

Rowlett

On the Water. On the Move.

A Monthly Message From Mayor Todd Gottel - January, 2017

State of the City

As laid out in our City Charter, once a year it is my job as Mayor to brag about the greatest city in Texas in my Annual State of the City address. It's not hard to do! 2016 will be remembered as the year of development...and rebuilding. This year, I delivered this address at our January 17 regular City Council meeting.

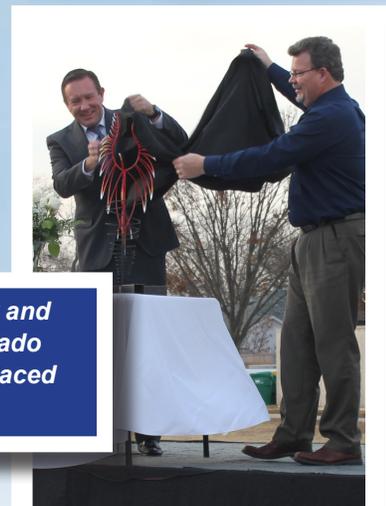
Just over a year ago, our community was changed forever following the devastating tornado. And like the Phoenix sculpture design unveiled at our recent Tornado Remembrance Ceremony, we have risen from the ashes of this tragedy. In a time of need, we came together for one another. The outpouring of support from our churches, volunteers, donors, and fellow citizens was overwhelming. This showed the true spirit and resolve of Rowlett! A community who refuses to be defined by this tragedy, and pushes forward at full speed.

Our State of the City address illustrates that there is so much to celebrate in Rowlett, as we reflect upon 2016 and look forward to our bright future. There has been significant change in our community since I joined the City Council in 1997, the vision created for our community BY the members of our community up to 50 years ago is finally coming to fruition! We owe a great debt of gratitude to those who served on council before me, as well as those citizens of Rowlett who became involved and shaped the development that is now taking place. With PGBT, DART Light Rail and the Realize Rowlett 2020 comprehensive plan in place, areas of Rowlett that previously were not open for development are now welcoming exciting opportunities. Remember when our dining opportunities were limited to one or two choices? Those days are gone, we now have world-class restaurants right here at home, with more on the way in the Bayside development!

I would like to take a moment to thank our incredible City staff. Without the hard work they put in on a daily basis, we would not have the City we do. I also need to thank my fellow City Councilmembers. We approach every decision with a team mentality and work together very respectfully to make the decisions that are truly best for our great city. I honestly couldn't ask for a better group of colleagues. I hope you enjoy this snapshot of all that is going on in YOUR hometown!



Mayor Todd Gottel



City Manager Brian Funderburk and I unveiled the design for a tornado remembrance sculpture to be placed at Schrade Blueonnet Park

2017 State of the City

December 2015 Tornado Recovery Update

Going out into our community after the tornado was a very sobering experience. The damage done was significant and we knew the road to recovery was going to be long. After the Tornado, some began to ask, can Rowlett recover? Well, I can undoubtedly say yes! And we're stronger than before!

I would like to recognize the extraordinary actions of our City staff, along with the tireless work by countless volunteers and relief organizations over the past year. Without their coordinated efforts, our community would not be as far along in the recovery! Comparing ourselves to other communities who have been impacted by similar disasters, Rowlett has far surpassed FEMA expectations during the recovery process. It's all thanks to you and the members of this community.

Most of those impacted are back in their homes...or will be soon. In the tornado zone, the City has issued over 1,800 building permits with a value of nearly \$50 million. Our churches, businesses, and non-profit agencies continue to aid and assist those who still have unmet needs.

“We will continue to stand strong...Rowlett Strong!”

Water!

Another challenge for us this year, and the foreseeable future, is water. Water customers all across North Texas were concerned last summer when they began seeing higher than usual water bills. Rowlett City Council met to discuss our customers' concerns regarding water usage and billing practices. At that meeting, Council expressed interest in analyzing Rowlett's water rate structure compared to other North Texas Municipal Water District cities, and to have an audit conducted on City water meters and billing processes. That independent auditor found no exceptions in City billing system.

