

State of the City address
Mayor Edward B. Murray
Feb. 18, 2014

President Burgess and members of the Seattle City Council.

In this, my first State of City address after several weeks in office, I would like to focus on our Future as a City and how we collectively can build on your work and the work of those who came before us to address the challenges that we face.

It was just days ago that over 700,000 people crowded the streets of Downtown Seattle to celebrate the Seattle Seahawks Super Bowl victory.

They were celebrating something very Seattle.

The Seahawks' use of intelligence, getting the fundamentals right, teamwork and leadership that was both positive and innovative.

And just weeks ago we saw Macklemore and Ryan Lewis honored for those very Seattle traits of creativity, independence, authenticity and focus.

As I spoke to those gathered on the street, I found folks that are positive and hopeful about what we can accomplish as a City.

An attitude that contradicts the cynicism that has creep into our politics and media about what we as public servants can accomplish to improve the lives of all our people.

There is no better example of this spirit than the response to the damaging of the historic Pergola in Pioneer Square.

Shana Pennington-Baird and a friend took it upon themselves to launch a fundraising campaign via social media to pay for the repairs, much of it in \$12 increments in the spirit of the 12th Man.

Shana is here with us today – I want to welcome and thank her for the innovation and community spirit behind her creative campaign.

It was only six weeks ago that I started a conversation with City Council, with the people of Seattle and with our region as a whole about the challenges and opportunities before us.

About the great diversity of our city, but also its fragmentation.

About our city's great progressive legacy, and its emphasis not just on debating problems but on tackling and solving them.

And about government not as the problem, but as a collaborative partner in solving the problems we face.

It's a conversation that we return to today as we discuss the state of our City – and one that we will continue to have together throughout my Administration.

Members of the Council, I want to thank you all for this opportunity to stand here as your partner in conversation – but also as your partner in action.

As elected leaders, I believe we should take as a challenge the renewed excitement, the focus and enthusiasm, the spirit of innovation that's taken ahold of our city.

How can we ensure that City government is as talented and energized, as enterprising and innovative as the people it serves?

Our answer to this question should be informed by our common history as progressives.

As elected leaders, we cannot and should not seek to hit pause on progress by clinging blindly to the status quo, or inhibit innovation by protecting outmoded ways of doing business.

We must be willing to embrace new practices – even where they may be as disruptive as they are constructive.

But more than that, we must lead the way in offering ideas for how this City can adapt to – and help shape – the innovation and enterprise happening in the economy and community around us.

We must lead the way in offering ideas for how all can share in the success of this economy and community.

Members of the Council, our challenge is to ensure that our City can address the pressing, central issues of our time:

- in social and economic justice, and creating an affordable Seattle, and
- in climate change.

Our challenge is also to ensure that our City is a functional City – a City that is up to the task of meeting its basic obligations to:

- create safe and livable communities,
- nurture a vibrant economy, and
- provide for efficient, effective government.

So let us turn now to these challenges.

[AFFORDABLE SEATTLE]

We are – all of us here – committed to a more prosperous city for all.

But we stand at a crossroads.

We can follow the example of others cities and become unaffordable for all but those at the very top of the income scale, and witness increasing polarization between the very rich and very poor.

Or we as elected leaders can take deliberate action to address the declining of the middle class.

Choosing the latter course and addressing these disparities, I believe, is critical to the city's future prosperity.

I'm eager to work with Council to do so across a variety of different strategies.

Income disparity

Our commitment to rebuilding the middle class and the economic diversity of this city starts with addressing income inequality.

As Americans, as residents of Seattle, we face the largest income disparity in our history – and this disparity strikes at the very core of who we are as a democratic society.

Every year since 2000, the top 20 percent of income earners in Seattle have brought home more than the bottom 80 percent combined.

Working with Councilmembers Sawant, Licata and Harrell, and with representatives from the business, labor and non-profit communities, I have committed to a process to raise the minimum wage in this city, and have set \$15 per hour as the goal.

We *can* increase the income and purchasing power of low-wage workers while protecting small businesses, retaining jobs, and fostering economic development throughout the region.

And, with the nation watching, we have the opportunity to create a model that can be replicated in other cities across the county.

Housing

But a living wage alone is not enough.

In this city, households that spend 30 percent of their income on housing are considered to be cost-burdened.

In 1990, 41 percent of renters were spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing.

In 2012, that figure is now 47 percent.

52 percent of household earning half of the average median income are spending half their income or more on housing.

This is up from 43 percent in 1999.

This is quickly becoming a crisis.

I plan to work with Council to duplicate the approach we have taken with the living wage issue and apply it to the issue of affordable housing.

