



State of the City

January 19, 2017

I am proud to report to you that the state of our city remains remarkably strong. Our population of 43,625 is growing, our economy is booming, crime is once again historically low, and our families have opportunities to thrive.

If you've got a good memory, this speech is probably already starting to feel very familiar to you. I just want you to know that's not because I'm intellectually lazy in my speech writing--it's because our benchmark indicators have been consistent and strong over a number of years now.

YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Before I move on to give you a snapshot of where we are and where we're headed, I want to step back and take moment to talk about the nature of city government.

I genuinely love being part of city government because local government does the most to impact our quality of life on a day-to-day basis.

Think about this: Cities are responsible for public safety, ensuring we have good, safe roads and sidewalks to travel on, good neighborhoods to live in and parks, libraries and community events to enrich our lives.

Cities ensure the trash gets picked up, that you have good, clean running water and a working sewer system.

In the City of Burleson, we have decided that city government should also be active in economic development to ensure our citizens have the consumer choices they want and that we expand the opportunities to work and learn right here at home.

I bring this up because as the biennial Texas legislative session begins, there is an unprecedented attack on local control in *some quarters* of state government.

This includes an attack on our ability to offer economic development incentives for companies to grow, locate or relocate in Burleson. I agree it would be preferable for no state or city to offer public incentives as part of economic development strategies, but the simple fact is incentives have been key to retail development, economic and job growth and diversifying Burleson's tax base.

If cities in Texas lose the ability to employ a wide range of economic development tools, we will lose the ability to compete with cities in other states. And, I would point out the incentives we have employed have been legitimate investments that have paid off economically.

It seems that some in Austin are unhappy with the choices some communities are making. Texas is a big, diverse state--this has always been a source of strength.

Different cities have different values and priorities and it is the job of local elected officials to do the best they can in representing their community's values and priorities. Courts and law enforcement are a check against local officials who violate state or federal constitutions or laws. And when local officials act in a way that is inconsistent with the wishes, values or priorities of the community they represent, their citizens hold them accountable.

In Burleson citizens do this in stores and restaurants, while you're out for a walk or jog, at school open houses, at free concerts in Old Town, in public meetings and town halls, on social media and ultimately at the ballot box. All of this is exactly as it should be.

When someone attacks local control, what they are attacking is our ability to make choices about the direction of our own communities. Fundamentally, disrespect for local control is grounded in a lack of trust in citizens' abilities to hold their own local elected officials accountable.

State and local governments have always been good partners. My message to the state legislature is, you've got complex and important state issues to focus on and that is the work you have been entrusted with by the voters. Let local elected officials do the work we have been entrusted with.

Now, let's talk specifics about how we're doing as a city and what lies ahead for us.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Obviously, there's nothing more important than having a safe place to call home. Our overall part-one crime rate, which accounts for those offenses categorized as the most serious under the Uniform Crime Report, including violent and property crimes, decreased by 3.1 percent from 2015 to 2016.

We did realize a 16.4% increase in part-two offenses. This is not all bad news in that it reflects pro-active enforcement in some categories like drugs, DWI and weapons offenses where stepped enforcement efforts are yielding positive results.

Of particular concern, however, are increases in family violence simple assault and runaways in 2016. Fortunately, the police department is well positioned to respond effectively.

Recently a new partnership was forged between the police and ministers, with the goal of providing outreach to our police staff and the community as well. Under this partnership, pastors will receive special training to help them effectively engage our most vulnerable populations.

In addition, we now have four community resource officers, each responsible for a geographical assignment and a city-wide initiative, including a youth-based initiative and a mentoring program in elementary schools.

Here's the bottom line: We have proven time and again that the generally accepted notion that population increases necessarily come with higher crime doesn't have to be true. We can absolutely continue to benefit from low crime rates, regardless of population growth or the economy, but it won't happen simply by chance, it will take two things:

- First, sustained investment in human resources, equipment and technology. Fortunately your City Council has made public safety its top priority for decades, and I don't see that changing.
- Second, but equally important, it will require extensive police-community relations. Of course, we know how to do that in Burleson. This past year, our Citizens Police Academy and Citizens on Patrol programs provided 5,430 volunteer hours to help make our city safer.

And in November the Burleson Police Foundation was incorporated to give citizens and businesses an avenue to recognize outstanding law enforcement service and provide for training and equipment needs that extend beyond what can be provided through the annual city budget.

On the firefighting side of the public safety equation, 2016 was a momentous year. Our fire department responded to 4,429 calls, with a 5:34 response time to emergency calls.

As with the police department, a sustained investment in human resources, equipment and technology is critical to sustaining effective firefighting in the face of rapid population growth.

In the current budget we added seven new firefighter positions, with the help of an \$840,000 grant which will fund six of those positions for two years. Rest assured that

our City Manager has already budgeted the funding necessary to retain all of those positions at the conclusion of the grant. We also employed a new aerial apparatus truck placed in service at Fire Station 2. Chief Freeman has set the department on a new course, which will result in the relocation of Station 2 to the area of Hidden Creek Drive and Dobson Street and a restructuring of the fire department to better meet the needs of a growing Burleson, ensure even better training for our firefighters and enhance the department's focus on safety and prevention.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Also critical to maintaining quality of life in a growing city is infrastructure. We continue to benefit from the investment citizens made in the November 2013 bond election, with many of those projects now complete and over 80% of the funds spent or encumbered for the improvements our citizens wanted.

