2017 State of the City address by Reno Mayor Hillary Schieve:

Thank you, Marily. You truly are an inspiration and the official rockstar of the airport. And a big thank you to your high-flying team here at Reno-Tahoe International and Reno-Stead airports. Let’s give them all a huge round of applause.  
  
I am so incredibly honored to host tonight’s event here at Atlantic Aviation.  
  
Also, I would like to offer a special thank you to Brian Kulpin and Trish Tucker from the airport, who coordinated with my staff to put on this spectacular event. Please give them a huge round of applause.  
  
It is also very exciting to see the young people here from the Civil Air Patrol and Pathways to Aviation, who have helped with tonight’s event. Thank you to our future pilots.  
  
Speaking of young people, thanks also to tonight’s musical guest. Let’s give a round of applause to Long Story Short, a group of young jazz musicians based right here in Reno.  
  
I truly feel that the airport is the perfect place to hold our State of the City because the team here knows how to create a flight plan for success.  
  
In the past 18 months, the airport has brought back 1,300 daily seats to our community and added 14 new flights. Did you know that the Reno-Tahoe International Airport welcomes 3.6 million people per year in Reno and brings in more than $2 billion in economic impact?  
  
The airport has assisted in economic development with innovative plans for Stead Airport, and has become a national leader in drone technology. How about a round of applause for the airport team that makes the first and last impression on visitors 365 days a year.  
  
This would not be possible without the vision of the Board of Trustees from the Reno-Tahoe Airport Authority. I’d like to ask chairman Rick Murdock and the Board of Trustees to stand for a round of applause.  
  
Let’s talk about vision. Reno’s future is bright!  
   
In November, voters took a stand to show they put education and students first by passing WC-1. This measure will generate more than $700 million and provide funding to build new schools, which are desperately needed.  
  
As Mayor of this city, I am proud to be a part of a Council that, when looking at future growth, schools have been one of our top priorities. I look forward to working with the new school board on educational initiatives as we soar to new altitudes.  
   
Will Chairwoman Angie Taylor and the Washoe County School District Board of Trustees please stand for a round of applause?  
  
And now, while we are talking about schools and young people, I want to do something a little different.    
   
I would like to invite Victor Medina to come to the stage. Victor is a Hug High School student with a very bright future.  
   
Just days after the tragic shooting incident at the school, the Reno Gazette-Journal published a poem Victor wrote for one of his classes.

I would like to ask Victor to share that [poem](http://www.reno.gov/Home/Components/News/News/16128/576) with us now.  
   
Thank you Victor.  Let's give this future mayor a huge round of applause.  
   
It takes a young student to teach all of us to show kindness to one another. Thank you again, future mayor.  
As we begin this new year, what our great city is faced with is an opportunity to take a new approach that will lift Reno up higher than ever before.

We are so fortunate to have 1,200 full-time City employees who are incredibly dedicated and passionate about moving our city forward. From Public Works to planning, from code enforcement to business licenses, they are the backbone of The Biggest Little City.  
   
As some of you may or may not have heard, unfortunately we have hit some turbulence at City Hall.  
  
From my own personal experience, I know what happens when something on the inside goes very wrong.  
   
Many of you know I had dreams of being an Olympic figure skater. But kidney disease threatened my life.  
   
Thanks to my loving mother, and incredible sister who donated her kidney to save my life and put me on a new path.  
   
I hung up my skates, but not my competitive spirit! I took that passion for competition and rechanneled it into other endeavors.  
   
That’s what our city must do now. When things get tough, you must take decisive action to fix it. It may hurt at first, but it’s an opportunity to take a new approach.  
   
Our city will be bringing in new, vibrant leadership and fostering a new culture to lift Reno up for years to come.  
   
We are looking for an innovative leader who will bring a new culture to our city that, like these jets around us, will help our city take off and continue to rise with new accomplishments.  
   
That’s why with the public’s help we are near completion on a search for a new city manager.  
   
