



## **2023 State of the City Transcript**

Good evening, I am excited to present to you the 2023 State of City. I want to first acknowledge our elected officials and distinguished guests in attendance. Tonight, I share where we are as a City and where we are going.

Over the last three years of being consumed with COVID, our community continues its strong desire to be connected with each other. Stronger than ever we are moving forward together as City. Are there challenges besides COVID facing us? You bet, but I believe our City and its residents are ready to tackle them together.

### **Where We Are Now - Update on 2022 Priorities**

Now I want to update you on where we are as a city.

Specifically, on some of the priorities of 2022. They were making Edmonds more livable, building connections to improve public safety, and a new vision for public spaces.

#### **Reimagining our Public Spaces**

Coming out of the shadows of covid people were excited to connect with each other again. I want to make sure we invested and connected with all parts of our city, instead of just focusing on our downtown. In fact, last year I reported a majority of our residents expressed a need for more community events.

Well, we heard you and we acted on it. In 2022, we engaged in a public space conversation about your neighborhoods. Where are the areas that make up of the overwhelming public spaces you may ask, it's our streets. The City hosted six roundtable discussions in neighborhood commercial areas, held over 30 core group meetings, and our community implemented three pilot projects. This was made possible by residents like you who helped plan and implemented the pilot projects.

#### **Events All Around Edmonds**

We doubled the number of outdoor markets we had in the Highway 99 uptown corridor and we held outdoor movies and concerts in neighborhood parks throughout Edmonds with hundreds in attendance. This was first year these park events were held outside downtown.

## **SMART 911**

Last year we announced a new campaign to sign up residents to SMART911. The system residents of Edmonds by providing timely warnings and information about severe weather events and natural disasters such as earthquake, flooding, and wildfire from the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management and Washington State Division of Emergency Management.

The system also provides the City of Edmonds a way to send Edmonds specific information on all types of emergency and disaster events and preparation for those events, as well as other City information from Public Works, Police and Emergency Management. When we started the campaign there were 30 people in the system from our city. I am proud to announce today there are now 2491. That is an 8000% increase in enrollment to the system from Edmonds residents.

## **Human Services and Unhoused Response**

Last year I shared with you an update on our new human services program. I am happy to report we not only have a new social worker but they have been fully integrated with our police department in helping our most vulnerable residents.

In 2022 the City of Edmonds coordinated services for 195 individuals with 62% of them presented with at least one behavioral health need. The Edmonds Police Department and City Hall Neighborhood Office were the top two referral sources.

Clients are connected to services such as temporary housing, detox and substance use treatment, food and hygiene resources and household support grants.

The City manages 5 motel vouchers through the department of commerce and is working closely with Snohomish County in preparation for the new temporary-bridge housing facility in the former America's Best Value Inn.

This has truly been an All-City Effort. Human Services is in coordination with the Edmonds Police Department (responding to calls and accepting referrals), City Hall Neighborhood Office connecting individuals to services, Community Court (attending and connecting to services; providing food), Parks department (responding and coordinating services for individuals located in parks) Community Services (ARPA household support grant program); Administrative Services (utility assistance programs); Planning Department (assisting code enforcement team); the Edmonds Senior Center (collaboration on social work and food needs); South County Fire (specifically the community paramedics); Sno-Isle library system (accepting referrals, coordinating day warming); and numerous non-profit and faith-based service providers. I am proud to say they are making a difference.

Before I move to the next priority I want to share with you a request. Dr. Martin Luther King said "A civilization can flounder as readily in the face of moral bankruptcy as it can through financial bankruptcy."

So, in our time of economic and social divide let us pause our moral judgment we place on those who have less than we do. Where we equate financial success with being morally good and those who are poor as being morally flawed. Residents have contacted me seething with anger about someone begging for money outside a grocery store or an unhoused person sitting on the sidewalk.

We all have been through hardships, have struggled, the difference is every single one of us who got back up had someone in their life to help them.

### **Community Policing**

Today, our police department is better than ever before. It is now better funded, better trained, better equipped, more diverse, more transparent, more accountable, and more engaged with our community. For example, last year our officers and community engagement coordinator participated in countless community outreach activities including sharing domestic violence information to English and non-English speakers in Vietnamese, Korean, and Spanish. They participated in neighborhood meetings for residents in South Meadowdale, Lake Ballinger, Seaview, and Firdale discussing crime prevention in their neighborhoods.

Our police department provided active shooter training to our businesses and churches to enhance preparedness through a community approach with tools and resources to help prepare for an active shooter incident.

