

<Introduction>

<Mayor introduces his wife, family, other notables>

<Remarks begin>

Thank you for that warm welcome, and for joining me today.

Once a year, it is my job as mayor to brag about the greatest city in the world – Scottsdale.

It isn't hard to do. In Scottsdale, 2015 was yet another year of accomplishment.

It is important, however, to place those accomplishments in context – in a framework that can help us understand what they mean.

And so I would like to present these accomplishments as answers to a question. A simple, yet supremely important question.

What kind of community do we want?

While each of us may answer that a little differently, I believe we can agree on these major themes.

We want a vibrant and enjoyable community.

We want a well-governed community that cares about people.

And we want a community that honors its past and protects its future.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the Scottsdale I want, and I bet you do, too.

Thanks to the work of many who have come before us, and many in our community today – including many folks in this room, Scottsdale is that kind of community.

Before I tell you why I believe that, it is my prerogative to turn over a few minutes of our time to my fellow City Councilmembers, and some other residents of Scottsdale.

We asked them to answer the question, “What do you want Scottsdale to be?” Here is what they said.

>>>ROLL VIDEO: councilmembers respond

Thank you to those residents and the Scottsdale City Council members who gave their perspective in that video.

<A vibrant, enjoyable community>

A vibrant and enjoyable community like ours is a place people want to be.

Scottsdale has earned a reputation. In the Valley, as a place people want to live. Nationally and internationally, as a place people want to visit, and increasingly, as a place people want to bring their businesses.

Vibrant is the right word to describe our community – it means bright and striking, full of energy and enthusiasm.

Each year about this time, Scottsdale shines brilliantly in the spotlight of an unprecedented span of events.

The Barrett-Jackson Collector Car Auction, the Waste Management Phoenix Open, the Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show, Spring Training.

We handle it in stride – and we look good doing it.

We are capable of shining, because we have made it a priority.

Investing bed tax dollars, generated by the tourism industry, in venues and facilities like WestWorld and the TPC Scottsdale, supports and grows tourism in Scottsdale.

We are in the midst of another amazing events season. Our signature events are seeing record crowds and raising millions for charity.

And don't forget about Spring Training.

It's an even numbered year, so the Giants will probably begin another World Championship season right here in Scottsdale next week.

These great events are very important for our reputation and our economy.

We also understand that at times, they cause some inconvenience for those of us who live in Scottsdale year round.

So on behalf of the city and all our event partners – thank you for your patience.

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During last year's State of the City address, Western Spirit: Scottsdale's Museum of the West, had just opened its doors. We couldn't say with certainty how it would be received.

One year later, it is clear that the idea of a place that showcases western art and artifacts in the heart of Downtown Scottsdale is a good one.

The museum is spectacular, and is achieving great success. It's another example of the power of investing tourism dollars to support a vibrant place that attracts all kinds of people.

Just a few months ago, Scottsdale's Museum of the West announced an affiliation with the Smithsonian Institute.

Affiliates are selected for excellence, professionalism, and the potential for advancing the Smithsonian's reputation and mission as the nation's history keepers.

Soon, iconic objects, cultural treasures and expert speakers from the Smithsonian will be coming to the museum, thanks to this relationship.

Scottsdale's Museum of the West achieved the honor and prestige of Smithsonian Affiliation more quickly than any venue in history – it was a great way to end 2015.

And they began 2016 strong as well, earning the title “Best Western Museum” from True West Magazine, which annually selects those institutions that best keep the spirit of the American West alive.

A great deal of the credit goes to the museum’s staff, led by Mike Fox, and their board, chaired by Jim Bruner – an historic icon in his own right.

Jim – stand up so people can see just how historic you really are <laugh>

Jim was serving on the City Council when the city made another bold investment in its tourism and events infrastructure – the TPC Scottsdale.

When that course opened in 1987, the Phoenix Open began its journey from a modest event on the PGA Tour to the most attended golf event in the world.

Using bed tax dollars two years ago to upgrade the TPC Scottsdale solidified an agreement to keep a PGA Tour event here through 2022, and it helped the Waste Management Phoenix Open earn the title of PGA Tournament of the Year for the second consecutive year.

