Good afternoon, everyone.  I want to start off by thanking Lakeside Church for providing this wonderful facility for today’s event.  I want to extend a personal thank you to Pastor Brad Franklin and his outstanding team for being such great, consistent, and inspirational partners to us in this community for so many years.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for taking time out of your day to listen and learn more about the community you live, work or play in.

There is an old French proverb – the more things change, the more they stay the same.  I want to say that right here at the beginning of my remarks and ask you to think about that phrase, because I’m going to return to that later on.

Let me start off with some good old-fashioned bragging that we can all share in.  I’m proud that Folsom has been named:

We are among the top 100 safest cities in America  
The 33rd wealthiest city in America  
The 23rd Best Beach Town in the nation (yes, lakes do matter)  
The 17th best place to live in the nation  
The 5th best place to live in California  
and   
The #1 best place in California to raise a family

Our economy is strong and growing:

Home sale prices are up 6.7% over last year.  
The average price of a home is more than $500,000 for the first time.  
Employment in the City is over 35,000 jobs for the first time.  
Unemployment is 2.4%-- the lowest in the region.  
Assessed value of all property is $12.8 billion, up 2.3% over last year.  
Sales tax is up 7.0% for the year.  
New business licenses are up 8.7% over the previous year.  
  
It’s important to understand it’s not by chance that Folsom is regularly recognized for a high quality of life.  We owe today’s accolades to our great staff and my colleagues on the Folsom City Council.  But we also owe a debt of gratitude to those who have served this community over the last century.  Folsom would not be where it is today without the vision of past leaders, community volunteers and public servants.

Folsom was built—and continues to operate—on innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit.  As a railroad hub and a gold rush town, our community’s pioneers were good stewards of the land—and advocates for local business and opportunity. The magic of our city is, and always has been, a place where residents and businesses alike can find opportunity and prosper. This spirit sets us apart from so many places in the region, and so many cities in this country.

From our safe, well-maintained neighborhoods, to our recreational trails, award-winning schools, quality parks, and dining and shopping opportunities, I hope you share my deep sense of pride in how Folsom has evolved. It’s not by accident or coincidence that this award-winning city has emerged.  The City we know today reflects decades of careful, deliberate and strategic planning and action.

In my 23 years on the Council, we’ve accomplished so much, and we’ve done it carefully, thoughtfully and deliberatively.  We’ve built two bridges.  We’ve welcomed Intel, Dignity Health, Kaiser, Kikkoman and Gekkeikan and countless others to town.  We’ve opened an Aquatics Center, a Sports Complex, a beautiful new library building, and the Harris Center. We are home to a senior center, an art gallery, a Zoo Sanctuary and even a symphony.  We’ve spent literally decades carefully plotting out the developments that we know today and the ones we will know tomorrow.  This includes Empire Ranch, the Parkway, Broadstone, Lexington Hills, American River North and the area that is just beginning south of Highway 50.

But just like those early pioneers, we never rest on our laurels.  We’re always looking five, ten, fifteen, fifty years ahead.  And that’s exactly why we have the quality of life we enjoy today.  Today, in 2018, we are merely reaping what we have sowed while thoughtfully planning for the future generations who will call Folsom home.

**Quality of Life**  
So everyone throws out the term “quality of life,” but what does that really look and feel like?  I will give you just a few examples.

Safe, well-maintained communities  
High quality jobs close to home  
Thoughtfully planned neighborhoods and transportation infrastructure   
Diverse recreational amenities   
Outstanding schools   
Arts and cultural  opportunities  
A strong, connected and supportive community

I’m sure we can all add to this list, as quality of life means something different to everyone.

**Public Safety**  
This City Council, and many in the past, continues to make public safety our number one priority.

I’m pleased to announce that construction is well underway for a new fire station in Empire Ranch, which will open in the fall of 2018.  Located at 2139 Ritchie Street at Empire Ranch Road, Station 39 will further support the lifesaving work of the Folsom Fire Department and position our highly trained first responders where they can quickly and effectively respond when they are needed most.  This will be the City’s fifth fire station.

