Good morning.  
  
I am very pleased to be able to spend some time with you all this morning to provide another annual update on the state of our city of Roseville.  
  
We can begin with the basic assessment first:  Roseville continues to be in a very good state, and we continue to be well-positioned to stay that way for the foreseeable future.

In Roseville, we continue to be the beneficiaries of our strong local and State economy as well as our excellent location in our region.  We can be proud of our diverse employment base, thriving businesses, innovative and forward-thinking educational institutions, a healthy non-profit sector, great parks and other amenities, and excellent transportation connections.  
  
As I have said one way or another in each of my State of the City remarks these last, now, seven years, so much of what gives us those advantages and assets in which we can take such pride comes from the hard work and commitment of the people who live here, work here, own businesses here, volunteer here, and care about each other here.  
  
I believe the best thing we can do as the local unit of government is be sure that everything we do contributes to the success of all those other efforts – or at the very least stays out of the way of those efforts.  
  
As is hopefully becoming an apparent ongoing theme in these annual assessments, I intentionally choose each time to organize the presentation around our established community aspirations.  Those aspirations arise from our community’s vision, and in my opinion serve as a useful means to measure where we are.  
  
In case they are not yet on the tip of everyone’s tongues after these annual recitals, here is a reminder of those aspirations:  
  
We in Roseville aspire to be a community that is:

* Welcoming, inclusive, and respectful
* Safe and law-abiding
* Economically prosperous, with a stable and broad tax base
* Secure in our diverse and quality housing and neighborhoods
* Environmentally responsible, with well-maintained natural assets
* Physically and mentally active and healthy
* Well connected through transportation and technology infrastructure and
* Engaged in our community’s success as citizens, neighbors, volunteers, leaders, and businesspeople.

**Welcoming, Inclusive, and Respectful**

Perhaps it is especially fitting this year to begin with this important aspiration of our community.  
  
We have seen events in the last year, from the terribly sad and tragic shooting of Philando Castille in our neighboring community of Falcon Heights, to the very real concerns of our neighbors who have come here as immigrants considering some of the heated election rhetoric and subsequent government actions at other levels, that reinforce the primacy of this aspiration.

I believe that all of us must make an extra effort these days to remember this aspiration and seek to live it in our day to day lives.  
  
That is why I have been especially heartened by a number of efforts that people in Roseville have undertaken over the last year to do just that.  There have been excellent conversations and educational efforts organized by the Roseville Area School District, both district-wide and at the school level.  I am glad to know that the district is continuing those efforts in 2017.  
  
Another effort in which the City has been involved has brought together the City with the school district and individuals in the community.  It is very aptly titled Imagine Roseville, building on the name of our 2005 visioning effort.    
  
Imagine Roseville was initiated by a combination of concerned individuals, council members, and city advisory commissioners after the Castille shooting.  I am truly proud of the planning group, which has brought together those “usual” participants along with some great contributors from our community who have not been “usual” participants.  The work has been well done, and my hope is that many of the “not usual” participants can become “usual” participants in City and civic life going forward.    
  
What is Imagine Roseville?  Imagine Roseville was envisioned as three community gatherings in an effort to help make connections in our community in light of changing demographics.    
  
The first gathering in October was a chance for participants to express their reactions to the Castille shooting and surrounding events.  Folks expressed their range of emotions with each other, and also had the chance to learn more about what we have been doing in Roseville related to policing policies and training in a number of relevant areas.  
  
The second gathering in December was an opportunity for ideas to come forward that might be the genesis of policies or actions that can be taken forward.  
  
Plans are underway for the third gathering, which will actually likely be a series of more in-depth discussions in three general topic areas, intended to move ideas closer to specific policies or actions that can then be put into effect.  Please stay tuned for more on dates, times, and subject matter in the coming weeks.    
  
Some of the Imagine Roseville planning group are with us this morning, and I’d like to take just a moment to acknowledge them here and thank them for their ongoing work and enthusiasm for helping to fulfil this community aspiration.

