



January 4, 2007

State of the City 2007 Mayor Kitty Piercy

Good evening. I'm happy to see you all. Here we are tonight just at the closure of 2006 and poised to begin 2007. It's time to reflect upon the year recently ended and to set goals for the year ahead. The world and our nation gave us much to be alarmed about in 2006, but hope for better times ahead is stirring. More than anything, we wish the New Year to bring:

- an end to war and conflict around the globe;
- access to good mental and physical health care, education opportunities, housing, and jobs; and
- the adoption of policies and actions that respond to finite resources and global warming.

In 2006 we faced grave national challenges. Yet Eugene remains committed to being a place where good things occur, challenges are met, and promises are fulfilled. We have pushed forward with great strength of purpose.

This has taken much local leadership and local action.

Thank you, City Council, for working hard with rigor and devotion, week in and week out. I especially thank our outgoing councilors, David Kelly and Gary Papé; the community appreciates your years of service.

Thank you, City Manager Dennis Taylor and City employees, for turning policy into reality, providing services for our community, making Eugene, Eugene.

Thanks to you who volunteer in so many capacities, from parks, to library, to recreation, to public safety. Thanks to you who work on committees or commissions, and for neighborhoods, social services, businesses, environmental, or political groups and agencies. It is because of you all that we have such a wonderful place to live.

Thank you, voters, for ensuring the future of our parks and libraries.

What we accomplish, we do not do alone. Thank you, Eugene Water and Electric Board, Lane Transit District, Lane County, University of Oregon, Lane Community College, Bethel and 4J school districts, and all of our neighboring cities, for your work that helps our community thrive.

You can turn to the booklet provided to you this evening for the highlights of 2006 in Eugene, our city goals and accomplishments. While I hope you will take pride and ownership in these achievements, we offer them with the caveat that they are but steps along a long path to a truly sustainable community.

There are four important things you have the right to expect every year from your mayor and elected officials: leadership, vision, delivery on promises made, and goals set for the future.

My vision is that, here in Eugene, we will meet the enormous challenges of a changing world and carve out new opportunities for our citizens while we preserve and enhance the livability of our community.

Three key things are necessary to ensure the livability of any city: a strong economy, a commitment to social equity, and a healthy environment. These must not be seen as discrete, opposing goals, but rather as equal pieces of a larger whole. This is the true meaning of sustainability – that our success in achieving one is ultimately dependent on our success in achieving the other two. That’s why we worked hard on the success of all three this last year.

Our city’s economic picture is healthier than it was just a few years ago, during the recession of 2001-2003. We have seen significant new development activity and increased employment. I am heartened by a relatively positive outlook and by some of the legislative initiatives proposed to address the basic needs of Oregonians. It is time for Oregon to end the slide downhill toward mediocrity and to once again live up to its reputation as one of the finest places in the world to live. A recent survey of Oregonians showed the majority are optimistic this state is going to head in a new and better direction. That would be good news for us because...

In both economic health and social equity, we face significant challenges.

Despite the recent economic upswing, an Oregon Employment Department study noted that wage inequality is increasing for Oregon workers, with “jobs in the low wage sector growing faster than jobs in average and high-wage industries.” Indeed, since 2003, 40% of all new jobs created in Oregon have been in low-wage industries.

To take an example closer to home, of the 10 occupations projected to add the most jobs to Lane County’s economy in the next decade, nine pay average salaries that are lower than the county average of about \$32,000 per year (OED 12/06).

Here in Eugene, because we are a center for high wage occupations like education, research and development, manufacturing and wood products, health care and government services, and others, we might take solace in somewhat rosier economic projections than these. But Eugene is not an economic island; our economic future is intricately tied to that of the larger region and state.

There are still too many in our community who do not have high wage occupations, who struggle for food, housing, good physical and mental health services, and access to education and training. While we have noted institutions of education and a remarkable range of social services agencies, their funding has been inadequate. Fewer of our young people enter college to prepare for the future and too many of our citizens find themselves at the bottom of our economy.

Developing additional high-quality job opportunities and support for education and social services will help all boats to rise.

We also face daunting environmental challenges.

From climate change to peak oil, scientists agree our world resources are finite and the planet is warming. Furthermore, there are ominous predictions of economic crises and threats to the social fabric if we do not, in the coming decades, directly confront our current dependence on non-renewable energy supplies and do not reverse the trend of global warming. While our federal government has been slow to either acknowledge or act on these threats, local governments both in the United States and in other countries have taken up the charge.

So have we, and here's how.

Building on a long history of stewardship, the City of Eugene has stepped up to the challenge.

We were recognized by Green Guide as the No 1 Green City in America, for providing one of the healthiest, most environmentally conscious, energy-efficient, and least polluting places to live.

We put policies in place that encourage green design and usage of alternative energy, prevent sprawl, and preserve a high percentage of green space.

