

Welcome everyone, I'm Mayor Bill Droste, and I want to thank you all for being here – both those attending in person and those who are attending virtually. I'd like to acknowledge my fellow city council members who are here with me today: Jeff Weisensel, Heidi Freske, Tammy Block and Paul Essler. This is a wonderful team of public servants who are committed to working together respectfully and responsibly for the citizens of Rosemount. I want to acknowledge our Dakota County Commissioners – Joe Atkins and Mary Haman-Roland; Representative John Huot, representing House 57B; Greg Clausen our state senator; and Representative Angie Craig. Working collaboratively with these public servants helps us to receive funding and attention for issues directly affecting Rosemount. I want to thank you for your service.

Thank you to our event sponsor SKB for helping to provide this meal for our guests. Today's meal is catered by Las Tortillas, and owner Ryan McGunnigle is here. Thanks Ryan!

Thank you to the cable commission for handling the video production and live streaming of this event for us. They continue to innovate with us through this new normal.

And thank you to the Dakota County Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event and continuing to create events that address this new reality we are living in.

I know it's not necessary to say that 2020 was a most unusual year as the world dealt with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and widespread civil unrest. But I do want to acknowledge the people who dealt with major losses – everything from not experiencing a graduation or wedding of their dreams, to job loss, business closures, missing friends and family interaction, long term illness and especially losing a loved one to this pandemic. To say it has been challenging is an understatement.

Last March when Governor Walz closed schools, public buildings and businesses, no one really knew what laid in front of us. But despite the incredible challenges, our community displayed an immense amount of resilience, creativity, and strength. Working together we were able to emerge with stronger partnerships, new initiatives, and continued growth in Rosemount. We saw people make sacrifices for the good of the community by practicing social distancing, mask wearing, and now getting vaccinated against COVID. We saw businesses quickly pivot into new sales models offering delivery, pickup, online services, and figuring out all the PPE and changes that kept coming at them. Our city staff was remarkably quick to pivot to a new work model, something that city government hasn't always been well known for. Not only did they adjust to working from home and changes in service models, but also, they tried a number of new initiatives to serve the community. We saw generosity and so much good will! From the many food drives to help keep our community food shelf stocked, to the heartwarming commitment from Ryan & Jen McGunnigle at Las Tortillas who to date have served more than 8,000 free lunches to Rosemount school children who otherwise may have gone without.

The Rosemount Resource Center saw continued demand resulting from job losses and child care constraints. We saw our residents get out and adapt to trying things in a new way. Our parks and trail system has never been so busy! We tried virtual Nite to Unite, virtual shopping, ordering food to go, and ordering activity boxes from Parks & Rec when normal activities were put on hold. I look at these efforts and I want to commend you. This was not always an easy task, but we did it together.

Other big projects moved forward despite the challenges of the pandemic. We saw our strongest year of residential growth in a decade, the beginning of construction on the new Morrison apartment complex, we opened our new Rosemount Skate Park, celebrated the opening of several new businesses in our community, and saw incredible participation in both the 2020 census and the 2020 election.

And I'm pleased to report that the state of our City is strong! Just as I have heard many of you observe, the pandemic helped bring into focus what is truly important here in Rosemount. This focus helped city council and staff as we worked to create our strategic plan for the future. We were able to reaffirm our focus areas and make plans on how to incorporate what we've learned from the pandemic to ensure that we remain resilient, nimble, and open to growth. And I'll get into more depth on that in a few minutes. Now I'm going to turn it over to our talented city staff to share some of what they were able to accomplish in 2020.

((CUT TO STAFF VIDEO))

Thank you, Mr. Martin. I'm incredibly thankful for our talented staff. Logan and his team will continue to grow as Rosemount grows, and it is encouraging to see the amount of work that was accomplished despite the challenges of 2020.

Each year your city council meets to review the work from the previous year, review current strategy, and make adjustments for the future. This year we met in January, and I'd like to share more about the vision for the next five years and how we will accomplish it. We continue to focus on four main areas: supporting growth in Rosemount, keeping our community connected and engaged, ensuring a high quality of life for our residents, and as Logan mentioned, developing a high performing organization so that we can continue reaching for these goals and beyond.