In October, 10 firefighter-paramedic recruits graduated from the Folsom Fire Academy and joined the team in preparation for Fire Station 39 and the future growth of the City of Folsom.

Driven by our team of dedicated dispatchers, the Folsom Police Department has implemented Project Lifesaver.  This is a nationally recognized program that provides trackable bracelets to people at high risk of becoming missing persons (e.g. people suffering from autism, Alzheimer’s disease, etc.).  This system enables our first responders to quickly locate missing people that are wearing the bracelet that may be in need of help.

The Police Department is implementing a new 911 phone system which will allow us to accept texts to 911.

If you want to get involved in enhancing public safety in your own community, I encourage you to contact our police department to be part of – or start -- a neighborhood watch program. You can also volunteer through our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and Citizens Assisting Public Safety (CAPS) programs to serve both our fire and police departments.

**Transportation/Traffic**

Transportation planning plays a critical role in Folsom’s high quality of life.  Well planned and safe roads benefit the entire city—from neighborhoods to our business community.

The City’s Public Works Department manages Folsom’s network of streets, signals, sidewalks, and off-street trails. We are currently working to address traffic safety and operations at multiple locations throughout Folsom.  And I’ll tell you what, I’d much rather spend a few minutes in traffic caused by our spectacular amenities and job centers than deal with the hassles you face in other jurisdictions. We want this bustle and vibrancy because it means jobs. It means quality shopping and local restaurants. It means cultural and educational opportunities.

Several capital improvement projects are expected on East Bidwell Street in the coming year.  The road will be widened by one lane south of Creekside Drive, and additional improvements will be made at the intersection of East Bidwell and Clarksville and East Bidwell at Iron Point to reduce congestion and improve vehicle flow along one of the City’s busiest streets.

The Orangevale Avenue Bridge Rehabilitation Project was recently completed. A century-old bridge that connects Folsom and Orangevale officially reopened to motorists, cyclists and pedestrians after a year-long rehabilitation and historical preservation project.

In 2018, we will complete the Rainbow Bridge Rehabilitation Project.  The Rainbow Bridge, which spans the American River at Greenback Lane, has provided a major connection for businesses and residents on both sides of Lake Natoma for nearly 100 years. The rehabilitation project will extend the lifespan of the historic bridge and provide a smoother and safer drive for motorists.

Construction will begin in spring of this year to complete the widening of Green Valley Road between East Natoma Street and the El Dorado County line, and add Class 2 bike lanes from East Natoma Street to Sophia Parkway.

Folsom implemented the “Connect Card,” which is a cashless, electronic fare card that allows riders to transfer seamlessly between nine regional transit systems.  It also allows riders to purchase fares and manage their accounts online.

The Capital Southeast Connector is a planned 35-mile long expressway linking Elk Grove, Rancho Cordova, Folsom and El Dorado Hills along the current White Rock Road and Grant Line Road alignments.  The Folsom section of the Connector has been cleared environmentally and is currently in final design.  We have received funding to construct a new intersection of East Bidwell Street (formerly Scott Road) at White Rock Road, a critical component of the project.  Construction is anticipated to start in 2019 and will result in a four-lane intersection with a traffic signal and improved roadway drainage.  When the entire Folsom section is completed, White Rock Road will be transformed from a two-lane road to a four-lane expressway with wider lanes and shoulders, and a separated bike trail.

**Trails/Johnny Cash**  
We completed the Johnny Cash Trail and raised over $300,000 for the future Johnny Cash Trail Art Experience, which will include eight larger-than-life public art pieces, a three-acre park honoring the “Man in Black,” and 2.5 miles of paved Class 1 trails.  We look forward to unveiling the first artwork of the Johnny Cash Trail Art Experience, anticipated sometime this summer.   
We completed the Lake Natoma Waterfront Trail in the Historic District, providing a pedestrian, and ADA accessible waterfront trail in the heart of Folsom.  
  
