

**ANNUAL STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS  
JANUARY 28, 2016  
HONOR GUARD  
PLEDGE OF ALLIGIANCE**

Greetings to all of you and welcome to the annual State of the City Address. Before I begin, I would like to recognize the elected officials who are in attendance. I'd also like to ask City Administrator Scott Lambers and all Department Heads along with other professional staff to please stand.

To paraphrase Charles Dickens, 2015 may be viewed as "the worst of times and the best of times." As for the worst of times, some of you may recall that at this time last year, the racial unrest caused by the events in Ferguson, Cleveland and New York City dominated the news waves.

At that time, it was my hope that the racial turmoil would result in much needed dialogue regarding the underlying causes that festered the strong feelings of discontent and inequality. Sadly, much more work is needed to be done.

No one would have thought that 2015 would bring a new, more violent element into the mix with ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks throughout the world and recently in San Bernardino. Now, unfortunately, inflammatory rhetoric and the application of widespread condemnation against Muslims as a whole is the order of the day. Such behavior is exactly what ISIS wants. Yes, ISIS is a perversion and needs to be totally destroyed.

But such destruction must not be at the expense of innocent individuals whose practice of the Islam faith makes them a target of discrimination and hatred. A positive approach to those Muslims who repudiate the ISIS ideology needs to be imparted at every opportunity to facilitate the elimination of radical Islamic extremists. Hopefully, by this time next year, that will be the case.

The City of Leawood's involvements with the Crescent Peace Society and a wide variety of interfaith activities are just a few illustrations of our efforts to be a very welcoming and inclusive community to all people of diverse race, religion and culture. We will remain steadfast as we look forward to the end of "the worst of times."

As for "the best of times," Leawood experienced an active year in the public safety arena, recognition of prudent fiscal management policies and numerous causes for celebration of our residents' generosity and achievements. It is this combination that resulted in Leawood receiving a number of acknowledgments from a variety of entities in recognition of being a very desirable place to both live and work.

To begin, [WalletHub.com](http://WalletHub.com) evaluated almost 1,300 cities with populations between 25,000 and 100,000 across the nation on 22 key metrics of financial and quality-of-life factors. Leawood was ranked as the fifth best city in the United States. Leawood also earned fifth place honors in the state of Kansas by AreaVibes using a Livability Score which evaluated cost of living, crime rate, employment, housing, parkland and other factors.

NerdWallet analyzed over 1,300 cities across the United States and ranked Leawood as the 31<sup>st</sup> best small city in the nation for families. The website, [OnlyInYourState.com](http://OnlyInYourState.com) identified Leawood as the third safest and most peaceful place to live in Kansas.

*The Kansas City Business Journal* conducted a comprehensive review of metropolitan cities using a 12-part formula to rate their measures of affluence, measures that drive business decision-making. In the metro area, Leawood was the second highest median household income and per capita income in the region. We were also second for adults with bachelor's degrees and third for advanced degrees.

In addition to being a safe and affluent community, the financial soundness of Leawood continued to perform in a stellar fashion. This past year, Moody's Investor Services reaffirmed the City's Aaa bond rating for the eighth year in a row for the sale of \$28.2 million in temporary notes at an interest rate of .4 percent. Our \$9.4 million in general obligation bonds earned an interest rate of 2.29 percent.

The City's mill levy was held steady for the 12<sup>th</sup> straight year while Leawood maintained its ranking as having the second lowest mill levy rate in the state of Kansas among cities of the first class.

Finally, in another gauge of the City's fiscal health, 93% of all properties realized an increase in their property appraised value this past year. During our annual budgetary proceedings, the Governing Body provides a careful and thorough analysis when deciding the best use for appraised value revenue growth. In recent years, we have been prudently reinvesting in our aging infrastructure while still ensuring that our mill levy remains flat. In 2015, these funds assisted with public works projects that totaled \$10,400,000 in Leawood costs, and were matched by \$5,000,000 in federal and Johnson County monetary aid. These fiscal spending decisions are provided for in our constitutional home rule authority, authority that we take very seriously and for which we feel great responsibility.

