



City of Oakridge

48318 E 1st Street - PO Box 1410

Oakridge, Oregon 97463

Phone 541-782-2258 Fax 541-782-1081

January 16, 2020

STATE OF THE CITY

To the Council and the Community,

I'd like to speak from my heart about our coming year and comment briefly on the past.

Oakridge is actively working at staying positive. I am thrilled to see the Arts community coming together to shine a light on all the wonderful talent we have and be a positive force for our community. Kudos to the Oakridge Arts Council. I see different faces in our community stepping into recreation such as the Disc Golf Course and recreation planning. Organizations, such as the Oakridge/Westfir Chamber of Commerce and the Uptown Business Association rebranding and working toward a renewed sense of purpose. Our Council committees are being revitalized to provide input and advice from citizens to council. The creation of a "Community Solutions Team" from a small group I convened to discuss the needs of our homeless. We are reaching out to re-energize our partnerships with agencies who had backed away from our community, but with a change in leadership and commitment to a new direction see Oakridge now as a positive place to invest. I know there are more examples of positive improvements and that you all are listing them in your head as I speak.

Basically, what I see is a community stepping forward into solutions instead of standing still or looking at the past. Nothing changes without action. Nothing improves without effort.

There is a cooperative spirit beginning to flow in our community and change is happening.

In speaking to members of the community, both those who more recently claim Oakridge as their home, and those for whom Oakridge has been home for decades I find once we get past how long our memories go back, a common theme is We can do better. Too often in conversations we don't start with what our goal is, we start with our differences.

My goal is to improve the livability of our community by increasing our access health care, partnering with the school district to create opportunities for our children, wisely use our resources for the upkeep of our infrastructure, develop an attitude of opportunity for new business, and to encourage positive interactions within the community - between the police and the neighborhoods, between organizations in our community and between business and recreation.

In the next couple of months you will have an opportunity to be a part of a community led Neighborhood Watch program. In our town hall we heard the importance of neighbors being aware of each other and the importance of reporting issues. I hope you will seriously consider how you can participate in this effort to care for our community.

Because of a partnership with LRAPA, Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative, In-Bound and others to secure a USDA grant 4.9M for Oakridge's Targeted Airshed we will continue our efforts see and feel a change in our air quality over the next five years. We will be sharing details about this at our April Town Hall meeting.

Our community came out solidly in support of our Fire and EMS program underlining its vital importance to Oakridge. We are seeing expanded medical and dental in our community, and the opening of new business. Our school board and superintendent, are making improvements to the education of our children, and tackling issues such as child care. Recognizing the importance of childcare not only to our community, but to the future economic growth of Oakridge. The city council embraced RAIN, and it has been exciting to see successful enterprises result from their guidance. And thanks to our partnership with RAIN, Oakridge along with four other communities will be part of a Rural Lane Entrepreneurship Council. The purpose of which is to strengthen each community's ability to provide support and encouragement for entrepreneurs. To that end I hope to see the council push for development and creative use of our lots in the OIP to provide opportunity for live/work business and entrepreneurs who depend heavily on connectivity.

When I spoke as a counselor in 2018 about change and that it is uncomfortable, I fully embraced that discomfort and worked hard to enact change. I think we are better because of it but. This hasn't been something that was easily done. It has taken work and dedication, tears and a great deal of frustration, but now, if we continue to see the value in partnerships and positivity, I see a bright future for our community.

We face opportunities this year that will challenge our commitment to that cooperation. Prickly and sensitive issues of budgeting, Infrastructure, transportation plans, Public safety and community services. I firmly believe that today, we are prepared for these challenges because we have a growing level of trust from and within our community, a council that is determined to find solutions to hard problems and an administration that is committed to being professional and transparent.

Communities that are mature and vital, know three things,

the power of vision

the power of strategic planning-

the power of cooperation.

The challenge before us this year is to create that vision, strategically plan our steps and work cooperatively as we make solid decisions. If we are to succeed we must actively nurture a positive cooperative spirit on council and in our community. Council must continue to commit to being open, informed, and kind as we discuss ways to better our community. Neighborhoods must choose to watch out for one another. Individuals must choose to speak positively. A vital community begins with a choice to be positive, be instructive and be kind.

In this current climate of "how low can you go" in politics, I want to state plainly that Oakridge city governance is not about politics. It is about community. It is where we make a difference with our actions and our words, in the lives of each and every one who calls this beautiful town their home.

I encourage all of us to actively watch for the good, speak into the positive and encourage one another in this place we call home.

Respectfully,

Kathy Nichols Holston
Mayor