

STATE OF THE CITY

JANUARY 6, 2020

FINAL (1-6-20)

1,285 Words (10 minutes)



Thanks for coming and appreciate the opportunity to address you all for the 10th time.

I believe we're in a new era with our new City Manager, Brian Latta, an era that will be famed both for dynamic action and forward thinking. In that vein, I'll just declare last year transitional, file it in the history books and aim this speech



at the future.

In five days, the Council and staff, rather than go skiing,



will go into fun Retreat mode



where we'll set both short- and long-term Goals for our community. With the City being more dynamic these days, but with a host of pent-up municipal issues, this session will likely be the most consequential in years.

Here's why.

First off, Dallas is growing like a weed, a nice weed.



And why not?



In many ways we are the most affordable, pleasant, safe, well-located and popular place to live in the region, if not Oregon.



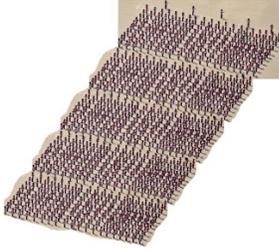
People vote with their feet, and folks have made Dallas the 9th fastest growing city in Oregon. And, on top of that, they forecast us to be the fastest growing city in the whole central valley for the next 50 years.



How do we prepare this small town for this big population without losing our character?

Two challenges - jobs and demographics:

Jobs first: From 2010 until 2017, our labor force living in Dallas grew by almost 1,000 people.



But out of those 1,000 new workers living here, Dallas had a net gain in local jobs of 12.



That's twelve jobs in seven years.

And,



over 83% of our whole Dallas resident labor force (folks with jobs) commute out of town for work. 83%.

Then there's demographics.

Dallas is aging fast.



We have the 6th oldest median age of any incorporated city in Oregon at 42+ years, up over 5 years since 2012.

So, come Saturday, what is it we want for Dallas? Continue our rapid growth as a bedroom community for Salem's workforce and pleasant retirement community? Or something way beyond that? I would suggest, way beyond.

First stop in the journey is the really excellent Dallas Vision 2030 we adopted six years ago.



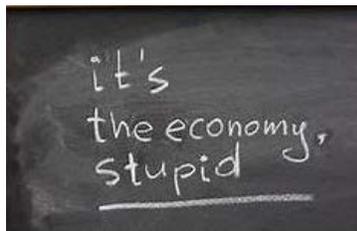
Our Vision has 45 bullet points, in the modern idiom, “all perfect.” If we ardently pursue its laudable aims – really, it’s our



North Star, our guide.

So, here we go – in the light of our Vision, I’ll encourage you to consider these 10 topics on Saturday.

First:



Recall “It’s the economy stupid?” Well, yes. For 2019, good news and bad. Good news



– we issued 124 new residential unit building permits – lots of houses. Bad news, we issued

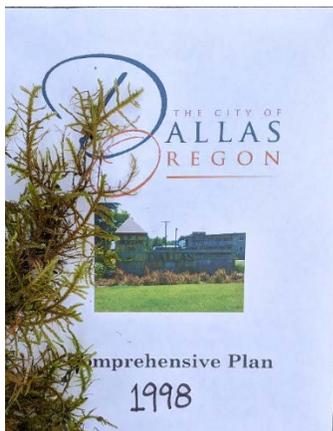


zero non-government commercial building permits and



zero industrial building permits. So, lots of new dwellings going up but nothing for commerce and industry. At least we have a new economic development baseline – zero – to craft a fix. No place to go but up.

Second:



Due to poor execution of our 1998 Comprehensive Plan – yes, that’s moss on it – we’re now essentially out of bare, shovel ready General Commercial land, so forget any new commercial businesses of any consequence coming to Dallas within the next several years - nowhere for them to go. Face it. Fix it. I heard somebody say it might take 3 years – just the “planning”, not the “doing.” You happy with that? Light a fire under this Comp Plan thing.

