



# Local Focus

The Magazine of the League of Oregon Cities

FOURTH QUARTER 2019



CIS & LOC:

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One!”**



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# Local Focus



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# The Power of Partnerships

**T**o move the needle and build vibrant cities of the future, we need to reimagine the way the government, the public sector and the private sector collaborate.

We can no longer settle for business as usual. Many of our cities are at a breaking point. Budgets cannot even begin to fill the massive backlog of infrastructure needs, and many cities struggle just to provide basic services. Without innovation, the current state of affairs won't be sustainable.

To tackle the magnitude of issues facing Oregon and the country, we need to resourcefully work together to create change. We're doing that at the LOC. We have stepped outside the government box and have found robust partnerships in both the private and public sectors. Previously, this hasn't been common practice, but we are breaking the mold. We are a model in the country, and making a positive difference around the state. This is an approach that seems so common sense, but really needs visionaries to create change. Where others see divides, we create bridges. Where others see issues, we see opportunity.

At the state level, we work with the administration every day. It's a natural place to start and our dedicated team of lobbyists tackle not only preemption issues, but any issues that positively or negatively affect cities. This relationship with the administration is critical and we meet regularly with Governor Brown to align our priorities.

We've expanded our influence and footprint at the federal level as well. It is critical we maintain a presence in our nation's capital and build those relationships. We will not let Oregon be left behind or out of the conversation, and in this case the adage, "The squeaky wheel gets the grease," is on point. A more pronounced presence in Washington, D.C. has a definite trickle-down effect to our efforts at the state level, and the LOC is making a statement by being at the table.

As our program of work expands, so do our key partnerships. Working collaboratively is not an option, but a necessity to advance agendas and accomplish our mission.

One of our closest alignments is with the National League of Cities (NLC). This organization represents tens-of-thousands of cities across the country from 49 state leagues. Together, our organizations are making positive impacts related to the work we do for all cities here in Oregon by expanding our service delivery. This symbiotic relationship is evolving in amazing ways that will benefit all communities in tangible ways.

We are building a relationship with Tech Association of Oregon (TAO) to make "smart cities" a reality in our state and build on critical tech infrastructure that will power our economy well in to the future. The LOC leverages relationships with

local councils of governments (COGs), economic development giants like the Oregon Economic Development Association, Regional Solutions and Greater Portland Inc. (to name just a few), as we keep focus on building strong communities of tomorrow.

But it's the private sector relationships that we are developing that have the potential to make the biggest impact—and it's about time. The public-private partnership idea is gaining traction as the stark realization



Mike Cully  
LOC Executive Director

*(continued on page 9)*

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## Census 2020 Webpage Answers Frequently-Asked Questions

The U.S. Census is traditionally considered a decennial conversation between individual citizens and the federal government. After all, the language of the U.S. Constitution says nothing about state or city responsibility to help the federal government conduct the census. However, there are very important reasons for cities in Oregon and elsewhere to engage citizens and encourage them to participate in the census.

The LOC has created a webpage featuring answers to frequently-asked questions about the census. View answers to questions including:

- How is the census conducted?
- Will the 2020 Census be any different?
- Why do the U.S. Census numbers differ from Portland State University population estimates?
- Which groups are hardest to count?
- How does the census benefit cities?
- How can cities help?

# United States<sup>®</sup> Census 2020

In addition, the webpage includes links to more information and helpful documents, toolkits, action guides, outreach materials and more. The LOC will continue to add more information and links as the 2020 Census gets closer.

Check it out at [www.orcities.org/resources/reference/census-2020](http://www.orcities.org/resources/reference/census-2020).

## LOC Wall Calendars Coming Soon

The League's annual wall calendar will be mailed to cities in late December. As usual, this poster-sized calendar features a wide range of high-quality photographs submitted by our member cities. The calendar also contains information on key events and dates to remember in 2020. Cities can obtain additional copies by emailing [loc@orcities.org](mailto:loc@orcities.org).



## Clean Water State Revolving Fund

### Improve your community's water quality with FREE assistance from DEQ

Public agencies are encouraged to sign-up for FREE expert help with stormwater and wastewater challenges. From initial planning to financing facility upgrades, we offer a range of assistance.

Contact the Water Quality  
Project Assistance coordinator  
at 503-229-6312 or email  
[CWSRFinfo@deq.state.or.us](mailto:CWSRFinfo@deq.state.or.us)

Visit our website:  
[oregon.gov/deq/wq/cwsrf](http://oregon.gov/deq/wq/cwsrf)





# 2020 LOC Board Elected

The LOC selected its 2020 board of directors on September 28 during its 94th Annual Conference in Bend.

The following are the city officials that were named to the LOC's governing board for the calendar year 2020. Officials new to the board or an officer position appear in bold text.

- President:** Jake Boone, Councilor, Cottage Grove
- Vice President:** Keith Mays, Mayor, Sherwood
- Treasurer:** Tanea Browning, Councilor, Central Point
- Past President:** Greg Evans, Councilor, Eugene
- Directors:** Steve Callaway, Mayor, Hillsboro  
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**Kevin Stine, Councilor, Medford**  
 Michael Sykes, City Manager, Scappoose  
 Steve Uffelman, Mayor, Prineville

## Mark Your Calendars 2020 LOC Board of Directors Meetings

- February 20 – Board Retreat, Independence
- February 21 – Independence
- April 23 – Pendleton
- June 12 – Location TBD
- October 14 – Salem
- December 4 – Salem



## Are You Signed Up for the *LOC Bulletin*?

Each and every week, the LOC Bulletin brings the latest news of interest to Oregon's cities directly to your email inbox. To be added to the list, send a request to [loc@orcities.org](mailto:loc@orcities.org).

## Mobilizing your community



Connected communities are strong communities. By advancing our technologies and services, we're helping to create the opportunities that make Oregon a better place to live and work.

When everything works together, your community moves forward.



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## LOC Welcomes New Staff



The LOC is pleased to welcome two new lobbyists to the Intergovernmental Relations Department.

**Mark Gharst** will focus on property tax and finance issues. He comes to the LOC from the Oregon Department of Revenue and brings a wealth of experience and knowledge. He can be reached at [mgharst@orcities.org](mailto:mgharst@orcities.org).

**Ariel Nelson** joins the LOC after most recently working for Oregon Housing and Community Services. Her focus will be on affordable housing, land use and related issues. She can be reached at [anelson@orcities.org](mailto:anelson@orcities.org).

## Thank You, Megan



The LOC would like to thank Megan George for her service as our Operations Director the past two years. Megan joined the LOC in fall of 2017 after serving two years with the city of Carlton. As part of the LOC's management team, she oversaw the Member Services department and was the LOC's lead staff contact for board meetings and two affiliates,

the Oregon Mayors Association and the Oregon City/County Management Association. She is taking her exceptional organizational skills and attention to detail to the city of Tualatin, where she will serve as assistant to the city manager. Congratulations, Megan, you'll be missed around here!

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

that “we can’t do it alone” takes hold. If we really want to move the needle, we need to work together, and the LOC has had some great successes already.

In 2018 we worked closely with Comcast and the Oregon Department of Revenue to close the books on a nine-year-old property tax dispute that wound up returning \$155 million to cities. This was a huge win for all involved, and the LOC’s relationship with Comcast was strengthened because of it. They are great partners with our organization, but also continue to be one of the largest private sector contributors to our local communities anywhere.

2018 also ushered in a new relationship with Utility Service Partners (USP). This company works closely with the LOC and our communities to protect residents from the unforeseen infrastructure failures that just don’t fall under the umbrella of a municipality’s responsibility to repair. They fill the gap by providing homeowners protection and limiting financial exposure for repairs, and their service has saved residents—in aggregate—over \$394 million in repair costs over the past three years.

