Thank you, Colin. And thanks to the Chamber for organizing this lunch.

It has truly been an honor to serve as your Mayor for the past year. I would most importantly like to thank my wife Rafia and daughters for all their love, support and understanding as I served our great city for the last eight years.

--

Earlier this month I represented Culver City at a conference in Austin, Texas, sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, where over 30 mayors from around the U.S. –and around the world-gathered to share ideas, best practices, and learn about innovation in local government.

I am proud to say that, based on my conversations with other mayors, and some of the most forward thinking ideas being shared at the conference-Culver City is at the cutting edge of cities around the country, in terms of what we have been able to accomplish, and what we plan to accomplish going forward.

The Chamber has been and continues to be a partner in this progress. The Chamber worked positively with businesses to support roll-out of the City's Culver Connect fiber project, which will provide the infrastructure necessary to support our businesses' high bandwidth data demands and service requirements.

Construction of the Culver Connect Fiber network backbone, which began in 2016, is now 90% complete, within the approved budget, and will soon be delivering high speed broadband to businesses and schools throughout the community. Its 21 miles of underground fiber is designed for geographic diversity, security and redundancy.

The City has also this year begun a Smart Cities Initiative, which will identify strategies to leverage the City's fiber infrastructure investment for municipal purposes, as well as provide a "Technology Roadmap" to guide strategic deployments of technology in the future.

--

During the past year, we have greatly expanded the use of social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Nextdoor to engage with our residents in new ways.

Our Facebook "reach" quintupled from under 10,000 to over 50,000 individuals a month in the last year, and our number of Twitter "impressions" more than doubled from under 30,000 to nearly 80,000 a month.

The "State of the City" video which was shown earlier in the program, was posted to Facebook on February 1st and has been viewed over 17,000 times.

What does this mean, beyond seeing more of me in your Facebook feed? It means we as a City organization are finding new ways to connect to our residents and businesses, take stock of your priorities, gather your suggestions, include you in decision making, provide better customer service, and overall transparency.

Don't just take my word for it. Culver City's website was recently recognized with a Digital Innovation Award for "Best in Citizen Engagement". Hats off to Michele Williams and her team at the City's IT Department.

--

And we don't stop at just engaging digitally.

During the past year we've held economic cluster meetings with automotive, tech, media, retail, and hospitality stakeholders, where business leaders have an opportunity to engage with City staff, ask questions, and make suggestions.

It is in part this close relationship between the business community and the City that continues to draw businesses to Culver City. Earlier this year we were excited to announce that Apple, who already has a major presence in Culver City, is expanding its investment in our community with the leasing of 128,000 square feet on Washington Boulevard in the TOD District.

This follows closely behind our announcement in October that Amazon Studios is moving-from Santa Monica, by the way---to Culver Studios, which will be its new home. Of course, the folks at Sony Pictures Entertainment have always been trendsetters, and Sony's long partnership with the City sets a high-bar for other entertainment companies moving forward.

These businesses bring jobs, generate tax revenue and generate economic activity that benefit the entire community-including our many small businesses.

--

We are fortunate as a City to have been able to partner with some of these local small businesses on programs that benefit our City employees, as well as the businesses themselves.

For example, CycleBar offers two free rides per month to City employees, and Goda Yoga offers discounted classes that are well-attended by City employees.

--

Want more proof that the City is listening to the Community and meeting their needs? Look no further to the plethora of development projects that began last year. We broke ground on:

• Culver Steps, in the heart of our downtown.

• Ivy Station, a new landmark in our Transit Oriented District.

• The Baldwin Project, a mixed-use project on West Washington Blvd., and

• Culver City Public Market, at the corner of Centinela and Washington, a place to explore a number of small artisanal culinary purveyors that will satisfy all our inner foodie desires.

--

This year we launched a Green Business Certification Program to assist Culver City businesses to be designated as a Certified Sustainable Business. The Chamber has always been a strong advocate for sustainability and was a partner in this program as well. Certified Sustainable Businesses are those that maintain sustainable business practices that reduce water consumption, divert waste, reduce pollution, and ensure fair treatment of employees. I was proud to participate last month in the First Annual Culver City Sustainable Business Awards Ceremony, where we certified the first twelve businesses in the program.

--

Our partnerships extend not only to the business community, but to non-profits and the arts.

