

## **The Oregonian**

# **Mayor Wheeler, in State of the City Address, Touts Portland As on The Right Track**

*By Gordon Friedman  
April 29, 2019*

In the third State of City address of his term, Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler on Monday cast himself and city partners as effectively tackling the city's homelessness crisis and policing controversies, pointing to what he said was significant and even unprecedented progress and pledging to ensure even more.

The speech, delivered from a corner of the Veterans Memorial Coliseum concourse, was chock full of oratory and anecdote. Wheeler told, for example, of taking a college course where he interacted with homeless people, which he said led him to forgo a Wall Street career for civic service.

But the speech was light on specifics for ways to alleviate what Wheeler said are Portland's most pressing problems, with the mayor focusing on his administration's successes. He told reporters later that he wanted the speech to "be more about values" than policy proposals.

Wheeler said the city government has made vast strides helping homeless people, including assisting 35,000 people to get off the streets or avoid landing there, even though it may not seem like it.

"We know that there are still significant challenges ahead of us and we know the problem could seem like it's getting worse before it gets better," the mayor said. He added: "We're not giving up."

Record numbers of homeless people have been moved from the streets and into affordable housing, he said, and the city is constructing affordable units at a pace ahead of what was promised to voters.

In his most significant policy announcement of the speech, the mayor said the Portland Housing Bureau on Tuesday will make available \$70 million in bond funding for affordable housing projects. That money could lead to construction of as many as 600 units, he said.

Portland's homelessness crisis still presents "daunting" problems, Wheeler said. But the mayor assured Portlanders the city government is responding urgently and that "we are on the right path."

On policing, Wheeler said the Portland Police Bureau has done more to train its officers on racial profiling, has hired unarmed specialists to help the homeless and officers' use of force is on the decline.

Being a Portland police officer is often a thankless job, he said, and the Police Bureau is at a critical juncture where retirements are high and recruitment is low. But Wheeler did not offer a plan to address the meager recruitments, which he attributed to the competitive job market.

Wheeler's speech also made no mention of some of Portland's toughest problems: people openly using drugs or suffering mental health breakdowns in the city core; increases in property crime; failing infrastructure, especially in East Portland; a spate of pedestrian deaths; the strained city budget and more.

Wheeler has not said whether he will seek reelection in 2020 and did not directly address it Monday. But he struck a much different tone than six months ago, when he muttered off-the-cuff that he couldn't wait for the end of his first term.

In his formally prepared speech Monday, he called being mayor “my purpose.”

“Being mayor is not easy. I was never under the illusion it would be,” he said. “But it’s by far the most meaningful work of my life. This is my life’s work.”

## **Ex-Portland Fire Chief Returns to City Hall as Emergency Manager**

*By Gordon Friedman  
April 29, 2019*

Mike Myers, who resigned as Portland’s fire chief in January, has been hired as the city’s emergency management director, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty announced Monday.

Myers was a well-regarded chief with decades of firefighting experience when he left his city post to lead emergency management in Cannon Beach. At the time, Myers cited as his reason a desire to be closer to his wife, who had moved to Gearhart.

On Monday, Myers said he was settling into his Cannon Beach job when he received a call from Hardesty, who asked him to return and run the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management. He told The Oregonian/OregonLive Monday that he accepted that offer and has moved back to Portland, though he and his wife will also keep their Oregon Coast home.

Hardesty, the fire and emergency management commissioner, said she offered the job to Myers because the ex-chief bring what she said is the right outlook to emergency preparedness. An initial recruitment also produced no suitable candidates, she said.

The commissioner in particular praised Myers’ effort to be mindful of how disasters disproportionately affect people of color and low-income residents, saying that approach “puts my mind so at ease.”

The Bureau of Emergency Management is a small office that coordinates Portland’s disaster preparation plans and outreach. Its budget this year is \$9.4 million.

