

State of the City  
March 9, 2021  
Noon

- Good afternoon. I am Pleasanton's Mayor Karla Brown, and I am honored to welcome you to Pleasanton's Annual State of the City address.
- I would like to thank our Chamber of Commerce for hosting today's presentation, and TV30 for doing our video recording.
- Over the past eight years I have served on the City Council, and I have always looked forward to this event... This is my first State of the City presentation as mayor, and it is a pleasure to be here with you today.
- I would like to take a minute to introduce my fellow Councilmembers Valerie Arkin, Jack Balch, Kathy Narum, and Vice Mayor Julie Testa. I know the 4 of you share a love of Pleasanton, just as I do. Like me, you give generously of your time and support to our community with countless hours of dedication. Thank you.
- The theme of my speech today is "we are in this together, and we are stronger as a team." It has been nearly a year ago when Alameda County and Pleasanton declared a local emergency. Afterwards, the county and state issued the FIRST of many

Shelter-in-Place Orders in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic outbreak.

- There is no question as we reflect on this past year, that the pandemic and its impacts continue to be the PRIMARY challenge faced by our city. As a councilmember and now as mayor, I have had the privilege of witnessing how the entire Pleasanton community has come together in response to this deadly virus. I am proud to see our City work alongside the Pleasanton Unified School District, our local health care providers, our non-profit organizations, our businesses, and of course our concerned residents as we work together, but safely distanced, masked and with freshly washed hands. We will continue to address our challenges and become a STRONGER and a more RESILIENT community.
- In response to the pandemic, our City Staff moved quickly to ensure we continued to provide all of our essential services. We are all in this together, therefore, we are here to help our residents and businesses, especially our most vulnerable populations. Some impressive examples included, providing **100 meals a week** through our senior lunch Program, “Meals on Wheels,” offering rides to medical appointments and grocery store visits through our senior Paratransit Services program, plus providing shelter for our unhoused residents.

- Like you, meeting with friends and business colleagues in person have become a blurry memory. Like so many other cities... Pleasanton was forced to quickly discover innovative ways to connect and serve our community VIRTUALLY.
- Prior to the Pandemic, I had not heard of Zoom – HAD YOU? Now I use it many times a day!
- Almost overnight, our city council shifted to the Zoom platform to allow the council to continue the City’s business, while maintaining the integrity of public meetings and open community participation.
- We KNOW Pleasanton IS Open for Business!... so, through the worst of it, the city kept processing new building permits through the City’s Permit Center. We adjusted by digitized submittal and review processes to offer online services. In addition, we quickly began conducting virtual building inspections from smart phones and other devices to ensure the safety of the applicants and the city inspectors.
- Pleasanton’s Library and Recreation team was forced to adjust as well. They emerged as a leader in creating a Virtual Library and Recreation Center filled with creative content such as an ON-LINE weekly story time, “how-to” activities for youth and adults, a virtual book club, and a full digital student learning center ... providing free academic resources and tutoring to support

Pleasanton students. We understood distance learning would be a challenge, and the Library wanted to be here to help.

- As you know, the library facilities were closed for indoor services, but the library remained open by providing patrons access to library materials through its sidewalk pick-up service.
- And I am excited to let you know, on March 16 our Pleasanton Library will be REOPENING for indoor services – but with limited capacity and modifications. Safe social distancing and Masks are required – of course.
- In preparation for re-opening of the library, we will continue to use enhanced safety and cleaning protocols in our City facilities which now include a high-tech ---- UVD robot! Our new robot does an excellent job of disinfecting surface and airborne particles against COVID-19 ... so everyone will be safe in the library.
- When our City's recreation staff was prohibited from offering many of our popular educational and activity programs due to health order restrictions, they like the rest of us, adjusted their programs, and began to provide virtual classes like computer coding, camps for youth and teens, sketching for teens, and watercolor painting for adults, just to name a few.
- While we have been able to deliver many City services virtually and from a distance, maintaining our city's infrastructure and assets must continue in-person. Our operations services staff

have done a fantastic job of maintaining our 44 community and neighborhood parks, and more than 24 miles of trails throughout the city. I have been walking more than ever before, and I think I have seen a few of you in our parks as well.