I will convene a group of stakeholders – including community members, housing providers, the business community, real estate developers, and others – to deliver a set of recommendations on a plan for affordable housing for Council to act upon during its budget process this fall.

All ideas are on the table as we work through the challenges facing the homeless and those who work but cannot afford to own or rent a home in this city.

We must also be prepared to address the issue of social justice.

After all, 51 percent of whites own their home in Seattle. For African-Americans that number is just 27 percent.

As we conduct this important work, we as a City must improve our ability to track the housing that we are building, and better align development with our needs.

We need to collect data, but we also need to mine and analyze it to give us a more strategic instrument for promoting housing affordability *prospectively* – not just assessing its lack *retrospectively*.

Preschool for all

While the overall unemployment rate in Seattle has fallen below 4.5 percent over the last five years, for Native Americans, it is 9 percent.

For Latinos, it is 10 percent.

For Pacific Islanders, it is 12 percent.

For African Americans it is 13.5 percent.

And while the unemployment rate for those with a Bachelor's degree or higher is just under 4 percent, it is 7.5 percent for those with only some college.

For high school graduates, it is 11 percent.

For non-high school graduates, it is 13 percent.

Only 60 percent of our African American and Latino children are graduating high-school after 4 years, compared to 84 percent of white students – a gap that has persisted for at least a decade.

In fact, African American students are still more than twice as likely to drop out than white students – a number that has widened over the past two decades.

46 percent of African American children and 40 percent of Latino children in Seattle live in poverty, compared to 4 percent of white children.

These figures show a cycle that we must take action to disrupt, and that we have a moral obligation to disrupt.

It's true that, as elected leaders of the City of Seattle, we in this room are not directly responsible for Seattle Public Schools.

But we simply cannot be content with these outcomes. And we cannot sit by while these outcomes continue.

Study after study tells us that the most critical time to support a child's development and invest in his or her future potential is before age four.

I am committed to making affordable preschool available to all children in Seattle before they reach elementary school – and I am working closely with Council President Burgess to develop a strategy to make this a reality this year.

In addition, my Administration will recruit additional providers into the City's Comprehensive Child Care Program, which provides families with child care subsidies, with a focus on English Language Learner providers and providers of color.

The City's investment in this program helps families meet their childcare needs.

I've asked the Department to set a goal of expanding the program to 60 new providers to give parents more child-care choices – a 45 percent increase by the end of the year.

Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs

When my grandparents came to this country they faced signs that read "Help Wanted, No Irish Need Apply."

When my husband's grandparents came to this country they were not allowed to own their own property until the 1950's.

For today's new Americans, despite changes in our laws, the reality is much the same.

Today's immigrants are twice as likely to start a new business.

They are focused on creating abundance for their communities and for the City, not re-dividing scarcity.

Immigrants like Jose Luis Rodriguez, who is here with us today.

Luis is originally from Baja, Mexico: he owns and runs The Station, a neighborhood café, and Beacon Avenue Sandwiches, a sandwich shop.

Luis often partners with neighbors, local artists and organizers to host art shows and neighborhood block parties – and many of his own employees are working artists and organizers themselves.

I want to welcome Luis, and thank him for his commitment to his his community.

We need more stories like Luis's, but there are too many needless obstacles in the way of those who seek to succeed as Luis has.

The City's Office of Immigrants and Refugee Affairs is understaffed and underfunded.

I will send to council a proposal for staffing and funding an office that will assist new Americans with the technical skills in education, business, and needed services.

I ask the council to act quickly on this proposal.

Human services

Each year we invest over \$60 million into human services, which is 6 percent of the general fund – by far the highest of any local jurisdiction in Washington, and maybe one of the largest commitments in the nation.

This is an extraordinary demonstration of our values as a community.

Taking care of the most vulnerable is a mission we are committed to.

But the City's Human Services Department has been in turmoil these past four years.

Our values and our current levels of financial commitment require us to restore strong stewardship and strategic direction to this critical office.

We must use data to drive our investments and interventions for addressing disparities, and use results-based accountability to create change.

And we must prioritize services that will move the needle on these specific outcomes.

My office will look to target investments in evidence-based strategies and proven interventions. And when programs don't deliver – we will retarget our investments.

I know Councilmember Clark shares my vision for an effective human services safety-net in our community and look forward to working with her.

We look to the example set by a diverse group of committed and inspiring teens known as Youth Ambassadors.

Ranging from sixth graders to university students, this group of young leaders strives to connect to their communities by influencing issues and others through peer-to-peer mentorship. Together, they deepen their understanding of what it means to engage compassion in a purposeful manner.

