



City of Peoria

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Mayor Cathy Carlat Delivers 2018 State of the City Address

PEORIA, Ariz. (March, 27, 2018) – *This is the mayor's speech as written. There may have been slight deviations in delivery.*

Good afternoon and thank you all for joining me for the State of the City address!

I'm honored to have the Peoria Chamber of Commerce as our host today.

And I'm pleased to have Jeff Berggren with us. He has connected Huntington University with the residents, businesses and organizations of this entire Valley. His leadership has truly enriched our community.

I want to thank my husband, Dennis, and my kids Adam & Natalie and Kalen for being here. Your love and support throughout the years has motivated and energized me to work towards Peoria's finest future, first for you and now for our next generation.

I'm also proud to have my mother, my sisters and their families here.

You are my blessings. All of you, please stand and be recognized.

And to my Peoria community, it is a privilege to serve as your Mayor. I say that to all of you in this room and to the other 171,000 residents outside these doors.

Every one of you is part of the unique character that makes up our great City. There are those who carry the rich history and heritage of our past, and others who are emerging and molding our future. But no matter the timeline, we are connected by the vitality of our community, the roads that intersect our shared spaces and the days and nights that slip by as we live and thrive in Peoria, Arizona.

Before I go any further, I want to recognize the Peoria City Council. In a profession where character matters, you are the best of the best.

I'm going to ask the members of the City Council who are here today to stand and be recognized:

Vice Mayor Mike Finn, Council member Bridget Binsbacher, Council member Jon Edwards, Council member Vicki Hunt, and Council member Bill Patena.



It is my honor to work with you. This Council works hard to meet the needs of the residents they were elected to represent and to unite each individual district into one connected community.

One connected community -

In Peoria, we have worked to build an interconnected city – a community that, despite its size, still feels small.

A community where neighbors know each other and are joined by experiences, family memories and celebrations shared in a safe environment.

I want to protect all of that for our City. And much more.

This year, this State of the City address is very important to me. This is the 4th time I've come before you to share my vision, achievements, challenges and always, my aspirations for the City I love. The life of a Mayor is measured in 4-year increments. Today is not only a chance to take stock of the last year, it's a chance to take stock of the first term.

I believe the overarching role of Mayor is to influence the future. To impact the trajectory of the City so that it remains relevant to current and future generations. To assure it advances with, and through, changing times. The Mayor's job is to shine a light bright enough for everyone to see the possibilities, and the path to reach them.

It has been my quest to protect the best of Peoria, our unique character, our safe neighborhoods, our connected relationships - while creating an environment that draws new generations, new employers, and new excitement to our City.

There is no doubt that we still want the connected sense of community that is reminiscent of a sleepy, small town. But multifaceted as we are, we also want the energy, commerce and sense of place found in an urban lifestyle.

I think we're making great progress. In 2017, Peoria was ranked on WalletHub's Top Ten Arizona Cities list of the **Best Place to Raise a Family**.

And, we were also listed at number 2 on Ranking Arizona magazine's list of **Best Arizona City to Live, Work and Play**.

Peoria is a champion for the live-work-play transformation of suburbs.

We are focused on creating an environment that encourages the type of private development that aligns with the quality of life desired by our citizens.



It is the job of your Peoria leadership to provide clarity in vision and expectations for development. A job I take very seriously.

Visioning followed by intentional investment, encourages private sector development and entrepreneurial innovation.

Customizing this approach to specific areas of the City allows us to celebrate the unique qualities of individual neighborhoods.

Each of those specific areas began with a recognition and a respect for the built environment and the value that it brings to our residents.

A great example is the area where the Peoria Sports Complex is located. We now all know it as P83, but that did not happen by chance. With the ballpark and event center as an anchor, the area went through an identity evolution that included theme enhancements such as signage, hardscape, lighting, and gateway features.

Additionally, programs were adopted to guide the repurposing of buildings such as the ever-successful Huntington University in a building so suitable for their campus that I can hardly imagine it as the salon and spa it once was.