The issue is with our contract with the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD), and the rates we are permanently locked into. Years of drought and the adoption of water conservation strategies have changed the amount and way we use water; and it is unlikely the cities will ever again use the minimums that were set by their greatest annual usage. Our residents and businesses are paying too much for water under this outdated rate method. We can only hope to get a unanimous vote of their board members to establish a rate structure that is equitable and serves the region's long-term best interest. Water rates continue to rise and have been raised 69.8 percent since fiscal year 2012.

The NTMWD is composed of 13 member cities and includes approximately 34 customer cities. Rowlett is a “customer” city, not a member city. Therefore, Rowlett does not have a vote on water policy or conservation measures with the Water District. This is a region wide problem that we will continue to monitor. We're on your side. I've experienced the same sticker shock on my water bill as everyone else. But folks, don't expect your water bill to go down anytime soon. If it hasn't already, it might soon become your largest bill. The NTMWD plans to raise rates by approximately 10 percent per year for the next seven years.

Budget

The City of Rowlett mission is to be “A Citizen-Centered Organization That Provides Great Value to Our Citizens for Their Tax Dollars.” Rowlett City Council takes this financial responsibility to its citizens seriously and are committed to financial transparency. The combination of improved tax values, new growth, and additional tax dollars will provide opportunities to address aging infrastructure in our City, revitalize neighborhoods, and enhance our community amenities. In just a few years, Rowlett will look and feel noticeably different from the vision anticipated so long ago by our citizens.

A key element to fulfilling this mission is strong financial stewardship. The City of Rowlett Accounting Department truly delivers just that every day and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) agrees! For the 12th straight year, GFOA has awarded their prestigious Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting to the City of Rowlett for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report. The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting!



Bayside



Economic Development

Did you know that the American City Business Journal named Rowlett's Bayside number #3 on their Top 55 New Residential Projects of 2016? Bayside, which broke ground on April 26, 2016, is the 262-acre, \$1 billion-dollar mixed-use lake-front development located at Dalrock and I-30, will boast an eight-acre Crystal Lagoon that is 25 times the size of an Olympic swimming pool and the equivalent to 10 football fields of sparkling water. The highlight of the Crystal Lagoon will be the largest show fountain in Texas, which will be home to daily live entertainment featuring music, fire and more – and it's all open to the public.

Bayside will be our new gateway into Rowlett on I-30. The development also includes a world class resort and marina, two condominium towers, luxury apartments, single family homes and 1.75 million square feet of mixed use retail, entertainment, restaurant and office space and 3,000 residential units. Bayside is expected to add nearly one billion dollars in new taxable value resulting in nearly \$150 million in revenue from property, sales and hotel occupancy taxes over the next 20 years. Mass grading, utility and infrastructure construction has already begun for the first phase of the project. This is a once-in-a-lifetime economic development opportunity that will absolutely enhance our quality of life and allow us to welcome visitors from all over to enjoy Rowlett hospitality at its finest.

Bayside alone would be a fantastic story; however, it doesn't stop here. Today, major projects in every quadrant of the City are under construction including, The Homestead at Liberty Grove, Terra Lago, Harmony, and not to mention smaller developments and projects along Highway 66. Have you seen the Village of Rowlett lately? It's going to be here before you know it and will be home to the Rowlett Public Library, once finished! While some projects will take time to develop in phases, many will be built in one phase. Over the next five years, they will add an additional \$800-\$950 million in new investment, potentially

adding \$10-\$15 million in property taxes alone. We also saw the opening of businesses such as Sprouts, Bankhead Brewing, Jimmy John's, the relocation of Valentino's, First Choice Emergency Room, Goody Goody, Deno's Kitchen and Spirits, Bullitt Multi-sport Complex, GatSplat Paintball, Pie Five, Panda Express, and Backcountry Brewing.

Who Let the Dogs Out?

In an effort to encourage more foot traffic throughout downtown and around the City, the City Council approved an ordinance allowing food service establishments to welcome dogs on their outdoor patios! The choice is, of course, up to each individual food establishment and is limited by certain minimum health requirements.