## **Portland State Considering Banning Cars From Street at Heart of Campus**

*By Andrew Theen  
April 29, 2019*

Portland State University is considering banning cars from a one-block section of Southwest Montgomery Street at the heart of campus.

The university will hold a one-month trial run by converting a stubby section of Montgomery between Broadway and Sixth Avenue into a temporary pedestrian-only plaza.

On Monday, the road was already closed to through-traffic. The university said it will bring out seating, temporary lights, planters and street art this week to make the tree-lined street more inviting. On Wednesday, school officials will hold a celebration and kick-off event.

The section of Montgomery is already effectively an island between two significant pedestrian-only areas. It sits between the campus' urban plaza to the east and the South Park Blocks to the west. The recently remodeled Karl Miller Center, which houses the School of Business, is adjacent to the street. The one-block road is cut off from the rest of the street grid by the other pedestrian zones and has a handful of angled parking spaces.

Julia Mitchel, PSU's planning analyst, said the plaza makes sense. "Turning this particular block of SW Montgomery into a public space for students will really help establish PSU's heart of campus, better defining the school's identity in downtown Portland," she said in a statement.

The city is working with the university to study the plan and crews are already gathering traffic data. Hannah Schafer, a transportation spokeswoman, said the street was completely closed for two years as construction was underway on the business school. "We didn't at the time have any major traffic impacts then," she said. "That's something that we are mindful of as we go into this project."

The school said it would get feedback from students and staff and the community on how they view the idea to "evaluate the feasibility of and desire for a permanent street closure."

It's not a new idea. The city, PSU and other community groups in 2009 published a report studying ways to make Montgomery a "vibrant walkable corridor" from the West Hills to the Willamette River. "The overarching plan was never fully implemented, but the Pop-Up Plaza is a way to test its feasibility – at least on this one-block section," the school said in a press release.

The city's transportation bureau has an initiative known as Portland In the Streets to encourage institutions or community groups to come up with creative uses for streets, sidewalks and parking spaces.

## **The Portland Tribune**

### **Teamwork Needed to Fix Broken Water Main**

*By Jim Redden  
April 29, 2019*

**Think it is easy to fix one of Portland's 100-year-old water mains? That's a pipe dream.**

Minutes after a 30-inch water main fractured in Northeast Portland on the morning of March 17, the first four Portland Water Bureau employees already were rushing to the area to begin the complex and dangerous task of shutting off the gushing water.

They were alerted to the break by 911 dispatchers fielding calls from neighbors and alarms going off at the storage facilities at both ends of the 100-year-old pipe. The break near Northeast 23rd and Skidmore had ruptured the pavement above it, releasing 40,000 gallons of water a minute into the neighborhood. The alarms were triggered by the sudden drop in water levels at the Kelly Butte Reservoir in Southeast Portland and the Vernon Tanks at Northeast 19th and Skidmore.

It took more than two dozen bureau employees about 38 hours to fix the pipe. None of the work was easy. And only a few of the managers were required to be there.

"The break happened on a Saturday and our (union) contract doesn't require employees to work weekends. They'll get paid overtime, but they didn't have to respond. Our workers are dedicated to their jobs," said bureau Maintenance and Construction Director Ty Kovatch, who was one of the first four employees on the scene.

Shutting off the water was not as simple as twisting a single handle at the reservoir that was feeding the main. The pipe was connected to other, smaller mains in the area. A total of 12 valves had to be identified, located and turned off by forcing internal metal or hardened rubber plates across the full diameters of the pipes.

Water was surging through all of the mains under tremendous pressure. A mistake could cause one or more of the valves to fail, creating additional problems that had to be fixed. Even worse, the force of the water was strong enough to kill anyone near such a failure.

"The pressure against the largest valves is enough to lift a front loader, which weighs 50,000 pounds," Kovatch said. "The pressure against the smaller ones can still lift a car."

