



2007 State of the City Address

Mayor Dennis P. Hession

February 9, 2007

“This is Our Time”

We are **the** City of Promise. No longer will it be said what we have is the potential to be or what might occur if things could just fall into place for us. Just ask the 155,000 who attended the U.S. Figure Skating Championships last week and the millions more throughout the country and the world who watched us on television. (Congratulations to Barb Beddor and Toby Steward and the Public Facilities District.)

Or ask the million or so people who will ride on Horizon or Alaska Air during the month of February and read the 24 pages highlighting Spokane. (Congratulations to Harry Sladich and the CVB Team. You are remarkable.)

We even have our own Starbucks coffee mug.

We have arrived.

The culmination of 30-plus years of hard work by strong-willed, passionate people committed to the success and prosperity of our City and this region, along with renewed confidence and optimism brings us to who we are today—the City of Promise.

This is our time.

Spokane has never before been in a position where a strong economy meets with citizens who have the passion and creativity to imagine what’s possible and then make possible what we imagine. These are Spokane’s Jobmakers:

- People like **Tom Fritz** of INHS, leading the nation with advanced health information technology networks.
- People like **Tony Bonanzino**, of Hollister-Stier, who took a risk, succeeded with a major expansion, and is building a great company.
- People like **Monica Walters** of the YWCA, who along with Rig Riggins of the YMCA, are combining their resources to build a fantastic new facility.
- People like **Marshall Chesrown**, whose Kendall Yards project will change the face of the north bank of the Spokane River.
- People like **Heidi Stanley**, who has helped expand Sterling Savings Bank throughout our region.

- People like **John Stone**, who sees the vision of the Institute for Systems Medicine to advance this community as a center of excellence for biomedical research .

This past year alone, our community led the state in job creation with 10,500 new jobs, a reflection of the success of our diversified economy. We also saw another record-breaking year for building permits, and sales tax receipts within the City grew at a robust rate of 11 percent.

We see a renaissance in downtown and a new demand to live there.. We are building an urban University District, raising money for a whitewater park, and expanding the venues available for cultural and recreational activities, from the Convention Center expansion to the Fox Theater renovation.

And we have great confidence in Greater Spokane Incorporated, our hosts today, as we partner to advance this economy and improve our business opportunities. Congratulations to Rich Hadley and the Chamber and EDC boards for their vision and ingenuity.

At the City, we are pursuing a plan to become best in class in the nation. That is our charge and our challenge, and I am here this morning to tell you that we will succeed. That is a definite stretch goal that goes well beyond our core services.

This is our time.

2006 was a year of great advancement. Let's take a look at short video we have produced to showcase some of the highlights.

PLAY THE VIDEO...

This is our time.

So what will we do with this time? What are our guiding principles, what are our priorities and what is our plan to implement our vision for the future?

Our principles, our promises are the same:

- Our integrity will never be compromised
- We will pursue excellence in all things we do
- We will be bold and creative in our programs and in our direction

We will continue to lead with the same priorities, to:

1. Grow the Economy & Create Jobs.
2. Keep the Community Healthy & Safe.
3. Enhance Customer Service and Secure the Financial Stability of the City.

Honoring those principles and leading with these priorities we are changing the way we do business at the City of Spokane. Although we recognize our obligation to provide basic services, we believe our responsibility goes much farther to provide leadership in this community and improve its physical and economic health.

With the goal of providing better service and better value to our citizens, the City is completing a comprehensive Efficiency & Effectiveness Study. This is a valuable tool, and we are committed to implementing its recommendations.

I am setting a goal of a net savings of \$1 million to \$2 million in 2007. The report tells us we should:

- Centralize and consolidate.
- Streamline and automate.
- Standardize internal controls.
- Adjust fee structures.

Among many other things, we will:

- Centralize the accounting functions of the City and tighten internal controls.
- Streamline the permitting process and improve turnaround times on permits.
- Work with Chief Williams, Chief Kirkpatrick, and our Fire and Police employees to determine how to deploy police officers and firefighters with an eye toward savings while preserving public safety.
- Reduce our fleet of City vehicles to save money on maintenance and vehicle replacement costs.
- Centralize our purchasing system by the end of the year to lead to better control and certain cost savings.

This work will require policy decisions and local legislative changes, and I am pleased to tell you that the City Council is committed to working with us to get it done. Each Council Member has taken responsibility for different sections of the report and will work with this administration to keep this process moving forward. My thanks to Council President Joe Shogan for his leadership on this effort.