Also this year, we will begin construction of two new trail components – a new class 4 trail parallel to Leidesdorff Street in the Historic District that will increase the ease and safety of riding a loop around Lake Natoma.  The Natoma Street undercrossing will connect the Oak Parkway Trail with the Johnny Cash Trail just east of Fargo Way.

**Arts and Culture**  
Construction is well underway at Econome Family Park located at the corner of Blue Ravine and Parkway – opening in spring of this year.  The park will feature sports fields, tennis courts, bocce ball courts, a walking circuit, picnic areas, and two play areas.

The Broder Family Homestead Park will be a unique historical and ranching-themed park built directly adjacent to McFarland Park in the Empire Ranch Community. Projected opening is late this year.   
  
We’ll welcome back the prestigious Amgen Tour of California in May, and we host the Stage 6 Start this time around.  This exciting event continues to put Folsom on an international media stage.  
  
Our library is the busiest in the region in terms of circulation, with the children’s collection continuing to be the most heavily used. We welcomed thousands more to our library last year, due in part to increases in both our e-books and regular collection.   
The library has clearly adapted to trends and evolved into a gathering place for the community rather than just a quiet place full of bookshelves.   
  
Visitors can now check out board games and interactive educational kits and try their hand at virtual reality and 3D printing.    
  
This year, we are launching a new initiative to bring library cards to every kindergartner in Folsom to foster an early love of reading and libraries.

**Planning for the Future**

**South of 50**

Work began last spring on an 18-month schedule of infrastructure and road improvements south of Highway 50 in the Folsom Plan Area, also known as Folsom Ranch — 3,520 acres annexed into the City of Folsom in 2012.  This planning process started in 1994 and will take realistically another 30 to 40 years before completion.

We are very mindful – as we have been for the decades some of us have been involved – that development south of Highway 50 must be a positive reflection of who we are as a city.  You have my personal assurance that this development will reflect the same prudent planning and commitment to high standards that are the hallmarks of the Folsom of today.

We are tracking this important development every single day.  In fact, we received a comprehensive update at our City Council meeting just a few days ago. The first homes are expected to be completed at Folsom Ranch (the portion of the site west of Placerville Road) in 2018 and at Russell Ranch (east of Placerville Road to the county line) in 2019.

**General Plan**  
We have been in the midst of updating our General Plan, a blueprint for Folsom’s long-term future growth over the next 30 years. I’d like to thank the countless residents and stakeholders who contributed their input throughout this process.

New demographic and social trends are reshaping how communities develop, and influence how we plan for the future.  By updating our plan, we can ensure the City’s goals, policies and programs are timely and flexible for changes occurring in Folsom today and in the future.

While the draft General Plan looks to the future, it celebrates and honors the past by preserving and enhancing our historical resources.    
  
**Schools**  
I regularly hear from residents who say they chose to call Folsom home because it’s a great place to raise kids.  And we are consistently rated as one of the best places in California for families.  Folsom’s schools play a major role in the success of our local economy and community.    
   
Folsom schools are consistently recognized as among the highest achieving in the region, and are regularly ranked statewide and nationally.

Our Folsom High football squad, coached by Kris Richardson, secured another state title.

Longtime Folsom High music director Curtis Gaesser has been nominated for a GRAMMY Educator of the Year award - only one of 10 finalists in the entire country - for his contributions to fostering student talent.

We welcomed a new Superintendent to our community, Dr. Sarah Koligian, who has made an immediate impact through her outreach to families, teachers, and community members.

Our school district is finalizing the designs for state-of-the art new schools for our new residents South of 50. These schools will be some of the most innovative educational environments in the region once completed in the coming years.

You may have seen one of our own fifth-graders on the national news earlier this year: Theodore Judah’s Nathan Zhang, an amazing piano virtuoso who gives up his recess time to serenade students in the lunchroom.

Dale Waldo, a popular science teacher at Folsom Middle School, won $20,000 after he was selected as an All-Star Teacher by viewers of NBC Sports Bay Area.

