



From the office of the *Mayor*

2016 STATE OF THE CITY

Brian Dalton, Mayor

You'll be glad to hear that the Washington Post says that Oregonians are the fastest talkers in the nation. So here we go.

I constantly hear the words love and Dallas in the same sentence. Even our kids say they like it here.

In every single ten-year census since the first one in 1880, Dallas has gained population, averaging 28% population growth each time. Got this from Wikipedia so must be true. Even while losing much of our big industry – Weyerhaeuser, Caterpillar, Tyco – we still gained population. Now we're over 15,000 and climbing with 9 subdivisions in plan review in the last few months.

Good stuff to report.

Our graduation rates are far better than state averages and are the fastest improving in the state. Our dropout rate of 2.75% is about half the national average. Our attendance rate, all schools, is 96%.

Look at our vibrant and thriving churches and non-profit helping agencies; Titus 3, Polk Community Development, James II, Dallas Family Night Out, Polk County Free Medical Clinic, Sable House, Christmas Cheer, our Resource Center and many more working together to provide a culture of caring that is unique in all of Oregon. Thus we have few homeless and those cardboard sign guys – “Will work for food.” Uh, huh.

Though our crime rate is low, our civic engagement is high. Walk out these doors and look at our beautiful downtown.

Our City – capital C – provides quite the spark to our success. We have one of the very lowest tax rates around, but look at what amazing things we do with slim dollars. Pick up our just-published the premier issue of the City Year in Review booklet, unique in Oregon I think. Here are some highlights.

Dallas 2030 Vision. A couple of hundred of our citizens helped shape our Vision of what we want our community look like in 14 years and the City actively roadmaps off this Vision.

We received a \$2,000,000 grant to build our new Senior Center down behind the historic Carnegie library building. Dirt turns in early May.

I know it's hard to get excited about things like I do but we replaced over 1,400 water meters with state-of-the-art radio read units. We can now shut off your water directly from the comfort of City Hall with the touch of a button.

We're working closely with the building owners downtown to help them fix up their historic buildings, both paint and repairs. It's a big year for the fondly remembered Blue Garden when it changed hands to local ownership and is now under advanced restoration with the help of our façade grants. Bob Collins lit up the beautiful Blue Garden neon sign for a big crowd a few days ago and what a great symbol of the success of our town square!

We have two big commercial projects going in North Dallas, the new 32,000 ft.² DHS building by Rite Aid, and the \$28,000,000 expansion of the highly successful Dallas Retirement Village.

The Tyco Building sold and the new American Gas and Technology Company is rehabbing the building and setting up their manufacturing facility. This is a great addition to our community, especially its job prospects.

Our great volunteer Fire Department has seen one of its largest recruit classes in years and continues to modernize with state-of-the-art equipment such as their new big truck. We are one of only 16% of cities in Oregon which provides ambulance service and we do an amazing job literally saving lives.

Our Aquatic Center had over 114,000 visits last year and now has over 1,500 annual members. I can remember back when we were hoping against hope we could find 1,000.

Our Library has become a thriving hub in the community. With a wide variety of innovative programs, especially for young people, such as the Storyteller Festival, we've now attracted well over 77,000 visits per year. It's like a beehive in there most days. Take that, Google!

Our Police Department remains remarkably effective in keeping down our crime rate and catching the bad guys and gals. Our Department's new focus on mental health intervention has become a leader throughout the region. The crime that does not occur is the best kind of crime. My personal measure of criminality is graffiti. In 2014 we had 9 reported cases. In 2015 we had 3.

In the Parks Department, we adopted a new Parks Master Plan, rehabilitated the Park bathrooms, received a half million dollar grant for the Trail System, installed some new playground equipment, planted a bunch of large trees and established a half-acre park on Main Street down by the Creek.

Let me put in a good word for the vibrant, new Dallas Downtown Association. Look for their sponsored historic train mural going up this summer on the south wall of the Polka Dots Building.

On to the challenges.

Last year I identified our important challenge as passing the Public Safety Levy. Well, the Levy passed handily with 56% of Dallas voters in favor. Well done.

But now we have to find a way to fix our funky streets. Due to vastly inadequate revenues from traditional sources, primarily the gas tax, we now fall short about \$400,000 a year for maintenance. So we have accumulated about \$15,000,000 in deferred repairs. If we don't do something soon, the problem will become a real burden all over town and just possibly incurable. The Council has put a \$10,000,000, 10-year general obligation bond on the May ballot to fix a good part of the problem and we'll really need your help getting it passed. Really.

Cost pressures abound for the City. Large increases in PERS payments. Increased employee health care costs. A potential minimum wage increase looms which, if passed, would bump up all wages.

Regarding things that go bump, if the term “Cascadia Subduction Zone Earthquake” is not in your vocabulary, I suggest you go home tonight and look it up. Be sitting down when you do.

I would be remiss not to address the vacant commercial and industrial land and buildings that pepper our community. Why is this when otherwise our city is robust, growing, safe and popular? AndOregon is the top “move in” state in the union for the third year in a row. Andour state’s 2015 economy was the fastest growing in the nation.

So, surely Dallas should be on the cusp of significant economic growth given all its opportunities. But where are all the investors and developers who should be hopping on the development train while it is still in the station? Why are they standing around all slack-jawed on the platform when the economic engine is about to pull out without them? That’s a mystery I’m hoping we’ll solve during 2016 and get all hands to swing up on the development train and off we go.

In Memoriam – Who we lost since we last spoke.

Buck Buchanan – Many of you were at his amazing memorial service yesterday. No one more civic minded than Buck. Breakfast in the Park. Crazy Daze. WWII combat flyer (hauling nurses around central Europe in a C-47 was the highlight I picked up on). Consummate businessman. First Citizen. Friend to all. Key sparkplug in downtown when it was hitting on all eight cylinders. The revival we’re witnessing in historic Dallas is a great monument to his work and passions.

Betty Foster – Our French teacher. DHS Class of 1938 helped choose the Dragon as the school mascot.

Les Ohler – Born in London, England, US Marines, on our Dallas Planning Commission.

Arianna Mattson - Aged 12, lost but a block away – you saw the little shrine. Painful to lose someone of Arianna’s age in our community that so greatly values our young people and their promise. To all our children of Dallas, be safe out there. We love you.

Ron Lines – On the back page of the booklet you will find a picture of Ron with one of his best friends, a tree. As I walk around City buildings, the Chamber of Commerce and here and there, I see pasted on desks and walls and hallways and on screen savers, pictures of Ron. How could our Parks guy be so important to people’s lives? You just had to know Ron. To say that we miss him is woefully inadequate. We loved that fun and inspiring guy who touched our lives in so many profound ways, some not clear until he was so suddenly gone. Ron Lines, our Parks guy.

You wouldn’t be in this room if you thought Dallas was ordinary. Last year I said, “Be bold for Dallas.” Now I’ll say it again, “Be bold for Dallas.” Invest, volunteer, shop, join, pray, help, donate, vote, lead or follow, but do something active, alive for this great little town. We count on you. We refuse to be ordinary. Be bold for Dallas, the second largest Dallas in the world and by far the best.

Thank you.