

ANNUAL STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS
January 31, 2019
HONOR GUARD
PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Welcome to the annual State of the City Address. I sincerely appreciate you being here to listen to the past year in review for the City of Leawood.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize all of the elected officials that are in attendance today. I would also ask City Administrator Scott Lambers and all of the City's professional staff to please rise and be recognized.

In many regards, 2018 was a notable year. There were Federal, State, County and local elections along with the persistent robocalls and never-ending mailers featuring motherhood and apple pie on one side and the apocalypse on the other. I'm sure you're all enjoying the cease-fire as much as I am.

Speaking of the national elections, it was extremely heartening to view the large turnout of voters exercising their democratic responsibility. I believe that it has finally sunk in that elections matter and each vote counts. I remain hopeful that a newfound basis for bipartisanship and the ideal of compromise are not four-letter words. I have seen reports that this last Congress was one of the least productive in history. Some may say that's a good thing, but I disagree. The issues our country faces are too severe to be kicked down the road year after year.

It is good news to report that after 35 days of a federal government shutdown, we are now *temporarily* opened for business until February 15. As an eternal optimist, I look forward to a solution that will demonstrate compromise from both Parties. Leawood's municipal government, however, is *permanently* open for business. I'm particularly pleased that we are a "nonpartisan" form of government as I truly believe that is most beneficial for cooperation and collaboration. We were elected to serve the best interests of our residents regardless of political affiliations.

At this time, I do want to take a moment to recognize Kansas Senator Pat Roberts, who recently announced his plans to retire, for his many years of dedicated service to make Kansas and our country a better place. His strong desire to solve critical issues and work in a bipartisan fashion speaks volumes about his character and integrity.

As for issues at the State level, the most critical is finding a sustainable funding solution for education. While the State has made significant strides, much more

work remains to be done. It will first be necessary to find additional money, and then even more difficult, index the total amount to inflation. The 2019 Legislative Session has already begun, and all involved need to immediately come together and hit the ground running toward a permanent resolution. I am very hopeful that our new Governor, Laura Kelly, will prove to be a catalyst for innovative thinking and lead a truly bipartisan effort to put the State on the right path.

Continuing their demonstration that the government closest to the citizenry governs the best, Johnson County Chairman Ed Eilert and the County Commission have tackled several expensive capital projects such as the new County Courthouse and Medical Examiner's Facility as well as the expansion of the Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant. All of these projects show the County's willingness to look to long-term solutions and not expedient, short-term fixes. They are to be congratulated.

Looking to Leawood, I am very pleased to let you know that 2018 was an exciting year in many regards. First, and I do mean "FIRST," *WalletHub.com* performed its annual evaluation of nearly 1,300 cities with populations between 25,000 and 100,000 across the nation on 40 key metrics on economic vitality, quality of life, education, health and public safety.

In 2015, Leawood was ranked fifth in the country; in 2016 and 2017, we were ranked third; and this past year, Leawood was ranked "Number One" in the nation! I want to thank all of those who contributed to this most prestigious recognition. This is worthy of a round of applause.

Two other "Number One" rankings for Leawood were from the websites *Niche* and *HomeSnacks* who ranked us as the "Best Place to Live in Kansas." Not to be repetitive, but *Zippia.com* rated Leawood as the "Most Successful City in Kansas."

Additional top ratings that Leawood received in 2018 include the second "Safest City in Kansas" by the *National Council for Home Safety and Security*; the third "Safest City in Kansas" by *SAFEHOME* and the second "Best Place to Retire in Kansas" by *SmartAsset*.

Police Chief Troy Rettig reported that his Department had a number of major accomplishments in 2018. The City saw violent crimes reduced by 22% as well as reductions in vehicle crashes from 2017. For the fifth consecutive year, the Department received the "AAA Platinum Traffic Safety Award." They were significantly involved in getting the Governor and the Kansas Legislature to approve the "Hot Car/Good Samaritan Bill" to remove civil liability for someone

breaking into a car to rescue an at-risk person or pet. The annual Citizens Police Academy had a new record of 33 participants. And, finally, seven Police Officers received "Lifesaving" awards after using their CPR skills to help save lives.

Speaking of the Police Department, I would like to recognize Police Officer Scott Frager. Ever since Scott was a little boy, he wanted to be a police officer. After 25 years of success working in the private sector, he joined the Leawood Police Department this past year and was able to fulfill his childhood dream.

