



2024 State of the City Address

April 17, 2024

By Mayor Sean VanGordon

Embracing Our Journey

I fell in love with Springfield while I was working mornings at UPS through college. I could always feel the city come alive looking out towards the Thurston Hills at dawn. Springfield is a living, breathing place.

Over the last 20 years, our community and nation have faced a dynamic set of challenges and opportunities that creates pressure and stress on us. The question we should be asking is how we chose to respond. The answer will tell you who we are as a city and why our future is bright.

Embracing our journey is about actively participating and making the most out of our experiences as a community both good and bad. We are:

Hardworking.

Friendly.

Creative.

Open.

It's about having and keeping faith in your neighbors.

After a very long January responding to the ice storm and a personal surgery, I want to celebrate the stories of Springfield with you tonight. We've all chosen to be part of Springfield. We share the collective responsibility to ensure that we continue to thrive and grow through our courage and actions. To never fear failure. Springfield is calling each of us to be part of that journey.



Airman Announcement

Springfield is a community who embraces each other when times are at their hardest. On September 16th while serving at a US Air Force base in northeast Colorado, Airman Trinity Reinhart was killed in a Humvee accident just two months shy of her 20th Birthday. 1st Lt. Joshua Beerbower said, “She was truly exceptional and always willing to help others, no matter the situation – she loved what she did as a defender.”

On September 25th, in a show of support and respect, hundreds of people lined the streets throughout Downtown to honor Airman Reinhart’s return to Springfield to be laid to rest. It is a moment that I will never forget.

Tonight, we have a special guest in our audience, Airman Reinhart’s mother, Rachael Sandlin and members of her family have joined us. They are here because, with the blessing of the family, it is my privilege to announce that the City of Springfield, along with our partners at Willamalane, will honor Airman Trinity Reinhart on Memorial Day, 2024, with a plaque dedication near the Women Veterans Memorial at our Veterans Plaza. We will announce more details as the day gets closer. For now, I want to thank Rachael and her family for joining us tonight. Springfield honors and remembers Airman Reinhart’s sacrifice.



Ice Storm

As we enter spring, our recovery from the January storm remains a high priority. During the storm, Springfield, East, and Southern Lane County was the epicenter of a significant, multiday emergency. Several thousand households and a majority of public buildings faced significant power losses, and many were damaged. We faced water shortages, fuel shortages, boil notices, communications issues, and many other challenges. Also, we saw the best of Springfield. Families, neighbors, and businesses stepped up to shelter, care for, and feed each other. We survived the ice storm because we took care of each other. Thank you, Springfield, for all that you did to help during the ice storm.

To the public employees of Springfield, Lane County, and the state of Oregon, thank you for your work to support the City during the ice storm. Every department and employee participated in what was a total city mobilization during the ice storm. From long hours to comforting people who needed to get warm, their work has impacted our lives, and we appreciate it.

Our community learned hard lessons from this storm. We had roughly two inches of ice on everything for several days. Time will provide an important perspective on how to move forward.

Across our community and in our households, we need to better prepare for emergencies including natural disasters. I'll ask the Team Springfield partners to provide an update on their progress during our next joint meeting and make that information available to the community.



Transportation and Infrastructure

The storm emphasized the importance of our infrastructure. Springfield's stormwater, transportation and wastewater infrastructure are the largest publicly owned assets in the City and is the foundation of our high-quality, livable neighborhoods. However, the condition and quality of our infrastructure continue to age and degrade. Maintenance and preservation of public investments are challenging. Repairing and modernizing infrastructure is a priority of the council and a priority of mine.

Since the end of timber payments to our road fund in 2008, we, like most cities, have struggled to maintain our road system. In 2018, the voters put their trust in Springfield by passing a 5-year bond to fix specific streets. I am proud to say that Springfield completed the projects on-time and on-budget. In 2023, the bond was paid off.

Our roads still need substantial work and, this year, the Council and I are asking the voters to trust again. Springfield has placed a bond measure on the ballot. It is for \$20 million bond to repave a specific set of roads and requires the City to report annually on its progress. While it's estimated to cost \$135 dollars per year per household, taxpayers will be saving \$80 dollars a year with the sunset of the 2018 bond. Our roads need the help, and I am asking for your vote for this important measure.

We are making additional progress in high priority roads. In 2024, we will break ground on the Mill Street project, which will fulfill a commitment the council made to the community. We will also begin a 42nd Street repaving project. The heavily used intersection of Marcola and Mohawk will get an effective interim fix while the council identifies resources for a longer-term effort.

