



2023 ORO VALLEY STATE OF THE TOWN ADDRESS

Mayor Joseph C. Winfield

Thank you, Kristen, and welcome to the Town of Oro Valley's 22nd annual State of the Town Address! The Oro Valley Chamber of Commerce has been working for weeks for this occasion; please join me in a round of applause for our colleagues at the Chamber for a job well done.

Today's event marks the one-year anniversary of Kristen Sharp's role as the Chamber's President and CEO. Under her direction, the Oro Valley Chamber will continue to serve as a critical support for our business community and they are one of the Town's valued partners.

Thank you to General Manager Shelby Francom of the Hilton El Conquistador Resort and the many hospitality staff members for their superior service. Great job!

Also with us today are my fellow councilmembers: Vice Mayor Melanie Barrett and Councilmembers Tim Bohlen, Dr. Harry "Mo" Greene, Joyce Jones-Ivey, Josh Nicolson and Steve Solomon. They are committed to the goals and needs of our residents and the businesses that call Oro Valley home. Thank you for your dedicated service.

It's my pleasure to introduce our new Town Manager Jeff Wilkins who joined the Oro Valley team in June. Mr. Wilkins has served in local government for 27 years, so he brings a depth of experience to help guide our community forward. Welcome, Jeff.

Lastly, a big thanks to each of you here today for all you do to make our communities, county, and state the best place to live, work, and play!

Much of what makes our community an outstanding place to live or manage a business is due in part to thoughtful planning and providing core services and quality infrastructure.

It's building out a park to provide places and activities for individuals and families. It's investing in quality roads and an adequately staffed police department. It's the sustainable management of our water assets to ensure residents now and well into the future have a safe and reliable water supply. It's shaping our built environment to serve the community while also preserving Oro Valley's stunning views and unique character.

All of these daily, operational efforts are the groundwork for a complete community where both residents and businesses can thrive.

As I have reflected on the accomplishments of the past several years, I'm excited about the direction and *MOMENTUM* this Council has charted to bring us closer to Oro Valley's vision for the future as stated in the 2016 General Plan.

Quoting from the plan: *“Oro Valley strives to be a well-managed community that provides all residents with opportunities for quality living. Oro Valley will keep its friendly, small-town, neighborly character, while increasing services, employment and recreation. The Town’s lifestyle continues to be defined by a strong sense of community, a high regard for public safety and an extraordinary natural environment and scenic views.”*

Momentum is a powerful concept.

We all have experienced or witnessed it in one form or another. Momentum can propel a sports team to play their best and win the game, or perhaps you have observed two individuals debating in disagreement that suddenly turns into an argument.

Momentum can swing either way.

Having momentum can increase confidence and enable bold decisions, because like a sports game, you have a strategic plan so that everyone understands the shared goal.

For example, the Town boldly adopted out a short-term rental ordinance in January, implementing a registration and licensing process for homeowners who rent through services like VRBO and Airbnb. Our goal is to support our rentals and hotel properties while also preserving the quality of life in our neighborhoods for the residents who call Oro Valley home.

Over at the Oro Valley Marketplace, Council approved three, 4-story hotels, 500-plus apartments and two drive-thrus for the Oro Valley Village Center development. While we’re still hammering out some details, this project is moving forward, and these new opportunities will better serve our residents, guests, and businesses.

These projects are representative of how our community is evolving to meet our future needs.

Oro Valley also welcomed a total of 97 new businesses in the past 12 months. That figure includes 27 new storefronts, 40 new home-based businesses and 30 new shared space or intelligent offices.

To support those new and existing businesses, the Town continues to offer a robust business retention and expansion program, which includes weekly in-person visits at local businesses.

It’s unique for a mayor, Town staff and Chamber staff to visit businesses together, but that’s exactly how we do it in Oro Valley. We want to hear first-hand the challenges, needs and successes of our businesses, so that we can better serve our important business community.

As mentioned previously, we strive to provide the core services and infrastructure our residents and businesses need in order to thrive. One of those core services, which has become a brand for Oro Valley, is public safety.

The Oro Valley Police Department has a strong reputation for excellence. We have a Town Council who remains dedicated to adequately funding public safety, and we have a Chief of Police who upholds the department’s long-held values while also ensuring that our methods align with best practices.

Last year I announced that OVPD earned accreditation by the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police Law Enforcement—that’s a big deal! I’m happy to report that Chief Kara Riley and her team have just successfully earned their annual RE-accreditation, which leads to greater accountability and confidence in OVPD’s ability to operate efficiently and respond to community needs.

Thank you, Chief Riley, for your commitment, courage, and compassion.

Another very public-facing core service that impacts a community’s quality of life is parks and recreation. We’ve had a momentum-building year of exciting projects and improvements across the community.

