

MINUTES

**Eugene City Council
Hult Center for the Performing Arts
1 Eugene Center
Eugene, Oregon 97401**

**January 13, 2025
5:30 p.m.**

Councilors Present: Eliza Kashinsky, Matt Keating, Alan Zelenka, Jennifer Yeh, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Randy Groves

Councilors Absent: Lyndsie Leech

1. ENTERTAINMENT

Eli Hansen Trio performed *Norwegian Wood*.

2. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

City Council President Matt Keating read a statement acknowledging the ceremony was being held on Kalapuya llihi, the traditional indigenous homeland of the Kalapuya people.

3. ADMINISTRATION OF OATHS OF OFFICE

City Recorder Katie LaSala administered the oath of office to:

- Kaarin Knudson, Mayor
- Eliza Kashinsky, Ward 1
- Matthew K. Keating, Ward 2
- Randy Groves, Ward 8

4. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

City Council President Matt Keating provided opening remarks.

5. VIDEO PRESENTATION

A video of the 2024 City of Eugene Highlights was shown.

6. BOLD STEPS REFLECTIONS VIDEO

Mayor Knudson introduced the Bold Steps Reflections video.

7. COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS

Mayor Knudson presented the 2024 Community Service Awards to Nancy Bray and the Friendly Area Neighbors Equity Action Team, Dan Bryant, and Guadalupe Quinn.

8. 2025 STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS

Mayor Knudson delivered her 2025 State of the City Address:

Good evening, Eugene!

City Council, City Manager, elected officials, tribal leadership, dedicated staff, colleagues, friends, dear family. Welcome, everyone. Here we are. In the thriving heart of the Southern Willamette Valley, Oregon's second largest city, our extraordinary emerald shire, a city that is both Great and the Greatest, a sanctuary shaped by wild "still waters," a pastoral and promising Tree City, Sister to Jinju, Kathmandu, and Kakegawa, and the one and only TrackTown, USA.

Thank you all for your service and work for our community. It is an honor to be your 40th mayor. I am so grateful to begin by celebrating the contributions of community leaders like Guadalupe, Dan, Nancy and the FAN Equity Team, and more than a decade of Bold Steps Award honorees from across our business community—these kinds of contributions are in our civic DNA.

Looking around this room, and across our community, I want to begin by acknowledging how privileged I am to enjoy this wholly unique perspective. Because I am looking out to you—a room of talented, passionate, thoughtful people and valued partners, a community devoted to the well-being and betterment of this place. And here you are: together, looking in the same direction, thinking roughly about the same thing. This moment is no small thing.

Like you, I am looking ahead—mindful of the challenges we face, and motivated by the opportunities we share. Our future will be shaped by the depth of our connections, the strength of our partnerships, and our ability to hold our shared values at a time when so much looks to be pulling apart. Sometimes, in that context, it can be easy to forget the unique assets that make Eugene so special—especially when compared to other cities of our size, or even cities much larger.

It begins with our still-wild river and clean water. But is also the abundance of nearby farms. The immediate access to higher education, ground-breaking research, and economic opportunity—the intellectual capital of our flagship university and colleges. Our local commitments to education and public schools, to libraries and library cards. The hands-on social innovations of our nonprofit sector, and the idea-generators who elevate our local industries. It's the sprouting recreational capacity of our open spaces, and the charm that comes with internationally-renown events happening just around the corner. Not everywhere can you pop down the street for world-premiere performances or world-record moments.

Even our sky-high-engagement with civic life—it's an enviable strength to live in a community that cares so actively, conscious of the legacy it is leaving and focused on how we shape that legacy every day. Consistent, disciplined work toward a goal you can't yet grasp. Even this very building is an example: the Hult Center for the Performing Arts. A project funded entirely by local donors and a third pitch to voters in 1978. Hard-fought. The country's first performing arts center built without state or federal funds. People holding onto a dream and seeing a bridge into our future.

We all share the determination to help make something special happen here. It's part of why people say, "You're from Eugene? I love Eugene!" I love Eugene, too. We have these intangible and obvious assets, and so many track back to our people. Some in this room, some resting in peace and power. Some newly arrived. People who all made the powerful decision to truly invest their energy here. There is no mistaking that this is a place that believes in itself, even if we grumble about it. We believe that we can do things differently, and better. That is a unique proposition—a sincere competitive advantage—and we should never overlook it.

For the past 18 months, I've had the opportunity to spend time with people all across our community, knocking on doors in every neighborhood, with groups and gatherings, listening to how people care about this place. Everyone wants to know how we're going to rise to meet the challenges of our time. How will our city make progress on particularly complex issues: housing, homelessness, infrastructure, economy, equity, climate. Within a national and global context defined by systemic crises and political division—can we choose to be a lantern?