### **Working in the mud**

All of the valves were located in concrete vaults beneath the streets between the Vernon Tanks and Northeast 60th and Holladay. The largest ones were reached through manhole covers, the others through smaller plates in the street. The four employees started turning the first of them off by hand using specialized gate keys; an exhausting task because some required up to 250 turns to completely shut off. Fortunately for them, other bureau employees soon began arriving in trucks with machines to finish the work.

One valve could not be closed, however. Doing so also would have shut off all water to a large part of Northeast Portland. That meant water had to still be flowing through the broken main while it was repaired, adding mud to the already dirty job.

When the first workers arrived at the scene of the break, the broken pipe was visible through the water in the ground. The pavement and dirt above it had been blown out by the force of the water that still looked like a fountain in the middle of the street. They closed the streets between Northeast 21st Avenue and 30th Avenues, helped evacuate residents in 12 homes and worked with Pacific Power to cut the electricity to as many as 14,155 customers in the area as a precaution.

As the valves were being shut off, five gas-powered pumps were brought to the site to drain as much water as possible out of the crater before it was further dug out with a large excavator so the walls could be shored up.

With the still-flowing water reduced to manageable levels, workers then had to enter the crater and excavate under the pipe about 16 inches. This allowed a specially-designed saw powered by compressed air to be fastened to the pipe to cut through it. The saw circled the pipe on a chain, guided by a worker who made sure the it stayed on track and the cut ended exactly where it began.

The first cut took around two hours. The second went a little faster, about an hour-and-a-half. When it was finished, the broken section was lifted out by a large excavator.

As all this was happening, a replacement pipe was located at the bureau's warehouse at 944 N.E. Tillamook St. and loaded onto a flatbed truck, along with two 30-inch diameter sleeves to be used to connect both ends of the main that were still in the ground. A decision was made that one of the sleeves would have a valve that cut shut the water off at that location for future projects in the area.

When the replacement pipe arrived at the scene, the "air saw" was used again to cut it to the right replacement length. It was then lowered into the crater and secured into place with the sleeves, all while water continued running through it.

With that work complete, the process of reopening the closed valves began — once again, in the proper sequence. At the same time, water was flushed out of the main through a manhole west of the site of the break to remove sediment in the water stirred up by the rupture and work.

"This was the largest main break we've dealt with and it was repaired in 38 hours. That phenomenal outcome was the result of our committed crews and support staff," said Portland Water Bureau Director Michael Stuhr.

### **No cause has been found**

Because so much pavement was blasted away and damaged, bureau workers are upgrading other pipes under the street there before the Portland Bureau of Transportation fills the crater and repaves it. When all the work is completed, the only reminder will be the new surface.

Kovatch said that, despite the age of the main that broke, no cause for the rupture has been found. That section has been inspected and it is still in good shape with no significant corrosion. That means there is no reason to replace the rest of it any time soon.

Bureau officials estimate the cost of the repair at about \$152,000, including approximately \$98,000 in direct labor, materials and equipment cost. These figures do not include restoring the street.

"We get about 200 main breaks a year, although nothing this large in a long time. Most don't get any news coverage. Factor can include age or nearby construction projects, but they're impossible to predict and the reasons aren't ever known in most cases," Kovatch said.

The 12 valves that were shut off are part of the approximately 60,000 total in the bureau's transmission and distribution system. Of those, 1,200 in the transmission system — which includes the mains — are considered critical and tested every two year. Others are tested less frequently. They are rarely fully closed, however, because that would disrupt water supplies. All of the valves that needed to be closed for the March 17 break worked.

## **Mayor Wheeler Gets Personal in State of the City Speech**

*By Zane Sparling*

*April 29, 2019*

### **Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler revealed his intimate reasons for serving at Veterans Memorial Coliseum on April 29.**

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is here to stay — until he's six feet under.

That, at least, was the mayor's message as he addressed the cameras and a who's-who crowd at Veterans Memorial Coliseum during his 2019 State of the City address on Monday, April 29.

"It's the city I love," Wheeler said of Portland. "It's the city I'll die in."

