



**Mayor Cathy Noon  
State of Our City speech  
April 11, 2013**

Today is a day to celebrate what an amazing, exciting city we live and work in - and this year there is a great deal to talk about.

We know that life here is pretty good and that we have much to be thankful for. But I have to say, that's not just a coincidence. Our wonderful City isn't just happenstance; it is the result of a well-thought-out plan that was set in motion years ago; a plan that we have implemented and that we will take into the future. A plan of vision combined with leadership.

A little over 10 years ago, the Mayor and Council of Centennial laid out a Strategic Plan. They developed statements of vision, goals, and values. As you can see, it wasn't a glitzy document, but one that reflected where we were at that time. But the words indicated there was far more to come.

In that document, the writers provided us with a Vision for the distant year of 2012. The Vision laid out 14 Principles to Guide our Future – 14 goals for Centennial to achieve by 2012.

So, now that it is 2013, I thought it was time to issue a report card on that 10 year Vision. How does the real Centennial of 2012 stack up against the Guidelines that were written 10 years ago?

**Financial Principles:**

There were three principles related to money:

- 1. *Sound, Balanced Tax Base***
- 2. *Financially Sustainable City Government***
- and 4. *Major Retail Center***

1. **Sound, Balanced Tax Base: Residential vs. Commercial/Retail**

During 2012, we added to our **Sound, Balanced Tax Base** with more **Commercial and Retail property** with the annexations of Rock Bottom Brewery, J. Alexanders, and REI.

That rounded out our previous annexation of the surrounding Centennial Promenade Shopping area, further balancing the amount of commercial vs. residential property within our borders.

Along with annexations, we've been successful with **business retention and expansions**, such as Stolle Machinery, Lasertech and AlloSource.

These expansions show that Centennial is a great place to do business. These companies could have looked outside the City to relocate instead of expanding their original buildings here in the City. But they valued their location and chose to stay, which is something for us to celebrate.

We also celebrated the opening of

- Connexions, a health care exchange company.
- Latsysis, new high-tech data center new to Centennial
- Walmart Neighborhood Market

## **2. Financially Sustainable City Government: Adequate Revenues to Support Services and Service Levels**

With regard to Revenue, I am happy to report that in 2012 Centennial saw:

- A 24% increase in Sales Tax collection.
  - This increase is due to an improving economy, sales tax audits, and improved collection of delinquent sales tax.
  - And of course, this self-collection and self-audit of our sales taxes was only possible because we are a Home Rule City. This June Centennial will celebrate our 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a Home Rule City, which was a top priority of the 2002 Strategic Plan. Since becoming a Home Rule City, we have collected almost \$5 million in audit revenue, interest and penalties.

## **4. Major Retail Center: Diverse Shopping Opportunities, Sales Tax Revenues, and Shopping Choices**

Since 2002, we've seen the development of two major retail centers in Centennial:

- **IKEA** – The City has seen continuing benefits of having Colorado’s only **IKEA**;
- **The Streets at SouthGlenn** has seen new developments including Chick-fil-A, Old Navy, Charming Charlie, and Café Rio.

The growth and expansion of business at The Streets at SouthGlenn shows that business is strong. We will see that growth continue in 2013 with the opening of H&M and other exciting retail stores.

**City Management Principles:**

Principles number 3 and 11 described the ways our City should be managed and the way work should get done.

**4. *Small City Government through Best Methods for Low Cost, Highest Quality Services***

- **Restructuring Internal Government:** At the 2012 State of the City, I announced the hiring of John Danielson as our new City Manager. With a long history with contract and start-up cities, John shares our values and during his first 9 months,
  - Re-evaluated what could be done best - either in-house or by contract.
  - Re-aligned staff responsibilities for efficiency.
  - Helped solidify our commitment to employees
    - With performance and compensation revamping, employees have clear expectations and criteria for success. We also completed a compensation market analysis to ensure our employees and taxpayers we compensate fairly.
  - And John emphasizes a philosophy of Customer Service that permeates through all departments to ensure we don’t perform like a “typical” government.
- In addition, best purchasing practices have resulted in estimated savings of more than \$1.4 million in 2012 alone.
- 2012 saw us renew our commitment to better government through **contracting** as we evaluated and renegotiated our Public Works contract with **CH2M HILL**.
  - **We extended our contract for 5 years at a savings of \$1 million while increasing service levels.**

