



State of the City

January 11, 2022



Good evening, and welcome to our first City Council meeting of 2022.

I want to begin by welcoming everyone who has tuned in tonight.

I want to thank my Council colleagues, our hardworking City staff and first responders for being true partners in the fight for our city's public health and economic recovery.

The State of our City is strong.

Even amid growing uncertainty surrounding the coronavirus variants, we remain resolved to help our residents navigate this rocky terrain.

Yes, we have seen unprecedented times, but we have also witnessed how much stronger we are together when we fight for an equitable democracy.

On June 15, 2021, the regional stay-at-home order was lifted, and we had our Blue Print for a Safer Economy. City facilities re-opened to the public in July.

Over the last seven months, we have worked hard toward some semblance of normalcy.

Many residents returned to work.

With nearly 35 hundred enrollments, our Community Services Department provided hundreds of classes and day camps for school-aged children to have access to online learning, which

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helped parents return to work knowing they had a safe space for their children.

We were able to hug our loved ones, have dinner in our favorite restaurants, enjoy responsible family gatherings, and actually plan family vacations again.

Roughly 40 THOUSAND - 67% percent - of La Mesa residents are vaccinated.

Vaccinations play a crucial role in our ability to move forward on the path to public health and economic recovery, and I wish to thank the community for helping reduce the spread of the virus.

When you see me driving around our community in my golf cart, I want to assure you that I take all of your concerns back to City staff.

At City Hall, we've stepped up the way we do business to be more responsive to the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors.

To take us back to the basics, all of our City employees participated in mandatory customer service training to foster a culture of "yes" that focuses on removing barriers to streamlined city services.

We hired a full-time Communications Manager to implement our Community Engagement Plan and enhance our overall outreach and communication to our residents and business community.

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Small businesses are the backbone and soul of our local economy.

We stand ready to help our small business community by amplifying their efforts and connecting them with resources.

We are working with the La Mesa Village Association to install a downtown district sign.

Understanding how the arts change and impact our lives in meaningful ways, we also created the Arts and Culture Commission to promote the arts, as a mechanism for fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Our Mortgage Assistance Program began accepting applications in October, as we work to help homeowners with any past due mortgage payments. We will soon expand the program to offer additional rental assistance.

We launched our SeeClickFix online tool to make it easier for our residents to report any neighborhood issues.

We have received over 600 SeeClickFix reports to date - completing nearly 80% of all requests.

In addition to thousands of preventative maintenance tasks, our Public Works staff repainted all the restrooms in our City parks, trimmed over 18 hundred trees, and repaired or renovated nearly 2 million square feet of pavement.

For public safety, we have focused on recruitment and retention.

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There were several key promotions in our Fire-Rescue Department, and we were able to hire several firefighters and one new fire inspector.

In addition to Fire-Rescue, we had several promotions within our Police Department, including our new Chief of Police, Ray Sweeney, who hit the ground running with his six step action plan to strengthen trust with a community-oriented policing model.

With fair and impartial policing at the heart of the plan, de-escalation training remains a top priority for the department.

As a city, we must pivot toward providing vital services to our most vulnerable communities in an effective, equitable, and sustainable way.

With our Homeless Action Plan as our foundation, we were able to launch our new Homeless Outreach and Mobile Engagement **(HOME)** Program and hired two full-time outreach workers.

Through the hard work of our HOME team, nearly 60 people were housed.

In addition to our compassionate approach to serving people experiencing homelessness, our Police Department has been working closely with the Community Police Oversight Board during its inaugural year to ensure we have police oversight and accountability.

As the City of La Mesa moves towards 100% renewable energy, our Climate Action Plan provides a road map to help us reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

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As one of five founding members of San Diego Community Power, the City of La Mesa officially began providing clean renewable energy to our facilities and La Mesa businesses last year.

In the spring of this year, San Diego Community Power will begin servicing residential customers.

The City has been working to make housing more attainable, especially for our younger generation.

Approval of the 8181 Allison Avenue Project, a 147-unit, 100% affordable housing development, takes us one step closer to tackling the housing crisis. Construction is slated to begin by early fall.

This year, we will prepare a master plan for La Mesa's first new park in many, many years to be located at the intersection of Waite Drive and Murray Hill Road.

The Master Plan for MacArthur Park is complete and will be followed by an Environmental Impact Report for the Park Plan.

And the next phase of renovations to our oldest Park, Collier Park, will begin very soon.

To summarize the state of our city; we continue to directly reinvest into our parks, public assets, and infrastructure; bolster our small business economy by shopping local, and shifting our paradigm to be a "*resident-centered and holistic*" approach to governance. I love this City, and I love the people.

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We are the Jewel of the Hills.

We are strong. We are resilient. We are La Mesans.

For the complete list of our 2021 State of the City accomplishments, please visit our website at www.cityoflamesa.us.

In closing, I challenge each of us to embrace our differences and find the common ground that unifies us.

Thank you.