



State of the City

Lenexa, Kansas

Delivered February 20, 2019

It has been another remarkable year for Lenexa and it is my honor to deliver my 17th State of the City Address to the Chamber members and our guests.

I would like to begin by thanking a number of people who make today possible.

First, to our luncheon sponsor, Kansas City Power and Light and WestStar Energy, who have sponsored the State of the City luncheon the last 17 years and continue to be a great partner of the City and the Chamber providing sponsorship dollars and, most importantly, reliable power to our residents and businesses. I especially appreciate your communication and responsiveness during extreme weather events as we have experienced this winter.

Next, I would like you to join me in thanking the associates with the Hyatt Place and Grand Street Café for today's meal and service.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank my associates with Commerce Bank for their support at those times when my duties as mayor take me away from the bank.

For the last 24 years, I have had the privilege of working with a group of dedicated individuals as part of the Lenexa Governing Body. These individuals devote countless hours visiting with constituents, touring development sites, reading packet materials, representing the citizens during council meetings and attending community events, and I would

like to recognize them at this time. Please hold your applause until everyone is standing. Tom Nolte, Andy Huckaba, Joe Karlin, Steve Lemons, Mandy Stuke, Dan Roh, Bill Nicks and Corey Hunt.

At your table is the 2018 Year in Review, appropriately titled Connected Lenexa. This is our annual report to the community highlighting the many programs and services provided by the City that bring us together as a community.

A few months ago, we received the following message on the City's Facebook page:

"I grew up in Lenexa, but left for college and have been gone since. I work in New York City for public space consulting firms whose clients are all over the world. I am so impressed and proud to look at Lenexa doing such successful, meaningful, public engagement – and using the best practices in the field. I'm always happy to show my coworkers that a Midwestern suburb is activating itself and its people to create a healthier – more livable – more connected population. Well done, all".

Those are the words of Thais Reis Henrie, and I could not agree with her more. Your elected officials, professional staff and our partners at the Chamber are constantly working together to create "community" – a vibrant, connected, hometown feeling, with a distinct culture within a larger metropolitan area, and much of that work has been guided by the City's visioning processes.

At the 2017 State of the City address, we announced the beginning of Vision 2040, Lenexa's third community visioning process. Continuing the success of Vision 2020 and 2030, we engaged a number of community volunteers to lead a citizen led effort to discover what you want Lenexa to look like in 2040.

Over the past few months, thousands of residents shared their hopes for the future. Our volunteers attended over 50 events, including VisionFest, to engage the public via surveys and the now famous, “I’d Like Lenexa” signs to gather a comprehensive database of information.

So, what did we hear? Predominantly, we heard that our citizens and business community love Lenexa and want us to stay on the same track, which has led to so much success. The Governing Body will receive the final document in the coming weeks; but I thought I would provide you a preview of the overarching themes today: Healthy People, Inviting Places, Vibrant Neighborhoods, Integrated Infrastructure and Transportation, and a Thriving Economy. That’s it for now, so stay tuned.

I’d like for Stacey Knipp, Mike Stein, our citizen co-chairs for Vision 2040, and Sean McLaughlin and Logan Wagler, our staff co-chairs, to please stand and be recognized for their dedication in leading the Vision 2040 process. I would also like extend our appreciation to the Steering Committee volunteers and staff for their hours of service and a special thank you to the 3,000 plus citizens for your participation and sharing your ideas with us.

A key responsibility of the City handled by the Municipal Services Department is to maintain quality infrastructure throughout Lenexa. The condition of our streets, bridges, stormwater piping, and such are important elements of the city – our residents have consistently told us that – through our citizen surveys. We continue to invest in this infrastructure – allocating \$26 million for maintenance and new projects in 2018.

Would you believe it if I told you that Lenexa now uses the latest technology with laser cameras mounted on vehicles to survey pavement conditions throughout the city? It’s true, and we now

prioritize funding and maintenance needs based on technical analysis of this newly collected data.