We have received excellent service from CH2MHill, and I’d like to take a moment to note that CH2MHill also shows a commitment to their employees, as reflected in their recognition by:

- **Fortune magazine** as one of the “**100 Best Companies to Work For**”, for **6<sup>th</sup>** time.

### 11. ***An Electronically Connected City***

Typical of the “young”, Centennial is interested in using technology to operate, connect and serve.

- Our Public Works Department has added **traffic signal controls** and **weather stations** which help traffic flow more smoothly and increase road safety. And, to facilitate those controls, the City is in the process of laying **fiber** to better facilitate communication to those high-tech devices.
- Online services have increased - from paying your **Court Fines to making Park Reservations, the Centennial website serves and provides information.**
- **Cartegraph software system allows tracking of all citizen concerns and work orders,** allowing officers to work in the field for greater efficiency.
- And we now have **Electronic Plan Review Submittals** (saving paper, time, and money).

#### **Safety Principle:**

Principle number 6 stated that Centennial should be a **Safe Community.**

- I’m so proud to remind everyone that Centennial was recognized as **Safest City in Colorado for the 8th consecutive year.**
- This can be credited in part to the outstanding work done by our public safety contractor, the Arapahoe County Sheriff’s Office, which shares this value and principle by achieving the Gold Standard Accreditation with Excellence Award for Law Enforcement Agencies. The Arapahoe County Sherriff’s Office is one of a handful of agencies who achieved 100% compliance.
- We are also made a safer community by the fine work of our three Fire Districts.
- The Cunningham Fire District achieved its first accreditation, joining an esteemed group of only 160 fire departments worldwide.
- South Metro Fire Rescue Authority Chief Daniel Qualmann, received the first ever George Mazzotti Fire Chief of the Year Award. He was also named the Distinguished Manager of the Year by the Special Districts Association.
- And Littleton Fire Department went out on a limb, providing opportunities for elected officials to be a “firefighter for a day”. As you can see, Councilmember Keith Gardner and I put on the firefighter uniform and learned first-hand what a demanding job it is.

You know, I need to also take a moment to recognize that, while we work hard to make sure that we are a safe community, sometimes things happen that are out of our control.

The theater shooting in **Aurora** and the **Waldo Canyon Fire in Colorado Springs**, had our state facing that fact once again. In those tragic circumstances what matters is how you handle it, and I'm so proud to say that our community came together and provided assistance. Our three **Fire Districts** stepped up and helped Colorado Springs and others fight their fires, and our **Sheriff's Office** provided assistance to Aurora and continues to handle the ongoing impacts of the trial. Let's give a round of applause to our first responders and thank them for being outstanding neighbors and protectors.

**Community Development Principles:**

Moving on through our report card, there were 2 principles related to city planning, otherwise known as Community Development:

Number 5 was ***Planned Growth and Development*** and Number 10 was ***Redevelopment and Reuse of Older Commercial/Retail Areas and Neighborhoods***

- 2012 saw our new **Land Development Code (LDC)** in action
  - So far we've updated zoning for residential property, as well as institutional property. Next up is all commercial property in the City.

Interestingly, we already have commercial applicants petitioning to be under the new LDC zoning prior to the total implementation being completed. Businesses appreciate the clear parameters and efficiencies of the LDC and residents are ensured their interests are protected.

We also saw **Technical Amendments** to the LDC. Falcons, horses, bees and chickens – where necessary, we adopted amendments that addressed the pets, livestock, and wildlife that also reside in our City.

This process allowed the planning staff to take a closer look at what was important to the residents of Centennial and adjust the zoning accordingly for each area.

