



*Official Speech*

**March 5, 2015    State of the City Address – Mayor Kenneth Weise**

Thank you to our three special guest speakers – Ryan Whitten, Mike Romano and Chris Camacho. I thought it was important for them to come up here because they each have three different and very important perspectives about what it means to Do Business in Avondale. They captured what we mean when we say Aspiring, Achieving, Accelerating.

I was at an event not too long ago that featured ASU President Michael Crow. In his speech, he mentioned a course at ASU. He said Arizona students were having a hard time in that class. At the same time, he said, students from out of state weren't having the same issues. And the question arose, well, what do we do about it? Do we do away with this class? Do we dumb it down?

And the answer was absolutely not. We find a new way of teaching it, we are going to find new solutions, and we are going to make sure that every student has the chance to succeed in that class.

I tell this story because coming out of the recession, we were hopeful to see big development come back quickly. After all, Avondale was one of the few cities that emerged from the economic downturn without having to take drastic measures that would affect our residents' quality of life. We made prudent cuts, and we continued to invest in our community so that we would be ready to move ahead again when the economy improved.

We were not going to cave in to the circumstances of the nation's economy, and we were not going to use the economy as an excuse for not moving ahead with our vision. Would it have been easier to just make excuses, sure, but as my friend Jim McDonald has told me numerous times, we never give up on the vision.

In the same way that President Crow had to grapple with the question about those students and that class, we in Avondale have had to ask -- what do we do with our Vision if development doesn't come back at the pace we'd like to see? Do we put it on a shelf, do we do away with it? I think you know that answer. In this council's mind, we never stop pushing, we never stop trying, and we absolutely without question never stop accelerating toward that vision, trying new methods and new ideas if need be.

Dan Davis and I sat down with Chris from GPEC earlier this week for what I hope was the first of many conversations on how his organization and ours will work together to reach our goals. Because the truth is Avondale can't do this alone. We need partners to help take us where we want to go. First and foremost we need our residents to believe in the vision we have set forth. We need our staff and management to live and breathe that vision. And without a shred of doubt we need the development community and the financial community to walk with us down this path. We need their ideas, we need their input and we need them to understand that Avondale Means Business.

As Ryan, with his exciting 8-bit Brewery startup has seen, if you bring your business to Avondale, you will find an environment that supports your success, and a community that's ready to help you succeed.

As the huge success story of UTI in Avondale has demonstrated – when you come here, you have chosen a financially stable, well-run city that has proven it is a solid investment for the future. Mike and his team have put together a world class organization right here in Avondale. We are proud to have you as part of our community.

And as we have seen with Dan, Cheryl, and Kim from Az Firearms.com, when you engage the community to help one of our own, the response is overwhelming. Thank you for opening up your hearts to Mike and his family.

One year ago, Avondale launched its new brand, with the tagline Aspiring, Achieving, Accelerating. Those three words capture the essence, the spirit of this community – from our residents who seek better opportunities for their families, and our Kids at Hope students who are hard at work achieving their dreams of success, to our businesses who are helping to accelerate growth and prosperity in Avondale.

The city had a busy year in 2014, with projects and activities that set the foundation for the successes we expect to see in 2015.

Last year saw the opening of a new Park & Ride transit center; the construction of numerous streets, sewer and waterline improvements; the launch of a Citizens Police Academy, and a council approved infill incentive program to stimulate development in Historic Avondale.

Numerous new businesses opened in the city. Three of them are here tonight giving us a taste of Avondale – Zeta’s Mediterranean Cuisine, Kneaders and 8-bit. Avondale Mitsubishi opened at the hugely successful Avondale Automall. Dysart Commons across from Estrella Mountain Community College is back on its feet and new businesses are thriving.

Working cooperatively with the development community who share a strong vision for the future, Avondale has paved the way for significant new developments which are poised to break ground or open in 2015.

Main Event, an amazing family entertainment venue will break ground soon. Copper Spring Hospital will also be under construction. Over the past three years, Trammel Crow has made significant investment in our community. They are adding 187,000 square feet of light industrial manufacturing to the 600,000 square feet that they have already built.

We will be announcing another exciting development from our friends at Vintage Partners very soon.

All this comes at a time when resident engagement is at an all-time high. Ninety percent of the more than 900 residents who participated in the 2014 Resident Satisfaction Survey ranked Avondale as a good or excellent place to live. We have outstanding volunteers on our 16 boards and commissions who are doing great work on behalf of their fellow residents. Some of them are here tonight, so let’s give them a hand.

Within our Vision, we cannot forget the Faces of Avondale. I am excited to launch a campaign this year that will put the spotlight on our residents and businesses who are Aspiring, Achieving and Accelerating. On social media, around city hall and in our public facilities, you will see the faces and stories of the amazing people that make up the fabric of Avondale.

Avondale Means Business. We strive to build an environment that’s business friendly, customer focused and purpose driven. Beyond our excellent location, our organization is financially strong, with a Double A rating. We paid off our mortgage for City Hall and the Civic Center Campus in only ten years. We have strong reserves in the bank, which

allowed us to purchase the PIR building thanks to the talent of our city managers and our finance team. We are innovative and technologically savvy. In fact, Avondale was ranked #1 in the Nation in the Digital Cities Survey two years in a row.

Without a doubt, we are one of the most politically stable governments in the region, with professional management and a Council that's determined to work together for the benefit of our residents. And we achieve all of this on a lean, fiscally responsible budget, with strong revenue forecasting, with a Council vision that's forward looking, and with the commitment to professionalism from the 503 employees of Avondale who truly understand the importance of public service.

While I can't get all 503 city employees on the stage with me today, I would at least like to call up the fellow members of my City Council. I would like them to stand up here with me, to show everyone that we are working for you.

*(Council comes up to the stage) have the management team and staff stand*

Whenever you hear a state of the city, state, union, speech. The person giving the speech is supposed to say, " the state of the ----- is?? I really struggled with this, it should be dynamic, or moving, or poignant. Ok so here it is, the state of Avondale is ever changing. Now that may seem like an unusual couple of words to use, but let me explain. Since late 2013 Avondale has 4 new Councilmembers, a new mayor, a new city manager, a new assistant city manager, a new director of public works, a new city judge, a new finance director, a new intergov, a new assistant police chief, a new police chief, whew, am I missing anyone? I would argue that no other city in the valley could or would weather those changes and not miss a beat. Think about that for a moment, all of the successes I mentioned earlier in this speech occurred during those changes. When we talk about all that Avondale has to offer, I ask you to look at the people on this stage, and the people standing in the audience, and the 500 other employees who serve our residents, our schools, and the development community and I say to you Avondale Means Business!!! Together we are Aspiring, Achieving, Accelerating.

Thank you very much for being here tonight.