

16th Annual State of our City May 12, 2022

Hosted By  Rotary Club of Centennial

Centennial Mayor Stephanie Piko State of Our City Speech

We choose this year's theme – Launching Forward in recognition of the position Centennial is currently in. One lesson learned over the past two years is – We cannot stop! As hard as the losses and complexities have been – we just do not stop.

Launching Forward acknowledges that the challenges and adversity we face when taken from a position of strength, it allows that pent up energy to build momentum and forge ahead.

We were in a position of strength- Strength in our finances, our planning and our goals – combined with the strength in our community, our partners and our businesses – made certain we did not stop. Seeing everyone here today, tells me that we are all excited about the possibilities ahead and eager to Launch Forward!

In 2021 we celebrated Centennial's 20th Anniversary. The only thing better than Celebrating Centennial's 20th birthday is now being able to say "We are finally 21!"

We had a lot to honor and celebrate in the past year – We honored and thanked those who worked throughout the past 20 years – to form the largest and I would argue the most successful incorporation of a municipality. I would ask that any former Council Members or Mayors – Board or Commission members or any of our founding fathers with the City of Centennial – please stand and be recognized.

In 2021, We also celebrated with our citizens, our businesses and our partners all of the things we have built and established together to make Centennial an exceptional community in Colorado.

Last year, we were approached by Viewpoint with Dennis Quaid – they are an education programming organization. They had noticed the various recognitions received in 2020 – being one of the safest cities in the US, one of the Top 10 most livable communities and the only government to receive the Gallup - Exceptional Workplace Award – which we proudly just received for the 6th consecutive year! We worked with them to create a one-minute commercial and a 5 minute "Quality of Life" video.

This video was distributed to 170+ media outlets throughout the US and aired on Fox Business news in prime time. It has also been distributed to public television stations across the country where it will be aired until April 2023.

It provides a great look at Centennial, our accomplishments and what makes our community unique – lets take a look.

Video

Centennial – where neighborhoods matter

This is an important part of our vision, something recognized by current and prior City Councils. It reflects on our founding – a collection of neighborhoods that came together in an exercise of self-determination. The challenge? How do you take 110,000 citizens – in roughly 86 neighborhoods, spread across 23 square miles to feel like a connected community? This is what we've set out to do as we "Launch Forward".

We have initiated a community grant program which recognizes and supports neighborhood efforts to make neighborhood improvements. These efforts are designed and implemented by the neighborhoods themselves. Any group of neighbors can apply to do projects or activities from neighborhood events to beautification efforts. This idea started as a pilot project and was so well received by the community City Council felt it's worth continuing to support.

Additionally - during our 20th Anniversary we successfully brought the celebration to the community through neighborhood centric events. Again, it was great for us to be out in the community and the response from residents was overwhelmingly positive. So back by popular demand – we will continue to have summer district events this year!

We recognize that the strength and desirability of our neighborhoods is great. Many residents have greatly benefitted from rising home values but the downside to the increasing cost of housing is how it can limit access for many young families and professionals to our community.

Of course, Centennial is not the only community experiencing this. In 2021, Centennial launched a housing study. We received a grant and are now examining potential housing and development options that can hopefully lower costs and increase opportunities for attainable housing in our community.

Centennial is also participating in regional initiatives to address homelessness like Built for Zero focusing on veterans and the Arapahoe County Committee on Impacting Homelessness.

It is important to this Council that we address the challenges facing our region regarding the individual needs of the unsheltered and take action to ensure the safety of residents and businesses.

Public Safety

Centennial has continued to be ranked one of the safest cities in Colorado with a population of over 100,000 citizens. We have a tremendous partnership with the men and women of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office (ACSO).

The ACSO continues to be one of the most highly accredited law enforcement agencies in the country going above and beyond, and the City of Centennial is dedicated to supporting and funding the ACSO to meet the needs of our community.

The ACSO has developed programs like the mental health co-responder program. This countywide program pairs licensed mental health clinicians or co-responders with deputies on calls for service that involve people experiencing a behavioral health crisis or emotionally charged situations. Using the

expertise of the deputy and the co-responder helps de-escalate situations and helps people get the appropriate mental health services they need.

We are so fortunate to have a Sheriff's Office that is eager to engage in many different ways with our community. At our community events, don't be surprised to see the Mounted Patrol, the K-9 Units or equipment to explore (like you saw today)– kids of all ages love it! It is my pleasure to introduce you to the newest member of the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Office – Zeke. Zeke joins Rex as the newest member of our School Resource Officer's team. Welcome Zeke and Rex.

Transportation and Mobility

Obviously, community safety is vital to the success of our City. But we also recognize the old adage – location, location, location! A big part of our vitality is Centennial's location. In the heart of the Tech Center and the I-25 corridor, transportation becomes a key mechanism to support our community, our employers and our workforce. Since the completion of our fiber network in 2019, we have continued to modernize our traffic signals with "Smart" technology and this year added a manned Traffic Operation Center - allowing us the opportunity to provide adaptive, real-time signaling throughout most of our corridors.

You may have noticed our largest construction project this year – the replacement of the 75-year old Arapahoe Bridge. Replacing this structure not only provides for continuity of travel lanes along Arapahoe Road – it is also an opportunity to improve another connection that is a vital part of our neighborhoods and community – our trail system.

