



Mayor Cathy Noon
State of Our City speech
April 17, 2014

Good afternoon, and welcome to the 10th annual State of Our City address. It's always a pleasure to be with you as we celebrate Centennial's latest accomplishments and take a look forward at what's on the horizon.

We have a lot of exciting news to share. But first, we have a few special recognitions to make. I'd like to start by thanking . . .

Rotary Club president Ken Hope and today's organizing committee for all their hard work;

I'd also like to recognize other elected officials in the audience. . . .

- Mike Coffman – US Representative
- David Walcher – Sheriff
- Nancy Doty – Chair, Board of County Commissioners
- Nancy Sharpe – County Commissioner
- Rod Bockenfeld – County Commissioner
- Sue Sandstrom – County Treasurer
- Ron Rakowsky – Mayor of Greenwood Village
- Jim Gunning – Mayor of Lone Tree

As many of you know, this is a transformative time for the City of Centennial--a year of many goodbyes and hellos as four of our nine City Council Members were term limited after eight years of service.

While we miss their input and institutional knowledge, term limits also give us an opportunity for fresh insight into our city.

Let us welcome our four newly elected Council Members who were sworn into office in January: District 1-Kathy Turley, District 2-Doris Truhlar, District 3- Mark Gotto and District 4- CJ Whelan.

This group is rounded out by: District 1-Vorry Moon, and District 2- Keith Gardner District 3 -Ken Lucas, and District 4- Stephanie Piko. The commitment of our Council Members and staff is commendable –we have spent many days/nights at orientation, a mock council meeting, Friday Focus training sessions, Centennial 101, and individual meetings to ensure there is no lag in handling City business. It is great to work with such dedicated people.

We had another goodbye this year, with the retirement of long-time Sheriff Grayson Robinson. Beginning with our incorporation, he was a true friend to our City and served our community with honor and distinction. Stepping in, we welcome new Sheriff David Walcher, and look forward to our continued partnership and excellent service of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office.

We also owe thanks to our three fire districts: Cunningham Fire under the direction of Fire Chief of the Year, Jerry Rhodes; Littleton Fire District led by recently retired Chief John Mullin and South Metro Fire District, under the leadership of Chief Dan Qualman, who has also announced his upcoming retirement in December 2014. We welcome new Littleton Fire Chief, Christopher Armstrong and are confident South Metro Fire will undertake a thoughtful process for Chief Qualman's successor.

I see many people in the audience today representing our special district boards and our two school districts, Littleton and Cherry Creek.

Special Districts Attending

SSPRD - John Ostermiller – Chair, Sue Rosser

Cunningham Fire - David Markham – Division Chief

Arapahoe County Public Airport Authority - Bob Doubek – Chair

Parker Jordan - Norm Shledon – President of the Board

Cherry Creek Schools - Jim O'Brien – President District A

Arapahoe Library District - Tom Johnson – President

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Thank you for your dedication and service to our community at large.

While not elected, but serving the city and our businesses, we have terrific partnerships with the Aurora and South Metro Denver Chambers and the Denver South Economic Development Partnership.

I'd also like to recognize city staff and contractors CH2M Hill, Safebuilt, Merrick, Widner Michow & Cox, and the Arapahoe County Sheriff Dept. and introduce City Manager John Danielson and City Attorney Bob Widner.

Last, but certainly not least, I'd like to recognize any members of our 10 City boards and commissions, such as Planning & Zoning, the Youth Commission, Election Commission, and our Senior Commission. Please give a wave if you serve on one of these boards. Let's give them a round of applause; they do this for their love for their community.

Recognize Jim – while not directly a servant to the city, my husband Jim provides me with the support to serve you and I want to thank him. You are the best!

Before I begin today's formal presentation on the State of Our City, I'd like to take a moment to reflect and acknowledge the tragic shooting that took place at Arapahoe High School on December 13th. This shocking act ultimately claimed the life of 17-year old senior Claire Davis and shook our community to its core. We all mourn for Claire, her family and friends; and continue to be deeply saddened by the trauma and loss of innocence the students, teachers, parents and administrators of Littleton Public Schools have endured.