In fact, the list of our amazing partners is long, and getting longer. We could not do what we do without the close relationships and support of companies like PGE, Pacific Power, Regence, Ameresco, Hayden Homes, Wal-Mart, AT&T, Piper Jaffray, OBRC, NPPGov, Johnson Controls, Orrick Herrington & Sutcliffe, Energy Trust of Oregon and FCS GROUP, just to mention a few. Without exception, all our partners “get” cities—the struggles and the opportunities—and are making Oregon a better place to live because of their care and investment. These are just two examples from the private sector, but illustrative of the potential to expand how we positively collaborate to benefit our municipalities. Partnerships are critical, and necessary as we advance our mission at the League of Oregon Cities, and we will look strategically to tactically develop these opportunities going forward. The LOC is a force of change: a catalyst, convenor and champion in Oregon, and you can add to that list—an active collaborator.

As we look to protect the best interests of all cities in Oregon, I urge you to reach out to me with any ideas for potential partnerships. We are open and receptive to your thoughts.

# Local Government Spring Conference

## April 24, 2020 in Hermiston

The LOC’s 2020 Local Government Spring Conference will be held at the Eastern Oregon Trade & Event Center in Hermiston. This one-day event will be a great opportunity for public officials from around the state to network and learn about issues impacting all cities. Look for more information in early 2020 at [www.orcities.org](http://www.orcities.org).



# A Welcoming Environment for Young Professionals?

By Madison Thesing, City of Lake Oswego, OR

## Is local government a welcoming environment for young professionals? Where do we succeed? Areas for improvement?

I have been kicking around how I wanted to answer this question for weeks and have had one too many drafts. I began with thinking about what local government is today and it quickly became more negative than I had intended, perhaps a little too #Mword (Millennial) entitled. I think we can agree that there is room for improvement in local government to be more welcoming to young professionals.

However, instead of focusing on the landscape of acceptance in today's workforce, I should focus on what local government could be in the future. The positive impact and the opportunity to make change that local government provides is too vast to focus on the negative.

Here is my vision of what local government could do to become more welcoming to young professionals:

**Hire for potential versus years of experience.** The workforce is drastically changing and very few people are staying in one organization their whole career. This trend can be found in all sectors. In order to adapt, we should value and seek applicants with potential, possessing core soft skills and transferable skills, as well as the drive to learn. This would not only be welcoming to young professionals, but also to applicants who are joining local government later in their career.

**View young professionals as your in-house succession planning.** There is a lifecycle for organizations and young professionals play a key role in that lifecycle. Let's prioritize creating programs that attract young professionals, developing employees within organizations, and planning for turnover and retirements. We will never have a sleepless night over the Silver Tsunami again!

**Celebrate employment growth.** Turnover is the reality of the workforce, but it does not happen as much as we think. We should be able to plan and celebrate employment growth. We too often focus on the time and resources invested in employees who may leave. Rather, we should focus on the positives of developing an employee who may grow out of their role. In fact, it should be a priority to train and develop employees so that they can grow out of their roles. This creates space for the next up-and-comer, drives efficiency and success, and promotes a culture of growth. Then, we can celebrate our former employees/coworkers who have become great partners

and leaders in our neighboring community.

**Explore new incentive packages.** Local government is competing with the private sector for new hires and it is not necessarily a bad thing. With the changing workforce, job seekers are looking across all sectors for job opportunities and weighing them for more than just salary. It might be true that young professionals are looking for more flexible work schedules, telecommute options, and merit pay opportunities. But most other employees are too!

**Welcome those purpose-loving young professionals!** If you believe in the #Mword stereotypes, there is a WHOLE generation looking for impactful work. Local government is the PERFECT career tract for people wanting to make a difference. We should be marketing and showcasing the amazing opportunities that local government can provide, like #ELGLInspire. If those young professional are hungry and driven by purpose, I think we should hire all the herds of #Mwords imaginable!

Lastly, if you are a young professional in the midst of navigating these tricky waters today, these are my takeaways from the last few years:

**Find support outside your organization.** I have a great group of friends that I chat with regularly about work. We are in the same stages of our careers and it's reassuring to hear about the young professional dynamic happening in other organizations/job fields. We are all excited for the future and being a part of positive change.

**Learn to tune the noise out.** If you are experiencing negative comments or remarks, ignore it. Most comments are not worth your time or energy.

**When deciding on a job, prioritize the leaders whose values align with yours, not job title or duties.** I was recently reminded of this by the great Parks Queen Kylie. Your job title will not get you out of bed, instead the vision and purpose that a leader can instill will.

**If the environment will not change, move on.** Simply do not waste your time or be dampened by bad organizational culture. As a young professional, we have the flexibility and time to keep trying until we find the right fit.

*Engaging Local Government Leaders' (ELGL) mission is to engage the brightest minds in local government. Find them at [www.elgl.org](http://www.elgl.org).*



# Small Cities Meetings Schedule

The Small Cities Network is a League program for cities with a population of 7,500 or less, with quarterly meetings to network and discuss common issues and solutions.

All meetings start at 11:00 a.m. RSVP to [dnanke@orcities.org](mailto:dnanke@orcities.org).

On the Web: [www.orcities.org/smallcities](http://www.orcities.org/smallcities)

## Upcoming Meetings

**North Coast (Region 1)**  
Seaside – February 17

**Portland Metro (Region 2)**  
North Plains – December 19

**North Willamette Valley (Region 3)**  
Jefferson – February 13

**South Willamette Valley (Region 4)**  
TBD – February 14

**Central Coast (Region 5)**  
TBD – February 20

**South Coast (Region 6)**  
TBD – February 19

**Southern Valley (Region 7)**  
Oakland – December 12

**Columbia Gorge (Region 8)**  
Maupin – December 19

**Central Oregon (Region 9)**  
Metolius – December 20

**South Central Oregon (Region 10)**  
Malin – December 13

**Northeast Oregon (Region 11)**  
Echo – January 15

**Eastern Oregon (Region 12)**  
Vale – January 16

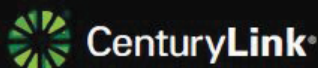
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# NLC Offers Prescription Discount Program for Oregon Residents

For many residents in cities, towns, and villages across the United States, prescription drugs are an ever-rising cost. A report from AARP shows that the annual cost for widely used prescription drugs rose on average 7%. In the first quarter of 2019, prices for generic and brand drugs increased by 2.9%.

As a member of the National League of Cities (NLC), a city in Oregon can sign up for CVS's Prescription Discount Program, which gives residents free access to, on average, 24% savings off the retail cost of prescription medication. The program is free to NLC members.

Prescription prices vary drastically across the country, with some drugs costing as much as 17% more than the national average in cities like San Francisco and New York. Through the partnership, cities can print and distribute discount cards to residents that can be used to purchase medications at lower costs.

Signing up for the program is easy for cities. Visit the NLC Prescription Discount Program webpage at [www.nlc.org/program-initiative/savings-solutions](http://www.nlc.org/program-initiative/savings-solutions). The discount program is part of NLC's Savings and Solutions initiative, which offers access to cost savings through partnerships with key private sector and nonprofit organizations.

Once a city signs up for the prescription discount program, residents can access discount cards and use it at more than 60,000 pharmacies across the country. The program is currently offered in more than 600 NLC member cities and towns and have saved residents over \$50 million since 2009.

Councilmember Kathy Maness knows this well. She introduced the program to her hometown Lexington, South Carolina and residents have saved more than \$57,000 in the past decade.

"The program offers an opportunity for our residents to have affordable healthcare options with an average savings of 23%

## What Can Prescription Discount Do?

In **641** participating cities and towns...