Speaking of community input, we’ve gathered a lot of it in the past few years.  
   
From our Neighborhood Advisory Boards to our community at large, we’ve heard one thing loud and clear: a thriving downtown is important to all of us.  
   
I truly believe that every great city needs a great downtown.  
   
Our vision for downtown includes restoring and finding tenants for blighted buildings, helping our homeless citizens and attracting new art and entertainment.  
   
One of our crowning achievements in 2016 was the transformation of the city’s most recognizable eyesore: a blighted building that sat vacant for more than 30 years. And you all know it.  
   
Formerly known as the King’s Inn, today it is home to the hip 3rd Street Flats, where millennials and tech meet.  
   
I would like to recognize Chi Chi Bengochea, owner of Bentar Development, who unfortunately could not be with us tonight. But he is what I call a true blight buster!  
   
When I think about downtown today, what comes to mind is the symbolism of our new bridge, which connects our colorful past with our bright future. Now citizens and visitors can experience the new river access from City Plaza while enjoying the BELIEVE sign and works of art along the river. Today’s Virginia Street Bridge is where history and progress meet.  
   
The Blight Initiative fund is also fueling real change downtown. So far we’ve invested $378,000 dollars of the blight fund to address a broad range of issues from graffiti, to condemned buildings, to trash along the river.  
   
The Biggest Little City deserves these big improvements, and we are planning even more efforts to lift Reno up.

Included in these efforts are…

* $225,000 will be used to expand neighborhood and river cleanups, distribute graffiti kits and purchase solar-powered trash cans.
* $250,000 will be used by code enforcement for the demolition of condemned properties and the cleanup of public and private properties throughout Reno.
* $250,000 will be dedicated specifically to cleaning up blight in downtown. In the past year, we demolished two vacant motels on north Virginia Street.
* $275,000 eventually will fund neighborhood renewal grants. Homeowners in qualified areas will be able to apply for a grant to help improve their neighborhood.

At this time I would like to recognize Ward 3 Reno City Councilmember Oscar Delgado for his work to spearhead the blight initiative. Now let’s hear from Oscar:

Thank you, Oscar. Please stand, along with any Ward 3 NAB members who are here tonight, for a round of applause.

We cannot lift Reno up if we don’t extend our hands to those in need. That’s why we are putting more money and resources into our community assistance center and homeless shelters. Last year, your city council approved investing more than $735 thousand dollars in our homeless shelters.  
   
A new funding formula approved by the transitional governing board increased funding for homeless services in our community by 48 percent.  
   
Thank you to our regional partners who have collaborated with us on this important cause: Washoe County, the City of Sparks and Volunteers of America.  
   
At this time, I would like to recognize Pat Cashell, regional director of Volunteers of America, for his hard work.  
   
Our homeless population needs more than money to change their lives. They need opportunity like the Reno Works program that recruits individuals residing in our homeless shelters to provide life skills and education, full-time employment assistance, and intensive case management support. The City of Reno has allocated $160,000 to the program over the last two years. Next month, we will celebrate our fifth Reno Works graduating class!

At this time I would like to recognize Vice Mayor and Ward 5 Reno City Council Member Neoma Jardon for her work to spearhead the Reno Works program:

Thank you, Neoma. Please stand, along with any Ward 5 NAB members who are here tonight for a round of applause.

When we talk about lifting Reno up, you can’t get more uplifting than High Sierra Industries. Since September 2014, Reno has partnered with High Sierra Industries on the walk and clean Downtown Ambassadors Work Program. We must expand on this success, and continue to make this partnership a priority.  
   
We’ve put $100,000 into this program, which provides job training to the disabled community, while also beautifying our downtown. LaVonne Brooks, will you and the Downtown Ambassadors please stand up at this time?  
   
I’ve also enlisted the help of a working group called Operation Downtown. This group is made up of business owners, developers, City of Reno staff, and others who want downtown Reno to rise. But in order to do so, we need more affordable housing options.  
   