We must remember, though, that the Study is just one tool to achieve that goal—becoming best in class in the nation.

I recently launched a citywide strategic planning process. Our employees are working to create a plan that will guide us through 2007 and beyond. In the plan, we are developing goals, strategies, and work plans that meet our priorities, that incorporate the financial planning work of the City Council, and the recommendations of the Efficiency & Effectiveness Study.

In 2007, as we focus on my three priorities, the following initiatives will emerge:

Open Government & Customer Service

For us, customer service is all about attitude and accountability. Our customers come first. We will be responsive to our customers by providing outstanding customer service, and we will be accountable to them through our efforts to open government to our citizens.

- Consistent with our current efforts in the Police Department to increase ready access to information, by the end of 2007 we will open up City Hall with **on-line access to 20,000**

new documents for easy access by citizens, with the ultimate goal to add on-line access to all public records.

- We will implement **one-stop shopping** through a new customer service center that will locate on the first floor of City Hall and will respond to a new central phone number.
- We are creating a new **citizen oversight model** for the Police Department that is suitable for our community and responsive to the needs of our citizens.

Financial Stability

We will stabilize the financial condition of the City.

- We have already started the process through **our strategic budget** for 2007. This budget incorporates strategies not only for 2007 but 2008 and beyond and is very conservative in both its revenue estimates and planned expenditures.
- We know that budgets in 2008 and beyond will be challenging and that employee medical benefits are our biggest cost inflator. We will **partner with our employees** to substantially resolve this problem within five years. We are also working creatively with our employees to provide options, such as wellness programs and health savings accounts that will reduce the cost of benefits to our employees and the City

Keep our Community Healthy & Safe (Quality of Life)

- The **reorganization of the Police Department** will be completed this year under Chief Kirkpatrick's direction. She has impressed us all with her knowledge and skills her few short months here.
- We will work in a variety of ways to protect our environment for future generations. Last week, I signed the Mayors' **Climate Protection Agreement** to help reduce the effects of fossil fuels and carbon dioxide emissions on global warming.
- Council Member Mary Verner and I are developing a **quality of life** initiative that recognizes the importance of the principles of environmental stewardship and validates the fact that it also good business. The Efficiency & Effectiveness Study recognizes the importance of a healthy **urban forest**.

Transportation

We will ensure the development and preservation of our transportation infrastructure and transportation network.

- We designate the completion of the **North Spokane Corridor** our highest capital project priority. We are working with Gov. Gregoire's office, our state legislators, and Congressional representatives to pursue the funding to make this happen. This is a prime example of the importance of the regional presence of the City of Spokane.
- We will seek funding, with our partners, including the Downtown Spokane Partnership, for early design and public participation efforts around a **downtown Streetcar system** that will move people more efficiently around the city core and promote economic development.
- Thanks to citizens, we will **continue to repair and replace our streets according to our 10-year plan, on time and on budget**.
- Strategic transportation planning is also important not only for Spokane, but the region, and I strongly support the objectives of the **Inland Pacific Hub** study, enhancing

Spokane's role as a transportation and distribution hub. (Thanks to Avista for leading this effort.)

Growth and Job Creation

- In an historic “first” for Spokane, we will launch our **on-line permit system** by April 30 so our citizens can apply for permits on-line and check the status along the way. We're also working with a group of developers with the goal of achieving the best building services department in the country.
- The City is taking a lead role in the implementation of the **Strategic Plan for the University District**. I want to thank Patrick Jones from Eastern Washington University for assisting us in obtaining a grant from the EPA to hire talented experts to evaluate our plans for development. We also are looking very seriously at a recommendation to change the initial phase of the Riverside Avenue alignment to Main Avenue to allow a more neighborhood-like development around this urban campus.
- We support the creation of a **Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District** in conjunction with Spokane County to assist with the development of **Kendall Yards**.
- We have worked hard with the business community to provide a new strategic direction for the **Workforce Development Council**, a private/public partnership for our region, and we will continue to do so to ensure we're meeting the needs of our community in workforce education and training to increase job growth and median incomes in our area.

Close

During his 1968 presidential campaign, Robert F. Kennedy said, *“There are those who look at things the way they are, and ask why... I dream of things that never were, and ask why not?”*

We are a community of big dreamers, asking, “Why not?” Now, more than ever before those dreams are being fulfilled. And we at the City are here to help make those dreams come true.

We are **the** City of Promise. ***This is our time.***