We owe a heartfelt debt of gratitude to our first responders, AHS faculty & staff, and to the generous actions of nearby businesses who provided shelter and aid during the event. I've often stated that Centennial's strength is its sense of community. We have strong ties to the neighborhoods we live in, the schools we attend, and the businesses we frequent. Never was that more evident than last December.

The outpouring of support for the Arapahoe High School community was amazing on December 13th with 36 agencies responding quickly to the emergency, King Soopers handing out blankets, socks, food and water to evacuated students, Burger King acting as a "command center" for first responders, and

many businesses and churches in the vicinity serving as refuge for students and families looking to reunite.

In the following days, those churches served as gathering places for grief counseling and many local businesses coordinated fund raisers for Claire. One fundraiser in particular was at the Burger King at University and Arapahoe across from the school – a frequent hangout of AHS students. Crowds flocked from near and far waiting patiently for their “fast food” and more than \$28,000 was raised in 18 hours. While I was there you could feel the emotion of the patrons and employees – shock that this could happen in our community, devastated for Claire and the students, and thankful to be together doing “something” to help. It was a sign of our connections, our resilience and our healing. Joining us today are: Michelle Fallon with King Soopers; Gary Robison the co-owner of Burger King; and AHS Principal, Natalie Pramenko. Please welcome them.

As I stated in this very address last year, while we work hard to make sure that we are a safe community, sometimes things happen that are out of our control. Whether it is a man-made tragedy or act of nature such as the devastating wildfires and floods that our state has seen in recent years, we continue to be resilient. We remain committed to supporting our two school districts and the Sheriff’s School Resource Officers in doing everything we can to keep our children safe, providing and promoting a positive learning environment, and standing strong in the face of adversity.

And now, let us move on to the main topic of the day: The State of Our City. I am pleased to report our City has never been stronger—in spirit, in resolve, and in economic strength. 2013 was all about connections: bringing new businesses to our City, forging strong alliances as we worked on regional transportation issues, and connecting with citizens as we keep our neighborhoods safe, well-maintained and visually pleasing.

As many of you know, the City of Centennial was created in 2001 by a group of citizens united in the desire for self determination and to ensure we had the resources to provide services for the people of this area. This commitment has changed very little since the early days. In fact, it has been strengthened by the planning, implementation and completion of numerous initiatives that improve the everyday ease of travel and quality of life in our community. It is exciting to see many of these long-term visions coming to fruition today.

For example, the City is actively looking into ways to expand its fiber optic infrastructure, currently used for controlling traffic signals. In November of 2013, 76 percent of voters approved ballot question 2G. Another confirmation of self-determination, the passing of 2G allows the City to examine opportunities to partner with the private sector to provide high-speed Internet services to business and residents. This can be a highly-effective economic development driver, as it would be an attractive feature to recruit new companies to our City.

The City's strong financial management is also worthy of attention. One of the most unique things about Centennial is that major capital projects are funded with the use of cash, and as a result, the City is debt-free. While other cities struggled through the recession, Centennial continues to do very well because we never over-extended ourselves and as a result, have the necessary funds to spend when needed.

I am also very pleased to report that 2013 revenues came in at \$77.1 million, 10 percent higher than expected. This increase is largely due to a better than anticipated sales tax revenue and additional federal and state grant revenue. Sales tax revenues continue to climb based on increased sales at major retail centers along with an overall increase in consumer spending.

Centennial's major retail centers are seeing exciting new tenants. Recent additions to The Streets at SouthGlenn include H&M, Ann Taylor Loft, Victoria's Secret, Bath & Body Works, Z Gallerie, White House Black Market, Sur La Table, Chico's, Chick-Fil-A, Tropical Smoothie Café and Café Rio. How's that for expanded shopping and dining options?

Another power retail center is the Centennial Promenade, located across from Park Meadows. We are excited to see the two vacant anchor spaces will soon be welcoming new retailers to the area. Conn's will be moving into the Loehmann's space and Cavender's will be occupying space next to WOW Furniture. The former Richmond American building has been demolished to make way for a new Longhorn Steakhouse and right next door, Tropical Smoothie Café just opened its second Centennial location.

I have to mention our largest retailer: IKEA Centennial. It is currently the second largest IKEA in the United States. This year the 415,000 square foot store expanded its geothermal and solar energy enhancements making it a one of the greenest stores in the world and a showcase for IKEA and Centennial.

