



## The State of the City Address

As presented by Mayor James Bernard

on Tuesday, September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Thank you very much, I'm happy to be here, and I thank the Milwaukie Rotary for inviting me here to talk with you all about the state of our City.

This is my seventh time addressing this group as Mayor of Milwaukie and over the years I've used this opportunity to talk about the projects we've accomplished and the projects that lay ahead, and by doing so, I try to provide a sense of how our City is doing. That's going to be my approach today, and when I'm done, I'm confident that you'll agree, that the state of our City is strong ... very strong.

I think a good way to get a sense of where we are and how we're doing is to look at how things were back when I made my first address. Not many would argue the Milwaukie of 2001 is much different than the Milwaukie of today. We've got a new McLoughlin Boulevard, our Riverfront looks different, our Downtown is a much different place, and we have new retail developments out by the Milwaukie Marketplace and off of King Road. We've created a streets program to protect the investments we've made in our

infrastructure and last month City Council passed an alignment for Light Rail that's right for our City and the region.

Right now four of our schools are getting major facelifts and we're in the middle of an innovative planning process with a world-renown design firm that will create a new vision for our South Downtown.

We continue our efforts to build Milwaukie Riverfront Park, and today I'm excited to introduce the City's new "Kellogg for Coho" initiative that will return the Lake to its natural state as a Creek, and by doing so, will restore fish habitat and bring more people into the south end of our Downtown by creating new access to Kellogg's banks.

These programs, the kinds of changes they bring about, they don't come overnight - progress is often times gradual, especially when it comes to government -but what I think is important to point out is that even though these kinds of changes come slowly, they have come about and do come about because our citizens, staff and business community have provided constant attention and energy to keep our City moving forward. It is because of these people and

their efforts that we are building a momentum in Milwaukie that is picking up speed - a Milwaukie that continues to evolve and grow with the rest of the region while still maintaining that small town feel that our new and long-time citizens value so much.

Let me start off by updating you on some of the projects you might already be familiar with.

As many of you probably know we just finished work on King Road. The project covered three-quarters of a mile and involved a complete reconstruction of King Road from the sub base up, from curb to curb. The cost of the project was \$800,000 and was funded through the Street Surface Maintenance Program Council passed in January of '07. I mention this particular project because it's the poster child of the Streets Program - a Program we can all be really proud of.

Two years ago staff recognized our streets were falling apart - a public asset valued at \$65 million. Staff put together a program to raise enough money to protect this asset and we went out to the

people to get their support. Matter of fact we came here to talk to you all. Our citizens recognized the need, were willing to support the program, and as a Council we passed it. The King Road project is proof that this program is hard at work and is just one of three projects that are being completed this summer. A pair of projects were completed in the 2006 construction season and we've got more than a dozen projects prioritized for the next five to six years.

What I think is impressive about this effort is that like all communities in the region, we saw a glaring need to help our streets. We also recognized that help wasn't coming. So, as a community, we helped our selves.

In a similar way, in 2006 the voters of our community passed a bond measure to raise money to significantly expand and improve our school district's schools and athletic facilities. That money is also working hard in Milwaukie.

On September 12<sup>th</sup> Milwaukie High will celebrate the grand opening of the school's new 8-lane track and all-weather field at its first

home football game. On-going renovations include an addition to the performing arts center, new performing arts classrooms, a renovation of the girls' locker room and other upgrades that will be complete in Spring 2009.

Lots of work is going on over at Rowe Middle School. Renovations there include a gymnasium expansion, a complete remodel of the locker rooms, a new choir room, fire sprinklers throughout the building, new bus and parent drop-offs areas, additional parking, and upgrades of flooring, heating, lockers, white boards, and paint. That project will be completed in September of 2009.

Linwood Elementary is getting a new gymnasium, a new library and computer lab, and four new classrooms. Major renovations include rest rooms, kitchen storage, flooring, paint, heating, ventilation, and fire sprinklers. That project will be completed in the spring of 2009.