Although not a member of the Leawood Police Department, Leawood resident Bob Cutler also wanted to be involved in law enforcement at an early age. He, too, was a most successful business man and made a career change later in life to become a member of the Platte Woods Police Department. We are most grateful and extremely impressed that you have both chosen to give back to your communities in the vital field of public safety. I would request that Officer Frager and Officer Cutler please stand to be recognized. Thank you very much.

Fire Chief Dave Williams and his Department retained their "International Accreditation" from the *Commission on Fire Accreditation International* and the City's "Insurance Services Organization" (ISO) *Public Protection Classification* rating of "One," making Leawood one of a handful of cities in the nation with both recognitions. The Department was also highly engaged with providing support to the community through its various programs of blood pressure checks, first aid classes, home safety checks, car seat installations and CPR training.

The Public Works Department, under the leadership of Director David Ley, administered 78 different contracts with a total value of almost \$10 million. I am very grateful for our City's important commitment to continually reinvest in our public infrastructure. The majority of the projects in 2018 involved street and stormwater construction. Of the stormwater projects, the most significant was the onset of the replacement of failing corrugated metal pipes, which total over 20 miles.

The City's Arterial Street Program included Mission Road improvements as well as sidewalk upgrades. Three miles of streetlights were replaced with LED fixtures, and street sweeping crews collected almost 700 tons of debris preventing it from entering our waterways.

Finance Director Dawn Long and her Department worked diligently to retain the City's AAA bond rating from *Moody's Investors Services* for the 10th consecutive year. This resulted in the issuance of almost \$24 million in Temporary Notes at an interest cost of 1.72%; the issuance of almost \$4 million in General Obligation Bonds with an interest cost of 2.36%; and the refinancing of existing General Obligation Bonds to a new, lower interest rate of 2.36%, creating a savings of nearly \$350,000.

The Finance Department was also recognized by the *Government Finance Officers Association* for its Annual Budget preparation for the 17th year in a row and for its *Comprehensive Annual Financial Report* for the 22nd consecutive time. I am also pleased to report that the City's mill levy remained constant for the 15th sequential year while maintaining the second lowest mill levy in the State of Kansas among cities of the First Class.

Information Services Director Ross Kurz and his Department upgraded the entire City's wireless network access points and the City's internet connection to new, faster Gigabyte speed levels. Fiber connection to Johnson County was improved from 1-Gigabit to 10-Gigabyte speeds. In addition, the Department totally revamped the City's webpage.

City Attorney Patty Bennett and the Legal Department successfully prosecuted almost 8,000 criminal charges against individuals, most of whom were not City residents. Over 30 cases went to trial with 29 of those resulting in guilty findings.

Human Resources Director Nic Sanders and his Department processed 20 full-time positions for which the City received nearly 1,000 applicants. Furthermore, they worked with the other City departments to achieve a work comp rating 41% below the industry average.

They also coordinated several employee volunteer and donation drives benefitting United Way of Greater Kansas City, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Veterans Community Project, Operation Gratitude, Special Olympics, Wayside Waifs, Johnson County Christmas Bureau and Children's Mercy Hospital. The City's employees should be congratulated on the depth and diversity of their giving to others who are less fortunate.

The Parks and Recreation Department, under the guidance of Director Chris Claxton, also stayed extremely busy. The year 2018 marked the 20th Anniversary for the Leawood Stage Company's provision of Community Theater. This year was themed "Shows with Purpose" with each production featuring a philanthropic opportunity to give back to the community. The season was

kicked off with "An Enchanted Evening," followed by "West Side Story," "Bark! The Musical" and "Mame."

Speaking of the arts, a new sculpture consisting of two parts was placed just north of City Hall titled "Dancers." Each of the pieces are fashioned from two types of steel, are 20 feet tall and individually weigh one ton. *Art in Public Places Initiative* Chairman Anne Blessing and Cultural Arts Coordinator April Bishop were successful in securing the piece by internationally acclaimed sculptor Ewerdt Hilgemann.

The City of Leawood continued to have strong development activity through 2018. Over the last year, Director of Community Development Richard Coleman and his team were busy issuing permits for retail, office, residential and educational uses. As a result, there were a number of new entries into our business community.