2015 CIP Bond Project Update

We are now in year two of the 2015 Bond Election and going strong! Nearly every streets project is in the design phase and several parks projects have been completed.

A new right turn lane was completed along Lakeview Parkway. As soon as it opened, it immediately reduced delays and congestion at the intersection. On average, almost 5,000 vehicles use the turn lane each day.

Miller Road was repaved between PGBT and CA Roan. The project involved removing 3" of existing asphalt and overlaying the road with new asphalt. A fiberglass petro-mat was installed to help prevent future cracking.

Phase 1 of our alley improvement program is over 75% complete. And work has begun on the alleys behind Trail Lake and Lake Bend.

Haley's Hurricane Twist opened this summer, becoming the newest water slide attraction at the Wet Zone.

Two practice soccer fields at Katy Park are complete.

Landscaping and sail shades have been installed at Isaac Scruggs Park. A ceremony dedicating the basketball court to honor the memory of Devin Oliver, a former Rowlett High School basketball star who passed away last year, was held for the basketball court on April 30.

An [interactive map](#) and timeline for upcoming projects is available at www.rowlett.com.

Library

The Rowlett Public Library received the Achievement of Library Excellence Award from the Texas Municipal Library Directors Association for the 11th year! Of 556 public libraries and library systems in the State of Texas, your Rowlett Public Library was among only 41 receiving the award this year. New technology is now available at the Library. Access to thousands of movies, television shows, music albums, eBooks, audiobooks and digital comics through hoopla Digital! All materials can either be streamed through the hoopla website or downloaded to a portable device through the Android or IOS app. Items checked out are returned automatically, so you don't have to worry about late fees! Best of all, library cardholders have simultaneous access to materials on hoopla, which means you never have to wait for someone else to finish with what you want to borrow.

The Rowlett Public Library has also just introduced self check-out! This is a great way to avoid the line at the Circulation Desk during peak periods. It also allows you to checkout and renew books at the same time!

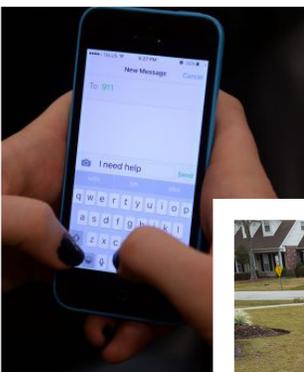
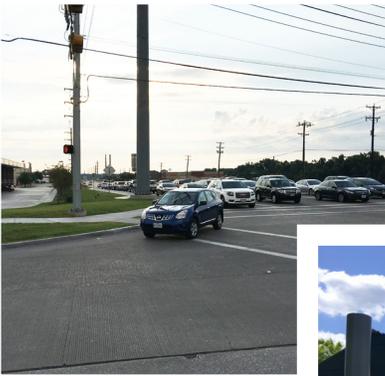
New Technology

And speaking of new technology in Rowlett, here are a few more innovations the City made this year:

Rowlett now offers Text to 9-1-1. Call if you can, but now you can text if you can't! Text messaging is one of the primary ways people communicate today and also serves members of the hearing and speech disabilities community. Text-to-9-1-1 is also helpful in situations when a crime is in process and can't speak. But remember, the best way to contact 9-1-1 will continue to be via voice communications whenever possible.

Utility Billing now offers a new payment method called Paymentus. Customers have the option to sign up for recurring credit card payments along with the option to make one-time utility payments! Another added feature, Paymentus also offers payments via a smart phone app.

Approximately 18,000 meter radio antennas will be upgraded during the next six to nine months. These new Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) antennas will transmit water consumption data directly to the City's Utility Billing Department, thereby eliminating the need to drive by locations to acquire the meter readings. When the system is fully implemented in late 2018, water customers will have the ability to access daily water consumption online to help save water and money!



Parks and Recreation

Thanks to the tremendous efforts of the Rowlett Parks and Recreation Department, Rowlett was once again named a *Playful City USA!* for the 6th straight year.