- Thanks to a lot of hard work during 2012, including plenty of public involvement, the **I-25 Corridor Plan** is well under way. As you can see, the area is key to the core of Centennial and this type of analysis and planning provides a vision as Centennial ages and redevelops. A

direct result of just such planning is the recent announcement of a 42 acre Business Park to be developed on the largest single ownership parcel in this area – the Jones Property. “The Jones District” will have 1.8 million square feet of mixed use, primarily office buildings. We look forward to working more with Jones as we implement our new code.

- Even without a large development project, more than 15,000 permits were issued last year, a sign that our businesses and residents are re-investing in our community.
- Our Building Services contractor, Safebuilt, excelled in customer service by going above and beyond as told in an email I received from a mom in the Foxridge neighborhood. One morning this mom was filling birdfeeders in her garage, with the door open, while her toddler was playing in the driveway. The mom could see her daughter from the garage, but someone on the street wouldn’t have known that. The mom heard a truck stop at the end of her cul-de-sac and then pull into the cul-de-sac. When the truck driver saw the mom he waved and nodded, it was clear to the mom that the Safebuilt employee, who was probably on the way to an inspection, was checking to make sure the child wasn’t wandering alone and that she was ok. This mom took the time to write to me to express her gratitude for this City worker’s neighborly gesture, saying: “To tell you the truth, my husband and I lived downtown . . . for 7 years and never . . . thought we would move to the 'burbs. Now, quite frankly, we are chagrined that it took us so long to get here. We love it, we love our mailman Mike, our Sheriff Deputy Jeff, our school, and now, a nameless neighbor who stopped this morning to make sure my little girl was cared for.”

Our employees and our contractors care about this City and go above and beyond to make sure we are a great place to live.

### **Public Works Principles:**

Principles number 7 and 9 were focused on Public Works:

***7. Well Maintained City Streets and Public Infrastructure***

***9. Ease of Mobility through Improved Traffic Flow Using a Multi-Modal Approach***

**Streets-** the thing we do that the public notices most. During 2012 we made significant improvements to our transportation network by:

- Scientifically assessing each street and committing to an overall high level of pavement condition.
- Increasing the number of miles maintained with best and award winning practices.
- Increasing the amount of snow plowing while reducing costs with route optimization. This innovative approach using GPS and algorithms helped reduce the time it took to plow our previous snow routes by 40%, allowing for 93 additional lane miles to be plowed during each snowstorm – a direct benefit to our residential areas.
- While we work diligently on our own roads, we also worked with other governmental entities on long term improvements to:
  - The I-25/Arapahoe intersection
  - C-470
- We signed an Intergovernmental Agreement with Lone Tree that provides clarity for maintenance and improvements to County Line Rd.
- For many years, the worst rated pavement in Centennial was Peakview St, just north of Arapahoe Rd. After much planning, the Peoria Roundabout – the 1<sup>st</sup> in the City - was installed and with a new concrete street, seems to be working well.
- Purchased a Public Works building and yard off Jordan Rd and Eagle Street. This site will provide a permanent home for trucks, plows, snow and ice materials, while saving our taxpayers money. The 6 acre concrete yard alone is worth more than the \$2.75 million we paid for the entire site.

Areas are often judged by their visible infrastructure. Centennial is showing our commitment to exceeding expectations when it comes to our roads and transportation infrastructure.

#### **Parks and Recreation Principle:**

Number 8:

#### ***Quality Parks, Open Space and Trails Meeting Community Needs with Easy Access for Citizens***

The writers of our Principles included a commitment to outdoor recreation.

- 2012 saw the official opening of Centennial Center Park which has seen amazing use from people all over the metro area, so much use we had to install additional parking. Center Park was the winner of the Great Outdoors Colorado Starburst Award, and is one of 10 finalists for DRCOG's Live Work Play award. We encourage you to go vote and in this case, vote often!

