

# For Immediate Release



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## **Renton Mayor Kathy Keolker Delivers 2007 State of the City Address**

*'Imagine a city of thriving neighborhoods, businesses eager to locate here and a city that is regarded as a model of how to get things done.*

*You Don't Have To Imagine Anymore – That Future Is Here In Renton'*

RENTON: Renton Mayor Kathy Keolker delivered her 2007 State of the City address before a packed audience at a luncheon organized by the Renton Chamber of Commerce. The state of the city address highlighted the city's recent accomplishments and outlined the work to be done to "preserve this future."

"We've gone from being a laugh line on *Almost Live* to being on the front page of local and national media including the *Seattle Times*, *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*," said Mayor Keolker.

The address highlighted Renton's economic future and growth opportunities. Renton's vibrant economy is expected to continue to expand. Renton's taxable retail sales increased by almost 10 percent in 2006 and are expected to surpass King County's over the next few years. Renton housing permits, between 1999 and 2005 were 55 percent greater than in the previous seven-year period. Rapid growth at Boeing continues, and for the second consecutive year, the 737 program achieved a record with net orders of 729 airplanes. Boeing's delivery rate is expected to be one plane a day in 2007-08.

The mayor acknowledged several of the members of the Sonics and Storm who were present for the address. She spoke about the opportunities and challenges ahead for Renton with regard to the multi-purpose events center.

"We know there is a lot of work ahead and due diligence required before we determine if this events center makes sense for Renton," said Keolker. "But irrespective of the outcome this has been a win for Renton. This has shown the world what we knew all along: We are a 'can-do,' world-class city, willing to roll up our sleeves and consider new possibilities."

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The mayor stressed her support for the “No New Taxes” proposal laid out by the Legislature. However she also called attention to the need to evaluate the true economic and neighborhood impacts of the proposal. The city will conduct an economic evaluation to determine the potential revenues and will begin working with the community and the neighborhoods that would be most impacted by the development.

“We will not allow our neighborhoods to suffer negative impacts without mitigation, and we will not jeopardize the financial health of the city by investing in this project any more than we can afford,” said Keolker.

The mayor highlighted several accomplishments. These include:

- Renton’s upcoming urban village at The Landing will also be one of Renton’s largest residential projects, set to break ground this year. Already 70% of the retail space has been pre-leased.
- From 2004 to 2006, Renton collected almost \$65 million in grants, loan and other revenues.
- Renton will be the home to several new businesses including the Seahawks, the Federal Reserve Bank, Providence Health Systems and more.
- Renton has purchased the world’s first hybrid aid vehicle to help reduce global warming and set an example for the region and the community
- Community Services Department recently renewed its status as one of 66 agencies nationally to achieve accreditation.
- Springbrook Creek Wetland Mitigation Bank in Renton, the first wetland bank in the of its kind in Washington, will enhance over 130 acres of wetlands in Renton.

The mayor also emphasized the importance of public safety.

“Most important to the city and our quality of life are public safety services. We have already taken several steps to strengthen our Police and Fire departments,” said Keolker.

Thefts decreased by 24% last year. Since thefts are such a large portion of total crimes, this resulted in an overall reduction of almost 15% of our Class I crimes.

The city launched a new community awareness program, Renton Heart Month to inform citizens about heart attack risks and how to quickly and properly respond to warning signs. By the end of February, firefighters had evaluated 1,759 people and those at risk were given alert cards for follow-up care. The mayor acknowledged two City of Renton employees who participated in Heart Month and as a result were able to save the life of a visitor at the Renton Community Center.

The mayor put forth several other upcoming priorities. These include:

- Highlands: A continuing partnership with the Highlands Community Association as the city and the community work together on the Highlands redevelopment.
- Emergency Preparedness: The city will launch a city-wide emergency preparedness campaign this summer to help Renton residents be prepared to last for three days without electricity and enough food and water.

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- Transportation: Several key regional transportation projects with an emphasis on Renton including \$1.2 billion for I-405 from Renton to Bellevue, \$410 million for SR 167 and \$380 million for the SR 167/I-405 HOV to HOV connection. These projects will be on the list for voters to consider this November.
- Airport: With the City of Mercer Island, a jointly funded airport noise study. The city will also be exploring improvements to flight approach patterns with the Federal Aviation Authority.
- Libraries and Museum: The city will begin a master plan for the Renton libraries and for the Renton Museum.
- Environmental Protection: In order to protect the trees and green spaces in Renton, the city's Urban Forestry Program will conduct an inventory and assessment of the trees in the city.

The Mayor also addressed the issue of annexations. Renton has 60,000 residents who live within the city's potential annexation areas and at some point are likely to be served by the city. As a policy, the city has determined that annexation is a choice of residents and the does not initiate annexation.

"We have two choices," said Keolker. "In order to take advantage of state funding that is available for a limited time, we can begin the process of annexation by 2010. Or without any funding, we can decide to accept areas into our city slowly and over a greater period of time."

"Every investment we make in Renton gives hope to a working family and helps to build an entire neighborhood," said Keolker. "The future is here! Let's all make sure that Renton will live up to the hope we have for our children."

To view or read the mayor's state of the city message, please visit <http://rentonwa.gov>.

