**Good Evening and welcome. First I want to say thank you to the Chamber, my fellow elected officials, and the many Elk Grove community members and business leaders who have joined us or are tuning into our web broadcast tonight.  
  
Before I begin, I’d like to recognize a few of these people: {Introductions}  
  
I am honored to speak to you tonight about the state of our city, a city that in my opinion is like no other. Elk Grove is special and those of us who call it home truly understand that. And in my talk tonight, I want to focus on three key attributes about Elk Grove:  
  
1. We are unique;  
2. We are diverse;  
3. And we are changing.  
  
Elk Grove is a unique city in the region with our own story, our own challenges, and our own strengths to share with the world. We are the second largest city in Sacramento county; second only to the Capital city itself.  
  
People come here for different reasons. For my family and I, we were attracted by the opportunity to buy a nice home at a reasonable price, in a safe neighborhood close to good schools. Do you recall what drew you to Elk Grove?  
  
For Ann and Bernard, both Doctors, moved across the country because they heard about our incredibly great schools and safe city OR for Hang and Randy who decided on Elk Grove over Roseville because of our diversity.  
  
These are just a few of the stories here in Elk Grove. Each story is unique and each story adds to the fabric of our community.  
  
Elk Grove is 17 years old. And like any teenager, we’ve experienced growing pains. But we are finding our way.  
  
Last week, my fellow council members and I met to review future goals for the city. It was a follow up to a similar meeting we had two years ago. And among the many things we discussed was the unique quality of life we share here in Elk Grove. We are different from anywhere in the region…but why and how? To define our “special something” is hard to do.  
  
But…if we identify it… and share it with the rest of the world, we could attract more of the visitors, jobs, retailers and businesses that we want and need.  
  
Visit Elk Grove and our Economic Development Office have been working to do just that as part of a branding research project. If you haven’t had a chance to participate in their online community survey, you still have a chance. Visit BrandElkGrove.com before the survey closes tomorrow.  
  
The results of this survey will be used to create a branding and a marketing campaign that will put Elk Grove’s special something in front of corporate decision makers, tournament and meeting organizers, and others to encourage them to consider Elk Grove.  
  
And when they visit our city, they will quickly realize that…  
  
WE ARE DIVERSE  
  
One of our city’s greatest strengths is our diversity. We are truly a reflection of America. And that is an amazing thing.  
  
Last year, WalletHub rated Elk Grove the 7th most racially and ethnically diverse city in the country and just last month, Niche.com ranked the Elk Grove Unified School District the 2nd most diverse school district in the country.  
  
As an English learner did you know that there are more than 88 different languages and dialects spoken in our schools?  
  
I remember, my first English words were “Amazing Grace.” I learned these words because my family’s neighbor, Mrs. Ernie, an African American single mother of 6, embraced us as her own and taught us how to sing.  
  
One of the beautiful aspects about our city is that we embrace our diversity. Simply put, we respect and celebrate each other’s differences. At your table tonight is a copy of Elk Grove’s Diversity Pledge. Developed by the City’s Multicultural Committee, the pledge states:  
  
I realize no one in Elk Grove is exactly like me and that’s an amazing thing.  
  
I respect my neighbors for the things we have in common and for our differences.  
  
I resolve that we all need to get along to make our community the best it can be.  
  
I Pledge Peace, Love, Friendship, Unity, Acceptance, Tolerance and Respect for Elk Grove.  
  
If you haven’t already done so, I invite you to visit the City’s web page and submit your pledge with the thousands of other residents who have committed to these principles since its introduction in 2012.  
  
I am pleased to be joined tonight by some of the members of the City’s Multicultural Committee.   
  
This group of volunteer members is responsible for the production of the City’s annual Multicultural Festival and they are committed to education, awareness and appreciation for Elk Grove’s diversity. Please join me in a round of applause for this group.  
  