Just a few weeks ago, the tournament welcomed a record 618,000 fans, and crowned a new champion who hails from Japan – which will only grow Scottsdale’s international reputation and following.

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These venues and these events happen thanks to the hard work of too many people to name here.

But these events don’t rely on resident taxes.

A healthy tourism industry should support and reinvest in itself, and that is what we have in Scottsdale.

Our partners at the Scottsdale Convention and Visitors Bureau – the CVB – are another example.

CVB President Rachel Sacco and her staff have developed and refined Scottsdale’s reputation as a destination for people who want to experience the beauty and sophistication of the modern west.

They have been incredibly effective over the years, but like any smart organization, they recognize that if you aren’t adapting and evolving, you are falling behind.

So the CVB is completely reimagining Scottsdale’s tourism brand.

They are diving deep, researching how people around the world perceive Scottsdale, and how we want to be perceived.

They are looking at our competition, and re-focusing on the things that make Scottsdale unique and appealing.

A new creative brand will be the result.

I’d love to give you a sneak peek here, but they aren’t even letting me behind the curtain.

The new brand and all its elements will be revealed this fall.

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The array of options to experience Scottsdale’s vibrancy are remarkable, and I have only touched on part of it.

Much of that comes from the venues and programs managed by the Scottsdale Cultural Council.

Led by an all-volunteer board of trustees, this nonprofit organization is funded by a combination of public and private dollars.

The Cultural Council manages three of Scottsdale's premier cultural assets – the Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts, the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art – SMOCA, and the Scottsdale Public Art program.

These go a long way toward defining our great city as a place and people that embrace art and culture.

The Cultural Council creates dazzling public displays, like the Canal Convergence installation that draws nearly 40,000 people to the Scottsdale Waterfront.

I hope you'll join me and experience it for yourself – Canal Convergence 2016 opens tonight, and runs through the weekend in Downtown Scottsdale.

Thank you to the Scottsdale Cultural Council for all that you do – for making Scottsdale vibrant.

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Another part of our vibrancy is the Scottsdale Philharmonic, a professional nonprofit orchestra providing free performances in Scottsdale.

They just performed last Sunday, and two more concerts are scheduled before the summer.

There are very few options today to enjoy classical arrangements of some of history's greatest music.

I am very grateful for the fact that the Philharmonic chooses Scottsdale.

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Much of Scottsdale's vibrancy is seen in our business climate.

You will find small businesses, large corporations and everything in between right here in Scottsdale.

Of course we have world-class retail and restaurants, but our position as a hub for innovative technology and health care companies has never been stronger.

In December, DataFox named Scottsdale one of the nation's 10 best cities to found a startup, outside Silicon Valley and New York.

They cited Scottsdale's strong relationship with Arizona State University, the Eureka Loft co-working space, low cost of living and a strong environment for business growth when ranking us No. 8 on this list.

That's nice recognition, but we already knew that our business environment is more attractive than ever.

In fact, the second Phoenix Startup Week, a regional grassroots festival celebrating startup technology firms, is occurring as we speak. Half of the activities in this Valley-wide event are happening right here in Scottsdale.

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A distinct focus of our economic development team has been retaining businesses already in Scottsdale, and helping them grow stronger – and that focus is reaping rewards.

A significant win is our success keeping JDA Software here.

JDA is one of the Phoenix-metro area's most successful technology companies, and they were one of the first international tech companies to make Scottsdale their corporate home.

After considering relocating to other parts of the country, JDA worked with the city economic development team as well as the Arizona Commerce Authority to explore Arizona options.

They ultimately decided to remain right here in Scottsdale, and are currently relocating their corporate headquarters to the Scottsdale Quarter. I look forward to helping them cut the ribbon soon.

It has been great to see the evolution and growth of the Scottsdale Quarter project over the last handful of years.

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During that same time, the McDowell Road Corridor, anchored by SkySong, the ASU Scottsdale Innovation Center, has reinvented itself.

