Good evening and welcome to our first City Council meeting of the new year. I hope your holiday season was enjoyable and a festive time for everyone. On behalf of the City Council we’d like to wish you a happy and prosperous new year.

Looking back at the past year I am pleased to highlight the accomplishments that the City Council, Staff and the La Mesa residents can be proud of.

I am pleased to say that our biennial public opinion survey conducted last year showed 91% of the residents rated the quality of life in La Mesa excellent or good.

I hope the other 9% isn’t here tonight. (laughter)

At the beginning of the year, a permit process for medical marijuana uses required under the citizens’ approved Measure U initiative was put in place.

Staff from many departments have devoted significant time toward reviewing those applications. We expect to begin the formal consideration of those applications in the near future.

Unfortunately, a considerable amount of city time and resource has been devoted to closing 20 illegal, unpermitted marijuana dispensaries. The success is primarily due to the result of a temporary restraining order, or TRO process by the City Attorney which has allowed us to use force by the police department to enter these illegal establishments and lock them down.

This use of force occurs at the onset of litigation rather than waiting for the final court determination which can take up to two years. The Superior Court’s recent authorization of the city to use TRO process has been a game changer for the City of La Mesa and a result the City Attorney, Police Department, Fire Department, Planning Code Compliance and Public Works have worked together to swiftly shut down the illegal dispensaries and keep them shut down.

Significant progress has been made, been achieved, on La Mesa’s Climate Action Plan. Five public meetings were held in the last year to discuss and receive comments on the draft climate action plan. The Council will be asked to take action on the plan in the first quarter of this year.

Building permit activity remains strong with the number of permits issued in total construction valuation similar to the record levels of 2016. And construction began on the 113-unit Briercrest of La Mesa Assisted Living Facility located next to Briercrest Park. This project, once completed, will bring a new, consistent revenue stream to the City of La Mesa.

A 66-unit apartment complex was completed at the Crossroads shopping center on Baltimore Drive. Farmer’s Table restaurant opened in the downtown village and has been very busy since. And Chick-fil-A and Habit Burger on Parkway Drive. Evan’s Tire and Vallarta Express opened on Jackson Drive and all this new activity has been received with [positive media attention](http://www.eastcountymagazine.org/100-local-residents-camped-out-grand-opening-chick-fil-la-mesa) in La Mesa.

La Mesa adopted affordable homes bonus’ package implementation state density bonus regulations to address the problem of housing affordability.

Plans were set in motion to upgrade the parking meters in the downtown village to improve customer service, including mobile device pay and alerting ability.

Speaking of the downtown, this year’s [Shimmer event](http://www.eastcountymagazine.org/photos-week-la-mesa-shimmers) to promote dine, shop, explore La Mesa had record crowds.

La Mesa’s police department has continued to work hard on behalf of its residents. During 2017, the city’s overall crime rate went down by 27%.

The police department abandoned vehicles abatement program continues to improve neighborhoods. Almost 400 abandoned vehicles have been removed from La Mesa streets since the program’s inception.

The police department’s Facebook page ([@lamesapolicedepartment](https://www.eastcountymagazine.org/la-mesa-mayor-delivers-upbeat-state-city-address-view-full-transcripthttps://www.facebook.com/lamesapolicedepartment/?ref=hovercard)) now has 1,600 likes and the Twitter account [(@LaMesaPD](https://www.eastcountymagazine.org/la-mesa-mayor-delivers-upbeat-state-city-address-view-full-transcripthttps://twitter.com/LaMesaPD)) has 1,500 followers.

Our City prides itself on delivering quality public service and we continue to invest in the community with $8.5 million in infrastructure improvements completed in 2017. This includes Phase II of the Alvarado Trunk Sewer Channel environmental restoration, Phase I of the University Avenue median and drainage improvements, and King Street pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

In addition to our work, other utilities, mainly SDG&E and San Diego County Water Authority, have been working in/on our streets doing improvements.

The pipe realigning project on Spring Street and Baltimore Avenue will be underway until the summer of 2018. While these projects are inconvenient during the construction, it means long-term stability for the infrastructure under our streets.