Then on July 9, we held the grand opening celebration of Kids Kingdom Playground! This state of the art, 22,000 square foot, community-inspired and community-built playground at Pecan Grove Park has definitely become a regional draw! Designed using up-to-the-minute technology and safe, sustainable materials, Kids Kingdom is accessible for children of all abilities and age groups. It was truly a community project, tirelessly planned and promoted by those volunteering their time by serving on the Parks Advisory Board and the Playground Committee. The main construction of Kids Kingdom, which occurred over a nine day period in December, 2016, was facilitated by over 850 volunteers who worked for 3,339 hours!



The Wet Zone Waterpark received a much needed facelift in 2016 including new signage, new foam floatables, a new slide feature and a new plaster bottom.

A new shade structure was also installed at Community Park over the front playground. Playgrounds and shade structures are a winning combination in the Summer Texas heat!

And of course, our incredible series of special events continues to bring the community together for fun and fellowship! This year, we enjoyed the annual Easter Egg Hunt and Pup-a-Palooza, Kid Fish, Cardboard

Boat Regatta, Memorial Day/Touch-a-Truck, Fireworks on Main, Summer Concert Series, Movies in Pecan Grove Park, Diversity Day, Camp Fear, Pooch Plunge, Veterans Day and Main Street Fest.

Senior citizens also continue to have plenty of opportunities to stay active here in Rowlett. After listening to their needs, the Parks Department hired a part-time Senior Programmer, Jill Beam, who increased participation in programs by almost 40 percent! No longer driving? No worries! The Senior Transportation program provided 686 one way trips for seniors to the Rowlett Community Centre.



Police Department

Thanks to efforts of the Rowlett Police Department, Rowlett was named the #3 Safest Place in Texas by ValuePenguin, who analyzed the most recent FBI Crime Report to determine the safest places in the Lone Star State! In addition, home and community safety experts, SafeWise, named Rowlett in the Top 50 Safest Cities in Texas. SafeWise is quoted as saying, "a growing population can be difficult to manage, but Rowlett is doing it swiftly and with grace."



When tragedy struck in Downtown Dallas, our community came out in force to attend a Candlelight Vigil at Rowlett City Hall, honoring the Dallas Police and DART Officers killed in the line of duty on July 7. In a true showing of support for our own officers, the Rowlett Citizens Police Academy had an overwhelming number of applications following that horrific event. The Department held two sessions with 60 graduates!



We also participated in the annual National Night Out. 35 active crime watch programs and 28 groups took part by holding block parties, cookouts, and safety demonstrations to promote police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie.

The Rowlett Animal Shelter continued throughout the year to maintain its extremely high 99% live release rate. This would not be possible without incredible volunteers and the help of Friends of the Rowlett Animal Shelter.

Rowlett is an organization that encourages unorthodox partnerships to find permanent homes for all of the pets that come to the animal shelter, in fact I showcase an animal at every regular Council meeting and on [my Facebook page!](#)



Fire Rescue

One of Only FOUR in the State of Texas, Rowlett Fire Rescue received the coveted award and designation of “Recognized Best Practices Fire Department” from the Texas Fire Chiefs Association Best Practices Recognition Program. Rowlett Fire Rescue was also recognized by Careflight and The Dallas Fort Worth Hospital Council as a “2015 Great First Responder”! This award celebrates Rowlett Fire Rescue for going above and beyond the call of duty as a First Responder, commitment to the highest level of emergency care in the field, demonstrating professionalism, and setting the standard for peers in life threatening emergencies.



Firefighter and Paramedic Scott Martinez was honored with the Liberty Mutual’s Fire Mark Award for Community Service & Education. Scott volunteered his own time tirelessly for months after the tornado, coordinating other volunteers into work crews, assisting victims with home repairs, debris clearing and demos. He’s the very definition of going above and beyond.

Rowlett Fire Rescue also continued the popular Citizens Fire Academy last June and July.

Firefighter Troy Ottinger took three Fire Explorer teams, a youth program where young adults receive training similar to professional firefighters, to compete in this year’s Explorer

Fire Games in Dallas. The Rowlett teams won a total of nine awards...three of which were first place!

Recognitions

2016 was possibly the busiest year ever in the history of Rowlett. Every City department went way above and beyond...

The Texas Chapter of the American Planning Association awarded the Planning Department their 2016 Certificate of Achievement for Planning Excellence.

