



STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS 2013
Oro Valley: A picture of healthy growth
Mayor Satish I. Hiremath, D.D.S.
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Good afternoon everyone. On behalf of my colleagues and the staff of the Town of Oro Valley, welcome to the 12th Annual State of the Town Address.

Let me begin by recognizing my fellow Councilmembers who are with us today: Vice Mayor Lou Waters, Councilmembers Brendan Burns, Joe Hornat, Mary Snider and Mike Zinkin. Unfortunately, Councilmember Bill Garner was not able to be here.

Before I get into the speech, I'd like to give you a little background on how we arrived at this year's theme: a picture of healthy growth.

In each of my previous State of the Town Addresses, I was very focused on a specific goal, and always pressing forward to tackle the next challenge. Apparently, I tend to do that in day-to-day life as well. So when Miss Nowak, our Communications Administrator, and I sat down together to talk about this year's speech, she told me it was time to hit the pause button and take a moment to reflect on the Town's achievements.

Those of you who know me know that this approach is way outside my standard operating procedure. I am a firm believer that we shouldn't pat ourselves on the back for things that we should be doing anyway. So needless to say, I was resistant.

But she pressed on, saying that the time was right to tell our story—to paint a picture of our successes so that we can appreciate how Oro Valley has become the community we know and love today.

But you know me... I was being stubborn and wasn't going to fold. I even used the line, "Do you know who I am?" To which she replied, "And???"

So we put it to a thumb wrestling match.

Guess who lost?

But in all seriousness, the time IS right to share our story. To paint a picture of how we began as a community, and who we are today. Sometimes we get so caught up in checking things off our to-do list that we forget to stop and reflect on how far we've come.

So as we started talking about how to develop this theme into the State of the Town Address, the concept of growth emerged.

I know... "Growth" isn't cutting-edge, nor is it a very exciting topic. But often times, the simple concepts—like growth—are the ones that are difficult to do well.

Growth is not a progression or evolution where we begin as one thing and end up as something different. It is not measured by just one or two indicators. Healthy growth is the development and maturation of a community.

When we plant a seed, we have a vision of what we hope it will look like. Unless deprived of all nutrients, trees will find a way to grow. Communities are the same way. With or without our intervention, communities will grow. But HOW a community grows is dependent upon how we tend to its needs. There's no single "right way." There is so much beyond our control, so it's imperative that we identify the things we CAN control and invest our time and resources in those areas to ensure the community has the best chance not only for survival, but for healthy growth.

Too often we see communities focus their resources into one area while another area crumbles away. What is lacking is vision—long-term vision for healthy growth. Healthy trees don't spring up overnight, and neither do healthy communities. They take guidance, nourishment and attention, and that translates into leadership, adequate resources and staffing.

Maintaining a long-range vision for a community is vital to healthy growth, and it starts at the roots.

When we look back at our Town's humble beginnings, it's amazing how far we've come.

It was 1874 when George Pusch would settle in the area of Oro Valley and establish his cattle ranch. Ranching in the area continued to flourish with families like the Romeros and the Rooneys.

In the late 1950s, the Oro Valley Country Club opened at the base of Pusch Ridge, establishing the area's future as an affluent community. By the late 1960's, incorporation became a greater focus for those living in the area, but it wasn't until 1974 that a group of residents successfully incorporated the Town. At the time, it was only 2.4 square miles with a population of 1,200. Today, we comprise 36 square miles with a population of more than 41,000.

The roots of this community are strong and rich with history. They serve as a stable foundation for everything that would follow, so it is important that we check back often and look at those roots, and acknowledge our history and heritage and remember those who have gone before.

With the acquisition of the Steam Pump Ranch property, the Town of Oro Valley has the means to protect and preserve an important piece of our history and heritage.

The Town now holds two major signature events here each year—the Fall and Spring Festivals—as well as monthly tours and cultural programs. And next month, the Oro Valley Farmer’s Market and Public Art Tours will be relocated to the Ranch.