The success of P83 is exciting, but we must never forget, as it has been said, that it is our history that illuminates the soul.

Playing upon the built environment of our past in Old Town Peoria, the vision for this area is quite unique.

The strategy began with targeted land acquisitions and improvements to the Washington Street block, directly across from the Peoria Center for the Performing Arts.

An Adaptive Reuse and Redevelopment program was put in place which, happily, was a compelling invitation for the Lucidi Distilling Company to transform and invigorate the original Fire Station Number 1 building.

That same program is now bringing renewed life to the 100 year old Edwards Hotel.

The effect is a growing social district that highlights our heritage, in the midst of theaters, parks, community gardens, sidewalk cafes and public art.

Also, our pre-development work was just the market-intervention needed to stimulate the land sale that will soon be the home of Maricopa Integrated Health Systems.



This new facility will not only provide access to high quality and compassionate medical services to our residents; it will also provide high quality jobs. The Center will help fuel the region's economic engine as it becomes increasingly involved in this vibrant community as an employer and civic partner.

Their \$70 million-dollar investment in Peoria will contribute to the quality of life for our residents as they enjoy the history and culture of Old Town.

That is visioning followed by intentional investment in Peoria!

The Vistancia Commercial Core off the Loop 303 in north Peoria is designed to create a state-of-the-art-business environment. Our public / private partnership and shovel-ready improvements have been validated by the national attention we've received for this location. More to come on this exciting employment corridor.

With vibrant neighborhoods, highly rated schools, miles of recreational playgrounds, and exceptional delivery of services to our residents, it's easy to see why Peoria continues to find its place among the best places to live.

For implementing Council goals & policies, and managing the incredible day-to-day successes of our City, I'd like to thank our City Manager, Jeff Tyne.

After almost 20 years of service in the City of Peoria and a continually advancing career, the City Council appointed Jeff to take over the reins as City Manager last summer, following the retirement of long time Manager, Carl Swenson. Mr. Tyne hasn't missed a beat accelerating Peoria's modern approach to every area, from economic innovation to the well-being of neighborhoods.

I've invited Jeff to share a few words with us. Take a look at the screen.

<VIDEO>

Jeff's leadership is reflected in the quality of his team, Deputy City Managers Andy Granger, Erik Strunk and Katie Gregory. All three of you bring decades of experience leading and managing City operations, and Peoria is fortunate to have you.

We plan and invest in our future, we also attend meticulously to our present needs.

Jeff and his team have energized the inner workings of our City and are intent on strengthening important areas of community.



I want to shine a light on one of those areas, and a favorite subject of mine, the arts.

Art comes in many forms, but today I want to talk about something I am especially proud to convey about Theater Works, our fine community partner and tenant at the Peoria Center for the Performing Arts. In addition to the many great productions they put on each year, they have developed a program called AdaptiveWorks.

AdaptiveWorks provides genuine theatrical experiences for people, ages 12 and older, with both mental and physical disabilities.

This is more than an opportunity to perform. It helps those, who may otherwise feel isolated, connect with each other, make friends, and interact in new and creative ways. It brings joy.

To hear more about this wonderful program, please turn your attention to the screen.

< VIDEO >

What an inspiring program!

Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning, keeping together is progress, working together is success."

Providing avenues for our residents to connect with each other in meaningful ways is a critical component of a healthy community.

I have always believed that open communication creates an environment of trust, and offers a path to common ground. To be and stay connected, we must communicate. It's that simple.

In this day and age of 24/7 news and an influx of fake news, we choose to double-down on open engagement and transparency.

We are driven to pursue the means to create active and ongoing dialog between residents and the government formed to serve those residents.

In order to do this effectively, and to ensure we are communicating with every generation of our city, we pulled out all the stops to fully engage our community.

We accomplished this in a number of ways. First, to reach our residents where they are, we incorporated every kind of social media in existence, at least as of noon today! Snapchat,



Instagram Live Stories, Flipgram, Boomerang and Live Twitter Video have all been incorporated into our digital communication efforts.

