

STATE OF THE CITY 2007

By Alice Norris, Mayor of Oregon City

This is a State of the City speech that has **something for everyone**. Something for the eternal optimist, the environmentalist, the history buff, the grouch, for those who need graphs, charts, and statistics; and of course I won't forget those of you who are visual learners, who need sound bites and pictures.

Let's start with **something for the historian**. You history buffs know that our city issues aren't new! The Oregon City Enterprise newspaper ran an editorial in 1890 detailing what projects Oregon City needed:

1. Erect a city hall
2. Extend facilities for fighting fires
3. Have a public library and free reading room
4. Require the RR to erect gates at crossings
5. Build a first class hotel
6. Pave Main Street
7. Remove an eye sore and prolific source of disease by piping 8th Street sewage into the river.

How far we've come! Yet many of our issues are still the same. We've taken care of the sewer problems, have gates at RR crossings, and have a nice hotel in town. But we still have inadequate facilities: city hall and police station, library, a vacant fire hall, and our streets are paved, but sorely need better maintenance.

Last year I launched a new slogan for Oregon City: **Take Another Look**...believing that Oregon City had turned a corner, that around the region people are taking another look at Oregon City, or they should be, because we are not the city we once were. Oregon City today is worthy of Another Look: We're getting our 3rd Street of Dreams and The Portland Business Journal called Oregon City, the new hot spot.

Now here's **something for the eternal optimist**. For those who like to celebrate success and accomplishment, I offer these 2006 achievements:

- We are a bigger city. Our citizens voted to add 156 acres to the city last year.
- We are a more vibrant city--with 3 new restaurants, wine bar, coffee shop, deli, seaplane rides.

- We are a more livable city: Over 400 people attended the Grand Opening of Wesley Lynn Park. Our new park is featured in the National Park Service's 2006 annual Land and Water Conservation Fund report, one of only 400 communities in the US to received federal funding for a park – we received \$175,000. Scott Archer, our community services director, is quoted in the report: "As Oregon City's first new park to be opened in more than 23 years ...the park provides green spaces for active and passive recreation, offering amenities identified as high needs in our community in an area historically lacking in parks and open space."
- We renamed Senior Citizens Park for the late Richard R Bloom, who promoted recycling and started Oregon City's Clean-up Day among other contributions to the city. Six former mayors attended the Dedication of Bloom Tots' Park
- We hired our first police officer in eight years by partnering with Oregon City School District to reinstate a School Resource Officer at the High School. Unfunded since 2002, this position was partially funded by an increase in towing fees. Our police department has joined the Clackamas County Interagency Drug Task Force to combat drugs and street crimes, especially meth. OCPD now offers Parent Aid, free & confidential drug testing for kids under 18.
- We received \$702,000 from Metro's new construction excise tax to complete our three Concept Plans.
- This has been a two-reservoir year. We built a new 2 million gallon covered reservoir for emergency water storage and future growth; and repaired and upgraded our 10.5 million gallon reservoir for seismic safety - mostly paid for with federal funds: a \$680,000 FEMA disaster mitigation grant.
- With the water reservoir project, Oregon City's skyline changed as the old Mountain View Elevated Tank came down last fall. Built in 1950, it once stored 100,000 gallons of water to provide pressure for the Hilltop pressure zone. After the Boynton steel stand pipe was constructed in 1984, the elevated tank was no longer needed and had nowhere near the storage capacity needed for our growing city.

- On July 7, the community gathered to welcome a Hometown Hero at Danielson's Mall: Jonah Nickerson, pitcher and 2006 Outstanding Player for OSU Beavers National Champions Baseball team. We gave him the key to the City (previously given to Sen. Mark Hatfield, Vice President George Bush, and Miss America 1982).
- We honored another Hometown Hero, Brad Smith, the winningest girls basketball coach in Oregon history, as our 2006 Citizen of the Year – for his positive contribution to Oregon City's youth, Oregon City's self-esteem, and Oregon City's future
- Our Trolley routes were a success last summer, running 2 ½ months with ridership at 6651. (And Helen was in the shop for a week)
- Thanks to the diligence of Guy Sperb and our Building Department, we were the first in the state to have online "e-permitting" – electronic submittal of permit applications for increased customer service to contractors.
- Willamette Falls Hospital completed a Master Plan and opened a beautiful new Emergency Room and Diagnostic Imaging Department last January – notice the underground utilities – no overhead wires!
- Miles Fiberglass & Composites was named one of 7 top small businesses in the U.S. and Small Business of the Year for the Pacific Northwest. For the 3rd consecutive year they were also named one of the 100 Best Companies to Work For by *Oregon Business* magazine.
- Have you been to the City's website lately? One of our engineering consultants told us: "Someone at OC deserves significant credit for your website; it is one of the best out there (particularly OC maps, I reference it to other cities as an example to follow)."