We’re also coming up on the Town’s 40th anniversary, and we’ll be celebrating that at Steam Pump Ranch on April 26, 2014, so mark your calendars now!

Moving beyond the roots, we come to the trunk of the tree, and I see that as our core values.

Nearly 40 years ago, when Oro Valley incorporated, its founders had to determine what kind of community it wanted to be. They had to identify core values, and then put policies and expectations into place.

Every ten years, thanks to Arizona state statute, our community is required to develop and ratify a General Plan, which is based on our core values and vision for the future. And those are determined by you—the members of this community. Why am I mentioning this? It’s time for Oro Valley to update its General Plan.

This document is the foundation for success as our community grows and moves forward. It is our roadmap for the next ten years. And the only way to ensure that this roadmap accurately reflects our community is to engage our residents, business owners and other stakeholders in the public participation process.

Today is the official launch of that process, entitled: *Your Voice. Our Future*. In your programs you’ll find information on how you can get involved. We want to hear your ideas and we want you to stay engaged in this process to see how it all unfolds. This is a very important time for our community, and I’m inviting you to join the conversation!

Throughout the years and the inevitable changes, the Town of Oro Valley has stayed true to its history, heritage and core values. Of course as times change and our residents’ needs change, we must be open to reinterpretation of those values and how to keep them relevant, because inflexibility—the unwillingness to look at our values with a fresh perspective—will ultimately stunt our growth.

Some view flexibility and compromise as weakness. But I ask you this: what happens to a tree that will not bend when the storms blow? It is snapped in half or worse yet, pulled entirely out of the ground.

It's a delicate balance: knowing when to stand firm, and when to be flexible. Oro Valley has benefitted from decades of leaders who understood that concept well. And as a result, we have developed like a tree with a strong root system and trunk, able to bend and flex without breaking or being uprooted.

So what happens when a community understands the balance between staying true to core values while also remaining flexible as changes come? Growth. And not just any kind of growth—healthy growth.

As we know, the lower branches of a tree are the largest, strongest and most mature. In Oro Valley, we have some “lower branches” that have grown to become our trademarks—the qualities and services for which the Town has built a strong reputation. Those branches include roads and public safety.

We're all aware that the deteriorating roadway conditions in the region have been discussed at great length. But in Oro Valley, we've found a formula that works. In fact, in a recent newspaper article, Pima Association of Governments identified Oro Valley's Pavement Preservation Program as a model for other jurisdictions.

But our roadway infrastructure goes beyond preservation to include improvements that will benefit the entire region. A recent example is the widening of Lambert Lane, including sidewalks, bike paths and a multi-use path. This successful project is the result of a regional partnership between the Town of Oro Valley and PAG.

Adequate funding, coupled with strategic and systematic management have ensured that our roads will remain among the best in the region.

When it comes to public safety, many cities and towns made the difficult decision to cut police officers and programs when the economy took a downturn; however, we did not. Oro Valley's Police Department, and the community services it provides, are so deeply intertwined with our identity and our residents' expectations, that cutbacks in this area were not an option. And you may not know how many services OVPD provides that go way above and beyond the status quo.

For example, the Oro Valley Police Department's School Resource Officers Unit was recently chosen as a model agency by the Arizona School Resource Officers Association. The allocation of resources to this program—ensuring the safety of our children while building relationships with law enforcement—has garnered national attention, as more communities seek out ways to implement similar strategies.

Other community-based programs include Adopt-A-Business, Citizen Volunteer Assistance Program, Citizens Police Academy, Project Graduation and the Dark House Program.

There's a reason Oro Valley Police Chief Danny Sharp received this year's Legacy Award from the Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce. Under his leadership—which began in 2000—our Police Department has maintained a safe environment in which our residents, businesses and visitors can thrive.