**\$50 MILLION**  
saved by residents since 2009

**24%**  
average discount on  
retail prescriptions

**68,000**  
pharmacies nationwide  
accepting the card

on each prescription and fosters a higher quality of life for our community," said Councilmember Maness, who also serves as NLC's 2nd vice president.

Once an NLC member signs up for the program, they receive a welcome packet that includes several tools to introduce and promote the program to residents. The discount cards can be printed easily online or ordered from CVS through the NLC website ([nlc.org/program-initiative/savings-solutions](http://nlc.org/program-initiative/savings-solutions)). Additionally, NLC supports cities by providing a monthly report that records card utilization within your city.

The program is free to NLC members and is cost effective for responding to the rising prescription costs that are facing residents in Oregon and across the country. The program covers hundreds of medications but has been particularly helpful to cities responding to the opioid crisis, as it covers one of the core medications used in treatment.

To learn more about the Prescription Discount Program or any of NLC's other Savings and Solutions programs, visit [nlc.org/program-initiative/savings-solutions](http://nlc.org/program-initiative/savings-solutions).

Sources: AARP, Sept. 19, 2019





## CONSERVATION CORNER

# The Allocation of Conserved Water Program

### Background

The Allocation of Conserved Water program allows a water user who conserves water to: use a portion of it on additional lands; lease or sell the water; or dedicate it for instream use. Use of this program is voluntary, and provides benefits to both water right holders and instream values.

The state statutes authorizing the program were originally passed by the Legislature in 1987. The primary intent of the law is to promote the efficient use of water to satisfy current and future needs—both out-of-stream and instream. The statute defines conservation as “the reduction of the amount of water diverted to satisfy an existing beneficial use achieved either by improving the technology or method for diverting, transporting, applying or recovering the water or by implementing other approved conservation measures.”

In the absence of Oregon Water Resources Department (WRD) approval of an allocation of conserved water, water users who make the necessary investments to improve their water use efficiency are not allowed to use the conserved water to meet new needs. Instead, any unused water remains instream, where it is available for the next appropriator. In exchange for granting the user the right to “spread” a portion of the conserved water to new uses, the law requires allocation of a portion to the state for instream use.

After mitigating the effects on any other water rights, the state’s Water Resources Commission allocates 25% of the conserved water to the state (for an instream water right) and 75% to the applicant, unless more than 25% of the project costs come from federal or state non-reimbursable sources or the applicant proposes a higher allocation to the state. A new water right certificate is issued with the original priority date, reflecting the reduced quantity of water being used with the improved technology. A certificate is issued for the state’s instream water right, and, if requested, a certificate is issued for the applicant’s portion of the conserved water. The priority dates for the state’s instream

certificate and the applicant’s portion of conserved water must be the same date, and will be either the same date as the original water right or one minute junior to the original right.

### Conservation Measures

The statutes define conservation as “the reduction of the amount of water diverted to satisfy an existing beneficial use achieved either by improving the technology or method for diverting, transporting, applying or recovering the water or by implementing other approved conservation measures.” In a nutshell, a conservation measure is the physical change that satisfies an existing beneficial use with less water.

The majority of conservation measures submitted to the WRD are for irrigation rights from surface water sources. However, the program is also available for water rights from groundwater. There are two broad categories of conservation measures for irrigation rights: distribution projects, such as canal lining or piping; and on-farm efficiency projects, such as converting from flood irrigation to sprinkler or drip irrigation.

### Program Implementation

To date the WRD has received 113 applications for the allocation of conserved water. Twelve of the applications have been withdrawn and one application was denied. Of the remaining 100 applications, 56 have been filed by irrigation districts, with the remainder submitted by individuals and other entities. More than 205 cubic feet per second (cfs) has been permanently protected instream as a result of the conserved water projects, with approximately 160 cfs attributed to the irrigation districts’ conservation measures. An additional 25 cfs is being managed instream for future out-of-stream use or during the testing phase of the conservation project.

Additional information including a program presentation is available at the Department’s website at <https://www.oregon.gov/OWRD/programs/WaterRights/Conservation/Pages/AOCW.aspx>.



# Partnering for Better Infrastructure

*By Jennifer Kenny, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality*

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) recently gave Oregon a “C-minus” grade on the overall condition of the state’s infrastructure. In their 2019 report, the ASCE reviewed the transportation, water and energy sectors and found that much of Oregon’s vital infrastructure is at the end of its service life. This assessment is made worse by the threat of a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake. However, none of this is a surprise to city leaders.

In early 2019, the U.S. Congress approved more money for infrastructure upgrades. This is badly needed, since the Congressional Budget Office reports that state and local governments paid almost 60% of the \$174 billion spent on transportation and water infrastructure capital costs in 2017, and 90% of the \$266 billion spent on operations and maintenance. Meanwhile, local revenue streams are limited by state laws and a community’s ability to increase fees.

The good news? State agencies are stepping up efforts to address infrastructure issues. Even before the ASCE report, 14 state and federal agencies came together to plan an infrastructure summit in Oregon. The goal was for representatives from multiple sectors and cities to learn from each other, collaborate and identify resources. The October 2019 conference succeeded in making the case that cities of all sizes are facing similar infrastructure challenges, and chief among them is the need to incorporate resiliency when repairing or replacing infrastructure. Multiple speakers highlighted the need for partnerships, careful asset management, and strategic planning.

“We must strive to make our infrastructure resilient, our economy depends on it,” said Business Oregon Industrial Lands Specialist Daniel Holbrook. “This summit provided a space for Oregon to talk about infrastructure comprehensively.”

A second summit is already being planned for the fall of 2020.

## Resources from the State

In Fiscal Year 2019, Business Oregon invested more than \$160 million in infrastructure statewide, 57 percent of which was in rural areas. Projects range from seismic risks assessments and



*The City of Prineville partnered with more than 15 organizations to construct a wetlands to treat wastewater, providing one of the best examples of collaborative, creative infrastructure problem solving. This “natural infrastructure” is highly effective and significantly less expensive than traditional wastewater systems, while also providing many more benefits. These include wildlife habitat, increased river flows and walking trails.*

plans for municipal water systems to road improvements and wind energy, among many others.

Similarly, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) invests heavily in water infrastructure through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. In the past year, the DEQ provided nearly \$66 million in below-market rate loans to cities, irrigation districts and sanitary districts for water quality upgrades. This includes traditional wastewater plants, along with “green” infrastructure such as bioswales used to capture stormwater runoff. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development also provides significant loans and grants for water quality infrastructure.

## Capacity, Climate Bring New Challenges

Cities are challenged with not just maintaining existing infrastructure, but also adding capacity. The city of Umatilla, for example, needed to find a way to balance stream flows with the water demands of data centers. After seeing the success the city of Hermiston had with water reuse, Umatilla decided to direct treated water from the centers to agricultural uses. Financed by the DEQ, this project will ensure more water stays in the Columbia and Umatilla Rivers while still allowing an industry to grow.





*The City of the Dalles constructed a co-generation facility which uses the digester gas from wastewater treatment to generate heat and energy, which is then used to power the systems. This dual-purpose approach offers a renewable source of energy while reducing costs and improving water quality.*

*In recognition of the energy-efficient project, the city received \$500,000 in principal forgiveness on their loan from the state's Clean Water State Revolving Fund.*

Even more pressing for cities is the need for infrastructure that can mitigate potential effects of the climate crisis. For example, in response to drier summers, more cities could follow Hermiston's lead and use "purple pipes," referring to the color of pipes used for recycled water. All aspects of infrastructure are vulnerable. This includes potential disruptions to transportation and communications, as well as to the energy grid which puts drinking water and wastewater systems at risk. And any one of these issues could impair the economic vitality of a region.