For those of you who like **trucks and heavy equipment**, this section is for you:

I want to recognize a very important department that we take for granted: Public Works. Larry Ostermiller, lead mechanic for our fleet, keeps our 61 vehicles running. That includes our 2 trolleys, one code enforcement scooter, and nine pieces of "heavy equipment," like a backhoe, loader, and grader.

We purchased diesel trucks fuel efficiency --from a 400 hp 10-yard dump truck to a sander built by the inmates at the Oregon State penitentiary. It's pretty amazing that our crew can attach one of the

three snowplows to the front of a truck and be ready to roll in 30 minutes. In fact TriMet has told us that our streets are clear before Portland's!

After the last snow storm, we had our streets cleared in approximately 3 hours. We put down 275 yards of sand, and picked it up in about 9 days. In 1999, it took approximately 105 days to sweep the city. Now it takes just 35. Thank you to our unsung public servants, the road crews.

This is **something for those of you walk, cycle or drive cars:**

Your city maintains 133 miles of streets, a \$132 million asset (not including curbs and sidewalks. We've added over 55 miles of streets in the past 12 years. If we assume a 20-year useful pavement life, we need to do major maintenance (asphalt overlay and slurry seal) on about 7 miles of streets each year to avoid major reconstruction costs. We do less than 2 miles each year. We are falling behind. Oregon City currently has a backlog of pavement maintenance totaling nearly \$14 million. The rising cost of materials, additional street standards, and new responsibilities erode our ability to maintain streets. If you live in Oregon City, your household is paying an average of just 14 cents a day for Streets maintenance.

Currently we spend \$100,000 a year on our street preservation program to maintain a pavement condition index (or PCI) of about 55. We need \$1 million. PCI is an analysis that measures the condition of a roadway. We want to keep our pavement as close to 100 or 'excellent' as we can.

Our street maintenance budget is primarily funded from gas taxes. The 24-cent State gas tax was last increased in 1993 and is the lowest gas tax among the five Western states. Cities receive the lowest % of dollars from the gas tax -- we received .1557% based on a per capita formula.

Your City Commission is interested in maintaining the investment in our streets and is assembling a committee of business owners, homeowners, nonprofit reps, and governments within Oregon City to look at how a Transportation Maintenance Utility Fee (TMUF) could be structured. A TMUF would provide a dedicated revenue stream for critical streets maintenance. Wilsonville and Lake Oswego also have

TMUFs. Milwaukie just adopted a fee capped at \$250 per business and \$50 per household to raise \$1.2 m year for streets maintenance.

For the doomsday prophets, I offer a gloomy scenario. This is also for those who thrive on repetition, since you heard this last year, and the year before, and the year before that.

Staffing: We have a staff shortage – approaching crisis.

Police – Our police department has exactly the same staffing as in 1978: 3 per shift. Our population in 1978 was about 10,000. We have grown by nearly 300% while our police department remains the same. Last year, we had 321 Priority 1 calls (armed robbery, domestic violence, rape) held until an officer could be freed from an assignment to respond. Then often only one officer is free to go (This is UNSAFE!) We had 1100 alarm calls in 2006. Each should take 4 officers but 50% of the time we have only 3 on duty. Current staffing is resulting in response times of +/- 9 min for priority 2 calls (problers, injury traffic accidents, missing juveniles).

One consultant told us we need 17 new police officers today; another study says 10 – we are approaching crisis. A single police officer costs \$103,000 to train and outfit with appropriate equipment.

Facility: The Police Department moved into a temporary building 26 years ago, our city hall. It's a terrible situation, ugly, inefficient, not secure, and certainly offers no privacy. We need to find relief for city hall this year.

A final gloomy note on **staffing**: The industry standard for number of city employees per population is 1%. Since we have 29,000 citizens, we should have 290 employees. We have 132 -- that means every employee is doing the work of two people! Thanks to the 132 people who make our city work – our valued employees.

Risk Management assessment: our employees provide excellence under woefully inadequate conditions!

For those of you who like 'hot' topics:

Fire: The situation is much the same with our fire contract with CCFD#1. We actually have 25% fewer firefighters on duty today than in 1980, serving a larger geographical area and 295% more people! Our Main Station has the only ladder company in the Tri-county area staffed by only 3 firefighters.

