

Opening

Over the holidays I received several Christmas cards from friends, family, and loved ones. But this was the first year I also received a New Year's greeting card from a good friend. Maybe they were trying to be a little different or maybe they simply missed the window for Christmas cards, either way, I was struck by the message the card conveyed. In a simple, yet powerful statement, the card read: "Dear Future, we're ready." I was taken by the confidence in the proclamation. The statement, of course, prompted a great deal of self-reflection and left me wondering if I could make such a bold statement about my own personal life. However, when I began thinking about this statement and how it applies to American Fork City, I felt more confident in proclaiming, "Dear Future, we're ready!"

Today I'd like to outline the ways in which we are ready, or getting ready, for the future.

Readying the People of our Community

Like many of our neighboring cities, AF is experiencing unprecedented growth. And why wouldn't people want to locate here? We are ideally situated, with our access to the lake, the mountains, and our proximity to Salt Lake and Provo-Orem area. Last year we issued 795 building permits, the most we've ever issued in a given year. This amounts to a \$180 million dollar investment into our community; which means housing, job growth, and entertainment. It also means greater demand on our staff, including our inspectors. But we are committed to improve and expedite our permitting processes without compromising building safety.

Now some tend to blame outsiders for our huge housing demand. But the truth is most of the people moving in are our own children and grandchildren. That tells me two things. One, we are doing something right as parents, teachers, leaders, businesses, and neighbors if our kids want to come back. And secondly, we are doing something right as a community if American Fork is a desirable location for new generations to move to. Whitney Houston was right when she said the children are our future.

But before we start patting ourselves on the back for good parenting, we should recognize we still have a lot more work to do.

Of course, we can't talk about our youth without mentioning Alpine School District who play a pivotal role in shaping our children. While there is no substitute for caring, loving, and present parenting in the home, Alpine has done tremendous work in fostering healthy, educated, well-rounded kids. In addition to teaching the core subjects, Alpine has taken upon themselves to promote mental health and wellbeing through programs like Shine Alpine and Aware. We are truly grateful for what they do in readying our youth for the future and participating in making our community thrive.

American Fork City and the School District work closely to discuss shared resources and common goals. I'd like to think doing this has saved taxpayers money. Through our coordination the city shares pool and field space while the district shares auditoriums and gym space. And through our new Communities That Care program the city and school district are collaborating like never before.

Communities That Care, or CTC, is a national program that uses data and community involvement to target issues specific to our community. Youth who

come from towns with a CTC program are 33% less likely to initiate cigarette use, 32% less likely to initiate alcohol use, and 25% less likely to initiate delinquent behavior. The CTC is a co-op between the city, school, businesses and residents. It is people volunteering time to solve challenges specific to American Fork. I thank everyone who is participating in our CTC program and invite other interested to get involved by reaching out to our CTC coordinator.

The only way our youth will be ready for the future is if we are willing to teach them and the only way to teach them is if we are ready ourselves. Probably the best lesson we can all learn is how to serve. We have examples in our own community that we should follow. This last year American Fork recognized Chuck Goodwin and Brian “Bucket” Parker who have given over 30 years coaching youth baseball. Then there’s Larry and Vada Hunter who helped those displaced by the Paradise Fire in California by donating their 5th wheel trailer and gathering supplies to fill another five trailers, all of which were sent to California. I have seen many great acts of kindness during my time as mayor. But I also know that countless other acts of kindness I haven’t seen take place by the good men and women that live around us. People choosing to serve one another will do more to prepare us for the future than any program, utility, or amenity can do.

As I reflected on how we can ready our community for the future I was reminded of something I mentioned when I started my term as Mayor, which I thought was worth revisiting. It’s that we live in a great community with great people. But it’s myopic to think that the only way to maintain our quality of life is to not grow. Closing the doors to growth will cut us off from the better things to come. We need to think higher than that and realize if we work together to be a strong,

unified, and an involved community, then we will maintain our identity as growth occurs. In fact, our identity will be transmitted to all who come in.