More connections mean more inclusive engagement and more dialog. Here's an example of how it works:

It's time to update our City's General Plan. This is an important blueprint that envisions how our City will look as it grows through the next decade. It's a document critical to smart growth in our City but historically, it has not drawn much of a crowd at open houses.

Peoria's planning team created PlanPeoriaAZ, an electronic portal to collect feedback and insights from residents.

Traditionally, this type of feedback is gathered via community meetings.

While we still conducted those community meetings, we also rolled out a robust response method via this electronic portal to gather feedback from Peoria residents, business owners and other stakeholders.

The results were astounding.

56 people attended the community meetings. The online participation yielded nearly 2,000 responses. Two thousand residents' voices were heard who might not have otherwise engaged with us, because we connected with them in a way that was fresh and relatable.

We also broadened the reach of our City Council meetings. In 2017, we were the first Valley City to live stream our council meetings on Facebook. Residents are commenting and asking questions as the meeting is happening, and getting real-time answers, that spur even more conversation.

In the past, if residents wanted to watch a City Council meeting, they needed to either attend the meeting in person, have access to Channel 11 or wait until it was uploaded to watch it on their computer.

Since live stream began, we are now averaging more than a 1,000 people viewing each meeting.

Citizens want, and we will continue to be -- transparent, engaged, and connected.

A City that is connected to its natural environment - protects the character that makes it unique, considers the well-being of its citizens, and increases the value of its surroundings.



Last year, we protected 317 acres of beautiful, mountainous open space from development. The preservation of Sunrise Mountain will ensure that this signature landmark will be available for Peoria residents to enjoy now and forever.

We also opened another trailhead to the celebrated New River Trail - at Fletcher Heights - and plans are in place this year to continue the New River Trail north, creating a regional connection beginning in Phoenix at Camelback Road, and going all the way up to Happy Valley Road.

We were able to shine an exciting spotlight on an area that connects us to the lives of those who lived here before us, with the completion of the Palo Verde Interpretive Trail. This is an educational and recreational asset that honors how the earliest settlers of the Hohokam Tribe used these lands, and the remarkable ruins that remain today. Adding to an open space preservation area, and an adjacent recreational park, the Palo Verde Interpretive Trail is listed on both the Arizona and National Registers of Historic Places.

I'm proud to announce that Community Park number 3, a 120-acre park nestled up against the West Wing Mountains, is getting ready to move out of the design phase and into the construction phase. An array of archeological findings has been secured and cataloged, and construction is set to begin in June – less than 3 months away!

And thanks to our volunteers on our Parks & Rec Board, Community Park Number 3 will soon have a real name!

Healthy, vibrant neighborhoods are a priority in Peoria. Neighbors who feel connected – invested in what happens in a community – make all the difference in the world.

Peoria's Neighborhood Pride initiative is a great example of paying it forward to strengthen and connect neighbors, while re-energizing neighborhoods.

Last year alone, 687 volunteers revitalized Peoria neighborhoods by trimming trees, repairing fences, shoveling gravel and painting houses.

This outpouring of volunteerism reminds me of a statement made by a respected philosopher and poet:

"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

Dr. Seuss always knew what to say!

Peoria is home to a diverse, and growing economy. We work hard to enhance the local business climate that creates the jobs that enable our residents to pursue career aspirations. We talked earlier about new, intentional development, and now I want to talk about our commitment to



partnering with our existing business community to provide a healthy environment for prosperity and financial stability.

Over the past year, we've launched a number of strategic partnerships and initiatives to safeguard the vitality of our City's current and future businesses.

Small businesses are the backbone of America. There are 28 million small businesses in the United States, adding 63% of the new jobs in the nation's workforce in the last decade. They are an economic powerhouse and a critical component of our economy.

In order to foster and grow the small business community in our City, last February, your City Council approved the launch of the Arizona Small Business Development Center in Peoria.

The SBDC provides valuable services to businesses, including onsite, one-on-one counseling for business owners, funding assessments and resources, and educational workshops, all with the purpose of creating and preserving small business jobs and revenue right here in our city.

