

GLADSTONE 2020 – State of the City Address

It's a new year....2020! That still sounds so strange! 20 years ago, when the world was going to end because of Y2K, what did we think 2020 was going to be like? Well here we are, in the perfect place to look in all directions. What was in the past, what is going on now, and what does our city's future look like. We finally have a plan...after so many years of making decisions based on what I suspect was a picture drawn on a napkin. So, let's 'engage' our super power and look back on what has been accomplished:

- Our city has a new police chief, John Schmerber. A new fire chief, Rick Huffman...along with new department leadership and a K-9 corps. When fairly distrustful citizens are telling me how happy they are on the direction these two departments are going, I know we've made the right decision.
- The Gladstone Senior Center has returned to full operation, continuing as our community hub, and will be getting an exterior 'Make Over' this year. We will be expanding our generational programs in partnership with the School District.
- The Gladstone City Council has made communicating with the public a priority! We are spreading the word to every home and business via our city newsletter, newspaper coverage, public open houses, social media and other communications channels. We're doing everything short of driving through the streets with a bull horn, so I encourage everyone to look to these official sources for the news. There are five generations in our community and work place now, and to support this diversity, we will continually strive to improve how our folks engage and receive information.
- Our citizens are involved in city business like never before! When having the difficult utility rate discussion last year, the Council followed the advice of hundreds of customers who responded to an open survey. Their preferred option became the City Council's direction. Decisions today are not being made in a vacuum...we want everyone to be part of the respectful discussion. The difficult part is how to engage everyone, instead of just the vocal few.

The physical changes are tangible...and more exciting than ever! There are many projects underway right now...

- The first one, and the one I'm most excited about, is our new Gladstone Civic Center, which will be complete in April of this year. This will house the City Hall and Police Department, replacing our existing building. If any of you have toured our existing building...you know beyond a shadow of a doubt how desperately this was needed! The added benefit is this building will book end our main street and help anchor our downtown revitalization.

- This project is the City's first to be constructed using the streamlined "Progressive Design-Build" approach. I'm told this is out of the box thinking, a novel approach. But really, it's a no-brainer. You bring together a team, from day one, to help design and build the project efficiently, correctly, on-time and on-budget! Wow...I'm not sure why this would be considered cutting edge! I'm happy to say it's working amazingly well.
- Funding for this project is through the Gladstone Urban Renewal Agency, along with full faith and credit notes and cash reserves. No additional property tax dollars are required. The total project cost is \$13 million. I want to remind folks this project was voted on and approved by the citizens of Gladstone.
- This new building is constructed to current seismic standards...that extra margin of safety is critical for our police force and emergency command when a disaster strikes. You will be hearing more in the coming months from me about the need for community preparedness...this building is the first step. You will all be invited to the Grand Opening in April, so tune in to the **city's** communication channels for updates.

Below ground.... well, those changes aren't as obvious, but just as important.

- Gladstone's elected officials are committed to fixing our antiquated and failing infrastructure. Water, sewer, and stormwater systems are in poor to desperate condition due to long deferred maintenance and lack of timely replacement. Folks, we can't kick that can down the road any further! We recently approved a phased in approach to utility rates needed to begin fixing failing pipes, pump stations and storage tanks. These investments are needed to maintain reliable water and sewer services. I know you all want to turn on your faucet and get clean water, flush your toilets and not have to give it a second thought. We're at the point where that wasn't a guarantee any longer...we have to start fixing what has been failing.
- The City of Gladstone received funds from the Clackamas County Community Development Block Grant (the CDBG) to completely reconstruct street and utility work along a 2-block section of E. Clarendon. The work included demolition and construction of streets, sidewalks, ramps and driveways. The utility work included installation of new sanitary sewer, storm drain and water system improvements.
- This past year the city also executed an agreement with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) allowing the city to make thoughtful, and incremental, capital improvements to correct deficiencies and protect the environment. I want to highlight the 'incremental' approach. We could have been required to complete immediate repairs, but the cost would be too big of a burden on our citizens, so a thoughtful incremental approach was considered and approved.

Our 2020 vision also shows the importance of Gladstone's connections to our neighboring communities. In Clackamas County, our cities are inter-dependent. I would love to say we live on a lush, self-sustaining, beautiful island...but that is not the case. Here's what is happening:

- Clackamas County and the City of Gladstone have agreed on a plan to bring a new library to our community! Our employees have been transferred to the County and a Library Planning Task Force is involved with the design and programming phase for a 6,000-sf library to be constructed right here where our current city hall sits. No, we aren't remodeling this building.... we will **TEAR IT DOWN!**
- We are updating our intergovernmental agreements (IGA's) with Water and Environmental Services (WES) and Oak Lodge Water to make sure our utility customers get the best, most economical service. Yes folks, we are at the table! That in itself is a huge accomplishment.
- WES also established a Tri-City Good Neighbor Fund that will help complete projects both in Gladstone and Oregon City that will advance environmental restoration, economic development and community improvement opportunities in a defined area known as the Tri-City wastewater recovery region. The Parks and Rec Board are actively looking at projects that would comply with the requirements.

The outcome of this partnership is to build a greater community together, through strategically agreed upon projects that support our economy, ecology, and the community as a whole.

So, what about the future? We have projects on the horizon that will have a positive and significant impact to our citizens...

- A replacement for the historic Trolley Trail Bridge...allowing pedestrians and bicyclists the opportunity to directly connect to our neighbor, Oregon City; bring people down our main street on a more personal level so they will stop and shop or eat at our local businesses, and connect with the river in ways that haven't been done in a very long time. This project will be paid for with regional transportation funds.
- An affordable housing project, the first in Clackamas County tied to Metro's \$650 million affordable housing bond, is being built in Gladstone! The mission for this fund is to house people who might otherwise be homeless.... our specific project will be for senior citizens with a priority given to Gladstone residents!

We will continue to finalize our housing needs analysis and create a community engagement strategy to find thoughtful solutions for affordable housing.

- We will be replacing our aging underground water, wastewater and storm water infrastructure to provide reliable services and keep streams clean.

- We have received a \$350,000 grant that will enable us to dredge the boat launch at Meldrum Bar Park, where sandbars have made the channel impassable. This is a huge cost for our Parks Dept., and one that would have been impossible if not for the grant.

These aren't dreams, but instead are fully funded projects! We won't be looking down a 20-year can kicking path, but will instead be rolling up our sleeves and getting to work.

Well, we do have some dreams too, of course.

- How about promoting trails and wildlife viewing areas at the Rinearson creek Restoration Area, Gladstone Nature Park and along our rivers;
- Revitalizing our downtown core and providing support to our existing businesses;
- Enhancing our emergency management roles and engaging the community with its preparedness;
- Completing a tourism and branding strategy for Gladstone.... we are so much more than a Pow Wow tree!
- Launching a grass roots corps of community volunteers! If you are interested, see me after the meeting and I'll sign you up!

We are working on all of these and more.

Gladstone's vision for 2020 and beyond are:

Safe
Thriving
Healthy
Highly Qualified
Engaged
Accountable
Livable
Financially Stable
Vibrant
Continually Improving

So, standing at the top of that peak, looking in all directions, we can see we are accomplishing all of these priorities! We can clearly see that 2020 will be remarkable...our BEST YEAR EVER!

As your mayor, I am passionate about the progress we are making and committed to see that progress continue. I am not alone. I am speaking on behalf of my six colleagues on the Gladstone City Council, and 57 dedicated professional staff. We are a team!! And that team also

includes you...the citizens of our city. We are 12,000 strong.... that should be a T-Shirt! In 2020 anything...and everything is possible!

Thank you