They also created an internet safety program for kids of all ages. The program provides information on how to safely navigate the internet and avoid online security risks such as cyberbullying, online predators, and exposure to inappropriate content.

Our Police Department forged partnerships with local youth organizations such as Washington Kids in Transition and the Edmonds Boys and Girls Club. We also collaborated with the Edmonds Rotary, and the Edmonds Food Bank to collect over 500 pounds of food for our community.

The Neighborhood City Hall office is evolving every day and has been a place where residents can connect with one another and the City, which helps them to feel like they belong, and are connected. These partnerships helped develop trust and transparency, leading to better community-police relationships.

### **Local Economy Update**

Like the last two years, our local economy continues to be strong. Over the last several years our City took steps to support our local businesses through business support grants, outdoor dining permits, and tourism promotion and I am excited to report it is literally paying off. In the last decade, half of all sales tax revenue for the entire city was made in the last three years! More people than ever before are visiting, dining, and shopping in Edmonds. Business is booming!

### **Equity in Action**

Last year I described the need for and importance of hiring an permanent REDI manager. I have been frustrated in the challenges we have had in filling this position that was only authorized for a temporary hire. I am pleased to report we finally have some applicants willing to only work three years and the hiring process underway, but hopefully this will lead to a permanent position. Institutional discrimination and inequality will only be overcome by ongoing and permanent changes, not temporary fixes.

In the meantime, we have taken steps to improve the equitable engagement of our City. For example, in 2022, the planning and development department responsible for all permitting, zoning and planning for our entire city developed an equitable outreach plan.

This guide is for planning and development staff and contractors for how to conduct community engagement. It calls for development of long-term relationships and build trust with historically underserved communities. This plan was first put into practice and tested during Comprehensive Plan Visioning process over summer 2022 where multilingual branding and surveys provided to residents in Korean, simple Chinese, and Spanish. This new effort is for our city government to meet people where they are, not just expect people to read it in the local paper or visit our website.

### **Park Land Acquisition**

Another area of making Edmonds more livable are our city parks and open spaces. We identified multiple parcels of land to expand our park system (see map). Our parks department created a new nominations and evaluation process that includes working with landowners, site research, appraisals, grants, and land trusts.

Some of the new things are parks department now considers on whether a particular piece of land is suitable for our City's park needs are wildlife corridors, tree canopy, natural vegetation, does it have streams and corridors supporting fish habitat, it is locating within threatened watersheds, would it be eligible or external funding, does it address geographic distribution, or pedestrian access and trail corridors, and what are the recreation opportunities? I hope to share with you soon on some additional progress we are making in this area.

### **Highway 99 Renewal Update**

Last year I talked about building a safer highway in the highway 99 corridor. As you can see from the photo and from the traffic, many have sat through it is well underway. Shortage of basic materials worldwide like concrete has caused some delays but the end is in sight my friends.

In addition to the physical improvements, we are making there, our city staff has also been engaging in creating a Community Renewal Plan. This action plan is designed to coordinate City-led projects to address longstanding issues specifically in the southern Highway 99 area. It involved stakeholder interviews, walking tours to document conditions, public open house events, economic profile, and analysis of the physical characteristics.

Recommendations from Community Renewal Plan include public-private partnership to provide community amenities and housing options, creating new through-block connections to improve walkability, develop new neighborhood parks and use green streets to reduce stormwater runoff.

Now you have heard what we have been up to as a city in 2022. but what I am most excited about is to share where we are going in 2023 and beyond.

## **Where Are We Going in 2023 and Beyond**

Here are a handful of new city projects my administration will be pursuing in 2023. They will be multi-year, bold, and make Edmonds more livable for all.

### **Multi-Use Trail Network**

In April of 2022, I remember vividly going with the police chief to a scene where a toddler and teenager were hit by a car. It had a profound impact on me and the misplaced priorities we place on cars over people.

Today, sadly, fatalities among pedestrians and bicyclists have been increasing at a faster rate than automobile fatalities in the past decade. We need to change our priority from reaching our destination to reaching our destination unharmed. Our streets need to be designed to balance needs for all users and prioritize the most vulnerable ones.

The item I am most excited to announce tonight is a new multi-trail network. The goal is to create a multiuse trail network that connects schools and parks throughout Edmonds. It will provide direct connections to key destinations along commonly traveled routes.

The trail network will be located within ¼-mile radius of all Edmonds public schools and popular community parks. Any connection to schools that is greater than ¼-mile from proposed route may be provided along streets with low traffic volume.