Lori Markowitz is the Cleveland High School teacher at the helm of this group, and the program has been launched at Roxhill and Concorde Elementary Schools, Denny Middle School, and Nathan Hale High School.

I want to welcome Lori, and:

- Kenisha Bijoux Rullan,
- Marissa Dominguez
- Marcos Ruiz
- Yerenia Urbine Calvillo
- Dign Rose Garcia
- Devan Rogers, and
- Hanna Rossen

who are our guests today.

Thank you all for your inspiring work.

[CLIMATE CHANGE]

Climate change is the most significant issue we have ever faced as a species.

Evidence of its impacts is quickly growing.

Globally, 2013 was the fourth hottest year on record.

In the United States, 2012 was the hottest year ever recorded.

In the Cascades this winter, a lack of snow has hurt skiing season – which could result in a drought this summer.

In December 2012, a storm coupled with an unusually high tide caused the highest Puget Sound water levels ever recorded.

Climate change is also a social and economic justice issue – since the impact of climate change is most often felt by those who can least afford it.

One needs only to look at those affected by hurricanes Katrina and Sandy for two recent and devastating examples of this.

As population centers, cities in general are well-positioned to drive meaningful reductions in carbon emissions.

This City can do so by making policy commitments in several key areas – namely in performance measuring, and in transportation.

Performance measuring

Where is Seattle making sustainable progress out in the community?

To date, we've only measured our progress in an ad hoc way—goal by goal, program by program.

For the first time ever for this City, my Administration will issue a comprehensive citywide environmental performance report card – not just of government operations, but of the City as a whole.

On Earth Day, we will release a report that evaluates our progress in achieving key environmental goals and targets, and identifies opportunities for further action.

In addition, the City is conducting a comprehensive sustainability assessment using the national STAR Communities framework, which evaluates and rates cities' progress in building a sustainable community.

Drawing from information in these reports, I will convene a committee of leaders from all sectors to take a thorough look at where Seattle is strong and where we can do better, and will ask them to make recommendations for a City Environmental Action Agenda for 2015.

Planning to reduce our impact on climate change also requires us to plan for climate change's impact on us.

Areas projected to be most significantly impacted by sea level rise include South Park, Harbor Island and other areas along the Duwamish, Interbay and parts of West Seattle.

And, of course, our Seawall.

In 2014, we will develop a citywide Climate Change Preparedness & Resilience Strategy which will focus on city-owned assets and services.

Seattle's utilities have done extensive work over the past several years in assessing the impacts of climate change on water and electricity supply and the drainage and wastewater system, and are preparing accordingly.

In the coming year, we will build on their ongoing work to develop a comprehensive citywide strategy.

Transportation

Nearly half of our region's carbon emissions come from transportation-related sources.

Seattle is one of only five U.S. cities where less than half all commuters are in single-occupancy vehicles.

But when such a large percentage of our contribution to climate change comes from just this one sector, continuing to move the needle can have a significant impact on our overall efforts to address climate change.

We can and must keep pushing toward a goal where 75 percent of our commuters travel to work by walking, biking, transit or carpool.

We can do that by broadening the array of viable transportation choices available to all.

For example: Bike Share.

I will announce plans very soon with our friends at Puget Sound Bike Share to bring an exciting new bike share program to Seattle – a program we are prepared to launch in 2014.

A second example: streetcars.

We already have the Lake Union streetcar – with ridership at three times initial expectations.

And later this year, we are opening the First Hill/Capitol Hill streetcar.

But a missing link is the Center City/First Avenue streetcar.

I will be directing SDOT to finish design work and work with our federal partners to secure funding for implementation of this project.

When completed these streetcars will carry more than 31,000 daily riders and will connect

South Lake Union,
the Pike Place Market,
Pioneer Square,
the International District,
the new Yesler Terrace,
First Hill and
Capitol Hill

with trains as frequent as every 5 minutes

A third example – the most urgent example for our entire region – is bus service.

We must Save Metro.

Metro is the workhorse of our city, with more than 300,000 riders every weekday.

Metro made possible our historic parade several weeks ago. And our continued growth as a region will only be possible with continued support of Metro.

Working together with the County Executive and members of the County Council, let's get the word out and do all we can to ensure that Seattle makes a strong, informed vote on April 22 to save Metro.

So those are just a few examples of the kind of options that need to be on the menu for Seattle commuters.

But *it's not enough* to have a full menu of options if the options themselves are uncoordinated and disconnected.

We need to develop a plan for a comprehensive, integrated transportation system, and not individual silos.

