



2022 State of the City

Mayor Kristofer P. Turnbow

Change is never simple.

Even change for the good – like progress – can create uncertainty and even fear that can divide an entire community if not handled properly or with the kind of leadership that we have come to expect from our elected body.

In the past couple of years, our City, our region and even our nation has experienced an incredible amount of change that will be simply considered normal to future generations. Not only have we had to sustain services in the midst of a worldwide pandemic, but continue to address the challenges of a growing community.

Our series of Community Conversations, first starting in 2016 and which we intend to continue, have helped define the future of our community. The conversations helped define who we are as a community and built a strategic plan for our Council, staff and residents to navigate some incredibly challenging projects that will continue to push the envelope and deliver more housing, amenities and opportunities for our residents not just today, but for generations to come.

It is because of the vision and leadership of past Council members and those who sit here today, that I am proud to say that the state of our City is strong. Do we have some fiduciary challenges that lie ahead? Yes, but we are in the midst of forging a path forward for our citizens to weather these tough times and still provide the city services they have come to know and expect.

Getting back to normal, but we have always been at work.

The root of all of this success, of course, lies with the incredible staff under the leadership of City Manager Jim Feuerborn.

Even in the worst of the pandemic, our staff continued to work – every day – to deliver services, protect our residents and guide growth during the past couple of years.

They continued to work through dynamic changes and sometimes unpredictable circumstances and we see their successes through national recognitions for our Parks, Public Works accreditation at the highest level attainable, Public Safety leadership and continued accolades for our fiscal responsibility.



We know our residents recognize the incredible work by our Police Department, but just recently our Chief Jan Zimmerman was recognized by her peers in the Missouri Police Chiefs Association as the Police Chief of the Year for the State of Missouri – an award that recognizes her lifetime of law enforcement work and dedicated public service.

Even as we said goodbye to long-time Development Services Director Jim Cadoret, I was confident that our planning and growth management would not miss a beat with the transition of numerous staff members throughout the City, and it hasn't

Our staff – for years – have been doing more with less. The time is NOW for our community to pass a Use Tax with Question P appearing on the August 2nd ballot, to be applied to certain out-of-state and online sales like Amazon to help fund new positions in the Police Department, Public Works and Parks maintenance divisions. With its passage in August, we will be able to hire at least four new police officers to help keep our growing community safe. A minimum of two new Public Works and two new Parks positions would also be created to aid those departments as they continue to maintain our infrastructure and parks to the highest levels.

I would encourage any resident who is skeptical of this need, and it is a dire need, to come and discuss the budget with city administration over the course of this next week. There is no doubt our economy is in a turbulent time, but those challenges do NOT reduce the need for these positions. Our citizens deserve the best services possible, and I fear what will happen should we not be able to staff our City with an appropriate amount of employees to meet the needs of our community.

As responsible fiscal stewards, we know how important it is that our residents trust how we spend their tax dollars. But as we grow, this is the responsible and right thing to do, and at the same time, supports our local brick-and-mortar businesses who often lose business to online sales due to an inability to compete. The time is now.

Building a Community for Everyone

There is no doubt that our community is growing. We continue to lead Cass County in residential and commercial development and are regularly recognized at the regional level as one of the most innovative communities in the area for development.

This is because our staff recognizes the importance of building a community that is welcoming to everyone and where everyone can find their own way to come home to more.



In just the past few years, multiple single family housing developments have been approved with more on the way. There are currently 203 single family homes under construction right now, with hundreds of additional lots on the way.

But having a balanced housing stock/options is imperative for a diverse community like Raymore. For many, single family homes are not the only piece that builds a successful community. Not everyone's American Dream includes a house with two cars. Our new, younger residents are looking for a place to call home that comes with different luxuries, is low maintenance and is close to restaurants, shopping and amenities.

We are a far cry from being considered an urban center. We want to maintain that small town feel and sense of community, but I firmly believe that it is incumbent on us to build a community that can offer a variety of housing options. It goes beyond just young residents, as our Community for All Ages GOLD Designation proves – our efforts to bring diverse housing touches all age groups.

Businesses and amenities follow our growth

During our Community Conversations, we have heard loud and clear from our residents that they want to see more sit-down, local restaurants and entertainment options in our community so they don't have to drive elsewhere for these amenities.

The biggest driver of commercial development is our own residential growth. The first question any developer will ask when looking at sites in our community is how many people live in the immediate area. How many can walk or bike to our location? How many will drive by on a given day?

We have tools at our disposal that help us attract these businesses - whether it's investing in infrastructure, coming up with creative ways to partner with businesses, or using incentive tools created by the state. All of these options allow Raymore to attract a strong and diverse group of businesses.

This affords us the opportunity to have a say in the kind of quality development we have seen over the past decade. We see time and again the projects brought to this community have been incredibly successful.

Already we are seeing success as we welcomed new businesses like Scooter's Coffee, Buff City Soap, Lutfi's, WingStop and many others.

Construction continues on Whataburger and in a few short months we will be able to sit down for dinner at our new Johnny's Tavern.

Already we are also seeing unprecedented investment and expansion at Compass Health – which serves our community's health needs and is a vital primary



employer. We also know the continued development of the Raymore Commerce Center and the City's partnership with VanTrust will provide valuable employment opportunities for the community.

These businesses and the nearly 250 other businesses that have re-invested in our community over and over are the success stories that prove our growth management and planning is second to none in Cass County. There are communities throughout the Kansas City region that only wish they had the kind of success we see and at times take for granted.

Ultimately, though, it is incumbent on us – as elected leaders in our community – to educate ourselves or seek out guidance from staff on how these tools work and what advantages they bring to the table when we sit down with a business to begin the planning process. We owe it to our residents to have a full understanding and share with them – honestly – how our City guides the kind of growth our residents have asked for.

We continue to listen to our residents because they shape the future

None of the success we have seen – even under rapidly changing circumstances in our region and throughout the world – would have been possible without the valuable input from our residents. At the end of the day, they are the ones at the top of the organizational chart.

That is why we will once again be holding a Community Conversation in just a couple days on July 27, only this conversation will have the specific focus on growth and what developments our community would like to see in the next 15 or 20 years.

Our residents and business owners will get to lend their voice to the conversation about where parks should be located, what kind of businesses we want to attract, and in what portion of our City. Building the future of our community cannot simply rest in the hands of a few, and so I am personally inviting everyone to lend their voices, now and in the future, and to use the online tools that our Development staff have created to help make your voice heard in this vital area.

Conclusion

We know we are not the tiny bedroom community we might have once been 20 years ago. With an incredible school district attracting new families and an emphasis on public safety, our community continues to be one of the fastest growing in both Cass County and the entire region.



We continue to see more people move here because of the incredible community we have built together. Our challenge is to ensure that no matter where you move within Raymore, you can find what you are looking for – apartments next to top quality amenities, single family homes for your growing family or maintenance free condos for those looking to downsize or retire.

Everyone has a place here in our community and no matter your stage of life, you... can always come home to more.