



## 2019 STATE OF THE CITY

Year three begins. And, despite a national landscape that continues to be fraught with drama and controversy, locally our work moves forward. Every day is a balancing act; every issue a set of hard choices. Here's the thing: optimism is a choice and it is infectious. Our actions matter and we can make a difference locally that improves the quality of life here and stands as a model for other communities.

Paul Hawken, author, researcher and visionary, spoke in Eugene last year about his work, Project Drawdown. His key message is that the 100 most effective projects we can undertake to reverse global warming are work that we should do anyway. The priorities we list as a nation, state or city are not about loss or deprivation -- they are about gain, about recognizing our strengths, encouraging common sense, inclusion, education, and investment.

In this speech, I am going to review the work of 2018 and the opportunities that await us in 2019 using my own "drawdown" list of four major priorities: homelessness and housing, climate resiliency, public engagement, and inclusiveness.

First priority: homelessness -- both the human rights crisis and the opportunity to create a full range of housing in our community.

We face a steady and consistent increase in the number of people who are falling into homelessness -- 130 newly homeless every month in Lane County -- from the single parent who has faced a rent hike without finding alternative housing, to the chronically homeless man with untreated mental illness, to the wandering unemployed who are passing through. Some people say we are doing too much -- that improving services only serve as a magnet for the impoverished -- while others say we are not doing enough.

Either way, the continued suffering in our midst is unconscionable. Failure to act is not a choice. Last year I committed to working toward the creation of a public shelter while at the same time warning that a shelter "is not a solution to homelessness." This year, I will amend that statement. Thanks to our partnership with Lane County, we will benefit this month from a report by the Technical Assistance Collaborative that will help us build a shelter that integrates and strengthens our complete system of services for the unhoused. We are no longer talking about a band aid, we're creating a strategic plan to strengthen our capacity to help people stabilize their lives.

And, as a more permanent solution, we must work to create a full range of housing.

Economic pressures, the vulnerability of tenants in a hot rental market, the cost of land and construction, the disconnect between wages and housing costs, and our increasing population place Eugene in one of the tightest housing markets in the country.

I pledged last year to champion missing middle housing as a pathway toward creating more housing that people can afford. Council had a couple of immediately relevant issues on our agenda: the Housing Policy

Board's recommendation of a Construction Excise Tax to support affordable housing projects; and the legislature's SB 1051, requiring cities to ease barriers in the construction of accessory dwelling units.

Both issues distill our essential struggle -- how to accommodate the needs of our growing community with a vision toward doing things better -- more equitably and sustainably -- when our first reaction is fear of the potential costs of change.

We've taken a promising step. In four workshops last fall, 36 community members hammered out recommendations to create more housing in our community. Along the path to creating this essential need, we are also fostering a productive dialogue. We exchanged the old and unproductive dynamic of winners and losers, to the new drawdown paradigm -- finding a way that we can all thrive together to do the work we need to do.

Second major priority: climate resiliency -- both the urgency and promise.

Council set ambitious targets in the Climate Recovery Ordinance, and we are committed to the challenge of meeting them.

There are direct and indirect ways of meeting those goals. Fundamental decisions about where and how to build housing and invest in public transit, biking and pedestrian pathways are direct ways -- we make public decisions and investments with tax dollars. But the outcome is indirect. If we create a landscape that allows people to live near transit, their everyday choices will reduce our carbon footprint because we have made it natural and easy for them to do so. It's an excellent example of a drawdown project -- we need to do this work to serve our growing population, and the outcome will help us meet our climate goals.

The premise of our climate work is that the city and large institutions lead the way in orchestrating major shifts in energy sources and use. The community engages at many levels -- from understanding the value of reducing food waste to taking advantage of public transit.

In so many ways, the framework of our thinking about climate change, the infrastructure work we and our partners undertake, and the public's adoption of climate-responsive actions are also a template for how we prepare the community for a major earthquake and other natural disasters. The two go hand-in-hand -- they are both about how we take care of ourselves and each other. If there is one message that should resonate with all of us, it is this: if we prepare ourselves so that we and our families can be safe, we'll also be able to help our neighbors and others recover more quickly when any disaster occurs -- whether it is an ice storm, a wildfire, or a major earthquake.

The sooner we are prepared for climate change and for any emergencies that may occur, the stronger our economy will be both now and in the future.

