

2020 State of the City Speech
Mayor Penny Sweet
February 13, 2020

Good afternoon my friends and fellow members of the Kirkland Chamber of Commerce.

Before I begin, I would like to introduce my colleagues on the council and the members of our Kirkland staff who have joined us here today..... Thank you all. The body of work and the achievements that I am going to describe in this State of the City speech would not be possible without the talents of these two groups of public servants and the powerful collaboration between our elected council and our staff. It is something for which we are envied and renowned across the region.

It is a tremendous honor to be before you again to deliver the State of the City address. I want to thank my colleagues on the Council for entrusting me once again with the privilege of being your Mayor. You all have my pledge that as an elected official and a proud Chamber member, I will dedicate as much time and energy as necessary to earning and keeping the trust that the Council and this community have placed in me.

Last year I told you that the state of the city was booming! (Just like the 4th of July!) We spoke of this Chamber's 100th Anniversary and how we had hit an all-time high of 511 members. We spoke of the thousands of housing units and jobs springing up in Totem Lake and Downtown. We spoke about Google doubling down on its investments in the community and we anticipated the opening of all the amazing shops, restaurants,

entertainment venues and new businesses blossoming throughout our City.

The fact is 2019 was an exceptional year for Kirkland, and it seemed nearly impossible to imagine that we could top it. And yet we have. This Chamber has now grown to 558 members and counting. We are now the largest and most active Chamber of Commerce on the Eastside! And that is thanks largely to an incredible Chamber team actively working with so many new businesses opening up shop across the city. Beth's ribbon budget has almost doubled and we're going to have to have the giant scissors sharpened soon.

Today in Kirkland's development pipeline we have over 5700 housing units and another 1.3 million square feet of commercial development underway. Google is seeking permits for a Phase 3 project in Houghton. Northwest University and Evergreen Health are both expanding. And best of all, this exciting new development is happening again, according to plan. This mix of jobs, housing and services is exactly the type of growth we want, and it is happening in urban centers served by frequent, reliable transit, exactly where we want it.

In 2020, we will be implementing next phases of our City Work Program. After extensive community engagement we will begin work on the Totem Lake Connector Bridge and construction of the Totem Lake Park and boardwalk project. We will also begin the major multi-modal transportation improvements for 100th Ave NE and Juanita Drive. A new bathhouse, picnic shelters and a playground accessible to children of all abilities will be built at Juanita Beach Park, and a new turf field and other major improvements will be built at 132nd Square Park. We're going to break ground on the first new fire station in decades at the Rite Aid site in

Juanita. And the City is doing so much more for parks, streets, sidewalks, water, sewer and stormwater. Over the next six years we will complete our largest set of infrastructure improvements in Kirkland's history. We seem to be booming still!

But there is a risk and a price to pay for the choices we make. If we want to prevent this boom from becoming a bust, we need stay the course by finding and maintaining the right balance.

We must balance being bold with being reasonable.

We must balance the metropolitan energy that is attracting thousands of new residents to Kirkland with the small town feel that is so important to so many that already live here and makes us that special downtown on the lake unlike any other city.

We must balance the excitement of new commercial and residential development with the impacts of growth and congestion that come with them.

We must balance the success of creating thousands of high paying technology and aerospace jobs with solutions for the skyrocketing costs of housing that follow.

We must balance the need to invest in the infrastructure and services our residents expect and deserve with the challenging fiscal reality we face.

We must balance environmental protection with quality of life.

And most importantly, we must balance the blessings of prosperity with the impacts of income inequality and serving the growing number of those who are challenged to make ends meet, who are in need, and those who struggle with addiction, mental illness and homelessness.

So how are we going to find and maintain this balance?

Well, Fortunately...

Exceptional women of the past provide wisdom and guidance for the present. This year we are celebrating an even more important centennial than last year. 100 years ago, in August of 1920, the 19th Amendment was ratified, and women earned the right to vote! The motto of the suffragettes was “Deeds, not words.” By deeds not words, the votes of women have transformed America and the world. By deeds, not words, women have also transformed Kirkland. For 10 consecutive years, the Kirkland Council has selected a woman as the Mayor. I believe it is no coincidence that Kirkland has flourished during that time. Susan B. Anthony said, “when we want to make change, Organize, agitate, educate must be our war cry!” Today, I intend to do a little bit of each as I make the case for balance.

Today, in the year 2020, to find balance we start with our vision! Our Comprehensive Plan sets our vision and guides our actions. But to find the balance we need we have to go beyond the words to the deeds. We have to go beyond vision to action and to act requires focus. Entrepreneur Alexa Hirschfeld said “The biggest challenge is to stay focused. It’s to have the discipline when there are so many competing things.”