Irrigation replacement at the Conquistador Golf Course is complete, and the tennis and pickleball court improvements at the Community Center opened with great fanfare.

Over at Steam Pump Ranch, the Barbecue and Bunkhouse restoration project was completed in July and has enriched the public’s experience at this historic property.

And another focus area I’m excited about is the expansion of the Town’s quality network of trails, which includes the construction of a new multi-use path along La Cañada Drive, between Lambert Lane and Naranja Drive. This important link to our multi-use path system should be finished in November.

The Town also received a \$3 million grant for a multi-use path on the north side of Naranja Road stretching from La Cañada Drive to First Avenue, and that design is currently underway.

Oro Valley’s network of bicycle routes, trails and multi-use paths is a treasured gem in our community. For many residents, it’s why they chose to live in Oro Valley.

We have 78 miles of safe bicycle routes and nearly 30 miles of paths including natural dirt trails, paved, and multi-use paths. These paths not only connect our physical places, but they are also corridors of social connection for our community.

I'd like to share a brief video that showcases this prized community asset.

- **VIDEO:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5SGQgRbYmVQ&t=1s>

Please consider this a personal invitation to enjoy one of our greatest assets.

The most ambitious of our recreation projects is the Naranja Park Improvement Project, which will be completed next summer. With the earth work and infrastructure in place, grass is growing on the two new multi-sport fields, and concrete has been poured for the new post-tension pickleball courts.

Thanks to a one-million-dollar grant from the Land & Water Conservation Fund, there is additional funding support for both the skate park and bike pump track which are anticipated to open in early 2024.

A new splash pad will be up and running by early summer along with new paved paths, ramadas and restrooms so that this beautiful, already beloved park can serve even more members of our community.

Over at the Community and Recreation Center, we've added 130 *much* needed parking spaces to this very popular facility, and efforts have begun on the Americans with Disabilities Act improvements for the front entry, including installation of an elevator. All of this is great news, especially as the Community Center is at record-level memberships and serving more residents and guests than ever.

Golf operations sustained a lot of momentum this past year, with an increase in the number of rounds played, and the highest in overall membership since the Town of Oro Valley acquired the courses. As a result, golf operations remained in the black for the second year in a row.

There are many factors that resulted in this success, some of which are due to the support of our residents. Thank you to everyone who supports golf in Oro Valley, and a big thank you to our golf operator, Troon Indigo Sports, and new General Manager Darryl Janisse.

Lastly, the Town has sustained the momentum created last year by the acquisition of the former Vistoso Golf Course and its designation—in perpetuity—as the Vistoso Trails Nature Preserve, a natural open space for passive recreation. This was another example of Oro Valley residents donating their hard-earned money, time and talent to ensuring the kind of future they want for their community.

The Town is currently undergoing a master planning process. In the meantime, I'm happy to share that several improvements have already been made. The former cart path has been improved to enhance safety for those walking and riding. The restrooms on the property are being remodeled, and the Town continues to address the removal of invasive species through community cleanup efforts and use of a contractor.

The theme of environmental stewardship has gained momentum these past two years. Thoughtful resource management and a series of successful projects and initiatives have solidified Oro Valley as a community that continues to place high value on sustainability and the natural environment.

Water remains at the forefront of any conversation regarding the growth and sustainability of communities across the desert Southwest, which is why Oro Valley continues to accumulate water resources, invest in efficient water infrastructure, and provide our customers with free-of-charge water conservation tools like WaterSmart.

Thanks to our community's strong conservation ethic, and an efficient water system, 2022 saw the second lowest annual groundwater pumping in the history of the Oro Valley Water Utility. We continue to utilize and look for ways of economically expanding the use of reclaimed water. Our percentage of lost and unaccounted for water throughout the water system is below 2%, which is among the lowest in Arizona, and far below the State mandate of 10 percent.

We also maintain a Designation of Assured Water Supply with the Arizona Department of Water Resources, which ensures that our community has enough groundwater supply to last for at least 100 years.

The Town continues to invest time and resources into the many facets of Keep OV Beautiful. In fact, our Adopt-A-Road and Adopt-A-Trail programs won a 2023 "Flag Forward Award" from CarteGraph for

“creating more efficient, responsive and sustainable communities through smart infrastructure management.”

The Town, along with our regional partners, completed the Wildlife Protection Gate and Fence Project on Oracle Road, which prevents wildlife from dangerous road crossings and keeps them in the Big Wash wildlife corridor.

In May, the Town, in partnership with the Pima County Regional Flood Control District, completed a new section of the multi-use path near Oro Valley Hospital that safely connects the Chuck Huckleberry Loop segment to our local trail system. This project helps keep cyclists off busy roadways and improves access to Big Wash—a key flood plain and wildlife and riparian habitat.