Wheeler's apparent cradle-to-grave commitment to the Rose City is at odds with his overheard comments in November about running out the clock for the last two years of his first term, not to mention the long-standing murmurs that the mayor would rather style himself as Gov. Wheeler.

But the 45-minute monologue appeared to offer a window into Wheeler's intimate reasoning for serving in public office, which he called "the most meaningful work of my life" but also "not easy."

The speech began with Wheeler's reflections of his years studying business at Columbia University in Manhattan in the late 1980s, a step toward an "unfulfilling" path on Wall Street that he ultimately avoided.

Wheeler described a formative study of homelessness while taking a course on nonprofit management, which led him to interview people living on the streets. They told him about the "unrestrained bitterness" of feeling ignored, which Wheeler said he recognized in his own actions.

"I realized that thread of humanity is woven in me, it's woven around you and it's woven around us," Wheeler said, according to a prepared copy of his remarks. "We are all bound by these universal needs of wanting to be seen, to be loved, to have a purpose."

Indeed, the speech was packed with personal anecdotes, including stories about a Spanish-speaking couple who were helped out of a moldy garage and into affordable housing by JOIN, as well as a Portland Police Bureau crisis negotiator, Officer Bill Ollenbrook, who convinced a young man not to jump off the top spire of the St. Johns Bridge.

But the speech also hit listeners with a blizzard of statistics, including the 660 units of affordable housing completed or in progress by the 2016 Portland Housing Bond; the Portland Housing Bureau's 1,800 new units to be finished this year or next; the 2.5 million pounds of litter taken off city streets since summer of last year; the 35,000 people helped to stay or return to housing, or find shelter or access to services last fiscal year.

After segueing from housing to police issues, Wheeler said he will be "announcing soon the first steps" to allow service providers and mental health experts to respond to 9-1-1 calls instead of law enforcement. Wheeler additionally promoted his initiative to encourage private employers to raise their wages and hire with diversity in mind, known as Portland Means Progress.

He praised the rest of the City Council by name, noting Commissioner Nick Fish's work on creating 2,000 new permanently supportive housing units, Jo Ann Hardesty's "commitment to social justice," Commissioner Chloe Eudaly's work "reaffirming" Portland's sanctuary city status and Commissioner Amanda Fritz's oversight of the opening of five new parks during Wheeler's term.

Wheeler said he decided to stage the speech in a sky-lit corner of the Coliseum because the "storied" building, like Portland, is in transition.

"We are not going anywhere," Wheeler said. "We will be in the trenches for you every single day to make sure we build a Portland that is welcome and prosperous for all."

## Former Fire Chief Returns to Portland

*By Jim Redden  
April 29, 2019*

### **Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty hires Mike Myers to head the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management.**

In a surprise move, Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty has hired former Portland Fire Chief Mike Myers to head the Bureau of Emergency Management.

Myers left Portland Fire & Rescue in January shortly after Mayor Ted Wheeler assigned it to Hardesty. At the time, Myers said wanted to spend more time with his wife, who was living on the Oregon Coast. He had been hired as the emergency manager for Cannon Beach in Oregon.

But on Monday, Hardesty and Myers said heading the emergency management bureau was a better fit for him.

"I started meeting with Mike Myers even before I was elected as commissioner and I was impressed with his vision. We immediately had a connection and it was clear we had shared values," Hardesty said in an April 29 press release. "When I was aware that he really wanted to focus his career in emergency management, I reached out to him to see if we would consider coming back to Portland to work with me in this arena and I was overjoyed when he said yes."

Myers started his career writing emergency medical plans in Las Vegas before being hired as fire chief there, a position he held before moving to Portland to become chief.

"I never dreamed an invitation like this would present itself. I'm so energized to work under Commissioner Hardesty's visionary leadership and return to give my very best to Portland residents in a new capacity. The Portland Bureau of Emergency Management is critical to public safety and I couldn't be more enthusiastic to collaborate with such a talented group of individuals," Myers said in the release.