This past year, we welcomed the grand opening of the Wende Museum of Cold War History, who have completely transformed the City's Armory facility into a world class destination. I have to give a big shout out to Justin Jampol, the visionary man behind this museum and also a resident of Culver City

Truly, the City has a symbiotic relationship with our local businesses and non-profits, and they have been an essential part of helping us do our best work at City Hall.

And speaking of our best work, I am proud of the progress my Council colleagues and I have made during the past year in pursuit of our City Council's goals, as identified in our Strategic Plan, to:

• Increase Civic Engagement

• Enhance the Restoration and Utilization of Ballona Creek

• Improve Transportation and Circulation

• Promote Workforce Diversity and Development

• Identify New Revenue Sources to Maintain Financial Stability

--

The last goal, identifying new revenue sources, was one of my main focuses during the past year.

I am proud of the work we did on the City's Marijuana Task Force to develop the City's cannabis policy, including an ordinance approved by City Council in December and subsequent policies that balance community concerns with the potential for economic development and growth, and tax revenues.

--

With our goals guiding us, the City has a lot to be proud of during the past year.

We completed impactful projects:

• Replacing the outdated play equipment at the Veterans Memorial Park Playground.

• Rehabilitating the Senior Center Courtyard.

• Installing a new digital projection system for residents, businesses and visitors at Veteran's Auditorium, with the assistance of Sony Pictures Entertainment, as well as the Chamber.

• Installing new automated parking equipment in all City parking structures, which will decrease risk and improve the experience for visitors.

---

We are getting greener:

• Through ongoing implementation of energy efficiency projects and adoption of City policies over the last several years, the City has reduced its energy use by 26% compared to 2013 and achieved the highest level status in SCE's Energy Leadership Program.

• We completed construction of a storm storage and diversion system at the Culver City Transfer Station, which will allow us to capture first flush stormwater discharges from the site, improving local water quality.

• Working with Metro and the City of Los Angeles, we are ready to launch a new Bike Share system this fall.

• The City participated in environmentally focused events by providing free bus rides on Dump the Pump Day and sponsoring a Bike to Work Pit Stop on Bike to Work Day.

• We joined the Clean Power Alliance, a group of cities throughout Los Angeles County that have combined to provide cleaner energy for our residents-reducing our impact on global warming.

--

Through it all, our City Finances remain much stronger than those of our peer cities.

This year we completed refinancing of all old Redevelopment Agency bonds, providing ongoing savings through 2028 that will benefit both the City and Culver City Unified School District.

And we again received the Government Finance Officers Association awards for both Culver City's Annual Budget document and financial statements. A big thank you goes out to Jeff Muir and his team at our finance dept.

--

We've had a lot of success during the past year, but as for all cities, serious challenges remain.

Take homelessness, and the availability of affordable housing, for example.

This year, we transferred $3.1 million in property to Habitat for Humanity for the creation of 10 workforce and affordable housing units. Construction is set to begin soon, right here on Globe Avenue in Culver City.

But as we learned in a recent presentation to City Council by our Housing Division, it is going to take significant time and investment to add the additional units of affordable housing we so sorely need.

We are continuing to standup for our community in the face of increased impacts from LAX, by retaining a federal advocacy firm to advance the City's goals as they relate to overflight noise and other issues relating to Nextgen.

I have full confidence that my colleagues remaining on the City Council-as well as our dedicated City Staff-are up for the challenge of tackling these and other major issues in the coming years.

--

Despite the challenges ahead of us, we strive hard to retain the small town community character, unique traditions, and inclusive feel that makes us Culver City. There are many forces working to take this away from us and we must come together as a community and overcome this.

This year' annual Culver City Car Show, organized in conjunction with the Culver City Exchange Club, was held at Veterans Memorial Park. This was the first time in the Car Show's 14-year history that it was relocated from downtown Culver City. Mark your calendars for Saturday May 12th at Vets Park as I know my sisters and brothers at the Exchange Club will put on another wild show.

Last Spring, the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Commission hosted a well-attended Community Conversation on "Growing up Intercultural in Culver City: A Student-Based Conversation on Race and Culture".

The City partnered with the School District for a series of student safety assemblies, and field trips at Transportation facilities.

I should also mention that the Chamber and our local businesses are also strong supporters of our Culver City Unified schools. The Chamber supported the school bond, and it awards an annual scholarship to a high school graduating senior, and works with many members to provide Backpacks with food and school supplies to local kids who need them through the " Backpacks for Kids Program"

The Culver City Disability Advisory Committee and Disability Services Program was awarded a 2016 Congressional Recognition of Excellence Award, acknowledging the City's excellent use of grant funds.