- Additionally, despite the pandemic, our “exciting” annual summer pavement management program resurfaced a staggering .... 4.2 million square feet of streets last year—a welcome benefit for anyone who drives through our city. Less cars on the road helped to make the process easier.
- When COVID testing became a high priority, the City staff began to mobilize our resources, and we worked to establish a testing site for Tri-Valley residents by collaborating with the Alameda County Fairgrounds, with the cities of Dublin and Livermore, plus Stanford Health Care-ValleyCare. To date the site has administered an incredible 31,000 COVID tests!
- We ARE in this together, and these partnerships and collaborative efforts have strengthened and sustained our community during this past year of the pandemic. I would like to extend a giant virtual hug to our many volunteers that have generously volunteered their time and supportive positive spirit.
- The list goes on and on: The fairgrounds and the City have partnered with the Alameda County Food Bank, Tri-Valley Haven, and Open Heart Kitchen to create a distribution site that serves

more than 2,600 Tri-Valley residents each week. Simply remarkable! Do you know that many of our City staff members participated in helping to prepare meals at Open Heart Kitchen for residents in need? Many of our own city employees packed and delivered groceries to senior residents. Other city workers were on hand to open the Gingerbread pre-school facility to provide free childcare for families of local frontline workers...

- As you know all too well, this pandemic has impacted every aspect of our community, including our Pleasanton businesses.
- Most businesses have had to pivot their business model to find creative ways to continue to offer products and services. For example, we have seen a plethora of takeout and delivery, curbside pick-up at restaurants and retailers, virtual sessions and appointments, outdoor classes and do-it yourself at-home kits. I am proud to report, many of our business owners have showcased their resilience and creativity.
- And yet despite these best efforts, some of our businesses have struggled to stay afloat due to restrictions imposed by the pandemic. So, to support our business community, the City this past year allocated \$3 million in COVID business loan assistance for Pleasanton businesses.
- We have granted individual loans for as much as \$21,600 to eligible applicants, and to date we have loaned more than \$1.25

million to assist 109 local businesses with payroll, supplies, protective equipment and other business expenses. This program is still open and accepting applications.

- Additionally, the City provided \$100,000 to a matching pool through the Alameda County CARES Grant program which made available another \$200,000 distributed to 109 Pleasanton businesses.
- With residents sheltering in place, the demand for food and grocery delivery has increased. Establishments relying on third-party services to make deliveries found themselves being charged up to a 30 percent surcharge by some delivery services. That is excessive! To provide some relief, the City approved a temporary 15 percent cap on these delivery services until the local emergency is lifted.
- This past year when outdoor dining was allowed, the City worked with the Pleasanton Downtown Association to help restaurants expand their outdoor dining capacity through what we call the “Weekend on Main” program. We closed off Main Street from vehicle traffic Friday afternoon, Saturday and Sunday during the summer and early fall. Many of our residents told me how much they enjoyed downtown during the street closures, and I am pleased to announce that we are working on bringing “Weekend on Main” back again this spring and summer.

- Through the City's temporary no fee permit program, restaurants have been allowed to utilize outdoor areas like parking lots and on-street parking spaces to expand their outdoor dining capacity. I am SO happy to see people having fun dining downtown again – although many are wearing parkas!
- Throughout the pandemic, the City has been working closely with local business organizations like the Pleasanton Downtown Association, Pleasanton Chamber of Commerce, Visit Tri-Valley and Hacienda to provide access to county, state, and federal resources.
- We know that when we sustain our local businesses, we support our entire community. Working together, we will succeed as a more resilient Pleasanton.
- We also recognize that struggling businesses result in hardships for their employees. While the state and county implemented rent deferment and an eviction moratorium, the City took it one step further and approved an Emergency Rental Assistance Program in partnership with CityServe of the Tri-Valley. Together we have provided over \$630,000 in grants helping 207 Pleasanton households pay their delinquent rent due to the pandemic.
- In addition to rental assistance, the City has helped many residents by waiving late fees for delinquent utility bills.