And finally, and probably most dramatic, an entirely new Ardenwald Elementary School is being constructed to replace the original

building that was built in 1924. The new school was designed with input from the community to retain the style and character of the old school, and it's set to open in September 2009 to service 550 students in kindergarten through sixth grade.

A lot of people will tell you that schools make up the backbone of a community. Thanks to the hard work of the North Clackamas School District, we're strengthening ours.

Remember when I said earlier that change is often gradual? As much as we wish it weren't, and as much as we're try to speed it along, that's the case when it comes to the development of Milwaukie Riverfront Park.

But progress is being made. As we have in previous years, we continue to budget money to fund incremental improvements that bring us closer to our goal. We have an incredible plan in place, and believe me, gaining approval of that plan was no small feat.

Through the hard work of the Riverfront Board and JoAnn Herrigel of Community Services, in the years to come we will have a

Riverfront Park that will rival any other that's on the Willamette.

Plans include a floating boat dock, an amphitheater, bike and pedestrian trails and a boat ramp.

Staff will continue pursuing grants to build this park. It's going to take time, but we will build this park, and when we're done, it will be the pride of Milwaukie.

This past July City Council passed a Locally Preferred Alternative for Portland to Milwaukie Light Rail. The LPA defines the light rail route and its terminus and station locations. The LPA we passed is the same alignment endorsed by all of the jurisdictions along the alignment, which includes Portland, Oregon City, Clackamas County, Metro and TriMet. The alignment is now being studied as part of the Final Environmental Impact Statement, which is required for federal funding.

The alignment is 7.4 miles long and joins the light rail system that's being finished up in Downtown Portland. The alignment would head into the South Waterfront area, cross the Willamette on a new

bridge over to the OMSI area, move down through southeast Portland along the Tillamook Branch where it will enter Milwaukie's North Industrial Area. The line will come through town next to the tracks behind the Portland Waldorf School and Milwaukie Lumber to a station at Lake Road, then cross Kellogg Lake and head south along McLoughlin Boulevard to a park and ride facility at Park Avenue.

Once completed Metro estimates the alignment will put more than 22,000 households and 85,000 employees within walking distance of one of the new stations and will add up to 25,000 light rail trips each day. Construction could begin in 2011 and you could board the new MAX line in 2015.

The passing of this alignment marks a huge step for Milwaukie and the region. It's been a long, often times difficult, road to get to this point. But thanks to a public process that has been going on longer than I've been Mayor and has drawn in the thoughts and ideas of hundreds and hundreds of Milwaukie citizens, we've arrived at a light rail project we can fully support.

I'm not going to tell you that the support for this alignment is unanimous. Anyone familiar with Light Rail's history in Milwaukie would call me crazy - to put it nicely - to suggest that. But I am completely confident that through a lot of hard work and citizen outreach we are planning a transportation tool that will be a great asset to our community when it opens, and even greater asset in the future as more people move to our region.

We've still got a lot of work to do, but I'm equally confident our staff understands what's at stake and what the community's concerns are regarding the introduction of Light Rail into our community. Security is a concern for all of us, and thanks to the hard work of our former Police Chief, Larry Kanzler, I think we have a great roadmap to follow to create a safe and secure alignment in Milwaukie. And our Community Development Director Kenny Asher has already sat down with TriMet's eastside design team to talk about how Light Rail will look here in Milwaukie, and in particular, to talk about the design of the Lake Road station and surrounding area so we make sure it's welcoming and comfortable.

I'm excited to begin this new phase of work, and I'm proud I was Mayor when Milwaukie made this landmark decision to bring light rail to our community.

With a station location at Lake Road, Light Rail is central to the South Downtown Planning process that the City is currently undertaking with the guidance of the Center for Environmental Structure. I don't know how much you all know about CES, at first I wasn't very familiar with who they are or what they do, but let me tell you, having CES doing work here in Milwaukie is like having Michael Jordan playing varsity for Milwaukie High School.

