IMPERIAL BEACH STATE OF THE CITY 2018

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Mayor of Imperial Beach

Let’s be frank-2017 was a tough year for Imperial Beach, but despite our challenges, our awesome, resilient, leaderful, friendly and cool little beach town continued the positive progress to improve the quality of life for all of our residents, in every corner of our city.   
  
So, tonight I would like to discuss five areas of achievement in 2017 that were made possible thanks to the work of our united IB team composed of our results-driven city council, our incredible action-oriented city staff, and our residents, as well as our supportive businesses and government partners.   
  
1. Community Events and Activities:  
  
In 2017, we continued our partnerships to host 46 fun and family friendly events   
  
These events included: an incredibly successful Ironman 70.3 Superfrog; an inspiring Symphony by the Sea; an ultra-fun Sun and Sea Festival; the Fall Car Show; and the Proving Ground Team Fit cross-fit competition. And we made arrangements to host the San Diego Yoga Festival in March of this year for the first time ever.   
  
These events and activities help to promote the best of Imperial beach, helping to attract tourists as well as support local businesses.   
  
2. New Businesses and Economic Development   
  
We continue to have more new development projects underway in our little beach town than at any other time in our city’s history.   
In fact, we processed more than 1,341 building permits in 2017, compared to 1,099 in 2016. Building and real estate activities resulted in an increase of almost $150 million in property valuation in 2017 which represents an 8.2% increase over 2016. Only Santee at 8.5% had a higher percentage growth in property valuation.   
  
Additionally, staff processed more than 3,837 business license applications including 702 new business licenses in 2017, resulting in an 8.5% increase in sales tax revenues, far outpacing just over 2% growth in the County. The opening of the Breakwater Town Center was a primary contributor to the growth in sales tax.   
  
The Breakwater Town Center has been an incredible success with businesses such as Grocery Outlet, Baskin & Robins, Chipotles, Five Guys, Jersey Mikes, Poke 123, Starbucks, and other great eateries that serve our residents.   
  
I especially love to see everyone hunting for incredible deals at Grocery Outlet—which has become our new Town Square where I run into neighbors and residents from all over town - in between looking for bargains and things like Moringa powder, apparently a superfood I never knew I needed.  
  
The Bikeway Village opened with Trident Coffee offering up delicious coldbrew while Two Wheels Cycling Boutique has been an instant smash, providing a full range of bicycles and electric two-wheel vehicles. I look forward to the Coronado Brewery opening up there later this year.  
  
I love to see how jam packed our bayfront destination is on the weekends, attracting cyclists, bird watchers and endurance athletes from around our community and the region.   
  
Our inviting and beautiful bayfront even attracted an unusual feathered friend – a pink flamingo from the Caribbean who has been “Kahuna.” The flurry of activity, visitors and good press about Kahuna indicates just how successful eco-tourism can be in our community.  
  
The Bayside Landing housing site on the bayfront—the largest residential development in our city’s history – is in the final stages of construction with over 200 units of market-rate housing. It has provided a new spur to the Bayshore Bikeway while increasing open space and reducing stormwater runoff into San Diego Bay.   
  
That market rate housing project illustrates the IB Way—in which we increase economic development and housing, protect our environment, and increase recreational access to our gorgeous natural wonders.   
  
I love the new Brigantine Oyster Bar—which is attracting tourists and locals alike. I am thankful to the Morton family for their investment in Imperial Beach and all the other business owners who continue to support our community.   
  
Probably the greatest example of our innovative approach to fostering new business ventures that improve the lives of our residents was our groundbreaking partnership with Limebike.   
  
We were the first city in Southern California to permit dockless bikesharing. As a result, and at no cost to taxpayers--we’ve had over a quarter of our residents use these dockless and low-costs rental bikes with over 18,000 rides.   
  
Over 50 % of the riders are high school students and transit users getting to and from bus stops.   
  
In the process, they have helped to save 415 trees, prevented 7,000 lbs. of polluting emissions from entering the atmosphere, eliminated 8,700 vehicle miles, and burned 400,000 calories along the way!  
  
3. Improving our Neighborhoods   
  
A major step in improving neighborhoods was the paving of 9 dirt alleys—that meant over a mile of dirt and dust that made life miserable and unhealthy for our residents-- was paved over with permeable concrete that also reduced storm runoff by one million gallons.   
  
We continue to make our streets safer with 17 intersections receiving enhanced crosswalks for a total of 50 improved individual street crossings.   
  
Our Public Works department also installed 2 miles of concrete sidewalks, 37 streetlights, 24 bike racks, 10 new pull up bars, and new playground equipment in Dunes and Sports Parks, and made plans for a new outdoor gym at Dunes Park.   
  
Of course, the new, beautiful county library has been an instant hit in the community, with its ocean themed murals, access to an extensive selection of books and other media, an inviting children’s section that makes me want to be a kid again, and beautiful community rooms.  
  
I am also very pleased with the beautiful design approved for a new Senior Center and our joint effort with the Sweetwater School District to identify and secure needed state funding for a new pool at Mar Vista High School.   
  
4. Transparency and Fiscal Accountability  
  
The City of Imperial Beach continues to have the highest standards of fiscal oversight, transparency and accountability.   
  
Recently the San Diego County Taxpayers Association gave Imperial Beach an “A” Rating for our debt, pension fund and expenditure management including perfect scores for our debt service as percent of revenues, long-term debt per capita, and pension cost as percent of budget revenue.   
  
That means with low debt and increasing revenues we can continue to invest in improving the quality of life for our residents.  
  
But we need to look at additional tools for increasing our revenues that can be used to continue to carry out the positive progress Imperial Beach is making.   
  
That is why our city hopefully can explore the idea of increasing our hotel taxes so visitors can contribute to our continued investment in public safety, parks and recreation and improving our neighborhoods.   
  
5. Environmental Protection and Public Safety  
  
In 2018, we will be as aggressive as possible in both the U.S. and Mexico to keep our beaches clean, as well as plan for ways to protect our homes and businesses from more frequent coastal flooding and long-term sea level rise.   
  
We are lucky to have such effective Public Safety professionals in our Fire Department, Lifeguards and Sheriffs who work together to keep residents and visitors alike safe and secure.   
  
The Fire Department responded to 2,868 calls in 2017 a 4.2% increase over 2016, and carried out 336 Fire Safety Plan checks, a 35% increase over last year.  
  
Lifeguards hosted more than 3.1 million visitors to our beach in 2017, making 502 ocean rescues, and carrying out 14,107 preventative actions.   
  
Thanks to our incredibly smart and strategic Sheriff’s Department, Imperial Beach had one of the lowest crime rates in San Diego County, and in January of this year, we had the lowest crime rate in all areas serviced by our Sheriff’s.  
  
It is very clear that as we continue to improve every corner of our city, that crime continues to drop.   
  
Can we give a round of applause to all our Public Safety Staff and our Sheriffs who risk their lives to keep us safe, along with the rest of our city staff, city council members and community partners who work together to protect and enhance our quality of life.   
  
Thank you!  
  
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While 2017 was great year for Imperial Beach, 2018 is going to be even better as we move our little beach town forward in a positive direction.   
  
I am grateful to my colleagues on the city council, our city staff, residents, and business and government partners who have made all of our success possible. This has 100% been a team effort.