- Pre-pandemic, we had already seen a rise in food insecurity, and an increased need for housing, mental health resources and access to health care. COVID-19 has only amplified those community needs for our most vulnerable residents.
- Each year, the City provided funding support through its Housing and Human Services Grants and Community Grants programs.
- Recognizing the additional need for services due to the pandemic, the City fully funded the 2020 grant requests totaling more than \$1.2 million to local non-profit organizations such as Axis Community Health, Open Heart Kitchen, Tri-Valley Haven, Hively, CityServe of the Tri-Valley, NAMI Tri-Valley, and Sunflower Hill. These important organizations are frequently looking for volunteers. I hope you will join me and volunteer.
- These essential community partners provide our most vulnerable residents access to critical services such as food and nutrition, behavioral health care, workforce development, disability services, homelessness prevention, and housing assistance.
- 2020 was indeed a challenging year for us all, especially for Pleasanton teachers and students who shifted to a distance learning educational format. I am proud of the flexibility and fortitude of our educators and our youth.
- Sadly, many fun school events and celebrations were canceled because of the health risk associated with large gatherings. Our

Pleasanton students and families missed out on being able to celebrate milestones like promotion and graduation.

- Recognizing the loss of these milestone events, the city was here to help make new memories for our graduating students. The City partnered with the school district and Tri-Valley Community Television to host a special fireworks celebration for all graduating Pleasanton students and families at the end of the school year. Many residents told me they had fun watching the fireworks throughout Pleasanton.
- And as we look toward the end of this school year, we continue to collaborate on ways to celebrate 2021's graduating seniors.
- Despite COVID-19's Shelter-in-Place Order, fireworks, New Year's Day, and other holidays, essential city workers like the Pleasanton's police and fire departments are always on duty, serving our Pleasanton community.
- Since 2017, the City has experienced an increase in unhoused residents and families with corresponding calls of service to the police department. In response, the City established a Homeless Outreach Team with two dedicated officers assigned to work closely with local community organizations and service providers to find appropriate housing and mental health resources for these individuals.

- To date, the Homeless Outreach Team has helped approximately 25 unhoused individuals find temporary or permanent housing.
- This team is just one of the police department's approaches to community policing through serving Pleasanton with compassion, respect, trust, and empathy by connecting directly and building relationships with residents through programs like National Night Out, Cone with a Cop, A Night to Shine, the neighborhood watch program, and story time with officers. I know our police department is looking forward to resuming these in-person activities when it is safe to do so.
- Shortly after the death of George Floyd, the Pleasanton Police Department along with City staff, worked with organizers of a local and peaceful protest, to ensure participants a safe route through the Pleasanton. Afterwards, the City hosted a series of community meetings on policing in Pleasanton to listen directly from residents, and to learn how we can best serve the Pleasanton community - together.
- After hearing from the long list of community members, the City approved the creation of a Chief's advisory board made up of community members to advise and provide input directly to the Chief Swing. This included development of an alternative response program for mental health crisis calls for service, additional de-escalation training, an evaluation of the city's

D.A.R.E. program, and finally, the role of resource officers serving within our schools. These topics and more, will be discussed at future council meetings later this year.

- Our dedicated Livermore-Pleasanton Fire Department has also been working hard to serve our community throughout the Pandemic as well. Do you remember the SCU fires, and the orange and gray smoke-filled skies in August and September? If the pandemic was not enough, Northern California was ravaged in 2020 by heat waves and arguably the worst wildfire season in California's history.
- Some of our Tri-Valley neighbors and friends were forced to evacuate their homes.
- Without fail, our heroes in the fire department quickly reacted to ensure fire containment, while also sending our own LPFD firefighters throughout the state to assist with other wildfires. This was definitely a scary time for many residents in California.
- Cal Fire set up a base camp, at the Alameda County Fairgrounds to house fire fighters and their gear from across the western United States, and, some from as far away as Montana. These brave fire fighters all converging to help battle the dangerous SCU and other wildfires throughout the Bay Area.
- I am proud of Pleasanton's own Community Emergency Response Team which trained volunteers to manage the entire

call center. Pleasanton's CERT volunteers worked over 390 hours from August 21 to September 2 to respond to over 500 calls per hour from the public about the fires. I hope these volunteers realize how much we appreciate their dedication and support. They are also our volunteer heroes.