2020 was a strong year for growth. Permit activity soared, total building valuation broke \$100 million for the first time, and we had our strongest year of residential growth in over a decade. In the development world, there has been much interest in Rosemount for future growth, both commercial and industrial. With this opportunity in mind, we are taking a three-legged stool approach to growth focusing on high-quality neighborhoods with a wide variety of life-cycle housing, supporting our business community so that residents have opportunity to spend money and engage locally, and ensuring that Rosemount is a regional draw for business and job creation. This growth is the basis for reaching many of our other goals.

By ensuring we have diverse housing options, jobs, and the ability to get what we need locally, we are creating a community that is open and supportive of all who chose to call Rosemount home. The growth in our tax base will provide the funding to create connectivity and to continue to enhance the quality of life here in Rosemount.

In housing news, residents will see significant growth with new and expanded neighborhoods in Greystone, Meadow Ridge, Caramore Crossing and Ardan Place. In addition you all know the development opportunity at UMore Park has been well-known and pursued for many, many years. We are pleased with the traction on this project at the moment, and we expect to see an application from a local land developer in the next 3 months that will see construction on the first phase. This is a 435 acre piece of the property on the south-west corner of Akron and 42, and it will bring nearly 1900 housing units of various types, along with commercial and service options in a prime location. This is a very significant project and once it's underway it'll prove to be well worth the wait. Through developments like these, we'll work to provide safe, connected housing with options whether you are a renter, a new homeowner, a growing family, or someone looking to downsize. Keeping our community connected is also top of mind as we create these new neighborhoods. Access to parks, schools and shopping is a key value in Rosemount and we are working hard to ensure that we keep that hometown, community connected feel as we grow.

I've already touched on the challenges of 2020, and for the business community, some experienced a boom while many others nearly saw a bust. We saw the most successful businesses respond with creativity and resilience, and we jumped in to help where we could. Supporting local business has always been important, but COVID emphasized the need more than ever to make that extra effort to care for our local main street shops. Many business models have or are changing permanently. The way you deliver services has changed. Carry out and online shopping have become the new norm. More people are working from home. If it wasn't already apparent, the pandemic clarified the need for connectivity. As an organization we acknowledge that these changing models have and will continue to impact our city, our businesses and our residents. As the pandemic wanes and we look to the future, we will continue to explore how we can utilize technology and create access to ensure that Rosemount is a place where people want to live, shop and do business. As long as I've been mayor, we've heard complaints about the lack of choice for internet connection in Rosemount. In 2020, the city partnered with Dakota County to bring broadband internet service to an area of town that had previously struggled with internet connection. By partnering with Charter Communications, Dakota County and leveraging some CARES Act dollars, we were able to invest \$1.5 Million to connect 370 homes that were in a more rural section of Rosemount. With online learning and remote work, the investment made even more of an impact for both students and adults this year. We are continuing to watch for and pursue opportunities like this to ensure that as we grow, our residents can access what has truly become a necessity. We want to make sure that Rosemount can compete as a regional draw for businesses and jobs. To do so, we MUST be prepared.

You saw in the video some of the developments in 2020, and more exciting growth is on the way. New businesses are actively working with us to locate in the Biscayne Business Park, including a large user that would create dozens of good paying jobs. We're also in talks with retailers and service providers interested in the Akron Avenue and Highway 42 intersection, bolstered by the housing growth in that area and the signal light that's currently under construction. This is perfect timing for this interest, because the city recently completed a Commercial Visioning Study. The study gathered input from local experts, staff, and market research to create a long-term vision of what Rosemount *could* become with partnerships, development, strategic land use and a plan to inspire investment. As Rosemount continues to expand to the east, we will build on what we currently have and create new spaces where residents can live, shop, work and play in a connected and vibrant community. With these visuals in hand and the eager support of our council and Port Authority, our staff is armed with the visuals, the tools, and the drive to sell our vision to developers and investors. In the years to come you will begin to see a community that is able to compete with our larger neighboring cities for residents, businesses, retail, and jobs.

Our next strategic focus area is connecting and engaging with the community. We want our residents and businesses to feel that your city government and leadership is accessible, and to ensure that you feel fully informed. In addition, we want you to feel connected to each other and your community via trails, technology and transit.

Rosemount is a great community in which to LIVE. During the past year with lockdowns, we were relegated to walking on sidewalks and trails to help save our sanity. The kindness I saw repeatedly with smiles, goodwill gestures, and positive messages in chalk or kindness rocks along the trails was and continues to be uplifting. I saw the joy our police and firefighters brought to the children as they drove Santa through our neighborhoods last December. These types of connections are crucial to our way of life here in Rosemount.

