

Mayor Shane T. Bemis  
State of the City Address  
March 15, 2018

Thank you for being here today, and Lynn, thank you for that introduction, and your partnership. Thank you for all that you do, that the Chamber members do in order to move this community forward to make sure that we are getting new leaders and new people involved. You're doing great work and I really, really appreciate that. I didn't get that note about not yelling at the refs at my kid's game. Quick funny story. My son was playing basketball on Saturday morning, and I was asked to run the clock. So I was running the clock. It was really, really early Saturday morning and I had been up really, really late the night before. So, I missed the clock a couple of times. The coach that was coaching for the other team, a very passionate lady, yelled at me the first time. I said, "All right, I got it, I got it." The second time I missed up, she screams to the stands, "Hey, we need a new clock person." Oh my gosh. I probably said something I shouldn't have said to her. Needless to say, I kept the clock for the rest of the time.

I want to thank you all for being here. I also want to thank you the Gresham Armory for letting us convene in their facility again this year, and a huge thank you to the men and women of the Oregon National Guard for their outstanding service to our state and nation. We need no greater example of the ideal citizen than the people in uniform here today. Please show them your appreciation.

City Councilors, honored guests, friends and neighbors, it is an incredible honor to be here today to speak about the state of our city. It is extraordinary to me that so many people would take the time out of their busy schedules to join together as a group and discuss our mutual love for this terrific 113-year-old city. The process of developing this speech gives me the chance each year to spend a couple of months truly digging in to a granular level of detail about the successes we have shared, and the challenges that still lay ahead. Your presence here today gives me great confidence that we, collectively, are poised to realize opportunities and growth for many years.



Everybody in this room has a hand in the state of our city, and I want to take just a moment to point out some of my teammates on the City Council, who have intimately contributed to our collective progress. Council President Kirk French, and Councilors Karylenn Echols, David Widmark, Jerry Hinton, Janine Gladfelter, and Mario Palmero are all with us today. I have a lot to say today about the importance of cooperation and the necessity of caring for and nurturing representative democracy. Let me tell you, that starts with these six individuals, and we are exceptionally fortunate to have such a dynamic,

talented, and cooperative group. We don't always agree on everything, but we always know that everybody is leading with their true hearts for the community, and that's all that really matters.

We are also joined today by some elected and appointed officials, whose partnerships I deeply appreciate. If you would, save your applause for the end, and I will list them here:

- My friend, Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury
- Multnomah County Commissioner Lori Stegmann
- Multnomah County Sheriff Mike Reese
- Metro Councilor Shirley Craddick
- Metro Councilor Betty Dominguez
- Mt. Hood Community College Board member Annette Mattson
- Reynolds School Board member Ricki Ruiz
- Gresham Barlow School Board member John Hartstock
- Gresham Barlow School Board member Sharon Garner
- Gresham Barlow School Board Chair, Kris Howatt
- Reynolds School District Superintendent Linda Florence
- Centennial Superintendent Paul Coakley
- Gresham Barlow Superintendent Dr. Katrise Perera
- Former Gresham City Council member Carol Neilson-Hood
- Tigard Mayor John Cook
- Happy Valley Mayor Lori DeRemer
- Wood Village Mayor Tim Clark
- Representatives from Senator Wyden's office and Congressman Blumenauer's office

I'd like to thank a couple of folks from the City. I'd like to thank our exceptional City Manager, Erik Kvarsten. I've been fortunate enough to spend all of my career as Mayor with the same city manager and the community is better off for it. We've found a great lane to work in together. He runs this organization in an incredible, professional manner and understands that we are here to serve you all and that goes down through the entire organization through his exceptional leadership. Please give our exceptional City Manager a hand. I also want to thank just a couple of other people in my office, Eric Chambers, many of you know Eric. Eric and I started together in this job and he's been an exceptional professional and an exceptional friend. Thank you, Eric.

I also want to introduce my family that's here. My mother, Cory Williamson, my mother in law, Nora Boren, my wife, Alix Bemis. Of course, my good friends, Joe and Arliss.

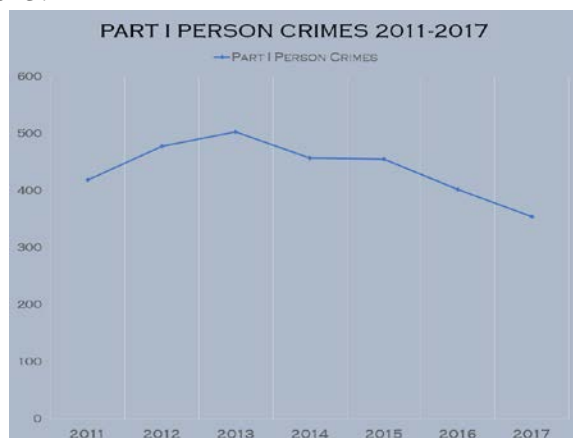
I'm going to be honest with you. This is a weird time to be in public service. Divisiveness has acted like a contagion and caused some people on both sides to retreat into their camps and comfort zones. I get it. Our national governance can best be described as parents who don't get along with each other, national incomes have been frustratingly stagnant for a very long time, and we are undergoing technological and social change at a rate that feels too fast for many people, and far, far, too slow for many others.

As a service provider on the local level, we do things like provide water to your homes, process wastewater, maintain parks, provide police services and fire suppression, and help save your life when you call 9-1-1. By in large, we don't play in many of the heated policy arenas that are haunted by our counterparts at the state and federal levels. But, we are home to the same constituents, and often end up on the front lines of trying to remind people, even people with broad political, religious, or social differences, *that they probably kind of like each other*.

That job is made harder, of course, by apps that allow discord to rapidly spread to millions of people 280 characters at a time. Let me tell you, there are times when I feel more like a marriage counselor than a mayor.

But I have learned, over the past couple of years, that maintaining and improving the vitality of our city has more to do with staying focused on outcomes than it does with contemplating the constantly shifting landscape. Change is constant, but, staying focused pays dividends.