This means reviewing and assessing data to answer two basic questions:

- How are people and goods getting from point A to point B, and
- How can we make our corridors more interconnected to move these people and these goods more effectively?

It means using the answers to these questions to prioritize the projects we want to fund – and it means identifying the source we will use to fund these priorities.

This will be the approach as we modernize our Seattle Department of Transportation. And this spring we will engage in a citywide conversation about what Seattle wants from the department.

I announced last week that we are back on track for Council to adopt a world-class Bike Master Plan that will put Seattle back in place as the most bike-friendly city in the country.

This is positive news.

And we can optimize the plan and its effectiveness by making sure it fits into a larger “Move Seattle Plan” that integrates plans for bikes, for freight, for cars, for transit, and for pedestrians – to keep the entire city moving.

Keeping the city moving and working also requires us to continue making progress on improving our streets.

For too long, we have ignored widespread maintenance problems with our neighborhood streets.

We cannot continue to ignore these needs, especially where traffic safety is concerned.

We must be willing to bring corridor-oriented solutions forward rather than just focusing on individual locations – solutions that address safety like the one we just announced on 35th Avenue SW.

And we must continue to engage our partners in Olympia on critical transportation issues.

Working together with Council – in particular, Councilmember Rasmussen for his ongoing leadership transportation issues – and with local stakeholders, it is my goal to unite around a position on the Westside design of 520 in advance of the 2015 legislative session.

And we will continue to advocate during the remainder of this legislative session – and, if necessary, into the next one – for a statewide funding package that serves rural *and* urban communities across the state, and is part of our broader statewide strategy to address the impacts of climate change.

[SAFE AND LIVABLE COMMUNITIES]

Police chief search and DoJ reforms

Our City's police force is under a federal consent decree in large part because of the disparity in how public safety is enforced among our diverse communities.

For the first time since the consent decree process began, the Department of Justice stood with us a few weeks ago publicly and applauded our efforts and our progress.

Interim Chief of Police Harry Bailey has fully embraced the need for reform in our police department.

He's installed the most diverse command staff and precinct leadership in City history.

He's created a new Compliance and Professional Standards Bureau, which brings all the components needed to accomplish the elements of the settlement agreement under one Assistant Chief with the authority and responsibility to deliver results.

And he's accelerated the development of major policies required by the Department of Justice, including for use of force, stops and detentions, bias-free policing, and crisis intervention.

I look forward to meeting with U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder on March 7 to further enlist DoJ's support for our efforts as we continue with training and implementation.

I also want to thank the co-chairs of our Community Advisory Committee, Pramila Jayapal and Ron Sims, for their tremendous efforts to engage with nearly a thousand members of the community, seeking input about the qualities this city would like to see in the next chief of police.

We have received a lot of constructive feedback from individuals and from organizations – including an incredibly powerful video from the youth of PugetSoundOff, a group for young people to start conversations about different causes and to take action on different issues.

Please watch their video about what they want to see from their next chief of police.

I want to welcome number of them who are here with us today....

Our goal in reforming our police department is not simply to comply with the requirements of the consent decree.

The goal is to weave the recommendations of the monitor into the very fabric of our police culture and become a national model for urban policing.

Neighborhoods and growth

Our neighborhoods make this city special, and we need to rebuild trust between our neighborhoods and City government.

We are beginning a process to revitalize the Department of Neighborhoods, and identify new ways for people to be involved in the decisions that affect their neighborhoods.

I am convening a Neighborhood Summit to take place on April 5.

The purpose of the Summit is to have an open discussion about how neighbors can determine and help shape the future character of their neighborhoods as they grow.

In 1994, this City forecast the development of 50,000 to 60,000 new households by the end of 2014.

And under the Comprehensive Urban Village Plan, the City set as a goal locating 75 percent of this new housing in urban centers and villages.

Between 1995 and 2013, we saw 58,000 new households, with 75 percent built in urban centers and villages – right on target.

We are now expected to add 120,000 new residents by 2035.

The Urban Village strategy is a success and together we must keep it a success.

We must continue leveraging growth to encourage shops and services to locate near where existing or density breeds efficiency, and where the City and the private sector can collaborate on further enhancements to our urban environment.

I understand that this will unfold differently in *each* of Seattle's unique neighborhoods – and it's a conversation I am very excited to begin with *all* of Seattle's neighborhoods.

I know Councilmember O'Brien in his role as chair of the Planning, Land-Use and Sustainability Committee has a strong interest in strategies for future growth and look forward to working with him on these issues.

[VIRBRANT ECONOMY]

Entrepreneurship and small businesses

The spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation is alive and well in Seattle, and we need to make sure the City is contributing to – and not inhibiting – that energy and enthusiasm.

