



2022 State of the City Transcript

Good evening, tonight I am here to present to you the 2022 State of the City. First, I want to acknowledge the legislative branch of government that serves our city, our City Council. I want to recognize each of them, as they are seven independently elected individuals who are all dedicated to our city. Councilmember Kristiana Johnson, Will Chen, Neil Tibbott, Diane Buckshnis, Vivian Olson, Susan Paine, and Laura Johnson. I look forward to working with you this coming year.

Tonight, I want to share with you where we were as a city, where we are now, and where we are going.

Where We Were

This week is the two-year mark of when COVID was first discovered in our country, right here in Snohomish County. We have all suffered loss because of COVID. Loss of freedom of movement, loss of companionship, loss of loved ones. We faced massive changes, our businesses closed, we were stuck in our homes, our kids could not be at school. We have had to be creative in how we live, how we work, and how we play in this new environment. We have found new ways to interact, to meet, to use outdoor spaces. We have rediscovered what really matters and what does not. And, what is unmistakable, is our desire to be connected with each other.

In spite of it all, because of you, we are moving forward as a city.

I want to thank every one of you for coming together to help get us through this.

We are now able to get vaccines, many are back at work, our businesses are now open, our kids are back to school. We still have a ways to go, but we are moving forward as a city.

Where We Are Now

Next, I want to update you on where we are now as a City.

Last year I shared with you some priorities for 2021. They were; start making Highway 99 more livable, help our most vulnerable residents, be more equitable and inclusive, protect our parks and expand open spaces, and support our local businesses. Today I want to provide you an

update on where we are on some of these priorities.

1. Neighborhood City Office and Highway 99 Renewal

Neighborhood Office

Last year I talked about my hope to open a new city satellite office along highway 99 to better improve how your local government can come to you. A place where we can connect you to city services, respond to your concerns, and be a community resource.

Well, it took longer than I would have liked to find the right space, but I am happy to report that at the end of December I signed the lease for our new office.

In fact, I am speaking to you right now from our new neighborhood city office. But, instead of me trying to describe it, why don't you come along with me as we explore the office and meet some of your new neighbors.

Meet Judge Rivera; meet Outreach Coordinator Tabatha Shoemake; meet Police Chief Michelle Bennett.

We will be ready to fully open to the public in early March.

We will have our police and court utilizing the space before that. Our police will be able to start using the workspace by February 21 if not sooner.

Highway 99 Renewal & Gateway Project

Last year I talked about designing a safer highway, a more welcoming highway 99.

This fully funded project along Highway 99 from 244th St. SW to 212th St. SW is a 2 ¼ mile corridor with collision rates ranked as one of the highest in the State for similar State Routes. This project will convert the existing center two-way left turn lane to a landscaped raised median turn lanes at key points. A HAWK signal will also be added 400' north of 234th St. SW to provide one additional pedestrian crossing along the corridor and gateway signs added on both ends of the corridor.

This project will create a safer corridor by reducing the number of vehicular crashes, improving the conditions for active transportation users, and creating a visual identity when entering Edmonds from either direction.

I am happy to report the Highway 99 Renewal & Gateway Project is scheduled to be constructed and completed this year.

This \$10 million project is one example of the significant investment our city is making in this neighborhood.

2. Helping Most Vulnerable -Human Services Program Successes, More Funding

Human Services Program

Last year I talked about our creation of a new Human Services Program to help our seniors, those who are housing unstable and unsheltered, and to prevent those from becoming homeless.

I am proud to report our new program helped 178 residents experiencing homelessness, housing instability, food insecurity, domestic violence and/or other household needs.

Our program managed long-term motel vouchers for Edmonds Emergency Shelter program through the WA State Department of Commerce.

We received 499 applications for ARPA funded household support grants, processed and paid out \$234,989.59 in grants last year to families in need.

We finalized agreement with Compass Health for a dedicated social worker, contract approved by City Council. Position recruitment ongoing.

Coordinated cooling and misting station setup and communication during heat wave.