- We also celebrated the grand opening of the Parker Jordan Centennial Open Space (off Broncos Parkway, next to Tagawa) and we look forward to the 3Creek 5K race to be held there again this summer.
- Each year Centennial's receives a portion of Arapahoe County Open Space funding, paid through the Open Space sales tax. We then distribute that money to parks and open space within the City. This year in addition to our two large park district partnership projects, City Council wanted to share our open space funds with school and metro district parks located in Centennial. By establishing these local facilities as "neighborhood parks", they can apply to receive a share of Centennial's funding to be spent on much needed improvements.

### **Citizen Engagement and Civic Pride:**

The final three principles focused on the **citizen's experience of government.**

#### **12. *Active Citizen Involvement in Policy Development and Implementation***

- Centennial provides numerous opportunities for citizens and businesses to be involved in our City.
- 68 citizens serve on 10 Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Groups.
- **District meetings** have increasingly good attendance and provide a great opportunity for direct sharing of information between council, staff, and citizens.
- **Providing their unique perspectives, our Business Technical Advisory Group and our Senior and Youth Commissions** will be weighing in to Council on various issues such as how we address **Amendment 64** in Centennial.
- Project open houses and neighborhood development meetings provide citizens an opportunity for input prior to decision making by council.

#### **13. *Mutual Respect, Confidence and Trust***

- TABOR: We take it as a sign of trust that the citizens overwhelmingly passed Ballot Measure 2D (TABOR) last November, allowing the City of Centennial to retain and spend City revenues from all funding sources that currently or will exist. Since 2006, the citizens of Centennial had allowed us a temporary "de-brucing", but approving a permanent exemption shows the level of trust our city has earned by its voters.

- We build Mutual Respect, Confidence and Trust by responding to citizen inquiries with excellent customer service. For example,
  - The Citizen Response Center took nearly 20,000 calls and its 100,000 total call since opening in 2008; an 11% increase shows our citizens use and appreciate the service.

I received an email last fall that serves as an example of the importance of the way we treat people in responding to their needs:

After his visit to Centennial, James Miller wrote:

*“Recently, I visited Colorado and took my nieces to Centennial Park. I have to say that I have been to a lot of parks and your city park is the best one I've ever seen!! It's fun, educational, and best of all free!*

*Kudos to you and your staff!*

*My wife and I might be moving back here, as our hearts and families still live in the Denver area. If we do, the first place we'll look for residence is in your wonderful City.”*

The thing you don't know about James Miller is that the first part of his letter describes an accident that his mother had on a sidewalk near her home in Centennial. She came to the City to tell us about her accident so we could fix the situation that caused it. Mr. Miller was so appreciative of the response that his mother received – that the cause of the accident was fixed and how his mother was treated – that he wrote this letter. As I said earlier, sometimes unfortunate accidents happen, but, again, what matters is the way that we handle it.

I know our City will continue to look for ways to address citizens' concerns.

#### **14. *Our City, One Community – Strong Citizen Pride in the City of Centennial***

It's appropriate that Principle #14 is the last goal as Pride is the result of doing everything else on the list well.

As you can see, Centennial's culture is “what we do, we should do well”. By the number of awards won, it shows others are noticing our work.

However, Civic Pride not only comes from what the City itself does, but from what those in our City accomplish. There is a certain “ownership” of the success of those who come from your City.

Denver has a history with professional sports teams and notable figures, but now Centennial has its own hometown hero who made a splash on the international Olympic stage (*or pool*).

Missy Franklin’s amazing success, genuine poise and grace gave our residents a glow in the summer of 2012. The Summer Olympics’ “golden girl” was OUR “golden girl”! Citizens contacted the City inquiring how the City planned to welcome Missy home.

With an amazing gathering place of our own, Center Park provided the perfect backdrop for a big community celebration.

So, with only 72 hours to implement and with help from the Governor’s office, Centennial invited Colorado Olympians to our Center Park and afforded Colorado residents a brush with celebrity –and especially with our hometown hero. The accomplished athletes who attended were touched to be honored, the youngsters in the crowd were wide-eyed, and our City shone at its best. Governor Hickenlooper told me the event was exactly what our state needed on the heels of the Aurora tragedy and Front Range wildfires. It was truly my proudest day as a Centennial resident.