The 42nd Street Levee remains a top priority for community safety, water quality, and flood protection. The City has spent a significant amount of time working with the Corp of Engineers, educating partners, and developing an emergency plan around the levee. In 2024, we are expecting to launch a multi-year effort with the Corps to evaluate existing risks and the best way to modernize the levee for our safety.

As we modernize and repair infrastructure, I ask that you stay informed by getting on the Development and Public Works email list or following our social media channels.



Economic Development

Springfield is a city of innovators, entrepreneurs, and skilled workers. We are committed to building a strong, vibrant regional economy. From wood products, medical facilities, tourism, and food and beverage, Springfield produces the goods and services people need. In the past, Springfield was known as a lunch bucket city because of the number of workers that lived here. We believe in the dignity and the importance of hard work; it's why you can build your future in Springfield.

Glenwood

Glenwood and the Franklin Blvd Corridor are the backbone of the metro region. It is the connection point between downtown Springfield, downtown Eugene, and LCC/Goshen. It is our connection with the University of Oregon. As the research engine of the Knight Science Campus accelerates, I hope that workers and private research labs will find homes to grow in Glenwood.

The City and partners are working to plan 30 acres of riverfront property along Franklin. It will take time to complete to ensure thoughtful public access to the river and the locations of infrastructure.

In the South Franklin Area, you should expect activity around the EWEB treatment plant, transportation improvements, and more in the next few years.

To build out the Glenwood District, Springfield will need to coordinate closely with state and local partners. We need the Board of County Commissioners to close the transfer site, deliver on commitments around infrastructure funding, and coordinate their work around waste management. Springfield has a strong partnership with the Board of County Commissioners, and I am looking forward to these conversations.



Spark at Booth Kelly

This past summer, Connected Lane County opened Spark at Booth Kelly. They engaged 134 partners and funders for the \$1.8 Million renovation. The project created 11,000 square feet of workforce development and career learning which included CNC machines, 3D printers, welders and more. In 2024, their goal is to serve 4,000 youth and expand their manufacturing programs to anticipate future workforce needs.

The Historic Booth Kelly complex dates to the early 1900s when the Booth Kelly corporation purchased the property. For decades, we have innovated and created in this space. Now, a new generation are learning those same skills in that same space. It's a journey we should be proud of and celebrate.

In 2023, Rosboro Forest Products announced a \$150 million investment in their Springfield plant that will create an estimated 100 new jobs. Rosboro's journey started over 100 years ago in the logging industry. **Over the years, Rosboro has adapted to changes in the industry and is now North America's largest producer of glue-laminated timber.** Their ability to grow their investment in Springfield is critical to our future.

Springfield has a hard-earned reputation for being open for business. It means that we will extend the Downtown and Glenwood System Development Charge exemption programs. We also need to find resources to start planning into north gateway. Reputations are important to uphold.



Public Safety

Police

In the early morning hours of August 31, Springfield police were called to a local home for a domestic disturbance. When officers Brian Bragg and Kirsten Cardwell arrived at the scene, they attempted to contact the man in question and were met with multiple rounds fired from inside the house. Officer Bragg was struck, and shrapnel hit officer Cardwell. As I visited them in the hospital that morning I was impressed by their humble resolve – they were just doing their jobs. I was just as impressed with the care and concern shown by the officers from multiple agencies, from hospital staff and later, from the community. I'm happy to say that both officers are back at work. This interaction shows that Springfield is a public safety city, and we support our police department.

The Police department is listening to our community and working to improve service for everyone that calls Springfield home. I am proud of the department. Department leadership has brought an emphasis on implementing and maintaining a set of best practices to promote effective crime reduction while building trust.

I am announcing that for the first time in decades the Springfield Police Department will soon complete its accreditation through the Northwest Accreditation Alliance. Accreditation processes improve outcomes through operational practices.

At one point, the department had a total of 20 vacancies. Now they have three. Filled positions have allowed the police to engage in more focused work such as drunk driving enforcement and shoplifting stings. It creates an opportunity for positive community events, work with schools, and community services projects. This type of work is an investment in the long-term relationship between the police and the community we serve. It creates a journey that improves lives, protects business, and impacts neighborhood livability.

Three years ago, Springfield was at risk of losing insurance coverage for liabilities. With work and dedication from a City-wide team, in July 2023, our insurance agency reduced the City's deductible for claims by half because of our performance. In February 2024, the City of Springfield received the Excellence in Best Practices award from our insurance company. The City Council, City Manager, City Attorney, and I continue to see this as a high priority.



