

Amy Walen, Mayor, City of Kirkland

Kirkland Chamber of Commerce

State of the City Address

January 12, 2017

Thank you for that wonderful introduction. Mayor McBride advised me that it was a rare privilege to serve as your Mayor, and she was so right. It has been my great honor to have been chosen by my colleagues on the Council to be your Mayor and it is my privilege to be with the Chamber of Commerce to deliver the State of the City Address.

But before I begin, on behalf of the City Council I want to thank you each of you for selecting Kirkland as the location for your business. Each year that I have been Mayor I have said that the foundation of our community rests on three pillars – *engaged neighborhoods*, *decisive, responsive government*, and *flourishing business*. Your success keeps general taxes low and helps fund police, fire, safe streets and incredible parks. The jobs you create and the services you offer our residents keep Kirkland the best place in the region to live, work, play, and to raise a family.

We know that innovative, creative companies like yours can be successful anywhere. We're deeply grateful that you have made Kirkland your home. This summer I had the pleasure of serving as the Mayor of Munchkin Land in Studio East's Wizard of Oz. Please be assured that as your elected officials, we strive every day to provide the quality of life and the business climate that will truly demonstrate to you that there is no place like home.

In my first State of the City Speech in 2014, I told you that Kirkland was *poised*. In 2015 I told you that Kirkland was *strong*. In 2016 I said Kirkland was *thriving*. Today, I am proud to tell you that in 2017 the state of the City is *blossoming*! Webster's defines blossoming as "a flourishing, healthy condition; the time or period of greatest beauty and artistry." This is a time of grace, for Kirkland.

In 2016 Google opened their gorgeous 180,000 square foot LEED platinum Phase II building, creating space for another 1,000 hi-tech jobs in our city. Right now Kirkland has over 760,000 square feet of retail and commercial space, 750,000 square feet of office space and almost 4500 units of housing in our development services pipeline. These incredible numbers are led by the construction underway at Talon's *Kirkland Urban* project, and CenterCal's *Villages at Totem Lake*. Northwest University is proposing to add 175,000 square feet to better serve its students and the community. At your tables you have a document that summarizes the tremendous growth that is happening all around us. But Kirkland is blooming in more ways than just development. Your businesses are flourishing at a record pace. Today Kirkland has over 9,000 registered businesses with nearly 40,000 employees. Both of these figures are tops in our history. Per capita income is also at an all-time high for the City.

Because we're flourishing, we are investing. We've invested in our waterfront business district. The new parking area for downtown employees is scheduled to be completed by June. Pay by Phone for parking will be available at more and more spaces. Thank you Councilmember Sweet. We are expanding capacity at the marina and installing a Marina cam so that visitors can see how much space is available, from anywhere. Thank you Councilmember Nixon. We moved the Totem Lake Park to the front of the line for improvement, to match the timeline of the redevelopment of the Village at Totem Lake. Thank you Deputy Mayor Arnold. We put public safety first, prioritizing the recruiting and hiring of police officers and state of the art equipment for our firefighters. I'm so proud of our team at City Hall and their customer service initiative, and the resulting service-oriented redesign of city hall. We are investing, while our strong, conservative financial policies have maintained our AAA credit rating, replenished reserves, and our Price of Government will drop to an all-time low of 3.3%, well below the "best in class" cost of 5%. Thank you Councilmember Asher.

Those who came before us loved Kirkland and invested in it. They built parks and unique neighborhoods, they protected the lake, and they preserved downtown Kirkland on the lake as our living room. We have a responsibility to take care of what they built and continue the legacy, continue to protect and foster our precious home.

Kirkland is blossoming as never before. Mission Complete! I could end my speech right here. Some of you might be very happy if I did! Restoring a booming economy and quality of life is why I ran for City Council in 2009. What more is there to accomplish? While I won't end the speech I will pause it. I will pause it so that we can all take some time and count our blessings. Noted author and clergyman Henry Ward Beecher wrote "Gratitude is the fairest blossom which springs from the soul." Our blessings are overflowing here in Kirkland. Let us be thankful for them and never take them for granted. There are so few communities around the country or in the world where we feel as safe, and feel "at home", as we do in Kirkland.

But the mission is not complete if the success is not sustained. How do we handle growth (and we are the fastest growing metro in the country, and the hottest housing market) without letting it overwhelm us, or cost us the small-town feel that makes Kirkland so unique? And the community is not complete until every member is in a "flourishing, healthy condition." Despite our success, we're not there yet. The next tasks then are to grow gracefully and help all members of our society to flourish.

How do we overcome these challenges? The same way we got here. It was not simple or easy, but it was also no accident. We got here by following the old adage "Plan your work and work your plan. This phrase is documented as being used in church sermons all the way back to the 1880s. I won't preach to you today, but interestingly enough, Proverbs 21:5 – says that "good planning and hard work lead to prosperity." So divine intervention is helped by human preparation and execution.

Since 2011, the City Council has adopted City-wide work plans in order to accomplish the ten Council goals designed to improve the quality of life in our City. At your tables you

have a sheet that lists the Council goals on one side and each of the City Work Program elements adopted since 2011 on the other. So as you can see, we planned the work. And then we worked the plans. If it's on the work program, it's given both policy and financial priority by the City Council and City staff. We've invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the plans. And the results speak for themselves.