So, tonight, I'd like to reflect a little on stability and opportunity—and specific ways that we can nurture both. They are both part of what we love about this place, why we've chosen to invest our lives here. And the City has a critical role to play in support.

Housing is the foundation of opportunity in every community, for every person and family, across all backgrounds and incomes. Housing availability allows young families, workers, artists, and businesses to say, "This is the place we want to invest our life—and we can actually make it work." That's a decision so many of us made. An accessible and affordable housing market has made Eugene attractive for decades. But today:

- 45% of Eugene is housing cost-burdened, with renters especially bearing the brunt
- Housing costs are increasing at about twice the rate of incomes
- Our vacancy rate has averaged well-below 5% for over a decade—a truly unforgiving context for neighbors, families, and kids

The lack of available, affordable housing is the root cause of our homelessness crisis. For those without housing or shelter, every day is a traumatic and destabilizing experience. But housing affordability is not just a necessity; it's also a prerequisite for vitality, dynamism, and prosperity. It's a foundation but also a springboard for our vibrant community. A commitment to addressing this crisis is one of the reasons I ran for mayor, and I look forward to working across scales and with all of our committed partners invested in this work.

We all want to see our community grow in ways that are healthy and supportive of an affordable quality of life. We know from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition that increasing access to affordable housing is the most cost-effective strategy for reducing childhood poverty in the United States. And we know access to stable housing supports economic mobility, school readiness, and helps to close the racial wealth gap. These outcomes underscore why I'm framing housing through the lens of stability and opportunity. They represent what we all gain, as a community, when we commit to improving our housing options. For example, the housing reform work that Eugene

undertook to design our middle housing code has been recognized as one of the most significant steps toward advancing racial justice and housing justice in our history. And this thoughtful re-regulation process has been productive in creating more housing opportunities.

Thanks to reforms that allow for diversity and prioritize affordability, so far we're seeing about 100 new units per year spread throughout a city with more than 83,000 existing residential addresses. So while the change isn't radical, it's significant progress. In just a few years, these regulatory changes are on track to spur what could be \$50 million in new housing investment.

What's important to keep in mind is that these homes didn't need public funding; they simply needed us to enact policies that allowed them to exist. And at about the same time, we created the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to support new affordable housing construction. Tonight, I want to highlight the power of this three-pronged approach: Reducing costs and improving regulation while identifying strategic funding. This approach holds tremendous potential as we work together to create sustainable housing options in Downtown Eugene.

Most of Downtown Eugene still has a lower residential density than most of our typical neighborhoods. That statistic tells you almost everything you need to know about why Downtown has struggled. Vibrant places need people power. Concentrations of energy—that's us.

Our city center should be where residential density is highest. Downtown needs people to support local businesses, to start small businesses, to activate public spaces, to breathe life into the center of the city. Housing holds people.

During my campaign, I spoke about the need for a Downtown Housing Initiative, and tonight, I'll announce a challenge that builds on our current planning: We need to build 1,000 new units of housing in Downtown in the next 5 years, and we need 200 of them to be in the Downtown core. This is double our current housing production, and a huge challenge—zero units of housing have been built in the Downtown Core in the past 5 years. But this shift is the trajectory we need to be on.

To meet this goal, the City will need to identify multiple new sites for housing development each year, reform our processes to reduce cost and time, and ensure downtown has the public safety support it needs. We will need to continue to work as an effective partner, bring financial tools to the table, and look for new ways that the city can partner with housing developers to meet our community's needs. I'll support aligning resources to those needs, and I'll work with City Council and staff to communicate city-wide strategies that support housing production.

I know our City Council cares deeply about this work—because it helps us economically, environmentally, and socially—and Council actions from 2024 support this trajectory. One half-acre at a time, we repair our City center and reinhabit our downtown core with neighbors, business, and the social life of cities. This kind of initiative will deliver the housing we need, and also support local jobs, spur economic

development, and model sustainable development. We are always doing more than one thing at a time.

As we're meeting our housing needs, Eugene also will be growing into a safer, greener, more beautiful city. As an architect and an urban designer, I care deeply about how we build our city. How we design and shape our city impacts people for generations.

We have long been listed among the most livable cities in the country, and our green spaces, parks, and trails are a big part of the reason why. Our parks and open space network, the expansion of conservation areas, and the visionary plans for our ridgeline and riverside open space systems—all are examples of generational investment in this place, and the power of a community that sees itself as part of a larger legacy.