The Texas Public Works Association recognized the City of Rowlett for the Public Works Project of the Year for Disaster, Emergency Construction, and Repair for the Rowlett EF-4 tornado emergency response.

Ed Balderas, Rowlett’s Emergency Management Specialist, received the North Central Texas Council of Governments “Hot Stuff” Award for the exceptional leadership demonstrated during the tornado response and in all of the months since.

Recognizing individuals who continuously strive to make a positive difference in diverse communities, City Manager Brian Funderburk was honored with the 2016 Bridge Builder award from the NAACP, Garland Branch at their annual Freedom Fund Brunch.

Assistant City Manager Jim Proce was selected as an American Public Works Association Top Ten Public Works Leader of the Year. Also recognized for leadership and innovative thinking by this organization was Public Works’ Will Plexico.

Volunteerism!

I would like to personally thank ALL of our volunteers and volunteer groups, without whom many departments would not be able to offer the high level of services currently available.

In Fiscal Year 2016, volunteers contributed 20,291 hours, an equivalent to 9.9 full-time employees, at a cost savings of \$509,507.

This does not include the thousands of hours donated by churches and non-profit groups during the tornado disaster and recovery!

We are very proud of our partnerships with great organizations like the Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT). In 2016, CERT and Fire Corps volunteers held a smoke alarm blitz targeting homes in the tornado zone and replaced 300 non-working smoke alarms. Due to increased attention and interest from the December tornado, Rowlett’s CERT trained 219 citizens in two classes. The Rowlett CERT program now has 159 trained members in their ranks.



Community Enhancement

Keep Rowlett Beautiful (KRB) is an incredible community partner. In 2016, KRB rose to the challenge and added additional events to help disaster survivors in the tornado zone get rid of debris and household hazardous Materials at no cost. Keep Texas Beautiful awarded KRB a 2016 Anheuser-Busch Community Restoration Grant. The \$3,000 grant was utilized to restore the sand volleyball court located in Lakeside Park, which was destroyed in the tornado.

The Arts and Humanities Commission unveiled the first in a series of public art pieces. This piece, by sculptor Nic Noblique, has been installed at the entrance to the Rowlett Community Centre, stop by and take a look! The Commission also held a new art exhibit focusing solely on the artistic talents and abilities of individuals living with special needs.



The City's new Neighborhood Life initiative has kicked off with planned programs that include a Neighborhood Clean-Up Blitz, Rental Registration Program, Enhanced Neighborhood Standards, and the brand-new Rowlett Citizen City Academy, which will be held annually in the spring. [Registration is now open here](#) for the inaugural class. You may have already seen a few programs like the Property of the Season Award, the Lone Star Smart Yard, and the Light Up Rowlett Award!



“As you can see, Rowlett truly is on the move! Together, we continue to make Rowlett the best city in Texas. I remain honored and humbled to be your mayor, and thank you for everything you do to make Rowlett great. Let's make 2017 our best year yet!”

ROWLETT PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
SPRING 2017 EVENTS

LITTLE SWEETHEART DANCE:
SATURDAY, JANUARY 28TH
7:00 - 9:00PM
ROWLETT COMMUNITY CENTRE

EASTER EGG HUNT:
SATURDAY, APRIL 8TH
10:00AM - 12:00PM
PECAN GROVE PARK

PUP-A-PALOOZA:
SUNDAY, APRIL 9TH
2:00 - 4:00PM
HERFURTH PARK

KID FISH:
SATURDAY, APRIL 29TH
9:00AM - 12:00PM
COMMUNITY PARK POND

CARDBOARD BOAT REGATTA:
SATURDAY, APRIL 29TH
1:30 - 2:00PM
COMMUNITY PARK POND

**MEMORIAL DAY CEREMONY
TOUCH-A-TRUCK:**
SATURDAY, MAY 27TH
10:00AM - 1:00PM
ROWLETT COMMUNITY CENTRE

I hope you and your family will join us at one or all of the super fun special events presented by the Rowlett Parks and Recreation Department coming our way this spring!

Find more information at www.rowlett.com/ParksandRec