Technology companies are finding a beautiful “live, work & thrive” environment on McDowell – an attractive commercial and residential mix.

The first three phases of SkySong are at 98 percent occupancy.

SkySong 4 broke ground in September, and new retail and restaurant spaces to serve more than 1,500 employees and countless visitors will open soon.

When we say that McDowell has reinvented itself, consider that of the 55 plus companies and ASU units at SkySong, nearly half are in the information, communication and technology sectors.

It is a very different atmosphere, and a stark contrast to the old Motor Mile.

The McDowell corridor of today and tomorrow is less about the road, and more about the code.

More apps, fewer hubcaps. More hires, fewer tires. Laptops, not hard tops.

I could go on, but hopefully you can see what I’m driving at.

As auto dealerships continue to seek freeway frontage elsewhere, they yield space for future opportunities such as mixed-use developments with employment, service retail and modern residential components.

Scottsdale Entrada, a proposed redevelopment of the northeast corner of 64th Street and McDowell Road, is an example. It should provide a wonderful, modern gateway on the McDowell corridor's west end.

McDowell will be mighty again – even stronger in the years to come.

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Across Scottsdale, commercial vacancy rates and values reflect a very healthy economy.

As of December, the commercial vacancy rate in Scottsdale was about 2 percent lower than the Metro Phoenix average, and the values were substantially higher.

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Among all of our economic successes, I am probably most excited about the Scottsdale Cure Corridor – the growing network of health care and bioscience companies in Scottsdale.

The third annual Scottsdale Cure Corridor event was hosted in December by the Scottsdale Business Development Forum and the city's economic development department.

More than 250 people attended. They heard about the amazing collaboration happening among innovators, bio-scientists, doctors, health care and pharmaceutical managers and investors.

These are the people who are improving the quality, accessibility and efficiency of health care as we collectively drive to the “cure”.

The Cure Corridor is more than an industry cluster, or real estate deals, or even creating jobs. It's also more than providing a great business, political and market environment.

The Cure Corridor is collaborative technical innovation in the bioscience industry. It's an attitude ...even a personality.

What does it mean to Scottsdale, the Valley and the state?

It means we have a growing bioscience business community that is intent on more than simple economic development.

The Cure Corridor is scientists, techs, doctors and business innovators focused on curing deadly diseases. The results are advancing the length and quality of human life.

One indicator of success is that the Cure Corridor continues to grow.

Nearly 50 hospitals, universities, companies and organizations are at work here, and more join each year.

Those committed to changing the future know they can find opportunities in the Scottsdale Cure Corridor.

The spark of collaboration and innovation continue to attract bright minds.

The Scottsdale Cure Corridor isn't a hope – it's a destination.

It has been called this generation's "moon shot", but I am steadfast in believing that cures to deadly cancers will be found, and that the people working right here will play a big role in doing it.

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Before I leave the topic of Scottsdale's robust and diverse business environment, I want to talk about another sector building roots in Scottsdale – cyber security.

As our economy becomes increasingly reliant on technology, nothing is more important than keeping data and our data-sharing infrastructure secure.

Security Canyon is a new cyber security coalition in Arizona, comprising an array of local firms and organizations.

Many are in Scottsdale, and all are focused on growing, attracting and retaining cyber talent in Arizona for this critical industry sector.

<A community that cares>

What good is any of our business or tourism success if it comes before the well-being of our community?

We want, and we have, a community that puts people first. I have some wonderful examples from the past year.

The story of the Wheel Inn Ranch has made headlines since June, when residents of this longtime RV and mobile home park were told that the land beneath them would be redeveloped by a new owner.

They would need to find somewhere else to call home.

City staff, City Council members and community advocates stepped in to provide assistance, and continue to follow-through with the residents of the Wheel Inn Ranch to make sure they are getting the help they need.

Scottsdale's annual Back-to-School event is another example.

Dozens of people, led by Scottsdale community services staff, worked for months to make sure that 800 Scottsdale children were able to start the year with the right supplies, and feeling good.

Partners from the private, nonprofit and government sectors contributed clothing, supplies, and health checks, making this one of the largest and most successful back-to-school events in the city's history.