It is also important to acknowledge City staff who are key to making this effort happen, including specifically City Manager Pat Trudgeon for his organization and stewardship.    
  
And very special and heartfelt thanks Police Chief Rick Mathwig, Community Relations Coordinator Corey Yunke, and the entire Roseville Police Department, for really engaging with the community on these issues, and all the while serving with great professionalism and care during a time of great stress and anxiety both among the public and among law enforcement this last year.

**Safe and Law-Abiding**

While we are on the subject of policing, we should note some other efforts of the Roseville Police Department to help us to continue to be safe and law-abiding in our community.  
  
Roseville PD has stepped up training in the areas of mental health awareness and de-escalation, and has begun an initiative, supported by the city council, to provide all sworn personnel crisis intervention training (CIT) by 2018.

Grant funds have been leveraged to enhance auto theft reduction efforts and, importantly in Roseville with our aging demographics, to continue to fight identity theft and prevent victimization by scams in our senior community.  
  
Roseville in 2017 will be joining a number of police forces in Minnesota who implement department-wide use of body cameras for officers.  
  
Not forgotten in efforts to keep us safe in Roseville is the Roseville Fire Department, who have also been taking steps toward this aspiration.  
  
The fire department continues its transition to a full-time firefighter staff, with the addition this past year of a Deputy Chief and other changes to the supervisory staffing.  In addition, the full time roster grew to nine with two additional hires.  As a reminder, the use of full time staffing helps to provide consistent service during times of day where demand for services is high but part time paid on call staffing often has gaps.  
  
As part of the changes in the department, fire safety inspections are now handled by on-duty firefighter inspectors.  Additionally, the department has begun a more proactive fire inspection and planning program to be sure that all significant residential and commercial buildings in the city are included, for the safety of residents, employees, and visitors.  
  
Finally under the aspiration of safety, at the urging of the fire departments in Ramsey County including our own, the city council approved entering into a joint powers agreement with other agencies for a pilot program to dispatch the closest available unit to calls for service in the county regardless of the jurisdiction.

**Economically Prosperous**

In 2016, there was probably no more obvious indicator of our prosperity, and hopefully confidence in that continuing, than the announced multi-million dollar re-investment in Rosedale by its owners, along with the planned return to having four anchor stores, with Von Maur coming in 2018.  
  
Beyond that encouraging note, we can also see positive signs in the headquarters of Calyxt being completed at Twin Lakes, along with two new hotels and additional retail in that area.

Efforts are underway to complete the preparation of the PIK Terminal site south of Langton Lake for redevelopment through removal of the old building foundation.  
  
More broadly measured, the City issued over 4700 permits in 2016 with a valuation of over $146 million.  This represented a 15% increase in permits over the previous 5 year average.  Significantly, this total included nearly 250 commercial remodels and over 1500 residential remodels.  
  
In order to enhance Roseville’s economic development efforts, the City transitioned from a Housing and Redevelopment Authority to an Economic Development Authority in 2016.  An EDA has the powers of an HRA in addition to a greater ability and toolset to promote economic development.  
  
Toward that objective the EDA in 2016 put in place financial incentive and property acquisition policies for the City that spell out our objectives and priorities in those areas.  Additionally, City staffing has been realigned and consultants engaged for expertise in this area.

**Secure in our Diverse Housing and Neighborhoods**

Roseville continues to work to add diversity to and improve the quality of our housing.    
  
In 2016 the City approved the Wheaton Woods development at Dale Street and County Road C, which includes six smaller lots where smaller homes with less of a yard can be built.  
  
Review and adjustments continue to be made to the recently begun Rental Licensing and Inspection program for apartment buildings over four units, with the goal of promoting maintenance and upkeep, and improving the living conditions for renters in Roseville – making those buildings more secure places to live, especially for those entering the housing market at the lower-income end.

