

## **State of the City 2026**

Thank you for joining us as we present the State of the City of Roseburg in January 2026. Thank you to the City Council, City staff, businesses, nonprofits and residents.

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

I also want to thank the Councilors and our Commission members who generously volunteer their time. And I want to welcome our newest Councilor, Jason Tate.

City officials accomplished a major feat last year in developing a blueprint for Roseburg's future growth and addressing our housing shortage: After decades, the city has at last adjusted its urban growth boundary to allow new housing construction in the Charter Oaks area. The land could hold nearly 675 new homes — which would be a critical addition to our housing stock that could make a big difference for many individuals, families and local employers.

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

Let's really make this new year count. Let's rely on each other, support each other and truly collaborate for the good of our cherished city. That takes hard work, open communication and trust in each other.

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

- Roseburg Fire, Police and Public Works rallied in response to March flooding of the South Umpqua River and creeks. The Fire Department rescued people and animals, while Public Works and Police shut down flooded and damaged roads, monitored rising waterways and provided other assistance to protect the community and emergency responders during the storm;
- Substantial federal and state grants won by City staff funded major capital improvement projects last year — including the completed outdoor tennis courts renovation, Brown Park's expansion for universal access this spring, Roseburg Airport's completed taxiway extension; and Sunshine Park's trail network expansion;
- The City annexed 50 acres of Sunshine Park to expand its trail network with Roseburg's first mountain bike trails that will be funded with a state grant won by Parks staff;
- The Oregon Department of Transportation oversaw a \$6.3 million project to strengthen historic Stewart Park Drive Bridge, a Great Depression-era steel truss structure. Ninety percent of funding came from the federal government;
- The Urban Renewal Area was expanded to include the former Rite Aid/Safeway properties and the Downtown Parking Garage;
- Umpqua Community College launched advanced medical degree programs under a project envisioned for over 15 years after the City won a \$5 million state grant;
- In a partnership between the City and the United Community Action Network, the Gary Leif Navigation Center has transitioned 34 more people into stable housing situations in 2025.
- The City launched the Roseburg Online Portal for 24-7 internet access to planning and zoning applications, business registrations and code violation complaints;
- The City website domain switched to "roseburgor.gov" on Jan. 1 for increased web security;
- Council chambers' aged audio-visual system was upgraded;
- An overnight warming shelter will operate this winter in a partnership between St. Joseph's Catholic Church and UCAN and a daytime Cooling Resource Center operated at downtown's St. George Episcopal Church last summer;
- The number of hypodermic needles found in parks during camp cleanups is falling after the Council voted against syringe distribution of any kind on City-owned public property;
- Roseburg convicted 205 people for prohibited camping last year. Police focus on prohibited camping in areas vulnerable to environmental damage and places where kids are;
- A new group, Destination Downtown Roseburg, recently applied for status in the Oregon Main Street Program;
- The City sponsored flower baskets, holiday lights and the Neewollah Parade to make downtown more festive. We're now believed to have America's longest-running Neewollah celebration;

- Last summer, the City welcomed sister city visitors from Kuki City, Japan;
- In September, WorldAtlas.com unveiled Roseburg as second on its list of “10 Best Places To Call Home In The Pacific Northwest In 2025.”

## Administration Department

The City Manager, Human Resources Director, City Recorder, Special Projects Coordinator, Communications Specialist, Human Resources Generalist and a Management Assistant 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 initiatives. She strengthened relationships with community partners to collaboratively solve multifaceted challenges and address future needs involving workforce development, housing, new educational opportunities and homelessness.

**City Recorder Amy Nytes**, who serves as the elections officer, strengthened citywide records management practices, supported timely responses to public records requests, ensured organizational compliance across all departments, and oversaw public bidding processes; ordinance preparation; franchise agreements and City contracts, leases and liens. She also helped train staff on the Council Chambers new audio-visual system.

**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. Our hardworking and dedicated staff consists of 155 full-time and 14 part-time employees.

**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 social media followers to 14,000 by Friday, Dec. 12. Stay informed by [signing up for the quarterly e-newsletter](#) and following the City on [Facebook](#), [Nextdoor](#) and [X](#).

In 2025, we added a new **Special Projects Coordinator** position and welcomed **Jennifer Bragg** to the team.

## Community Development Department

**Community Development Director Stuart Cowie** and his staff completed two major urban growth boundary projects, transitioned permit software providers, and hired a new Associate Planner.

Their top accomplishment was working to pass state legislation authorizing Roseburg’s UGB exchange and requiring the state land conservation department to acknowledge boundary changes that swap two difficult-to-develop properties inside the boundary with flat Charter Oaks land outside the boundary. After decades of City effort, the UGB swap will allow up to 673 new homes to be built there.