Now, all these honors can come with a price. In a tongue and cheek infotainment survey, the website RoadSnacks, whose mission is to use national data, analytics and a sense of humor to reveal things about where you live that your real estate agent won't tell you, evaluated the 10 snobbiest cities in Kansas and found Leawood to be *Number One*. Besides the usual metrics our other awards are based on, they also tally private schools, theaters and art galleries per capita. Leawood stood out from all of the other cities in Kansas. According to the authors, "The folks in Leawood are just about the richest and smartest, and live in just about the biggest homes in the state of Kansas." The authors go on to say, "We're not saying there's anything wrong with Leawood. In fact, if you're well-educated, well-paid, and highly cultured, good for you!"

Moving on to a more serious topic, another indicator of a vibrant community is a high level of diverse economic activity. This past year, almost 2,000 building permits were issued. The total residential construction value was approximately \$55 million, and the total commercial construction value was \$135 million, for a combined total of \$190 million.

There were numerous new entries into the Leawood business community in 2015. Some of the highlights include:

- At 103<sup>rd</sup> and State Line Road, the headquarters for the Larson Building Company was approved; and the Neenan Company Showroom and Overland Chauffeured Services opened.
- At the City's Bi-state/Centennial Park, Heartland Services, Inc., is in the process of expanding their building by 23,000 square feet; and Kristin Malfer & Associates, a real estate company, opened their doors.
- At the Camelot Court Shopping Center, Fairway Eye Center; Mr. Gyros Greek Food & Pastry; Pie Five Pizza Company; Smoothie King and Three Dog Bakery were all welcomed.
- Investment broker, Charles Schwab, completed the construction of their building at Cornerstone Shopping Center.
- At Ironhorse Center, final plans were approved for the construction of a four-story, 110,000 square-foot, 74-unit independent senior living facility overlooking the Ironhorse Golf Course.
- Other new additions at that location also include Sunflower Bank; Saint Luke's Walk-in Clinic; Red Coats, That British Store; and Ironhorse Veterinary Care.
- Information technology staffing firm, TriCom Technical Services, arrived at Leawood Corporate Manor.
- Leawood Plaza had two new tenants: Acute Spinal Rehab-ASR and the Catalyst Health Center.
- Salon 130 had its debut at Leawood Square; while Market Square added Invisible Fence Brand and Rapid Road to Reading.

- The construction activity at Mission Farms continues with phase three of Mission 106, the residential/office component consisting of a 195,000 square-foot, four-story building containing 180,000 square feet of residential, 15,000 square feet of office, a parking garage and seven townhomes. Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate office is also under construction.
- At Park Place, Hand & Land, a retailer of home and health products, as well as The Grille at Park Place restaurant opened.
- Parkway Plaza had a busy year with the opening of The Urgency Room; BluSky Salon Suites; Chabad House of Leawood; Flanery Chiropractic Clinic; Get Smarter Prep; Hoopla Studio and NextCare Urgent Care.
- Union Bank & Trust located at Pinnacle III; and RBC Wealth Management became the first tenant at the new Pinnacle V, a three-story, 70,000 square-foot office building.
- At Plaza Pointe, MAO Leawood, an orthopedic clinic, received preliminary approval for a 15,000 square-foot outpatient facility.
- The Philadelphia Insurance Company opened in the Tomahawk Creek Business Park.
- At Town Center Crossing, the much anticipated opening of L.L.Bean was finally realized along with Mitchel Gold+Bob Williams.
- Town Center Plaza had the most activity in the City's shopping centers with the approval of Restoration Hardware for a three-story, 42,000 square-foot building currently under construction; Customize IT; Athleta; Miracle Eyebrows; Pita Pit; Suit Supply; Let's Crepe; Arhaus and Yoga Six.
- Forsa Technologies, another technology staffing firm, opened along College Boulevard.
- Saint Paul School of Theology located along 135<sup>th</sup> Street on the campus of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection.
- Finally, Mainstreet received final approval for the construction of a two-story, 70,000 square-foot assisted living, rehabilitation and skilled nursing center at 143<sup>rd</sup> and Nall Avenue.

I think you will all agree that this past year was very busy for our Planning Department. Some opportunities they will be facing this year include continued refinement of our 135<sup>th</sup> Street Community Plan and infilling some of our older shopping centers.