**Environmentally Responsible, with Well-Maintained Natural Assets**

Our Parks and Recreation and Public Works areas at the City of Roseville continue to be the vanguard of our environmental and natural asset maintenance efforts.  
  
Growing out of the Park Renewal Program as it wraps up has been a solid natural resources volunteer stewardship effort, with monthly events that combine education and action.

Importantly, leadership in this effort has been largely taken on by a core group of dedicated volunteers who are tremendously appreciated for those efforts.  
  
Two very relevant highlights this past year in these areas within the parks and recreation system and programs are the establishment of a butterfly garden at the Harriet Alexander Nature Center and the hosting of bee and pollinator friendly gardening workshops and a bee nest building program.  
  
Public works involvement in this area can be highlighted by a couple of park-related efforts.  First, the Upper Villa Park Stormwater Reuse System has been put into operation, diverting nearly 80% of possible area stormwater flows into that new system, providing 2.5 million cubic feet of stormwater volume reduction.  The collected water is re-used for irrigation, saving on the need to use City water for that purpose.  
  
In addition, the new recycling contract that begins in 2017 includes expansion of recycling into City parks, providing a key link in that effort to reduce waste streams, and one that is especially relevant in our natural areas of the city.  
  
One key area of maintenance of our natural resources, although certainly one that is not without controversy, is the management of the wildlife populations in the city.  Roseville instituted a wildlife feeding ban and held a sharpshooter deer herd reduction in order to more closely align the local deer population with the natural habitat that is available.  While this effort has received headlines for seeming to pit deer lovers against gardeners, an important aspect behind council support has been the management of the herd size for the benefit of the animals themselves.

**Physically & Mentally Active and Healthy**

As might be expected, much of the work in this area also falls within the Parks & Recreation realm.   
  
One exciting project that will soon be bearing fruit, so to speak, is a new orchard that was planted at the Muriel Sahlin Arboretum last spring.  This was spearheaded by The Food Group, a local non-profit that works to feed those in hunger in our communities as part of their “Fruits of the City” program.

The fruits harvested from the orchard will go to food shelves, and volunteers tend the trees and harvest the fruit.  The initial planting was generously supported by Wells Fargo Bank, including financial support and also volunteer labor on a very cold, wet weekend.  
  
Other key efforts to promote active and healthy lifestyles included two strategic park land acquisitions.  
  
The City in 2016 initiated acquisition of property at the southeast corner of County Road B and Cleveland Avenue as a “down payment” on our Park Renewal Program commitment to add parkland to serve southwest Roseville.  This site will provide park amenities to nearby residents, including at the Midland Grove condominiums and Ferriswood Townhomes.  
  
A second property is also being acquired – this one at 1716 Marion Street near Rice Street and Larpenteur Avenue.  This site offers the opportunity for unique partnerships with grant funders and service providers to not only provide needed recreational amenities for the nearby apartment complexes, but also to bring services to the many Karen refugees who live in that area and don’t have access to transportation to get to service providers.  
  
The City anticipates extensive public input processes beginning this spring to plan both of those parks.  It will be exciting to see what becomes the vision for those sites that are essentially blank canvases right now.  Our Park & Rec department’s long-standing neighborhood park planning process is one of the foundational examples of what we strive for as community engagement in Roseville.  
  
Another public input process related to the park system and active and healthy living is wrapping up this spring with the engagement of a firm to develop design concepts to build upon the work of the Cedarholm Golf Clubhouse advisory committee.  Additional public input is being sought as those plans are developed in an effort to provide a multi-season, multi-function facility to serve not just our golfers but our community more broadly.

**Well-Connected**

Two-thousand Sixteen was a red-letter year with respect to connections in the Twin Lakes area.  
  
Not only was the upgrade of the 35W and County Road C/Cleveland Avenue interchange completed, but at long last Twin Lakes Parkway was connected from the interchange all the way through to Fairview Avenue. The completed Twin Lakes Parkway provides an important connection to and from the businesses and residents in the Twin Lakes area between County Road C and County Road D with the I-35W freeway.

