

# Mayor David Condon

## State of the City Address

### February 12, 2016

Spokane is all about community and it really does take all of you to make it great.

Within a community there are several partners – neighborhoods, organizations and associations, businesses, and government. All of those groups working collaboratively as smaller and collective communities have delivered the great outcomes we just saw and have us ready for even bigger and better things in the years ahead.

Good morning and thank you for being here to celebrate Spokane and to look forward to the great things ahead.

History tells us that it is imperative to look back in order to move forward.

Winston Churchill famously said, “Those who fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

That is unquestionably true. The world is filled with examples of conflicts, poor business decisions and government failures born out of a simple disregard for history.

However, I would suggest that the converse is also true.

Those who fail to acknowledge the successes and what made them so impactful are doomed to never repeat them.

Over the past four years, your city employees have done amazing things. These men and women are responsible for the innovative solutions that have made us safer and more affordable. They have driven greater accountability to the community and helped us become smarter about the way we do business. Their efforts have better aligned us to your priorities and made city government stronger.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the City Council, other elected officials and hundreds of people who volunteer their time to sit on city boards, commissions and committees. Your service is moving our community forward and setting an example for the rest of us.

That progress has not been without some learning. The past few months have been challenging and let me take a moment to apologize.



Let me apologize to the community and City Council for any confusion that has been created by the way the events have unfolded. It was never my intention, nor that of my Administration, to inaccurately portray anything.

As far as we have come in the areas of collaboration, communication and community, there is still room to learn, grow and improve.

Many of you have told us as much as we have started the process of evaluating the past four years, reassessing future priorities and refining objectives and strategies to deliver Vision 2020.

Today is a continuation of that community engagement process. You will hear from some of those who have already offered their thoughts. There will also be opportunities today and over the next couple of months for you to join the discussion.

As we look back – as I look back over my first four years as mayor – the city has been at its best when we have worked together – the Administration, the City Council, the community, and the media – to drive Spokane forward.

More than a few examples come to mind.

Homes for Spokane's Heroes, an initiative that settled nearly 200 veterans and their families in permanent homes last year.

The ongoing effort to re-engineer our police services into a national model.

The strides made evolving fire and emergency medical services delivery.

Opening the Domestic Violence Family Justice Center at the YWCA to combine the resources to advocate, investigate and prosecute in a single victim-friendly location.

Passing the street levy and beginning to deliver those improvements.

Passing the park bond that will make the most significant investment in Riverfront Park in more than four decades.

Spokane Gives, which shines a spotlight on the compassion in our community and the year-round need for your time, talent and treasure.

Using a barge to clean up the bed of the Spokane River one piece of discarded trash at a time.



Each of these has one very important commonality.

Collaboration, communication and community made them examples of progress and success.

Elected officials, service providers, community members and organizations, individuals, youths and adults, business and neighborhood leaders all came together to make those things happen in Spokane. Each had a role to play as we worked collectively for the good of Spokane.

Two years ago, I stood on this very stage and asked you to show me what makes Spokane special to you. I asked you to write your definition of My Spokane on these sheets of paper.

Well, that is My Spokane. That is what makes Spokane the City of Choice.

That's my list, but we need to hear from you. So, we are asking, "Where has the city made progress?"

Let's take a look at what some in the community had to say.

### ***VIDEO 1 – Where has the city made progress?***

That big coalition of committed, caring citizens who want to make a difference includes you. In fact, it starts with you. We need to know what you think.

So, get your phone ready and tell us, "Where has the city made progress?" To begin, text 'SOTC' to 22333 followed by your answer. Has progress been made in public safety? Stormwater management? Road improvements? Economic development? Budget and finances?

Text your answer to 22333. For those joining us on television or @SpokaneCity on Facebook and Twitter send us your responses on social media or to [Vision2020@spokanecity.org](mailto:Vision2020@spokanecity.org).

Thank you for your feedback. There always a lot of different opinions that come in to the Mayor's Office. That engagement is part of how we move Spokane forward together.

Spokane is a community that is not content to leave challenges to others. We are a group that works together to get things done.

One only has to go back a few short months to November 17 and the days that followed the most devastating windstorm to hit our community in years, maybe decades.



Hurricane-force winds tore the city apart and devastated our infrastructure.

In a couple violent hours, the wind knocked out power to 200,000 people, crushed homes and vehicles, and left families cold and in the dark a week before the Thanksgiving holiday.

By the time the sun came up the next morning, Spokane was already working together to help each other.

Government, business and nonprofits worked side-by-side to identify and deploy resources to meet critical needs.

Hundreds of volunteers mobilized to knock on thousands of doors to check on those most impacted by the storm.

Churches, community groups, businesses, schools and many, many others made arrangements for people to come in out of the cold and have a warm meal.

Inland Strong became the rallying cry of a community that needed to work together to get things done.

How the community responded to that event taught me a lot about collaboration, communication and community.

It reminded me that Spokane is a place we all call home.

That's where we begin our discussion about the next four years.

Our passion for Spokane is a common interest we share.

As a community, we define success as what is best for Spokane.

