



2023 State of the City Address

Springfield Mayor Sean VanGordon

Courage is part of Springfield's DNA. We try new things, make tough decisions, and evaluate our next right action. It allows Springfield to adapt, to grow, and to change.

The opposite of courage isn't fear. It's the status quo. It's inertia. It's the way that is safe because we've always done it that way. It's the instinct to keep dreaming and never doing. Courage is about overcoming that. You only need about 30 seconds of courage to take the next right step forward.

Each year, Springfield moves forward with optimism, courage, and a refined sense of itself. We face real challenges. Inflation, high fuel prices, economic uncertainty, food insecurity and more have been hard on Springfield.

But Springfield IS a community of opportunity. You can build your life here. The courage to act is how you do that. The courage to act is how you cut through the noise and uncertainty. It's the realization that there is no easy way. That great things are hard. It's the effort, the lessons, and growth we achieve that prepare us to be bigger than the next challenge we face.

Distinctively Springfield Leader of the Year Award

Springfield's people are at the center of our story. They inspire us with their actions, compassion, and courage. Their tenacity and work ethic built our community. The Distinctively Springfield Leader of the Year Award is a Mayor's Award that is given to recognize an individual who goes above and beyond to build a Community of Opportunity through everyday acts of courage. I am pleased to announce the 2022 Distinctively Springfield Leader of the Year is Rae LaMarche.

Rae takes "service above self" to heart in everything she does. As a retired foreign language teacher, she felt it her responsibility to teach not only another language, but also tolerance and acceptance of other cultures and people. She founded the non-profit organization Women's Gift to financially support Women and Children at Risk in Lane County. To date, the organization has given more than \$150,000 to the local community. That's not all. Rae volunteered at Springfield High School to support Holiday Farm Fire victims. She has organized numerous Rotary programs and efforts including a successful Anti-Human Trafficking campaign

in our area. I could go on and on about her accomplishments. Where there is a need, there is Rae, ready to serve. Thank you, Rae.

Distinctively Springfield Businesses of the Year Award

It takes courage to be an innovator, a business owner, and an entrepreneur. The economy is always creating new challenges from new state regulations to changing global markets. Our local businesses capitalize on new opportunities, adapting, and investing in our community. A strong economy delivers community benefits to workers in everything from wages to sponsoring little league teams.

I'm recognizing two businesses for their individual and joint investments in Springfield. Richardson, a family business operating in Springfield since the 1970s, is a global supplier of headwear and team uniforms. They provide hundreds of local jobs and recently completed a large expansion of their headquarters. Their investment in our community is distinct and appreciated. Olsson Industrial Electric, also headquartered in Springfield, provides craftsman-caliber electrical construction services to industrial customers including work with steel and lumbar processors. Employing hundreds in our community and region, Olsson Industrial Electric was ranked among the Top 100 Employers in Oregon in 2018.

Both Richardson and Olsson's contributions to our community go beyond great employment opportunities and high-quality services and products. They were the drive behind the Springfield Drifters. Kelly Richardson and Ike Olsson co-own the collegiate summer wood bat team. They collaborated with Springfield Public Schools, Bushnell University, and the Drifters to form the "Springfield baseball project" which resulted in the renovation of the stadium at Hamlin Middle School. In 2022, the Hamlin Sports Complex became home to the Springfield Drifters and the Bushnell Beacons.

For their contributions both on and off the field, I am recognizing Richardson and Olsson Industrial Electric as Distinctively Springfield Businesses of the Year.

Economic Development

Our business leaders have inspired the City to be bolder with our economic development goals. In Downtown and Glenwood, we engaged in economic partnerships that are a calculated stretch for a community our size.

Blue McKenzie is a redevelopment opportunity in between the old Springfield Buick building and the post office, a currently undeveloped site in Downtown Springfield. It will bring 84 units

of much-needed market rate housing. It is slated to begin construction in 2023 and will be the first significant new mixed-use building in Downtown in the last 15 years.

In Glenwood, Springfield will soon be starting the Master Planning process for roughly 30 acres in the North Riverfront Site. This area is a combination of publicly and privately owned land. There is substantial work still to be done in Glenwood before we start to build. It will come with careful planning, and we're excited for tangible progress on this site.