For its part, the state is updating its Climate Change Adaptation Framework. Using reports from the Oregon Climate Change Research Institute on potential threats, the framework will help guide policy and program responses by state agencies.

No community can tackle this alone. With infrastructure challenges that threaten economic, social and environmental resiliency, it will take strategic planning, creative collaboration and significant investment for Oregon to earn an "A" in infrastructure.

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Does your community sing your praises?  
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# LOC and CIS...

# “We Are One!”

By Patrick Priest, CIS Executive Director

**W**hen CIS was preparing for this year’s LOC Conference in Bend, I met with the LOC’s Executive Director Mike Cully and his Communications Director Kevin Toon. There was much talk about conference logistics, but the biggest takeaway from the meeting was just how much LOC values its partnership with CIS.

At the end of the meeting, Mike Cully said it best: “We Are One!”

## Working Together to Help Cities

The LOC has always demonstrated visionary leadership.

Back in 1958, LOC leaders saw the need for bringing great health insurance coverage to their member cities. They saw the advantage of pooling their dollars to purchase coverage to fit their specific needs. Because CIS didn’t exist yet, the LOC worked directly with Regence BlueCross to fill that important need.

Today, when a city chooses CIS Benefits, it’s also helping bring dollars to the LOC. But, just as important, the city is helping its own staff. CIS can reduce the workload of a city’s HR—and their budget—by offering value-added services, at no additional charge.

Cities that choose CIS Benefits receive services such as an:

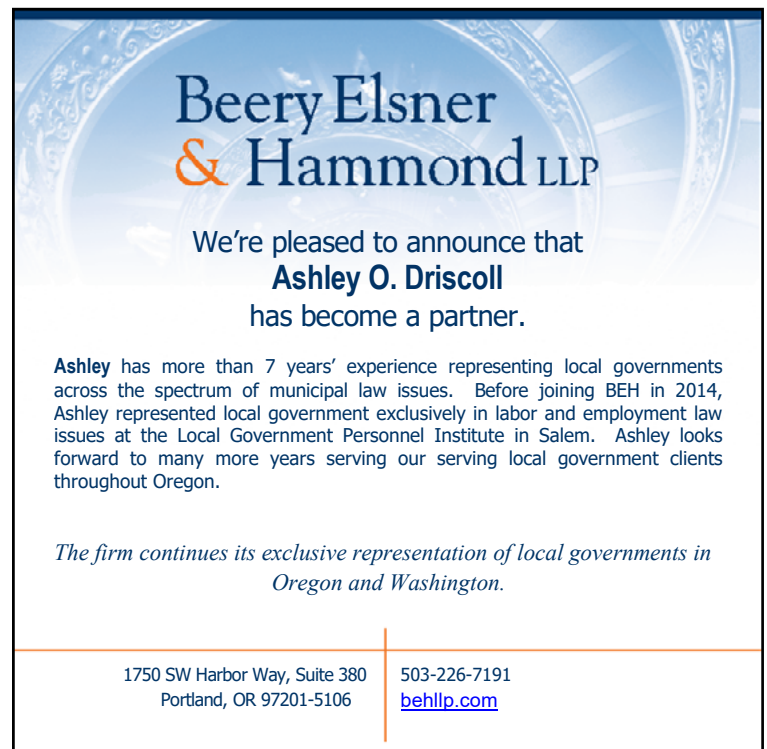
- An Employee Assistance Program;
- Administration of Healthcare Flexible Spending (Pre-Tax) Plans;
- Administration of Dependent Care Flexible Spending (Pre-Tax) Plans;
- COBRA and retiree administration, billing and collection services;
- Healthy Benefits services such as weight management programs;
- Financial and logistical support for worksite wellness activities;
- Support for GASB 75 valuation services;

- Online enrollment services with 24/7 access for you and your employees; and
- Online billing and payment services (you can pay from your Local Government Investment Pool or other account).

Once the LOC created the employee benefits trust, the focus shifted to creating another trust to meet its members’ needs for property, liability, and workers’ compensation coverages.

## 1981 Was a Memorable Year

In 1981, the American hostages held in Iran were released, Prince Charles married “Lady Di,” Sandra Day O’Connor was appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court, and Music Television, or MTV, was launched. And closer to home, the city of Rajneeshpuram began its brief history, while Oregon State beat arch rival Oregon in the Civil War game, 14-3.



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CIS Executive Director Patrick Priest speaks at the 2019 LOC Annual Conference.

1981 was also when the year when an insurance crisis hurt cities and counties across America. New York City was in deep financial trouble, and that turmoil affected cities everywhere. It was a tough time to get coverage. And when coverage was secured, it was expensive. All cities were affected — large and small.

What brought the crisis home here in Oregon was the small city of Juntura in eastern Oregon. This city had to disincorporate after its insurance premiums were higher than what the city collected in taxes. Both cities and counties were affected and needed to find a solution. Many of them found themselves without access to liability insurance.

To tackle the problem, the LOC and the Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) approached the Legislature, seeking the authority to allow cities and counties to join together to self-insure their liability exposures. The two organizations launched Citycounty Insurance Services (CIS).

Things got better, but then, in 1985, cities were rocked again by another insurance crisis. That's when CIS' Liability coverage became self-insured. Workers' compensation followed a year later, and property became self-insured in 1990. The LOC was instrumental in creating these coverages to bring savings, stability and service to their members.

*(continued on page 18)*

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Today, nearly 40 years later, CIS is still meeting the needs of cities and counties for coverages, including employee health benefits, property, liability and workers' compensation.

### CIS Stands by Member Cities in Good Times and Bad

It's easy to see why CIS would be successful during times when insurance was hard to obtain. But why has CIS stood the test of time? It's because of the level of service we bring to cities.

It's common for CIS staff and its board to hear that the CIS team is a lot like family. It's because CIS stands shoulder to shoulder with its members in good times and bad. It's as much about the people at CIS—and the service they provide—as it's about the quality of the coverage.

Also, CIS has been consistently governed by city and county members who've made certain that insurance coverages and rates were fair.

And, as the needs of cities has changed over the decades, so has CIS. We have strong financial reserves, which help stabilize members' rates.

The LOC and CIS have proven that risk management and risk financing is something that can be done better together rather than going it alone.

### Top Reasons Oregon's Cities Pool their Funds

When members "pool" their risk with other cities, they receive:

1. **Better Coverage** – In a pool, levels of deductibles, coverage and various insurance and risk management terms and conditions can be developed to suit a city's specific needs. CIS has greater latitude to decide on the risk exposures than what might be available through commercial insurance.
2. **The CIS Core Mission** – We make sure insurance coverages are consistently available at competitive rates—no matter what's happening in the insurance market. Plus, CIS has broad coverages that are unique to each city.
3. **More Stable Coverage** – All LOC members, not just those with CIS, have benefitted from CIS' presence in the insurance market. The commercial market has had to compete with CIS to maintain rather than reduce coverage. And, CIS is generally not as prone to react to hard or soft market swings.
4. **Management and Administrative Services** – CIS has specific providers in each service area and can choose from the best qualified to provide strong services to cities.



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5. **A Broad Range of Services** – CIS has an extremely broad mandate to help cities manage risk. CIS defines risk as “a possible loss or other adverse event that has the potential to interfere with a city’s financial stability or the ability to fulfill its mission.”

We focus on what benefits the pool as a whole. We also address the specific needs of individual members for tailored advice and assistance.

6. **Improved Cash Management and Investment Earnings** – CIS is a pool that can accommodate different flows of funds and financial objectives. The CIS finance team can adjust contribution payment schedules and invest pool reserves to benefit members (often at rates of return better than the individual member can obtain).

Without a profit motive, CIS can use investment earnings and surplus funds to offset operating expenses or poor loss performance or reduce future rate increases.

