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# 2016 State of the City

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January 6, 2016

### Mayor Piercy's 2016 State of the City Address Our City

It's 2016: a new year for us all. This is a big year in a world that has grown too small in so many ways—in economic inequities, disaster, and conflict.

This is a big year as we face elections that affect our future and who we are as a city and a nation. Too often we become small in how we treat each other. We hear small thoughts, bigotry, intolerance, and selfishness. Squabbles replace focus on the common good.

Uncertainty and pessimism weigh heavily on the spirit of this nation and every community. Yet, we have the antidote within us.

I come tonight to ask us, as Eugeneans, to continue to be leaders in the best sense. I come tonight to ask us to have hope in human capacity and confidence in our ability to make good choices here at home.

What we do here matters a great deal, and when we do our best, we join with others across our nation and world. In the midst of all that confounds us, there is the earnest work, courage, and heart of so many who live in peace with each other locally and worldwide.

I ask that we keep moving with determination toward a better future where justice prevails for all, where each person will have the opportunity and right to live a decent life, where we preserve our great natural resources, and where all our families are safe and secure.

In my 11 years as your mayor, our city has strived steadfastly, day in and day out, to achieve this vision and these goals. With the help of all who live here, this great city has shown it has the capacity to do what is needed.

We are neither a perfect government nor a perfect people, but we have done some very good things. We have built on our strong community foundation to ensure that we leave a livable city for future generations. We have focused on the triple bottom line: social equity, environmental protection, and economic prosperity.

Each year I come before you and tell you about our accomplishments and our challenges. Each year builds on the ones before it. We meet tough challenges, sometimes falter, regain our footing, experience extraordinary successes, and then rise up again to meet the future's new challenges with strength and fortitude.

I think it's good for us to recognize just a few of the things we all accomplished together in 2015:

- Our police and fire departments dealt with many challenging incidents, including the Civic Stadium fire. This required many resources and fast intervention to control the spread of the fire and to protect nearby neighborhoods.
- And, out of the loss, community leaders stepped forward with a vision for a sports complex that will one day provide playing fields for our children and be the pride of our city.
- We continue to partner to build much-needed affordable housing. Bascom Village will provide 101 new units, and we've purchased land out on River Road for future affordable housing.
- I also take special pride in our city rehabilitating the Polk Street Apartments to create 12 units of housing for youth transitioning out of foster care. We know that many young people on our streets have come out of foster care with no safety net under them. This is the first such apartment facility in Oregon and an important addition to our housing inventory.
- We supported rest stops and a dusk-to-dawn ordinance to provide legal places to sleep, and Eugene was one of the first cities to join First Lady Michelle

Obama's challenge to address homelessness among veterans. We responded with our own effort—Operation 365—in partnership with Lane County with the goal of housing 365 vets by the end of 2015. Although we are awaiting final numbers, every indication is that we have met this ambitious target thanks to the work of many community partners.

- A new Department of Veterans Affairs outpatient clinic in North Eugene is scheduled to open early this year. The clinic represents a significant improvement in services to veterans in our area.
- Our children's wellbeing and future matters a great deal to us. We provided 1,749 programs that positively impact youth health.
- And, we teamed up with Trillium for Project Plunge, providing 290 youth with free Summer Swim Passes and access to all 3 pools.
- Over 2,500 parents signed up to have their children, ages 0-4, receive a new book each month through our Imagination Library program. This great work is funded through the tireless efforts of the Library Foundation.
- Speaking of our great library, in November, voters approved a five-year local option levy to provide for more hours, access, programs, materials, and technology for our public library system's users.
- National tragedies remind us to be grateful for our police, who brought ALICE training to local schools and organizations to teach survival options in those critical moments when a violent situation occurs.
- To improve our justice system, we brought together our police, prosecutor's office and municipal court to begin redesigning and creating a more nuanced system that focuses on problem-solving, individualized treatment, restorative justice and faster resolution of cases.
- We launched the Parks Ambassadors Program to make our parks safer and more welcoming.
- We improved the Spencer Butte Summit Trail on time and on budget, using innovative design, improving safety and accessibility, and protecting the ecosystem.
- Economic development efforts continue, bringing broadband, housing, hotels, grocery stores and the building of the Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network facility downtown.
- RAIN was recognized with an award given by the International Town and Gown Association, a result of an important partnership with the University of Oregon.
- At the U of O and Eugene School District, we welcomed new leaders in education to our community.
- The National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors named Eugene's Digital Dojo Coding Team Project the Community Broadband Digital Equity Project of the Year. This was a project launched in partnership with Lane Community College.
- Also key to our economic development was the addition of daily non-stop airport service to San Jose.
- We are proud to have passed a local paid sick leave ordinance, which gave rise to the new statewide sick leave law that allows workers to stay home when sick

without loss of pay.