Treatment Court and Measure 110

During the Police and Jail Levy Campaign of 2022, the City Council committed to pursue funding for a treatment court to actively engage with high-risk, high-need offenders in the community. In the fall of 2023, the US Department of Justice awarded Springfield with a grant to begin a treatment court. The treatment court opened in 2024, and already has more than a dozen participants.

With the state level reforms to Measure 110 going into effect, Springfield's police, fire, and elected leadership voices will be critical in the development of diversion and deflection programs. Our police and courts are part of a regional system of enforcement, treatment, and other services that can work to get individuals to the resources they need.

Fire

In 2009, we started integrating our fire department with the City of Eugene. After nearly 15 years, it is clear to me that our current governance structure isn't sustainable. Over the last 2 years, a committee of city councilors from both cities has been working hard to develop a recommended governance. It will be challenging. However, when completed, it will put this behind us, so that we can continue to focus on medical and fire response.

While the governance structure remains a technical conversation, the fire department continues to work on safety risks to the community. In 2024, the Fire department will increase its public engagement and education as part of their regional full scale wildfire drills. These drills occur in our high-risk neighborhoods to help prepare our crews and engage and educate community members about how to reduce their wildfire risk. In 2024, the scope of the wildfire exercise will continue to grow in complexity and bring in additional partner agencies. We look forward to engaging with the Springfield community more on this topic.

Public safety is a calling and is a commitment by your entire family. First responders face real risks to their safety and consistently respond to changing emergencies. On the behalf of Springfield, I'd like to offer my thanks and gratitude to our Police Department, our Fire Department, our Operations Division of the Development and Public Works Department, and all the emergency responders in the City. Your commitment, work, and sacrifice for Springfield is noticed, honored, and appreciated.



Community Conversation

PANEL DISCUSSION

Tonight, I am joined by a group of community leaders that I've asked to provide perspective on their part of Springfield's Journey. Please help me welcome Jamie Moffitt, University of Oregon Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration and Chief Financial Officer, Jameson Auten, CEO and General Manager of LTD, and Oren Posner, Vice President of Lane Forest Products.

Questions: Jamie Moffitt, University of Oregon Senior Vice President for Finance and CFO

1. You have been with the university for several years in various leadership positions including the law school, athletics, and central administration, as well as serving as interim president. Given the extent of your experience, what do you see as the top priorities of the university as a new president takes the helm?
2. How does your vision for the University of Oregon encourage and enable economic prosperity for the region? And how can the university and its students make better connections with Springfield?

Questions: Jameson Auten, LTD CEO and General Manager

1. You joined LTD in November 2022 – what are your impressions of Springfield?
2. Trust in institutions and leadership is at an all-time low across the board. How are you working to build trust with the community, and what advice do you have for public and private organizations to build trust?

Questions: Oren Posner, Vice President of Lane Forest Products

1. During the ice storm Lane Forest was one of the first community partners who reached out to the City. How important was that connection to be made so early?
2. Springfield continues to change, and our workforce is changing along with it. What should our focus be as we bring in the next generation of workers?

Thank you for your insight and advice. How about a round of applause for our panel?



Council Highlights Video

I asked each city councilor to highlight a project from their ward that they were passionate about. Let's take a look.

Intermission for the Video

The Springfield City Council is a volunteer position. Every year, the councilors volunteer hundreds of hours in meetings, coffees chats, community events and more. I'd like to thank them for their passion, wisdom, and dedication in embracing Springfield's journeys. Springfield City Councilor's will you please stand up and be recognized?



Award Winners

My favorite part of being Mayor is getting to know, recognize, and share the many parts of Springfield that are special and excite me. The Distinctively Springfield Mayor's awards given to celebrate unique contributions to our community.

Springfield Business of the Year

The Distinctively Springfield Business of the Year recognizes an organization whose leadership and employees have dedicated themselves to making Springfield the best it can be. It is my pleasure to recognize Sanipac, as the 2023 Business of the Year. A Springfield institution since its founding in 1973, Sanipac embodies an unwavering commitment to our community and environmental excellence. Locally, they have over 130 family wage jobs. In 2023, they celebrated their 50th year of business in Springfield. Their commitment to embracing Springfield's journey goes far beyond waste management. Sanipac has been a longtime supporter of many local nonprofits including Northwest Association of Blind Athletes, Catholic Community Services of Lane County, a holiday party that builds bikes, and more. In 2023, Sanipac helped bring back Spring Cleanup at their EcoSort Facility. Thank you Sanipac!