- The outpouring of community support for all the firefighters stationed at the Fairgrounds was remarkable, with residents like me, showing up early in the morning to cheer on fire fighters as they headed out and then again in the evening when they returned from a long day of fighting fires.
- Throughout the pandemic and the wildfires, I was reminded of the compassion and generosity of our residents and businesses whether it was their outpouring of support helping to feed the firefighters or donating PPE to our essential workers... Thank you.
- We have gotten through this pandemic so far, by working together. Now we are a stronger and a more resilient community ... as we head into the balance of 2021.
- Even though Pleasanton is open for business, without question the pandemic has greatly impacted the local economy and the City's budget. The Council received a report just last week on City revenues this fiscal year. Our property taxes are up \$1 million and contribute significantly to Pleasanton's financial sustainability.

However, we are experiencing a shortfall to date of \$9 million, of which a significant portion is a result of reduced hotel taxes due to the global decline in business and leisure travel. Pleasanton had to curtail our spring and summer recreation programs which was also reduced our income.

- However, because of our conservative fiscal governance over many years, Pleasanton is poised to weather this shortfall and recover with minimal impact to essential services. We are making short-term reductions, and we are drawing on budget reserves that were set aside for rainy days -- JUST like this.
- On a positive note, the City currently has approximately \$45 million in its 115 Pension Trust that is available to pay down the City's pension liability.
- Here we are now in 2021 – a New Year with renewed optimism and now we can finally see a light at the end of this exceptionally long and at times, dark tunnel.
- With COVID -19 vaccination sites up and running throughout the State ... the opening of the vaccination site right here at the Alameda Fairgrounds is critical to the region. This location will provide local access to the COVID vaccines for health care workers, senior residents, for teachers, childcare providers, and essential workers in food and agriculture industries.

- Many parents are excited to see Pleasanton's schools beginning to safely open for in-person learning. And with declining positive case rates from the winter surge, Alameda County is trending toward the next tier under the State's Blueprint for a Safer Economy, which means we will be able to further re-open our economy.
- While life may never go back to pre-COVID "normal," this pandemic has made us rethink and re-evaluate how we do things and what our new "normal" will look like.
- I am confident we are going to come back stronger and healthier as the City continues to respond to the pandemic and makes progress on projects that are important to our community. Here are a few of these projects that are underway:
- Fire Station 3 is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year. The nearly 50-year-old building had reached the end of its service life and was unable to meet the operational demands of a modern-day fire department due to seismic issues and needed underground repairs. The new building will offer revamped apparatus bays, reconfigured living quarters, and a wider driveway on West Las Positas Boulevard.
- Pleasanton's first all-abilities playground is coming! Last fall, the Council approved the location for the new playground at Ken

Mercer Sports Park, and next will be the design phase of the project.

- There will be opportunities for community feedback and input as the design process moves forward.
- We are working to complete the basis of a report to address and remove PFAS in Pleasanton's groundwater wells. The study will identify the scope of improvements at each of our 3 wells, and review the next steps under consideration. We anticipate the report will be concluded in the next few months.
- Another priority approved by the City is updating Pleasanton's Climate Action Plan, also known as CAP 2.0. The City's original Climate Action Plan was adopted in 2012 and outlines local actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, enhance environmental sustainability, and prepare for climate change. While climate change is a global issue, actions we take at the local level will have impact on a global scale -- if we all do our part.
- The City is in the process of gathering public feedback about CAP 2.0 through virtual meetings, community surveys, and a workshop coming later in March.
- To help meet our CAP 2.0 goals, Pleasanton enrolled in the East Bay Community Energy, a not-for-profit public agency providing electricity from clean and renewable sources that will begin

providing service next month to Pleasanton residential and commercial customers through automatic enrollment with the option to opt-out.