We dedicated a beautiful new stadium at Vista del Lago High School, where their team had an incredible season and playoff berth as well.

Folsom Middle School seventh grader Lea Han placed fourth in the nation, out of 100 other finalists, in last summer’s National History Day.

Folsom High School’s computer science academic team recently competed for its second year in the CyberPatriot National Youth Cyber Defense Competition and brought home three Platinums and two Golds.

Both Vista del Lago and Folsom High once again earned silver medals in U.S. News and World Report’s annual Best High Schools in the Nation rankings.

The state named Vista del Lago a Gold Ribbon School for creating a positive school learning environment and for providing schoolwide exposure to relevant and important issues

Folsom Lake College is one of the fastest growing, highest performing community colleges in the nation. This outstanding college is now led by President Whitney Yamamura, who we are so pleased to welcome to our community.

Every year we host a City Works Day to introduce school children and their families to the City of Folsom. This free, popular annual event attracts hundreds and is designed to educate the community about the City’s many programs and services.  This year, it will be held on May 16th.

**Engagement**  
Folsom is a city that embraces community engagement and access to information.  It is important to us that we communicate early, often, and easily.  We do our best to translate the complex and complicated into something that is meaningful for everyone.  We want you to understand why something is important to you, your family, your neighbors, your community.  And we understand that not everyone has the time to pore over spreadsheets or hundreds of pages of reports.

The City reaches out often and uses new technology to keep residents informed and engaged. We’re giving residents the ability to stay up-to-speed on City programs, activities, events, and services through our newsletters, social media, email and text alerts, through our website and outreach with local media. Get real-time, critical information through our emergency notification system Nixle and submit and track your service requests through our app “See Click Fix Folsom.” Connect with us on our numerous social media pages and stay informed about the week’s events with our weekly e-news digest.  On any given month, our City information is seen hundreds of thousands of times. If you haven’t done so already, pull out your phones today and like us on Facebook.

There is only one official source of accurate, factual data and information; that is the City of Folsom.

**Engaged Community/Partnerships**  
Before I close, I wanted to take just a few moments to talk about our amazing, engaged community and our critical partnerships.

Thank you to Folsom Lake College and Folsom-Cordova Unified School District for educating tomorrow’s leaders in outstanding fashion.

Thank you to our host for today – the Folsom Chamber of Commerce– for dedicating every day to retaining our existing, highly successful business community and attracting new ones.  Our successful partnership has yielded productive results.

In just this year alone, the Folsom Economic Development Corporation secured two new company locations, nine corporate expansions and 1,115 direct jobs. The Partnership was instrumental in bringing or facilitating expansions for VoxPro, PowerSchool, Conference Direct, Tax Audit, Toshiba, Stem Express, SAFE Credit Union, Micron, Johnson Controls, Sierra Nevada, Agile Global Solutions, Inductive Automation and others to town, as well as Out of Bounds Brewery and Red Bus Brewery to name just a few. I’m also very pleased to announce that we will soon welcome Willamette Valley Vineyards to Folsom.

Two new hotels have opened in the last two years, bringing the hotel room count to close to 1,000 rooms, thanks to the efforts of the Folsom Tourism Bureau.  Our occupancy rate continues to hover around 70 to 80 percent, which is incredible.

The Greater Folsom Partnership is constantly seeking out new and fun ways to market our community.

And most importantly, thank you to our community volunteers.  One of the things that make Folsom such a remarkable community is the spirit of volunteerism and dedication to service.

Folsom’s community members regularly donate their time, talents, and financial resources to enhance this special place we call home.  And they teach their children to do so.  We have all witnessed time and time again how the community lines up to help when there is a need.  I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in this room who has served our community.  I’d have you stand to be recognized, but it would probably leave every chair in this room empty.

