

State of the City Address – Mayor of Gresham

My brothers and sisters, my friends and neighbors, good afternoon!

Today, we gather not just as individuals, not just as citizens, but as a **community bound together** by the common hopes and shared dreams that unite us. We stand here, in the heart of Gresham, on the precipice of **possibility**, looking toward the horizon of a **brighter tomorrow**.

I am humbled to stand before you, honored to serve as your mayor, and deeply moved by the **strength and resilience** of this great city.

There are those who say a city is merely **streets and buildings, laws and policies**, but I say to you today—a **city is its people**. A city is **the hands that build, the hearts that love, and the voices that rise in unity**. And in this city, my friends, **we will rise together**.

Recognizing Our Leadership & Community Partners

Before we cast our eyes toward the future, let us recognize the **leaders who serve this city** with dedication and commitment.

We have an **exceptionally diverse and dynamic City Council**, whose intention and approach set the stage for events like today. They bring **thoughtful, deeply connected, and inquisitive leadership**, representing the **breadth, depth, and best that this community has to offer**.

Council President Jerry Hinton, Councilors Sue Piazza, Janine Gladfelter, Eddy Morales, Kayla Brown, and Cathy Keathley—please stand. You are **tremendous colleagues and wonderful representatives** of our community. **Thank you for your service, your support, and your leadership.** *(Applause)*

I also want to acknowledge our **city leadership team**—City Manager **Eric Schmidt**, Assistant City Managers, our Chief of Staff, Fire and Police Chiefs, department leaders, managers, and **every city employee**. You all do **extraordinary work in trying and challenging situations**, and I want to thank you for it. *(Applause)*

Honoring Mayor Shane Bemis

Before we move forward, I want to **honor the legacy** of **Mayor Shane Bemis**. His leadership **brought stability and vision**, guiding Gresham through **transformative times**.



Mayor Bemis, you **propelled this community forward** with tireless dedication, and today, we **stand on the foundation you built**. Many of the **achievements we celebrate today** are part of **your vision and legacy**. On behalf of **this council and this community**, we say **thank you**.
(Applause)

Navigating National Challenges

My friends, we do not operate in isolation. While we remain focused on progress, we cannot ignore the **uncertainty and challenges that impact our city**. Economic shifts, inflation, and federal dysfunction have put **pressure on families, small businesses, and local governments**.

We see **costs rising**, yet funding for essential services remains uncertain. Our infrastructure projects **face delays**, and small businesses struggle to keep up with **shifting economic policies**.

But Gresham has never been a city that waits for solutions to come from elsewhere. **We are problem-solvers. We are doers. We move forward, no matter the obstacles.**

While others debate, **we act**. While others stall, **we build**. While others delay, **we push ahead**—because this city belongs to us, and our **determination is stronger than any challenge before us**.

And so, we **continue to invest**, to **strengthen our foundation**, and to **protect the future of this city**—no matter what challenges arise.

Reflecting on Our Progress

We look back **not in sorrow, but in celebration** of what we have accomplished. **Gresham is rising. Our city is growing. Our future is bright.**

Public Safety & Emergency Response

- **Public Safety Levy Passed** – Thanks to the **overwhelming support of our residents**, we passed **Gresham’s first Public Safety Levy in 30 years**, securing **critical investments** in our police and fire departments.
- **Expanded Fire Services** – Seven **new firefighters hired**, **additional fire rescue unit deployed**, and **training underway for new recruits** to improve **response times**.
- **Fire Prevention & School Safety** – **Two new deputy fire marshals** have been hired, allowing for **enhanced fire prevention outreach and school safety inspections**.



- **Behavioral Health Unit Restored** – This unit **responded to over 836 crisis calls** last year, ensuring mental health crises are met with **care and support** rather than solely enforcement.
- **More Officers & Community Safety Specialists** – We have **hired 26 new police officers**, launched a **dedicated training facility**, and brought on **four new Community Safety Specialists**, improving efficiency in **handling non-emergency incidents**.
- **School Safety Program** – The **School Liaison Officer program** now serves **81 schools**, providing a **secure learning environment** for students and educators.
- **I would be remiss if I didn't mention our EMOPI program.** These efforts would not be possible but for the leadership of our Governor, Senator Gorsek, and Representatives Ruiz and Hudson. The state recognized the need for this critical funding and stepped up to ensure that we could invest in youth engagement alongside other investments we are making in reducing youth violence. To see our youth engaged in positive experiences that sets them on the positive path of poverty to prosperity is absolutely encouraging.