- 1980 – 12 firefighters on duty each day. It peaked at 34 FTE when the population was 10,000
- 2006 – 9 firefighters on duty (3 funded by CCDF#1 at the Holcomb Station with triple the population)
- Hilltop is 2nd busiest company in the entire fire district

In our South End area demands for service increased 33% over the past 4 years. Yes, our new station, completed in 2003, has never been staffed. The police department is now using it to ease overcrowding in the police department. If South End were staffed, firefighters would respond to 600-700 medical emergencies per year

As you may remember, we have a gap between what Oregon City residents pay for fire services by contract and what the rest of the fire district pays. The contract goes up 2.5% yr; but fire costs go up 4.5% year. It's an unsustainable situation. The District is subsidizing the City. It is an issue that fire district taxpayers cannot continue to sustain. The City must find an answer. Long term quality fire service is in jeopardy. The best solution we can offer is annexation to the fire district. This would enable us to address critical staffing issues, facility needs, program shortfalls, and keep pace with growth. You'll be hearing more about this as we engage you in helping us find a solution that keeps our community safe, livable and sustainable.

Now something for those who cherish this community, its green spaces, its built places, and its people.

Our #1 goal for 2007 is to **Build a Sustainable Future**. This means Sustainability in all its definitions: Sustainable finances; sustainable services; and of course a sustainable future means making a smaller footprint upon the earth, real reductions in energy use and carbon emissions. Our first act on Jan. 17 was to sign (with unanimous agreement of commissioners) the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.

In Building a Sustainable Future, your city has already taken some important energy conservation steps:

1. In 1998, Oregon City was one of the first municipalities to purchase diesel dump trucks and service trucks. We purchased 5 that year and the mileage more than doubled -- from approximately 6 mpg for the gas vehicles to approximately 15 mpg on the Diesel trucks.

2. With a project just completed at our swimming pool in December, we anticipate saving \$16,000 annually on energy costs! With the help of Energy Trust of Oregon, we upgraded our 40-year old pneumatic heating and ventilation controls with a programmable digital control system, added pool covers, and a supplemental ultraviolet light water treatment system that regulates water chemicals. The thermal pool blankets trap heat at the swimming pool every night, so it takes less energy to reheat the pool during the day. This in turn allows us to use the boiler less and save gas and electricity and the payback is only 3.5 years.

So how well is our old 1965 aquatic center used? Every year we teach 3,000 school kids to swim and 2000 more in the public swimming lesson program. Including aqua camp, swim teams, lap swims and recreational swims, we serve 90,000 people each year.

National polls show that all of us, government, business, nonprofits, and homeowners WANT to save energy but we don't know how. **Here are some great examples of sustainability in our community:**

1. Willamette Falls Hospital has recently installed high efficiency lights throughout the 143-bed hospital to reap \$16,000 a year in energy savings. That's 257,000 kilowatt hours of electricity each year or enough electricity to power nearly 23 average Oregon homes. Energy Trust

provided an \$11,726 incentive through the Business Energy Solutions program. WFH expects to recoup the \$49,575 project cost in just 1.2 years.

2. Redside Development is converting the old Copeland Lumber site into what will be the first privately developed LEED-certified building in Clackamas County. (LEED= Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Keeping construction waste out of the landfill was a significant goal for this project. They reused or recycled over 95% of construction waste, including art crafted from materials salvaged from the building.
3. We hope to strengthen our partnership with Clackamas County and the Green Ribbon Committee chaired by Rick Gruen, to share best practices and adopt ordinances that make us a more sustainable community. Clackamas Community College is also providing resources for learning.
4. Buildings account for the largest source of energy consumption -- about 48% of all greenhouse emissions and 68% of electricity. We are currently looking at an energy saving program directed at all City buildings and street lights and hope to do much more in the future.

For those of you who like give-aways and door prizes, this is something for you:

Change a bulb. Change everything. 18seconds.org. If you could do something in 18 seconds, that would make a \$550 million difference in energy costs in our county, wouldn't you do it? Today I'm launching a program in Oregon City that is easy and practical. If every American home replaced just one of the light bulbs they use most with a compact fluorescent light bulb or CFL, together we'd save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes for an entire year and more than \$550 million in energy costs, while preventing greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars! A compact fluorescent lamp, or CFL, is a light bulb that uses at least 2/3 less energy than a traditional incandescent bulb to provide the same amount of light. Just imagine the difference we could make if we replaced all of the lights we use most!