There is nowhere in which that is more true than public safety. Despite the challenges that Gresham has always faced on the revenue side, due to having one of the lowest permanent property tax rates in Oregon, we have made substantial progress in public safety in recent years. In our Police Department, for example, Part I Person Crimes—the most violent category of crime, including things like aggravated assault, robbery, and rape—are at a five-year low, down even from last year, which was also a five-year low. Part II crimes, which capture more minor but still very impactful issues, remained largely flat over the past couple of years, and 20% lower than their peak in 2011-2013.



To give the whole picture, while violent crime is down, we have seen some increases in property crimes in recent years. This is, in part, due a substantial increase in stolen vehicle cases. A few years ago, the State Court of Appeals interpreted the stolen vehicle statute to essentially say that the suspect has to admit that he or she knew the vehicle was stolen in order to face prosecution. Obviously, the criminal community caught on, and now knows that a simple lie means they can avoid jail and keep stealing cars. I don't think for a second that the sensible residents of Gresham have any interest in being soft on Grand Theft Auto. Therefore, the City of Gresham

will continue to push our colleagues in the State Legislature to empower our stolen vehicle statute to do its job, so that we can do our job on the local level and curb this disturbing trend.

Despite obstacles that are often outside of our control, I am incredibly proud of the work Gresham police officers do. Did you know that the Gresham Police Department's 94% homicide solve rate is 30% higher than the national average of 64%? Gresham is literally one of the worst places in the country to commit murder. The monsters who bring this type of evil violence to Gresham will be brought to justice by our police officers. It's as simple as that.



In addition to solid patrol and investigation work, the past year also brought a reboot of our Neighborhood Enforcement Team (NET). NET is a collaboration between Gresham Police Officers and code personnel from our Community Development Department, which dedicates resources to the worst chronic nuisance and livability issues in your specific neighborhoods. These are the folks who feverishly tackle chop shops and drug houses, and who maintain order and livability while their

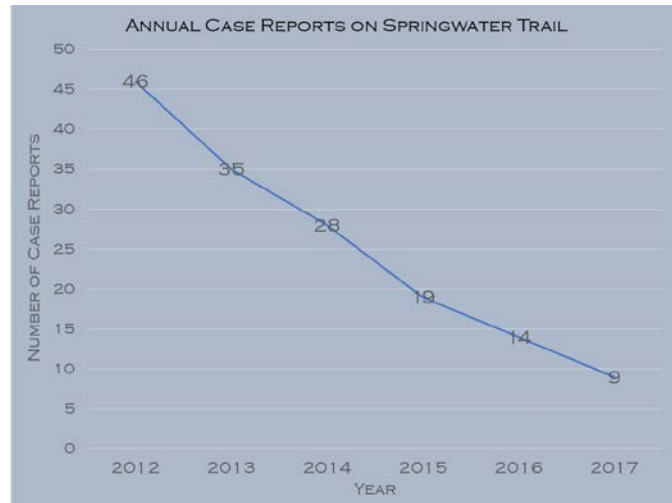
colleagues are going from one 9-1-1 call to another.



In addition to our patrol program and special teams, we have had a consistent, dedicated police presence on Gresham's portion of the Springwater Trail for three years running. When Portland decided to completely abandon any hope of maintaining the trail for conventional use, we held the line firmly, and put police officers on Gresham's portion of the alignment every day. Did it work? Not only is Gresham's portion of the trail still regularly and heavily used by our residents, but our crime statistics show the benefit

of our approach.

This chart shows the total number of cases our police department has fielded each year on the trail, for the past six years, from a high of 46 cases in 2012, to a low of just nine cases last year.



Trust me, we will not ease off of our vigilant enforcement efforts, and we will maintain our strong police presence on the Springwater Trail. Gresham's portion of the trail will remain a safe and healthy recreation and transportation opportunity for our families. When you are out there this summer, please be sure to thank the excellent Gresham Police Officers who help ensure it stays that way.

It would be difficult to discuss the Springwater Trail without taking a moment to discuss homelessness issues in Gresham and across the region. To be clear, Gresham has held strong on the enforcement side. We have city codes and livability rules for a reason, and we have no interest in letting go of those. That may sound harsh, but there is nothing, nothing compassionate about letting mentally ill or severely addicted humans live in the squalor of a thin tent, and there is nothing acceptable about letting that happen in our neighborhoods.

So, what is Gresham doing about it? Well, through our ongoing partnership with Multnomah County, we have identified resources to help those experiencing homelessness, mental illness, and addiction, while also improving the livability of our city. The front line in these efforts is the City's Homeless Services Specialist, Aaron Sando, who is on our streets and trails, and in our parks every single day building relationships with homeless individuals, driving them to services, and working with them to find permanent solutions and treatment. Here's a brief glimpse into some of the work Aaron does to help those in our community:

*[Homeless services video]*

Thank you, Aaron. If you would have asked me 10 years ago if we'd have an employee in this arena, I would have told you no. But changing times require us to change and adjust with them, and this approach is what the pressures of our day demand.

In addition to Aaron's work, I also announced our Clean Start program at last year's speech, which pays formerly homeless individuals to clean up garbage, litter, debris and camps in Gresham. This program has the double benefit of helping formerly homeless individuals

rediscover the dignity of work and compensation while also getting a nice return on investment, in terms of being able to expediently clean up problems in Gresham as soon as they happen.

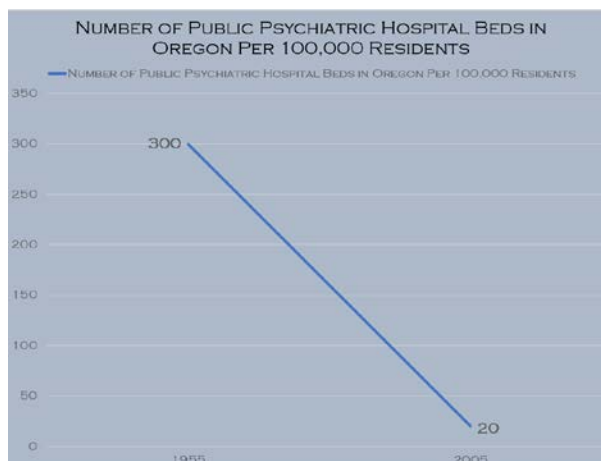
I'm very excited this year to announce a brand-new program in this arena as well. As of March 5, we have started a new partnership with Central City Concern called the "Community Volunteer Corps" which is available to homeless people in Gresham who are seeking treatment, but who are earlier in the process than their counterparts who have graduated up to the Clean Start program. Participants in the Community Volunteer Corps program will be paid a daily stipend, will get reacquainted with the value of their labor, and will be a dedicated resource available five days a week to make our community better. They will pick up litter, paint curbs, remove graffiti, clean up the parks, work for local non-profit agencies, and generally do anything we ask them to that improves the community.