This is a great step forward in ensuring Peoria businesses have the support they need to thrive, and I was excited to see this program come to life. Already, hundreds of Peoria and regional business owners have received free services through the SBDC.

One of those business owners is Dr. Rami with Desert Vein and Vascular Institute. Dr. Rami is a north Peoria resident who found himself at a crossroads when trying to launch his business.

See what happens next.

< VIDEO >

I'm so happy for Dr. Rami and was thrilled to see his business open in Peoria earlier this year. Thriving businesses mean a healthy job market and bringing quality jobs and employers to our city remains one of our top priorities. This year, a WalletHub survey ranked Peoria in the top 5 on their **Best Place to Get a Job in the United States** list. WalletHub compared more than 180 U.S. cities and analyzed factors such as socio economics, employment growth opportunities, salary potential and job security.

This is good news for our economy and good news for the residents of Peoria.

Another project I am eager to share with you is our partnership with Arizona State University.



Years ago, the city launched the BioInspire Medical Device Incubator, which has now evolved into a partnership with the ASU Entrepreneurship and Innovation Team to build a unique program that we are calling Peoria Forward.

This is a game-changer. Peoria Forward not only connects our entrepreneurs with ASU -- the Number One Most Innovative School in the Country, it provides access to technical support, training, investor connections and commercialization expertise.

And on top of that, it is action packed. ASU will immediately begin building their entrepreneurial base by delivering their expertise through a series of events – 22 scheduled for this year alone.

This partnership with ASU demonstrates our goal of connecting the business community with invaluable resources to propel their success in Peoria.

Another important economic driver is tourism. We have been hitting it out of the ballpark by giving visitors a uniquely-Peoria experience.

When someone escapes to Peoria, in the same week, they can play on our gorgeous fairways, enjoy a hot dog and a beer in the outfield, see the view from atop our desert mountains and cool off in our crystal blue lake.

There is no doubt, we have gems throughout the City that are putting us on the map, and we are getting the national recognition we deserve with features in Expedia, Huffington Post and USA Today, among others.

Of course, we welcome many visitors from Seattle and San Diego who are loyal spring training fans. Last year, 227,000 people walked through our gates at Peoria Sports Complex.

Beyond the \$29 million dollars directly associated with spring training each year, the Peoria Sports Complex also generates an additional \$26 million in year-round economic impact. This is a trend forecasted to continue, particularly in light of recent renovations, which have provided new amenities for private family events, business conferences and even weddings!

But our footprint for tourism success doesn't stop there. Look a few miles north where nature's playground, Lake Pleasant, attracts more than one million people a year. This area is a tourism mecca with offerings as varied as extreme water sports, and moonlight kayaking.



Complementing the desert mountains in north Peoria, the beautiful Cibola Vista Resort is undergoing yet another expansion, adding more amenities and bringing their room count up to 343.

I'm excited to announce that two new hotels under the Marriott flag are joining the Peoria business family in the heart of the P83 Sports and Entertainment District.

I am also pleased to see so many independently owned dining establishments like Fabio on Fire, Revolu, Haymaker, Osaka P83, Headquarters, Slicks Garage, V's Taproom and many more, flourishing in our city. Diners today want a unique, chef-driven, locally sourced, culinary experience, and they can find it throughout Peoria.

Connecting with another important segment of our city's population – military veterans – I would like to acknowledge the Veterans who were on stage at the beginning of this event and all the veterans who are here today.

Thank you for your service.

One of my favorite highlights of the past year, something very close to my heart, was the Veterans Day celebration when we unveiled the new and expanded Peoria Veterans Memorial at Rio Vista Park.

When we began this expansion, we had a simple, yet significant goal – to pay tribute to the men and women who have served our country and to honor them, and their families.

Every single American has been impacted by the selfless contributions of our veterans and the Memorial Wall now allows each of us an opportunity to preserve the memory of the veterans we personally know and love, on the newly created Honor Wall. I was really proud to be able to add my dad's name there.

Completely new this year is the Vietnam Veterans Memorial represented with a full-size Huey helicopter. I hope our Vietnam Veterans will find the recognition they deserve when they visit this Memorial and read the heartfelt "Welcome Home" inscribed near the Huey.