We’ve come together as a community to address the very tough issues of homelessness. In spite of a growing economy and shrinking unemployment levels, homelessness in the Sacramento region, and Folsom, continues to be a concern.  For the first time, the faith based, government and nonprofit sectors are all coordinating to compassionately tackle this complex problem.

Our efforts today are two-pronged: provide compassionate and sustainable help to homeless individuals, while preventing and discouraging homelessness in Folsom.

We recently partnered with the Sacramento County Health Department to add a Mobile Crisis Support Team Counselor to our patrol efforts-- trained in helping citizens suffering from mental illness.

We also partnered with Sacramento Self Help Housing in an effort to provide long-term problem solving resources to those living in our homeless population.  Their Navigator works with our Community Crime Suppression Unit to connect directly with our homeless population here in Folsom and help them work through the complicated services available that can be brought to bear for help, housing, jobs, and ultimately, long-term self-sustainability.

Many organizations are assisting proactively and cooperatively in this multi-faceted, outreach-based, ‘housing first’ approach to address chronic homelessness, including the City of Folsom, the County of Sacramento, the faith-based community, Twin Lakes Food Bank, Powerhouse Ministries, Sacramento Steps Forward, Sacramento Self Help Housing, and the new nonprofit HART (Homeless Assistance Resource Team) of Folsom. If you are interested in helping the homeless in our community, I encourage you to reach out to the HART of Folsom at [www.hartoffolsom.org](http://www.hartoffolsom.org/).

Volunteerism can be found every hour and every day in Folsom.  We see it perhaps most powerfully on Community Service Day.  On Saturday, September 15, the Folsom community is coming together again for the fifth annual Community Service Day—Folsom’s largest day of service and volunteerism.  This is my favorite event, as it unites Folsom with a common mission—to improve the lives of others and give back to the community.  Learn how to get involved at [www.folsomcommunityservice.org](http://www.folsomcommunityservice.org/).

**Closing**  
A high quality community requires outstanding city services and strong, supportive leaders. We in Folsom are the beneficiaries of an unparalleled and exceptional level of City service, and I know you share my gratitude.

I’m very proud of our City’s executive team, and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their expertise and service.  We had two new hires to this team last year-- Felipe Rodriguez as the new Fire Chief and Pam Johns as Folsom’s Community Development Director.

City of Folsom staff is, in my opinion, not only the best in the region, but I have to say the best in the nation.  As you’re out and about in our community, please say thank you to a City staff member—whether that be a park aide, a solid waste truck driver, a building inspector, or a first responder.

I’d also like to thank my colleagues on the City Council, past and current, who are dedicated to navigating today’s challenges and setting the stage for tomorrow.  We are all different, and we come from different places, but we are united in putting Folsom first.

City Council is a hard job.  It is not just a title; it is not about ourselves.  It is about Folsom – always will be and always should be.

Dedication, experience, longevity, consistency and collaboration have allowed this City Council and Councils of the past to guide, manage and plan Folsom into being the best city it is!  In my book, we are number one in the nation, not number 17!

Remember the proverb I asked you to remember at the beginning of my speech?   That the more things change, the more they stay the same?

We may no longer be a one stoplight town.  We may have dozens of parks and miles of trails.  We may have just a few more stores and restaurants to choose from.  We may have highly successful major corporations and specialty small businesses calling Folsom home.  Our population may have increased.  We may have more amenities here than our ranching and goldmining forefathers and foremothers could have ever even contemplated.

But, you know what?  We remain committed to an important “sameness.”  Today as yesterday.  New communities as historic ones.  North of 50 as South of 50.  We remain committed to keeping Folsom very, very special. We remain committed to meeting or exceeding Folsom’s exceptionally high standards. Folsom is precious and we treasure and covet it as we would a priceless gem.  Because that’s exactly what Folsom is – a gem.

As a longtime resident and councilmember, I know firsthand the strength of Folsom as a community. It’s that tight-knit sense of community that continues to make Folsom a great place to call home.

Ladies and gentlemen, I can’t express enough to you in words what an honor it is to serve as the Mayor of this great city.  Thank you.