7. **Understandable Costs of Coverage** – Pool members are able to more readily link contribution adjustments, be they up or down, to specific causes (such as poor loss experience of the group, increase in reinsurance rates, changes in Oregon’s legal environment, etc.).

8. **Better Risk Management** – CIS helps its members identify priorities for cost effective risk management through the development and implementation of individually tailored risk management plans.

The bottom line: when a city chooses CIS, they not only get great coverage at a good value, they’re also helping the LOC.

CIS believes in the mission of LOC so much that it contributes over \$1 million a year to LOC’s operating budget.

LOC approves CIS’ plan designs and set rates for all coverages.

### “We Are One”

The LOC created CIS to make insurance coverages consistently available at competitive rates. They wanted to create an organization that could withstand all sorts of market conditions—and, they wanted to bring valuable and broad coverages to their member cities. By working together, LOC and CIS have done just that.

CIS will always value its strong partnership with the LOC and the important work they do on behalf of all cities, large and small.

Mike Cully was absolutely right when he said, “We Are One! ■

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## Q: When Should My City Call CIS for Help?

**A:** CIS' Pre-Loss Program provides free legal advice to CIS members who seek assistance with employment law matters that could result in a claim. Some examples of the employment law topics for which CIS provides advice include:

- Terminations
- Discipline
- Best practices for lawful hiring practices (including veterans' preference)
- FMLA/OFLA leaves of absences
- ADA/Oregon disability law matters (the interactive process, reasonable accommodations, and leaves)
- Diversity and inequality (discrimination) in the workplace
- Responding to internal complaints of harassment or a "hostile work environment"
- Working with injured or ill employees (workers' compensation reinstatement/re-employment, light duty work)
- Employee handbook review and policy drafting

CIS does not provide legal advice on wage and hour matters, contract/collective bargaining interpretations, or union/association matters (including grievances).

CIS will refer CIS members to LOC's legal team for the following issues:

- Public meeting laws
- Public records laws
- Disputes with other governmental agencies or third parties
- Ordinance-related issues (drafting, interpreting or implementing)

- Charter-related issues (drafting, interpreting or implementing)
- Ethics issues
- Land use/planning issues
- ADA accessibility issues (public accommodations law)

It is not unusual for both LOC and CIS to work simultaneously with a member organization at a given time. For example, with an employment termination at a smaller city, the member organization may have questions about the legality of the reasons for the termination and whether the termination decision itself is defensible (all CIS matters). But because the handling of the matter involves review by the city's council, the LOC provides guidance on whether and under what circumstances an executive session can occur to formally address that termination.

Another recent example involved a smaller city in which the elected officials were not working well with the city's employees. Both the LOC and CIS logged several complaints from the employees and the elected officials at that city regarding the minimal (and ineffective) communication occurring between the employees and elected officials, and various day-to-day operations issues that were allegedly not being properly handled by the council or the employees. In that situation, the LOC was able to provide the city with training on council roles and responsibilities, and CIS provided the advice on addressing ongoing performance problems, developing a complaint-reporting procedure, revising the city's employee handbook, and handling several "hostile work environment" complaints. ■





# 94<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 94<sup>th</sup> LOC Conference set a record for attendance, as more than 1,000 city officials, speakers, government staff, vendors and sponsors participating. Any year the event is held in Central Oregon, it takes on a different energy, and this year LOC staff presented a fresh, vibrant, memorable, and worthwhile experience for attendees

Living up to its billing, the conference was packed with great content. The sessions were well-attended, there was more dedicated time scheduled for networking, and the general sessions were generally appreciated. Highlights included two keynote presentations: the opener on Thursday by Fire Chief Darby Allen, and a closing presentation by "Better Angels" on Saturday (see page 30). In addition, attendees participated in sessions on topics including property taxes, eminent domain, wildfires, budgeting, diversity and inclusion, sustainability, economic development, SDCs, climate, media relations and affordable housing.

Finally, the quality of this event, the largest annual gathering of city officials in Oregon each year, simply wouldn't be possible without the support of our sponsors and participating vendors. 2019 was also a record year for the level of financial support provided by these organizations (see page 28), and the LOC, its board of directors and member cities truly appreciate these partnerships!

The LOC Conference provides a one-of-a-kind experience for city officials from all corners of the state, so it's not too early to start thinking about the 95<sup>th</sup> LOC Conference, which is scheduled for October 15-17, 2020 in Salem. Mark your calendars!

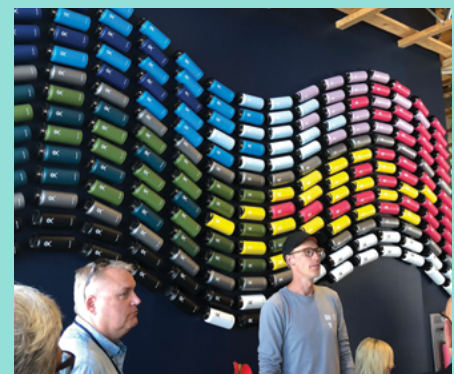
Videos of the general sessions and award presentations are available online at [www.orcities.org](http://www.orcities.org).



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## HERMAN KEHRLI AWARD

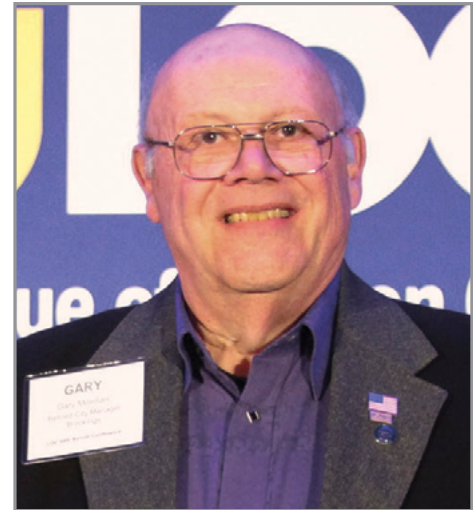
The Herman Kehrli award is given to a city employee who has made exceptional contributions to city government in Oregon, producing lasting benefits for their community.

### **Gary Milliman** **Former City Manager, Brookings**

Over a 45-year career in public service, Gary Milliman has exemplified the highest standards in local government leadership. In Brookings, where he served the final 11 years of his career as city manager, Milliman helped lead a downtown revitalization, the purchase of the Brookings Airport, and the implementation of a city fuel tax to repair streets. He also collaborated with higher education leaders to advance a development plan and secure funding for the Curry campus of Southwestern Oregon Community College.

Regionally, Milliman has assisted cities in preparing for, managing, and recovering from natural disasters. He has trained employees in incident command techniques, prepared emergency plans and organized practice events to test the readiness of the emergency organization and identify training needs. Through FEMA, he obtained a grant to build the Brookings Emergency Operating Center.

In retirement, Milliman serves as a municipal court judge in Port Orford and Powers, as well as judge pro tem and truancy court judge in Brookings. He is a senior fellow for the Center for Public Service at Portland State University and a senior advisor for the Oregon City/County Management Association.



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## JAMES C. RICHARDS AWARD

The James C. Richards Award is given to elected city officials who serve the citizens of Oregon through an exceptional personal investment in intergovernmental affairs.

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### **Cathy Clark** **Mayor, Keizer**

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Mayor Clark is an unwavering champion for her community, a leader in the Mid-Willamette Valley and among mayors across the state. During her years on the Keizer City Council, Mayor Clark has successfully led efforts to launch a local library initiative, improved miles of street scape, and helped develop a new civic and event center. In 2017, she led the effort to create stable funding for parks and police services and has responsibly directed public resources to homeless programs that have made measurable impacts.