In 2019, \$6.8 million have been budgeted for the Pavement Management Program. Key projects include 87th Street from Quivira to Pflumm, 12 lane miles in residential areas, and improvements to streets in the business parks East of I-435.

In addition to street needs, we continue to fund our nationally acclaimed Rain to Recreation program, which included over \$14 million dollars in programming last year. A fun fact: our staff has responsibility for over 160 miles of storm water pipe, 9,000 storm drain inlets, and 22-miles of stream ways in Lenexa.

While maintenance is important, preparing for and enhancing future growth opportunities is constantly in our planning process. Included in the 2018 \$26 million figure is construction of Ridgeview Road from K-10 to Prairie Star Parkway, which will open additional land for commercial development along the corridor. In fact, we approved two, 120,000-square-foot commercial spec buildings for Meritex at the February 5 City Council meeting and interest in the area by other prospective investors is increasing as the project moves forward to a November 2019 completion date.

During 2017 and 2018, with funding from the Mid America Regional Council's Planning Sustainable Places Program, we engaged neighbors and business owners along Quivira Road from 79th Street to 99th Street to study the corridor and to guide efforts as new development and redevelopment occurs. The Governing Body accepted the recommendations this past summer and we have programmed \$3.2 million dollars for street, pedestrian, and lighting improvements this year.

In response to citizen engagement, the City began review of a Complete Streets Program in 2018. We are working to develop a comprehensive complete streets policy for the city. Public input has been a key element of this process as we strive to understand the mobility needs of all users of the public right of way and address the interaction of drivers, cyclists and walkers along city streets, sidewalks and trails.

To engage the public in the process, we held an open house on the topic, conducted focus group discussions, and are awaiting the results of a statistically valid survey from our residents. In the coming months, staff will review the data collected and then present a draft policy to the Planning Commission and Governing Body for consideration.

Now, let's take a tour around the city, both geographically and internally across various city departments.

2018 was another great year for Economic Development for Lenexa. For the fourth year in a row, we set a new record for building permit activity. Last year's total construction valuation was more than \$466 million, and the five year total topped \$1.8 billion of new investment in Lenexa. With all of that development activity, the Planning Commission has been very busy, and I'd like to recognize those members who are here today for their hard work. Chairman Chris Poss, Vice Chair Jo Ella Hoyer, Mike Burson, Jerry Harper, Ben Harber, Don Horine, Jason Leib, Curt Katterhenry and Alice Snider.

A special shout-out to Chairman Chris Poss who took on the chairman role in 2016 following 40-years of service by former chairman, Don Oppliger. Chris has done an amazing job navigating the new position and leading the commission – especially when considering the volume of work.

The Lenexa Community Development Department, which processes all of these applications, is world class. Our investors – that is developers, builders and contractors – regularly tell us about the superior quality of work from everyone involved in the development process.

After working with our staff on a recent project, a seasoned construction superintendent, who has worked in 26 states sent us the following message:

“From the first day of meeting with City employees to the Certificate of Occupancy, everyone made me feel like a part of a team. The City of Lenexa should be a training city for other cities so the job is successful for all parties. This letter would be 200 pages long if I wrote down my experience with every employee I worked with. I look forward to working in Lenexa again.”

Development is happening from east to west – all over the city. We welcomed T.J. Maxx & HomeGoods on Quivira, and Grundfos at 95th and Loiret. Construction began on the VanTrust Widmer Industrial building near 96th and Plfumm and residential growth continued from the Mill Creek Valley to the western city limits.

The city competed for a number of KCADC national projects in 2018, resulting in three big wins for Lenexa, all of which received national attention. We are pleased to welcome Geico, Convey Health Systems, and Turn5 to our business community.

Even with all that great development news, 46% of the permits were issued in the I-435/87th Street and City Center area. Large earth movers stormed the Hoehn property east of I-435 preparing the site from the Sonoma Hill townhomes and the Sonoma Plaza Retail development. Over 50% of the 332 townhomes have been leased and absorption continues at a rapid rate. Construction of the McKeever’s Market is well

under way, Culver's has broken ground, and once the weather clears, construction on the Red Door Grill and Chick-fil-A will begin. Over all, the commercial project is 80% leased or sold and several leases are out or letters of intent are in place. In addition to these residential and retail projects, Oddo Development continues to invest in office/warehouse properties as well.