When roots are nourished, the core is strong, and lower branches are well developed, new growth can flourish. We've all seen communities where a vision for new growth came at the expense of core values and infrastructure. When resources are taken away from the things that keep the tree strong, the tree's foundation becomes weak and it cannot support or sustain new growth.

I'm very proud that through all its initiatives and vision for new growth, the Town has retained the core values and services which are a strong framework for our future. And that future includes annexation.

Annexation is the reason the Town has grown from just 2.4 square miles to 36 square miles of gorgeous scenery, beautiful neighborhoods and successful businesses. And a few months ago, we expanded our boundaries once again, to include the northwest corner of Oracle and Ina. This recent addition to our Town includes just 107 acres of land, but it contains a significant number of office, retail commercial and residential properties, as well as a hotel and some great non-profit organizations.

While the Town will incur some costs, due primarily to roadway maintenance, the Oracle/Ina annexation will have a positive fiscal impact on the Town, including the addition of two major community assets: Tohono Chul Park and the Quality Inn.

I extend a hearty welcome to ALL the residents and businesses of this newly-annexed area. You've added to the richness and diversity of our Town.

Speaking of diversity, you may be surprised to learn that there are now as many residents in Oro Valley under the age of 18 as there are over the age of 65. Yes—you heard me correctly. According to 2010 Census data, there are now as many children as there are retirees. Oro Valley is no longer just a "retirement" community! So we've been taking a look at our new profile and asking an important question: Are we meeting the needs of all residents?

For quite some time, the young people of Oro Valley have been the most underserved segment of our population, but we've been working very hard to change that. Through robust Parks and Recreation programming, as well as the addition of facilities such as the Archery Range and Aquatic Center, the Town is doing a better job of providing recreational opportunities for youth. In fact, Oro Valley earned the "Playful City USA" distinction for the third consecutive year.

The Town also sponsors Spotlight on Youth, which publicly recognizes the accomplishments of Oro Valley students; Project Graduation, which provides a fun and safe venue for students to

celebrate on graduation night; and the Youth Advisory Council, which aims to engage young people in the political process and give them hands-on experience with their local government.

I'm also proud that Bloomberg Businessweek named Oro Valley the 2013 Best Place in Arizona to Raise Kids. Clearly, we are on the right track!

Young people are a tremendous asset to Oro Valley, and we will continue seeking new ways to engage and support them in this community.

Oro Valley's schools are also an important community asset.

While Arizona continues to fall below national averages in education and educational funding, Oro Valley schools are bucking that trend, with consistently high test scores and graduation rates. And that is one of the important reasons we have been able to build an emerging workforce. Parents looking for educational excellence will find what they need in Oro Valley, and our teachers and school administrators—some of whom are here today—are to be commended for raising the bar.

Another area in which the Town has experienced new growth is in economic development.

To reduce the time required to establish or expand a business, the Town instituted the Economic Expansion Zone—an overlay district in Innovation Park.

Additionally, the Conceptual Design Review Board has made changes to speed up the entire development process, even re-writing the Zoning Code to take the mystery out of what the Town expects.

These innovative changes, combined with a recovering economy, have resulted in increased development activity for Fiscal Year 2012-13. We saw a 285% increase in single family resident permits over the previous fiscal year!

Additionally, the total volume of permits has grown dramatically, including commercial buildings, tenant improvements, home improvements and general construction, with a 36% increase over the previous fiscal year.

As development increases, and Oro Valley's high-tech and bioscience industry continues to flourish, major employers like Sanofi, Securaplane, Oro Valley Hospital and Ventana Medical Systems are recruiting a young, talented workforce. And they're able to recruit young talent because Oro Valley is a place people want to live and work.

Part of the Town's overall vision for economic development was also a focus on sports tourism, including the new Aquatic Center.

The impact of sports tourism in Oro Valley is substantial. Each year, the USA Triathlon Duathlon Championships and Arizona Distance Classic bring a combined 3,800 athletes and more than \$1 million in economic impact.