But in most cities, streets make up 80% of public space—and their beauty should live up to the beauty of our parks and open spaces. The design of our urban streets and sidewalks support our quality of life and our connections to each other. Their quality and connectivity support economic development and public health. People who live within walking distance of a park—and have a safe route to walk there—live longer, happier, and less stressed lives. This is part of why we love Eugene. Surrounded by such extraordinary green spaces, I often think about the ways in which we can weave these natural connections into our city. How can we celebrate the unique character of our neighborhoods and urban public spaces while honoring the beauty around us?

This can be true in generational projects like the transformation of Franklin Boulevard, and with key bicycle corridors or pedestrian safety and beautification projects in our neighborhoods.

When we think about safety and public space, we must prioritize design, not just behavior. Why? Because the former influences the latter. Street design, in particular, is safety design. Streets are the most dangerous public spaces, and in Eugene, we want to make it safer for people to walk and bike, and easier for them to take advantage of our transit systems. The average household in Eugene spends 23% of their income on transportation every year—that's almost \$12,000 annually. Transportation options can save people money, supporting overall affordability, and they are among our most influential climate-action efforts.

And of course our public spaces must be safe and accessible to everyone. Everyone in Eugene should be able to enjoy our public spaces without worrying about harassment, profiling, or violence. We have significant work to do on this front, and, with more urgency than ever, we must address the ongoing crisis and repercussions of homelessness.

No city solves homelessness alone. We have strong partners in this work. They reach from the Governor's Office, to our Legislative delegation, County leadership, dedicated nonprofit organizations, and civically-minded business community. In this work, we are part of a team.

The outcomes that Lane County delivered with Governor Kotek's first round of All-In funding were literally off the charts—surpassing every goal: more than 1,900 people stabilized in housing, 244 households permanently housed, 304 new emergency shelter beds provided.

Locally, leaders from all three sectors have also supported the launch of ActNowLane, underscoring the importance of diverse, public-private-nonprofit expertise to move the needle on structural, systemic challenges.

In this work, the City of Eugene's catalytic role has been to advocate for innovative shelter solutions and expand the range of shelter solutions that qualify for state funding. As the population center of a County with a nation-leading per capita rate of homelessness, the crisis of homelessness looks different, and the work our city, neighbors, and community partners have done to stand up innovative shelter solutions is helping to save lives, reduce conflict, and mitigate harm. Thank you. "Homelessness is a Housing Problem," but as we build the housing we need, shelter is an important step. In this coming session, I will advocate for state funding to stabilize our shelter capacity, and I will be part of our city's efforts to inform a statewide, comprehensive framework for homelessness.

We have a lot to do, and a lot more to talk about. But I will close now, because we also have Titans, Ducks, Beacons, and refreshments waiting for you. I hope you'll join me there in just a moment.

As our only city-wide elected official, the Mayor has a unique responsibility to foster civic engagement, effective communication, and uphold the public trust. I promised to be accessible and proactive in this work, and I will. Many of you know I love a coffee meeting or a meeting on a walk or run—but I'm also hoping you'll invite me back to your front porches. Over the next year, I'll coordinate a series of informal community porch tours with neighbors and businesses across Eugene. These meetings will be a chance to connect, and to hear your thoughts about the most important issues where you live and work.

In addition to this work, I will continue to champion models of equitable engagement and approaches that ensure we are hearing from a representative cross-section of the community. This innovative approach to community involvement gives us a richer, more diverse picture of our needs. You'll also see me share regular updates on weekly events and public meetings, and stories from our work all around the city. Accessibility is a priority on my calendar, and as mayor, I hope to get to know you in the months and years ahead. Through me, I hope you will get to know our city better.

Tonight, I shared some of the key challenges and opportunities ahead: creating affordable, accessible housing; building safer, greener, and more vibrant public spaces; and fostering deeper civic engagement across our city. These priorities will guide us as we work together to shape a future rooted in equity, sustainability, and connection.

One of my goals is to help you see all the ways our city is working, for you, toward our goals—and to show how we can meet our challenges head-on. We're working on a

place where everyone has the chance to thrive and everyone feels their voice is heard. I hope you feel connected through our work, and to the generations before us who added their part.

Together we are shaping a city and a future that reflects our shared values and holds all of our dreams, that offers stable footing and soaring opportunities. So thank you again for being here tonight, and for being here in this moment together. I look forward to our work and I am proud to be your mayor.

9. ENTERTAINMENT

Eli Hansen Trio performed *Road Song*.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Katie LaSala
City Recorder

(Recorded by Cherish Bradshaw)

Link to the webcast of this City Council meeting [here](#).