That's not the only development story in Glenwood. The Wildish Family has done considerable work to prepare their property for development in Glenwood. It is property that represents the legacy of their family in Springfield. Their work has been deliberate, thoughtful, and courageous. I look forward to seeing the outcome of their dedication.

To make Glenwood and the Riverfront successful, we will need the support of the Lane County Board of Commissioners. We will be requesting economic development support in the form of lottery dollars, transient room tax, or other support to complete this work. I support the Lane County Board of Commissioner's work to close the Glenwood transfer site. Lane County has significant work to do around the landfill's future, and Springfield looks forward to learning more.

Marcola Meadows is moving quickly toward completion. The additional homes, apartments, Arrow Park, and church will complete an important new neighborhood for Springfield. With the completion of the Mohawk Boulevard upgrade and new businesses opening, I'm proud to say the Mohawk District continues to thrive.

Across Springfield and in uncertain economic conditions, Springfield businesses are growing, innovating, and working. We are expecting a new restaurant in the 54th and Main Shopping Center. Valley Contax expanded their manufacturing operations in Springfield. Portal Escape Rooms opened a major update. These are a few examples of businesses that chose to expand their operations in Springfield.

To our business community, I want you to know that the City of Springfield sees how hard you are fighting, and we are behind you. Springfield will continue to advocate for State legislative policies to allow people to economically thrive.

We will always work to make the City easier to do business with. In 2022, we reorganized the Economic Development program. Between economic development, planning, and public works, we've developed teams that allow for better service. We began updating plan zone conflicts - this means it will be easier to find out what you can do with your property. In 2023, we will complete a market study for development fees to ensure that Springfield is competitive in the costs of development.

Distinctively Springfield Employee of the Year Award

Through a year of monumental change, Assistant City Manager Niel Laudati has modernized, aligned, and stepped in to fill roles in the economic development department. His work has been critical to streamlining Planning and Public Works services, cultivating community connections, and representing our legislative interests at the State and Federal level. When I asked City Manager, Nancy Newton, about the work that Niel has done this year, she said, “Niel has led significant projects and taken on additional responsibilities and has done so exceptionally well. He has 18 years of service with the City and is invaluable to our success, and his dedication to Springfield is unmatched.”

By the way, when you drive into downtown from A Street and see the beautiful new “Welcome to Springfield” mural; Niel made that happen just in time for the World Athletic Competition.

It’s my privilege to recognize Niel Laudati, with one of two Distinctively Springfield Employee of the Year awards.

Infrastructure across the city needs to be repaired, modernized, and upgraded. These investments are a core service of the City. They improve livability and economic vitality. Springfield must approach infrastructure with common sense

We’ve done significant work on street repair and modernization. The City has completed all the projects from the 2018 street bond. In 2023, the City Council will begin evaluating the need for a second street bond. The Mill Street restoration project is scheduled to kick off in 2024.

Modernizing and upgrading 42nd Street and the levee remain a top regional priority. The work around 42nd Street will need to upgrade the levee, repair the street, address water quality issues, improve freight mobility, and more. Springfield has a lot of work to complete project, and we will depend on our regional partners for support.

Public Safety

Springfield Police Department is listening and engaging with our community. The department has embraced changes with a growing confidence and renewed energy. In 2022, the police department completed a community survey regarding police services to learn more from the communities they serve. Officers responded to nearly 36,000 calls for service, attend 100 community events, and been present with over 7,000 community members. Connecting with community is important work that will continue.

In the last year, SPD added a second computer forensics detective and hired Jami Resch as our new Deputy Chief. Welcome, Jami. SPD also extended medical and mental health coverage in

the jail to being 24/7. I want to thank the Springfield community for your continued interest in police services and for your support of the public safety levy that supports roughly 1/3 of their budget, which was overwhelmingly approved by Springfield voters. Thank you, Springfield.

Since 2021, the City has done significant work on policing. We've started a citywide enterprise risk management program to emphasize preventing, rather than just responding to liability exposures. We still have some open claims, but in fiscal year 2022, we had the lowest number of police claims, and dollars spent in 15 years. That is a significant achievement. I am grateful for work of the Springfield City staff and the significant support from City County Insurance Services (CIS). We still have work to do, and enterprise risk management will be an area in which we will remain focused. The City's elected leaders are committed to supporting this work.

