

Fanucci keys on business in State of the City address

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VINELAND - Now a full year into his term, Mayor Anthony Fanucci on Thursday painted a hopeful picture of Vineland in his State of the City address.

The event, hosted by the Greater Vineland Chamber of Commerce, drew a large crowd to the Greenview Inn at Eastlyn Golf Course.

Fanucci offered an overview of his administration's accomplishments and areas of focus moving forward before opening the session to audience questions.

Just two were asked of the mayor.

"That's a positive sign," Fanucci said. "And the line of questioning, if you noticed, was needing general, real knowledge. And some weren't even questions, they were thank-yous, which were nice."

Fanucci was asked of potential plans to bring more cultural events to the city and the outlook for Landis Avenue, specifically as a destination for things to do for those living in or visiting Vineland.

The mayor spoke extensively on the need to entice businesses to come to Vineland, something the Fanucci administration has already seen success in.

The downtown will be a focus of that push, according to Fanucci.

"We have some new businesses that are courting us to look to come to Landis Avenue," Fanucci said. "Our goal is going to take Landis Avenue and put bodies on the street. Other administrations have tried just the restaurants or tried just the shops, listen, we're not going back to 1950 now.

"Things have changed, people have changed, the millennial generation is completely different than that generation, they're not like the baby boomers, they're really not like the Gen-Xers, they're looking for things differently."

In turn, Fanucci said successful businesses, especially ones on Landis Avenue, can transform the city and erase any negative connotations linked to that area.

"It's people with income and disposable income who are willing to spend it and reinvest it," Fanucci said. "And when they see what we're doing to reinvest in our community and build a stronger, more prosperous, cleaner, safer community, especially downtown, we will change that perception.

"By the end of this year, that perception, hopefully, we will completely nullify that negativity where people are like, 'Oh, downtown's not safe.' Well you know what, it is safe, much safer than many other downtowns."

Fanucci talked with The Daily Journal following his address and expounded on the importance of improving Vineland's business climate throughout the city.

The thought process goes beyond just bringing employers in. Having able workers here also is crucial, according to Fanucci.

"It's going to be what really changes the true fiscal condition of Vineland," Fanucci told The Daily Journal. "The more strong businesses we can put into place, whether they're small, medium or large businesses, is going to be a factor. Because it's employees, it's wages, it's more income being distributed in the city."

He said working with the county to get the proper type of workforce is going to be huge with workforce development as key.

"We have a number of employers who are looking at things right now and asking, 'What's your work pool like?' So we need to continue to educate and become a stronger workforce," the mayor said. "That's going to make us more attractive."

Fanucci also touched on public safety, infrastructure, beautification and sustainability during his address. Highlights in those areas include the construction of a new police headquarters and public safety building, improvements to city parks and stricter code enforcement of neglected city properties.

A new city website also is expected to launch within two months, according to the mayor.