That’s why Operation Downtown and the City held a recent affordable housing workshop to identify ways Reno can take action.  
   
We are looking for ways to incentivize more affordable housing projects by participating in public-private partnerships, such as building affordable housing projects on city-owned land.  
   
One affordable housing project that the City of Reno is particularly proud of is the Vintage at the Crossings, by developer Dane Hillyard. We look forward to more of his affordable housing projects to come.  
   
At this time I would like to thank Dane Hillyard, and Ken Krater, chair of Operation Downtown, and all of the members for leading this effort. Please stand if you’re a member of Operation Downtown.

   
I think a quote from a recent Bloomberg story sums up the state of our city: “Reno has clawed its way back from the recession, embracing tech and the arts alike as the city sheds its image as a second-tier destination for gamblers and visitors to Lake Tahoe.”  
   
While we are still recovering from the recession. Our Council remains committed to fiscal stability. For one, the city's total debt has decreased by more than $150 million dollars, and our fund balance totals more than $19 million under the leadership of this City Council.  
   
Now, that’s what I call progress.  
   
Speaking of progress, the city of Reno launched our ReLEAF Reno program, meant to preserve and expand Reno’s tree canopy.

At this time I would like to recognize Ward 2 Reno City Councilmember Naomi Duerr, who spearheaded the ReLeaf Reno initiative. Let’s hear what Naomi has to say about Reno:

Thank you, Naomi. Please stand, along with any Ward 2 NAB members who are here tonight, for a round of applause.

As our city improves, we don’t just want to grow bigger, we want to grow better. And being a great place to live starts with a feeling of safety and security.  
   
Our focus is not just on downtown! We want to improve the quality of life in every neighborhood.  
   
Our police, fire, and public works are the frontline of our city that touch every neighborhood.  
   
The Reno Police Department is nationally recognized as a model for community policing. I’m proud to say that, under Reno Police Chief Jason Soto, they have continued to impress!  
   
Last year, the police department graduated 30 new police officers, of which 19 were newly funded positions, authorized by the City Council.  
   
With the recent population growth and the increased calls for service, we will continue to prioritize the funding of additional officers in our upcoming budget.  
   
Our police department is also building bridges with our community.  
   
To improve the safety of downtown, we’ve implemented the Downtown Walking Team. The City Council approved the deployment of five additional police officers in the downtown core.  
   
This is an opportunity for our police department to further engage in community policing. The officers meet with business owners, residents, and visitors on a daily basis to build strong relationships throughout the community.  
   
Please join me in recognizing Chief Jason Soto for his outstanding leadership of our Reno Police Department.  
   
Speaking of safety, we must also improve driver and pedestrian safety. 2016 was a very difficult and deadly year, particularly for pedestrians, in the City of Reno.  
   
That’s why we’re planning a community workshop to dive into this issue more deeply.  
   
As we work with Zero Fatalities, pedestrian safety has to be seen as a top priority throughout the city.  
   
Our newly adopted Pedestrian Safety Action Plan will assist. We will also be asking our community to get involved and be a part of the solution.  
   
If we can begin to shift the culture toward a more pedestrian-friendly mindset, together we will be able to stop these senseless tragedies.  
   
2016 was a landmark year for our Reno Fire Department. We added 31 new firefighters and have 50 paramedics trained in advanced life support.  
   
This has allowed us to expand service and open two formerly browned out stations:  
   
Fire station 7 on Skyline and Fire Station 19 in Somersett.  
   
All 14 Reno Fire Stations are now open and are protecting our community. This has been one of my biggest priorities since taking office.  
   
Please join me in recognizing the great work of Reno Fire Chief Dave Cochran.  
   
Another important partnership is the one we’ve established with REMSA to expand on our public safety.  
   
We’ve accomplished so much over the past year together.  
   
I’m proud that the Mutual Aid Agreement was signed in September 2016 providing a joint collaboration of lifesaving services to our citizens. We look forward to opportunities to further strengthen that partnership.  
   