We are building our public transportation system and offering rebates and tax exemptions for using alternative power sources. We've enacted smoke-free public places, developed affordable housing programs, and supported efforts to improve local wages and provide social services.

All these efforts are making a difference. We are talking sustainability here, the triple bottom line, caring for our natural resources and our people while building a strong economy.

Both City of Eugene staff and elected officials are leading by example. We have been building a green fleet and have already reduced our carbon emissions by 500,000 lbs. We are currently purchasing 25% wind power, recycling, and using green products and building practices. We are promoting the use of alternative transportation and offer our staff bus passes. We are partnering on after-school programs, housing projects and support services for the homeless. We continue to invest in bike paths. Just this last year, we partnered on four local green building projects and on five business assessments of sustainable practices that can improve the bottom line. Eugene joined the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) to help us measure carbon emission reductions. I partnered with a hundred other mayors in signing on to the Kyoto protocol and have been working with them nationally on this effort. We are doing a lot but there is much, much, more to be done to respond to economic and social need and to slow down global warming and reduce our consumption of finite resources.

To meet these challenges and to take advantage of the unique opportunities they present, I launched the Sustainable Business Initiative.

Two years ago, Eugene already had undertaken many excellent green practices, creating a foundation that I believed positioned us for a quantum leap forward. With our University, our expertise, our entrepreneurial spirit and our deep concern, Eugene is uniquely positioned to lead, to provide some answers to world problems and to develop our economy through new job creation. We can respond to climate change, finite resources and the need for good jobs.

I charged a task force to identify ways Eugene could support the growth of businesses that produce sustainable products and services, including alternative fuels, alternative energy, green investing, green building, alternative transportation, and natural foods, among others. Additional charges were to recommend how Eugene could support all businesses in adopting more sustainable practices, and educate the public about sustainability and the triple bottom line.

The Sustainable Business Initiative task force engaged over 800 of our citizens and made 22 recommendations, which were officially endorsed by council resolution on November 13, 2006. The first of these are the establishment of a city Sustainability Office and Sustainability Commission. These two bodies will be key to implementing the remaining SBI recommendations. (You can find the recommendations on the City's web site.)

The vision is for Eugene to become a center of sustainable businesses and practices, enabling us to respond to the challenges of a changing world and the needs of our citizens for high quality jobs and services that allow them to raise their families. This is a great vision and a doable one; an exciting opportunity for our future.

Eugene works hard to fulfill promises.

In the past year we have also focused on other key arenas of livability:

- We hired an independent police auditor.
- After public input, the council selected the “rockin’ butterfly” site (the butterfly parking lot next to the county building as well as the Rockin’ Rodeo building) as its preference for a new City Hall location.
- Downtown development advanced with the opening of the Federal Building and Tate condominiums, the groundbreaking of Westtown on 8th, and the selection of the Whole Foods and the Kemper project on the old Sears site.
- McKenzie-Willamette moved forward with locating a full service hospital in Eugene, which will help to ensure healthcare competition and complete choice in services.
- We responded strongly and swiftly to hate speech and passed a resolution affirming the human rights of immigrants.
- The City Council held a dialogue with representatives of communities of color and a 15-member Community Committee on Race was established.
- Library cards became available to the homeless and the council designated special funding in support of homeless services.
- Eugene’s Human Rights Commission co-sponsored a mental health summit.
- The Neighborhood Matching Grant Program was reinstated, and new work on opportunity siting and infill standards was begun.
- Exciting plans were made for Eugene’s hosting of the 2008 Track and Field Olympic Trials.

- The Mayor's Cultural Policy Review took the first intensive look at the arts in 20 years.
- Congress approved the land swap to facilitate the development of the Eugene Wetlands Environmental Education Center.

What about the goals for 2007?

A lot of them will be about completing the work already underway. Here are the top 10 that fit this category:

- The Sustainability Office and the Sustainability Commission will be up and running, moving forward the 20 other SBI recommendations and our vision of being a center of sustainability.
- The Eugene Wetlands Education Center will break ground.
- I will focus even more strongly on Eugene's Downtown development as a major piece of the community's livability, seeing the projects underway to completion and the successful development of new ones. We will need the help of everyone in this community. Downtown belongs in a very real sense to each of us. I understand the challenges, but remain convinced that we can overcome them. Just as I will support property owners and good development opportunities, I also believe the property owners have a responsibility for good maintenance and sidewalk appearance and we have the responsibility to keep it safe for people of all ages. If we want people to live there, it has to be nice. Finally, I think we need to be innovative in finding ways to support local businesses locating downtown. It will always be a combination of local and national interests that will make downtown work.
- Arts have rightfully been identified as an essential part of the character of this community. Recommendations for new initiatives in culture and the arts will come from the Mayor's Cultural Policy Review Committee this next year. It's time for the next evolution. The arts are also important to our downtown success and our economy. We have a growing number of gallery and performance opportunities. Please, everyone, come to the First Friday art walks and when you think of purchasing art for your homes or businesses, think of Eugene artists first. We should fill our streets with art and performances as often as possible, with a year-round calendar that appeals to all ages. Invite your friends and relatives.
- Another key part of our downtown is our city hall. We will continue planning for our new city hall - as an important seat of democracy and governance in our community. It should be connected to our park blocks and farmers market, provide a great community meeting place and be an energizing visible expression of how much we honor our cultural and social diversity. We should get excited about this opportunity. Many of you talk about the need for architecturally appealing buildings. Just think of this one as a beautiful connector of our arts and outdoors and a symbol of us, this wonderful community. This is something you build for future generations, for Eugeneans far into the future.
- It's also about how we live together. The Civilian Review Board will be in place as the next step in rebuilding confidence in public safety. In addition, we will work to have the best police responses possible to individuals experiencing mental health crises and the Police Commission will be bringing forward recommendations for council consideration. We will continue to work with the HRC to reduce the stigma attached to mental health conditions.