Once again, none of these efforts would have been possible without our valued partnership with Multnomah County, and I want to specifically recognize my friends, Chair Deborah Kafoury and Commissioner Lori Stegmann, who have delivered this investment to Gresham. The County is our go-to agency when it comes to the social service side of the equation, but our partnership has increased in recent years. Where overlap exists, silos must not hamper our outcomes. We couldn't do these things without their help, so I thank them again.

While we work hard on the services and opportunity side of the equation, I want to be very, very clear about our priorities around code enforcement. We won't tolerate dilapidated RVs taking up residence on our neighborhood streets. We won't turn a blind eye to camping in our parks or public spaces, and we will be vigilant in monitoring and enforcing our parks rules for everybody. The consequence for repeated violations of parks rules can include being excluded from the park in question, and that is a tool we will use this summer to ensure that our parks are safe and accessible for everybody.

We know how much of a priority homelessness is for the community, and for that reason, we will continue to do everything we can to lift people out of their circumstances and hold the line on our local codes and laws. But let me also take just a moment to lay out for you the state and federal actions—or inactions—that got us into this mess, and placed the sole responsibility for solving it on the shoulders of the people in this room.

Did you know that between 1955 and 2005, Oregon reduced the number of public psychiatric hospital beds from nearly 300 per 100,000 residents to under 20 beds per 100,000 residents today? That is a staggering 93.3 percent decrease in psychiatric beds.



To make it worse, the widespread emergence of opiates as the go-to prescription for our medical community has resulted in a frightening addiction epidemic. There are 3.2 million opiate prescriptions issued in Oregon each year. That is 92 opiate prescriptions for every 100 residents in the state. That number is jarring. Prescriptions drugs are expensive, and once dependencies are established, a vicious cycle begins, whereby the addiction becomes the only thing that matters, and for economic reasons, people experiencing the addiction turn to cheaper alternatives, street level drugs like methamphetamine, heroin and synthetic fentanyl.

Are we seeing that here? You bet we are. According to Multnomah County's needle exchange data, there are over four million needles distributed each year, and 46% of needle exchange clients are street-level homeless individuals. At three-needles-per-day-per user, that would suggest that there are roughly 1,680 street level homeless needle users in the County.

There was a day when local governments were more about Sunday potlucks in the park, and speeding cars in the neighborhoods. Those days have been replaced by local governments increasingly being called upon to address the disinvestments and policy failures on the state and federal level. Look, we're up to the challenge and we'll do our job, but we need your help, in terms of demanding more from our electeds, including better psychiatric care, and which is critical in an out-of-control addiction epidemic.

That is one reason that innovation is so important in local government. We are responding to new challenges in new ways, because we have to. That is why we have continued to expand Project Respond services by pairing behavioral health clinicians with some of our traditional police services. Our officers, increasingly, are being asked to perform as front-line mental health practitioners. They are tremendous, but they need help, and they need the right tools.

We are undergoing similar shifts and innovations in our Fire/EMS services. We used to just be in the 9-1-1 business. You'd call 9-1-1, and we'd beat the ambulance there. Once stabilized, we'd hand the patient off for transport, and that was the end of things.





QUICK RESPONSE VEHICLE (QRV)

What we are learning now is that doing more can actually increase efficiency and save money in the long term. We launched a pilot project in 2016 to deploy a Quick Response Vehicle (or QRV), which is able to respond to emergency medical calls more efficiently, and without having to roll out the big red fire engines. We saw the quality of service advantage we could realize through the QRV, and I am happy to report that 2018 marks its return to the force.

We will continue our progress with innovative approaches like the QRV and use data strategically to decide how best to deploy our lifesaving personnel. Of course, we are also still very much in the old-fashioned fire suppression business. I could not be more proud of the men and women of the Gresham Fire Department. They do everything that is asked of them and more, protecting Gresham, and also stepping up to help protect others as well. Last summer, when the Columbia River Gorge was going up in flames, and ash was falling on our homes, our Gresham firefighters were called upon to help. They leapt into action, drove into the fire, and arrived first on the site at Multnomah Falls.



I don't exaggerate when I tell you how perilous of a situation this was. Because they arrived first, they became the incident commanders for the other departments that joined later. The lodge caretaker basically tossed them the keys and said there were cookies and soda inside, and don't let it burn.

As the night wore on, and then into the next day, they would fight back waves of flames as they came down the hill, and towards the wood-shingled structure. We called them in the morning to check in. We asked them about the state of the lodge and the historic bridge over the falls. "Listen," they said after working 20 straight hours (Chief, cover your ears), "There's no \*bleeping\* way any of that is going down on our watch!"



You think these men and women are committed to the job? They take that same intensity and commitment to every structure fire in our city, and we are extremely fortunate to have the very best serving us right here in Gresham. Please give a round of applause to our Gresham firefighters.

Of course, I could not speak about our amazing Gresham firefighters without taking a moment to give probably one of the hardest goodbyes I've ever had to give. Last month, Gresham Fire Chief Greg Matthews notified us of his intent to retire. Not only is Chief Matthews amongst my closest friends, but he embodies what public service looks like, and what it means to put our residents first in everything.