**Moving now to public safety, in 2015, the City's Fire Department had a noteworthy achievement. Under the proactive leadership of Fire Chief Dave Williams, the department initiated a tedious self-improvement process that began in 2012 by formally entering into an accreditation program with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. This process required the department to vigorously re-evaluate its policies and protocols to ensure that they were in compliance with the best practices of current firefighting standards.**

**The process also included a forward-thinking mechanism to plan for the future needs of the Leawood Fire Department.**

**On August 26, 2015, the City Administrator and I along with members of the Fire Department leadership team appeared before the Commission where a unanimous vote for accreditation was received. As a result, the Leawood Fire Department joined an elite group of fire departments from across the nation to be accredited.**

**Out of the 30,000 recognized fire departments in the United States, Leawood is now one of only 218 agencies to hold Internationally Accredited Agency status with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International and the Center for Public Safety Excellence.**

**Chief Williams, would you and members of your staff in attendance today please stand so that we may recognize you.**

**The City's Police Department underwent significant changes in 2015 with the retirement of three members of the department representing over 111 years of law enforcement experience.**

**Kelly Ratliff was hired in 1984 as a Public Service Officer but was quickly promoted to Police Officer. Kelly established herself as a trend setter for the department by organizing the Department's annual fishing derby, becoming the Department's first police cyclist, being recognized as the Co-Officer of the Year in 1998 and winning the Department's initial "Top Gun Award." Kelly was also active with a variety of nonprofit organizations. Kelly, you are a tremendous tribute to the department; you will certainly be missed.**

**Randy Wiler started his law enforcement career 38 years ago in 1977 in Marysville, Kansas, where he served as the Police Chief. Randy developed a deep appreciation for the positive possibilities contained in Drug Abuse Resistance Education, D.A.R.E., and became a certified D.A.R.E. Instructor. In 1990, Randy decided to bring his D.A.R.E. training and enthusiasm to Leawood and imparted his knowledge over the next quarter century to thousands of school-aged children. In recognition of his efforts, Randy was chosen twice as Leawood's Police Department's Officer of the Year, City Employee of the Year, Kansas Attorney General's Officer of the Year and International D.A.R.E. Officer of the Year. Randy took the initiative to incorporate Bullying Prevention with the D.A.R.E. Program. He still serves as a Director on the Kansas Bullying Prevention Association. Randy, you have proven yourself to be a true hero for our youth.**

**Finally, Chief John Meier...John started out with the Kansas City Police Department in 1973. Three years later, he joined the Dallas Texas Police Department for a couple of years. Fortunately, he returned to the Kansas City area to work at the Lenexa Police Department where he rose to the rank of Captain. He joined the Leawood Police Department as Deputy Chief in 2005 and was named Chief in 2006. During his tenure with Leawood, John received numerous accolades for his dedication to law enforcement. Most notable of these were the "Clarence M. Kelly for Meritorious Service Award" from the FBI National Academy Associates, the "Kansas Special Olympics Hero Award" and the "Clarence M. Kelly Award" from the American Academy of Industrial Security.**

**John, over the past 10 years, the Police Department and Leawood citizens have benefitted greatly from your professional outlook, calm demeanor and your great sense of humor. Please accept our sincere gratitude for your dedicated service and tremendous leadership.**

**Would all three of you please stand and be recognized.**

**We were fortunate that Deputy Police Chief Troy Rettig was well prepared to step in as Chief of Police. Chief Rettig is a 22-year veteran of the Leawood Police Department, and we are excited about the prospect of him serving as Police Chief for a long time to come.**

**We were also delighted that Police Captain Kevin Cauley, who has served over 24 years with Leawood, was promoted to fill the role of Deputy Police Chief.**

**Would both of you please stand and be recognized.**

**You are all aware that impressive statistics regarding metrics are not what truly make Leawood a special place. Rather, it is our people—not just my great City Council and excellent professional staff—but also our citizen volunteers who generously commit their time and energy to better our community. Would all volunteers who serve on a Leawood committee or in a Leawood Service Group please stand to be recognized.**

