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STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS delivered by  
Mayor Charles Royer June 30, 1986

Filed June 30 1986 Tim Hill, City Comptroller

By [Signature] Deputy

**ACTION OF THE COUNCIL**

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Honorable President:

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STATE OF THE CITY

BY

MAYOR CHARLES ROYER

June 30, 1986

Mr. President, I am pleased to present my eighth State of the City message. Among Seattle's 47 previous Mayors, only Wes Uhlman and William Devin enjoyed so many chances to report the City's condition. In truth, this should have been a record ninth State of the City message, but in my youth, as some of you recall, I forgot to do one.

No one was badly injured by that oversight, but perhaps somewhere in the alcoves of our library, amid the musty fragrances of historical documents, a lonely scholar will search in vain for the Mayor's views on the State of the City in 1978. If so, I apologize.

If the State of the City messages of the past 100 years are neither complete nor fine works of historical prose, they at least reveal something about the forces that helped make Seattle so special. As much as it is a city shaped by the environment, Seattle is a city shaped by dreams, and by human action in pursuit of those dreams. It is a place where the neighborhoods, parks, schools, and even the electric system, still reflect the ideals of those who felled timber and built

railroads, sailed from Asia and Europe or walked across the continent in search of new opportunity.

All left their mark. They won victories, suffered losses, made mistakes, and tried again. On the foundation of their labors, they fashioned a city and made it a living, beating heart for the Pacific Northwest.

The good condition of our city today is the legacy of their gift of time. By any measure, that legacy is priceless--stunning natural beauty; a vigorous economy; a strong tradition of arts and public education; a diverse and creative population with a spirit of optimism and compassion. In time, our own contribution will be judged, not only by how well we protect that legacy, but whether we build on its strength, correct its shortcomings, and prepare for the future.

In many ways, we have done well during the past decade. We've overcome the effects of severe recession, and enlarged Seattle's role as a center of world trade. We've written a new comprehensive plan, to protect Seattle's beautiful family neighborhoods and bring a sense of grace and humanity to downtown as it grows. We've completed many of the long-awaited projects that have frustrated City Hall for decades: Won a settlement of High Ross Dam; built a fine new bridge to West Seattle; restored the Pike Place Market,

begun the restoration of the city's public buildings, streets, bridges and parks.

Many times we took actions that were controversial. This Council pioneered energy conservation as an alternative to nuclear power. We made sacrifices to secure new sources of energy for our children at Boundary, Lucky Peak and Ross Dam. We created new laws to protect human rights and give a share of our public works to those who had been left out in the past. Without hesitation, Seattle welcomed tens of thousands of refugees from wars in Southeast Asia, and offered sanctuary to families fleeing deadly violence in Central America.

But the past, as the playwright says, is prologue. The real action lies ahead. There have been many accomplishments in the past eight years, but there is much, much more to do.

While Seattle has led the state's economic recovery and many of us enjoy higher levels of prosperity, too many of our children are growing up in poverty. That must be changed.

Although we have a proud tradition of excellence in education and the arts, we risk losing that quality unless we overcome complacency and neglect.

Although we have renewed many parts of our city that had fallen into decay, areas with great potential remain blighted and unrecognized. We must make the most of those opportunities as well.

And although we pride ourselves on the beauty of our environment, it has been damaged, by bad decisions--and by indecision. We must correct those mistakes, and avoid making new ones.

We have a long list of tasks, made longer and more difficult because the federal government is less and less a partner in our labors.

#### Financial Condition

We have resources to meet these challenges. We are in solid financial condition. We have managed our resources wisely, ending 1985 with an operating surplus of more than \$3 million. Our reserves are near record levels. We now have more than \$30 million in the Cumulative Reserve Fund and will have \$6 million in our emergency fund after paying to repair the damage from last winter's storms.

While most cities and counties in Washington have used all the sales tax capacity granted by the legislature, we still have capacity to meet future uncertainties.

Nevertheless, there is mounting pressure on Seattle's operating budget.

Four years of cutbacks in federal domestic programs have placed new demands on local government, especially to meet human needs.

This year, the administration took aim at Community Development Block Grants and General Revenue Sharing, which together provide about \$23 million a year for Seattle.

Many experts declared the programs dead. But Seattle took the lead in court action against the Block Grant deferral and we won in federal court.

