

## **State of the City 2025**

Thank you for joining us as we present the State of the City of Roseburg in January 2025. Thank you to the City Council, City staff, businesses, nonprofits and residents of our cherished city here tonight.

I want to thank City Manager Nikki Messenger for your leadership, hard work and devotion to the city. And I want to thank City staff – not only for your labor, but for your talent, expertise and dedication. We are lucky to have the best local government employees in Oregon – your commitment to serving our town really shows. I can't thank all of you enough, and I ask everyone listening tonight to go out of your way to thank City staff this year.

I also want to thank Councilors and Commissioners who generously volunteer their time. That includes our newest Councilors, Katie Williams and Zack Weiss, who are downtown business owners. **Welcome!** And thank you to Councilors David Mohr and Patrice Sipos, who served the community until December 31.

Roseburg marked a major milestone late last year: The Council approved using \$2.35 million in state grant funds to support Umpqua Community College's effort to open the Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center.

The Council's support came after a decade of community collaboration on a vision to tackle rising shortages of healthcare professionals and medical training in rural Oregon. Under a City-UCC partnership, the project is blazing ahead so the college can launch five new academic programs on campus this year.

That's just one project that will make a major difference in our town for years to come, and I'm proud of everyone's efforts to reach this point.

We've also made strides to address homelessness. In late 2023, we opened the City's first low-barrier group emergency shelter with wraparound case-management services at the renovated Gary Leif Navigation Center, operated by United Community Action Network. Last year, the center connected dozens of people with stable housing -- sometimes reuniting them with family -- and the City provided \$116,605 to support congregate shelter for up to 35 people and 10 "sleeping pods" that can sleep two. This is one way we're showing Roseburg cares about the most vulnerable people in our community.

Now that 2024 and elections are behind us, Roseburg is poised to start a new year and a new era as we embark on the next quarter century in 2025. What will we – and our children and grandchildren, our friends and neighbors, and the new residents who move here – remember from this time?

I'd like each one of us to make our individual best effort to come together and truly collaborate for the good of our beloved city. That takes hard work, open communication and trust in each other.

It's tempting – and easy – to let personal differences divide us. Instead, I'm sharing a message of unity for a community that's already proven it understands the meaning of the saying, "To go fast: Go alone. To go far: Go **together**." Because together, we can accomplish so much more for Roseburg.

### **Here are additional highlights of what we accomplished last year:**

- To address a housing shortage, staff is committed to an urban growth boundary swap OKed by the Council and County Commissioners to enable critically needed home construction in the Charter Oaks area. The flat land is on the water system's main service elevation and has roadways and waterlines – making it easier and more cost-effective to develop. While several neighbors objected to the Charter Oaks land's inclusion, staff is planning sewer improvements with the sanitary authority and will keep working with the state until winning approval.
- Also, nearly 400 apartments have been built in the Diamond Lake Urban Renewal District since 2019 after the City developed a construction incentive known as a systems development charge buydown program. In 2024, 105 units were completed at Ash Springs using the incentive. The City's housing needs analysis shows we're ahead of the curve on multi-family housing;
- Roseburg addressed homelessness using a multi-pronged, collaborative approach. Last year, Saint Joseph Catholic Church and St. George Episcopal Church stepped up to provide warming and cooling centers. Saint Joseph's and UCAN will team up again this winter on an overnight warming shelter, and St. George's will offer a new daytime warming center and emergency supplies for those who can't or won't use the overnight shelter;
- In September, the Homeless Commission learned nonprofit shelters offer 360 beds and five family units and, soon, three homes for homeless youth. The Roseburg Rescue Mission, providing 233 of those beds, has never turned anyone away for lack of space, and UCAN offers 95 of those beds;

- Adapt continues to run the Roseburg Sobering Center – a safe alternative to sobering up in jail or the hospital;
- Mercy reopened a behavioral health unit with 12 beds for short-term stabilization, and Adapt soon breaks ground on a Diamond Lake Boulevard treatment campus;
- Homeless Liaison Officer Josh Chavez makes a difference not just for Roseburg Police, the City and our parks, but for homeless campers who find their first “glimmer of hope” that they can overcome addictions and get off the street in the Officer’s compassion and persistence that it’s never too late to turn their lives around;
- A U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Grants Pass v. Johnson case gives cities flexibility to address chronic public camping offenders, who previously faced only fines many never paid. In late September, the City transitioned into new camping violation penalties, and bans on weapons or tools on City property, including parks. Police have found campers’ behavior does not change without consequences. Those convicted of violations now have stronger incentives to seek help with housing instability or face fines and jail time;
- A reorganized Municipal Court is playing a key role in holding illegal campers accountable;
- Police partnering with retailers on prosecution have shrunk the number of stolen shopping carts in parks and waterways;
- Police, who were hit with five retirements in two years, are increasing recruitment and retention through innovations including a 32-hour workweek for Patrol;
- Staff won substantial federal and state grants for capital improvements and programs, including \$750,000 to replace aging Umpqua Valley Tennis Center courts and \$667,000 to expand Brown Park for universal access; \$2.26 million to extend Roseburg Airport’s taxiway and \$234,804 for backup power there; plus numerous library grants;
- Downtown is thriving thanks to businesses, residents, innovators and City support, which includes supporting the farmers market move downtown in November and UCC’s efforts to develop student housing in renovated historic buildings;
- The City sponsored flower baskets, holiday lights and the Neewollah Parade to make downtown more festive. The “Neewollah” Halloween tradition started in Kansas in 1919 and Roseburg in 1933. The parade’s been held here every year except during World War II and COVID. We’re now believed to have America’s longest-running Neewollah celebration;
- Last summer, the City welcomed young Japanese sister city visitors and took part in City Hall Selfie Day.