CES is a world-renown design firm that concentrates on how people relate to spaces and is dedicated to learning what a community has and wants way before it ever puts pencil to paper to rough out a design.

Last month CES came before Council and reported the findings of the 34 individual interviews CES staff held with Milwaukie citizens,

almost all of which lasted more than hour. As they walked the Downtown, the interviews focused on describing what downtown elements citizens wanted to protect, enhance, or reproduce in other areas of Downtown.

This kind of work is at the heart of the CES approach - taking great pains to really understand a place and its people. Learning directly from the people themselves about how they want to see their City grow, and then taking that information and creating a design language that will produce the kinds of change people want.

Some of the conclusions drawn from this work are that the basic concept of creating a plaza at the south end of town is a good one, that the tree-lined lot across from City Hall should be protected, and that restoring Kellogg Lake to a creek and enhancing access to the natural area would be a great asset, which brings me to my next point.

Today I'm excited to announce the Kellogg-for-Coho Initiative, a broad-based effort that will restore Kellogg Creek for native Coho

salmon and other threatened fish species and at the same time will support the City's downtown revitalization efforts by connecting parks and public space with bike trails and pedestrian paths.

Located in the southern portion of downtown Milwaukie, the project will replace the Kellogg Lake Bridge and remove the Kellogg Lake dam, opening seven miles of riparian habitat in the Kellogg/Mt. Scott Creek watershed.

Removal of the dam will allow construction of a new bridge to support bike and pedestrian options between downtown Milwaukie, Robert Kronberg Park, and the planned Riverfront Park. Federal partners have committed \$1.2 million in funds for a new bridge design and to study biological and transportation benefits, and the City of Milwaukie has committed more than \$100,000 toward the effort.

Additional nonprofit and foundation partners are currently being sought, and the City is hoping to enlist the help of many other groups and individuals working to improve the Kellogg/Mt. Scott

creek watershed. The project's planning and design will continue through 2011, with construction forecasted for 2011 and 2012.

In addition to projects like this one, Light Rail and the South Downtown planning effort, I think there are other projects that are just as important in creating this momentum in Milwaukie I've been talking about.

The City wasn't planning on having a Milwaukie Daze celebration this year - there just weren't enough people stepping up to help plan it and make it happen. But when the call went out to rescue this great City tradition, Alicia Hamilton and Tamara Huber responded and put together a wonderful event. They organized the parade, enlisted the volunteers - including the dozens of Rotary volunteers who were so instrumental in the effort - and got the word out to the community. There were more than 600 entries in the Parade, and it was a great example of that "small town feel" we love so much here in Milwaukie.

And in true Milwaukie fashion, others followed Alicia and Tamara and built on top of their efforts. Thanks go to Raevon Day and her daughters Jodi and Brea for organizing the games over at the Waldorf School, Tom Hogan for organizing the Poetry Picnic at Ledding Library and Ed Zumwalt for coming through once again for putting together yet another spectacular fireworks display.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Brendan Eiswerth for his tireless efforts in building and managing what many consider Milwaukie's single greatest asset - its Sunday Farmers Market. He and I began the Market a decade ago with the intention of creating a place where people could come together, talk, and get to know one another. We wanted to create community. I think we've done that, and Brendan has managed an incredible roster of vendors that has put our Market among the top of the region. Thanks to Brendan, and it's been incredibly gratifying working with you to build and care for our Market.

You see, a community can have great projects and policies, but without people like Alicia, Tamara, Ed and Brendan, to push them

along and to providing the momentum to keep them going you really just have a bunch of ideas or words on a page. We are so lucky to have a staff and a citizenry who care as much as they do about Milwaukie - people who value its past, believe in its potential, and are willing to do the hard work to get things done.

It's been an honor serving as this City's Mayor for the past seven years, and it gives me great pleasure to report to you today, that the State of our City is strong.

Thank you.