- The City of Eugene adopted the most ambitious climate recovery ordinance in the nation.
- 95% of materials from our former city hall were reused or recycled, including 30,000 board feet of red cedar salvaged for use in the new building.
- Emergency management adopted new plans and provided training and presentations for emergency preparation.

In early December, I was invited to join key West Coast mayors in a two-day summit. This included the mayors of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Portland and Eugene. All of our cities have deep concerns about and have dedicated considerable time to two of the nation's greatest challenges: housing and climate change. We spent two days digging deeply into these issues, sharing concerns and solutions. Our efforts resulted in a joint letter to Congress regarding the homeless crisis that we face and asking for support in removing barriers and creating more opportunity. We also signed an agreement to use our collective strength and assets to ambitiously reduce our shared impact on climate change.

In 2016, Eugene will continue to work on prosperity and strengthening our economy so that we can provide more opportunity for everyone to thrive. In particular, we will continue to build on our successes as the "Silicon Shire," a nationally recognized hub for technology and innovation. We will also continue to build on our federal designation as part of the Pacific Northwest Manufacturing Partnership. Advanced manufacturing is one of our area's greatest opportunities, as are food, arts, health care, education and sports.

We will push our local economy forward with more employment, as well as good wages and benefits. This economic development work will take time and sustained focus.

In the meantime, many community members continue to struggle with finding housing and shelter. While we are making progress, we have a long way to go. We need more affordable housing. People who have vouchers cannot find available units. We will enlist the help of the state and federal government in meeting this need. Governor Brown has responded to our request to form a state and local workgroup to guide the state's response to this critical issue. Housing in our area is disproportionately expensive. We must address the cost of housing so that people with low and moderate incomes are not priced out of the market like we see happening elsewhere. We will focus on worker housing as one way of addressing this situation.

We lack shelter capacity and safe places for people to be. It's not right for the second largest city in Oregon and one that has long had a homeless issue to have no public shelter. More shelter can also reduce the impact of those who now try to survive on our streets and riverbanks. This is both about being humane and about making sound economic decisions that protect our community livability.

Of course, shelter remains only one part of any system. Permanent housing is the real solution. We will be acting on a resolution to adopt the Housing First model to guide our decision-making. We need this type of low-barrier housing in our community. It's the right thing to do and it's time to do more as a city. I will join community partners in bringing this initiative forward this year.

We must provide adequate places for people to live throughout our community. We have to step forward to meet the need while maintaining good, walkable, beautiful, and livable neighborhoods. It's not possible to ignore this issue or to refuse to change. This is hard and challenging work. It's easy to react with fear of loss. We have to pull together in a concerted effort to meet everyone's needs while continuing to pursue our community goals and aspirations. This is about our entire community and the leadership role we all take together.

A strong economy and social equity are hard goals to accomplish, and so is environmental protection. We have set rigorous standards in our climate ordinance, and we will not get there with a casual hit-or-miss approach. The City will lead but the answer ultimately lies with all of us. As a council, we will set up a timeline with check-in dates to see how we are doing. This is among the most important work we have. I hope you will ask those who are running for office for their strong leadership and adherence to this ordinance as a part of your decision about who to vote for.

One place all of these goals meet is in our downtown and riverfront site, where we continue to build prosperity and business opportunity, nurture arts and culture, provide housing opportunities, share our public spaces and build well-connected green spaces that are the very core of what we love about our home. In this as with all else, when solving problems I ask that we set our fears aside and lift our aspirations, open our minds and hearts to each other, and look for solutions that benefit and acknowledge us all.

I continually find that when I expect the best, that is most often what is given in return.

In my last year as mayor my expectations are high, my sense of humor intact, and my resilience strong. I have my health challenges. We all have challenges. The world does.

I end my last State of the City by thanking this council for their hard work and dedication, their thoughtful discussions, and their commitment to our community. I thank them for treating each other and the community with respect. I thank them for their leadership on setting policy. It's not easy.

I thank our City staff who have used their professional skills and deep commitment to public service to keep city services intact and moving forward during the worst recession this nation has known. They serve us well. They live here and love this community just as we all do.

I thank each of you—our partners and people throughout our community—for this great opportunity I have had. Just as in the last 11 years, I expect that in this 12th and last year of my service as your mayor, we will do great things and continue to be Better Together. Bring on the New Year 2016. We are ready.