Coordinated warming center and cold weather shelter setup, volunteer recruitment and operation during cold weather.

Established Edmonds Homelessness Taskforce, a collaboration between first responders, social workers, local shelters, faith institutions, elected officials and city staff. We will be sharing their recommendations next week.

3. Taking Action Promote Equity -Equity Toolkit, REDI Manager

Equity Roadmap

Last year I spoke of our opportunity to rebuild in a way that achieves greater equity, inclusion, fairness, and dignity for all members of our society. In response to this challenge, our residents produced a citywide Equity and Social Justice Toolkit and Work Plan for our city to follow.

Each City Department Head created a work plan during 2021 and established priorities. These Department Equity Roadmaps will be finalized to support the overall goal of Community Engagement.

This roadmap was created to:

- Guide city actions towards equity in the coming year
- Put systems in place that create both expectations and discipline to achieve goals the city has adopted

The Dept. Directors selected priorities for this year:

- Community Engagement
- Establish equitable policies, procedures and practices

We anticipate finalizing the Citywide Roadmap in the next two months.

Through this process, it was clear we needed permanent support to guide this work.

That is why last year we put the new Racial Equity Diversity Inclusion Manager (REDI) position in the City 2022 Budget.

Racial Equity Diversity Inclusion Manager

This year we will hire a new REDI Program Manager to support the departments in implementation of the equity work plan and to provide support to the City staff Organizational Equity Team.

For DEI efforts to be fruitful, organizations have to back up their good intentions with resources, putting time, energy, and money into ensuring diversity and awareness-raising work is an integral part of organizational culture, recruitment, and larger strategy.

While many organizations are now including DEI in their principal values, intent is just the beginning. It takes a lot to implement strategies and initiatives that address and prevent biases in the workplace, and that promote inclusivity, recognition, respect, and appreciation.

As to the question of "why now?" As a nation, we have become very aware that our governmental institutions are structured with inherent systems of racism. Many government organizations are publicly prioritizing their commitment to change governmental structures and practices in service of better, more equitable outcomes. Right now, we have an opportunity to address the question of how cities can dismantle systems of racism in government and invest in lasting and meaningful change.

In order for a REDI program to be successful there must be a dedicated person (or persons) who is responsible for advancing that program. It creates continuity of this work and shows understanding that equity is not a one-time project but rather continual work the City must engage in, no different from any of the other regular services the City provides.

Indigenous Peoples Day

Last year I talked about our desire to honor our Indigenous People in a more meaningful way.

The City had developed a program to honor Indigenous People, but unfortunately, it was canceled due to COVID safety issues. The City continues to work on developing relationships with Salish Sea tribes as a community partner for opportunities to learn and honor their history and culture.

We are also developing a potential public art piece by indigenous artist(s) along the waterfront that would provide a strong visual and be educational for the many visitors to our beaches.

Arts Grants

Last year I talked about art grants for projects that focus on the challenges faced by the arts to address social concerns about diversity and equity.

I am proud to announce our Edmonds Arts Commission Create Grant program Awarded \$36,500 in grants last year to projects in performing, visual and literary arts with the purpose of building and reinforcing a diverse, accessible, and equitable cultural community in Edmonds.

4. Expanding Parks/Protecting Open Spaces -Park Acquisition, PROS Park Plan,

Land/Coastline Acquisition

Last year I talked about our desire to expand and protect our parks and open spaces.

Through extensive research, the City discovered 20 more acres of waterfront and tidelands north of Brackett's Landing that are accessible to our residents. (image/info included in PPT)

The City acquired a 1-acre parcel to expand Yost Park and enable the city to conserve a piece of its agricultural and farming history.

With help from our State Legislative Representatives, our City secured first rights of refusal for the 21-acre Marsh Expansion/Unocal/Chevron Property. This positions the city at the front of the line once the marshland becomes available for purchase.

For the past year, we have been in acquisition discussions and negotiations with landowners for several parcels including Perrinville Woods and a 3-acre undeveloped parcel along Highway 99. We have brought the owners asking price before City Council. However, we have yet to come to a purchase agreement that is fiscally acceptable/feasible to the City. Discussions will continue and we have more properties that will be reviewing this year.