And we're not just focused on building new roads, this year we increased funding for street maintenance by 8.5%. We will continue a long-standing focus on improvements that enhance safety and emergency response capabilities, improve traffic flow, provide safer routes to schools and parks, and make our city more walkable and bikeable.

GOVERNANCE

Next, you should be confident that you live and work in one of the most well managed cities anywhere. Our Finance Department was once again recognized with a Government Finance Officers Association Budget Award, Popular Annual Finance Reporting Award and Certificate of Achievement for Financial Reporting. Last year we refunded \$26 million of previously issued bonds, garnering a savings of \$2.4 million. Finally, in recognition of our history of sound management and fiscal stability, we received a bond ratings upgrade from Fitch Ratings.

As always, transparency and accountability is a fundamental value in the City of Burleson. We don't treat records requests as an annoyance, our City Secretary's Office bends over backwards to not only fill requests quickly and conveniently, but also goes to remarkable lengths to make sure citizens understand the information they are provided.

And don't forget, if you're ever curious about how the city spends your money, every bit of budgetary and financial information you could ever need is one click away on the City's website. You can even browse through the city's check register.

We are also placing a premium on public engagement through face-to-face forums, on-line town halls, social media communications and a new City app to make it easy for the public to receive or submit information.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Let's turn our focus now to community and economic development. In 2016, the city approved 80 final and minor plats and issued 340 residential building permits, with an average value over \$230,000.

2016 was a huge year for economic development--we created \$150 million in new investment in Burleson--that's compared with \$12 million in the previous year. Our unemployment rate stands at 3.1%, as opposed to 4.4% for the country and 4.2% for Texas.

Our median household income is \$80,556, more than \$5,000 higher than the median income for the state. And our retail vacancy rate remains the lowest of any DFW submarket at 1.9%.

There's a lot on the horizon for 2017 as well; here are just a few highlights.

- Old Town Station is a signature development that will add first class office space and great new dining options and will unquestionably be a new major landmark.
- Arabella, a new mixed use development on the 174 corridor will add 1100 to 1200 new residents, create close to 200 new jobs in health services and will be a \$90 million investment in Burleson.
- Hays & Stoltz is under construction and will become the largest employer in Highpoint Business Park with 100 jobs.
- Burleson is the US headquarters for F-Wave. They are developing cutting edge technology that could be a game changer in roofing and sustainable energy. They hope to one day employ 400 to 500 people in Burleson.
- And the Depot on Main is a first-class multi-family project that will offer 250 high end housing units and bring much needed residential density to Old Town.

As most of you have heard me say many times, Burleson is booming. If you're looking for a recipe for success in business, here it is: Bet big on Burleson!

A PLACE TO BELONG

For the remainder of our time today, I want to return to a theme I began discussing in last year's State of the City program and have focused on throughout the year--our role as placemakers.

That is our unique opportunity to work together to build great and authentic public spaces as well as a culture that leads to a special sense of place and a feeling among citizens that Burleson is the place where they belong.

Remember that some of our most effective placemaking is done through our parks and our library--they offer citizens the opportunity to engage their mind, improve their health, forge stronger bonds within their family and with a community. More than ever before citizens of Burleson will find new places to belong--on trails for walking, jogging, exploring or mountain biking; while playing soccer, golf or disc golf, fishing or joining other dog lovers and their best friends in our planned dog park along the Oak Valley Trail.

And there may be no greater sense of belonging than when we gather together in some of our favorite places to hear great music, watch outdoor movies or celebrate our shared holidays and traditions.

Now let's turn to our generation's opportunity to make a lasting mark through placemaking, building dramatically on our rich history. Today I am excited to share with you the design for our Old Town Plaza.



This design is the product of months-worth of extensive public input through townhall meetings, Facebook forums and pop-up plaza events. The plaza will be our community's outdoor living room--a space for concerts and festivals, a space for children to play, or a place for two friends to sit and chat over a cup of coffee.

As you know the plaza will also include a private sector redevelopment which will frame the plaza and offer new places to live, work, shop and eat. And it will also afford us the

chance to achieve the expansion of higher education opportunities that, when combined with the Burleson Opportunity Fund and the BISD's Early College High School, will ensure that every kid in Burleson has access to higher education.

CONCLUSION

Finally, I will conclude as I did last year, with this challenge that is the ultimate expression of placemaking. In a world where too many seek to define communities by who should be excluded, let us be a community where there is a place for all who abide by the law and seek to contribute. To the CEO, the entrepreneur, and to those who make a living providing the services that enhance our quality of life; to the young and young at heart, whether you are married or single; to the student, those at the beginning of their career and those who have retired; to the teacher, the firefighter, the police officer and the disabled vet, we say, "There is a *place* for you here."

Burleson is not just a place to live or work. Burleson is a place to *belong*.

Thank you. May God bless you and may God bless Burleson.