

In July, 2015 this Op-Ed column appeared in the Las Cruces Sun-News and the Las Cruces Bulletin:

A Bright Future for the City of Las Cruces Mayor Ken Miyagishima

Eight years ago, just before my first campaign as mayor, I wrote a column for the Sun-News that outlined concerns associated with rapid growth in our region. Would Las Cruces continue to be a place we enjoy living? Could we make city decision-making open and transparent? Could we build a future shaped by everyone and not just a few?

In a column four years later, after my first term in office, I was able to answer these important questions in the affirmative. A commitment to comprehensive planning, combined with reasonable development standards, brought increased order and logic to our growth as a city. Careful financial management allowed us to maintain a high level of service, even during a time of exceptional economic challenge. We made key investments in our city's future, guided by a detailed strategic plan and an unprecedented level of resident involvement in the decisions that were made.

Now, at the end of my second term of office, we are in the midst of a period of exceptional advancement for the city. A new city hall, museum complex and transit center will soon be joined downtown by a major community health facility in the old city office building. Ground has been broken on a medical school on the NMSU campus, and construction will begin this month on our new city plaza. We have a beautiful aquatic center and a rapidly expanding network of walking and bike trails. Our new Organ Mountains Desert Peaks National Monument is already drawing visitors from around the world.

The questions that face us now, eight years after my first column, are different, centering more on our willingness to continue forward on this positive path. Can we put aside arguments of the past to champion what we share in common, a deep love for our city and a commitment to its future? Can we reaffirm our determination to make sure Las Cruces is a great place for everyone who lives here – business owner or employee, long time resident or recent arrival, child just starting out or a person now retired?

At its most basic level a good community allows us to accomplish together what we can't do on our own: building and maintaining streets, providing water and sewer systems, and making sure we have the police, fire and emergency services to keep our neighborhoods safe. A strong community seeks out and

supports economic growth and opportunity, with the kinds of jobs that allow workers to be full participants in the life of our city. A wise community continues to invest in its people and its future, creating a better life not just for ourselves, but for everyone else.

When I look back at all that we've accomplished over the past eight years, I think of the many contributions of our engaged residents, a public-spirited council and a dedicated city staff. I think of our determination to open up the governing process and the spirited public dialogue that is an inevitable result. I think of the great strides we've made as a city, and the great things we will do together in the years ahead.

We are extremely fortunate to live in Las Cruces, in this place and time, with all of the many and varied efforts being made to improve our community. I hope we will not draw back, but will continue to invest in our future, grateful for the many advantages we enjoy as a city. I hope we will make the most of this moment and opportunity, and the confidence in our community we've worked so hard to build.

In so many ways, the best is yet to come.