- The Community Committee on Race will bring recommendations to the council for next steps to better ensure that everyone feels welcome in Eugene. We aren't the community that we want to be until we achieve this.
- We will work with community partners to sponsor Project Homeless Connect in February and I will name a Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Homelessness.
- We will have a Neighborhood Summit to continue work on our Neighborhood Initiative, improving our usage of our neighborhood associations in key decision-making in Eugene. I hope you each participate in some way in your own neighborhood association.
- Finally, our road infrastructure is important. As promised, work is underway with local, regional and national partners to address West Eugene transportation needs in a way that will improve the livability of that area of our community.

In addition to the substantial list of ongoing efforts, I propose five new goals for the year 2007:

- I would like to see a City Youth Advisory Committee put in place. Our young people have worked hard to have an increased voice in our community. They participated in the Sustainable Business Initiative, lobbied successfully for a LEADS meeting space, and led a huge free speech effort.
- I will issue a Mayor's Neighborhood Climate Change Challenge for a 20% reduction in carbon emissions. Everyone wants to do his or her part.
- I will invite regional mayors to meet for discussion of mutual infrastructure issues. Working together, we can better ensure the success of each community.
- I will call for a downtown planning meeting with the Board of County Commissioners. Eugene and Lane County each have goals for new and revitalized buildings and we could help each other in reaching those goals.
- In addition to my ongoing Mayor One-on Ones, I will meet with 100 businesses and non-profits to assess any ways the city can be of assistance. Those in the West 11th corridor are of particular interest.

Cooperation is needed.

Remember that I mentioned cooperation? We'll need more of that this year. To accomplish our goals we'll need higher levels of cooperation and working together across jurisdictions-- for all our people and our future.

I could say much more about both our challenges and our opportunities! But the bottom line is, among cities in Oregon as well as nationally, Eugene is a LEADER, and we have a lot to be proud of. To accomplish our goals for the future, each and every one of us needs to step up. Step up to more civic involvement, investment and more volunteering. Step up to the challenges I've outlined. Step up to the leadership that will guide our city – not just forward, but forward in a smart, sustainable way. Your city needs you and I hope you will continue to respond or even step up for the very first time.

Together, we will create a proud, shared future. And, we can have fun doing it. I appreciate each and every one of you.

I close with a quote from George Washington Carver:

*How far we go in life depends upon
our being tender with the young,
compassionate with the aged,
sympathetic with the striving,
and tolerant of the weak and strong.
Because someday in our lives
we will have been all of these.*

*Let us strive to build goodwill
in every situation.*

Happy New Year everyone.

Summary of Mayor Piercy's 15 Goals for 2007

Completing the work we have underway

- The Office of Sustainability and the Sustainability Commission are up and running.
- The Eugene Wetlands Education Center breaks ground.
- Eugene's Downtown development projects move to completion and new ones are planned.
- Recommendations for new initiatives in culture and the arts come from the Mayor's Cultural Policy Review Committee.
- Plans move forward for Eugene's new city hall.
- The Civilian Review Board is in place. The Police Commission makes recommendations regarding police responses to mental health crises. The Human Rights Commission takes steps to reduce the stigma attached to mental health conditions.
- The Community Committee on Race brings council recommendations.
- Eugene co-sponsors Project Homeless Connect and a Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on Homelessness is named.
- A Neighborhood Association Summit takes place.
- West Eugene transportation issues are being addressed to improve the livability of West Eugene and the effectiveness of the state transportation system.

Five new goals for the year 2007

- A City Youth Advisory Committee is established.
- The Mayor's Neighborhood Climate Change Challenge for a 20% reduction in neighborhood carbon emissions is undertaken.
- Regional mayors meet for discussion of mutual infrastructure issues.
- A downtown planning meeting takes place with the Board of County Commissioners.
- In addition to her ongoing Mayor One-on-Ones, Mayor Piercy meets with 100 businesses and non-profits to assess ways the city can be of assistance.