Yes, we are going to disagree from time to time about how to get there, but at the very core, I believe our hearts are in the same place.

The beginning of a second term, a second four years presents new opportunity.

The transition team that came together four years ago to help us prioritize our work reconvened last month. The group of community, neighborhood, service and business leaders assessed our progress and talked about areas where opportunities remain.



Their feedback was complementary, encouraging and candid. They praised our steady progress, pointed to an increase in citizen engagement, and cautioned against complacency.

The letter grades they gave us were enough to earn a spot on the honor roll and also came with a clear reminder that there is still room to learn, grow and improve. That they expect us to learn, grow and improve.

Over the next few weeks and months, we will be asking for additional feedback during neighborhood and town hall discussions. We will be asking the same questions: how have we done, where can we improve and have your priorities changed?

Recent community engagements have given us a good start.

In conversations with the community over the past year, you have told us that the time has come to renew our focus on jobs and economic growth. Nearly 80% of the 15,000 people who participated in one discussion said that it was your expectation that City government helps drive jobs and economic growth.

Many have pointed out other opportunities as well. Let's take a look at what they had to say.

### ***VIDEO 2 – Where do the opportunities remain?***

They made a lot of really astute observations:

Keep that momentum moving forward. Continuity of leadership and the efforts of those people working together. A single voice.

What do you think? Text us at 22333 to tell us where you see opportunities.

Your feedback is important. We can learn, grow and improve and we will continue to improve because as one speaker in that last video very wisely pointed out, "If you sit on your laurels, it stops and it takes forever to catch up. You have to continue to move forward."

We have taken the guidance we have received so far to heart and have begun expanding job growth incentives. Growing our economy, creating new job opportunities and growing median household income so that businesses thrive and you have more disposable income makes Spokane stronger.

An economic incentive program we established last year in partnership with the City Council has us ready to promote job growth and economic development in ways we never have before. The program



aligns incentives with other development resources in key geographic and industry areas. Job creation, public benefit and new revenue are the most heavily weighted of the five criteria for evaluating public investment because those categories define the return on citizen investment.

Just last month, the City Council President and I committed the interest savings from refinancing outstanding River Park Square bonds to seeding a strategic investment fund. That money will jump-start private investment that generates new jobs in Spokane.

That kind of thinking is making Spokane stronger and we still have room to learn, grow and improve. We will continue to learn, grow and improve.

Public safety also continues to be a critical focus area.

Crime has dropped more than 19% over the past four years after years of increases. More police officers patrolling neighborhoods drove down property crime by more than 18% during that same period.

Innovative new programs that are fundamentally changing the way we respond to non-emergency medical calls and chronic users of the system are freeing up resources for more urgent needs. Additional fire and emergency medical resources are increasing our coverage and cutting the time it takes for us to get help to you.

Hire-ahead programs have been implemented for the police and fire departments to keep staffing levels consistent and strong.

Those initial steps are making Spokane safer. We can still learn, grow and improve.

In fact, we are improving every day.

Programs like the Youth Police Initiatives and Police Activities League are establishing interpersonal relationships that are breaking down barriers between officers and youth in our community.

Collaboration with the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing program is helping us push forward the re-engineering of the Spokane Police Division. We are only the second city in the country to seek the assistance of the DOJ COPS collaborative reform program.

Together, we are improving our policies and procedures, training and tactics, investigation and documentation, civilian oversight and community outreach. To date, we have completed 18 of the 42 recommendations DOJ made just over a year ago. Another 17 are in progress. The remaining 7 require



additional collaboration between the community and our employees that will occur during our engagement with DOJ.

More than 200 Spokane police officers are now wearing body cameras, which is the largest implementation in the state. We have established a new protocol to publicly release video that captures critical incidents to make those investigations even more transparent.

Spokane has also been invited by DOJ to host a regional training in restorative justice.

These are important steps that will bring lasting changes that are making Spokane a national policing model.

Geographic policing strategies remain the basis for how we deploy resources to prevent crime from happening and bring swift resolution when it does. Greater visibility, new relationships between police officers and the neighborhoods they serve are paying dividends. Vehicle thefts are down nearly 25% over the past four years. Residential burglaries are down almost 28% during that same period. Commercial burglaries are down 17%.

Despite all of that great progress, we are keenly aware that the selection of the next police chief will be critical to our continued success. The suggestions and feedback you and others in the community have provided to the citizen Police Leadership Advisory Committee has us prepared to begin a thorough, focused and productive national search for Spokane's next police chief. That leader should be in place this spring.

We are making Spokane safer. We can still learn, grow and improve. We will continue to learn, grow and improve.

Investments in replacing critical equipment, adding firefighters and innovative programs that reduce the burden on our fire and emergency medical services are evolving how we meet your emergency needs.

A \$2 million federal grant added a dozen firefighters system-wide. A new station in southwest Spokane has improved fire and emergency medical coverage in that area. Additional paramedic capabilities have been added in northwest, south and southwest Spokane.

The CARES program, a key partnership with Eastern Washington University, has been enhanced.