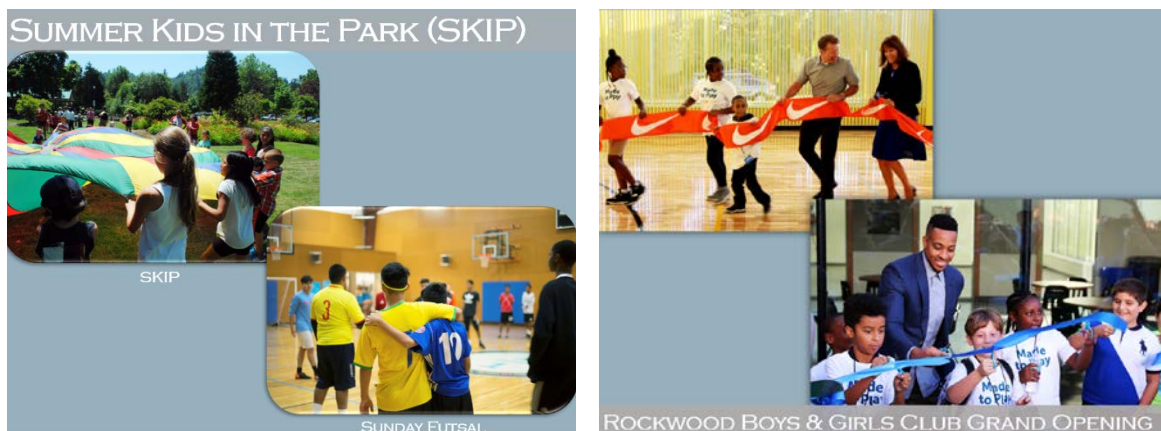
He has served in the US Army. He has served as a Gresham Police Officer. He has served as a Gresham Firefighter. He has served as a State Legislator, and he has served as our Fire Chief. Of course, he's also served as the DJ and MC of every single community event in Gresham for the past 30 years—a role from which we will never let him retire.



In geeky political science and public administration circles, you will hear philosophical discussions from time to time about the “ideal public servant.” What does it look like to enlist one’s maximum talent and commitment into the service of others, and to do so for an entire career? Well, it looks like Greg. Greg, stand so that your hometown can give you the thank you you deserve.

Greg is a Gresham kid who grew up with a supportive community in a place that he loves. That is our ambition for every kid in Gresham. This City Council has had no ambiguity in speaking to our top priority: fostering the best possible environment for our children and families.

I’ve spoken in past years about the City’s ongoing efforts to restore youth recreation. Our Summer Kids in the Park program is entering its fifth year of free summer programming for Gresham youth. Our Friday night basketball program continues and has been expanded to include Saturday night, and we have now added a Sunday Futsal program as well, and the past year also brought the grand opening of the beautiful new Rockwood Boys and Girls Club, a partnership with the City’s urban renewal agency.



All of these efforts together have created thousands and thousands of hours for our youth to pursue healthy activities and avoid the idle time that too often invites less healthy behaviors.

We are also entering a renaissance, of sorts, in Gresham’s schools. With bond measures successfully approved in both Reynolds and Gresham-Barlow School Districts, we are poised for one of the largest reinvestments in Gresham’s schools we’ve ever seen. I was also very happy to see the district put the brakes on last year, just briefly, and get the design right so that the historic nature of Gresham High School would be preserved and honored as the facility is rebuilt.



The good news in Gresham's schools does not stop at the reinvestment in facilities. We are also seeing advances in academic performance in our schools as well. Every single high school in Gresham saw increases last year in their graduation rates. Barlow, Centennial, and Gresham High School all have graduation rates that exceed the state average of 76.6%. Just to be clear, as Oregonians, none of us should be happy with a state average of 76.6%. Nevertheless, the advances we are seeing in Gresham show remarkable progress in just a single year, and I am convinced that it is a sign of things to come, as our community continues to rally around, and invest in, our children and families.



I want to specifically mention my appreciation for the partnership that I have enjoyed with Gresham-Barlow's new Superintendent, Dr. Perera. Since the moment I met her, I knew I liked her, and I knew that her energy and passion would breath new life into our school system and set the bar very high for expectations around improvement and performance. Dr. Perera, thank you for your commitment to excellence and for your valued partnership.

Another key component to educational success is early childhood literacy. I am very pleased to report that my wife Alix and I teamed up last year to launch the Gresham Reads program, a partnership with restaurants across Gresham to promote reading and access to books for Gresham's youngest residents. Alix keeps the Gresham Reads kiosks stocked with fresh books for our kids to read at five area restaurants including Burgerville, Sugar Cubed Cakes, Blondie's Pizza, Shari's, and Tortilleria y Tienda de Leon. The kids can enjoy the books while they dine, or take them home with them afterwards. Research has shown that the only behavioral measure that correlates significantly with reading scores is the number of books available in the home, so we want to do everything we can to make them available for children in Gresham. This program



depends, in part, on the generous donations we get of used children's books, so if you have any at home that you can part with, we'd love to have them at City Hall.



Providing a great place for children and families also means investing in our parks. You've heard me speak about my excitement for the development of the Hogan Butte Nature Park in past State of the City speeches. Well, now it is finally complete, and it is more beautiful than we ever imagined. We compiled a short video, in case you haven't made it up there yet:

*[Hogan Butte Video]*

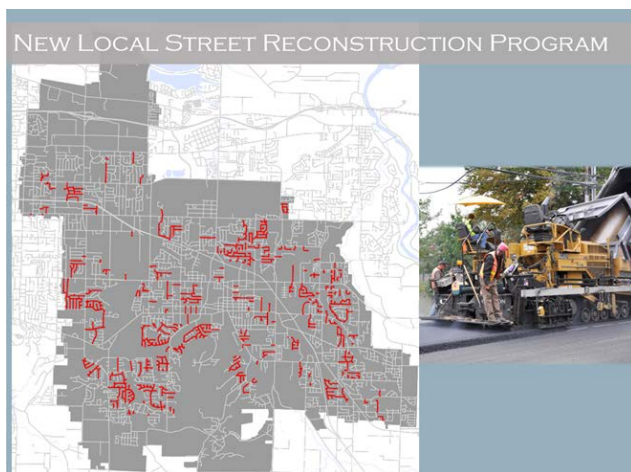


In addition to our grand opening at Hogan Butte, 2017 also brought us another great year of community events, including the Gresham Arts Festival, which now draws over 20,000 people to downtown Gresham, Rock the Block, Spirit of Christmas, and Music Mondays, put on by our awesome volunteers at the Center for the Arts Foundation. You just can't beat a warm summer evening with good live music on a beautiful plaza downtown, shared with your friends and neighbors.