While speaking about the east side of I-435, Urban Air, a trampoline/recreation and entertainment center for kids of all ages, has announced plans to occupy 30,000 square feet of the former Kmart location next to Sprouts with a planned opening this coming summer, bringing yet another sports-related venture to the area.

City Center continues its progress with completion of The Silo Modern Farmhouse restaurant, phase 1 of the Gomer's of Kansas retail center and the Central Green office building.

Construction on the 6-story Kiewit Power office, The District mixed-use project, the Shawnee Mission Aquatic Center, the Lenexa City Center Library, and Building E are changing the skyline, which will continue the area's dramatic transformation in 2019 with approved plans in place for the completion of Scarborough Street from Renner to 87th Street, Restaurant Row, The Yard, The Lofts at City Center, and the Renner 87 Flats.

We recently completed a short video about City Center and would like to share it with you now. *(video)*

Ongoing activities and events make City Center a great place to connect. More than 20,000 people visited the Lenexa Farmer's Market during its inaugural year. While vendors sold locally sourced seasonal goods, visitors were entertained by music and special activities

throughout the year. We will begin our second year of the Lenexa Farmer's Market on Saturday, April 27.

The Recreation Center celebrated its one-year anniversary in July and welcomed more than a quarter million visitors during 2018. Nearly 9,000 members account for a substantial number of those visits, however kids camps, high school lock-ins, and 852 birthday parties indicate that we are servicing all segments of our population.

The Public Market, named the "Best New Hang" by *435 Magazine*, celebrated its one-year anniversary in September. The personality of the Market continues to evolve – as it always should – as the reputations of the vendors and restaurants gain prominence across the region. In fact, Red Kitchen's breakfast burrito was named the best burrito in the state of Kansas by *Food and Wine Magazine*, again bringing national attention to Lenexa.

As the first Public Market in the metro area, we garnered significant media attention from KCUR radio, the Shawnee Mission Post, The Kansas City Star, the Pitch, and number of local television stations. If you've not yet been to the Market, please make a point of stopping in whether for a quick lunch or to enjoy one of the many special events.

Our dedication to the arts in general, and public art in particular, continues as we commissioned two works of art as part of the civic center construction.

"Body Politic" was dedicated in September at the west side of the Lenexa Commons as you make your way from the parking deck to the Rec Center. The Artist, Joe O'Connell, realized the importance of City Center as a place for people to connect and incorporated 200 unique human silhouettes into the spheres, which during the daylight hours interact among themselves. At night, LED lights illuminate the spheres

projecting images of the silhouettes on the visitor drawing you into the interactions.

The second installation, entitled “Splash”, hangs from the ceiling just inside the south entrance to the Rec Center. San Francisco artist Shan Shan Sheng created this 65-foot long abstract sculpture comprised of 31 colorful pieces of cold-cast glass and is meant to capture the experience of entering water and the resulting colorful images as light interacts with water droplets as they are displaced.

You will find art integrated into many of our festivals and programs. The art gallery in City Hall exhibits 2D and 3D art of local and regional artists, which changes monthly, and local musicians routinely perform at the Farmer’s Market and the Public Market, and the Lenexa Community Orchestra completed a successful second season and will be back for three concerts this Summer. If anyone is interested in sponsoring the orchestra for Season 3, we would welcome a conversation.

In partnership with the Johnson County Library, we kicked off City Center Live earlier this year with the next concert scheduled for Friday, March 8. The schedule for upcoming events can be found at Lenexa.com/citycenterlive.

On Sunday, June 2, we will join with the Johnson County Library for the grand opening of the Lenexa City Center Library and later this fall, with the Shawnee Mission School District and Johnson County Parks & Recreation for the opening of the District’s Aquatics Center. The impact of these additional visitors will continue to activate the public spaces and dramatically increase the connectivity envisioned by the authors of Vision 2020.