This year, the City Council will continue its quarterly updates with the police department. The Springfield Police Advisory Committee will begin work on the Police Strategic Action Plan. We will complete reform of the police complaint process. The police department is developing a more comprehensive training plan and will continue to support each other with a peer-to-peer support program. The City of Springfield and the police department are committed to a culture of continuous improvement, with a focus on standards and best practices, transparency, and accountability.

Being a police officer is a calling to serve. Thank you to the Springfield Police Department for your service and your commitment.

Policing will be a major part of the Council's legislative priorities for 2023. We need the State to address issues that hurt local government's ability to hire officers. We will advocate for the reform or repeal of Measure 110. We must give public safety officials and courts more tools to get people into treatment.

This year, we welcomed Eugene Springfield Fire Chief Mike Caven to lead the department. I am excited about Chief Caven's new role. His dedication to the profession is unparalleled and under his leadership, we will continue to evaluate how to create the most efficient and effective fire and life safety service delivery model to meet the growing needs of our community.

Courage to be Ourselves (Libraries and Culture)

Great communities have the courage to listen and to accept people. Our diverse backgrounds are what enrich Springfield. From the Ukrainian Festival to the Huerta/Chavez Celebration to

the Block Party, we are many communities together making Springfield a diverse and beautiful place.

The Springfield Library and Springfield Historic Museum have a large role in promoting programming and events that celebrate our culture. They published the Springfield A to Z book. It's a book that celebrates Springfield and its natural beauty. The Library also extended its services to give Library cards to every student in Springfield for three years. If you haven't heard by now, we have an amazing Library.

Springfield is going through a renaissance of culture and arts. We've done a lot of work around cultural issues, and frankly there are still stories that haven't been told. Our country is divided across political and social lines right now. It doesn't have to be that way. We can find the courage to listen. We can seek to understand the experiences of people around us.

The Museum completed its first ILLUMINATION Project, which is designed to highlight different cultures within our community, their stories, and their struggles. The project has featured stories from the Latinx community. And this year it focuses on stories and individuals from our Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

Distinctively Springfield Employee of the Year Award

Kristina Kraaz is a person that embodies the courage, advocacy, and listening that moves the City forward. She is the Assistant City Attorney, and I am recognizing her with the Distinctively Springfield Employee of the Year. Throughout 2022, the City Council has relied on her advice, perspective, and knowledge of Oregon land use law. Kristina played a critical role in identifying legal issues with the Climate Friendly Equitable Communities rulemaking process. She has been a resource to the League of Oregon Cities and established herself as a state expert in land use. She completed her undergraduate work in Engineering allowing her to understand both operation issues and legal issues. She was born and raised in Springfield and is choosing to raise her family here. Thank you, Kristina.

Education

As I meet with parents, businesses, and community members, education and academic progress is on people's minds. The lasting impact of school closures has set our kids back academically and socially. I know that teachers, administrators, and staff of Springfield School District are working hard to address it. I know parents and kids are working hard to address it. It is going to take time.

My twin daughters started Kindergarten at Guy Lee School. My experience with the staff at Guy Lee and Ms. Rees, my daughter's teacher, has been exceptional. Being an educator is tough and the challenges over the last several years test even the best teachers. We can find ways to support teachers and education. We can find time to read to our kids more. We are collectively responsible for our students' futures.

Conclusion

The opposite of courage isn't fear. It's the status quo. It's inertia. It's the way that is safe because we've always done it that way. It's the instinct to keep dreaming and never doing. Courage is about overcoming that. You only need about 30 seconds of courage to take the next right step forward.

Springfield has big dreams, and we have challenges. To succeed, we can't depend on other people or large government programs to solve our problems. It must be about our community. The flexibility of our small business. The passion and work ethic of our people. Be courageous and serve. When you have the courage to follow your dreams, Springfield is better for it.

If you doubt yourself or lose faith, know that you have an entire community that is behind you. Maya Angelou once said, "Stand up straight, realize who you are, and that you tower over your circumstances."