It relieves rush hour pressures on both County Roads C and D, and especially the intersections of Fairview Avenue with Lydia Avenue and with County Road D, which are over capacity especially during the afternoon rush hour.  
  
In 2017, that project will be completed with the addition of a signal at Twin Lakes Parkway and Fairview Avenue.  
  
Additional improvements are being planned for the Lincoln Drive/Terrace Drive/County Road C2/Snelling area to the east of the Twin Lakes area, to improve traffic movements and safety there.  
  
Another key connection near that area is at County Road C and Snelling Avenue.  Just recently, the City received word of the award of Federal funding for a third northbound lane on Snelling between County Road B2 and Lydia.  Construction will occur as matching funds become available via nearby Twin Lakes redevelopment.  That third lane will allow for quicker passage of northbound evening rush hour traffic on Snelling, creating longer east-west green signals on County Road C, which will benefit both motorists and, importantly, pedestrians trying to make that crossing.

**Engaged in our Community’s Success**

There may be no better testament to how our community is engaged in its success than the level of volunteerism among our residents and businesses.  In 2016, nearly 700 individuals contributed some 14,000 hours of volunteer time to City efforts.  That doesn’t even include non-recorded time or such things as coaching or sports support in the park & recreation system.  
  
All of that data about volunteering is collected thanks to a database that was established and is managed by our volunteer coordinator, Kelly O’Brien, with the help of volunteers.

Thanks to Kelly and City staff in virtually every department, and – actually – a number of volunteers, Roseville in 2016 became the first civic entity in the United States to be Service Enterprise Certified as a volunteer supported organization.  
  
That is just one more in a history of examples of Roseville being on the leading edge of civic engagement.  
  
In 2017, two major engagement efforts will be undertaken that will have important ongoing consequences for Roseville.  These will build upon what we have learned in the past about engagement and hopefully the end products will bear out the true input of the community.  
  
One, our Comprehensive Plan update, will update the chart of the City’s course for the next ten to twenty years with respect to land use, transportation, infrastructure, and many other facets of City business that was last updated in 2008.  
  
The other, the continuation of the Rice & Larpenteur Revitalization effort begun with our partners in St. Paul, Maplewood, and Ramsey County last year, will develop the vision for that area of southeast Roseville, and the guide plan for implementation of that vision.    
  
The City has contracted with a consultant to lead the Comprehensive Plan update effort, and selection of the consultant was significantly based on their community engagement plans and expertise.  The objective is to do much of the work this year in order to meet the State mandated deadline to have the plan updated in 2018.  
  
Earlier this year, proposals were also solicited for a consultant to guide the Rice & Larpenteur efforts.  The advisory group of elected officials and staff from the 4 partners just recently met to consider selection of that consultant, and soon the process will get back underway, to build on the community meeting that was held in July of last year.  The objective is also to complete that planning process in 2017, resulting in both a vision and short, medium, and long term implementation steps to be adopted by all the partners.  
  
These are just 2 examples of larger engagement efforts, but numerous smaller efforts have been and continue to be undertaken, and we continue to learn and adapt our efforts as we go.  Key partners in that process are our citizen advisory commissioners, who have provided notable policy guidance with respect to land use notification processes, grass roots development of neighborhood associations, and outreach to under-represented groups to engage them in civic decision making.  We on the city council are tremendously grateful for our partnership with these citizen advisors, and look forward to an enhanced working relationship going forward.

**Closing Thoughts**

As usual with these state of the city remarks, I can really only scratch the surface of what we in Roseville are doing.  And of course my focus is primarily on what our City government is doing.    
  
However, I believe that the examples highlighted here can represent all of those things, great and small, that individuals and organizations across this community do every day to enhance and strengthen the state of our City.  
  
That is among the reasons that – despite the thousands of words I have spoken this morning – words really cannot adequately express my pride in calling Roseville home, and in serving this great community as your mayor.  
  
Thank you very much.