We are grateful that these partners believed in us and joined our journey.

While the success of City Center gets an abundance of attention, it's important to remember that we value all parts of Lenexa – especially Old Town. During last year's State of the City, I spoke about our work with residents and investors in Old Town to create a long-term vision for the area in anticipation of development and redevelopment.

During 2018, we commissioned a study to review the Community Center and the Senior Center looking for ways to improve our commitment to the area. The recommendations reviewed by the Governing Body earlier this year were very well received, and we anticipate advancing the plan through the budget process in the coming years.

For years, we have looked for a cost-effective way to lessen the impact to area residents and businesses of the noise caused by the train horns. Nearly 40 trains pass through Old Town on a daily basis and previous Quiet Zone safety requirements were cost prohibitive and nearly impossible to achieve due to the proximity of the tracks to Santa Fe Trail Drive.

Thanks to our friends in the City of Merriam, we discovered a stationary wayside horn system that is much less expensive and fits within the proximity challenges of both the Noland and Pflumm Road crossings.

After a demonstration of the new technology and positive feedback from the neighborhood, the Governing Body quickly endorsed the plan, funded the projects, and asked staff to begin discussion with the BNSF Railroad and the Federal Railroad Administration to prepare the engineering design work and move forward with construction. We are hopeful that construction may begin later this year or in 2020.

Old Town continues to host two very important annual events for the city – the ever-popular Freedom Run and Independence Day parade on July 4th and the Chili Challenge. We are excited to announce that we will hold a Food Truck Frenzy in Town on June 1 this year, so save the date.

Our community events are dispersed across the city and the Parks & Recreation Department takes the lead most of the time, however many departments provide support services. In addition to the Chili Challenge, our BBQ and Spinach Festival remain popular among our residents and new additions, such as Get Outdoors Lenexa at Black Hoof Park, Tails on the Trails at Ad Astra Park, and outdoor movies at Electric Park provide activities for residents to connect.

In May, we opened a new section of Sar-Ko-Par Trails Park to the public, which included additional parking and trails. Highlighting the celebration is our newest and largest open-air shelter, the Grand Pavilion. Our gateway, park, and trail signage program is nearing completion, systematic upgrades to our playground equipment continues, and improvements to existing tennis courts are taking place over the winter months, as we fulfill the recommendations in our Parks Master Plan.

Needless to say, the Parks and Recreation staff is working at a frenetic pace to provide exceptional experiences to our residents and visitors.

Now, let's turn to our public safety departments for a quick review.

With both an ISO One rating and the International Accreditation designation, the Lenexa Fire Department is among the elite in the nation. Of the 27,000 agencies in the country, only 72 have attained both designations. During 2018, the Fire Department responded to over 6,200 incidents and conducted nearly 3,600 fire and safety inspections.

In addition to these emergency calls, the Fire Department made it a priority to connect with citizens throughout the year, hosting a community-wide Open House, coordinating the third annual Citizen's Fire Academy, and presenting fire prevention and safety instruction to more than 17,000 individuals.

During 2018, the Lenexa Police Department responded to more than 41,000 calls for service including over 7,700 emergency calls. The average response time for an emergency call was an impressive 5.3 minutes.

A growing number of calls – nearly 950 in 2018 – involve a mental health component and through a partnership with Johnson County Mental Health, a specially trained mental health co-responder joins officers on calls assisting with behavioral health issues. Based upon the success of this partnership, we authorized funding for a second, full-time responder for the coming year.

Like Fire, community outreach is important to the Police Department – especially with the youth of Lenexa. The School Resource Unit works with all 12 elementary, middle and high schools in Lenexa. In 2018, school resource officers taught 649 course hours reaching over 16,600 students in the three districts and two private schools in Lenexa and made time to attend 80 school functions.

Successful police work and code enforcement often results in time in Municipal Court. This past year, the Lenexa Municipal Court scheduled more than 12,000 cases for hearings. The municipal judge and court staff approach their work with impartiality and professionalism. The court consistently adapts to emerging technology and has the respect of peer institutions and the attorneys who appear representing clients.