Regionally, Mayor Clark has helped improve both the economy and transportation systems, and with the efforts to end homelessness in the Mid-Willamette Valley. She has held key leadership positions with the League of Oregon Cities, the Mid-Willamette Council of Governments and the Salem Keizer MPO.

Mayor Clark has worked tirelessly to preserve the home rule authority of cities in Oregon. Her efforts have directly contributed to the development of transportation funding packages and increased intergovernmental cooperation.



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## CIVIC EDUCATION AWARD

The Civic Education Award recognizes educators who have promoted local government education in Oregon schools.

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### **Beth Wytoski** **Mayor, Dayton and Teacher,** **Dayton High School**

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A government and economics teacher for more than 10 years, Mayor Wytoski has nurtured civic responsibility by giving her students practical, hands-on exercises that instill the values of civility and respect, community involvement, equity and inclusion, and personal responsibility. Her impact goes well beyond the classroom. As mayor, she connects students with government officials, providing opportunities for interaction with their city councilors, state legislators, and the governor. In addition, she's created a nationally-recognized civics education curriculum that requires students to develop a community action plan to improve the lives of residents in an area of concern. Over the years, her students have created plans for additional sidewalks and recreation facilities, outlined homelessness solutions, and park remodels, for use by city and county decision-makers. Finally, Mayor Wytoski serves as an ever-present, in-classroom role model for students, particularly young women, on the importance of public service.



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### **Mark Koepp** **Police Officer, Philomath**

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Every summer for the past 25 years, Officer Koepp has been instrumental in leading the city of Philomath's week-long Safety Town program for kindergarteners. Through this program, he teaches kids how to safely cross the street and how to travel to and from school safely. He also teaches them about "stranger danger" and how to interact with a police officer. In addition, Officer Koepp spearheads the city's "bike rodeo, a safety program for kids in the elementary school. Described in his nomination as a "community treasure," Officer Koepp has been his department's go-to officer for community engagement for more than two decades.

For years, residents of Philomath have commented that his classes were some of the fondest memories of their childhood.





## CITY AWARD WINNERS

### **Award for Excellence**

## **City of John Day Innovation Gateway and Riverfront Recreation Area**

The LOC presented its 2019 Award for Excellence to the city of John Day its Innovation Gateway and Riverfront Recreation Area. The Award for Excellence recognizes progressive and innovative city operations and services.



The city's ambitious economic redevelopment plan involves the revitalization of the former Oregon Pine Mill site, and the restoration of more than 90-acres of brownfields surrounding the John Day River. The area will house the city's new wastewater treatment plant and will feature: a community pavilion adjacent to a 6,000-square-foot hydroponic greenhouse; a new city shop; a future conference center and hotel; and opportunities for in-city camping and riverfront recreation.

The city council felt this project would reinvigorate the local economy, as the loss of three timber mills has resulted in a 15% decline in John Day's population since it peaked in the early 90s. The city worked closely with multiple state and federal agencies on this project and has invested more than \$1.5 million in public funding for Phase 1.

### **Helen & Alan Berg Good Governance Award**

## **City of Cornelius "Reach Out, Invite People In and Create a Real Community" Campaign**

The LOC presented its 2019 Helen and Alan Berg Good Governance Award to the city of Cornelius. The award recognized the city for its "Reach Out, Invite People In and Create a Real Community" Campaign. Created in 1998, the Good Governance award honors city programs that connect citizens within a community.



In 2012, Cornelius hired its current city manager to improve communication and cooperation with all residents, including a Latino community that is 52% of the population. Over the ensuing eight years an amazing transformation took place, highlighted by three projects. First, after much open and transparent community discussion, the city disbanded its struggling police department and contracted with Washington County for services. This was followed by the construction of a facility featuring the new city library on the ground floor, and 45 units of affordable senior housing on the second and third. Finally, the city conducted a public outreach effort for a new downtown plan and an urban renewal district. Both plans were recently approved by the City Council. Each of these efforts included oral and written communication in Spanish, leading to a more open and transparent discussion. In recognition of these efforts, Cornelius was honored this summer as one of only 10 cities to receive the 2019 All-America City Award.

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# Red and Blue America 2019

## An Interview with Better Angels

*"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."*

Political polarization isn't new—it didn't start with the 2016 election, and it's been steadily increasing for over the past two decades. While this is certainly a national trend, many Oregonians witness the rancor and divisiveness in our own communities and are searching for ways to work together to lower the political temperature.

At the 94th LOC Annual Conference in September, city officials attending the Saturday Keynote address heard from John Wood, Jr. and Ciaran O'Connor of Better Angels—a citizens' movement formed to reduce political polarization in the U.S. by bringing together conservatives and liberals to foster understanding beyond stereotypes.

After the conference, Ciaran and John shared their impressions of the political climate in Oregon, their experience at the conference and why they see city leaders in Oregon as critical participants in the effort to depolarize the country.

**LOC:** John, tell us about Better Angels and the work your organization does.

**John:** Better Angels is the largest bipartisan grassroots organization in the country. It's volunteer labor and member-driven, dedicated to the work of political depolarization and increasingly creating a shared sense of community and common identity amongst the American people and across the political divide.

We are active and have members in all 50 states, including local alliance chapters spread out in major cities and small communities across the country. Our work is aimed at fostering depolarization within government, the media and, of course, grassroots organizations and local communities. So, we're truly a national and bipartisan enterprise, bringing Americans together from across the spectrum into a working alliance and a shared sense of community to combat the divisions that are plaguing us at this time.

**LOC:** Ciaran, can you drill down into the problem of polarization in America and how the Better Angels organization identifies the problem and seeks to foster understanding and reverse the trend?

**Ciaran:** I think Better Angels is operating from a recognition that, in some ways, polarization is kind of the primary first-order problem that is preventing us from solving a lot of the pressing problems facing our country, which require us to work together. I think it's no secret that we're more polarized



now than we've been at least since the 1960s and potentially since the civil war and, obviously, polarization manifests in a number of ways. On a personal level, it is harming our relationships: it's breaking up friendships and causing friction at home with our families and at work with our colleagues. It's degrading public discourse. It's eroding our trust in each other and our institutions. It's making government more dysfunctional. And it's fundamentally hardening us into tribes that are increasingly oriented around opposition rather than necessarily advocating for the common good. So, whereas we acknowledge that problem, we want to build a space and a structure that can allow for meaningful solutions. And it starts with how we think about conflict, how we think about each other, and how we develop the principles and practices that allow us to transcend that conflict.

**LOC:** You both gave a very well-received closing keynote speech at the LOC Annual Conference in September. Can you share your impressions of the conference, the attendees you met and what it meant to speak to city leaders from across the state of Oregon?

**John:** Well, first of all, it was highly enjoyable and one of the things I remarked upon to Ciaran was just the fact that when you're in a room full of mayors and city councilors you definitely don't feel like you're talking to stereotypical politicians. These are people who are close enough not just on the issues, but to the people they are serving. They tend to want to talk about political issues in a way that is grounded because they all have responsibilities towards their constituents.

It feels very authentic and deeply personal because they're just so steeped in the communities that they represent. So, it's a different dynamic than for a state legislator who has to travel hundreds of miles to the capitol or a congressperson has to travel thousands of miles to D.C., and then stay there for weeks and months at a time. There's not this bifurcation of language and environments that happens with politicians at the higher levels. And that's not to say anything bad about those politicians, it's just to say that there's something special about folks working at the local level. That really came through for me in talking with the mayors and the city councilors in Oregon.