Speaking of art, our friends at Gresham Outdoor Public Art have made outstanding contributions to our community with four recent installations of public art downtown and at the Nadaka Nature Park. Gresham has a long heritage enjoying live music and appreciating art, and it is awesome to see the community stepping forward again and taking exceptional leaps to support a robust and vibrant arts experience for our residents to enjoy right here in Gresham. Thank you, Gresham Public Art.



Great parks, good schools, opportunities for youth, vibrant commercial areas, robust community events, art, and public safety are critical components to Gresham's success in attracting young families. In addition to the items I just mentioned, one of the most common questions I've been asked over the years relates to the quality and condition of Gresham's roads. Look, we get to do fun stuff like open Hogan Butte and enjoy town festivals, but we also get to deal with the potholes, and I profoundly understand that responsibility.



I was very pleased during this speech last year to announce our five-year plan to reconstruct every failed residential street in Gresham. Our work is now in progress, with results to show for it. All told, at the end of this five-year plan, we will have reconstructed 25 percent of Gresham's residential streets. To put it plainly, it is the most ambitious street maintenance infrastructure effort in Gresham's history, and I cannot wait to see it fully come to fruition. The days are numbered for those infuriating

cracks in the asphalt on your neighborhood streets.



It's impossible to overstate the importance of that street-level neighborhood livability. The core of local government will always fall directly on our families, and the neighborhoods in which they live. 2017 brought us a major revamp of Gresham's Office of Neighborhoods and Community Engagement, now run by Michael Gonzales, a longtime Gresham resident. Michael is hard at work getting Gresham's previously defunct neighborhood associations up and running, and providing support for Gresham's other longstanding, healthy neighborhoods as well.

Neighborhood Associations serve many functions, be it land use, advocacy, or organization. But they also provide opportunities to just be neighbors and have fun. This summer Michael will be taking a block party trailer from neighborhood to neighborhood all summer long, hosting barbeques and neighborhood get-togethers. We'll bring the burgers and the music. You bring your neighbors, and together we'll grow the social fabric that makes Gresham thrive.

We've also completely realigned our code enforcement services to better integrate Gresham's livability efforts with the needs of our neighborhoods. We've split off the nasty stuff: zombie houses, chop shops, and drug operations, and we've put those issues with the Neighborhood Enforcement Team, where they belong. We don't need to be nice to the folks who would prey on our neighborhoods and make you stay awake at night.

As for the other stuff: overgrown shrubs, long grass, chipping paint, and so on, we've put those services in the Neighborhood office, under the new management of Jessica Harper, who you may know from her previous role as the Assistant to the Mayor. In case you were wondering if the new manager knows what it is like to get a heavy-handed communication from the City for a minor issue, rest assured, after answering the phone in my office for the past four years, Jessica has a profound understanding of how frustrating that can be.

Our approach on these issues is transforming. We're focusing on compliance as opposed to the heavy hand of enforcement. Here's an example: A couple of weeks ago our code officers were responding to a complaint of a utility trailer that had been filled with debris and was parked on a city street adjacent to its owner's home. Our code officer responded to the call, but instead of generating a nasty letter to the homeowner with threats of fines, he did something really simple. He knocked on the door.



An elderly woman answered the door. She expressed embarrassment that the trailer hadn't been emptied and explained that her husband was ill. Our code officer came back to City Hall that day with a plan. The crew went back to the woman's home, emptied the load from the trailer and disposed of it properly. They moved the trailer off of the street for her, back on her property.

Do you want to know something crazy? That actually saved us time and money, because the amount of bureaucratic process that would have otherwise gone into the case, over several weeks, was avoided. Happy resident, happy neighbors, problem solved, and more efficient services. That's where we're headed here.



Stay tuned, because we will also be launching a new volunteer effort in the coming months, to assist in this new approach to code compliance and livability. A good number of our code cases stem from the property owner being elderly, disabled, or impoverished. They express a strong desire to deal with the issue, and often express embarrassment that it hasn't been handled yet. I know that Gresham is full of residents who don't hesitate to help their neighbors when they are called upon. This year we will be launching Gresham's "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" program, where we will put a bunch of these code cases to bed by deploying goodhearted volunteers to help mow the grass or trim the hedge when the property owners are unable to do so themselves.

In addition to neighborhood livability, our children, families and neighborhoods also need a robust economy and good jobs to thrive. Do you remember awhile back, in the midst of the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, when we'd get together as a group and talk about our hopes for better days? Well, our planning and hard work back then paid off. You have undoubtedly seen the progress on the Gresham Vista site, but that is just the most visible marker of what is happening across the City. In 2017, our economic development staff assisted in the completion of 1.7 million square feet of new industrial space, with an additional 890,000 square feet set to begin construction in 2018. One of those projects will become home to Gresham's newest high-tech manufacturer, a firm from the United Kingdom that will be making an \$80 million investment in Gresham this year, providing 60 new family wage jobs.



2018 has also brought the recruitment of Migration Brewing to Gresham, our first larger-scale brewing facility. We were able to help attract Migration to Rockwood through an Urban Renewal New Industries Grant. They are a great employer, and their facility will contribute substantially to the urban form of the area, with their plans including a tasting room and brewpub. You'll want to keep your eyes on this one. My understanding is, Councilor French, you've already got an office there?

To speak about square-footage of traded sector industrial space in the millions was nearly inconceivable a short while back, but streamlining our industrial review process, ensuring that our fees are on the very competitive edge of the region, and partnering with exceptional entities like the Port of Portland has put us in this position, and this growth is poised to continue at an awesome pace for years to come.



I am also happy to report the growth and development we've had in our residential building permits. In the past three years, we have issued more permits citywide for single family homes than we did in the six prior years combined, and housing starts for 2018 through February are already double over the same period in 2017. Much of that growth is occurring in Pleasant Valley, which has been home to around 200 housing starts in the past three years. Pleasant Valley is on its way to becoming the excellent, vibrant neighborhood we envisioned before the housing

market disappeared. There have been some growing pains here and there, but Council has been clear that our parks and amenities need to be developed simultaneously with housing developments as they occur going forward.