Portland Fire Battalion Chief Kristine Artman is the acting interim director of the emergency management bureau. She will continue in this position until Myers begins on June 1.

You can read a previous Portland Tribune story on Myers' resignation [here](#).

## Your City Hall: Report Urges Balance on Redevelopment

*By Jim Redden  
April 30, 2019*

### **The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission says an existing building in the greenest building.**

WHAT IS HAPPENING? The Portland Historic Landmarks Commission is urging the City Council to balance preservation with redevelopment in its annual State of the City Preservation Report, which will be presented on Thursday, May 2.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT? The City Council is under pressure to decide how Portland will continue to grow. The city's population is projected to increase by 120,000 households by 2035. Some existing homeowners, neighborhood associations and preservation advocates are warning the city's character could be harmed by too much redevelopment. Others say redevelopment will

allow more people to take advantage of desirable neighborhoods that currently are priced out of the reach of most residents.

Tensions around the issue range from the council requiring earthquake warning signs on unreinforced masonry (URM) buildings to the city's Residential Infill Project and House Bill 2001 before the 2019 Oregon Legislature, both of which would require smaller multifamily projects to be built in exclusive single-family neighborhoods.

**WHAT DOES THE COMMISSION SAY?** The commission prefers renovating existing buildings over building new ones. The report argues that the creative reuse of existing buildings is the best way to respond to both issues. "The (commission) will continue to beat the drum of 'the most sustainable building is the one that already exists.' This is not just good practice in the field of historic preservation, this is essential for fighting climate change," the report says.

The report prioritizes a number of location and issues for council consideration. They include:

- The New Chinatown/Japan Historic District in inner Northwest Portland, where varied investment has lagged. "The Landmarks Commission supports new smart investment in this neighborhood, provided this new investment is respectful of the historic character of the district," the report says.
- The unreinforced masonry requirements, which the commission fears will result in the demolition of many historic buildings without city support. "Without a robust support system, offering financial, technical, and logistical assistance to owners of these buildings, many property owners may choose to demolish their buildings rather than upgrade them."
- Focusing on historic African-American community buildings. "Without proper identification and protection, and without a new champion for National Register listing, these buildings and the stories they represent will continue to be lost," the report says.

**WHAT CAN I DO?** The commission report will be presented to the council on Wednesday. You can read it at [www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/729893](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditor/article/729893).

You can give the council your opinion on the report by reaching out to the members through the contact information at [portlandoregon.gov](http://portlandoregon.gov).

## **The Portland Mercury**

### **Former Fire Chief Returning to Portland to Head Emergency Management Bureau**

*By Alex Zielinski  
April 29, 2019*

Mike Myers left his position as Portland's Fire Chief in January and moved to Cannon Beach to run the city's emergency management program. But, it appears, it was a fleeting move. According to Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty's office, Myers has agreed to return to Portland in June—just five months after his departure—to lead the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM).

As commissioner, Hardesty oversees both Portland Fire & Rescue and PBEM. While Myers left two days after she entered office, Hardesty says they've built a strong connection over shared values.

"I started meeting with Mike Myers even before I was elected as commissioner and I was impressed with his vision," said Hardesty in a Monday morning press release. "When I was aware that he really wanted to focus his career in emergency management, I reached out to him to see if we would consider coming back to Portland to work with me in this arena and I was overjoyed when he said yes."

Myers will be taking on a changing bureau.

Since entering office, Hardesty has taken steps to guarantee all communities and neighborhoods are granted fair involvement in emergency response plans and access to emergency preparedness tools.

One of her first proposals as commissioner was to delay the city's deadline for building owners to label their earthquake-unsafe buildings (called Unreinforced Masonry buildings, or URM) if they can't afford the costly retrofits to improve a building's safety. Since many members of the African American community were unaware of these changes until the last minute, or needed financial assistance to avoid the "Scarlet Letter" of a URM label, Hardesty asked council to slow down the process for the sake of equity. [They did.](#)

It will be Myers' job to orchestrate the roll out of this labeling program next year—along with strengthening other policies to help us survive the ever-looming Cascadia Earthquake.

