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News Release



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Renton Mayor Denis Law Delivers 2009 State of the City Address

Mayor Announces Annexation, Future of Library Services, Enhanced Safety and Crime Reduction, Emergency Preparedness, Community Planning, Economic Development, and Infrastructure Improvements

RENTON: Renton Mayor Denis Law delivered his 2009 State of the City address before a packed audience at a luncheon organized by the Renton Chamber of Commerce. With an emphasis on effectiveness, efficiency and accountability, the State of the City highlighted the city's recent accomplishments and outlined new programs and initiatives.

"Our region and city are experiencing one of the most difficult periods of our lifetimes, but even in these trying times, the state of our city is strong," said Mayor Denis Law. "With the exceptional vision and leadership of the City Council and the efforts of each and every city employee, we have accomplished a great deal in the face of adversity."

The Mayor outlined the current economic challenges and the impact on Renton. Total Renton employment is expected to decline about 3 percent this year and housing permits have dropped from more than 1,300 units in 2007 to less than 450 units last year and are anticipated to continue to go down.

The Mayor provided an update on the city's budget –the city's total 2009 budget is \$252 million, of which approximately \$100 million pays for police, fire, roads, parks and recreation, and other key services. The decline in consumer and business spending is expected to continue and result in reduced sales tax collection for the city. As a result the city forecasts a deficit of 8% or more this year. The Mayor mentioned that the city is exploring options to see how this gap can be bridged with the least impact to the community.

"We continue to look at every possible way to maintain high quality service to our citizens," said Law. "And though these times will test us, it gives us the opportunity to transform ourselves — an

opportunity to keep our city on a path that will lead to enhanced fiscal accountability, greater efficiencies, and a culture of innovation.”

Despite the economic challenges, Renton has been experiencing some positive gains. Renton was one of only three cities in the Puget Sound region to see a positive growth in retail sales, which was among the highest in the region at over 3% in 2008. New construction in the city has been between two and three times the regional average over the past three years. Renton’s assessed valuation has increased almost 100 percent over the last seven years, from \$5.0 billion in 2001 to nearly \$10 billion in 2008. Employment growth for Renton between 2005 and 2008 outpaced that of King County by 4%.

“Now is the time for us to put our city on a new path that will lead to fiscal accountability, greater efficiencies, and a culture of innovation,” said Law. “Now is the time to stand up for our city, because this is a city worth fighting for.”

The mayor highlighted several accomplishments. These include:

Unprecedented Growth

The City of Renton population has doubled from about 40,000 in 1990 to over 80,000 in 2008, in part due to the annexation of the Benson Hill area and other neighborhoods adjoining Renton.

Enhanced Public Safety

- Increased police patrols in downtown and transit center
- Relocated Police Special Operations Division to transit center
- Implemented the highly successful photo enforcement program – over 18,500 citations were issued, with a majority being given to non-Renton residents
- Launched anti-graffiti initiative and passed ordinance to punish offenders
- Cracked down on massage parlors and tanning salons involved in illegal activities
- Emphasized code enforcement and resolved over 3,000 cases involving code violations; demolished the Don-a-Lisa Motel
- Removed two large contaminated drydocks on Lake Washington

Preparing for Major Disasters

- Successfully responded to several major storms this past winter – city trucks and snow plows cleared over 13,000 miles of local roads
- Completed Emergency Management Plans and established “disaster assignments” for all city employees
- Provided blood pressure and blood sugar screenings during Renton Heart Month; over 500 people received CPR training

Promoting Economic Development

- Numerous businesses opened in 2008 at The Landing and throughout the city, and several new restaurants and retail stores opened downtown
- Renton drew several large employers to the city, including Providence Health and Services, the Seattle Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center, and Downtown Harley Davidson

- 50% of Cedar River Corporate Park, the first LEED-certified green office in Renton, is now leased

Community, Parks, Environment

- Had record attendance at events and festivals – from Renton’s 4th of July celebration, the Farmers Market, IKEA Renton River Days, Holiday Lights to neighborhood picnics
- Partnered with Renton Technical College in the CommUNITY festival to celebrate the rich diversity in Renton
- Continued to work closely with those in need in our community
- Revitalized neighborhoods, parks, recreation and community programs
- Instituted one of the most comprehensive recycling efforts in our region

Transportation Projects

- Duvall Avenue construction to be completed this summer, on time and on budget
- Completed improvements to SR169/I-405 Interchange
- Finished construction of bike path along Logan Avenue

The mayor announced several key initiatives. These include:

Evaluate Annexations without Impacting City Services

Welcome annexation areas that desire to be a part of Renton while ensuring adequate funding for Renton.

Ascertain Community’s Future Needs for Library Service

As significant investments are needed to meet future library needs, the city is working on a plan to give the Renton community the option to determine whether or not to annex to King County Library System.

Reduce Crime and Enhance Safety in our Neighborhoods

- Increase video surveillance at transit center and other identified areas
- Expand anti-graffiti initiatives, including placing several surveillance cameras at key locations, prosecuting offenders and seeking restitution
- Expand “Renton’s Most Wanted,” an effort to provide the community with information on wanted criminals
- Cooperate with 18 other agencies in King and Pierce County to reduce auto theft

Continue to Prepare City and Community for Emergencies

- Prepare Emergency Preparedness Plan for potential impact from the Howard Hanson Dam
- Develop automatic notification system and establish Community Emergency Response Teams for businesses
- Increase public access to AEDs (Automated External Defibrillators)

Empower Citizens to Envision the Future of Renton

- Launch Community Planning Initiative to empower citizens to create a visionary, yet strategic and sustainable future for Renton
- Implement the Highlands Task Force recommendations for the revitalization of the Highlands neighborhood
- Working on the development of an off-leash dog park, starting the Museum Master Plan and expect to be recognized as “Tree City USA” this year

Emphasize Strong Economic Development to Create Jobs

- Begin construction of Hawks’ Landing, a new hotel at Pan Abode site
- Celebrate the Seahawks’ first full year at their new training camp
- Work closely with Boeing to ensure continued prosperity and partnership

Invest in Significant Road Projects and Infrastructure Improvements

- Improvements to Rainier Avenue
- Install school zone flashers at all schools
- Improve sidewalk safety
- Work with Sound Transit, WSDOT and our regional partners to improve transit options
- Form a partnership with six cities to build a new regional misdemeanor jail

“We are in a new era of resolve and responsibility,” said Law. “We will make tough choices today, but attain greater prosperity tomorrow. We will come through this a stronger city.”

To read the mayor’s State of the City message, please visit <http://rentonwa.gov>.