We coalesced with our citizens to wage an extremely effective campaign that helped to convince Congress that Block Grants should be continued at nearly the present level.

Now, we must win the battle for revenue sharing. The Congress has just passed a budget that leaves the program in legislative limbo. It's in the budget, but funding depends on appropriations. Many members of Congress,

including members of our own delegation, still do not realize the impact of revenue sharing. We use those funds to pay for police, firefighters, and food, shelter and health care for the poor. Cuts in these areas would be apparent overnight--and, I submit, politically dangerous for those members of Congress who forget where they come from.

The nation's cities will work to win on revenue sharing as we have won on Block Grants. But in the meantime the threat to revenue sharing will place added pressure on our operating budget.

But this does not mean that we must settle for a status quo budget. As we confront new problems the City's departments will respond by cutting programs that are no longer relevant to free resources to meet new challenges.

For the past three years, Seattle has dedicated more of its own resources to meeting human needs. That commitment will continue in 1987, but the General Fund cannot be our only tool.

Our departments already are inventing other ways to meet human needs:

- In 1985, City Light used higher than expected earnings on the sale of surplus power to build a perma-

ment endowment to protect the poor against power shutoffs.

- The Department of Administrative Services has renovated historic City properties for new life as community clinics and senior centers.
- The Department of Human Resources is reaching out to County government, suburban cities, the business community and United Way to share ideas and build new support.
- And we have used our debt capacity to meet human need, with a Senior Housing Program that prevented a crisis for Seattle's elderly and many of our disabled.

That strategy worked. We promised to build 1,000 units, but we have already built more than 1,200 and we're still building.

In a few days, the Council will act on four more projects to complete the Senior Housing Program: Special housing for the frail elderly at the Pike Place Market and Capitol Hill; a residence for the mentally ill in north Seattle, and housing for elderly Native Americans at Leschi Center.

Each of the 1,200 units of senior housing is changing someone's life--someone like Mrs. R., a 90-year-old widow living alone and confined to a wheelchair. Increasingly isolated from her family and friends, she had become unable to maintain her home.

Last month, she became one of the first residents of the new Ravenna School Apartments, where the City's human services and her new neighbors will help her continue to live independently.

Through senior housing and a dozen other strategies, the City has helped to make dramatic improvement in the lives of Seattle's elderly.

### Children in Poverty

Now we must do the same for our children. When we began Kids-Place two years ago, we promised that Seattle would work to become the best city in America in which to raise a family. We have made progress for all of Seattle's children since that time. But if we are to fulfill our promise, we must confront the cruel reality of poverty among children. During the past 15 years, the percentage of American children living in poverty has nearly doubled, to 24 percent. Even in Seattle,

16 percent of our children are poor, and among preschool children, the number is even higher.

These children are growing older without the tools to grow stronger. Many lack decent shelter, basic health care, and adequate nutrition. Unless these tools are provided, we cannot expect these children to achieve a solid education and to sustain our community when it is their turn to provide and to lead.

Our strategy for meeting this new challenge is beginning to emerge.

We will focus the energy of the City to provide:

- Basic health care for young women and infants;
- Child care for young children of single and working parents; and
- Unflagging support for our public schools.

In September, if you agree, we will take to the voters a levy to meet the desperate need for family housing.

Last night, more than 350 families with children took refuge in our emergency shelters. But many others were turned away.

Shelter providers say the biggest problem is the shortage of affordable housing for families. There are now more than 1,200 households on the waiting list for public housing, including 750 families with children. Half of these are large families, who must wait up to two years for placement.

Jane Noland, Jim Street, and other Council members have helped to refine the levy proposal in recent weeks. If you approve it and support it, we will build or renovate 1,000 housing units for Seattle's poorest families and individuals. We will build that housing to the same high standards we demanded in the Senior Housing Program. The new homes will be designed to blend with the surrounding neighborhood, the renovated homes will make a lasting improvement in our housing stock, and you will create a lot of new jobs.

### Schools

Just a few years ago, the hottest issue in many Seattle neighborhoods was the closure of a school. But Seattle's birth rate has risen, and the exodus of families to the suburbs has slowed. Enrollments are now starting to increase in the elementary schools, and the subject of debate this summer is not the closure of schools, but the location of new ones, and the design of those to be renovated.