Although some of these projects occurred prior to 2013, we are now reaping the rewards of our careful land use planning and our forward-thinking economic development strategy. Centennial has a history of successful business recruitment and retention. We are proud that some of the region's finest companies call Centennial home, and that a number of them are expanding.

Centennial's Top 10 Private Sector Employers

- OppenheimerFunds
- Comcast & Comcast Media Center
- United Launch Alliance
- Pearson/e-College
- Connexions, Inc.
- US Foodservice
- Saunders Construction
- AlloSource
- National CineMedia
- IKEA Centennial

Last year the Lifetime Fitness in Centennial expanded with a new tennis complex that features 10 indoor courts, 10-lighted outdoor courts, as well as amenities such as video analysis rooms for tennis coaching, a pro shop, luxurious locker rooms and indoor viewing lounge. Quite an investment in our city!

In September 2013 when FEMA officials urgently needed additional office space for flood recovery efforts, they leased 62,000 sq feet at the Innovation Pavilion in Centennial. The Innovation Pavilion is home to many start-up tech companies and offers short-term lease options to accommodate tenant needs. While FEMA was a different type of short term use, our community development staff and our building services contractor, SafeBUILT, quickly processed permits to help FEMA move in and be ready to help those impacted by the floods. Devastated communities also received hands-on help as Centennial first responders and building department staff spent a number of weeks helping on site. Our partners are a reflection of our City and connecting in a time of crisis is a culture we are proud to share.

And for quenching your thirst, we are also pleased to announce the opening of Centennial's First Craft Brewers - Blue Spruce Brewing Company & Two22 Brew.

Lastly, in December 2013, we welcomed new corporate citizens to our city in the area south of Arapahoe Rd and Blackhawk St. Blue Bell Ice Cream, FedEx, Scottish Home Improvements, MMR Constructors as well as a number of independent businesses now call Centennial home.

We also have some exciting new developments on the horizon including:

- Jones District - 1.8M square feet of commercial mixed use on the 40 acres next to IKEA including new access roads and enhancements to the Dry Creek light rail connection. The Jones Company vision for this property looks very exciting.
- Time Warner Cable in Centennial is building an \$85 million Data Center expansion that will support the equipment necessary to deliver digital video and IP based services for Time Warner Cable's residential and business products. It is estimated that the construction project will generate approximately 400 jobs, equating to more than \$11 million in local income.

Centennial will soon have another unique advantage with the development of a corporate recreation corridor along Arapahoe Road. From Celebrity Lanes to the newly expanded Centennial Gun Club; to projects that are in the early stages of construction such as ViewHouse which is renovating the former Trail Dust Steakhouse) and TopGolf, a high-tech, computerized driving range where "golf meets bowling meets darts"; these new amenities are sure to make Centennial the new hot spot for unique high-end entertainment.

As I said earlier, 2013 was a year of "connections" and in order to become a more desirable destination, drivers need to be able to move through our City with ease. Preliminary plans have been approved, and design work has begun on improvements for the I-25/ Arapahoe Road interchange. This complex project requires the involvement of many different agencies and look forward to its completion in 2017.

The City is positioning itself to take advantage of this revitalization opportunity, and completed the I-25 Corridor Sub Area Plan in August. This planning document provides a vision and guidelines for

development of a vibrant, competitive, and economically healthy hub along the Interstate that will attract new businesses and employers, and take advantage of the existing Dry Creek Light Rail Station. Along with planning for the Centennial portions of Arapahoe Road, we also joined Greenwood Village to meet with representatives from the International Council of Shopping Centers for a collaborative look at the future of commercial along the Arapahoe Road corridor.

In addition to improving our center connector, Centennial is participating in the C470 Coalition on our southern border. Both I-25/Arapahoe Rd and C470 projects have received CDOT funding known as RAMP (Responsible Acceleration of Maintenance Projects) and will become a reality by 2017. Although C470 is outside our City boundaries, the expansion of this roadway will undoubtedly affect our traffic patterns and we have made sure to have a seat at the table to represent and advocate on behalf of our citizens.