PROS Plan

Last year I discussed updating our strategic plan for enhancing parks, open space, trails and recreation opportunities.

I am proud to announce this plan, called the 2022 Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, has been through an extensive community engagement process over the past year and the draft Plan is currently available for public review and comment.

This Plan establishes Edmonds' priorities for recreation programs, parks, trails, open spaces and recreation facilities for the next decade and is slated for Council review and adoption next month. Please consider reviewing the Plan if you are interested. More information can be found on the City's Parks & Recreation website.

Major Survey Findings:

- Livability: Nearly all respondents (99%) feel that public parks and recreation opportunities are important or essential to the quality of life on Edmonds.
- Usage: Park visitation is high, with 88% of respondents visiting parks or recreation facilities at least once a month.
- Park Amenity Priorities: Respondents indicated that the highest unmet need is for pedestrian and bike trails (84%)

Respondents ranked improving existing parks, and acquiring additional land for conservation and open space, were some of their top priorities.

- Respondents expressed a greater need for community events (56%)

The acquisition of additional neighborhood parks is necessary to address existing gaps in park services in the South Edmonds area and along the SR 99 corridor. Three new park sites should be pursued.

I encourage you to check it out. You can find more detailed information here about the plan ([show link](#))

Salmon Safe Certification Assessment

I also discussed last year to restore salmon habitat and help combat the pollution of our waterways, we were going to bring in outside assistance to review our policies and procedures to make our city salmon safe.

The Salmon Safe project is underway with conditional certification expected in May of this year. It includes thorough review of the City's current operations and policies around water

quality that support salmon populations which focus on our Public Works, Parks, and Development Services departments. The report of their findings and recommendations will be available for public comment period and then Council adoption consideration.

5. Support Local Economy

Local Economy

Last year I talked about our local economy. I am happy to report our local economy continues to be strong and improve.

December 2021 to December 2020 Revenue Comparison

In Summary: The three sources of General Fund revenues on this report; property, sales tax and development related revenues have increased \$2,571,326 over the same time-period last year. By adding in changes for lodging tax and REET revenues, the overall increased totals are \$4,248,245.

Year-to-Date December 2021 Sales Tax Revenues of \$10,302,518 are \$1,985,472 higher than they were in December 2020.

Business Support

Last year our city helped 21 small businesses with COVID relief grants totaling \$182,500. This is an ongoing program that we will continue as needed in the coming years.

Where We Are Going - 2022 Priorities

I have shared with you where we have been and where we are now as a city. Now I want to talk about where we are going and my priorities for 2022.

These priorities are: 1) Making Edmonds more livable, 2) Building connections to improve public safety, and 3) A new vision for public spaces.

1. Making Edmonds More Livable

Public Process for Naming a New Neighborhood

The City is committed to improving livability in the Hwy 99 area while celebrating community assets that are already there. We have hired a consultant to work closely with the community to develop an action-oriented community renewal plan starting in the first quarter of this year. As we launch into this work, we will engage with Hwy 99 community stakeholders to formally name their neighborhood; a new name will help to strengthen

identity, bolster community cohesion and bring new energy into this dynamic community. We plan to do a series of interviews and stakeholder meetings along with broader surveys to capture ideas over the next couple of months.

More Uptown Markets

Based on the success last summer's Uptown Market, we will double the frequency, we will be having it every two weeks this summer during the evening. We are currently looking for a new location, as last year's spot is no longer available. Stay tuned.

Emergency Communications Campaign-SMART 911

Another area that I want to prioritize to make our community more livable is the ability to get timely communications to all our residents. Recently we have seen the havoc extreme weather and a tsunami warning can suddenly create. That is why we will be launching a new campaign to encourage residents to sign up to SMART 911.

The FREE system benefits the residents of Edmonds by providing timely warnings and information about severe weather events and natural disasters such as earthquake, flooding, and wildfire from the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management and Washington State Division of Emergency Management.