**Ciaran:** I found it to be an inspiring experience because local leaders often don't have the luxury of just leaning into partisanship wherever they can and focusing almost solely on raising money and, you know, slinging mud online. They actually have to roll up their sleeves and get things done. I think that it was clear that everyone there, even though they probably harbored some pretty sharp disagreements, really

seemed to be coming together in good faith with a solutions-oriented mindset. These are people who want to be leaders on this issue. So, it was really an honor to be able to engage with them and hopefully impart some hope and some practices and principles that they might be able to take to their community. At the end of the day, this is very much a grassroots movement and we're only as strong as our local leaders throughout the country. That's how this thing is going to really bubble up to create national change. So, to be able to come and build these relationships with foundational leaders in Oregon, I think it's exciting because I think it's clear that Oregon is becoming a real hotspot for Better Angels and potentially a model for the nation.

**John:** Every time we go to Oregon, I feel like the welcome is warmer and warmer; it really is a special place. On the civic side, it seems to me from my encounters with people, and this is certainly true at the LOC conference, that people have to have a definite understanding of the basic fact that our larger political health grows out of the health of our relationships with our neighbors. Whereas in other parts of the country, that might sound a little bit quaint or outdated, that sentiment seems to be alive and well in many parts of Oregon. Certainly, with the Republicans and Democrats who we talked to and interacted with at the conference. So, I think that as folks like that set the tone and serve as the moral example, the state can do that for the larger country. I imagine that we can really work some miracles with Better Angels and our activities going into 2020, and Oregon is going to be an important place for that.

**Ciaran:** The only thing I would add to that is that the rural-urban divide is one of the big underlying divides nationally and, in some ways, Oregon is sort of a microcosm of that. Portland and Eugene tend to lean pretty liberal and the rest of the state tends to lean pretty conservative. So, if Oregon can kind of become a model and a beacon of how people are bridging the divide between cities and rural areas, then that can be constructive for the nation. Because until we confront and try to overcome that divide directly, I don't think the larger issue of polarization can really be solved in any complete way.

John and Ciaran were grateful to have had the opportunity to come to speak at the LOC Annual Conference and look forward to coming back to Oregon soon. To learn more about Better Angels visit [www.better-angels.org](http://www.better-angels.org). ■

Learn more about Better Angels at [www.betterangels.com](http://www.betterangels.com).



# Why Small Cities Need Big Data

By Paul Aljets

In September, I attended the LOC's 94th Annual Conference in Bend, along with hundreds of elected officials and city staff from cities of every size across the state. This was a new experience for me, as I had previously worked the event as a staff member for the LOC. Now as an independent data strategist, I was a vendor and conference sponsor, so the way I prepared for the conference was different. Research and data are somewhat nebulous concepts for many practitioners, and the field is full of buzzwords like "Big Data." I realized what mayors, city managers and city councilors might most want to know is, "Why would my city need data?"

It's a good question, because cities have operated for years (and sometimes centuries) without big data, research and an endless supply of spreadsheets. True, cities can survive and even thrive doing the same thing forever, but data and research can help cities do better than yesterday. This is even more true for small cities, often defined as those with a population less than 10,000. With that, here are my five reasons why cities (especially small cities) need big data.

## 1. Get to Know Your City and Citizens

Luckily, some of the best data is not far away or hard to obtain. The most important data for a city is often U.S. government data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics or from the U.S. Census Bureau. These two sources will give a city plenty of data on its citizens. For example: How old are they? What percentage are single parent families? What types of jobs are most common in the city?

While some of this information may be common knowledge, this data can bolster or at least confirm an understanding of who lives and works in a given city. It also can be used to discover future issues that can be addressed now. Several small

cities in Oregon have no one in their population under the age of 40. Some actually have zero residents. This creates an obvious problem in a few decades when these cities could run the risk of disappearing entirely. While this is an extreme example, the city that can use data to discuss future issues now will be far more likely to prosper in the future.

## 2. Explore Ways to Save Money

Cities must keep robust financial records, audits and plans for future spending. But this data doesn't just have to be about how the city spent X amount on public works this year, or will spend Y next year. Big data allows cities to compare themselves to other cities. For example, one city spends X amount this year, but another of the same size and region spent far less. Why? And how does the city that spent more match the other city's efficiency? Sometimes the answer is simple, other times there are extenuating circumstances. But some comparisons can do wonders to inform the financial process and save the city money.

Additionally, data allows for the examination of trends over time. Is a revenue source that the city relies upon going to be reliable into the future? Examine the trends from the last 20 years and see. This is yet another place where comparing the revenues to like cities can be useful. If a revenue source is declining in all cities in a given region, it's time for those cities to act.

## 3. Compete with Large Cities

In Oregon, there are 48 cities with a population greater than 10,000 residents, and 12 greater than 50,000. Nearly 70% of the state is smaller cities, often operating with a staff of fewer than 10 people. This compared to Oregon's largest city,



Portland, with over 5,000 full-time employees. For this reason, smaller cities need to find ways to do more with less. Data can help make this possible.

For instance, a city with a large legal team can answer questions all day, such that even small questions get answered. If a city councilor asks, “How many cities in Oregon have wards?” it’s easy to assign a staff member to this issue for several hours to get an answer. For a city that may have only a single lawyer for these questions, compiled data can be a huge timesaver that allows these questions to be addressed.

#### 4. Track Your City Goals

Every city has goals to accomplish in a year, 10 years, etc. Citizens may ask whether the goal is achievable or wonder if the city is on track to meet it. Data can help here by showing exactly how close the city is to a goal. A data dashboard can even illustrate that progress in real time.

Now, not every goal is easy to illustrate with data. If a city has a goal to reduce its debt by \$1 million in the next five years, that’s a very easy goal to track. If the city has a goal to increase equity and diversity in the city staff over the next three years, that goal is multifaceted and dependent upon interpretation. Yet even more qualitative goals such as this can be monitored and tracked with the use of data. Tracking important goals is critical to maintaining focus and alignment. Cities should track their most desired goals to create transparency and accountability, and ensure that when the goal is met, the city can point to real success.

#### 5. Make Better Decisions

All the previous points boil down to the most important theme of this article: data helps cities make better decisions. In the same way courts rely on evidence to prove or disprove a case, cities need evidence to support a strategic direction or available options.

Imagine there is a problem facing a small city in rural Central Oregon, and the city needs to provide some context for the problem. This may involve information about the residents, finances, previous decisions, etc., much of which can be provided by data. If the problem ties to operations and citywide goals, data can show where the issue first arose. Finally, data provides more options. Few complex decisions are either/or prospects; there is often “wiggle-room” on the fringes that can be of tremendous benefit over time. Data provides more solutions to problems as well as more clarity about the nuances of the problem and solution.

What are other reasons why data is important? How has data helped your city or organization? If you’d like to explore further how data can be useful to your city, let’s talk. Visit [aljetsconsulting.com](http://aljetsconsulting.com) to connect with me. ■

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## MEDFORD

### New Identity Launched



**MEDFORD**  
OREGON

The city of Medford has begun implementing a new look and personality to its communications with a branding and identity initiative supported by the City Council to increase the city's engagement within this growing community.

The city partnered with Travel Medford during a brand development process. The two have brands that share visual elements such as the "M," but differ in color and design elements, according to the city's announcement about the initiative.

"We are accountable to the public and have a responsibility to share what we are doing with public funds," the announcement stated. "Consistent, professional, accurate and relevant visuals and written communications are important to building public awareness, trust and confidence in the work the city does on behalf of the public. Government agencies that invest money and effort in strategic branding and communications save in the long run by increasing public awareness and engagement."

In 2017, the Medford City Council made community engagement a top priority, and the rebranding process was part of that initiative. The new logo and associated visuals serve as the anchor to all of the city's communications, and the "M" in

Medford is designed to provide an upward energy while hinting at the city's importance in the Pacific Northwest.

The city noted that its previous logo was created in the 1960s and represents the building that houses its administrative offices.

"After 60 years of progress, population growth of over 55,000 people, and the need for an identity that visually represents the growing community, it's time for an upgrade."