These public facing departments do a remarkable job serving the citizens and investors of Lenexa.

Now, I would like to share some information about several departments that do not always get much public attention but are critical to the success of the city organization.

The Human Resources Department helps us recruit and retain an exceptional group of employees. This past year, the city hired 269 full-time, part-time, and seasonal employees and our need for additional talented employees continues. Our next job fair will be held on Saturday, March 2. I encourage you to refer great candidates our way. Our current employees and the long-term tenure of many, provides testimony that Lenexa is an employer of choice.

The Legal Department touches every department in some manner providing services ranging from writing or reviewing city contracts, to drafting ordinances, to managing our risk management and insurance programs. In today's complicated world, filled with incentives and development agreements, the Legal Department is a key member of our economic development in Lenexa.

The Legal Department was responsible with creating the new Lenexa Foundation, which received a 501(c)(3) designation by the IRS, in September 2018. This effort was complicated by the fact that the existing Endowment Fund had to be unwound at the same time, all the while ensuring compliance with IRS codes.

The City's financial position remains strong thanks to the efforts of the Finance Department. Through the hard work of this team, our five year revenue and expense projections are balanced, the city received a AAA rating from Moody's Investors Services for the eighth consecutive year,

and we were able to reduce the property tax mill levy by 6 percent for the 2019 budget.

Also supporting the entire city, the Information Technology Department navigates the ever-changing world of technology and protects the integrity of our data from attack, damage and unauthorized access. Imagine the difficulty of accomplishing that while providing open and transparent access to the public.

And, no one knows the importance of sharing information with the public more than our Communications Department. From TownTalk to Tweets – and all things in between – the department strives to keep everyone informed about what is happening in Lenexa. Their creative approach continues to win national awards, telling Lenexa's story.

Over the last 26 minutes, I have shared with you the 2018 year in review for Lenexa. Beginning with recognition of the City Council, who represents the citizens and sets the policy direction for the city, with guidance from ongoing citizen engagement and our long-range strategic plan and Vision 2020 and 2030 documents.

We then reviewed a number of investments made by the City to maintain our existing quality of life and investments made by the private sector providing for new economic opportunity and provided an update department by department across the city organization.

You may have noticed a distinct change in today's message from previous years – that is, my failure to recognize individual accomplishments and express appreciation to the Lenexa City staff as I spoke of the various departments.

That distinction was intentional and hopefully an efficient way to provide you with a more information about the City in a limited amount

of time and consolidate the well-deserved praise and recognition for now.

Everyone knows what makes Lenexa a premier city is our dedicated staff members who carry out the Governing Body goals and wishes of the community.

I am now going to call out each department director and department, one-by-one, and ask that representatives of the respective department here today to please stand. Please hold your applause until I complete the list. Nick Arena, Municipal Services. Beccy Yocham, Community Development. Gary Ristow, Parks & Recreation. Chief Lonny Owens, Fire Department. Chief Tom Hongslo, Police Department. Judge Erika DeMarco, Municipal Court. Jim Bowers, Human Resources. Cindy Harmison, Legal. Doug Robinson, Finance. Justin Rairden, Information Technology. Denise Rendina, Communications.

This team of exceptional leaders are recognized by their peers as the best of the best in their respective professions – and those they represent across our talented organization – have been assembled and led over the last 15 years by a visionary leader and public servant, Eric Wade. As most of you know, after 35 years serving the public and 15 years as Lenexa City Manager, Eric has announced his retirement for June of this year.

Eric has had a tremendous impact on the organization and his hard work and leadership deserve to be recognized.

Always one to put the organization and community first, Eric provide us with an initial five year timeline and then nearly a one year notice of his anticipated retirement schedule, which allowed us to plan for this transition in leadership. We are currently engaged in a national search

to fill the City Manager position and will announce our selection later this spring.

Looking back over the past year with all that has been accomplished, it's not wonder *Money Magazine* named Lenexa the Best Place to Live in Kansas.

Thank you for attending today and let's have a great year in 2019.