The system also provides the City of Edmonds a way to send Edmonds specific information on all types of emergency and disaster events and preparation for those events, as well as other City information from Public Works, Police and Emergency Management.

The system is extremely beneficial to our residents by offering the opportunity to choose what kind of emergency alerts they wish to receive, and allows them to add more specific information about their household, which can be used by 911 dispatchers to relay to responding emergency vehicles to your location. You can go right now to our city website to sign up.

Homelessness

I also want to briefly touch on another subject that has been exacerbated by COVID and the livability of our city, homelessness. In the coming weeks my Administration will be taking more steps to address homelessness to ensure we exercise compassion and provide more shelter and critical services to help those most in need. But, for those who refuse assistance you will not be able to stay overnight in our public spaces.

2. Building Connections to Improve Public Safety

My second priority for this year is to build connections and improve public safety. One of the best ways to measure this is by taking proactive steps. One proactive step is having our police department build close relationships with all of the community they serve. Our new Police Community Engagement Coordinator, who you met earlier, is busy helping build those connections and I want to share some of the things she is working on this year, COVID permitting.

Community Policing

- Domestic Violence Month
- Family Court Awareness
- Crime Prevention neighborhood meetings
- Crime Prevention – package thieves, catalytic converter theft,
- Engage with Uptown businesses with the Chamber of Commerce
- Adopt a Senior Pet Month
- Mentoring program for at risk youth
- In discussions with the Snohomish County Latin Community on how the PD can better serve the Latin community
- In discussions with the food bank to mentor youth volunteers
- Launching volunteer program
- Recognizing scams presentation with the Senior Center

3. New Vision of Public Space

Public Spaces

The third priority I want to share is a new vision for our public spaces.

The pandemic has emphasized the importance of public space as safe and inclusive gathering spaces. This was especially evident during governor's lockdowns, when businesses shut down, occupancy reduced, and events canceled. People united in public space to meet their social needs.

We have had robust discussions about Streateries in Edmonds. While we heard voices in opposition, the majority of respondents in a citywide survey, thought they enhanced downtown. At Council meetings, people of all ages came out in support, and commented on how Streateries enabled them to see neighbors and socialize in the public realm in a way that they had not been afforded pre-pandemic.

Just imagine if we used a greater portion of our streets to improve connectivity for people walking, for planting landscapes and trees, and for creating new spaces where people can socialize and see their neighbors.

It is time we explore new public space strategies.

77% of our public space lies in our streets. It is critical that we allocate space on streets to activities that serve environmental, social and health outcomes.

For example:

Streets planted with trees or green stormwater infrastructure enhance our environment and foster walking, thereby reducing traffic and carbon emissions.

This initiative I am introducing tonight will create a green street network that will map areas that are conducive for expansive landscape and that can treat stormwater and reduce flooding.

People are attracted to our local restaurants, retail shops and parks. It is important that we leverage these social districts and afford the opportunity for people to stop and stay. This new initiative will:

- identify locations that provide opportunities for social interaction
- create new public space that provide room on the street for social interactions
- prioritize an investment strategy that identifies public and private funding opportunities.

The Parks PROS plan I mentioned earlier identified one of the top community interests is improving walkability and access to parks. By reconsidering existing street usage, we can make space for sidewalks that:

- connect places of interest
- improve safety of pedestrians and
- create spaces for social interaction

Conclusion

In summary, we have come a long way from when COVID arrived two years ago. We successfully adapted and reprioritized what is most important to our community, our connections to each other.

Our City is now making Highway 99 more livable, we are helping our most vulnerable, taking action on equity and inclusion, expanding our parks, and supporting our local economy.

We still have much work to do in these areas, but we are not stopping there.

We are going to take more steps on making Edmonds livable for all, build community connections to improve public safety, and evolve our streets to create new public spaces for our neighbors to gather.

My friends, Edmonds is and will continue to be a caring and vibrant community because I know that regardless what the future may hold, we will move forward together.