Without strong regional collaboration, we couldn’t be successful. This month’s flood event was yet another example of our region’s focus on teamwork.  
   
Our hearts and thoughts go out to those who have been affected and are still going through a difficult time as a result of flooding.  
   
Many cities and communities in Washoe County and northern Nevada were devastated, but we banded together. We couldn’t have gotten through this without everyone’s assistance and cooperation.  
   
I’d like to thank Governor Brian Sandoval, the Red Cross, the Washoe County Commissioners, Sparks City Council, and my fellow City Council Members for their support throughout this event.  
   
Community volunteers also played an important role, and we thank them for for their acts of kindness and dedication.  
   
Thank you to all of the men and women who were on the front lines. I see many of you here tonight and I would ask those who worked so hard to keep our community safe, to please stand.

Now I would like to recognize Ward 4 Reno City Councilmember Paul McKenzie for his great work to ensure a safer Reno. Let’s view Paul’s video:

Thank you, Paul. Please stand, along with any Ward 4 NAB members who are here tonight, for a round of applause.

Last year, the Urban Land Institute conducted a Virginia Street Corridor study and recommended several infrastructure improvements to beautify our main street that runs through our city.  
   
Just south of downtown, our growing Midtown area continues to gain national recognition to lift Reno up. The merchants continue to play a key role in the development of Midtown. Thank you to all the Midtown business owners and residents who believed in Midtown when no one else did.  
   
At this time, I’d like to ask that any Midtown business owners in the audience, please stand, and thank you Paul Doege, chair of the Midtown Merchants Association.  
   
I’m extremely excited to say that the same story of transformation is now in the early stages for Park Lane, Midtown’s neighbor. Soon, the site will no longer be home to asphalt, seagulls, and fences.  
   
After 20 years of sitting vacant, park lane will blossom into a vibrant mixed-use project featuring shops, restaurants, and housing. At this time I would like to recognize Chip Bowlby, owner and managing partner for Reno Land, who is revitalizing Park Lane.  
  
We have all had the chance to ReImagine Reno. Thousands in our community have given input to the new Master Plan, which we plan to adopt this summer. The plan will be key to well-managed growth and determine what our city will look like in the next 20 years.  
  
We will focus on connecting development to future demands, and making sure that we are proactive with our infrastructure investment. Key policy choices will be in the areas of employment, housing, infill redevelopment, infrastructure and neighborhoods.

I would like to recognize Ward 1 Reno City Councilmember Jenny Brekhus for her work. Let’s see what Jenny has to say about lifting Reno up:

Thank you, Jenny. Please stand, along with any Ward 1 NAB members who are here tonight, for a round of applause.

We’re fortunate to enjoy a great quality of life here in Reno. Our Parks, Recreation and Community Services department is pivotal.  
   
In addition to adopting several climate change initiatives, including Compact of Mayors last year, the City of Reno collaborated with local residents to revitalize Pat Baker and Virginia Lake parks.  
   
We have implemented 12 pesticide-free parks.  
   
We have also teamed up with The Rotary Club of Reno to create a Sculpture Garden for people to enjoy at Bicentennial Park.  
   
Safe and healthy neighborhoods are definitely a priority of this city council.  
   
Thanks to Reno City Councilmember David Bobzien, a new Reno license plate that generates revenue to beautify our parks can be purchased at the DMV.  
   
I am also excited for his dedication to the City’s 150th birthday celebration. I’m elated to introduce, for the first time tonight, the Reno 150 logo!

Let’s hear from Council Member At-Large, David Bobzien:

Thank you, David. Please stand for a round of applause.

2016 was a big year for Reno in retail!  
   
The historic downtown U.S. Post Office building, featuring West Elm, has put a new stamp on downtown redevelopment.  
   
The Basement will floor you with its eclectic mix of businesses.  
   
I would like to recognize developer Bernie Carter, manager Tiana Appel from West Elm, and designer Brianna Bullentini for their first class work on the Post Office building.  
   