Last September, the Council passed a proclamation that declared Elk Grove as No Place for Hate. This proclamation represented a commitment by the Council and our community to protect and preserve the rights, freedoms, safety and security of all of our residents. As a City, we will not tolerate or condone hate motivated intimidation or violence. Not today and not ever.  
  
Whether immigrants or descendant of immigrants, your city council members continue to work hard to ensure that our city staff reflects the diversity we see in our community. The council brings their own stories and diversity:  
  
Vice Mayor Detrick’s grandfather came as a Greek immigrant though Ellis Island.  
  
Councilman Suen’s grandparents came here from China and Hong Kong and became sharecroppers in the Delta – making Courtland their home.  
  
Councilman Hume’s family came from Scotland, England and Portugal and then followed the Oregon Trail to settle in Eastern Oregon and Chico.  
  
And then there is Councilwoman Nguyen and I…her family and mine share a similar story of escaping as refugees as the Vietnam War ended. Councilwomen Nguyen’s family left South Vietnam on boats ending up in Louisiana by way of Australia. To the Northwest of Vietnam in the country of Laos my family gathered their belongings on their backs and began their journey to Thailand and ended up in Gardena.  
  
Additionally, our city employs the only female city manager in the region {nod to Laura} and while that’s a good start, we want to continue to develop a workforce that reflects our diversity. We are building on our current recruitment efforts to find talent that reflects our community’s makeup.  
  
But we are not just culturally diverse, we are generationally diverse. Baby boomers, Gen Xers, Gen Ys and Millennials are all finding their niche in Elk Grove. Earlier this year, Elk Grove was ranked second in the country for millennial homebuyers. And just last month, we made it into the Top 20 Places to Start a Family in America. These are significant national accolades that speak to the quality of life we enjoy in Elk Grove.  
  
For those residents who moved to Elk Grove with young families who now have children leaving the nest – Elk Grove is still a great place to call home. The availability of quality health care, a good climate, safe neighborhoods and a central location to snow, surf and an international airport make it a great place to retire. And as our population changes, we continue to explore what amenities, programs and services are needed to serve our residents of all ages.  
  
The City is pleased to be partnering with the Cosumnes Community Services District in developing “Elk Grove’s Plan for Play,” a parks, recreation and facilities master plan. The CSD is conducting a series of workshops and surveys for this project and I would encourage all of you to contribute to the conversation. This plan coupled with the City’s General Plan Update will chart a clear course for policy, funding and service priorities that will shape our future.  
  
These plans and projects anticipate changes for Elk Grove. And make no mistake, Elk Grove is changing…  
  
With a population exceeding 167,000 people and future projected growth expected to reach 225,000 residents by 2025, the Council is committed to bringing the infrastructure, jobs and services to Elk Grove that make it a well-rounded community.  
  
This is an exciting time for the City and changes are on the horizon.  
  
Our General Plan Update is identifying those locations within our city that are conducive to smart growth and in-fill development while still preserving our rural area. And we’ll finally dive into construction on civic amenities like our aquatic center that will break ground this summer followed by our community center with its veterans hall and senior center not too far behind.  
  
These amenities will establish new public spaces in Elk Grove for events, recreation and celebration that will enhance our quality of life.  
  
Our city is alive and like all bodies it functions best with a strong heart. And if I had to identify the heart of Elk Grove, I’d say it’s our Old Town. The City Council continues to invest in Old Town Elk Grove. Improvements to the Old Town Plaza are currently under way and will be completed later this spring. The Plaza will continue to host events like the Old Town Farmers Market, Brewfest, and monthly food truck events that encourage our residents and visitors to explore Elk Grove’s historic district and support locally owned small businesses.  
  
Our Old Town offers tremendous potential for new entertainment and nightlife additions and our Economic Development team is working closely with the Old Town Elk Grove Foundation to explore ways to tap into that potential with new programs like our Brewery and Winery Assistance Program and other small business incentive programs to inspire entrepreneurs to consider Old Town.  
  