Myers echoed Hardesty's excitement about his hire in a press statement:

"I never dreamed an invitation like this would present itself. I'm so energized to work under Commissioner Hardesty's visionary leadership and return to give my very best to Portland residents in a new capacity," Myers said. "The Portland Bureau of Emergency Management is critical to public safety and I couldn't be more enthusiastic to collaborate with such a talented group of individuals."

## **Mayor Pushes Values (and Not Much Else) In State of the City Address**

*By Alex Zielinski  
April 29, 2019*

In his first State of the City address in 2017, Mayor Ted Wheeler announced major new landlord regulations, suggested burying Interstate 5 underground, unveiled massive new infrastructure investments, and even proposed creating a public beach along the Willamette River downtown. In 2018, Wheeler's address featured a controversial call for an expanded police force and a blistering critique of the Trump administration.

This time around, however, Wheeler's annual address didn't introduce any new policies or unveil any new programs.

Held in a stately corner of the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum, Wheeler's invite-only address felt more like a politician's stump speech than an update on the city's wellbeing. Wheeler used his hour to tout his personal values, point out past successes, and address community anxieties (he said the word "fear" five times, I counted).

"I believe that there is no problem that we cannot solve if we stick together, if we have each other's backs, if we bring together the best of our collective courage and wisdom," Wheeler said.

"I have a role to play in making Portland a city that can show the nation that we can be hopeful, that we can show results, and that we can thrive together, even in uncertain times."

"That's what I believe," he continued. "And that's why I'm here." (He could have easily tacked on an "and that's why I'm running for re-election" to the end of the pitch.)

Wheeler kicked off his speech with personal anecdote that, in brief, explained how he nobly turned down a prosperous career as a Wall Street trader to enter politics after he met some homeless people.

He leaned heavily into the success of the Portland Housing Bureau, which has recently added 600 supportive housing units—specifically tailored to help people who've been homeless for a long time—to its arsenal, thanks to 2015 housing bond dollars.

"It's expensive, but it's a lot less expensive than letting individuals cycle through our shelters, jails, and hospitals," Wheeler said.

He noted that later this week, the bureau will open solicitation applications for \$70 million in bond funding available for new construction projects, housing purchases, and house rehabilitation for affordable housing. Wheeler said these new funds, made possible by that passage of a recent ballot measure, are expected to create 600 new units of homes for low-income Portlanders.

Wheeler took a moment to praise the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) for its "difficult, thankless" work, nodding to the rows of officers in attendance.

"I know many of you... are largely supportive of our police, but there are still some who fear them," Wheeler said. "I understand that as well and that's something I'm determined to change."

Wheeler said that as police commissioner, he's delivered on what the public's asked for.

"You asked for more police accountability. So we created the Portland Committee on Community-Engaged Policing (PCCEP)," Wheeler said. "It's where the bureau and community members sit at the same table to both engage with and hold the police bureau and me accountable for policy decisions."

He neglected to mention that the city was actually court ordered to create PCCEP to fulfill the city's settlement agreement with the US Department of Justice for police misconduct. Not creating PCCEP would have placed the city in contempt of court.

Wheeler also pointed to the achievements of last year's budget request: Expanding the PPB's behavioral health program and introducing a team of unarmed police officers.

He also hinted at a project tucked into this year's budget—which he's set to unveil Wednesday, May 1—that would allow for mental health experts and social workers to respond to non-violent 911 calls involving people experiencing homelessness (which sounds similar to Street Roots' detailed Street Response Plan). Wheeler didn't explicitly say what this budget item will be, but told reporters after the speech that it'll include funds to study the scope of such a program.

Before closing, Wheeler mentioned the significance of holding his speech at the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum.