In partnership with Home Depot, we are offering each of you one CFL. It will take you 18 seconds to make a difference. These CFLs have earned the government's ENERGY STAR label and typically last up to 10 times longer and save \$30 or more in energy costs over their lifetime. Thanks to tremendous increases in the number and variety of CFLs available today, you can now find CFLs most anywhere you currently shop for light bulbs. We especially want to thank Home Depot for their generous donation in providing half of these bulbs for you. This is a symbolic gesture – but one example of the small things that make a big difference. Please promote this project.**

Now **something for those of you who like to dream about the future:**

1. Our most visible capital improvement project in 2007 will be Beaver Creek Road – This is a roadway capacity expansion to enhance economic revitalization. We will be adding bike lanes, upsizing water pipes, doing an innovative storm water pilot program with swales in center strip, and adding two new traffic signals.
2. Our most important design activity is the McLoughlin Blvd Enhancement project, phase I, using federal funds. Long before my time, our citizens expressed strong desires to have greater access to the river and its views, to slow traffic through town, and have better connections into the historic downtown business district. With the new 12th Street signal, landscaping, pedestrian improvements, safer pedestrian crossings, plus a promenade and plaza, these dreams will finally be realized.
3. This spring we will open the first spray park in the city at Rivercrest Park.
4. This summer, construction will begin on Jon Storm Park & the Willamette River Trail connection to Clackamette Park with \$330,000 of state lottery funds.
5. 20th annual cleanup day – Saturday, April 28 at Clackamette Park
6. We are refurbishing our Elevator to restore its rightful place as an Oregon City icon. It is one of the busiest places in town with a ridership of over 120,000 annually. The murals inside the viewing deck are deteriorating and the outside needs updating. We have a very creative art selection committee that is overseeing this project.
7. Two of our Concept Plans will be completed this summer. These plans will determine future land uses and city services for current and future residents that will guide the development of 415

acres along Beaver Creek Road and 470 acres in the Park Place area. The Park Place area will be primarily residential; the Beaver Creek Road area primarily employment lands. Both project committees are looking at green and sustainable designs.

8. 2009 is coming and with it the 150th anniversary of Oregon statehood. What will be our legacy project? A National Heritage Area along our river? Public access to Willamette Falls?
9. We will continue to work with the county and our Library board to seek solutions for Library operations, since one solution was defeated in the November election. Even with hours reduced by over 50% for the year, our circulation only decreased by about 19% - circulating more items per hour than any year since records have been kept. Our library is open only 35 hours a week, the fewest of any city in Clackamas County.
10. And our final goal is to re-energize citizen participation. We certainly did a good job of that last week as we re-engaged our committees and citizens over the landscaping plans in the McLoughlin Boulevard project! Your voice, your support, your opinions matter to us – and we are looking at better ways to better partner with you in the months ahead and help our neighborhood associations – as we face our city challenges together.

Here's **something for those who like the global view, the economists & strategic thinkers** among you:

We are basking in some long deserved excitement over our city revitalization plans. Our economic development strategy, put in place about 2 1/2 years ago, appears to be working. People are Taking Another Look at Oregon City. The Clackamette Cove mixed use development (rolled out with fanfare at my last State of City address) is in the final stages of due diligence. I know that many of you have given input that has helped Randy Tyler and Ed Darrow shape their design. It's a \$120 million project with 2 waterfront restaurants, town homes and Oregon City's first condos, office space, natural areas, paths, and water access. We've got our fingers crossed for the ground-breaking next spring for this exciting project.

The Landfill project (also rolled out with fanfare last year) is still on track. This is also a complex project, located in the floodplain and to be built on garbage, the closed Rossman Landfill. Besides

reclaiming degraded property, this \$300 million project of CenterCal and Fred Bruning, is expected to be a lifestyle retail and mixed use center. These projects will define and enhance our Regional Center.

What is the State of the City? Oregon City continues to make slow progress and you heard our list of many small accomplishments – with some big ones on the horizon. Economic development won't solve our problems, but will certainly help. Our challenges are great: we need 10 more police officers today. Our City Hall is embarrassing, inefficient, & inadequate. We do not have a full service library. Our streets need an infusion of funding to keep them in average repair. Without a new source of revenue, or service and program cuts, we cannot move forward.

We have some tough decisions to make. As neighboring cities across the state are doing, we must fight for funding. Cities are getting the short stick. People will **stop taking another look**, if we cannot solve our service problems. But we cannot do it alone – we need your help and support to build a sustainable future for Oregon City.

I hope I've given you something for everybody. But doesn't everyone want the same thing? A great community? A community that has **something for everyone** – for the pessimist as well as the optimist, for families and singles, for workers and retirees, a place where business can thrive and government has the resources to invest in public safety, public spaces, and public services. Together we can build a sustainable future, a place we can all proudly call home..... a place with something for everybody.

***When the CFL bulbs burn out, they should be collected with other household hazardous waste and taken to the Hazardous Waste Facility at the Metro South Transfer Station. It is open Monday through Saturday, 9 to 4. There is no charge for residential waste. A special program exists for businesses with small amounts of hazardous waste.*