To continue that momentum, Council approved \$5 million in capital improvements to transform the municipal pool at James D. Kriegh Park into one of Southern Arizona's premier, competition-level facilities. The new Oro Valley Aquatic Center—which opened in March—also includes a waterslide, splash pad and other family-friendly amenities.

A feasibility study indicated that this facility would create approximately \$2.2 million a year in economic activity in our community, and we are on trend to meet that \$2 million mark.

We've already held several state- and regional-level competitions, and in 2014, the Oro Valley Aquatic Center will host the **National** Synchronized Swimming Championships!

And we recently learned that our Aquatic Center was named 2013 Facility of the Year by the Arizona Parks and Recreation Association.

This facility has truly been an investment in our community's economic health. It has also been an investment in our residents' quality of life.

Speaking of residents' quality of life, I'd like to address a special group of residents—our retirees.

Oro Valley has long been known as a first-rate retirement community. And although our demographics have shifted to a balance of age groups, we are still a top choice for retirees from across the nation. But I've noticed an exciting shift among our retirement community. Today's retirees are active and thriving. They are looking for new ways to experience the world and make the most of each day. They're hiking, biking, swimming, running, volunteering and on occasion, relaxing!

Oro Valley's retirees truly embody the new spirit of what it means to be retired, and we're fortunate to have this dynamic group as part of our community.

Another community value that has seen new growth this year is arts and culture. As you know, the Town of Oro Valley believes in the power of art to enhance the community's beauty and enrich its citizens and visitors. As a result of our "1% for Public Art" program, which began in 1997, we have amassed more than 250 public art projects!

And to showcase Oro Valley's public and private art, the Town launched a Virtual Art Gallery and monthly public art tours, where residents and visitors can reserve a spot on a van for a free, in-person, narrated tour of the Town's many public art projects.

It's exciting to see new growth springing from a firm foundation. But it takes a lot of work to ensure that new growth is nourished, sustainable and in line with core values. Recognizing that fact, the Town of Oro Valley has been diligent in its practices of allocating resources, assessing needs and fostering new growth.

Last year, in response to a new focus on marketing and branding to promote Oro Valley, we launched a new tagline: It's in our nature. And since then, we've done some exciting things with that tagline, including advertising spots in magazines, newspapers, web ads, t-shirts and an award-winning marketing brochure, all of which have been instrumental in reinforcing our brand and recruiting new businesses, employees, guests and potential residents.

Also this year, we launched a new website, developed entirely by Town staff. This new site has improved services to our residents, streamlined access to information, and increased staff efficiency. It has also helped visually reinforce our new brand.

WHY is it so important that the Town invest resources into marketing?

Since Oro Valley doesn't levy a property tax, we are highly dependent on sales tax, which is about 50% of our General Fund. When tourism increases, sales tax increases. In fact, about a THIRD of our local sales tax is generated from visitors and non-residents. And MOST—if not all—of our bed taxes come from out-of-town guests. That's huge!

And that is why the Town is looking for new and creative ways to bring more guests to our businesses, hotels and recreational facilities.

Today it is my pleasure to unveil a new campaign, designed to promote Oro Valley businesses, hotels and destinations, such as Catalina State Park, the Oro Valley Aquatic Center and our newest gem, Tohono Chul Park, for the overall economic health of our community:

Play OV/Stay OV. Whether your pleasure is hiking, golfing, swimming, cycling, shopping or relaxing at a spa, make Oro Valley your destination.

Although the Town has taken some bold steps this year in the area of marketing, we realize the far-reaching power of collaborating with the region, and that is why we have continued to invest in the Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitor's Bureau—which is now called Visit Tucson. SO much easier to pronounce!

Visit Tucson has been working with Town staff to enhance Oro Valley's presence on their website, including the new Play OV/Stay OV campaign, and identifying opportunities to promote the Town's amenities. Additionally, they've produced a beautiful promotional video that we're going to debut right now...