In addition, brothers Brian and Paddy Egan recently opened the new downtown Patagonia store in the historic Hudson Building.  
   
West Elm and Patagonia are the first major retailers to move into downtown in decades.  
   
When we talk about key players downtown, Eldorado Resorts dealt our visitors a great hand when they announced they plan to invest more than $50 million in their three iconic casino properties.  
   
And speaking of home runs, we have really scored big this year in sports! Professional sports have never been more evident in the City of Reno: with the addition of the Reno Puck Club hockey team, Sacramento Kings partnership with the Reno Bighorns, and the Reno Aces partnership with Reno 1868 FC, a professional soccer team.  
   
So, I say, let the games begin Reno! Sports are a great draw not only for our locals, but for our visitors.  
   
Speaking of visitors, I would like to personally thank the Reno-Sparks Convention and Visitors Authority for their sponsorship of tonight’s event.  
   
Special thanks to my fellow board member Bob Lucey for his great work as RSCVA board chairman. I am proud to serve with you. I want to also commend Jennifer Cunningham for her leadership. She has helped take the convention authority to new heights! Last year marked a record for the most taxable room revenues in the history of the RSCVA. Please stand, Jennifer and Commissioner Bob Lucey.  
   
And now we have even more exciting news. Please help me in welcoming RSCVA’s new president and CEO, Phil DeLone.  
   
Moving forward, the future of tourism is bright. Hotels in Washoe County are on track for double-digit percentage increases in taxable room revenues.

   
The RSCVA brought in 4.89 million visitors in 2016, the most since 2007. So, thank you again RSCVA, for all your amazing work.  
   
I would also like to thank our partners at EDAWN for bringing in 1,600 new jobs and 27 new companies. EDAWN has been advocates for arts, culture, and education. They really are the gold star of economic development. At this time I would like to recognize Mike Kazmierski, CEO of EDAWN, and his team for their incredible work.  
   
Many companies thriving online are calling northern Nevada home, which includes advanced manufacturing and logistics facilities. In 2016, a record 9.6 million square feet of industrial space was leased in the Reno-Sparks area alone! Our community ranks among the top three in the nation for manufacturing and distribution space per capita.  
   
Today, it is my honor to announce that an exciting e-commerce company called Zazzle will now open core distribution and manufacturing in Reno. Zazzle works with Fortune 500 companies, such as Disney and Warner Brothers, just to name a few.  
   
Did you see the beautiful BELIEVE mugs that were handed out tonight? Proud to tell you that is the work of Zazzle! Speaking of work, they are bringing in 250 jobs to The Biggest Little City.  
  
I am very excited that Zazzle is here tonight. At this time I would like to ask Charles Ohiaeri, Bridget Smith and Peggy Beaver to stand. Let’s welcome them to The Biggest Little City.  
   
We are truly lifting each other up!  
   
In closing, we put a sculpture up downtown called BELIEVE. To me, it’s much more than a word. It’s more than art. It’s a philosophy that everyone in Reno needs to rally around.  
  
As someone who grew up here, I can tell you that for as long as I can remember, this community has let itself be defined by outsiders who perpetuated negative stereotypes and clichés about us. We are far past the time of letting others define us.  
  
In today’s Reno, we decide our future, we decide our reputation and we decide the legacy we will leave for future generations!  
  
But it starts with each and every one of you, including the media, taking pride in what Reno has done to re-create our city and our image.  
  
Yes, much more needs to be done. But if we believe in our citizens, believe in our city staff, believe in our City Council, believe in our businesses, believe in tourism, and if we believe in our schools, then we will take Reno to a new altitude, with a new attitude.   
  
This city is going places. We have set a course for change. It’s a long flight, but the City Council and I are proud to be navigating this new course. I encourage you all to get on board as we take our city to new heights in 2017.

Right now, let’s take a look at some of the projects that are truly taking off:

Thank you again. And remember, be kind. The sky’s the limit, Reno! God bless!