The Spokane Fire Department has partnered with local Red Cross and neighborhood volunteers to install smoke detectors in homes without them.



Those initial steps are also making Spokane safer. We can still learn, grow and improve. We will continue to learn, grow and improve.

You expect us to.

We will continue to invest in fire and emergency medical services coverage for Spokane, and will be asking voters to renew the EMS levy in the next few months. The first six new apparatus purchased as part of the public safety capital plan will be placed into service this year. We are also working to achieve greater integration of field medical care delivery with local hospitals to reduce overall community medical costs.

The community has also made it very clear that they expect the work that is making Spokane smarter to continue as we pursue the community's most important priorities.

Here's what a few members of the community have told us.

### ***VIDEO 3 – What are the most important priorities?***

As you can see, public safety continues to be hugely important to Spokane. Economic growth and collaboration were also themes that emerged.

What do you think? Text us at 22333.

Would you add to that list or reaffirm the priorities you just heard? Should we add street improvements, the Riverfront Park redevelopment, getting to a cleaner river faster or more resources for health and human services?

These are great suggestions and important community priorities.

Let me tell you what our thinking has been so far and maybe it triggers other thoughts that you can leave behind on the comment cards at your table. You can also send your comments to us at [Vision2020@spokanecity.org](mailto:Vision2020@spokanecity.org) or [@SpokaneCity](https://www.facebook.com/SpokaneCity) on Facebook or Twitter.

Over the next several years, our attention has to be on the most significant investments in the history of Spokane.

You have entrusted us with a total of more than \$810 million to improve our streets, redevelop Riverfront Park and get us to a cleaner river faster by keeping pollutants from entering the Spokane





River. Each of those is an important initiative made possible by your belief in our ability to deliver better outcomes through smarter investment of your money.

Street improvements, the first of the \$500 million voters approved over 20 years, ramped up last year and will double this year. Arterials, which see the most traffic and the most wear and tear, are receiving most of the early attention.

The work we are doing to get to a cleaner river faster also doubles this year as we remain on schedule to complete upgrades to how we manage stormwater and wastewater and keep it from entering the river.

Design work is underway on the largest tank in an innovative underground network that is capturing, storing and diverting hundreds of millions of gallons of wastewater away from our river during large weather events. Like other tanks in the system, it will integrate above-ground enhancements, in this case improved streetscapes, river views and trail access.

Of course, the functionality is equally important and the system is working. Our system passed a major test during record-setting precipitation over three days in early December. Four of the newly constructed tanks functioned as they were designed and diverted 4.2 million gallons of combined wastewater from entering the river during that single event.

Construction also begins this year on the first pieces of the \$64 million redevelopment of Riverfront Park. Plans include a new ribbon of ice, improvement of the carousel, greater interaction with the river and more defined spaces for community events.

That is a lot of work. In fact, this year alone, investments in the streets, wastewater management and park renovations will total \$139 million.

Partnerships with Spokane Public Schools and other local stakeholders are making another historic investment in creating new opportunities for youth in our community through the Promise Zone. This holistic approach to education, employment and social challenges is transforming neighborhoods in northeast Spokane.

One of the learnings from the windstorm was the need to further streamline our customer service offering. People, whether in times of need or during the normal course of business, benefit from a single point of contact that can immediately direct them to resources, so we will establish our 311 system by the end of the year to improve customer service.



Dedicating excess revenues from 2015 to replenishing our reserves is also a priority we are working with the City Council to get done.

The groundwork is also being laid to evolve into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century library system.

Great progress has been made to better, more efficiently connecting people to the resources they need most. The way the community has rallied around our goal to end veteran homelessness in Spokane has been nothing short of amazing.

We can and will continue to learn, grow and improve by investing more in health and human services and at the Council President's suggestion are collaborating with the City Council to set aside as much as 1% of the budget for this work. The model that has served our veteran so well is in many ways a blueprint for helping other individuals and families who find themselves homeless or otherwise in need of a hand to get them back on their feet.

The timing is right. The housing and programmatic resources either established or being built in this community put Spokane at a critical point to capitalize on that momentum.

Those enhancements, and other community needs, will be managed by new Neighborhood Resource Teams that better align resources to neighborhood needs. This is another area we need your help. Your input will help us organize teams, organized by City Council district, to improve responsiveness to unique neighborhood needs, establish single points of contact and more strategically direct resources.

That is just some of our thinking so far. We still need your ideas, feedback and recommendations because our best outcomes have been the product of our best engagements.

That's how we continue to grow.

Many major priorities remain for Spokane over the next four years and beyond. We are renewing our commitment to a safer, stronger and smarter Spokane and to do it in a way that is affordable, accountable and aligned to the community we serve.

The deliverables are ambitious and the opportunities are tremendous.

We have the chance to do great things if we remember the lessons that made us Inland Strong in November and over the past four years.

A lot has been done, but much work remains.



So, I challenge us to move forward. Together.

Let's not forget what has gotten us this far and apply those lessons as we collectively pursue new highs for Spokane.

Collaboration, communication and community must be built into solutions.

We can still learn, grow and improve. We will continue to learn, grow and improve.

