



Steve Leary

Mayor

MAYOR'S FOUNDER'S AWARD PRESENTATION & 2020 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Speech delivered by Mayor Steve Leary

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MAYOR'S FOUNDER'S AWARD

Thank you Betsy and the Chamber for today and for all that you bring to the city every day. Before I share with you my thoughts on the State of the City, I would like to present this year's Mayor's Founder's Award. The Mayor's Founder's Award honors an individual, family or organization whose commitment, dedication and actions have built upon our Founders, Loring Chase and Oliver Chapman's vision, and have developed Winter Park into the best place to live, work and play for individuals and families of all ages.

Each year's award is unique and reflective of the honoree. This year's honoree is a pillar in the greater central Florida community. Touching literally thousands of individuals and families across decades of service.

There are many here who have been touched directly or indirectly by our honoree. Dr. Gregor Alexander's family escaped war-torn Germany and relocated to Columbia, where Gregor was born. Dr. Alexander received his medical degree from Javeriana University in Bogota, Columbia and moved to Detroit Michigan to begin his work.

Gregor has lived the American dream. Speaking no English, he arrived in Detroit, on one of those cold Detroit winter days. He was directed to go to the donut shop across the street from the hospital to meet his team. Not only did he not speak any English, dropped in cold, snowy Detroit from Bogota, he also had no idea what a donut was.

True Story. But he persevered.

He met his team and began work the very next day. He eventually moved onto Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami before coming to Central Florida. For more than 42 years, Dr. Alexander, through his work at Orlando Health Winnie Palmer Hospital for Women & Babies has helped bring life to, and save lives in, our community.

Under his leadership, and working alongside another great Central Floridian Mr. Arnold Palmer, the NICU grew from a 6 bed unit in 1975 to a 142 bed unit in 2016 when it became the largest NICU under one roof in the country. The tiniest, most at-risk babies and mothers, found a miracle worker in Dr. Alexander and his team. Through his work with extraordinary neonatal professionals, Dr. Alexander has cared for more than 45,000 critically ill infants. 45,000 infants and their mothers.

Dr. Alexander, his wife Annie and their 15-year old son Gabriel are residents of Winter Park. Communities are comprised of and defined by its residents. Dr. Alexander is a gift to Winter Park, our region and beyond as families have traveled across the globe to have their at-risk babies delivered under his leadership.

Many of you know that I hand craft these awards to meet the individual honoree. This award is in the shape of Lego blocks, which represent some of the earliest toys that young hands play with. The colors of the award are also unique this year. As stacked they represent the flag of Columbia where Dr. Alexander was born and raised. When you separate the blocks, the colors of the pegs within are the colors of Mr. Palmer's famous umbrella logo in tribute to the close partnership between Dr. Alexander and Mr. Palmer. This year's award was also constructed with the help of a mother and a set of triplets that owe their health to Dr. Alexander and are also very special to me.

The inscription inside reads:

2020 Mayor's Founder's Award
Dr. Gregor Alexander

With sincere appreciation for your lifetime building upon our founder's vision.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Gregor Alexander.

2020 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

I can think of no better person to bestow the Mayor's Founders Award on than Dr. Alexander. And a special thank you to the men and women that serve in the medical profession and take such good care of our community.

I would like to recognize Commissioners Seidel and Sprinkel for their years of service on the Commission. It has been a pleasure to work with you. You will be missed on the dais, but I know that you'll both continue to be involved in our community.

Thank you again to the Chamber for your efforts today, and every day in Winter Park. Thank you Commissioners for your dedication. Thank you to our citizen advisory boards. Thank you City Manager Knight and your staff who work every day to keep us such a special place.

NOW: Winter Park is in phenomenal shape.

First financially:

For the 12th straight year we have held the mileage at the same rate. Winter Park has the third lowest mileage rate in all of Orange County. As well, by year's end, we expect to have 30% of our General Fund in reserve. From 2019-2020 the taxable property values in Winter Park increased by +8.8%. And from 2015-2020 taxable property values increased by +48%.

Beyond overseeing the financial stability of Winter Park, a major responsibility of the commission is to set policy to manage our present and plan for our future. Some of the more prominent projects that I'll speak of have taken months and years to come to fruition.

The undergrounding of Winter Park Electric's distribution lines are on pace to meet our 20 year time frame that we laid out when we purchased the utility years back. We should have all distribution lines underground in the next seven years. And based on our most recent renegotiation for bulk power rates we are saving customers +\$1 million annually.

As well, the work that you see going on along Fairbanks between I-4 and US Highway 17/92 is the undergrounding of the large transmission lines that bring power into the city for our own utility to distribute. This is a \$16 million dollar project that has been in process for close to nine years. There is now a three-foot tunnel under the intersection of Fairbanks and US Highway 17/92 that will bring the underground lines to Harper Street and onto our sub-station up the road. This is work being completed in partnership with Duke Energy & the FDOT. This project is being paid for through state funding.

The Winter Park Library and Events Center's guaranteed maximum price has been approved and we are moving forward on a world class facility. From the very start the city worked with the Winter Park Library to ensure the project meets all their needs. In addition to the \$30 million that residents approved for the project plus \$1.5 million in bond proceeds, we also were fortunate to secure a \$6 million grant from the Tourist Development Tax fund, roughly \$2 million from organizational and individual donations and roughly \$2 million from our own CRA. Look for our ground-breaking ceremony soon and in 2021 the official ribbon-cutting.

Quiet Zones have been installed and this year is the first year that train conductors need not blow their horn through Winter Park.

For the past few years we have been working with the state to finalize the acquisition of the Howell Branch Preserve. When completed this will be a 55-acre natural preserve for residents and guests to enjoy whether they walk, run or paddle.