While I'm on the topic of housing, I do want to speak briefly to our regional issues with housing affordability. There are many different interests and perspectives on this issue, and there is no doubt that different jurisdictions will take different approaches. In Gresham, we have committed to making data-driven decisions on the topic, and we will seek input from all of the interests in the community. Immediately, the City Council is forming a Housing Affordability Task Force, which will have a good balance of perspectives amongst its membership, and which will make recommendations to the City Council. Those with different opinions on this topic will sit across the table from each other and engage respectfully while working through tough questions.

While we are excited to see the results of this Task Force's work, people on every side of the housing issue can celebrate that recent growth in Pleasant Valley, and growth elsewhere in Gresham, will certainly help with the supply-side of the affordability equation, which is a critical component to any solution.

There is so much good stuff going on in this community. Where other cities have fallen to divisions, infighting, and grumpiness, Gresham has stayed together, and fought hard against the forces that would divide us. I started the speech today by mentioning the strange times we find ourselves in, and how much anxiety and grumpiness can interfere with our collective responsibility to govern and make progress.

My intent today is not to sound delicate. Trust me, I couldn't have spent this much time in public service without a thick skin. I'm not asking you to protect our egos over at City Hall. But I do want to make the case for community cohesion and civility, in an era where it seems like, too often, we've lost track of those core values—especially at the state and federal levels of government.

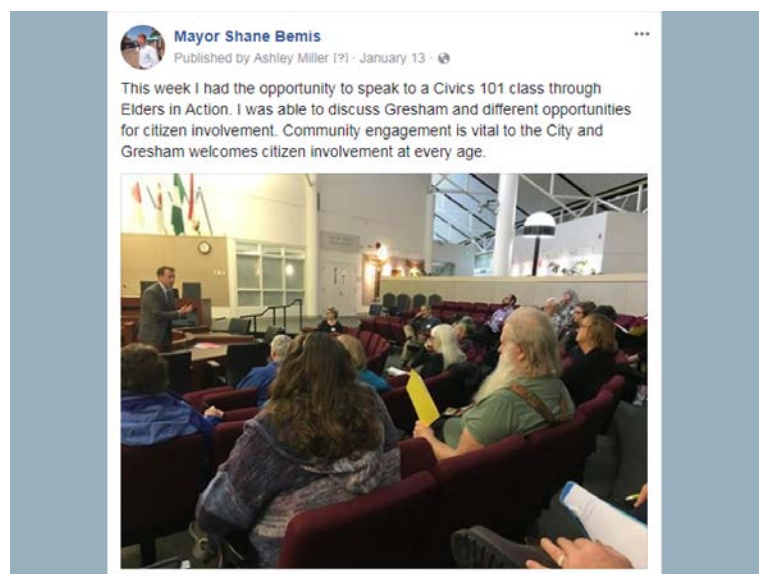
We've all heard the old adage about retirees at the coffee shop who meet up every morning to discuss politics and solve the world's problems. Republicans and Democrats, best friends and

fishing buddies, setting party aside and enjoying each other's company. Don't let go of that. If you are a Democrat and you don't have a close personal friend who is a Republican, go find one. If you are a Republican and you don't have a dear friend who affiliates with the Democrats, don't hesitate, go find one. Mine's Deborah Kafoury. It might seem like hyperbole, but I believe the health of our City, and as an extension, the health of our state and nation, depends on it.

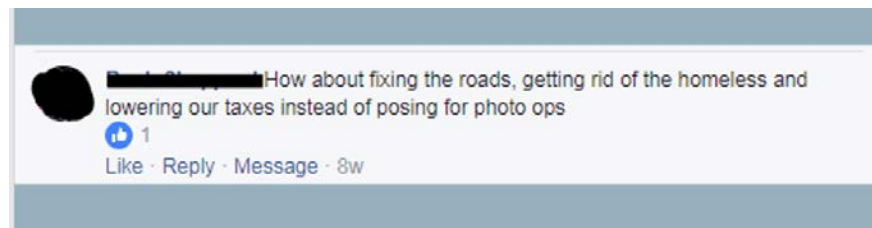
I'm not trying to see the world through rose colored glasses. I am well aware that there's plenty to be grumpy about. But where does that get us? At the end of the day, we need each other. We need our community to be cohesive. We need to be able to set aside our party affiliations on Friday evenings in the fall, find our seats in the stands, and be Gresham Gophers together, or, if you insist, Barlow Bruins. It is not lost on me, Madame Speaker, that the colors here are Barlow Bruins. It's okay—it's a school of Olympians. They just keep coming from there. I joke, but my point is that community is delicate. Solomon's old Proverb rings true today: "Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath."

Representative democracy must be purposefully nurtured, or it will fail, and we can accomplish a whole heck of a lot more together than anybody can when civics and civility break down. We need only look to social media to see some on-point, if not also a bit humorous, examples of what the breakdown of civil discourse can look like.

Exhibit A: One of my Facebook posts from a couple months ago, about speaking to an Elders in Action Civics 101 class that visited City Hall. I was invited to chat with them about different ways to get involved in their community.



Pretty controversial, right? I mean, what can be more polarizing than speaking to our honored citizens about the values of community and democracy? Well, here's a post:

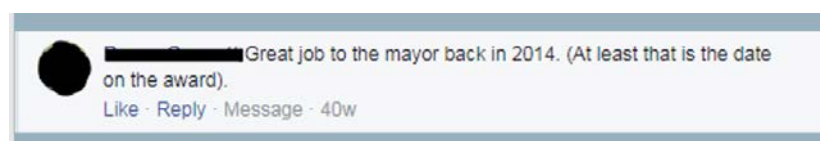


Ok, now, I get it, roads, homelessness, and taxation are important issues, and we've talked about all of them today, but can't we focus on all of those important issues and also spend some time with senior citizens?