### **Edmonds Preparedness Volunteer Group**

Another way we will be making our city more livable is by seeking help from all of you. It is clear from our SMART911 outreach that our residents want to do more to prepare for a disaster. This is a great way to meet your neighbors, plan and prepare together. Any disaster whether earthquake, tsunami, flood, fire will require all of us to look out for each other.

This program will bring together local government, volunteer groups, first responders, business and community leaders, and other groups with a direct interest in strengthening their community, supporting emergency preparedness, prevention, and response for the impacts of disaster.

The program will work to enhance the abilities of every individual through information, education, training, and volunteer service to make their communities safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the hazards and threats that may impact their friends, family, pets, and community.

Members of the Edmonds Preparedness program will meet monthly at City Hall beginning this month. Stay tuned for sign up information to be released soon.

### **Downtown Historical District**

Although I have prioritized city projects outside of the bowl, I recognize the impact and charm our downtown serves in our community. That is why tonight I am announcing the creation of a Downtown Historical District. Our Edmonds downtown core offers a unique glimpse into the past and represents a distinct character. I believe this history should be preserved. We will be

working with the WA State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to evaluate the potential of designating a historic district in Edmonds downtown core through the National Register of Historic Places.

The establishment of a historic district will involve exploring and surveying local properties of historic significance, community outreach and coordination. Benefits include raises awareness and appreciation of local history and formally recognize the historic character of our downtown for future generations to enjoy.

### **2023 Climate Action Plan**

Recently I was invited to an elementary school science fair about climate crisis.

It was heartening to see so many creative ideas to help reduce the impacts of the climate crisis. And yet it was tragic at the same time. Tragic because we are relying on our children to help fix this parent made catastrophe. We need to be the adults in the room, accept responsibility and make lifestyle changes to save their future, not just ours.

Extreme weather like fires, floods, ice storms and droughts are an effect of the climate crisis, but they are not the cause. Human actions are the cause. Our reliance on fossil fuels is killing the us literally. Our actions are the cause but, they can also be the solutions. Our carbon pollution emissions come primarily for two things: buildings and cars.

The Edmonds Climate Action Plan (CAP) sets actions to reach a carbon emissions reduction goal. The main goal of the plan is to reach climate neutrality by 2050. This means by 2050 we are only producing an amount of carbon emissions that our planet can absorb. Sadly, our City has made little measurable progress since Edmonds' first climate action plan in 2010. We must take bolder action. The 2023 CAP outlines new actions so that Edmonds can meet our 2035 target if we take action now. It puts in place periodic tracking of metrics holds Edmonds accountable to its goals. We cannot do it alone.

Some of the most effective local climate actions can we take include adopting zoning codes that facilitate, renewable energy projects, create a green building incentive program, require large scale buildings to meet LEED gold standards, invest in green street improvements that promote walking, biking, and transit.

### **Electrifying New Construction**

Because buildings emit half of our local carbon emissions, we need to amend our code to require electrified utilities in new commercial and multifamily development, incentivize electrification in new single-family residences until State Code is amended to enable Edmonds to require. With these actions we can prevent producing carbon emissions equivalent to 450 million miles driven by 2044.

### **Continued Highway 99 Investment**

Project Improvements:

- Add 6 ft. planter strip buffer with 7 ft wide sidewalk on both sides of Hwy 99
- Add northbound left-turn lane at the 238th St. SW Intersection to increase capacity.
- Improve pedestrian safety at the Hwy99/SR104 interchange by adding rapid flashing beacons, lighting, and signage to the pedestrian crosswalks.
- Construct new ADA compliant pedestrian curb ramps

- New water, stormwater and sewer utility upgrades
- Add street and pedestrian lighting to improve safety creating a welcoming and attractive environment
- Project cost is \$33M
- City has secured \$27.6M in state funding to complete the project

## **Conclusion**

In summary, we are making Edmonds more livable by reimagining our public places, building connections with city events in every part of our city, ensuring our residents are warned and prepared for any disasters we face, providing services for the unhoused, building closer police and community relationships, strengthening our local economy, ensuring our city makes equitable decisions that serve our diverse community, finding more parks and open spaces, protecting our kids with a more walkable community, preserving our downtown, investing more in our uptown, and doing all we can to protect our environment for us and future generations.

Even with all this, there will always be challenges and uncertainties that our city will face,

But I am not worried.

Because you and I are not alone.

We are blessed with an amazing city staff...

dedicated volunteers...

active community leaders...

caring businesses leaders...

...and the most passionate and engaged residents in this whole country!

I believe that if we all act with love and compassion for one another, my friends, our best days are ahead of us!

Thank you