Some of the new businesses announced in 2018 included the following:

- Ranchmart welcomed Duck Donuts and Mathnasium will debut this March;
- Camelot Court added Pareto Health, Diamonds Direct and will soon have Ika Sushi & Grill open for business;
- Camden Woods brought in Dennis C. Ayers, DDS;
- Town Center Plaza added Power Life, Artisan 119, Tao Reflexology, Vitality Bowls, Blade & Timber, Brow Studio, the return of Coldwater Creek, OneWealth Partners and Barefoot Beach Bums;
- Town Center Crossing opened Tuft & Needle;
- Park Place was augmented with Breakout KC and The Ainsworth restaurant;
- Parkway Plaza saw openings for SERC Physical Therapy, Clothology: 135 and Tilted Core Pilates KC;
- Plaza Pointe's additions included Arora Periodontics, Precise Fitness and The Retirement Planning Group;
- Market Square added B&P Nails, Code Ninjas, WHC Worldwide and Z-Trip;
- Nall Valley Shops welcomed Burg & Barrel;
- Leawood Plaza celebrated the announcement of Barstow School's expansion which will open in 2019 as well as the Allstate Insurance, Morrison Agency;
- Village of Seville brought in The Breakfast Spot; and
- Ironhorse Center added Woof Gang Bakery & Grooming.

In addition to these numerous newcomers to our community, there was other construction activity as well. Park Place has started on the 50,000-square-foot office building that will be the headquarters for Tortoise Capital Advisors.

Directly west, the construction of an 81-unit apartment building that wraps a parking garage is under construction providing 249 parking spaces for the apartment and office building.

In Cornerstone at 135th Street and Nall Avenue, erection of the Element Hotel has begun which will have 110 rooms and encompass 73,000 square feet.

In Town Center Plaza, the On The Border Mexican Grill & Cantina was razed to make room for two new retail buildings to be completed in 2019, including a much-anticipated Shake Shack restaurant.

As was previously mentioned, the construction of the new Tomahawk Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant broke ground in the spring of 2018. The plant consists of 12 buildings and a KCP&L substation. Construction is scheduled to be completed in 2022.

The City's Public Works Maintenance Facility at 143rd and Kenneth Road will soon expand with two new bays being added to the building.

A major remodeling of the office building at 114th and Tomahawk Creek Parkway consisted of 84,000 square feet of upgrades for the new CROSSfirst Bank headquarters.

Two schools, Leawood Elementary and Prairie Star Elementary, both had major mechanical upgrades. The new Brookwood Elementary, located on 103rd Street, is 76,000 square feet and will reopen in March 2019.

On the residential side of construction, Hallbrook East Village is underway consisting of 33 single-family villas on approximately nine acres between Overbrook Road and State Line Road. The Hills of Leawood at 151st and Mission Road broke ground on the first phase which consists of 40 lots on 25 acres. Construction also continues on the 16 acres of Village of Leawood near 89th and Lee Boulevard on 24 turnkey, single-family homes.

The total number of construction permits issued in 2018 was 1,969. Total construction value was \$150 million, up from \$148 million in 2017. This included 139 commercial building permits with a commercial construction valuation of \$86 million, the same as in 2017. Residential construction had 57 new single-family home permits, including 13 re-builds. There was one multifamily permit for 81 units issued in 2018 with a construction value of \$19 million. Total residential construction value was \$64 million, up \$2 million from 2017.

The City of Leawood is most fortunate to have what I often refer to as our “army of volunteers” generously donating their time and expertise to better our community. Would all of you here today that are involved in various capacities, whether in Service Groups or on Commissions, Advisory Boards, Councils or Committees, please stand and be recognized?

Please join me in a round of applause.

There are some with us today that deserve special recognition. As I call your name, please come up and join me on the platform.

Gary Swanson, a member of the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, spent 10 years video-recording almost 1,100 veterans from World War II. Gary initiated this endeavor out of his deep commitment to pay tribute to the men and women of this country's "Greatest Generation" who heeded the call to fight fascism all around the world. His recordings have been generously donated to the "Veterans History Project" and are streaming on the *Library of Congress* website. Gary, your dedicated efforts have provided an archive and a legacy that will be passed on for the benefit of all future generations. Thank you very much.