Here's another post reflecting on the City's advances in clean energy, and celebrating the national recognition and \$800,000 in savings our efforts return for our residents each year:



And the response:

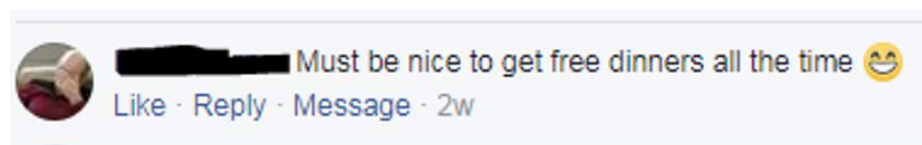


Now this one gets me, because I sort of have to agree with the commenter. After all, I WAS the Mayor back in 2014!

And finally, a recent example, reporting on the accomplishments of some outstanding young women who were honored at the Gresham Soroptimist “Live Your Dream Awards” luncheon:



What could our collective snarkiness possibly go after on that one? Well, here you have it:



If it makes you feel any better, the event was held at Gresham’s Elks Lodge, where my dear mother is now in charge of the kitchen. Any time you have lunch with my mom, it comes with a to-do list! There’s no such thing as a free lunch, my friend!

Look, like I said, I get a chuckle out of these, and I am well aware that sometimes people just need a venue to vent their frustrations. All I want is for us to also give ourselves the opportunity to pause from time to time and reflect on the exceptional community we are building together.

We have something extremely special in Gresham. We have one of the most diverse communities in Oregon, with a broad mix of incomes and livelihoods, where people can attend schools that look like the world and the workforce they’ll someday enter, where they actually stand a chance of meeting a friend who was born in a different country or who prays in a different church, where languages and cultures and food vary widely, but where basic neighborliness still stands a chance. No offense to my colleagues in other communities in the region, but they can’t always say the same in their cities.

Here’s the thing: if we want to be part of the salve that heals our fractured democracy, we have to actively choose to do so each and every day. We have to unite in confronting those who seek



first to divide us, distract us, and depress our collective goodwill. Believe me, if we can hold this together, we can accomplish amazing things.

Gresham has done that. Huge credit goes to my colleagues on the City Council, currently and in the past, who have purposefully treated each other with respect and led first with our hearts for the community. And what has this civility gotten us in the past decade? Well, an awful lot:

Together, we built the Gresham Sports Park.



We built the Downtown Arts Plaza.



We built a beautiful recreation fountain for our children.



We established one of the nation's most innovative Rental Housing Inspection Programs to safeguard the livability and health of some of our most vulnerable residents.





Our Wastewater Treatment Plant became a net energy-producer, one of the first in the nation to do so, saving ratepayers a bunch of money.



We launched a Garage to Storefront program, filling over 225,000 square feet of previously vacant retail space with 144 new or expanding small businesses, all during the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.



We established the Neighborhood Enforcement Team (NET) to work with residents on chronic neighborhood livability and law enforcement issues, put cops on the MAX, launched Citizen Volunteers in Policing, and protected our portion of the Springwater Trail.



We constructed the Rockwood Police Facility. Our Urban Renewal Agency has leveraged \$97 million dollars in private investment, helped establish over 400 new jobs, and generated \$36 million in new tax revenue for public projects that improve the lives of people in the community.



We built the Hogan Butte Nature Park, one of the region's flagship vistas, with sweeping views of our Cascade mountains and the Columbia River Gorge.



We partnered with Friends of the Children, Boys and Girls Club, Family of Friends, Latino Network and the Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center to bring a critical array of children's services to Gresham.





We brought back summer recreation for kids in our parks and built new futsal courts.



We partnered with Multnomah County to deliver services to address homelessness, in part by giving homeless people the dignity of a job to help make their community better.



We funded and launched the most ambitious street maintenance infrastructure plan in the City's 113-year history and are rebuilding our schools.



And we restored Gresham's community festivals, events, arts, and music, generating record attendance and participation, and lots of smiles.



We accomplished all of these things and so many more by staying together. Every single milestone I just mentioned could have been lost to the ether if personalities, grumpiness, and trolls had prevailed. We have a record of outstanding accomplishments because we choose to accomplish them together. Cooperation is not an accident, it's an outcome.

That list of accomplishments shows the power of unity in retrospect, but let's also consider what we have to gain right now and on the very near horizon by working together. Positive developments are happening in every corner of the city, from Rockwood, to Civic Neighborhood, to Downtown.

In Rockwood, we have awesome service providers locating in the Rockwood Community Office, including a Metro East Community Media digital "makers" studio, and Micro Enterprise Services of Oregon.

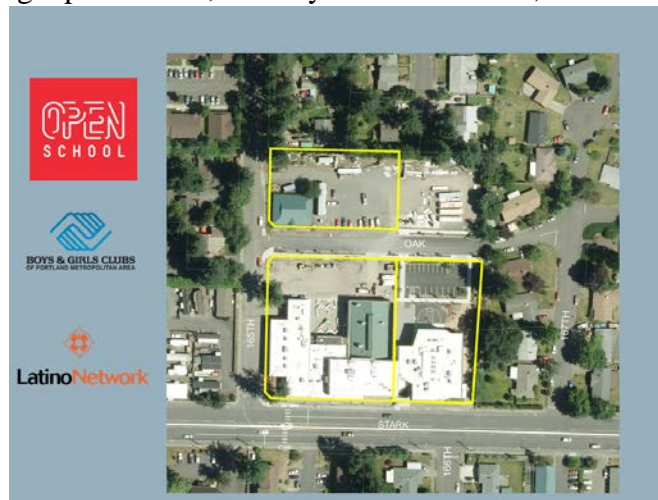




Across the street, the Rockwood Rising project will immediately enhance the urban form of the area with a building for services, a local-vendor market hall, an urban plaza, and new housing.