**I would like to now focus on a few residents who demonstrated exceptional philanthropy or received significant honors for extraordinary service during the past year. Please come to the stage as I call your name so that we might capture a group photo at the end.**

**I ask that you please hold your applause until all have been acknowledged.**

- Mary Tearney received the “Distinguished Volunteer Award” from the Kansas Recreation and Park Association for her volunteer efforts with the City of Leawood and the entire metropolitan area. Mary has given over 10,000 hours of her time by serving on the Leawood Arts Council, Art In Public Places Initiative and facilitating the City’s concerts, studio art tours, stage productions and educational outreach programming. Mary, your efforts to enhance the cultural opportunities for our residents are absolutely renowned and greatly appreciated.**
- George Guastello received the “2015 Nonprofit Professional of the Year Award” from Nonprofit Connect at their annual awards luncheon for his successful efforts as President and Chief Executive Officer of Kansas City’s Union Station. George and his team have successfully stabilized our bi-state initiative and community treasure. He has delivered sound fiscal results for the past six years while also expanding program offerings and increasing the tenant occupancy. George, this was a very well-deserved honor.**
- Sophia Porter, while a Senior at Hyman Brand Hebrew Academy, was the only student in the country to receive the “2015 National Space Club Keynote Scholar Award,” which provided her a \$10,000 scholarship. This accomplishment is even more impressive given the fact that she was competing against fellow high school students, college and graduate students. As the sole recipient of the Award, Sophia was also privileged to give the keynote address in front of 2,000 aerospace professionals at the National Space Club’s Annual Awards Dinner. Sophia, please accept our heartfelt congratulations on all of that you have accomplished and will certainly continue to achieve in the future.**

- **Roshann Parris, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Parris Communications, Inc., received the “2015 Distinguished Alumni Award” from the Kansas University School of Business for her dedication to business excellence, community service and commitment to Kansas University. Her impressive company has been a “Best Places to Work” honoree for the past eight years. Roshann also served as the co-chairman for the United Way of Greater Kansas City’s very successful 2015 fundraising campaign. Roshann, we greatly appreciate your many gifts to our broad community.**
- **Joyce Hayhow received the “2015 Centurions Leadership Award” from the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce Centurions Leadership Program in recognition of her leadership and volunteer commitments, including the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Kansas City, Starlight Theater and the Advancement of the KU Academic Medical Center. Joyce enjoyed a 28-year career with the *Kansas City Business Journal*, of which 25 of those years were at the helm of the publication as publisher. Our sincere congratulations, Joyce.**
- **Dr. Mary Davidson Cohen was selected as the “2015 Johnson Countian of the Year” by the Johnson County Community College Foundation for her lifelong commitment to the betterment of Johnson County and the metropolitan region. Mary was appointed as the Secretary’s Regional Representative for Region VII by U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige. She also served as assistant director of the William T. Kemper Foundation and was assistant vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Kansas Regents Center. Mary is currently the Executive Director of the Barton P. and Mary D. Cohen Charitable Trust which contributes greatly to the betterment of our community. She has served numerous nonprofits in our region including Board Chair of the World War I Museum and Chair of Overseers for the U.S. Coast Guard Academy.**

