

## Las Vegas: Becoming a World-Class City

I am proud to be the 2019 Chairman of the Las Vegas Metro Chamber, an organization that has been a part of shaping the southern Nevada community since its earliest days. The following remarks are condensed from a speech I gave at my installation.

I came to Las Vegas in 2000 because I viewed this city as the land of opportunity. It's hard to believe how far this city has come since then:

- Our population has grown by almost 1 million people
- 14 major hotel properties have opened
- Nevada State College was created
- Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health opened, as well as The Smith Center for the Performing Arts
- The UNLV School of Medicine was created
- We've welcomed major league sports with the Vegas Golden Knights, Las Vegas Lights and Vegas Aces. We're now building a world-class stadium for the soon-to-be Las Vegas Raiders and also building a new Las Vegas Baseball Stadium.

We have made tremendous progress in rebuilding after the devastating recession. Since that time, we have become serious about diversifying our economy – with growth in tech, healthcare, and distribution, leading to 100,000 new jobs since the pre-recession peak. We are diversifying our core industry of tourism by investing in major events and major league sports, and expanding our convention space. And our construction industry has been rejuvenated after losing more than 175,000 jobs.

We have grown into a true metropolitan region, and now we need to think seriously about our future. We can't go back to the pre-Recession mindset that took the good times for granted. What will we need to be a vibrant community? What should we do today to capitalize on opportunities? And how should we transform our city to be globally relevant in the future?

Las Vegas is an iconic city. No matter where you go on the planet, everyone recognizes Las Vegas. It's a special position that we should never take for granted. However, iconic and world-class are not synonymous. And while we have made tremendous strides, we need to get serious and focus on transforming into a world-class city.

First and foremost, world-class cities have vibrant small businesses. Small business is at the heart of who we are in Las Vegas because it's a place where you can stake your claim to the American economic dream. An average person with an idea and a lot of hard work can take a chance here and open a business; can nurture that business, eventually hire employees, and work to make their enterprise grow.

World-class cities have global relationships that connect their economy to the world. Las Vegas is well-positioned in this area. We are blessed with an international airport that connects us to

nearly every part of the globe, and we welcome visitors from all over the world. But we also need to connect our local businesses to the global community. That's why the Chamber has been expanding our relationships internationally and why we recently established a new partnership between the Chamber, the World Trade Center and the LVCVA that will help us build even more international connections and relationships.

World-class cities have great transportation systems that efficiently move their residents and visitors. Las Vegas needs an integrated, multimodal transportation system to handle our growing population and influx of visitors – a system that connects workforce, education, the Strip corridor, the airport, and population centers.

World-class cities have top-tier research universities. A strong UNLV fuels innovation and research, produces the next generation of industry leaders and professionals, and shapes the intellectual dialogue in our community. We need to fully support our university and make sure it has the resources it needs to grow and become a Tier 1 ranked research university.

To be a world-class city, we also need a pipeline of talent ensuring we have trained workers at all levels, from quality certificate programs to doctorate degrees – a strong talent pipeline that encompasses K-12, CSN, Nevada State, and UNLV.

World-class cities have high-quality medical care, with first-class medical schools and health sciences schools to produce the doctors, nurses, health care professionals, and medical advancements that our residents must have to stay healthy. While we have made some strides in this area, there is still much to do. The UNLV School of Medicine is still in its infancy and it is going to need a lot of support for it to grow into the thriving school it should be.

I truly believe that Las Vegas has the capacity to become one of the greatest cities in the world. But to get there, we can no longer afford to get sidetracked or lose ground because of an antiquated mindset that our state can only have one of something. We need to think bigger than that. When Las Vegas thrives, the entire state and region thrives.

We are ready to take this next step in our evolution – to think even bigger and be bold in our quest to become a world-class city. Our history proves that in Las Vegas, we can make this dream happen.