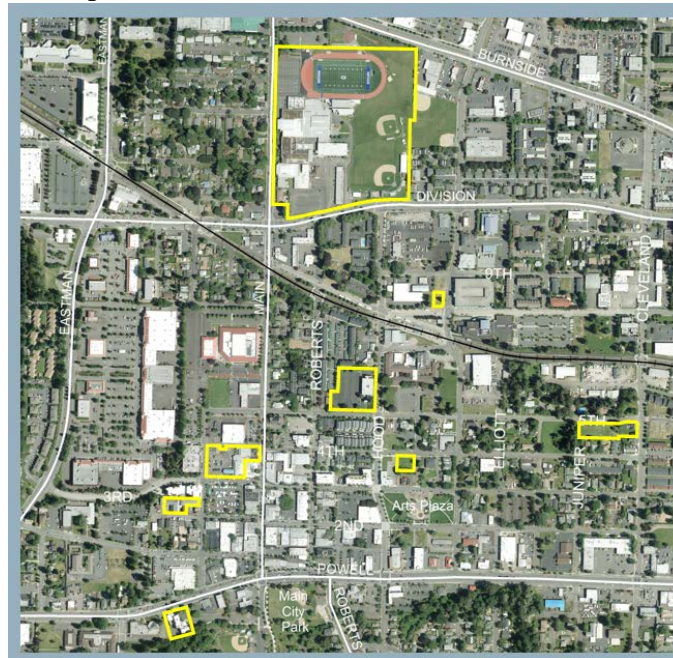
As I mentioned earlier, just west of that we have a campus filled with new services and beautiful new buildings, including Open School, the Boys and Girls Club, and Latino Network.



To the north, Migration Brewing's new Gresham operation is underway—a beautiful building, good jobs, great beer.



Over in Civic, we have four parcels currently underway for development, which will add vibrancy, housing, and economic activity to the neighborhood. Across the street, we have the K-Mart property on Burnside, which is essentially a huge developable land-bank, and will be targeted for vibrant redevelopment on the near horizon.



In our Historic Downtown, we have so many exciting projects underway, which will collectively solidify what has been occurring for years: Gresham's downtown is becoming one of the most vibrant urban neighborhoods in the region.





For starters, Gresham High School is getting a rebuild, but keeping an important architectural nod to our history.



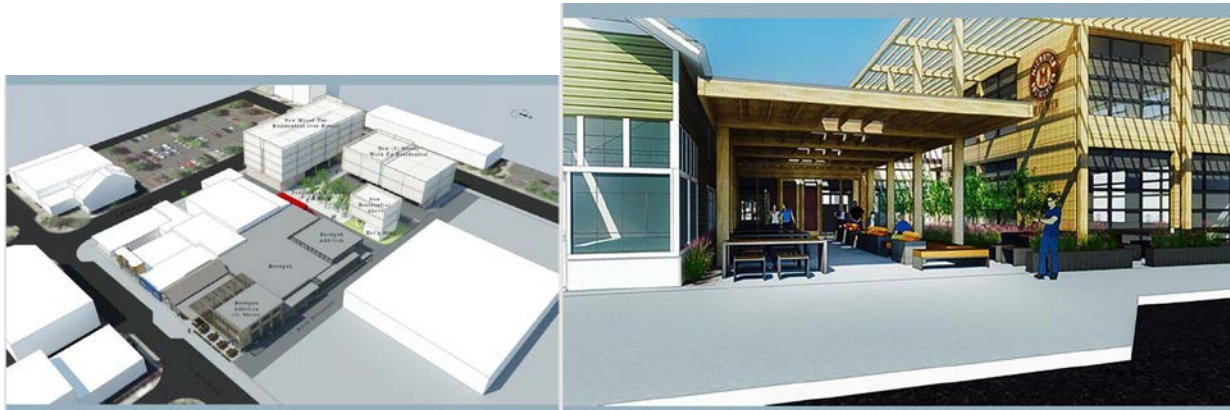
To the south, an innovative housing project is underway, which will bring a Salish-Ponds-like cottage living experience to Gresham's urban downtown core.



To the west, Dr. McKeel's recent redevelopment project, a beautiful and hip new watering hole across from the Library, is set to open very soon.



Directly adjacent, but fronting Main, McKeel also has plans for a larger project that would include a brewery, housing, additional retail, and reinvigorate a large and critical parcel in our downtown.



And further east on 3<sup>rd</sup>, beautiful new urban townhomes are planned for Beech Street, across from the Arts Plaza.



Downtown has become the go-to place for craft beer, ethnic dining, cakes, candy, coffee, ice cream, fro-yo, hip retail, urban living, pho, community festivals, parades, summer days at the fountain, fizzy drinks in fancy bars, art, music, first dates, dog walks, book clubs and bubble tea. It caters to young creatives, red hat ladies, families, foodies, beer geeks, and art enthusiasts alike. Be proud of that. Be proud of how our community is growing up, and in particular, be proud of how we are doing it together.

Self-governance is a huge burden, but it is one we have always welcomed as Americans. We knew the stakes, and we determined that we were up to the challenge of moving our community forward and investing in future generations. Look, I can't always figure out what is going on in our world right now either, but I can tell you that there's a hardworking platoon of volunteers at

the Gresham Historical Society curating our collective story. There's a service project being planned at the Rotary Club. The Bingo numbers are being called for Betty Chisolm and her friends over at the Elks Lodge. A group of amazing women are equipping the next generation at the Soroptimist Club, and a vibrant coffee group is having a heated discussion at Jazzy Bagel.

The point is, we are brimming with wonderful people who make this community great. There are folks who have given their whole lives to this community—some of whom we have lost recently. My former colleague on the City Council, Dave Shields, comes to mind. Dave passed away last month after a long fight with cancer. I learned so much from him over the years. He was firm and fearless, and he was smart enough to take on anybody who dared distract him from having the city he loved from becoming the city it ought to be. Dave was one of the toughest people I've encountered in politics, but his toughness had nothing to do with his ego. He cared about this community as much as he cared about anything, and he led with his heart. Always.

That is all any of us can hope to achieve. Cooperation and mutual respect are so foreign to the political discourse of our day that they seem almost absurd. That's ok. A great American agrarian poet once said, "As soon as the generals and politicians can predict the motions of your mind, lose it." Let's continue to make the ridiculous decision to like each other. To respect our community and to focus on progress. To reject negativity and confront the trolls. Let's aim to leave our mark on the community, like Dave Shields did, so that we can achieve the simple but wise rule of scouting, to leave this place better than we found it.

This room is full of people who are already all-in. You are the reason this job is fun. You are a generation of community leaders who know the value of collective progress, and who have decided that we'll get there together. Thank you for that. Because of you, I can stand here today and say that the state of our city is undivided, and because of that, we are strong.