**Mary, you are certainly deserving of your many recognitions.**

- Fred Logan, the “2008 Johnson Countian of the Year,” received the “2015 Excellence in Community Advocacy Award,” a Pinnacle Award from the Johnson County Library Foundation. He earned this award in recognition of his 35 years of civic leadership and commitment to Johnson County, the metropolitan area and the State of Kansas. Fred has served as a Trustee for Johnson County Community College, President of United Community Services and Chair of the Kansas Board of Regents. He has also led a number of public fundraising campaigns, including the successful effort to establish the Johnson County Education Research Triangle. Fred, your tireless willingness to improve our community is truly commendable.
- Susan Cohen and Mitchell Krasnopoler were featured as a cover story in the publication for seniors, *The Best Times*, for their efforts as founders of the “Americans for Older Driver Safety” to promote safe driving by aging drivers. One reason Susan and Mitchell are so motivated is due to the unfortunate loss of their 20-year-old son, Nathan, who was struck by an elderly driver while he was riding his bicycle in a bike lane. Their intention is not to take the car keys away from senior drivers. Instead, the organization’s mission is to educate older drivers regarding the impact of aging on driving skills and helping them to adjust their driving behavior accordingly. Susan and Mitchell, it is clear that your endeavors in response to the loss of your son will undoubtedly save the lives of many others.
- Gary Swanson was recognized for his many years of service to veterans by the Jewish War Veterans Post 605 who gave him the “Legion of Honor Humanitarian Award” on behalf of The Chapel of Four Chaplains Foundation. For many years, Gary has provided numerous monthly profiles of veterans in *The Best Times* publication. One of the World War II veterans he profiled was my own 93 year-old father, Patrick Clune. The Foundation was established in 1951 in commemoration of four Army chaplains who sacrificed themselves during World War II by giving up their lifejackets while their ship was sinking to four other soldiers so that they might live. The award is given in recognition of an individual’s faith, courage and selflessness. In 1988, Congress designated the date of the sinking, February 3<sup>rd</sup>, as “Four Chaplains Day.” Gary, your efforts to support our Nation’s Veterans are greatly appreciated and appropriately honors the fallen four chaplains.

- In an extraordinary act of generosity, Dr. Douglas and Barbara Cusick donated \$1,000,000 to the Foundation for Shawnee Mission Medical Center establishing the “Dr. J. Douglas Cusick Medical Mission Endowment.” While they have previously been on more than 40 medical missions, Doug and Barbara decided to create the endowment to further the Foundation’s efforts to provide compassionate care for the whole person, following the example of Christ’s healing ministry. The endowment will pay for the Medical Center’s doctors and nurses’ travel on medical mission trips for years to come.

Doug and Barbara, thank you for your gift to the Foundation and for your personal efforts to provide people hope for a cure.

- Thomas Brentano, a Troop 10 Boy Scout from Prairie Star Middle school, decided that his Eagle Scout project would be collecting and shipping English books to Jhong Shan Elementary School, an elementary school in I-Lan, Taiwan, to assist the students learning of English. For those of you who do not know, I-Lan, Taiwan, is a Sister City of Leawood. Thomas and his family have hosted visiting I-Lan students in their Leawood home. Thomas collected over 1,600 new and used books and raised more than \$400 for shipping costs for the 14 boxes weighing nearly 600 pounds.

I-Lan Elementary School Principal Chen was so delighted with Thomas’ book drive that he wanted to rename the library after him. However, Thomas suggested naming the library “Leawood Troop 10 Library.” Thomas, on behalf of the City of Leawood, I want to express our sincere appreciation for your efforts to further strengthen the ties between I-Lan and the City of Leawood. Congratulations also on your recent attainment of the rank of Eagle Scout.

- Finally, I want to recognize Dr. Rich Davis who passed away this past year. Rich was a renowned child psychiatrist and accomplished piano musician. He was the founding Board Chairman for the Youth Volunteer Corps of America and the Alliance for Epilepsy Research, as well as co-founder of the UMKC Bloch School “Entrepreneur of the Year Awards.” However, most of you are probably more familiar with his culinary creations -- KC Masterpiece Barbecue Sauce. He was the Blue Ribbon winner for the first American Royal Barbeque competition and was named one of “America’s Most Famous Barbecuers” by *Parade Magazine*. His sauce won the “Best Sauce on the Planet Award” at the 1980 American Royal Barbecue Sauce Contest and is the No. 1 Barbecue Sauce sold in the United States. To honor Rich, there is a gift of KC Masterpiece products on your table. The winner of the table gift is the person whose birthday is closest to Rich’s, April 7<sup>th</sup>. I ask that Rich’s family members who are here today, Coleen Davis, Laura and Lewis Gregory, please come forward and allow us to share our gratitude for all Rich accomplished to make our world a better place.

In closing, I want to thank each of you very much for attending today. Your presence is a clear demonstration of your commitment to ensure the positive future of the City of Leawood. Please know that it is my sincere honor to serve as Mayor for this wonderful City. We are truly fortunate that Leawood is such a special place to both live and to work. May you all enjoy a very healthy and prosperous 2016. In other words, the “best of times!”