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Scottsdale is a community for all ages, and in addition to helping our young people, we offer some of the best senior services and programs around.

We are often mentioned among the best communities in the country to retire, and rightfully so.

Two full service senior centers help residents stay connected to important resources, but most importantly each other.

Retirement does not mean retreating from a full and active life, and Scottsdale's senior services and senior community certainly prove that.

It is a fact, however, that some of our seniors need a little more assistance than others – and we're doing something about it.

We're making house calls.

A Scottsdale Fire Department paramedic and a nurse practitioner from Honor Health started this summer, making special visits to people who have a history of multiple 9-1-1 calls for chronic conditions.

This team provides screenings and helps them manage their health proactively.

This personalized care relieves the health care system of unnecessary and unproductive emergency calls, but more importantly, it gets people on the path to a better life.

It is just the kind of service that we should expect in a caring community like Scottsdale.

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Speaking of services, we recently adjusted Scottsdale Trolley routes to better serve visitors, businesses and neighborhoods, including some areas with large senior populations.

In addition, members of city staff are also hosting senior trolley tours to help people become familiar and comfortable with riding the trolley as a means to maintain their independence, even as they grow older.

Initiatives like these, which help seniors be happy and hopeful for their entire lives, are very important to me.

“For Our City” is a community coalition that I helped found in Scottsdale several years ago.

I have asked them to work with the city’s human services team and other agencies to develop more programs to improve the quality of living for our seniors.

“Aging in place”, as it’s called, shouldn’t mean being stuck at home.

We’re making sure seniors in Scottsdale know that, and have resources to do something about it.

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Another program that helps our seniors is the beneficiary of today’s event – Operation Fix It.

This program was started by city code enforcement officers who realized they were writing citations for people who really wanted to maintain their properties, but just could not, due to physical or financial circumstances.

These officers started taking a little of their personal time on weekends to mow lawns or do basic cleanup.

The “Code Cares” program started there, and eventually grew into “Operation Fix It” as we pushed to take it to a new level.

In 2015, Operation Fix It put nearly 700 volunteers to work, fixing up nearly 200 properties.

Financially, the program survives on donations from the local business community and other organizations.

Last year, we raised \$24,000 at this event for “Operation Fix It”.

The program is more than fixing up homes – it reconnects people to their neighbors and to the community – with long lasting positive effects.

Ines Wagner is one of those people. Her husband passed last fall after a valiant battle against brain cancer.

As a result of that difficult struggle, understandably, her property began to show signs of neglect.

She received a notice of violation, and after speaking with a code enforcement officer, learned about Operation Fix It.

Ines can tell you the rest of the story much better than I can.

<<ROLL INES WAGNER OPERATION FIX IT VIDEO>>

After watching that, I think you can see why I am so proud of this program, and put such a priority on making sure it can help as many people as possible.

Thank you to everyone who supports Operation Fix It, whether it is through this event, volunteering, or donating materials or money.

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All of these things are the marks of a community that cares.

If we weren’t delivering on the basics, however, we may not be able to spend time truly caring for people in Scottsdale.

But we do a great job with the basics here.

Scottsdale delivers the core foundations of service more effectively than anywhere else I know.

This is a well-governed community.

I'm not going to sprain my arm trying to pat myself on the back, because it takes more than elected leadership.

The Mayor and City Council are certainly vital elements, and Scottsdale has enjoyed decades of positive and visionary elected leaders.

Those leaders have hired professional staff – city managers and other charter officers – who have, in turn, developed and grown a municipal organization that does its job very well.

We also have thousands of active and engaged residents and community leaders who truly make Scottsdale, Scottsdale.

Here's one example.

This summer, a group of residents started appealing to the city to provide public pickle-ball courts.

While some may be unfamiliar with the sport, it is growing in popularity. In a city with the full array of recreational assets, people pointed out Scottsdale's lack of public courts for their favorite sport.

Because we listen to and value our residents, we responded, much more quickly than many people expect from government.

We converted two tennis courts at Cholla Park to eight pickle ball courts with money already in the budget. The courts opened in December.