We are entering the greatest period of school building in Seattle in more than two decades. During the next four years, the district will invest more than \$132 million to improve its facilities. That building boom will keep DCD and DCLU working overtime, but it will have a profound positive impact on the economy, appearance, and morale of Seattle's neighborhoods. And public education--looking sharper--will attract new customers.

But new buildings are not the only good thing happening in Seattle's schools. The teachers and the Board have settled on a new two-year contract. The Board has chosen a bright, vigorous new Superintendent in Bill Kendrick, who has already set three tangible goals:

- 1) To double the number of volunteers working in support of our schools;
- 2) To overcome the problem of disproportionate learning; and
- 3) To clean up the old schools and build new ones so neighborhoods will be proud of them.

He has asked for our help, and we will deliver all the help we can. In fact, we've already begun.

We've provided City funds to open child care centers at Concord and Sacajawea Schools as pilots for the great new system of neighborhood child care the district is building within its new and renovated schools. We'll provide a wide range of City programs in the schools, and use the joint-use agreement between the district and the Parks Department to create the best possible schools and playgrounds for neighborhoods.

### The Arts

As we rebuild our tradition of public education, we must also protect Seattle's growing tradition of excellence in the arts. The Northwest's reputation in the visual arts is well established through the work of Tobey, Tsutakawa, Callahan, Cummings, and many others. A new generation of artists now extends that tradition, encouraged by public support.

Ironically, this rich Northwest tradition is a treasure without a home. Many of the finest works are never on public display, simply because the Seattle Art Museum has too little space to show them.

The Museum has also assembled an outstanding collection of Asian art, and one of the three best collections of African

art in the world. Yet these works, too, are almost invisible to the public. The Museum's remote facilities are so limited that only three percent of its own collection can be shown, and displays from other cities are impossible to accommodate.

Seattle's voters will have a chance to change that in September. The Art Museum levy would provide \$29 million in matching funds to build an outstanding center for the visual arts in the heart of our city. It would be an Art Museum different than any other--with its strength in Asian, African, Native American, and Northwest art--a true reflection of the cultural diversity of our city.

The region's performing arts have long had a good home at Seattle Center. The task force we recently established on the Center's governance should strengthen that role even more as they explore ways to broaden the Center's base of support.

While Seattle's performing arts organizations are winning national acclaim, they face an ironic dilemma: They play to full houses but they have empty coffers.

With this problem in mind, I asked a number of citizens from throughout the region to participate in a Task Force on Arts stabilization, and a separate group to find a remedy for the crisis facing the Seattle Symphony. The Symphony

Panel has recommended a regional effort to save the orchestra for the orchestra. The City has been asked to contribute \$220,000 to that effort, and I recommend that we do so.

If we want to retain the vibrant force of the arts in our city, we must act now to stabilize their precarious existence.

Physical Projects: "Work in Progress"

I will borrow a phrase from the arts to describe the physical condition of our city: Seattle is a work in progress. Everywhere there are signs of repair, renovation and new development. In fact, one of our neighborhoods, Maple Leaf, just won recognition as the very best in America. In every neighborhood, crews are hard at work fulfilling the promise of the Seattle 1.2.3 Bond issues to fix up and clean up the city as never before. It's hard to find a bridge that isn't being painted or repaired; a street that isn't being resurfaced, a fire station or library that isn't under renovation, a park that isn't being restored. From Seward Park to Carkeek, from South Park to Lake City, the red, black and white signs have gone up and the crews have gone to work.

Many more Seattle 1·2·3 projects will get under way this summer and fall. With the Council's approval, we'll break ground for three new community health centers at Columbia City, Capitol Hill and the International District, and the first of our new schools will rise this winter in Yesler-Atlantic, with many more to follow.

In spite of all this work, it is still possible to navigate Seattle's neighborhoods. Downtown may soon be another matter. We are beginning a period of almost unbelievable construction in this small area of our city. Twenty-seven public projects and at least 23 major private projects will be built downtown during the next four years.

Already the steel has begun its reach across the freeway for the new Convention Center, and utility work is under way beneath downtown streets for Metro's Transit Tunnel. At street level, the City will build a fine new park at Westlake after 30 years of trying. At the same time, private developers will add 11 million square feet of new commercial space.