Third:

Next step in the New Comprehensive Plan you will demand is the Economic Opportunity Analysis, the EOA.



The State turned down our grant application, so plunge ahead anyway, fast and on our nickel – let the State force money on us later. Get your best and brightest community entrepreneurs involved in the EOA. Make it strong and high-quality with



a deep dive into the commercial potential for the LaCreole Node.

Fourth:

On our latest community survey, 41% of our respondents said downtown vibrancy was “poor”, the lowest rating we got.



Our downtown is actually the world's image of us. If it is dull, fading and uninteresting, we lose. If it is hot stuff, we win.



So, here are just three options to think about to make our downtown “hot stuff.”

- Pursue a Courthouse Square National Historic District



- Light up the Square, both the public



and private spaces



- Support the Arts Master Plan



Public art is a real economic

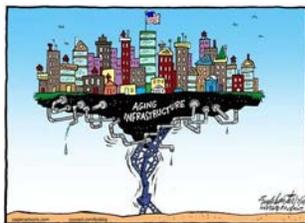


development tool in our kit bag

And more, of course.

Fifth:

Keep fixing infrastructure.



We have millions of dollars of projects backed up on our Capital Improvements Plan - 7 pages worth on the Budget - but with low dollars. So, here's some priorities:

- Plan and act right now for more water storage,



likely a new dam. These things take years, maybe decades, but water equals civilization equals our future.



- Signalize the Fir Villa/East Ellendale intersection



- Plan for modern facilities for police and fire, now crowded and worn out



- Plan for infrastructure for the LaCreole Node to support commerce. Now on the “too tough to tackle shelf” - drag it down and dive into it.



- Plan as if Mint Valley Paper is going to happen next month, hurry with the plans for the supporting infrastructure – purple pipes, Godsey Road improvements, etc. Figure ways to welcome them into our fold.



Sixth:

A lot of people are beginning to care about climate change. We can and should be on board in ways that are practical, cost-effective and fit our culture. To show our resolve, weave it into our thinking and be up front about our achievements. Samples:



- Build the electric charging stations we talk about (as inspiration, there are 6 in M-I, 2 in Falls City, 1 in Rickreall, 0 here).

- Plant even more and



larger trees

- Work to provide more jobs here



so folks don't have to commute all over the place for work.

Seventh:

Continue to pursue a "co-working space" downtown



Here's the Governor over at Indy Commons in Independence

Eighth:

More actively pursue the micro-brew and wine industries.



These things are all over western Oregon, just not here -----yet

Ninth:

Welcome more second story housing downtown.



Ghost tours of vacant, haunted spaces are fine, but.....

And, Tenth:

Continue our biennial citizen surveys.



Use the results to fix stuff.



Now to our image, the image we project out to the world, and really to ourselves. Kelly quite appropriately asks



- what do folks out there think about Dallas, Oregon, if they even know we exist?

Let me go out on the limb here and assert that Dallas is not the “Take a Closer Look” city anymore - frankly, it never caught on. We’re quintessential small-town America, the land of the Courthouse Square,



Mayberry R.F.D. like a Hallmark, Norman Rockwell kind of place folks treasure and relate to.



Build our image around who we really are – double down on what our citizens and



guests love about us already. Check our Vision 2030. It’s all there.



Now, in memoriam, a moment to honor Jim Fairchild, who sat here in this room with us for 22 years, ten as mayor.



Jim left his great mark on our government, our schools, our sports and our civic pride. Remarkable reach as President of the League of Oregon Cities and on committees of the National League of Cities, and Oregon Construction Contractors Board and surely much more. Amazing, indomitable guy, often honored for his work.

Well, there go my 10 minutes.

Surely our Saturday session will very productive, even groundbreaking.



I've given you a few ideas to think about and you'll have a bunch of your own as we brainstorm our future, setting a fast pace for the next several years and giving Brian something to do.



Thanks for listening.