The Town of Oro Valley has generated tremendous momentum this year in some key areas, which has positioned us for the very big year that lies ahead, including the launch of the Town’s 50th anniversary and the 2026 General Plan.

In case you didn’t know, the Town of Oro Valley will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2024. We're still in the planning stages for the year-long celebration of this milestone, but I’m happy to give you a preview of what’s in store.

As we all know, Oro Valley loves community events, so planning is currently underway for a big 50th Anniversary celebration event AND a parade! Keep an eye out for dates and details, and be sure to join us for this once in a lifetime opportunity!

For the history lovers, there will be an interactive timeline on the Town’s website, and we’ll be publishing a new podcast series and 12 monthly articles about Oro Valley’s first 50 years.

We also wanted Oro Valley’s business community to join us in the celebration. To that end, the Town and the OV Chamber are creating a special “shop local” program that incentivizes shopping at participating businesses by holding prize drawings throughout the year.

Details are still in the works, but we’re excited to announce that our generous friends here at the Hilton El Conquistador and at Tohono Chul have already donated 50 prize packages that will be awarded to shoppers. And of course, participating businesses will be included in our promotional efforts.

If you’d like to learn more about this program, please reach out to the OV Chamber. And if your organization has additional ideas on how we can help the community celebrate, please let us know! Just send an email to ask@orovalleyaz.gov.

We’ll start rolling out the fun in January and February, so be sure to follow us on social media to stay in the loop.

We will build on the momentum of our first 50 years by strategically planning for the next 10 years as we come together to create the 2026 General Plan.

I am often asked what my vision is for Oro Valley. But the more important question is: What is Oro Valley’s vision for the future? It is our residents and stakeholders who define the vision, and that happens every 10 years in the General Plan.

The General Plan is our “true north” because it is informed and shaped by the citizens. It identifies our values, our priorities and our needs and wants. It articulates our goals, policies and measurable actions. The community-based process of developing a general plan is how we turn the community’s vision into reality, since the plan becomes our playbook for the next ten years.

We’ve worked hard to fulfill the vision articulated in the 2016 Your Voice, Our Future General Plan. To date, we have completed, maintained or are in progress on 96 percent of the actions in that plan, with four percent remaining to be evaluated or prioritized in the next three years.

We will leverage the momentum of our successes with the 2016 plan to propel us into our next decade as we consider focus areas like land use, water resources, public services and facilities, recreation, safety and more.

The good news is we’re kicking off the 2026 effort with an award-winning Public Engagement Plan. The Arizona Chapter of the American Planning Association just named Oro Valley winner in the Public Outreach Category.

Your ideas are important to us, so we invite you to weigh in and be part of planning what’s next for Oro Valley.

I am proud to announce that the theme of the 2026 General Plan and outreach effort is Oro Valley’s Path Forward. And today is the official launch of the online engagement platform which you can find at OVPathForward.com.

We’ll be adding more content, discussion threads and videos in the coming months, so be sure to visit right away and subscribe to notifications on the focus areas that are important to YOU.

A few weeks ago, my wife Mariann and I were on our early morning walk. Everywhere we went there was a buzz of activity. A pavement preservation project was underway. A crew was doing road and trail shoulder work to reduce erosion. A patrol car passed by, and as we turned into a neighborhood, would you believe it—a street sweeper was at work cleaning the pavement.

Our experience was only a small sample of the thousands of tasks done each day by our staff, and it was a wonderful reminder of the incredible men and women we have at the Town of Oro Valley who work tirelessly to provide the services and amenities that are foundational to our quality of life and thriving local economy.

If you’re a member of Town staff, please stand so we can recognize you.

Oro Valley’s success is strengthened by the forward momentum we generate across the seven focus areas in the Town’s most recent Strategic Plan:

- *Economic vitality* is our driving force, fostering innovation and prosperity while respecting our extraordinary natural environment and creating cultural and recreational opportunities.
- *Public safety* remains paramount, safeguarding our citizens and ensuring a secure environment for all to enjoy.

- *Roads, water, and Town facilities* form the infrastructure backbone, enabling investment, connectivity, and customer service.
- *Thoughtful land use and design* drive sustainable development, enhancing Oro Valley's appeal and livability.
- Lastly, *efficiency and effectiveness in governance* are pivotal to improving services and responsiveness to citizens.

As mayor of Oro Valley, I am committed to sustaining this momentum, collaborating with all stakeholders to nurture a vibrant economy, preserving our quality of life, and prioritizing public safety and financial sustainability.

Together, we can guide our town towards a future envisioned by its citizens, setting the stage for a community that flourishes while preserving what makes Oro Valley special. Together, let us continue this momentum for a brighter, more peaceful and prosperous tomorrow.

Thank you!