Since the development of Evermore in the early 2000s, we have built neighborhoods with trails, sidewalks, and bike paths. The pandemic showed us why these elements are necessary for our personal health and they also define us as a community by connecting people, and in many cases also their pets. As we build the new neighborhoods of the future, we are working diligently to ensure that we will be able to connect with an even larger system of trails. The Mississippi River Greenway Trail will soon connect Spring Lake Park north to St. Paul and south to Hastings. And we are laying the groundwork for the future Rosemount Greenway and Vermillion Highlands Greenway trails so that our residents can utilize bike trails to get to multiple regional parks including Lebanon Hills, Whitetail Woods, Spring Lake Park and local favorites such as Flint Hills Athletic Complex, UMore ballfields, and everything in between.

We have a great partner in Dakota County and we are eager to do our part to see these plans come to fruition. The new underpass at Akron and future connections to safely cross Hwy 42 is just one piece of that groundwork that will allow bike transit to become more of a reality in Rosemount.

To improve our ability to engage with citizens, we acknowledge that in the digital age it is important to meet people where they are at. *Which means we need to be in a lot of places at once!* To achieve this goal, we are expanding our reach both online and in person. We have already begun to improve our social media presence and next year, staff will be upgrading our website with improved navigation and technology. We'd like to add service options that allow you to complete more tasks day or night, regardless if city hall is open. In addition, we have created a new Technology Task Force. This group of tech-savvy citizens and staff are being tasked with ensuring that Rosemount is creating a city of the future. They are looking for efficiencies that can be created using technology. Things such as smart water meters, electric vehicle charging stations, enhancements to the City's digital service offerings, and even smart trash cans in parks that notify our teams when it's time to empty them. These enhancements are being explored with a goal of helping us streamline our services and saving tax-payer dollars, while providing 21st century service delivery that residents expect. And as the pandemic winds down, we are looking forward to more events like this where we can connect with you directly. We recently held our first "Council Out and About" and we hope continue hosting these events by meeting you where you are at. We were thrilled to see many of you at the recent Home & Business Expo and look forward to once again celebrating Leprechaun Days together.

Finally, we will work to continue enhancing the quality of life in Rosemount. I have lived in Rosemount since 1989. I love this town and I know you do, too. The benefit of our proximity offers all the conveniences and opportunities of the Metro, and yet we continue to retain a welcoming, hometown feel often reserved for smaller towns. We want to hang on to that feeling, while helping to make Rosemount a regional destination with welcoming gathering spaces, fun activities and exciting events. As we watch the Morrison property go up, you can see the vision of our downtown area becoming a reality. New families will be moving there later this fall, bringing more residents, more activity, and more vitality into the heart of Rosemount. Creating destinations such as this is a key priority. Another top priority is to ensure that Rosemount can support the community's need for recreation. In addition to our wonderful parks and trails system, the Rosemount Community Center and the Steeple Center are highly used facilities in our active community. In 2020, we added a new skatepark with a professional and modern design that attracts youth of all ages. I've been amazed with how busy that park has remained since opening day. In the private sector, we were pleased to welcome Hope Fieldhouse and CA Gear to our community – bringing excellent facilities and additional options for indoor sports and recreation. Looking ahead, we are expected shortly to announce a public/private partnership on a large indoor rec center that will bring excitement and regional attention to our growing community. As a council, we are actively ready to make investments that will serve our community and spur additional growth in key areas. Needs change as a city develops and we want to ensure that we can continue to provide the high quality of life that you have come to expect in Rosemount. To do this, we must be bold and willing to innovate.

2020 was a challenging year. But we are seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and that gives me hope. Just last week I heard a heartwarming story of a gentleman who went to pay his bill at Kwik Trip in Rosemount and realized he had forgotten his wallet. Instead of sending him home as he requested, three strangers grouped together to cover his bill and send him on his way. This is who we are! Together we have weathered a storm and we have come out stronger. More of us are getting vaccinated each day and that gives us hope for gathering safely again. Our city staff is once again planning for summer events and activities, and I'm sure you are equally excited to get out and celebrate together with music, sports, camps, festivals and the like. Our organization is developing as a high performing team with new skills and new ideas. Our city has remained on its track of steady growth, and we on the city council have unity in our vision for Rosemount. This vision will take commitment, strategy, investment and a strong team – and we are ready to grasp our opportunity and run with it. Its our time. This is the future of Rosemount, and our future looks bright.

Thank you.