St. Andrews Trail plans are being finalized so that we can bury an old drainage ditch and create a connection point to the Cady Way Trail. This \$2 million effort is also paid with state funds.

Along with the new lights on our Little League fields, we've added +200 parking spaces to our Cady Way Park/Showalter Field complex to better serve the families that spend time enjoying outdoor sports activities there.

Denning Drive is complete and while we work on some tweaks, it is a much more appealing and functional boulevard than before, connecting Webster Avenue almost all the way to Mead Gardens.

These projects have taken some time to get to the point where they are, but all will be well utilized when complete.

None of these projects could have been completed without great partners. I want to thank our partners at the local and state level for recognizing the significance of these efforts. We have the responsibility to continue to improve our assets and develop a more complete offering for residents, prospective residents, businesses and guests. This past year the City Commission seated a task force to help us reimagine Orange Avenue. Along Orange Avenue from Einstein Bagels to Fiddler's Green, we have three major properties ripe for redevelopment. These properties could have redeveloped independently to meet their own needs.

Rather, the task force worked with property owners and nearby residents to create an overlay that utilizes the redevelopment opportunity to address some long-standing corridor issues. As Commissioner Sprinkel once said: why shouldn't the people that live and work along that corridor have a place just as special as Park Ave or Hannibal Square? Property owners who were unable to bring their properties up to current code due to parking or water treatment deficiencies, will now have the opportunity to leverage shared assets. This may take years to realize but when completed as imagined, we will have another great area for everyone to enjoy.

We are also looking at the possibility of purchasing the US Post Office to expand Central Park. This may be a costly acquisition but I look forward to the community discussion. We are also looking at the possibility to create better parking in our core perhaps through the construction of an underground garage that would allow for hundreds of additional parking spaces while at the same time, provide additional surface level green space. You'll be hearing more about both of these items in the coming months.

One of the challenges that we face as a city and a region is the unprecedented growth of our larger community. Show of hands - how many of you or your parents were NOT born in central Florida? Look around the room, this is a pretty influential gathering, and the vast majority of us or our parents came from somewhere else. I hear a lot of comments about "all these people that are coming here!" Guess what, we are "these people." We chose Winter Park for any number of reasons and made it our hometown or home to our business or both. Remember this when you hear complaints about "these people..."

In the past I have honored Congressman Mica, Mayor Allan Trovillion, Father Walsh, Vincent Gagliano and many others that have come from somewhere else and have left an indelible mark on our community. We are a part of a growing region, an important part. And while it comes with its challenges, I believe you would agree that it's better to be part of growing region than a shrinking region.

Regarding the growth in our region from 1990 to 2017

- Orlando grew 70% (Orlando ranks 10th; 19% more people moving in than moving out)
- Orange County 97%
- Apopka 238%
- Oviedo 254%
- Winter Garden 340%
- Winter Park: 23%

Since 1990 Winter Park has been responsible for less than 1% of the overall growth in Orange County. We will continue to work with our neighbors to seek out ways to manage the growth around us that cuts through Winter Park.

While I am at it, I'd like to recognize a few more individuals. At my table are Lambrine and Ronnie Macejewski. Lambrine, together with other local families, turned an old garden and nursery location into Cocina 214. Their success in serving local families and guests has led to another location in Daytona that is also receiving great accolades. Lambrine is also an active member of our community having served on the Chamber Board, the Orange Avenue Overlay board and others. Lambrine thank you for your vision and your continued commitment to serving our community.

I also have Ron Hightower and Captain Tom Smith at my table. Ron's family owns and runs the Winter Park scenic boat tour and if you have the option, get on Captain Tom's boat. This business has been serving Winter Park since 1938 showing residents and guests a unique view of our city. It is one of the assets of our community and one that you can enjoy over and over again. Thank you Ron and Tom for being such great ambassadors for Winter Park.

Some final thoughts:

All of these great projects, with a reasonable mileage rate, money in the bank and great people who call us home or a favorite place to visit. We are a different place. A special place.

Jane Goodall said: "What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make."

The vast majority of us or our families came from somewhere else. Our founders created this different place. They created a community that welcomed new residents, business and guests. There is an effort, both nationally and at the state level to create homogeny.

I serve as the Chair of the Orange County Council of Mayors. We are one another's biggest competitors for new residents, businesses and guests, we are one another's greatest allies. We celebrate our differences and recognize that when packaged together, our differences make up a greater whole.

When Tallahassee or DC preempt local control of zoning regulations, they hurt each of our individual communities and the greater region. Currently there is a bill rapidly making its way through the legislature that would preempt local control of short-term rentals. I know many of us here have stayed in an Airbnb or VRBO and we'd like to think that all visitors are as respectful as we are to the neighborhoods that we land in.

Some of you may wish to rent your home out to supplement your income or offset your expenses. But do you want all of your neighbors renting out their homes? This is a very slippery slope that has been walked before with little or no input from local communities as to the impact on our neighborhoods.

And while we may choose to allow short-term rentals in certain parts of the city or city-wide, it should be a local decision. This is just one example, there are many others. Home rule authority is a constitutionally guaranteed right as it allows us to maintain our uniqueness and our difference.

I'd like to thank State Representative Eskamani for her support of local governments. In the past, I have spoken about the canvas that we have been blessed to inherit. And of Generational Customization. Each generation has been able to craft a Winter Park that is true to our brand, but flexible enough to meet the needs and wants of current residents. It does no good to bemoan the growth. Let's unite around working with one another to continue to build on our founder's vision. Let's be different by welcoming new neighbors and new ideas so that we can continue to meet the desires of our community.

Thank you all for your time today and for all that you do to keep Winter Park different and the special place that we call home. Have a great weekend.