[\[Oro Valley promotional video\]](#)

Our partnership with Visit Tucson is one of the many ways we're supplementing and making the most of our own marketing and branding efforts.

One of the important ways in which we are caring for our tree is through sound, fiscal management.

In the past couple years, our Town Manager Greg Caton has launched the budget process earlier than we used to. This new timeline allows us to secure the involvement of all community members, providing opportunities to gather input from their unique perspectives.

Careful consideration is given to the development of this document, ensuring that it is guided by the Town's Strategic Plan and voter-approved General Plan.

Oro Valley's approach to budget development has been very successful. And as you may have already heard, we ended fiscal year 2012-13 with a \$1.7 million SURPLUS which will be carried forward for investment in future capital projects.

Sound fiscal management is more than balancing revenues and expenditures. It also means looking for creative and cost-effective solutions to problems. Often times, those solutions have come by way of collaborative partnerships which not only improved services to the community, but also resulted in cost savings. That was the theme of last year's State of the Town Address, and our most notable collaborative efforts were with the Regional Transportation Authority to launch the Sun Shuttle Dial-A-Ride transit service, and with the City of Tucson to begin delivery of Central Arizona Project water.

I'm very proud that a year later, we are still benefitting from these partnerships. The result has been an improved quality of life for residents and sustainability of growth.

Oro Valley's approach to fiscal management and regional collaboration has ensured that we're adequately funding our core services while investing in our future. And one of the most important investments we chose to make was in our employees.

Last year—for the first time in many years—we were able to reinstate a 2.5% cost-of-living adjustment for all employees. And this year, we are making good on another promise: implementation of step increases and employee merit raises for the current fiscal year. Council also recently approved additional funding for employee health and wellness programs as well as incentives.

I'm so proud that we have invested in our employees, and I am prouder still that they continue to invest their time and talent in this community. Council can only do so much by providing direction and approving funding for programs and services. At the end of the day, it is the employees who provide those day-to-day services to our residents, and it is our employees who ensure that the Town's reputation for excellence never falters. So it is with humble gratitude

that I say thank you to the men and women who serve this community on a daily basis. You are very much appreciated!

If you are a Town of Oro Valley employee, please stand and be recognized. Thank you for all that you do.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize our Town Manager. His vision for our organization, coupled with the support and respect of Council and staff, has enabled the Town to take bold steps, resulting in new successes. Mr. Greg Caton, would you please stand!

There are some other thank you's that need to be said today as well:

Thank you to the Greater Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce board of directors, President/CEO Dave Perry, and each of the sponsors who made today's event possible. The Chamber continues to be an important partner in Oro Valley's growth.

Another big thank you goes to the Hilton El Conquistador Golf & Tennis Resort. Special thanks to Lynn Ericksen and his team, who always put on a top-shelf event.

We understand that healthy growth doesn't happen overnight and it doesn't happen spontaneously. It is strategic, thoughtful and well-planned. It is the result of bold leadership, long-term planning, allocation of resources and the ability to be flexible.

I honestly believe that we have one of the greatest towns in the nation, but in order to stay great—to continue our healthy growth—I challenge you to help us make it even better.

How? We need to continue to root out the negativity in our community and focus only on the positive. Let's face it...It's very easy to tear things down and complain, but it's much more difficult to build things up and be positive. Society teaches us to think about ourselves before others. I ask that you put others before yourself. Let's reach a place where we genuinely care for each other so much, that no single individual in our town will go without.

If someone needs help, reach out and help them. If you need help, ask for it without the fear of damaging your pride. Each one of us in this room has been the recipient of someone's kindness when we needed it most. It may have been a family member, a friend, a neighbor or even a complete stranger, who made a difference in our lives. Respect one another. Demonstrate integrity. Choose to be kind. For it is only when we care for each other that we can truly grow as individuals, and in turn, the entire community will grow...just like a tree!

Thank you for the privilege of being your Mayor!