Growth is inevitable. Change is inevitable. It is up to us to determine how best to guide that growth and change so it benefits the community, preserves our character, maintains our quality of life, while still giving future generations opportunity to live, work, and play around us.

Readying the City Employees of our Community

Another way we are getting ready for the future is by building a team of great city employees that have a forward-thinking attitude. As a municipality we differ in many ways from a regular business or corporation. Cities can't measure success by profit margins or by counting the number of goods sold. But one measuring stick we do have in common with businesses is that of customer service. For city and businesses alike, we are only as good as our employees. I want to tell you we have great employees. They work, they serve, they volunteer, and they go the extra mile. By no means are we perfect but for a group of people who work inside a community fishbowl, to be judged of everyone, they are incredible. We are always striving to be better, which is why I think, as an organization, our attitude is what it should be; willing to accomplish even more and always looking for ways to improve. In that sense our employees are ready for the future.

We have a strong, independent, free thinking community. But we are also respectful, thoughtful, and understanding. From this tapestry we have pulled some of the very best to be city councilmembers. I am honored to work alongside councilmembers Christiansen, Shelton, Barnes, Carroll and Taylor. They are willing to tackle complex issues, not because it's easy because it's right. They work well

together. You have to be a glutton for punishment to be on city council. No matter what decision you make there will always be a group that disagrees; and they will let you know. But I promise you, in spite of this our city council is always serving the best interest of the community.

Whether councilmember, business owner, city staff, volunteer, or resident, we are all pulling the same wagon forward. So let's work together, share the load, and make sure we are all pulling it toward the future.

Readying the Physical Space of our Community

In addition to readying our people for the future we of course need to ready our physical space. Last year you approved the construction of a new fire station in the north east part of town and property in the south part of town for a future station. Thank you so much for approving this critical need. We are currently securing the location for the station and hope to send a request for qualifications in the next month for design work. Building the second fire station cannot come soon enough. The transport numbers have come in for 2019 and we have retained our title as the 'busiest fire station in Utah County'. Last year we handled 3,910 calls, which is 728 more than 2018. Not to be outdone our police have also done more with less as development has stretched them. While they too need to grow, I am always amazed at how effective our police department is at leveraging grants and other resources to get the work done.

We are excited for some other key transportation projects that will prepare us for the future. In order to reduce congestion we need more and better connectivity. Connectivity like what Canal Blvd. will provide. By serving as a major east-west connector through northern American Fork the Canal Blvd. will reduce the traffic

that comes down to State St. Another key east-west link will be connecting 700 N between 100 E and 200 E. Thanks to MAG funding we can begin design work for this crucial road, which will have a signal on 100 E and a grade downhill that will be less steep than 600 N by the Star Mill. Additionally, we are working with UDOT on the Vineyard Connector, for which construction has already begun in Vineyard City. That road will be vital to supplement the congested I-15 and State St. in our town.

While we'll keep building roads and improving connectivity, we also need to be looking at public transit as an acceptable alternative. This is another element we are planning for, knowing it will be essential infrastructure in the near future.

While it is wonderful to have I-15 in our community, as many of you have observed it acts as a literal barrier between development on the north and south side. Currently, the FrontRunner station is like an island from which you can see, but not reach, the mainland that is our Meadows Shopping Center. With the TOD and other growth coming, we know the south side will eventually be its own mainland, which makes connecting our two sides all the more important. For this reason we are excited to have MAG fund a study for a public transit circulator that will carry people between the FrontRunner station and our business districts in town. This study will be the first official document stating the need for better mass transit in our community and the first step in working with UDOT and UTA to make a transit circulator, and even another overpass, a reality.

With PARC funds we have made great strides in readying our recreational and cultural spaces for the future. To date PARC funds have provided \$4 million dollars in arts and recreational opportunities. With this money the community has

enjoyed more plays and playgrounds. We have enjoyed performances by the Alpine Community Theater, the Timpanogos Arts Foundation, and Fork Fest by the Harrington Center for the Arts. We have completed playgrounds, parking lots, and pavilions. Most notably, we will finish Art Dye Park this spring thanks to PARC funds. We are incredibly grateful to our community for approving the PARC funds which have been a tremendous boon to American Fork's quality of life.