Staff processed 26 land use applications and 313 site review applications, including 142 commercial sites and 25 new residential units. Completed construction or projects now underway that were permitted by the City include Del Taco’s reopening, Elmer’s Kitchen, the City’s Brown Park expansion as well as the City’s outdoor tennis and pickleball court renovation, Gary Leif Navigation Center storage shed upgrades, Mercy Medical Center upgrades and a mini-storage facility on General Avenue — plus beautiful murals on Lane and Jackson avenues.

Two major projects to amend the urban growth boundary were actually completed last year. The first involved Charter Oaks. The second involves the City annexing about 50 acres of Sunshine Park to gain jurisdiction and build mountain bike and hiking trails using a \$149,000 state grant.

The City is collaborating with the Oregon Department of Transportation on two planning projects to support growth and travel safety. One plan that is expected to be completed by spring will identify needed multi-modal improvements in the Diamond Lake Boulevard/Oregon 138 East corridor. Also underway is a plan to accommodate multi-modal travel needs at the I-5 Exit 124/125 interchanges at Harvard Avenue and Garden Valley Boulevard, and along Garden Valley Boulevard from Stephens Street to Stewart Parkway. The project should conclude this summer.

The department is also involved with efforts to improve the downtown and Laurelwood parking program and make ACE Parking solvent.

Community Development also spearheaded the City's software transition to OpenGov's Roseburg Online Portal to offer online access for planning and zoning applications, business registrations and code complaints.

By mid-November, the City responded to 224 private-property nuisance complaints and cleaned 52.22 tons from 26 private properties. City and County work crews removed nearly 148 tons, or 296,620 pounds, of garbage from 1,538 camps at 33 locations -- mainly parks and under bridges -- at a cost of \$65,281.

## Finance/IT/Municipal Court

For the 32nd 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 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report.

Other highlights include maintaining the City's credit rating as a high-quality, low-risk Aa3 and adopting the 2025-26 Budget in full compliance with Oregon budget law and City policies, including the General Fund balance reserve.

With a 49% case increase in the past two years, Municipal Court restructured operations, which allows the Court to address a case backlog and to streamline operations to promote efficiencies and enhanced customer support.

## Library

Roseburg Public Library, led by **Director Kris Wiley**, remains a destination for reading and lifelong learning. Highlights included 7,000 cardholders, 114,000 checkouts, 215 programs attended by 7,700 people, 3,500 new items and 5,300 computer sessions. The library began updating its five-year strategic plan and expects to complete the project in March.

The library used a "Libraries Transforming Communities" grant from the American Library Association to create new programming for adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities. Staff applied for more funding to continue the work.

The Ford Room's kitchenette was remodeled and its sound system upgraded with Friends of the Roseburg Public Library funds.

The Summer Reading Program had 328 youth and 61 adults participating. Since the local Dolly Parton program began in 2019, 64,000 free books have been mailed to 3,500 children up to age 5 in the Roseburg area.

## Public Works Department

Led by **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.

The City, partnering with Umpqua Valley Tennis Center, completed an exciting \$2.5 million renovation of Stewart Park's outdoor tennis courts. Eleven aging courts were replaced with eight new tennis courts and 10 pickleball courts thanks to a \$750,000 state grant, \$523,000 in City funds and \$1.1 million in matching community funds raised by the nonprofit tennis center.

Brown Park is being renovated with accessible, age-appropriate play structures and a covered picnic area after David and Kelly Trincherro made a generous donation allowing the City to buy adjoining property and Parks staff secured a \$667,000 grant. The expansion envisioned 17 years ago will be completed soon.

Staff are finalizing the design on a project to enhance Sunshine Park's trail network to include Roseburg's first official mountain bike trails. Construction is expected to be completed this spring. Staff also got grant funding for the design of a proposed Fir Grove Sports Field Turf Project.

ODOT supervised Stewart Park Drive Bridge's renovation to accommodate modern fire engines. The project included truss strengthening, pedestrian walkway improvements, new lighting and a resurfaced concrete deck.

In 2025, the water plant treated 1.82 billion gallons of water – an average of 5 million gallons daily.

Roseburg Regional Airport's taxiway was extended 400 feet so larger planes can use the entire runway without having to perform a back-taxi maneuver –improving pilot and plane safety. The City won \$2.58 million in federal and state grants and used only \$68,000 in Airport Capital Improvement funds. Fencing and security upgrades are underway.

## Fire Department

Last year, personnel led by **Chief Tyler Christopherson** responded to over 7,100 emergencies -- demonstrating steadfast commitment to community safety. Of those, 142 were fires, 4,010 were emergency medical calls, 1,052 were public service incidents and 1,896 were miscellaneous.

We welcomed two new firefighters and celebrated three promotions.

During unprecedented flooding in mid-March, our Fire personnel and assisting agencies rescued 23 people, 10 dogs and 2 cats who were trapped by floodwaters that had surrounded their homes and prevented escape.