With this urgency in mind, I will host a Mayor's Emergency Preparedness Summit in March. The goal is to bring key partners together to publicly share their plans to coordinate their responses to an earthquake and to raise public awareness of this work.

We will not succeed in reaching any of our goals if the public as a whole is not engaged. People need to agree with choices about land use and transportation, and they need to personally invest in solutions.

Effective, public outreach reduces trauma and inspires hope. If the public can't see the work, they assume nothing is happening. If you know that good work is being done on your behalf, you feel that your own efforts are worthwhile; that the future is promising.

Which brings me to my third major priority: public engagement and government accountability.

I have devoted a lot of conversation and thought to community involvement in meetings with neighborhood leaders, councilors and staff. When I took office in 2017, I created an online “dashboard” to help us track ongoing work. It was born out of a recognition that the array of decisions and the lag-time between discussions can lead to misunderstanding, confusion and distrust.

It is right that the public should demand clarity, transparency and ease of access to information concerning the expenditure of public funds, and question the public benefit of programs that encourage economic development. I have three proposals to address these challenges.

First, I have asked the city manager to create a complete list of links on the city website to all of the audits -- financial and performance -- that the city currently undertakes. My intention is to clarify where and how we account for public funds and to reassure the public that the city is diligent in its oversight of your dollars.

But financial oversight is only one part of the answer in creating trust. We also need more clarity about the values, assumptions, and priorities that those funding decisions reflect.

What information do you need to assess these choices? In what form should that information be provided?

Before we began looking for our new police chief, the city very successfully engaged the public through an extensive and varied outreach process to identify our highest priorities and the qualities we needed in our new police chief. That process greatly assisted our recruitment and hiring of Chief Skinner.

But we can't take the time for such intensive outreach efforts before every decision that comes to Council. I want the city -- council and staff -- to make effective use of online survey tools to inform the choices before council. More agile, timely, and accessible digital outreach will help the community be directly engaged in our decisions; and improve council's willingness to make the difficult decisions ahead of us.

Among those is moving forward on the creation of the Town Square, including a City Hall and year-round home for the farmers market. This has been a process two decades in the making. My predecessor, Mayor Piercy, and six of the eight current members of Council engaged in a robust public process in 2016 which led to the decision to retain a city hall in our historic town center as key to our investment and commitment to a vibrant urban core. This year, finally, those plans will come into clear focus!

In the coming months, we will also begin to see the impact of increased investment in public safety. Council approved an additional \$8.6 million in one-time funds for an array of safety investments including more police officers, investment in a day center for the unsheltered, and preventative outreach to at-risk youth. This is just the beginning -- concerns about public safety impact all of our other efforts. We will begin to see the impacts of this investment in 2019 and that will inform council's deliberations about long-term funding sources for this priority.

I am also proposing to create a Youth Advisory Board to offer council insight on issues that directly impact youth, including our climate recovery work, our housing development strategies, our transportation and public safety investments. We will take time in 2019 to reach out to existing youth boards to determine the structure and composition of this new board and expect it to be up and running by 2020.

My fourth and final major priority is inclusiveness.

Inclusion is not a word I'm using lightly. Our demographics are changing but our civic life has not kept up. As we look toward the 2021 World Track and Field Championship we have an opportunity to invest

in legacy projects that will benefit our community for years to come. Civic engagement should be one of those legacies.

Last year, I announced to you my goal of honoring 20 cultures within our city by 2021. We are beginning that work at home. Our longstanding Sister Cities provide the first pathway in recognizing and appreciating our friends, colleagues and neighbors who hail from Nepal, Japan, S. Korea and Russia. Beyond that, our community is rich with citizens from Ethiopia to Guatemala, Afghanistan to Indonesia. We will honor our city's varied cultural traditions and perspectives by focusing on one each month, beginning in November 2019 and culminating in a multi-cultural festival in July 2021 before the August World Track and Field Championship. This is one city endeavor that does not include hard choices or financial trade-offs. It's just a wealth of opportunity.

People often ask me how I like being mayor and if the job has turned out to be what I thought it would be. The answer is: Yes, I like it; and yes, the work is just as I expected—challenging and rewarding, varied and sometimes overwhelming. But in my everyday working life for the city, the job I do and the choices I make are driven by you -- your passions, your skills, your investment in this community, and your capacity for hard work.

Optimism is a choice, and it is also a way of life. Thank you for your optimism. I'm confident of the good work we will continue to do together in 2019.