Our Center Park was a big success spring, summer, and fall, so why not try for winter too? With a brand new 30-foot spruce tree planted in the park, the City held its inaugural holiday tree lighting ceremony with performances by over 300 students from 6 school choral groups performing. The park provided a festive glow for those driving Arapahoe Rd. throughout the holiday season.

These kinds of experiences and a specific mention of Center Park are why it’s no surprise to us that Money Magazine chose Centennial as the 47<sup>th</sup> Best Place to Live in 2012.

In addition to Money Magazine, others in the media were also talking about Centennial. To get a feel for what was said, we created a Word Cloud made up of the most frequently used words in the press about Centennial during the past year. You have copies on your table and I think you’ll be proud to see how positive Centennial was viewed.

Since we hope to be an even better place to live in 2013, let’s take a sneak peak at what is on the horizon.

- Innovation and Customer Service – during our reorganization last year, these two areas were designated as critical to Centennial’s culture. The collaborative “Office of Innovation” will be looking at creative ways to do all things better, from technology advances to funding projects. Customer Service will cross departments to ensure our “customers” have the best possible experience working with Centennial.
- **We will continue to establishing low cost programs that encourage voluntary compliance versus punitive measures.** Be it sidewalk snow shoveling with the Snow Hero program or licensing a dog, Centennial believes we all should be “good neighbors” and wants to recognize those who are.

**Road Improvements will continue to be a high priority and there are exciting projects on the horizon.**

- Work will begin on the design of **I25/Arapahoe Interchange** and the quest for funding continues at the state and federal levels.
- **The C470 Coalition will** continue work on implementing the preferred option to add managed toll lanes from I-25 to Kipling St.
- **And I’m so pleased that we are focusing on Arapahoe Rd, Waco to Himalaya Street**, east of Parker Rd. The plan is to widen this stretch of 2-lane roadway, a project that many have long waited for– even prior to Centennial’s formation – and a project that has many challenges. However, City Council has decided to take it on and committed \$4 million dollars this year to get started. This project is a high priority for Centennial, and it will require us to work with our partners and neighbors to make Arapahoe Rd a more efficient route for commuters, businesses, students, and families.
- **2013 will see more improvements in Center Park** – shade structures, a demonstration garden by the Centennial Rotary, and improvements to the stage area will allow for more events and enjoyment at the park.
  - Some of those events are:
  - Nuggets Coach George Karl’s “Reggae in the Park” with the Wailers – a concert benefitting the CancerCare Initiative on July 27.
  - Dog Days – a special day for dogs and their owners.
  - Centennial Under the Stars – re-vamped with some special features that aren’t affected by fire bans and you won’t want to miss!

- And an even bigger and better Holiday Tree Lighting Celebration.

I hope you have the opportunity to have some fun with us in 2013.

**Recognition of 4 outgoing Council members:**

Those who created this Strategic Plan laid out these Principles and Centennial has followed up on them.

One of the reasons we've been successful is because we've had four Council members who have provided **consistent leadership** to our City for the past eight years. In 2005, Centennial elected four new City Council members. And because our Council members can only serve for two consecutive terms, those four Council members are now in their last year of service to their districts. Remember, Centennial is only 12 years old, so these Council members have served for 2/3 of the life of the City. We've made a little video so that you can hear from these four Council members who will be leaving office next January: District 1: Rick Dindinger, District 2: Sue Bosier, District 3: Rebecca McClellan, and District 4: Ron Weidmann.

**Show Video**

As you can see, their legacy is undeniable and they have laid the foundation for Centennial's future. Let's all thank these Council members for their service to the city.

Next year we will have four new Council members who will hopefully continue to use these highly successful Principles to Guide our Future.

It appears our vision and leadership have worked hand in hand.

And with accomplishments like these, I hope you agree this is one "report card", you won't be afraid to take home!

In closing, I thank you for coming each year to hear about Centennial and I also want to thank each of you for your contribution to our incredible community. We really did it!