As we grow, the way we get around the city and the region will change too. The Council will soon receive the findings of Transit’s Comprehensive Operational Analysis. This report will anticipate our future public transportation needs.  
  
But, perhaps the biggest guard against future gridlock lies in the Kammerer Road Extension Plan. This project offers the greatest potential to make an impact on the City’s economic prosperity. Connecting the City’s southeast area to Interstate 5 is the kind of project that will help define the Southeast Policy Area as a major employment center and help right the city’s jobs to housing imbalance.**

And recruiting and retaining good employers remains one of our highest priorities. Next month, we will celebrate the opening of the expanded state offices on Long Leaf Drive and we await the reaccreditation of California Northstate University. These organizations, in addition to health care, represent key industries that the City seeks to attract for future jobs. We will continue to work with Greater Sacramento to attract quality employers to the city so that more of our residents have a chance to work where they live.  
  
Having an emerging workforce ready to meet the needs of the employers that will be attracted to Elk Grove is a goal shared by the city and the Elk Grove Unified School District. As the school district continues to excel at this, the City has partnered with them to host the Summer at City Hall program to introduce high school students to careers in public service. We are entering our third year hosting the program and I can’t help but think that one of those amazing students will take my place up here someday. Thank you once again to the school district, its teachers and administrators for the work you are doing to prepare our next generation.  
  
If those students were given the chance to grade the city on its retail, dining and entertainment options at the moment, we might be in trouble. To be honest, Elk Grove has a deficit of retail, dining, and entertainment options. While we support the development of new retail projects like The Ridge Shopping Center and the addition of businesses like Dick’s Sporting Goods and Costco, we need more projects like these within the City. And while we touched on events and entertainment in Old Town, the addition of new dining and entertainment facilities is also needed to serve Elk Grove’s growing group of millennials, Xers, Ys and boomers.  
  
The City is evaluating new and enhanced economic development incentives that will generate high quality retail projects. And we’re initiating new programs like Open Counter to make it easier to open a business in Elk Grove. But encouraging investment in Elk Grove from those within our region is vital to our success.  
  
Has anyone visited Rockin’ Jump yet? Offering fitness and fun, this ultimate trampoline park opened its doors on Dwight Road in January 2016. Its owners include Usman Rao (Uz-mon Row) whose company is based in the bay area…Dublin to be exact. According to Usman, they chose Elk Grove based on our demographics, large student population, the lack of competition in our area, and the city’s family friendly atmosphere. Rockin’ Jump employs 55-60 people with the majority of their workforce consisting of high school and college students. The owners are working with the school district’s career placement staff to create a training to employment program that will enable more students to hone their professional skills. And business is good. Rockin’ Jump will add a laser tag arena later this year and are proposing to open an indoor swim school facility on Longport Court called SafeSplash. The facility will offer swimming classes for children 6 months and older and is expected to create another 35-40 jobs in the city. SafeSplash is expected to open next year.  
  
Revenue generated by these kinds of projects and these kinds of investors can be used to enhance City services… Services like an animal shelter. Next Monday, the city will host an update meeting on the Animal Shelter project to share their progress and renderings of the proposed facility which will be constructed on city-owned property in the southeast area. The facility is expected to open in 2019.  
  
Despite all of our growth and change, we maintain one of the safest cities of its size in the country. Chief Noblett’s annual report notes that crime was down in most categories in 2016. Thank you to the officers, staff and volunteers in our Police Department for your continued vigilance to protect our community. Working together with our police force, we can continue to maintain safe neighborhoods for our families.  
  
In closing, I’m reminded of a quote from U2’s singer Bono who said “America is not just a country, it’s an idea.” Like many who came to this country before us, we have big ideas…for ourselves and for our city. As your Mayor, I am committed to working with the Council and this community to ensure that our dreams for Elk Grove come true.  
  
We are unique…we are diverse…and we are changing.  With your help, we can continue to make that a change for the better.  
  
And that is the state of our city. God bless you, God bless our city and God bless this great country we call the United States of America. Thank you and good night.