If we want to be ready for the future we'll need businesses that provide important services and are invested community members. We have many wonderful businesses in our city and are continually adding more every year. Some notable businesses to announce is the Amazon Delivery Station, Built Bar which will locate in the former Twin Labs building on Utah Valley Drive, and I am pleased to announce that Woodbury has begun construction of a new class A office tower that will be 5 stories, 155,000 sq. ft. and located near 500 E. American Fork is the only city in Northern Utah County to have a Qualified Opportunity Zone and this tower is the first office space to take advantage of the zone. They will only add to the terrific businesses we already enjoy. I thank our businesses that locate here, serve our residents, and invest in our community. Your presence improves us all and helps provide the ever-changing needs of our growing and dynamic city.

Readying the Infrastructure of our Community

The last way we are readying ourselves for the future is in our infrastructure. Managing what goes under the ground is some of the most important aspects of what a city does, yet it's one of the least sexy ways to spend a dollar. What I mean is its important but often not seen. None-the-less we are committed to improving and updating our critical infrastructure. We are working to update our road plan

to show residents what's been accomplished and what it will take to improve the remaining network. We have some major water lines that need to be installed or updated that we are planning for and as development occurs, we make sure they cover their own water by adding water rights to our city portfolio. We have also had tremendous success with our sewer slip lining program, such that we have been able to hold off increasing TSSD rates for our residents. We have made great strides in our infrastructure and are planning for the future.

I'd like to spend a couple minutes talking about Fiber in our community and why this is an issue worthy of our attention. For one, fiber really is the new utility. Connectivity is the first thing developers ask about when deciding where to build; even before impact fees and permit costs. In addition to general demand for internet, fiber will be essential for future needs like 5G and can be used for other services like education, healthcare, telecommuting, and emergency response. Additionally, AF has a number of assets that give us an advantage when it comes to providing fiber. We already have a network operating center, or 'NOC', and we already own fiber lines. We are the only city that owns fiber along the I-15 corridor. Rather than let these assets go unused or sell them off for a fraction of their value we are investigating a plan that could utilize them and benefit the city, the residents, and even other communities.

While demand for internet is virtually everywhere in AF, supply is not. Yes, there are already internet service providers and companies that provide fiber. A few cities have used their models and that is a possibility we are exploring as well. But we want to make sure we are not signing a deal that leaves the company with all the benefits and our residents and businesses with all the risk. Our community

deserve all the essential infrastructure expected in this day and age and its our job to work out the most responsible way to provide it.

The city has a big undertaking in preparing for the future. In addition to preparing our residents, we need to look at what goes over and under the ground and ensure that its ready for the future as well. And while we may not have everything fixed, we have plans and we are committed to accomplishing them. Our council and staff are willing to forego the short-term gain for the long-term solutions.

Closing

If you find yourselves hopping on the freeway at 1600 N in Orem or near the Roller Mills in Lehi, if you look you'll be able to see our large American flag at the cemetery. I look for it often when I'm approaching American Fork. Like a pin dropped on the county landscape map our great flag is an indication of where home is. There is something unifying about being able to see the flag from anywhere. I'd like to think the flag has been a unifying symbol for our community for some time. Before we were ever American Fork we were an American fort. In my mind's eye that fort had an American flag also, with far fewer stars, hoisted up on its wall; a beacon of home and safety for the pioneers. At the bottom of our flag today we have the Statue of Responsibility as designed by Gary Lee Price, an object memorializing our duty to share the American values of hard work, equality, independence, and justice with others and carry them into the future.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "The future depends on what you do today." Whether it's our people, our place, or our infrastructure, we are preparing for what lies ahead by making good decisions now. We are striving to live by the values we want to teach our children so when they grow up, they can carry the city forward. If we

can create a unified vision for our great city we can say with confidence, “Dear Future, we’re ready.”

Thank you.