We can't always deliver a new amenity this quickly – but in my mind that small example is par for the course in Scottsdale.

I know “par for the course” is golf speak, but I’m not sure what it translates to in Pickleball lingo, so please forgive me.

Regardless, we always try to deliver on the city’s mission statement: Simply Better Service for a World-Class Community.

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City services across the board are excellent, but I want to speak for one moment about the law enforcement professionals in the Scottsdale Police Department.

Our public safety professionals hold themselves to the highest standards.

Nationally, 2015 was a very difficult year for men and women who wear the badge as police officers.

I want to speak very clearly: we honor and respect every police officer in Scottsdale.

It’s a difficult job and at times requires split second judgement decisions. You have built a reputation as one of the premier law enforcement agencies in Arizona.

Scottsdale police officers deliver a Scottsdale level of professionalism, and we thank each of you for being part of that.

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The foundation for all our services is smart and well-planned infrastructure that usually goes without notice. But we shouldn’t forget about it.

While California’s drought restrictions made headlines, decades of smart water resource management – including Scottsdale’s water reuse system that is known around the world – a desert city like ours continues to prosper.

When we talk about a safe community, an enjoyable community, a desirable location for business or tourism – remember that none of that is possible without a water system that can support it.

And Scottsdale has one of the best.

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Before I leave this subject, I want to applaud another strong fundamental piece of Scottsdale – for which your city government takes no credit.

The public schools in Scottsdale are terrific, coupled with excellent public charter schools , and the variety of outstanding private schools all meet the diverse demand of our parents and students.

We’re also fortunate to have an award-winning community college serving our community, and the Mayo Clinic medical school in the near future.

The quality of local schools is profoundly important to the health of a city’s business environment, and Scottsdale’s are “A +.”

<A community that honors its past and protects its future>

The community we want is also one that honors its past and protects its future.

The history of Scottsdale is steeped in superlatives, and we are recognizing some major milestones in 2016.

Scottsdale Stadium was first built 60 years ago, and not coincidentally, we are getting ready to celebrate 60 years of Spring Training in Scottsdale.

Our city will celebrate its 65th year of incorporation this summer.

Tomorrow, it will be my honor to be part of celebrating city founder Winfield Scott’s 179th birthday.

<<show photo of his statue>>

Happy birthday, Winfield – you don't look a day over 175.

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One community partner celebrating a milestone anniversary this year is not quite that old, but just as accomplished.

2016 marks the 25th anniversary of the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy.

Thanks in large part to their work, Scottsdale's McDowell Sonoran Preserve is our crown jewel, coveted by residents and visitors alike.

With nearly 50 square miles now permanently protected, the Conservancy remains a fixture in the Preserve.

Their hundreds of volunteer stewards are always sporting a helpful smile along with their iconic blue shirts.

The partnership between the city and the Conservancy is one of the best things about Scottsdale, and it continues to have a substantial positive impact in our community.

That's why it was so gratifying when the American Society of Landscape Architects presented its Medal of Excellence to the city and the Conservancy in November.

The award recognizes significant contributions to landscape architecture policy, research, education, project planning and design. The evolution of Scottsdale's scenic preserve required all of those facets.

The preserve hosted nearly 700,000 visits last year – people who came to enjoy the beauty of the desert and a network of award-winning trails and trailheads, hosted and maintained by Scottsdale Preserve staff and the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy stewards.

When people share a vision, and then work hard to make it happen, great things are possible.

Special thanks to the McDowell Sonoran Conservancy, their staff and volunteers for being a big part of making Scottsdale special.

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As I begin to wrap-up my remarks, I want to spend some time talking about the future, and the importance of our work to determine what Scottsdale will be years from now.

The McDowell Sonoran Preserve is an example – it simultaneously embodies honoring the past while preserving the future.

Another– the Desert Discovery Center – has been an idea studied for many years now. It could be another Scottsdale signature for generations to come.

Although its future is not yet decided, I am excited about the fact that Scottsdale is taking this big idea forward, and look forward to learning what the public outreach process will reveal.