## Administration Department

The City Manager, Recorder, Human Resources Director, Communications Specialist and two Management Assistants provide vital services to residents, businesses, the Mayor, Council and others.

**City Manager Nikki Messenger** guides the management team in optimizing operations and tackling Council goals. She strengthened relationships with community partners to collaboratively solve multifaceted challenges and address future needs involving workforce development, housing, childcare, new educational opportunities, homelessness, addiction and mental health.

In 2024, we welcomed new **City Recorder Amy Nytes**, who serves as the elections officer and oversees citywide records retention; public records requests; public bidding processes; ordinance preparation; franchise agreements and City contracts, leases and liens.

**Human Resources Director John VanWinkle** also serves as the Risk Manager and Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator. He troubleshoots insurance questions and ensures policies and contract language protect the organization and taxpayers’ investment. Last year, 10 employees were promoted and 23 new employees were welcomed. Our hardworking and dedicated staff of 159 full-time employees include 70 who’ve worked here at least 10 years, 15 for over 20 years, 12 over 25 years and three who’ve been here over 30 years!

**Communications Specialist Suzanne Hurt** provides the community with accurate information and keeps people engaged in their hometown. Overseeing the City Connection and social media, she grew the City’s followers to 11,370 by Monday, Dec. 30. Stay informed by [signing up for the quarterly e-newsletter](#) and following the City on [Facebook](#), [Nextdoor](#) and X.

## Community Development Department

**Community Development Director Stuart Cowie** and his staff worked on urban growth boundary projects,

housing, transportation, parking, FEMA floodplain mandates, code enforcement and economic development. Staff processed 24 land use applications and 340 site review applications, including 137 commercial sites and 45 new residential units. Completed construction includes McClendon's Old Fashioned Meats on Harvard Avenue, Ash Springs apartments, and Roseburg High School's new softball field. A Holiday Inn Express is being built on Mulholland Drive.

Two major projects to amend the urban growth boundary are underway. One would swap steep, hilly property currently located inside the boundary for flat, easier-to-develop property outside the boundary in Charter Oaks. A second project proposes expanding the boundary so the City can annex 50 more acres of Sunshine Park, gain land-use jurisdiction and build mountain bike and hiking trails using a \$150,000 state grant.

By mid-November, the City responded to 202 private-property nuisance complaints -- resolving 79% of those -- and cleaned 9.16 tons from the 14 worst offenders. Also by mid-November, City and County work crews removed nearly 184 tons, or 405,231 pounds, of garbage from 1,287 camps at 27 locations -- mainly parks and under bridges -- at a cost of \$87,602.

## Finance/IT/Municipal Court

For the 31st year in a row, the Finance Department led by **Director Ron Harker** earned the Government Finance Officers Association Award for "Excellence in Financial Reporting" for the 2023 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

Other highlights include maintaining the City's credit rating as a high-quality, low-risk Aa3 and adopting the 2024-25 Budget in full compliance with Oregon budget law and City policies, including the General Fund balance reserve.

## Library

Roseburg Public Library, led by **Director Kris Wiley**, completed six years of operations. Highlights included 6,700 cardholders and 260 programs attended by 7,400 people. Staff gained insight with a community library-use assessment and hosted "Americans and the Holocaust: A Traveling Exhibition for Libraries."

The Summer Reading Program had 400 youth and 61 adults participating. Since the local Dolly Parton program began in 2019, 64,000 free books have been mailed to 2,800 children up to age 5.

## Public Works Department

Led by newly promoted **Director Ryan Herinckx**, the department's mission is to provide quality public infrastructure at the lowest life-cycle cost. Its divisions encompassing Parks and Recreation, Maintenance, Streets and Storm Drainage, Facilities, Engineering, Administration, Airport, and Water deliver a range of services, mainly behind the scenes.

Parks staff have been working with i.e. Engineering on final design of the Stewart Park Tennis & Pickleball Courts project. In 2024, the water plant treated 1.8 billion gallons of water – an average 4.94 million gallons daily.