All of the men and women who are represented on the wall, either through their name or through a battle in which they served, answered the call to duty for their homeland.

They deserve our highest respect and with the expanded reflection deck, shade, and seating next to the calming water, we hope this Memorial will forever serve as a tranquil and welcoming place to find peace and soothe the soul.



Many people contributed to bringing the memorial to life, including our dedicated City of Peoria team, Council member Patena and the volunteers who serve on the Peoria Veterans Memorial Board. Thank you for your hard work in making this memorial special.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Light Horse Legacy for your assistance in acquiring the Huey. Your work with U.S. Combat Veterans suffering from PTSD is admirable and greatly appreciated.

Now I'd like to shift our attention to our City's other heroes – Peoria's Police Officers and Fire-Medical teams – who are working day and night to keep our City safe.

Peoria is one of the safest cities in the Valley. In fact, Peoria was named on the Top 20 **Safest City in America** list by WalletHub. As part of their study to determine where Americans can feel most protected against life's hazards, WalletHub Analysts compared more than 180 U.S. cities across 38 key metrics such as home & community safety, number of law enforcement personnel and crimes per capita. I'm proud to see Peoria recognized nationally as the safe and secure City we know it to be.

Crime is on a downward trend - property crime is down 9% and overall crime is down 7%.

But due to a variety of social issues in this ever-changing climate, law enforcement agencies across the country are struggling to recruit, hire and retain qualified police officers and 911 dispatchers.

To adjust to this national occurrence, we have deconstructed our entire recruiting strategy, and are seeing tangible results.

Chief Minter, please stand and be recognized for your hard work and the amazing work of the police department.

In September, we opened the Pinnacle Peak Public Safety facility to serve the ever-expanding population of our City more effectively.

This state-of-the-art building was designed to bring police services close to the growing population in the northern part of our City, and to provide reassurance that Peoria citizens will not experience a lag in service as growth continues.

Our police departments' outreach efforts contribute to making our city an ideal place to raise a family. Their community policing philosophy and touchpoints with residents are numerous and impactful.



An important aspect of community outreach involves our City's youth. Peoria's School Resource Officers are specially trained law enforcement officers assigned to work in a school.

SROs help to identify bullies in the classroom and online. They are intelligence officers, counselors, mentors and have the rare ability to alternate between nurturing and authoritative figures. They teach students that police are not the enemy. And they help them make smart choices.

Let's take a look.

< VIDEO >

I want to thank Peoria Unified School District.

They are our partner on the School Resource Officer program and in many other ways. Their commitment to excellence, demonstrated by their award-winning Choice Programs and 93% high school graduation rate, continues to draw people to our City.

I'd like to switch gears here to our City's other emergency responders – our incredible Fire-Medical Department.

Chief Bobby Ruiz, under your leadership, your team constantly looks for new and better ways to serve Peoria residents, for which we are extremely grateful.

Chief Ruiz, please stand to be recognized!

The Peoria Fire-Medical Department protects lives and property threatened by fire. They render emergency medical and transportation services, plan for every kind of disaster, and still find time for fire prevention and life-safety education programs.

Since the historic launch of our own ambulance service one year ago, the Peoria Fire-Medical team continues the mission to protect this core service from the traditional model of private ambulance companies. The Council recently voted to add additional vehicles and personnel to this program.

While Lake Pleasant and our scenic mountains contribute to the fun and beauty of our City, it is the Peoria Fire-Medical crews who must show up when something goes wrong.

These two specialized areas of rescue require exhaustive training hours, specific gear and critical staffing methods to assure hikers and boaters are taken care of in the event of an emergency.



There are big and important jobs to do in our City, and we do them well.

The state of the City is strong.

Peoria is more than just a place on a map. We are boldly embracing a future enriched by the depth of our character and enhanced by our courage to unleash the opportunities ahead.

It is my honor to serve as your mayor during this pivotal and exciting time in Peoria's history.

Thank you for joining me today.