Accepting the 2023 Business of the Year award on behalf of Sanipac are:

- Aaron Donley ("Don Lee"), Senior Account Manager
- Chris Kjar ("Car"), District Manager



City of Springfield Employees of the Year

The Distinctly Springfield Employee of the Year recognizes significant contributions to Springfield throughout 2023. It's my honor to recognize two Employees of the Year tonight.

Our first Employee of the Year is DPW Planning Manager **Mark Rust**

In the fall of 2018, Mark took on the challenging role of Project Manager for the City of Springfield Development Code Update. Under his leadership, this significant project was successfully completed and adopted by the City Council in 2022. Mark's meticulous attention to detail and his ability to effectively coordinate multiple stakeholders were instrumental in the project's success.

Mark assumed the position of Planning Manager in 2022, where he has played a pivotal role in the implementation of the new development code, working to ensure its smooth transition and effective enforcement. He has also been key in efforts to revamp our code enforcement program, collaborating with current code enforcement staff to re-envision its strategies and processes. Mark's dedication to improving our City's planning and enforcement initiatives has been commendable.

Mark's efforts in analyzing the City's current planning fee structure, including collaboration with staff and consultants, have been invaluable in refining proposals that will be presented to the City Council later this spring.

Joining Mark in accepting his award is his wife, Paula.

And our second Employee of the year is Eugene/Springfield Fire Battalion Chief **Derrick Frost**. In his 26th year of employment with the City of Springfield and Eugene Springfield Fire, Derrick is the type of employee we wish we could clone. His technical expertise, dedication to the Fire Department and community are unmatched. Most recently Derrick has led the Fire Department's training section. Derrick restructured how fire training is delivered in a yearlong process that includes real time live fire training, including elements for safety and survival along with critical fireground tasks. Statistics, charts, and graphs will never cover the full impact of Derrick's dedication to training. His success is measured by the firefighter who wasn't injured or the community member who was saved, because our Firefighters are better prepared for their jobs. Derrick's humility, consistency and reliability are traits that make him a valued asset to the Fire Department and our community.

Congratulations to Derrick on his Employee of the Year award.



Springfield Community Champion

The Community Champion Award recognizes individuals who tirelessly work to uplift Springfield, fostering unity, resilience, and a vibrant community spirit. Recipients embody the essence of service, inspiring others to actively contribute to the betterment of our city.

Brenda Moore has dedicated her career to serving others with a no-nonsense, roll-up-your-sleeves attitude. From her days in Oregon's state government, through to her current role as Executive Director of the Lane Council of Governments (LCOG), Brenda has been on a mission to make a real difference in our region.

In addition to her professional responsibilities, Brenda demonstrates an unwavering commitment to community service. Brenda's compassion and dedication shone brightly during the Holiday Farm fire crisis, where she tirelessly ensured the safety of pets and livestock belonging to affected families. Her proactive efforts reflect her belief that service extends beyond job descriptions. Brenda's involvement also encompasses various community initiatives, including supporting veterans at Camp Alma and volunteering with Burrito Brigade. Furthermore, Brenda is a key player in 15th Night, a group dedicated to ending youth homelessness through resource connection and innovative strategies. Her multifaceted involvement exemplifies her belief in collective action and the profound impact individuals can make by extending a helping hand to those in need.

And when she's not busy running around the region, you'll probably find Brenda just running around – for fun.

We are fortunate to have Brenda helping and looking out for so many Springfield community members! Congratulations, Brenda.



Conclusion

By embracing our journey, you are writing your part of Springfield's story. I ask that you do your best and continue the spirit of Springfield as Hardworking. Friendly. Creative. Open. We don't have to be afraid of changing and chaotic times. We need to measure our success by our own potential. In Springfield, we show people kindness still matters. Checking on your neighbor still matters. Volunteerism and service still matters. Integrity matters. You matter. Your actions show who we are as Springfield.

In my time as Mayor, I've spoken about the importance of service and how everyone contributes. Tonight, I want to end with who we are leaving our journey to. For me, it's my daughters, Katie and Livy. They are at the beginning of a grand journey, and I am grateful to be part of it. I want Springfield to capture their imagination the same way it captured mine when I was a college student working for UPS all those years ago.

Thank you.