We have another transportation milestone to our east. After many years of planning, we are moving forward with improvements to Arapahoe Road east of Parker Road. The City of Centennial has committed a total of \$10 million to the project, with partner agencies Arapahoe County, Southeast Metro StormWater Authority (SEMSWA), and the City of Aurora making up the rest of \$15.1 million budget.

About 1.5 miles of Arapahoe Road between Waco Street and Himalaya Way will be expanded from two to four lanes. We have launched a new website, arapahoeroad.com that shows project details and an interactive map. This road widening project is a high priority, required to make Arapahoe Road a safe, efficient route for commuters, businesses, students and families. Some preliminary work such as reconstructing the Antelope Creek crossing will begin this year, with roadway construction to begin in 2015. Talk about a necessary connection!

In addition to these large capital projects, Centennial remains dedicated to providing well-maintained city streets. The City commits \$6.6 million to roadway improvements each year. Our public works contractor CH2MHill scientifically assesses each street and uses preventative maintenance to save the City money by cutting down on long-term costs of road replacement.

This was also the second winter using our optimized snow routes which allowed for 93 additional miles of coverage while reducing the time to cover snow routes by 40 percent. While this winter wasn't the worst by Colorado standards, the Centennial area reported more than 75 inches of snow, providing just enough powder to allow the City of Centennial's Snow Hero initiative to achieve great success. Residents nominated 128 fellow community members for showing their 'snowman-ship' by voluntarily clearing snow and ice from the sidewalks and parking lots on and near their properties. We have also added a mobile site (centennialsnowhero.com) to make it even easier to nominate and upload snow hero photos right from your smart phone.

Innovation and customer service are designated as critical to Centennial's culture. In addition to our dedicated city staff, we rely on many public/private partnerships with our contractors to provide an outstanding level of service. Another notable value delivered in 2013 was the opening of our new multi-purpose Eagle Street Facility. Without incurring debt the City purchased a vacant 9.2 acre lumber yard and remodeled it to house Centennial Public Works, Animal Services, Code Compliance and the 24/7 Citizen Response Center. The total project was completed for under \$6 million—a fraction of the cost it would have been to build from scratch.

This property, located at Eagle Street and Jordan Road, includes office and maintenance space, covered bays for vehicles, and a new 5,000 ton salt storage dome and brine mixer to provide efficient operations during snow storms. Centennial Animal Services also has a holding area at this location where customers may conveniently pick up their lost dogs; and there are three meeting rooms available for rental by the community and non-profit organizations. City Council is proud of the collaboration with our contractors CH2M Hill, TerraCare, and the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region – that allowed the renovation of this facility to meet their needs and the needs of the City. Best of all – the City is now the landlord for our contractors which will control costs and help pay back the cost of the building and the renovations.

The Eagle Street Facility also houses our Traffic Operations Center (TOC) which provides the ability to monitor the status of traffic signals in real time and make adjustments to better manage traffic. The TOC is currently connected to 15 signalized intersections with an additional 48 intersections planned by the end of 2014.

Public safety is no exception with regard to customer service and value. In 2013, City staff completed a comprehensive six-month review of law enforcement services provided to the City of Centennial through an intergovernmental contract with Arapahoe County. This included a review of crime statistics, staffing levels and costs per capita/calls for service. The review revealed the services provided through the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office not only meet the contract requirements and are highly accredited by professional standards, but are also provided at a lower cost per capita than comparable metro Denver cities. Centennial has consistently ranked as one of the safest cities in Colorado with a population of more than 75,000 and we are very pleased that the results of this assessment reflect the City's and ASCO's dedication to being responsible with our taxpayer dollars.

It's not all about work in Centennial – we are serious about our time outdoors as well. Centennial's award-winning Center Park is also receiving some improvements this spring. This 11-acre park features family friendly amenities, along with a spectacular view of the front-range mountains. It's no wonder that last spring, Center Park received the Denver Regional Council of Governments' (DRCOG) People's Choice *Live Work Play* award.

Enhancements include a new stage covering and electrical improvements that will allow us to attract professional performances as well as present a great venue for local artists and community performances. Other amenities that will be coming soon include new shade structures in the park and – this should be near and dear to our Rotarians -the addition of a pavilion in the Rotary garden.

