

State of the City address focuses on development | City

At Wednesday's Emporia City Commission meeting at the Civic Building, Emporia Mayor Jon Geitz gave his State of the City address. Here is the full text of the speech:

"In Emporia, we have had the same city commission for the last four years. In that time, our commission has focused on maintaining the city's financial strength, long-range planning and development.

"I think we have made significant progress toward our goals, but I think the most visible area has been in development. Development can take many forms, but I thought I would focus on housing, infrastructure, industrial, commercial and higher ed.

"Updated housing has long been a need in Emporia and has been on the city's goals since 2013. Housing can take many forms, but I wanted to focus on both single-family and multifamily. We had 20 new houses started last year, with a total cost of \$3.3 million, and 247 remodeling permits with a total of \$1.8 million. Last year, the commission approved the first RHID (rural housing incentive district) project in Emporia, opening 26 lots for construction in the new Hidden Vistas development. Of those 26 lots, 10 have commitments. The commission also supported three housing tax credit applications that could lead to a new low- to moderate-income housing complex. Finally, 2016 saw the opening of the Chelsea Lofts downtown.

"Maintaining and updating the city's infrastructure has also seen significant development.

"Last year, roads that were resurfaced included Highway 50 and over two miles of other city road improvements. Over \$750,000 was invested in our roads. We also re-lined over three miles of sanitary sewers to maintain their life expectancy, and completely rebuilt Sewer Lift Station 6 in Jones Park. The city's award-winning water also saw significant investment in a new ozone treatment cycle and a new main water intake line from the Neosho River, complete with zebra mussel prevention.

"Industrial development and jobs are one of the backbones of our local economy. Last year, we saw higher employment at many of our major employers. The RDA (Regional Development Association) is continuously in talks with our local companies and will look to partner in their future growth. Finally, the city used a KDOT grant to finish Warren Way in Industrial Park 3 to open the last big lot to development.

"Commercial development saw two major projects announced and the construction started. The Flinthills Mall is using a 1 cent CID (Community Improvement District) to rehab and modernize their facility. This is the first project of its kind in Emporia. The Emporia Pavilions project was approved and construction began in October 2016. This was a combination TIF (tax increment financing)/ CID project, again the first time that method has been used in Emporia.

"The final type of development I wanted to discuss is in higher education.

"Last year, the city announced a major plan to help improve Welch Stadium at ESU through a five-year commitment. The city also partnered with Lyon County to provide scholarship dollars to help recruit students to ESU. The city also completed a storm water project along Merchant Street that improved the ESU landscape off of I-35.

"The current city commission has focused on all types of development the last four years. Progress can be seen around town. However, if you feel that there are other priorities the city should focus on or just think things should be done differently, please remember that the next election for the city commission will be in November. If you would like to file for the election, please see the Lyon County clerk by June 1."