"This building represents Portland's storied past," said Wheeler. "Just through those doors, it's where the Trailblazers won that incredible 1977 NBA championship. It's where leaders like President Obama, the Dalai Lama spoke to thousands.

In perhaps the most uncomfortable oversight of the evening, Wheeler failed to mention that a decade before that Blazers win, the city displaced thousands of African Americans living in the historically Black neighborhood of Albina to build the coliseum.

"To me this building doesn't only connect us to our past, but it reminds of the opportunities that we will experience together in the future," he concluded.

After the address, Wheeler confirmed that he has "every intention" to run for re-election in 2020.

"I expect to run again," he said "I don't think the city is well-served by a revolving door of mayors, because when a mayor leaves, priorities shift, leaderships shift, it's highly disruptive. I can't imagine simply turning on a dime and saying 'I'm done' after two years, that doesn't make any sense to me."

## OPB

### **Portland Mayor: Homelessness May Seem Like It's Getting Worse Before It Gets Better**

*By Kristian Foden-Vencil  
April 29, 2019*

Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler stuck closely to facts and figures in his "State of the City" address Monday night and refrained from announcing any glitzy new ideas.

He focused instead on two of the city's nagging problems — concerns about bias within the police force and homelessness, which he said may seem like it's getting worse before it gets better.

Wheeler said after decades of inadequate housing investment and problematic criminal justice policies, Portland is now on the right path.

He pointed to the two housing bonds recently passed — one in Portland, the other at the regional level. He said they are giving everyone a chance to live in safe, stable housing.

In the first two years, Portland's 2016 housing bond is halfway to creating 1,300 units. He said the Portland Housing Bureau also added 800 affordable units last year and promises another thousand more this year.

"Last year, we moved more than 6,000 people out of homelessness and into housing," Wheeler said.

"We prevented nearly 7,500 people, people who are identified as being at the greatest risk of becoming homeless, we prevented those from becoming homeless in the first place. We've doubled our shelter capacity and we've redesigned how those shelters work."

Wheeler said for the first time on Tuesday the Portland Housing Bureau would use their new authority — given by amendment in the Oregon Constitution last November — to make its bond issues go further.

"This Solicitation makes \$70 million in bond funding available for new construction projects, property acquisition, and the rehabilitation of existing buildings for permanently affordable housing," Wheeler said.

He dedicated five pages, out of his 14-page speech to housing.

Portland City Commissioner Amanda Fritz said the mayor emphasized the progress the city is making on difficult problems.

“I think it was a hopeful speech in terms of all of the things that are being done. And giving the numbers, that actually yes, people are being helped,” said Fritz, referencing Wheeler’s focus on housing and homelessness.

“It’s obviously something that all Portlanders are very concerned about.”

The next biggest section of Wheeler’s address was dedicated to bias within the Portland Police Bureau.

He said officers are tasked with a dangerous and often thankless job. But he’s asked Police Chief Danielle Outlaw to make sure they’re serving the community equally and fairly.

“Now in a city of more than 600,000 people, I know many of you understand this and are largely supportive of our police – but there are still many in this community who fear them. I understand that as well and that’s why I’m determined to work with the police bureau to change that,” he said.

He said the Portland Police Bureau has made significant progress, through initiatives such as implicit bias training. He said the ‘use of force’ is down, the equity team has been beefed up, transparency has increased, and the bureau has transitioned from a gang enforcement team to a gun violence reduction team.

He said the bureau has also beefed up the Behavioral Health Unit to better address the needs of those in crisis on the streets. And he said he created the Portland Committee on Community-Engaged Policing so police and community members could better hold the bureau accountable.

Wheeler also spoke of expanding Portland’s economy to help more of its people.

He said the scale of Portland’s economic opportunity is out of balance. So the city has helped women and people of color strengthen their companies and get better access to startup money.

Wheeler mentioned several other high points, including work to make Portland one of the cleanest cities in America; exploring the use of 5G technology in the city; and the city’s Climate Action Plan.