This year, you can look forward to an exciting summer of colorful performances at the Center Park amphitheater. Mark your calendars and join us for the grand opening of the new amphitheater on Saturday, June 7 with a free concert featuring the amazing Eagles tribute band "The Long Run", local favorite Katey Laurel and a youth band from the School of Rock. Enjoy live music, children's activities and fabulous food trucks. We will also be hosting a Friday Film Festival every other week in June and July; and in August, you won't want to miss our Centennial Under the Stars show featuring live music, laser lights and family entertainment. We will close out this year's events with our popular Holiday Lighting Ceremony featuring Centennial school choirs and of course, a visit by Santa Claus.

While the city sponsors events in our park, the venue is also popular with outside organizations. Last summer, Coach Karl's "Reggae in the Park" moved to Center Park. Despite a few showers, the event showed off just how great the venue is. Fall brought the German Festival where attendance was at an all time high. This summer other groups will be renting our space. Look for a Farmers and Artisan Market and Big Brothers, Big Sisters' 3-concert series.

Some other outdoor items worth mentioning include the launch of our Neighborhood Park Grant Program. Last year, we completed six projects—three playground remodels in the Smoky Hill Metro District and three Littleton Elementary school yard projects. We are actively looking to partner with special districts and schools to build parks and recreation amenities within neighborhoods. The City is also working on extending the Lone Tree Creek Trail just west of Center Park from Broncos Parkway to the Cherry Creek State Park to improve connectivity; and we are working to improve major trail crossings along the High Line Canal.

We are also proud of another new initiative-- Picture Centennial, a program that highlights the wonderful art of the area, provides a free venue for the display of art and supports local artists in the community. Selected artists are featured in the Centennial Civic Center for three months, with an artist meet-and-greet session at the beginning of each installment. Our next opening is a week from today, so please check out our local talent.

Citizen engagement remains a top priority of City Council efforts to connect. Participation is actively encouraged through citizen outreach and involvement to create a sense of community for all. This year, the City launched Centennial 101, a highly successful citizen's academy that informs residents about various aspects of City operations from community planning to economic development and public safety. The goal was to encourage community involvement, instill citizen pride and perhaps even inspire future leaders of tomorrow. Thirty citizens had six educational and interactive weeks to see what it takes to run their city. Feedback has been very positive and we look forward to having another class in the future.

Here's what some of the participants had to say about the program:

- Centennial 101 was both a fun and informative approach to becoming better citizens.
- The class gave an excellent overview of how the City came to be, how it operates, and a much better understanding of and appreciation for the challenges it's managers face.
- If you love where you live and want to learn more what goes into making Centennial such a great city then you must attend Centennial 101. It is not only very informative but will motivate you to get involved to make our community even a better place to live and work.

We have also revitalized our Senior Commission with a goal of focusing on issues such as aging in place and mobility. The Commission has created Senior Resource Guides and written newsletter articles on a number of topics to help our seniors connect with needed resources in our community. Our youngest volunteers, the Youth Commission, provide valuable insight into the challenges and roadblocks to success encountered by today's youth. This year, we are especially proud of how they supported each other and the youth of our city in dealing with the Arapahoe High tragedy.

Additional resources for youth and seniors are just part of what you will find on the City's new and improved website, www.CentennialCo.gov. So if you need more information on any of the events or special projects I've mentioned today, details are just a click away! You can find schedules and maps for street sweeping and road construction, economic development news, or sign up for email notifications and our Councilmember's district newsletters.

To further help connect to Centennial, I would also encourage you to check out our social media channels. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CentennialGov and follow the City of Centennial on Twitter at www.twitter.com/CentennialGov and to receive important news and information about the City. Or take the opportunity to connect with the Council and contribute ideas and feedback through www.connectcentennial.com. Whatever your preferred method of communication, we've got something for you! It's easy to stay connected and stay involved with the City of Centennial.

Centennial takes pride in the connections made last year from the new businesses locating or expanding in the City, to the strong partnerships we have developed working on regional transportation issues, and connecting with citizens and businesses. Whether those connections are one-on-one, or like today, with hundreds of people, our goal is to communicate. I appreciate your attention today and your dedication to our City. Our success would not be possible without the teamwork and cooperation of many great people –just like today’s 10th State of our City!