Dr. Vania Castro, Leawood Lion extraordinaire, contributed significantly to the Leawood Lions Club being the only Club in Zone 4 receiving the "Club Excellence Award." Since she is not the type of person to rest on her laurels, Lion Vania went on to be the first Kansas Lion to be certified by the Lions Club International as a "Lions Certified Instructor," becoming only the 34th person to be certified worldwide. In addition, Vania led the successful effort working collaboratively with the Leawood Lions, the City of Leawood, the Leawood Chamber, the Shawnee Mission School District and the Blue Valley School District to acquire a "Leadership Transformation Grant" valued at \$50,000 from the *Kansas Leadership Center*. Vania, I want to thank you for your commitment to others before self and for being a compassionate leader and an outstanding ambassador for our community.

Kaitlin and Laurin Stotts, daughters of a former police officer, decided to operate a lemonade stand with the proceeds going to families of fallen Wyandotte County Sheriff's Deputies Theresa King and Patrick Rohrer. As a result of their efforts, the two girls raised over \$1,100.

If this has a familiar ring to it, you are correct. In 2016, their first lemonade stand raised over \$800 for the family of Kansas City, Kansas, Police Captain David Melton who also gave his life in the line of duty. Kaitlin and Laurin, thank you for your dedicated efforts to help ease the pain for the terrible nightmare that these families have experienced.

Mary Tearney was the last President to preside and lead the Leawood Woman's Club. The Club was founded in 1958 and for almost 60 years, the members engaged in countless philanthropic activities to benefit a variety of Leawood organizations. The Woman's Club is to be congratulated and thanked for their exemplary service and contributions to our broad community over the years.

Mary was also one of three “Virtuoso Award Finalists” honored by ArtsKC for her long-time support and advocacy of the arts in Johnson County, the Kansas City metropolitan area and by helping to establish ArtsKC. She serves on the Johnson County Public Art Commission, the Johnson County Museum, the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, the Arts Council of Johnson County and as Chairman of the Leawood Arts Council. Mary, your steadfast dedication to the arts has made our region a very special place. Thank you very much.

Will Gurley, a 15-year-old student at Kansas City Christian School, took the lead last year to confront our nation’s critical mental health issues, particularly depression and suicide. Being a talented musician, Will confronted the matter head on by hosting the “You Matter Music Festival.” The festival featured music, information booths and first-hand accounts from individuals who have dealt with these problems. Will’s effort to bring this issue to the forefront for discussion and action is highly commendable, and we all should applaud his endeavor to help people who are desperately in need. Again, Will, thank you for generously using your musical talents and for your tremendous leadership.

Pat and Kathy Cocherl, founders and trustees of the Cocherl Family Foundation, are known for sponsoring the “Arrowhead Concert Series,” providing college scholarships for 20 to 30 high school graduates each year, giving financial aid to the children of fallen Navy Seals and supporting a safe haven for victims of domestic violence.

In early 2018, Pat experienced a medical emergency to which the Leawood Fire Department responded within three minutes of receiving the call from dispatch. The City’s emergency responders found Pat in a state of cardiac arrest and initiated the lifesaving actions necessary to resuscitate and stabilize him before transporting him to a hospital. Pat clearly recognizes that he is with us today because of the expertise of the Fire Department members who responded to his call.

In appreciation of their efforts, Pat and Kathy appeared at the December 3rd City Council meeting to present a check from the Cocherl Family Foundation to the Leawood Fire Department First Responders in the amount of \$50,000. Pat, we are so grateful that you and Kathy are here with us today and are able to continue the generous work of the Cocherl Family Foundation.

Kent and Charlie Sunderland, President and Secretary/Treasurer, respectively, of the Sunderland Family Foundation, received the *Ingram's* 2018 "Philanthropist of the Year" award. The Foundation's generosity was demonstrated by its \$75 million gift to help create the Children's Research Institute at Children's Mercy Kansas City and its \$66 million commitment to complete the University of Kansas Health System Cambridge Tower expansion project. These two acts of generosity are just the tip of the iceberg of the Foundation's history of giving over the past 73 years. Kent and Charlie, on behalf on the entire Kanas City metropolitan area, I want to personally express our gratitude for all that your Family Foundation has done to make our community a better place.

Please join me in a well-deserved round of applause for these extraordinary and generous individuals.

In closing, I want to thank each of you for your attendance today. Leawood is a truly exceptional community, and it is a great honor and a privilege for me to serve as Mayor. It is my sincere hope that we all will continue to live up to the City's motto of "Growing with Distinction." I wish each of you a healthy, prosperous and joyful 2019.