We must continue conducting outreach to hundreds of businesses – across all sectors of our economy – connecting them to important resources such as financing, marketing and navigating government processes.

This year, working in close partnership with the State, King County, and Public Health Department, the Office of Economic Development will launch a new online restaurant resource guide to help new restaurant business owners navigate the local and state regulatory processes of opening a restaurant in Seattle.

And later this winter, the City will launch StartupSeattle, a collaborative effort between the City and leaders of Seattle's technology startup community.

The goal is to develop a strategy for supporting early-stage technology companies, expand the number of startups, and firmly establish Seattle as an internationally-recognized home for emerging technology companies.

I want to acknowledge Council in general and Councilmember Clark in particular for your good work on the restaurant resource guide and on StartupSeattle.

Maritime/industrial sector

As we continue our ongoing conversation about the middle class, we must note that the middle class of Seattle wouldn't be possible without the approximately 90,000 manufacturing, maritime and logistics jobs clustered around the port – jobs which pay on average more than \$52,000 per year.

Ours is, in fact, among the most vibrant maritime/industrial sectors on the continent.

I will be convening an Industrial/Maritime Summit in the spring to help us better understand what our competitive advantages are as a region and how we can build upon and maximize them – particularly around widening our region's window for international trade.

As we take steps to bring more Seattle workers into the middle class, we must also preserve and grow the significant job base of this vital sector.

[EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT]

Waterfront

Progressives have always believed that it's government who is given both the *ability and the responsibility* to build the infrastructure that keeps us safe and makes us thrive.

We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do this on the Central Waterfront.

You all know by now of the significant issues with the bored tunnel.

And you should also know by now that my Administration is committed to working with our partners – WSDOT, the contractors and the community – to move forward on our responsibilities with the Seawall even as the problems with the tunnel persist.

Let us remember that the driving reason for this entire program is public safety.

The Nisqually earthquake was a warning – one we cannot afford to ignore. We need to get traffic off the viaduct.

And at its root, the failure mechanism is actually the Seawall.

So, despite problems, I have ordered SDOT to move forward and replace our compromised Seawall.

For the first time since the Seawall was completed over 50 years ago, this weekend we began work not just to patch over damage but to build a new Seawall, for a new generation and against the expected rising tides of a changing climate.

I established the Office of the Waterfront because City of Seattle has not embarked on a major project of this magnitude in years, and it's critical that we do it efficiently and that we get it done right.

We have brought in experts with a successful history of major infrastructure project management and delivery into the Mayor's Office.

The result, in the very end, will be a world-class waterfront park that will reconnect the city to the bay.

And during Waterfront Week in the first week of March, we will be revealing the next round of our designs, so please stay tuned.

Parks

While we have a nearly unprecedented opportunity to build a new urban park along our central waterfront, we also have the opportunity – and the responsibility – to preserve the many we already have and rely upon.

The Parks Department has identified a significant major maintenance backlog – \$267 million across 300 projects.

I applaud the work of the thousands of volunteers who give their time and resources to help keep our Parks and Recreation system accessible and open to all.

But, it is time for the City government to step up and be frank with Seattle residents about a very simple truth: The time has come to create a sustainable funding source for our parks system.

Where previous mayors have focused on capital investments and parks system expansion, we have to shift the conversation to the basic maintenance needs and services that are fundamental to keeping our parks and community centers as great gathering places for people of all ages and backgrounds.

I am committed to working with Councilmember Bagshaw and Councilmember Godden to present to the voters a funding measure this August that will deliver on our core commitments for basic services and maintenance of our parks system.

Broadband and technology

Part of making Seattle vibrant, affordable and connected is looking at how Seattlites connect to the internet.

This spring, the City is releasing its first Information Technology Indicators Survey in four years – which will give the city hard data on how residents currently use the internet and mobile devices across the City.

While we know that while it will show Seattle is a connected city, unfortunately we also know that it will also show that across the city there are disparities in connectivity.

We will use this data to inform our policy decisions and set priorities.

Conclusion

There are those who will tell us many of these initiatives are not the role of local government.

But local government has always served as the laboratory of democracy in America.

The programs of the New Deal began in NYC .

Seattle passed an ordinance protecting the rights of gay and lesbian citizens in 1976. It was not until thirty year latter in 2006 that the state finally acted.

We have the opportunity again to lead on disparity in pay and housing, on urban policing, on the environment and universal pre-K.

We must engage, in the words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in “bold, persistent experimentation.” He said: “It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something.”

Members of the Council, I look forward to working with you as we face our challenges and opportunities as a City.