For the first time ever, this year we produced inclusiveness signs for local businesses to display in their windows, highlighting Culver City as a City of Kindness. It is needed now more than ever, and I'm proud of former Mayor [Jim Clarke](http://www.culvercityobserver.com/search/Jim_Clarke) bringing this program to our city and my wife Rafia running with it.

And speaking of powerful women, I hope that everyone here also had a chance to attend the Chamber's Women In Business Leadership Awards Luncheon in October. It brought together over 200 people to recognize excellence achieved by women in our business community. We are all looking forward to the event again next fall.

We've truly had a lot to celebrate this year. We celebrated Culver City's 100th year with a Centennial Birthday Party in the Park, partnering with the Historical Society for historical tours, and had Closing Ceremonies at City Hall which coincided with our Sister City starting a new relationship with the town of Capo De Orlando. Way to go Sister City Committee!

--

So here it is, eight years later and I'm down to only 40 days more serving as your Mayor.

It has been an amazing ride since I was first appointed to the Park and Recreation Commission back in 2000. That commission had Alex Alexander, Chip Netzel and Jerry Chabola on it. I am struggling to remember who the fifth commissioner was, guess I really am getting old, Jerry Chabola, do you remember? LOL

I have been fortunate to learn much at this job and appreciate the support I received from the community that elected me twice. That community consists of residents and businesses, and many that own the businesses also reside here! WE are all part of the community and don't let anyone tell you otherwise!

We are at a moment of divisiveness not only throughout our country, but right here in our Mayberry...the place we call Culver City. I, for one, have been feeling a profound sense of sadness and anger as so many attempt to put a wedge in our community that separates people in a way that crosses political lines, and is just outright mean and nasty. All of us from both sides of the political arena need to stand up loud and clear and say enough of this bull shit, Culver City is better than this!

We have always been a politically diverse city, but although the rise of social media has been a great blessing, it has also been a double edged sword that has been particularly painful for those of us, and our families, in and outside the political arena.

I came into this office with a myopic vision that I could make everyone happy with my decisions. I thought the people who were not happy with those decisions would eventually come around when they saw my decisions were ones that improved our city and quality of life.

The reality is: some of my decisions were not always the best for our City. Many of the people that were not happy with my decisions at first, never did come around to becoming happy with my decisions, as I had hoped.

The fact is, some people who disagreed with me on one issue, I found agreed with me on many other issues. I encourage my colleagues that serve, and our candidates running for office, to be open to dialogue and friendship with those who have a divergent opinions, and encourage those around us to do the same.

People tend to thank me and my council colleagues for our service to the community. We have accomplished a lot, but none of it could have happened without the help and support of our great city employees. They make us elected's look great on a daily basis.

I will miss the relationships and camaraderie with many of you that I have gotten to know over the years and I look forward to continuing our friendships.

It has been a tough year. We lost many who gave their all to make our community a better place:

Scott Wyatt

Madeline Ehrlich

Margaret Lindgren

Vince Motyl

MaryAnn Fernandez, and

Mim Shapiro.

All were dedicated community members from different ends of the political spectrum, but the one big thing they had in common was their love for Culver City!

Of course we also lost Steve Rose: the face of this Chamber and Culver City for many decades, and whose shoes will never be filled.

[Jim Clarke](http://www.culvercityobserver.com/search/Jim_Clarke) had a great idea last year. He came up with the "Citizen of the Year" award, given by the Mayor. Last year, the awardee was John Riordan.

I am proud to continue this tradition, but this year I will rename the award: the "Steve Rose Citizen of the Year".

My pick is a person that is quiet, dedicated, and determined. He has, through many decades, always been there for our great city: including volunteer work on:

• The Exchange Club

• The Elks

• The Soroptimists

• The Historical Society,

• The Parks Commission.

• He also was on the board of the YMCA, and organized Culver City's first Youth Baseball league.

The 2018 winner of the "Steve Rose Citizen of the Year" award goes to none other than that "little flower," AKA, Earl Eskridge.

And so I end today with a big thank you to all of you here today and all the other members of our community who could not join us today. I say to you we are fortunate to live in Culver City, look forward , work with others regardless if you agree or disagree, find that common ground of love for our city, don't rest on your laurels and get involved to make our city the best It can be.