A standby generator was installed at the airport to power runway lighting, navigational aids and fuel dispensing in an extended outage. Engineering staff completed 232 site reviews, which are up 15% from 2023. Staff completed delivery of \$8.3 million in capital improvement projects and oversaw many private construction projects.

## Fire Department

Last year, personnel led by **Chief Tyler Christopherson** responded to over 7,100 emergencies -- demonstrating steadfast commitment to community safety. Of those, 126 were fires, 4,200 were emergency medical calls and 794 were public service incidents.

The department welcomed Deputy Fire Marshal Ben Simons and celebrated three firefighters completing probationary training. Prevention staff performed 306 in-person inspections and found 968 code violations. They focused on high-hazard, high-occupancy schools, adult and childcare facilities, hotels/motels, large retail stores and assembly halls.

Training included live drills on wildland fire tactics and urban interface strategies using Reservoir Hill and search-and-rescue at the old Elmer's restaurant site. Firefighters completed over 6,000 hours of training, which included electric vehicle fire suppression, elevator rescues, heavy equipment operations and vehicle extrications. Firefighters and apparatus assisted at the Battle Mountain Fire in Ukiah.

## Police Department

Police led by **Chief Gary Klopfenstein** responded to over 35,000 service calls and took more than 6,500 reports last year. Three Officers took well-earned retirements. Fortunately, RPD got 244 applications, interviewed 64 applicants and hired three recruits, with several now undergoing background checks. Police also hired a second Community Service Officer.

Homeless Liaison Officer Josh Chavez posted over 1,300 camp cleanup notices on public property by early December, and 364 prohibited camping citations were issued through September. Weekly camp cleanups are efficient thanks to collaboration between Police, the Code Compliance Officer, Parks and Public Works.

Roseburg's Prohibited Camping Ordinance update means convicted offenders are now fined \$100 for a first violation, \$250 for a second and get up to 7 days in jail for subsequent violations to encourage them to seek support to address their lack of housing and stability. Since changes took effect Thursday, Sept. 26, the Municipal Court Judge has convicted 100 people for prohibited camping -- with 32 people convicted twice, five convicted three times and one convicted four times. Police focus on prohibited camping along riverbanks and other areas vulnerable to environmental damage and places where children gather.

In September, Oregon House Bill 4002 once again criminalized possession of "user" amounts of illicit drugs. Officers have since made several arrests for possession of controlled substances. Police continue partnering with Adapt on the Mobile Crisis Team, which responded to 1,945 mental health crises by October -- a 35% increase. They diverted many people from jail or the ER.

## Looking Ahead

Here's what's expected in 2025:

- **Downtown:** Last spring, the abandoned former Rite Aid store and adjacent vacant Safeway property moved into local ownership for the first time in decades when the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians bought both properties. City staff and the Tribe are discussing how they might work together on developing the properties to help transform downtown.
- **Downtown Business:** With renewed interest, downtown businesses are reapplying to the state's Oregon Main Street Network with Thrive Umpqua's assistance.
- **Housing:** Efforts to increase housing include UCC students moving into dorms inside the renovated historic Newberry Company building. Also, we expect completion of 13 townhomes and a house on Thyme Drive, plus seven townhomes on Harrison Street. Once the Charter Oaks UGB swap is approved, we'll begin informing housing developers about the area's potential and obtain infrastructure funding help.
- **Urban Campground:** Staff will continue working with Council to find property, funding and an operator.
- **Council Goals:** We will keep collaborating on priorities that staff and Council hope to accomplish together.
- **Bridge Rehab:** Historic Stewart Park Drive Bridge, also known as the Green Bridge, will soon undergo a \$6.3 million rehab allowing use by modern fire trucks -- with 90% of the project federally financed through the state's Local Bridge Program.
- **Parking:** Staff, ACE Parking and Council are nearing a solution to fund the parking program through a 75/25 split between drivers and businesses and/or property owners downtown and in Laurelwood.
- **Software:** Community Development will launch software for online business registrations and site review applications.

- **Police:** Plan to hire nine sworn Officers and another Community Service Officer.
- **Brown Park:** Construction on a state-of-the-art, universally accessible playground next to Fire Station 2 on Harvard Avenue should begin by fall.
- **Tennis and Pickleball Courts:** The outdoor courts' renovation should seek bids soon, with construction expected to start in mid-May after the high school tennis team's season.
- **Sunshine Park:** If the City can expand its urban growth boundary at Sunshine Park, we can annex the property and build mountain bike and hiking trails to increase recreation and fitness offerings.
- **Airport:** Construction to extend taxiway A should begin in spring.
- **Medical College:** Continue supporting UCC's Southern Oregon Medical Workforce Center.

We've accomplished so much – and we'll keep on tackling these important projects and more by continuing to grow and work together as one Roseburg. Our strength and adaptability shines, leading us into a bright future as we continue to make Roseburg the best small town in Oregon.