Economic Growth & Business Expansion

- **Unemployment at its lowest in 30 years—4.2%! More jobs, more opportunities, and a stronger local economy.**
- **Trader Joe's and In-N-Out joined our city!** National retailers are investing in Gresham, bringing **economic growth and new opportunities**.
- **Workforce training programs expanded** in partnership with **Microchip, ON Semi, and Mt. Hood Community College**, preparing our youth for careers in **advanced manufacturing and semiconductors**.
- **22 students graduated from the first Semiconductor Technician Training cohort**, marking a new era in Gresham's **economic transformation**.
- **Urban Renewal Charter revised**, allowing us to be **proactive, not reactive**, in **economic development and city planning**.

Housing & Homelessness Solutions

- **91 new affordable housing units under construction**—ensuring **more families have a place to call home**.
- **40 families assisted with rental assistance**, preventing displacement and promoting **housing stability**.
- **Rental inspection program recognized for excellence**—ensuring **safe and fair housing for all renters**.
- **Homeless outreach team doubled** to seven days a week, **rehousing over 55 households this year**.
- **As a matter of fact let me mention**
- I am proud to report that our recent point in time count - a process that took place in January when we go out and count the number of people living unsheltered in Gresham - located fewer than 20 people living outside. And while even one person living unhoused is one too many, this is a triumphant success.



- Credit goes to our incredible homeless services team, which has doubled(!) from two people to four this year. And in the first six months of the fiscal year, this team provided 317 instances of case management for clients including connection to shelter, employment, transportation, and referrals for other services.
- One of those families we helped was Austin and Kelly's. These two and their four children became homeless after Kelly became sick and Austin lost his job during COVID. They were evicted and had significant property debt preventing them from finding a new home. Instead, the family of 6 lived in a van for a year as Austin continued to work but never could overcome the barriers the eviction had created.
- Our team met the family in late April 2024 and immediately placed the family in a hotel for a week while we secured a family shelter room, one of the five hotel shelter rooms the city has reserved for clients we are working with. They moved into the Rockwood Tower Shelter in May and Willie Shaw, our Senior Homeless Services Specialist continued to work with them. Willie partnered with Metro Public Defenders to negotiate their significant past property debt down, pay it off, and remove the eviction from their record. The family moved into an apartment at Rockwood Village in June.
- Willie was impressed by how motivated Austin was to find a stable, well-paying career to support his family going forward. He helped Austin enroll in the Mt Hood Community College's Chrysler Mopar College Automotive Program (MCAP). This apprenticeship program includes sponsorship from and employment with an automotive dealership and upon completion, Austin will be certified to be a diesel and transmission mechanic with great career prospects.
- Through the City's annual funding from Multnomah County's Homeless Services Department, Gresham provided the family five months of rent to get them stably established in their new home. Austin is working full time at the dealership, actively participating in his apprenticeship program, and the family has independently paid their own rent for the last few months since the City's assistance concluded.
- When asked about his experience working with the City, Austin admitted that at first he was surprised that he had to "jump through the hoops" to get help but that in the end he understood that the City "couldn't pay for someone who wouldn't also follow through for themselves" to be successful. That accountability is the heart of Gresham's program. As Willie Shaw, our senior homeless services specialist who helped Austin has said, "If a client is willing to take one step, I will take 10." Austin and Kelly were willing to do that and more and their family of 6 is now safe, housed and thriving because of it.
- Willie Shaw is here today, and he does this work tirelessly and changes lives. Willie, please stand for us. Applause...

Parks, Infrastructure & Sustainability

- **\$1M in grants secured for Southwest Community Park, bringing new pathways, picnic shelters, play areas, and restrooms.**
- **Gradin Sports Park moving forward with phase 2!** This expanded facility will offer **top-tier soccer fields, a dog park, fencing, and new pedestrian paths.**



- **Safer Streets** – New sidewalks and flashing beacons added near **Davis Elementary and Gordon Russell Middle School**, ensuring **safe routes for students**.
- **32,000 native trees and shrubs planted** – Restoring habitats, improving flood control, and creating sustainable green spaces.
- **Volunteer & Community Engagement Growth** – Relaunched **volunteer programs**, strengthened partnerships with **nonprofits and local schools**, and supported our **Lilac Run event, which raised \$20,000 for youth programs**.

Looking Ahead

My friends, **our work is far from done**.

We will not slow down. We will not settle. We will continue to build the Gresham we know is possible.

Ahead of us stands a vision **not yet fulfilled**. A city where:

- **Every child is safe.**
- **Every family is housed.**
- **Every worker is paid fairly.**
- **Every voice is heard.**

And so we **push forward!** We **fight for more investment, more infrastructure, more justice!** We demand that Gresham be **not an afterthought, but a beacon**.

Let us **march forward** with purpose in our step. Let us say to the world:

Gresham is rising, and we will not be stopped!

Thank you.