La Mesa projects continue to gain recognition with the awards from the [American Public Works Association](http://www.nasland.com/about/awards), American Council of Engineering and Companies, and [La Mesa Beautiful](http://www.lamesabeautiful.org/).

Big changes are underway at [MacArthur Park](http://www.eastcountymagazine.org/search/node/macarthur park), as the transition from golf course to public open space are in process. The park has been cleaned up and natural pathways created. A new park entrance is planned for construction this year to increase access to the park from Kulken Field Little League parking lot.

The city is reviewing proposals from vendors to renovate and open and operate the former golf pro shop for other beneficial uses to the community. A study to explore further future opportunities for potential park uses and reuses is being prepared for the community center complex including MacArthur Park.

The City celebrated a grand reopening of Phase I of Collier Park during 2017 and future phases will occur as grant funding is secured. A $25,000 grant was awarded for playground equipment at Vista La Mesa Park. This new playground in this busy park is expected to be completed this year.

The city leverages its ability to increase community programming through partnerships. Last July, City of La Mesa, La Mesa Spring Valley School District, Boys and Girls Club of East County, Windsor Hills Community Church and Helix Charter High School celebrated a [groundbreaking of the new full service Boys and Girls Club](https://www.eastcountymagazine.org/la-mesa-mayor-delivers-upbeat-state-city-address-view-full-transcripthttps://www.eastcountymagazine.org/champions-headline-boys-girls-clubs-east-county-groundbreaking-la-mesa).

This partnership is a successful example of organizations working together for the benefit of the community. The new clubhouse is expected to be completed this summer. As part of the project the City secured a $2 million grant to improve traffic, pedestrian and bike circulation in and around the new facility on University Avenue.

Special thanks to the Brady family for their generous support to this exciting project. The club, and new public road, are expected to open next summer.

Despite heavy rains in early 2017, sewer spills were down 16% because of continued emphasis by public works departments on effective maintenance practices.

Continued positive claims history performance also resulted in risk management receiving $157,024 refund from our insurance liability pool.

La Mesa remains a financially stable City and again this year we successfully completed our annual audits and were issued a clean audit opinion.

The new online business license renewal system was used by 27% of La Mesa businesses last year. The purchase of new financial analysis tool was approved by the Council to help city projects and analyze financial scenarios to maintain fiscal stability.

While the city continues to invest in a Section 115 retirement trust fund, to help with long term pension obligations, we are closely monitoring the new changes approved by CalPERS board during 2017 that will significantly impact our pension cost beginning in the fiscal year of 2018-2019.

Fire resources provided mutual aid with wildfires in northern and central California and assisted with responders for hurricanes Harvey and Irma.

In La Mesa the annual weed abatement inspections were conducted with 99% compliant (free?), reducing the risk of home ignition during a fire event.

A new fire engine, number 11, was brought into service this year and to continue to improve efficiencies the department implemented a 911 call triage program, reducing the amount of emergency responses required by fire personnel 13%.

To assist in keeping our community safe during emergencies, volunteers were trained through the community emergency response CERT program, and a refresher course was held with some 100 east county CERT volunteers.

Community preparedness education continued at our annual pancake breakfast and various community events. Our community service department oversaw programs and special events that enriched youths and adults alike by offering 332 classes to residents last year and 23 camps during summer and winter break. Special events range from science learning for kids, the annual Flag Day Parade, Summer Concerts at the park, Movies in the Park and at the pool.

I can’t say enough about our residents willing to volunteer their time in the community services as evidenced by 23,832 total hours of service offered by the benefit of the community. For example, older adult volunteers contributed 600 hours to act as eyes on the street for students walking or biking to school.

Rides for Neighbors program completed 8,991 one way trips with approximately 123,000 miles driven for older adults and people with disabilities who need rides to doctor appointments and other critical appointments.

We should celebrate the progress we have made in the past year and the challenges that we overcame. We now move forward into the new year ready to take on new challenges that lay ahead and the accomplishments that they will deliver with hard work and dedication of our City Council, staff and through the support and input of our residents. Thank you very much.