Ladies and gentlemen Today, the word that describes the State of the City of Kirkland is **focused**.

We are focused on completing our Work Plan. At each of your tables is an updated version of the major tasks our Council assigned ourselves to protect and enhance the quality of life in Kirkland. There is one in particular I wish to highlight. The City is now embarking on setting a new land use vision for the Sound Transit Bus Rapid Transit Station at I-405 and NE 85th St. That study will incorporate all four corners of that intersection including properties freed up by the elimination of the cloverleaf –property owned by the State. This is a once in a generation opportunity to define what type of jobs, housing and services should be located by Kirkland’s first true high capacity transit service. We need the entire community to help us shape this vision. I call it out because it is an example of how fast moving and interdependent the opportunities before us are presenting themselves. The rest of the Work Plan initiatives are equally important and each one is complex enough to cover in its own speech. Accomplishing them all and making sure this plan stays absolutely relevant remains one of our top priorities.

We are focused on creating housing of all types, so that all members of our community may live here, regardless of age, income or ability. In 2020 we will be adopting new land-use codes to create more duplexes and triplexes and accessory dwelling units throughout the City. We need this housing for all those who create a complete community. We need housing for young families just starting out, for our teachers and first responders, for our grocery clerks, auto mechanics, and hair stylists. For our children returning from college, and for our parents who want to remain in Kirkland after retirement.

We are focused on leading both locally and regionally to provide housing and services for those experiencing homelessness, and this summer we will open the doors to the first women and family shelter on the eastside.

We are focused on public safety. Last year the voters of Kirkland passed Proposition 1 for enhanced police services and community safety. Because of that we now have added School Resource Officers to all our high schools and middle schools and a Pro Act police unit to concentrate on property crimes. We have partnered Neighborhood Resource Officers with behavioral health specialists to help address the increase of mental health issues across our communities. We are about to roll out gun safety training and education programs funded by the ballot measure.

This year we will be asking the voters to invest again to build a new fire station in Totem Lake and seismically retrofit the existing stations in Houghton, Rose Hill and Forbes Creek to keep our growing community of residents and businesses safe. We will ask for new firefighter/EMTs, to improve fire and emergency medical response times throughout the city. We are currently immersed in a process with almost 30 community members to help us determine the total scope of that ask and make a recommendation to the City Council. As we move forward, we will be coming back to the Chamber to seek support on this critically needed ballot measure.

We are focused on financial sustainability. In 2021 we will lose over 4 million dollars per year of state support through the annexation sales tax credit. We have come a long way since 2011 to our goal of filling that gap

with new revenues and with Kirkland Urban and the Village at Totem Lake we have come a long way but over the course of years we have also continued to grow across the city in ways that demand increased services and planning and parks, and all the infrastructure required to support them. This year we will be engaging our entire community on the tough choices we will need to make to balance our budget. These choices will affect all of you which means we will need your help.

Some initiatives you may like. We know we need to do everything we can to help businesses succeed in Kirkland to help offset the loss of the state revenue. We need to revisit issues like restrictions on sandwich board signs and any other regulation that can help keep businesses healthy and thriving here.

Some initiatives you may not like. The City Council will be reexamining the business license fees in Kirkland. Some changes to the head tax may be required to help us balance our budget.

We will absolutely engage the Chamber and local businesses on each of these discussions.

Finally, we are focused on equity and inclusion.

As Susan B. Anthony said, “I look for the day...when the only criterion of excellence or position shall be the ability and character of the individual; and this time will come.” We want that time to come in Kirkland. If we are going to create the safe, welcoming and inclusive community Kirkland aspires to be, then we need to understand and respect all perspectives. We have to examine everything we do through a new lens of equity and inclusion particularly in communities that are historically marginalized.

We must prioritize our actions and investments to recognize and help those who most need it, and not those who are simply the most organized.

These are challenging issues that are faced by all communities. And I am so proud that Kirkland does not shy away from our responsibility to address them. We tackle them together. We reject litmus tests and extreme points of view. We find the thoughtful middle by listening to each other, seeking awareness and finding empathy; Purposefully, with laser like focus. We are actively engaged in a process of creating cultural change within our organization and the City of Kirkland.

In 2019 we provided every police officer and all other employees with training on implicit bias from nationally recognized experts. The City developed a bias and diversity resource webpage for Kirkland businesses that was launched at the Business Roundtable and shared with the Chamber of Commerce and the Kirkland Downtown Association.