But remaining a world class city means you never stop improving, never stop working hard, and never lose the fire to make things better for all members of your community. We will not stay a prosperous society unless we help everyone to blossom. The City Council will tackle this simple little challenge on February 3, at our annual retreat. We will set a new plan that lives up to our vision statement that *"Kirkland is one of the most livable cities in America. We are a vibrant, attractive, green and welcoming place to live, work and play."*

Because there is no more fundamental duty of a government then protecting the health and safety of our residents, we will review plans for the renovation of Fire Station 25, the construction of new Fire Station 24, and the siting of new Fire Station 27 in partnership with Evergreen Health.

We will determine how best to involve our neighborhoods and businesses in a move to Community Policing as called for in our Police Strategic Plan. We know that we must be vigilant in protecting the relationship of deep trust between our community and our police, which sadly, so many cities and towns have lost.

We'll discuss the Cross Kirkland Corridor Master Plan implementation that will build connections throughout our city.

To respond to the tremendous growth in housing and jobs, we will prioritize the funding of new capital investments to support growth, especially in the Totem Lake Urban Center and Downtown. In December we dedicated over 90 million dollars to multi-modal transportation projects and another 15 million in park renovation and expansion. But more must be done.

To connect Kirkland with the region we'll design partnerships with Sound Transit and the State Department of Transportation so that I-405 improvements and ST3 services provide mobility options that truly respond to the needs of Kirkland businesses and residents. We are so fortunate to welcome Councilmember Pascal to the Council, who is an expert in transportation issues.

These are some of the ways we will initiate planning to grow gracefully and sustain our success. But Jane Addams, the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931 said "The good we secure for ourselves is precarious and uncertain until it is secured for *all* of us and incorporated into our common life." So that is the purpose of the next potential initiatives we evaluate at the retreat: to secure good not just for ourselves but for *all*.

The Council started this task by making our highest commitment ever in human services grants to help those most in need, and we established for the first time ever a full time Human Services Commission. At the retreat we'll explore how they can guide us to most effectively invest these dollars to change lives for the better.

Next we will partner with A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) and local churches to construct a permanent women and family shelter in Kirkland. In our recently adopted budget the Council dedicated a record amount of 830,000 dollars to the ARCH trust fund for housing. I want to thank our City Manager, Kurt Triplett for his leadership on the board of ARCH. This city, all of us, took the lead, by committing another 850,000 for the shelter. We thank Councilmember Marchione for her leadership in reminding us, that in one of the most robust economies in the nation, no women or child on the eastside should ever sleep in the cold.

But we must do even more than that. Housing for the homeless and housing affordability impact all walks of life and affect people of all ages, incomes and abilities. To remain a complete community we must provide housing to the teachers who guide our children through school, the artists who inspire us, the baristas who know just how we like our coffee, and the friendly service advisors working in the lane at your local Ford store. So many of my dearest friends are reaching retirement age. I feel so strongly, that the Contreras', the Dicks, the Silvernales, those who have made Kirkland their lifetime home, regardless of income, should be able to afford to retire securely in our fair City. I love my nephew Josh. But when he finishes college I want him to live *near* me, not *with* me. And he shouldn't have to have to lead a hi-tech start-up through an IPO to make that a reality. If we cannot find ways to house the homeless, house our parents and house our children, we will have failed. This year the Council will be calling for a Housing Strategy Plan created by our community, for our community. We will be looking to the Chamber of Commerce, the Kirkland Alliance of Neighborhoods, our partners in the faith community, service providers like Attain Housing and Hopelink, Hallmark Realty, Keller Williams, Windermere and many more to unite with the City and create an action plan for affordability. I urge you to join us. We can, and should, solve the problem of housing together. Lives depend on it.

Last year, I spoke to you about civility, after some very difficult conversations we had in 2015. This year, we should think about how we can preserve Kirkland as an inclusive and welcoming community. We have been asked to restate our commitment to justice. At the January 3 Council meeting I issued a proclamation that set forth our ideals. Kirkland believes in the dignity, equality and constitutional and civil rights of all people. And we will protect them. Our adopted vision statement for the City says "Civic engagement, innovation and diversity are highly valued. We are respectful, fair, and inclusive." A copy of the full proclamation is at your tables. But words without actions are empty. In 2017 the Council will launch a community conversation to bring these words to life and to identify specific action steps that demonstrate that Kirkland is a welcoming community for everyone.

Last year I gave this speech before President's Day and quoted many of the leaders of our country. Presidents can be a great source of inspiration to listen to the better angels of our

nature and to build a better world. I would like to conclude with a final quote from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. "This world of ours... must avoid becoming a community of dreadful fear and hate, and be, instead, a proud confederation of mutual trust and respect.

Kirkland is already a bastion of mutual trust and respect. Please join us in preserving this proud local confederation. Join us in keeping inclusivity and civility at the forefront in Kirkland. Join us as we strive to create a complete community, where every soul can blossom. Together we will accomplish even more remarkable things and keep Kirkland the most livable city in America. Thank you.