

From the Desk of the Mayor of Hillsboro: Quality of Life Begins with a Job



Mayor Jerry W. Willey
City of Hillsboro

We say that a lot in Hillsboro – and we mean it. We recognize that a strong economy, with ample opportunity at every rung in the career ladder, is absolutely essential to the well-being of the community.

So, what are we doing to help Hillsboro's businesses be successful? What are we doing to provide opportunity for families and individuals to succeed in providing for their needs and their aspirations? Let me share a few highlights.

First, to attract and retain businesses which provide good paying jobs for our citizens, we need an ample supply of industrial land. With the chamber as a key partner, we have devoted much of the past year and a half explaining the need to have a long term supply of land, primarily in the North Industrial area along Highway 26, to Metro and our other partners. As I write this, the Urban & Rural Reserves process is nearing completion. I remain hopeful our efforts will succeed, and we will obtain a reasonable amount of future industrial lands to serve such key business clusters as high tech, solar/alternative energy, and bio-medical while protecting our treasured farm and forest lands further north and elsewhere around the region. In 2010, we will continue to work with the chamber and with other key stakeholders in an effort to move some of that land into the Urban Growth Boundary.

Another key ingredient to a successful economy is infrastructure. Here again we have been busy. Thanks to the leadership of Senator Bruce Starr and Representative David Edwards, we have obtained substantial state funding for a major upgrade to the Brookwood interchange at Highway 26. We hope to obtain a federal funding commitment for the project in 2010. Currently nearing capacity, this interchange is the "front door" to our north industrial area, containing hundreds of acres of good industrial land. With the improvements planned for this interchange, we will create the capacity to add an estimated 20,000 high-paying jobs in the coming years.

Meanwhile, we continue planning for a major expansion to the Hagg Lake Dam and Reservoir, guaranteeing a long term water supply for current and future businesses and residents. And on a more prosaic level, we will be tackling upgrades to our street, sewer and water capacity in the coming year. This may create a little inconvenience on our commute but those road improvements mean both jobs today and more jobs tomorrow.

In our downtown area, we are hopeful that 2010 will witness the formation of an urban renewal area, setting the stage for improvements to make downtown more attractive. We aim to build on the successes of recent years in our historic Main Street district, including the Walters Cultural Arts Center, the Hillsboro Civic Center and the Venetian Theater. 2010 will also witness the opening of two important investments in the Health-Education district – Phase II of the Pacific University College of Health Professions and the Intermodal Transit Facility.

Elsewhere in the city, we have approved the Amberglen Plan, a bold vision for increasing the density of this regional center over time, with medium and eventually high density mixed use development supported by a new central park and an extension of the MAX red line. We also hope to move forward in 2010 on adding South Hillsboro to the Urban Growth Boundary, providing additional housing choices.

I need to mention two other components of a health economy – workforce and city staff. We continue to partner with the chamber, PCC, Work Systems Inc., the State Employment Department and others making sure that we can quickly meet a company's worker needs. City permit staff and others continue to work proactively to find solutions to business challenges. After all, that is the Hillsboro way.

2010 looks to be a busy year – and we thank the chamber for its strong support and leadership in many endeavors intended to strengthen our economy.



Today Hagg Lake serves drinking water to more than 400,000 people, provides irrigation water to 17,000 acres of crop land and helps maintain flow in the Tualatin River