It’s the kind of thing that most other communities would never contemplate. But it’s just the kind of thing that Scottsdale does.

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While the beauty of the Scottsdale’s Sonoran Desert and mountains are impossible to deny, Scottsdale is involved in another conservation effort that is more difficult to see.

One in every 5 gallons of water we use in Scottsdale comes from the Salt River Project system. And that water originates in the streams and rivers of Northern Arizona.

Forest fires, which have become all too common in that part of our state, don’t just ravage trees and meadows. The runoff after those fires, heavily laden with ash and debris, severely denigrates the quality of the water we receive, and significantly increases the cost to treat it.

Scottsdale will contribute \$120,000 over the next three years to the Northern Arizona Forest Fund, which will help pay for a variety of efforts to make our forests healthier, and restore our watersheds.

Those efforts will improve the quality of the water we receive, and could also increase the quantity available to us.

A forward looking community like Scottsdale thinks, and acts, beyond our borders – and our participation in the Northern Arizona Forest Fund is a perfect example.

Water issues and water policy are a particular passion of mine – we need look no further than the tragedy in Flint, Michigan, to understand their importance.

Among my responsibilities as mayor is representing Scottsdale on the board of the Arizona Municipal Water Users Association.

Lending my perspective to their important work developing policies that safeguard Arizona’s future water supplies is something I take very seriously.

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To continue a look forward, let’s consider some of the things we will explore and address as the year progresses.

Downtown Scottsdale continues its remarkable evolution. As we welcome more employers and more upscale urban living in the area, we will face new challenges.

Parking. Transit. Marketing. Mission.

Can we continue to guide the evolution of our downtown as a place to live, work, visit and enjoy?

Can we make sure there is enough parking, and that it is fairly allocated and paid for?

There are some important discussions and decisions ahead for Downtown Scottsdale.

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In 2015, we once again asked voters to consider paying to rebuild and improve important infrastructure with bond financing.

Voters approved two of six bond packages presented. As a result, several fire stations will be built or improved, and money will be dedicated to preserving pavement on streets around Scottsdale.

But how will we pay for similar attention needed to rebuild and improve parks, police facilities, technology and other infrastructure?

That is an important conversation we must have as well.

Another concerns the city's unfunded pension liability. We can't afford to ignore it, and need to explore reasonable and effective reforms to our pension plans and compensation policies.

And we can't forget about transportation. We need to plan and respond to immediate transportation needs by prioritizing our transportation dollars, whether those are locally generated or county Prop. 400 funds.

An update to Scottsdale's Transportation Master Plan has been underway since last fall. Many residents and businesses have provided input, feedback and ideas for that plan as we reshape it to address our current and future needs.

That prioritization is critical, because it will position Scottsdale to capitalize on regional transportation matching funds to accomplish our long-term transportation goals.

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On a regional basis, as the current Chair of the Maricopa Association of Governments Regional Council, I am working hard to get the ball rolling on a Statewide Unified Transportation Plan.

Doesn't it make sense to plan large transportation systems and projects collaboratively, without constraint of municipal or even regional boundaries and connect all stakeholders with a comprehensive, pragmatic and rational plan?

I think so.

So I am working to bring MAG and the other MPOs, municipalities, the state Department of Transportation, regional agencies and other organizations together to plan transportation networks that work more efficiently and effectively for everyone. We are modeling after some effective approaches used by other states, most notably Utah.

<Conclusion>

As I said in the introduction, we want a vibrant and enjoyable community.

We want a well-governed community that cares about people.

And we want a community that honors its past and protects its future.

I hope these remarks have illustrated how Scottsdale is all of those things.

We have wonderful visions and terrific ideas but the essence of accomplishments is always ACTION.

Scottsdaleians have been in history, as they are today: a people who have ideas, make decisions, and act upon them.

They get things done to move Scottsdale forward.

By the grace of God, most of those decisions have been the right things to keep our city strong, prosperous and safe.

Together, we make this the best city in the world.

I remain honored and humbled to be your mayor.

Thank you for joining me today, and for everything you do to make Scottsdale great.

Together, let's have a great 2016.