Kirkland also joined together with *Leadership Eastside* and *Eastside for All* with the goal of assuming ours is a community where People of Color feel included and safe. Together we are reviewing Police policies and practices and hosting a city-wide learning series called “Kirkland Talks About Racism.” These conversations are challenging us all to confront our own attitudes and beliefs with titles such as “Preparing to Be Color Conscious and Color Brave” , “Driving While Black” and “Shopping while Black” I hope each one of you is interested in participating in at least one of these presentations or dialogs.

This work would not be possible without the leadership, passion and commitment of the entire Council. We are blessed to be coming together as a new Council that will build on the strong foundation of past Councils and take us to new heights! We have added three new members. They are smart, accomplished and bring fresh new perspectives, and positive energy. They are eager to learn and willing to act. Every member of our Council is a “doer.” Each of us prefers deeds, not words. Each of us shares a deep commitment to good government. I want to tell you a little bit about each of my colleagues.

Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold was awarded the Association of Washington Cities 2019 Advocacy All-star Award for his incredible role in lobbying for bills to address affordable housing and homelessness in Olympia last year. He chairs our legislative subcommittee and among other roles serves on the Washington State Department of Transportation Executive Leadership group, The regional Growth Management Policy Board, Several transit and transportation groups and the King County Climate Collaboration. His passions are Kirkland, Parks, Smart Growth and Transportation.

Councilmember Toby Nixon has served our community in a number of roles since 2002. He was a state representative for the 45th district for two terms, then served as a fire commissioner from 2009 to 2011 when he was elected to city council. He is the president of the Washington Coalition for Open Government and as such has driven policy across the state regarding public records access and law. Councilmember Nixon’s passions are open transparent Small government, Public Safety and assuring services to the poor and needy among us.

Councilmember Jon Pascal is a consummate volunteer, from coaching his kids to baseball leadership to neighborhood organizing, to years of service on Kirkland's boards and commissions and now council. He serves on King County's Regional Transit Committee and the Regional Law, Safety and Justice Committee. His passions are all things transportation (which is a good thing since it's also how he makes his living) and pretty much all things safety. He was just appointed to Washington State's Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Council.

Councilmember Neil Black is an Attorney practicing in Kirkland. He came to us after serving on the Houghton Community Council, and has been an active member of the community as a Coach, Trustee of the King County Bar Association, and someone who is passionate about access to justice and reducing gun violence (Past Trustee Washington Ceasefire Board). Sometimes it's difficult to believe that councilmember Black really prefers deeds to words but the words he is sharing in his deliberations at council are full of deeds. There are just a lot of them.

Susan B. Anthony famously said "I do not assume that woman is better than man. I do assume that she has a different way of looking at things." One of the reasons that Kirkland has succeeded so well for the past decade is because we have been blessed with exceptional women who have looked at things differently. I am proud to welcome two new Councilmembers who are already upholding that strong tradition of bringing new perspectives to the Council.

Councilmember Kelli Curtis served on our Park's Board, the Kirkland Housing Strategy Advisory group and the Houghton Community Council before joining the council in 2019. Regionally she serves on the SCA Public Issues Committee and holds alternate positions on the SCA King

Conservation Districts Advisory Committee and the King County Cities Climate Collaborative. Her passions include sustainability and the environment (she is in fact a master gardener), Parks and also affordable housing and sustaining our culture of inclusion.

Councilmember Amy Falcone started her path to city council when she invited councilmembers to her home and we walked to Sophia's school along a not too safe walk route. Soon after, that walk route was fixed. She served as PTSA President at Thoreau Elementary and received the Golden Acorn Award. After Annexation she got very involved with her neighborhood association and served as co -chair. She was an Inaugural member of our Human Service Commission. Her passion and focus is on equity and inclusion , sustaining the natural environment and schools.

As for me, most of you know, I'm a retired healthcare administrator and own a little wine shop downtown. I serve on a bunch of committees that I won't list because frankly, they are kind of boring to the average citizen. I have a longstanding passion for this community and our city. I believe we are, in fact the best city in the world in which to live work and play and I will do everything I can to make sure we stay that way.

There is an old saying – “Don't stop when you are tired. Stop when you are done.” And I am nearly done with this speech. But this talented Council is just getting started. We are taking on ambitious tasks in 2020. We are focused, but we are bold. To quote Susan B. Anthony one final time “Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputations can never effect change.” I hope that you will be willing to join us in being bold and making the right choices and changes for our city. Thank you! And God Bless Kirkland!