Downtown is less than two percent of Seattle's land, yet it generates 30 percent of our taxes and more than 40 percent of our jobs. In time, this explosion of new activity will provide great benefits to the entire region. It will strengthen Seattle's position as a center of world trade,

create thousands of new jobs and a lasting source of tax revenue. Since most of this development is governed by the provisions of our new Downtown Plan, these new projects will be sensitive to the City's spirit. Those developers who have chosen to build to full height will have earned that privilege by providing affordable housing, child care centers and other public benefits to help make downtown more livable.

That is the long-term reward. Between now and then, unprecedented growth could be matched by unprecedented hassle unless we all work together to minimize the disruption. The Physical Development Cabinet will coordinate our efforts to see that these projects are completed as smoothly as possible.

### Street People

But we will not have an exciting and livable downtown unless and until we finally address the problems associated with street people, who confront the community with alcoholism, drug abuse, and mental illness. Every city in the nation has similar problems, but in Seattle, street people are more apparent. With every district under renovation, there is no longer any place where street people gather away from the mainstream. In Sam Smith's phrase, street people have

become urban nomads, migrating between the streets, the jails, detox centers, and hospitals.

The human and financial costs of that migration are staggering.

This summer I will submit to you several initiatives designed by our Task Force on Street People to meet this challenge:

- I will request funding to establish a full-time staff to work exclusively on the issues of homelessness and street people;
- In August, I will submit the findings of a committee of labor and business representatives and human service providers outlining a strategy for employing street people; and
- Within a few days, I will submit a study by OMB, analyzing the problems of the County's alcohol treatment system and recommending changes.

Chief Fitzsimons and I will also work closely with Norm Rice and the Public Safety Committee to address the problems of crime, not only on our downtown streets, but in our neighborhoods and homes. The demands on our Police Department have steadily increased, and Councilman Rice is correct in asserting that we must find new ways to meet that challenge.

The new housing levy is also part of our strategy for dealing with street people and strengthening downtown neighborhoods. It will provide alcohol-free housing for those trying to break away from Skid Road, and decent shelter for the mentally ill.

Through these initiatives, we will make it clear to those on our streets that Seattle cares enough about them to demand something better--of them and of ourselves.

We will continue to rebuild our downtown neighborhoods. Many cities lost their public markets and turned their back on areas like the International District. We have made them the cornerstone of our plans for the future of downtown living.

### Harborfront

No place in our city holds greater promise than the Central Waterfront. By virtue of Seattle's history and its spectacular setting, the waterfront should be the city's major entryway and public gathering place. But the waterfront's potential has yet to be realized.

The growing crowds attracted to the renovated areas south of the Aquarium are hemmed in on narrow, cluttered sidewalks. They are cut off from the city by five lanes of

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traffic, railroad tracks, and acres of parking lots scattered beneath the viaduct. At only a few places along the entire Waterfront do people feel comfortable walking into the heart of the city. Seattle--one of America's greatest maritime cities--has no significant moorage for small boats in its central harbor.

Now is the time to take advantage of the great possibilities of our Waterfront, for a major open space, a waterfront promenade, public moorage, and street parks climbing the hills into the city.

This year, with the help of others, we are going to start turning those dreams into reality.

#### South Lake Union

We have another great opportunity at South Lake Union. For decades, we have averted our eyes as we weave our cars between Capitol Hill and Queen Anne. We have treated the lakeshore not as a destination, but as an obstacle course.

During the past 18 months, we have started to change our thinking and make the use of the land and the water our first priority. Two weeks ago, the Council approved the concept of a new park on the south shore.

I have recommended that the City use the rest of the land we own at South Lake Union as a center for research and development--to provide a home for the new small companies founded on the research activity of the University of Washington. There is no reason to lose these companies to the suburbs when South Lake Union is such an ideal location--midway between the University and downtown.

These hopes will not be realized, however, while the area is sliced into pieces by haphazard traffic patterns. The Council rejected our plan for a tunnel, but we will do everything in our power to help Paul Kraabel find a better approach. Together, we will make South Lake Union a destination in its own right, a vital part of Seattle's future.

#### New City Hall

We have another opportunity as we address the question of building a new City Hall. Twenty-five years ago, Seattle's leaders thought they had found a bargain basement answer when they bought the plans for an office building from a Texas developer who had failed to sell his design in Dallas. His failure to pedal his plans in Texas should have been warning enough, but our forerunners persevered, adapted the Texas plans to the topography of Fourth and James, and laid on Seattle the architectural egg we blushinglly call City Hall.