Parks and Trails

In cooperation with our partners at the South Suburban Park and Recreation District, Arapahoe Park and Recreation District and Arapahoe County Open Spaces, we are able to continue to provide our community with something they have always cherished, but have really embraced over the past 2 years – Parks, Trails and Open Space. We have continued to work to expand our trail system east-west via the Centennial Link Trail and coming soon the north/south expansion of the Lone Tree Creek trail which will offer another "under Arapahoe Road" crossing opportunity and access to Cherry Creek State Park with all trails leading to Centennial Center Park!

We are excited to celebrate Centennial Center Parks 10th Anniversary this year. Centennial Center Park is undergoing an additional \$4,500,000 investment that will bring an additional venue, garden, open field, restroom facility and a parking/food truck court. Centennial Center Park continues to be our gathering place. It is in the center of our city and is our place to bring our community together – so join us this year for a Birthday Party, Brew-N-Que and Centennial Under the Stars! Whiskey Warmer and the Winter Artisan Market.

Education Embraced

Two additional strengths that tie our neighborhoods and community together are our two incredible school districts that have seen first hand how much our citizens support them. Both Littleton Public

Schools and the Cherry Creek School District have continued to innovate and respond to the changing needs in education. New schools can be seen in each district. Most predominantly is Newton Middle School's new campus with a sports stadium soon on its way, LPS's EPIC campus – and the Cherry Creek Innovation Campus – both providing pathways to job and skills development that make us leaders in creating workforce ready graduates. We appreciate the connection that our businesses have formed with our schools, helping them adapt to the ever-changing needs of industry, especially here in Centennial.

Economic Vitality

In Centennial we value our relationship with the business community. Not only are businesses (large and small) the driving force of our economy, but they play a vital role in the shaping of our community. Over the past two years we strived to support and promote our businesses as they have been challenged beyond expectations. Our citizens have also responded and continue to support the shop local mantra as they recognize that business is essential to the economic health of our community.

Beyond “Shop Local”, the City is launching initiatives like our SPARK program, a unique program that has looked at the revitalization of our shopping centers, supported opportunities for small businesses to demonstrate expansion ideas and now we have 30 businesses participating in an incubator program to explore ideas for customer expansion, building engagement and ultimately increasing sales.

Centennial is a community of smaller, neighborhood centric retail centers and they too have been impacted by the recent acceleration of a shift in consumer behavior. The City of Centennial is actively creating partnerships in these retail spaces to look for innovative ways to transform the retail experience, attract foot traffic and provide an impact that benefits the consumer and the retailer.

We are looking at a retail reinvestment strategy that will place our retail centers at a competitive advantage and attract the type of retail that supports and is supported by our community. The redevelopment of the Macy's and Sears locations at the Streets at SouthGlenn will also provide opportunities to explore retail that meets the needs of residents.

Fiscal Sustainability

In 2020, the City of Centennial adjusted its budget expectations (as everyone did) to prepare for the anticipated downturn in revenue. Although we saw a shift in where tax revenue was generated (How many of you shopped at Total Wine!?) Thanks to prudent budgeting and our resilient community, Centennial was back on track quickly. With 2021 revenues up 20% and with some sectors back to 2019 levels. The City has maintained its healthy reserve and remains debt-free. We continue to set aside revenues for future capital improvement projects and continue to support our Street Fund.

We are also very excited about the launch of what is currently our largest new development – right along the I-25 corridor – **The District!** Connecting with our Dry Creek Light Rail Station, the District will be Centennial's first Transit Oriented Development, a mixed-use development offering diverse housing opportunities and unique retail/office opportunities that will create a completely new experience in Centennial. Let's take a look.

Video

Supporting and retaining the businesses that have become a part of our community is so important. Denver South is a partner that embraces the significance of how all of our I-25 corridor communities attract new and support existing employers. Centennial is home to an admirable list of businesses and industries. Arrow, ULA, SEAKR, Sierra Nevada Corp, AlloSource and now, Boom Supersonic to name a few as well as our NEW Centennial Hospital, all representative of the high caliber companies that are attracted to our community for all of the reasons outlined today.

Video

With everything you just saw as part of the strong foundation in Centennial, it is easy to see why we continue to “Launch Forward”. We are not sitting back, our Council and our staff are dedicated to remaining innovative, collaborative and intentional. Our unique model allows us to be agile, to shift and innovate to best serve our community. As we strive to provide exceptional service for Centennial’s residents, we are committed to focusing on successful strategic priorities without getting bogged down by the distraction of outside forces.

We continue to create a future ready city – and the State of our City is stronger than ever – not only because of the priorities of this and previous City Councils and staff – but because of the strength and resiliency our community has demonstrated. I appreciate the spirit of exceptionalism that inspires our City and thank you all for partnering with us to continue to make Centennial a great place to live, work and play!

Thank you for coming out today – Thank you to all of the participants in our “show and share”. Greatly appreciated by all! Thank you to my husband, James – for being incredibly flexible with my time. Thanks to Lunch Wired for wonderful lunch and Wings Over the Rockies, we appreciate the opportunity to have such a marvelous venue so close to home and of course – thank you to the Rotary Club and the City of Centennial.

I hope you gained some insight, appreciation and perhaps a new idea, new contact and confidence in launching forward.