Prevention staff performed 268 in-person inspections and found 546 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 live fire exercises at a soon-to-be demolished structure. Firefighters completed over 9,000 hours of training, which included electric vehicle fire suppression, elevator rescues, heavy equipment operations and vehicle extrications. We deployed an experienced team and apparatus to the Los Angeles area's Santa Monica Mountains to assist with the devastating Palisades Fire last January.

## Police Department

Police led by **Chief Gary Klopfenstein** responded to over 26,300 service calls and took more than 6,500 reports last year. Community Service Officers handled over 3,500 calls.

Staffing continues to be challenging. They received 211 Police Officer applications, interviewed 60 applicants, hired four Police recruits and have several more moving through the background-check process. However, with two retirements in December 2024 and two resignations in 2025, Police have essentially the same number of Officers as 2024. All but three temporary duty positions have been suspended until staffing levels increase. Police also hired a third Community Service Officer.

The Homeless Liaison Officer posted over 1,900 camp cleanup notices on public property by December 1, and 451 prohibited camping citations were issued from January to December. Weekly camp cleanups are efficient thanks to collaboration between Police, the Code Compliance Officer, Parks and Public Works.

Those convicted of prohibited camping 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. The Municipal Court Judge has convicted 205 people for prohibited camping – 23 people have been convicted at least three times. Police focus on prohibited camping along riverbanks and other areas vulnerable to environmental damage and places where children gather.

Police purchased additional Axon software with tools such as Draft One, which transcribes body-camera audio to generate draft police reports and enables Officers to spend less time on paperwork and more time on proactive policing.

In 2024, Oregon House Bill 4002 recriminalized possession of “user” amounts of illicit drugs. In 2025, Roseburg Police arrested 111 people for Unlawful Drug Possession and our County placed 15 people on Drug Enforcement Misdemeanor probation. Police continue partnering with Adapt on the Mobile Crisis Team, which responded to 1,596 mental health crises by October – an 18% decrease. They diverted many people from jail or the ER.

## Looking Ahead

### Here's what's expected in 2026:

- 1. Charter Oaks:** Staff will work with the Roseburg Urban Sanitary Authority as they create a preliminary plan and explore resources for sanitary sewer improvements to serve the area and facilitate housing construction;
- 2. Stewart Park:** A Master Plan update process will begin this year after community input through a City survey;
- 3. Water System:** The City also will begin updating the Water System Master Plan to pinpoint key improvements to facilitate housing, commercial and industrial development and to maintain a reliable drinking water system;
- 4. Library:** The library expects to complete a five-year strategic plan update in March;
- 5. Council Goals:** The City has hired a facilitator and won a grant to continue collaborating on priorities staff and Council hope to accomplish together;
- 6. Homelessness:** The Council continues exploring effective solutions to address homelessness and prohibited camping — which could include finding property, funding and an operator for an urban campground;
- 7. Gary Leif Navigation Center:** Staff is working with UCAN to improve operations and increase wraparound services to the homeless. The City just ordered two new larger transitional units for more flexibility and temporary housing options thanks to an Umpqua Health Alliance grant;
- 8. Tennis Courts:** A grand opening for the renovated outdoor tennis and pickleball courts will be held soon;
- 9. Brown Park:** A state-of-the-art renovation with universally accessible play structures will be done by summer;
- 10. Sunshine Park:** Construction on an expanded trail network, including Roseburg's first official mountain bike trails, will begin this spring after the project went out for bid January 5;
- 11. Fir Grove:** Staff will work with Umpqua United Soccer Club and other interested groups on field improvement funding, with \$660,000 granted to the City by UHA to address lighting and ADA improvements;
- 12. Downtown:** Destination Downtown Roseburg will continue efforts to unite business owners who want to help downtown flourish and grow, while the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians has gotten multiple grants to begin improving a former Rite Aid building that will be repurposed into a vibrant community asset. Umpqua Community College is moving more programming downtown. UCC is completing renovation of the former Newberry's building now dubbed the Hawks Hideaway — with basement community space, first-floor office and programming space and upper-level student housing. UCC staff previously working out of the Wooley Center are relocating to the Hideaway to start operations in January;
- 13. Housing:** Staff will continue supporting UCC housing expansion and implementing new state laws related to housing production;
- 14. Airport:** Design for a project to rehab Roseburg Regional Airport's runway will begin this spring with fencing and other security upgrades ready for construction. The projects are 90% funded by the Federal Aviation Administration with state help;
- 15. Medical Careers:** The City will continue supporting UCC's efforts to expand medical career pathways.

I'm so proud of all that we've accomplished in the last year — and we simply couldn't have done all of this without working together for the community's greatest good. We'll keep coming together as one Roseburg to tackle important projects like these. Our strength and adaptability shine, leading us into a bright future as we move forward — continuing to make Roseburg the best small town in Oregon.