- As the City updates its CAP 2.0 with a goal to be carbon neutral by 2045, the rollout of services from East Bay Community Energy is a step toward achieving overall reduction of greenhouse gas emissions here in Pleasanton.
- While I am on this topic of long-term initiatives for Pleasanton, the City's next Housing Element update is due in 2023. Though that may sound like we have a lot of time, the State process to determine each City's Regional Housing Needs Allocation, RHNA, is currently underway. This allocation determines the total number of residential units the Bay Area region needs to zone for. Affordability must also meet the housing needs of residents of all income levels, over the eight-year planning period.
- The State has taken a more aggressive approach this cycle, toward local accountability. For example, the projected housing production figures have increased more than twofold from the prior planning cycle!! Twice as many!
- The City is seeking support from the Association of Bay Area Governments to request reconsideration of our allocation so that we can protect local control for our Pleasanton community.

- You do not have to be a Realtor to know it is expensive to live in Pleasanton, so last fall, the City approved an update to its existing Down Payment Assistance Program to increase the maximum loan amount from \$20,000 to \$100,000 providing eligible residents real purchasing power in this high-cost housing market.
- Our goal was to help our teachers, police, firefighters and non-profit works so they can live in the same communities they serve.
- I think this is a great idea.
- During many council meetings we heard from the residents about a critical need for mental health services in the Tri-Valley, and those needs have been intensified by the COVID pandemic.
- We recognize there was not enough capacity to meet the demand for mental health services. The systems are complex and difficult to navigate, especially in a crisis. Patients who do not have a health care provider frequently wait \*weeks\* for an appointment with a licensed therapist or psychiatrist.
- I am very proud to announce ... the City just approved funding to support the start-up of a pilot program with Axis Community Health in partnership with the County and the cities of Dublin and Livermore. The program will provide short term mental health services in an urgent care model for Tri-Valley residents. The pilot project will be available to all members of the community, regardless of income or insurance status.

- During the pandemic, these mental health services will be provided via tele-health. The center will serve as a central entry point for assessment, triage, treatment, and care coordination for anyone seeking treatment.
- When needed, Axis Mental Health Urgent Care Center will provide assessment a timely connection to services in a format that is less costly than an emergency room. This is another of example of how working together we are a stronger and a more compassionate Pleasanton.
- By the way, YES, We ARE Open for Business, and while we have seen some businesses struggle during this pandemic, I want to share a bit of good news about Pleasanton businesses that are thriving.
- At last year's State of the City address, the mayor reported that Pleasanton's 10X Genomics valuation catapulted 125% in the first six months of its Initial Public Offering.
- 10X Genomics represents a true success story that started here in Pleasanton and is ready to expand already. They chose to revitalize the Springdale Ave. shopping center, near the Stoneridge Mall. This site will be the location of a new 10x Genomics campus, offering well-paying jobs right here in Pleasanton.

- In addition, another Pleasanton-based company called Gritstone Oncology announced they are developing a second generation COVID vaccine with potential prolonged protection and potency against mutations. It makes me proud to know that Pleasanton is home to businesses that contribute to the wellbeing and health of our nation and the world.
- Lastly, I want to mention the Council's Work Plan Priorities Workshop. This is a process where the Council identifies and prioritizes projects and initiatives that will serve as the road map for our budget over the next two-years. The workshop is being scheduled in approximately a month, and I look forward to hearing the community's input.
- In summary, we have discovered many heroes among us, despite the challenges of 2020. I am so incredibly proud of our Pleasanton community and how in the toughest of times during this pandemic, .... we have found the pearls among us. I am proud of the dedication of the City's staff, of our frontline workers, of our community partners, and most importantly of our Pleasanton residents and businesses who day-in and day-out have demonstrated that our City is strong, resilient and filled with hometown heroes.
- It is an honor and a privilege to serve as mayor of the City of Pleasanton – BUT- I know we are not completely out of the woods

yet, and there is still much more to be done. We will continue to get through this pandemic, and we will restore the health of our residents and our economy. We are in this together, and together we are making history with our resilience and our positive attitude. Pleasanton is an extraordinary place to live, work and volunteer within our community. We have so many reasons to be proud. Thank you for your attention and support.