Those who made that decision may have been hailed for their frugality while in office, but we don't think so fondly of them today as we labor in a building where the heat seems to work only in August, the roof leaks on the Council always, and the maintenance expense to simply keep the building operating would have paid for a better building many times over.

The facts are clear: The functions of City Hall are scattered among several bad buildings on expensive downtown land. If we package the land for other development, we can earn most of the money we will need to build better quarters and we can quit passing on to the taxpayers the hidden costs of leaky roofs, wasted time, and expensive leases. Further, we will have the chance to build the civic center where it will bring new life to an area of the city that needs the energy of our public investment.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

### Landfills/Garbage

While we work to reclaim those areas of the built environment, we must also correct the damage that has been done to our natural environment. Virginia Galle has worked tirelessly in this cause. I'm certain she will agree that no

issue has been more frustrating during the past year than dealing with the consequences of Seattle's dependence on landfills. The methane problem at Midway created terrible disruption for those who live nearby, but we acted responsibly to protect the community and secure the value of their homes.

We will keep our promise to close the landfills at Midway and Kent Highlands, and correct the environmental problems they have caused. We will negotiate a fair price for the temporary use of the County's landfill, but we will expect to be treated no differently than other jurisdictions with which the County contracts.

For the future, I have recommended that we work to achieve the highest possible level of recycling.

I have also recommended that we work through King County to dispose of waste that cannot be recycled. I believe a regional solution is now possible because all jurisdictions in King County will soon face the same problems. All will pay staggering rate increases to repair the damage of their own past practices. And all will soon face the same hard choice among recycling, building energy recovery plants, or siting new landfills.

Seattle has come to the crossroads first. We can make the best of our unhappy circumstances if we pioneer recycling as we pioneered energy conservation, and find strategies that can be replicated throughout the region as other cities come to the same crossroads.

### Secondary Treatment

Perhaps the people of Seattle take greatest pride when we succeed in an act of urban redemption. When friends visit from out of town, we take them to the Pike Place Market, rescued by a vote of the people from the twin villains, decay and demolition. We show them the fresh produce, and tell them about how we saved the farmlands. We make sure they visit the park we salvaged from the old gas works, and we explain how the Burke-Gilman Trail was transformed from a rusted railroad track, and Lake Washington rescued from serious pollution.

In a few days, the Metro council will decide where to process the region's sewage. The choice, since the City is outnumbered on the Metro Council, has boiled down to two Seattle locations: either Metro will dispose of its sewage on 36 acres of the finest saltwater beach in King County at Discovery Park, or in the region's major industrial area along the Duwamish.

The extent of the difference in cost between these alternatives is still being debated. But while we debate costs, I want to ask each of the members of the Metro Council to visit Discovery Park before they cast their vote. I want each of them to spend an hour on that beach and decide how much it is worth to children whose parents cannot afford to take them to the ocean. I want them to experience the cool and the quiet in the forests above the beach and imagine those forests ruined by the cars of a thousand workers and by the constant caravan of sludge trucks and the noise and smell of a 40-acre industrial plant. I want them to look out from the meadows, across Puget Sound to the Olympics and put a price on what that view can mean to the spirits of the elderly, who may no longer have the resources or the strength of limb to reach the Cascades, but who can reach Discovery Park with a bus ride.

If each member of the Metro Council would take his or her family to Discovery Park for a Sunday afternoon, I believe the majority would vote to restore the beach and save Discovery Park. Long after the costs of converting to secondary treatment are paid, the legacy of this decision will remain--either as a lost opportunity, or as a priceless gift to our children.

## Conclusion

Many years from now our children will judge our times as we now make judgments on the past. They will ask whether we kept faith with the values we held, whether we made government better than when we came, and did enough for those who had too little.

In our own time, we may be criticized for trying to do too much; for failing to say what should be done first, second or last. But our children will judge us not so much by the order in which we took action, but by whether we took action; less on the weight of our studies than the results we achieved.

They will look at the City we have passed on to them and decide whether we acted with enough courage to protect their legacy. They will measure their opportunities and decide if we had enough vision to invest in their future.

Mr. President, let us work together so they will judge our day to have been a time of partnership and a time of action for our great city.

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