On Feb. 7, the City Council approved the new brand identity, and on July 1 the city began implementation through a phased-in approach that it plans to complete by mid-2020. Its immediate focus is to launch the identity through digital communications including its website, online documents and e-communications, and to replace or include the logo on all reprinted and newly created print or outreach materials already included in its budget.



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# SWEET HOME

## New City Hall

Sweet Home recently celebrated the opening of its new City Hall with an open house that gave visitors a chance to see firsthand how the building reflects the community's robust logging history.

Located in the former U.S. Forest Service office at 3225 Highway 20, the Sweet Home City Hall features countertops made of locally grown and milled wood in the reception area, a planned rotating artifact display area and artwork created by local artists, according to the *Albany Democrat-Herald*.

"It's nice," City Manager Ray Towry said. "This building is going to meet our staff needs and our community needs for the next 50 years. We have lots of space now, and there is about another third of the building's total square footage that can be developed down the road."

The city paid \$750,000 for the 13,000-square-foot building that sits on more than five acres. The building was constructed in 1985 and housed the U.S. Forest Service staff until 2006. It sat empty until the city bought it after determining construction of a new building was not efficient financially, the *Democrat-Herald* reported.

"I'm ecstatic about finally getting this building opened," Mayor Greg Mahler said. "It has taken a lot of time, effort and hard work to get to this day, but it is worth it. It is a gorgeous building and I think the citizens of Sweet Home are going to be very proud of it."

An open floor plan created a large main entry that features local artwork and a mural. City Hall has a small public conference room and a larger conference room, as well as reception windows for general public services and for community development and planning. Three large TV monitors allow the public to easily see council documents during meetings.

"The counter tops were made by Dustin Nichol, shop teacher at Sweet Home High School," Towry said. "He's also going to make a table for the larger public conference room. The sliding barn-style doors for the conference room were made by Don Sullivan of the Public Works Department."

Staff engineer Joe Graybill repurposed furniture for the new kitchen/break area.

The previous City Hall was built in 1954 and has structural and mold issues, forcing the city council to meet in a modular building behind City Hall and then in the police department.



The total project cost, with remodeling, was about \$2 million. In addition to the City Hall building, the property includes a storage building, ample parking and space to add a small city park.

The city also recently received a \$241,809 grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department that will help replace aging playground structures with new accessible equipment at Sankey Park, construct about 1,280 feet of paved and natural trails and path lighting. It also will pay for a historic Weddle Bridge plaza, tables, benches, bike racks and signage. The city celebrated the grant with a groundbreaking ceremony Oct. 5 during its 13th Annual Harvest Festival.

### Have City News to Share?

Email us your copy (500 words max.) detailing your city's notable achievement (i.e., a project, initiative, award or individual honor), preferably with an image.

**Contact:** Kevin Toon, [ktoon@orcities.org](mailto:ktoon@orcities.org)

# CRESWELL

## All-Abilities Exercise Area

People in wheelchairs and those with other disabilities have new exercise options in Creswell, where the city has installed an outdoor exercise area with equipment that is accessible by Americans With Disabilities Act standards. The city's public works department installed the equipment over the summer outside of the Cobalt Activity Center.

The outdoor exercise area is part of Creswell's 2018-2028 Park Master Plan, which was developed through extensive input from the community as well as careful consideration of industry standards and trends. The plan aims to provide a sustainable and balanced park system that is accessible and inclusive for all residents to enjoy, the city states on its website.

"We also believe this plan will continue our commitment to shape the character of Creswell and enhance the quality of life for our residents," City Manager Michelle Amberg said. "Many of the ideas found within this document mirror emerging needs that citizens believe are important. Our collective challenge is to use this plan as a foundation to build upon to ensure future generations will have an opportunity to enjoy an outstanding park and open space system."

Amberg noted that the city has a responsibility to strategically evaluate its facilities and operations to meet its future vision. The Park Master Plan will allow city staff to focus on maintaining and improving the community's assets and be better equipped to meet the challenges of the future.



"As staff, we feel privileged to serve this tremendous community and honored to support the Parks and Tree Advisory Board with the development of the Park Master Plan," she said. "Creswell values its parks and deserves a thoughtful plan to enhance its open space. We are especially grateful to our residents who have voiced their opinions and attended public meetings. Our promise to the community is to use this plan to continue our efforts to create a community that offers quality of life while anticipating future community needs."

# MILTON-FREEWATER

## In Memoriam

The city and community of Milton-Freewater lost a beloved resident and longtime city councilor when John "Orrin" Lyon passed away August 26 at the age of 82 due to complications resulting from a riding accident. Orrin was a beloved resident and long-time City Councilor representing the Ward 1 position. Representing Ward 1, Orrin served on the Milton-Freewater City Council for 18 years, 15 as council president. He was first elected to fill the term of his brother, Councilor Mel Lyon, and the city has had a Lyon on its council since 1964! Orrin was a family man, constant supporter of the community and he was very involved with his church. He will be sincerely missed by all.

*Submitted by City of Milton-Freewater*





# WOODBURN

## Transforming Downtown

After more than 15 years in the making, Woodburn has finally received the downtown makeover it has been waiting for.

Woodburn is a rural north Marion County community with a population just over 26,000. Having served Oregon as a significant agricultural region, Woodburn is comprised of a culturally diverse population. More than 56% of Woodburn's residents are Hispanic/Latino, 15% Russian and a growing Somali population. This diversity is what makes Woodburn a truly wonderful, vibrant and unique community.

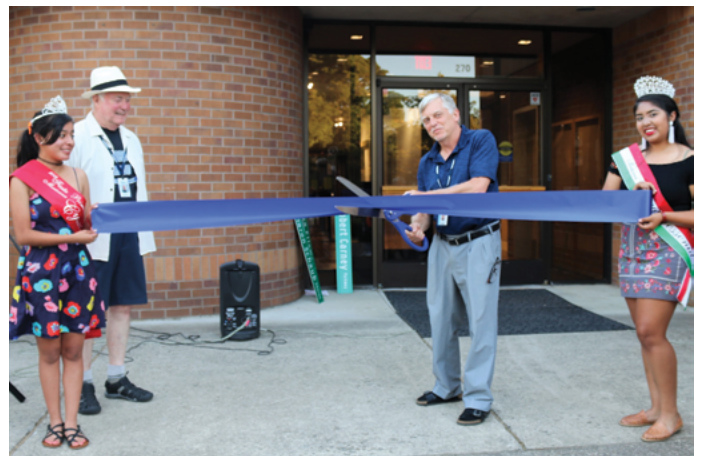
We like to say that Woodburn is a smaller rural community with larger urban challenges. Having grown from its rural agricultural roots and its "small town" values Woodburn is facing tremendous residential growth. With its location along I-5 and proximity to the Portland and Salem metropolitan areas, not to mention home to Oregon's #1 retail tourism destination (Woodburn Premium Outlets) with more than 5 million visitors a year, Woodburn is well positioned for growth. Woodburn was first settled in 1849 with the Oregon California Railroad following in 1871 creating newfound opportunity. During these early years, Woodburn ebbed and flowed in growth and economic prosperity. It was not until the 1970's when the auto-oriented development began on OR 99 and 214 that Woodburn began seeing businesses transition out of downtown. Downtown Woodburn suffered, storefronts sat empty, buildings fell to disrepair. There was a time where downtown was not a safe or inviting place to visit.

Overtime, Woodburn began to see change. There were new businesses opening in downtown, new retail establishments, new restaurants, and new investment. In 2005, the city engaged its resident, businesses, and community partners to complete the Woodburn Downtown Development Plan and envisioned a thriving, safe, vital center for the community. Participants helped identify the best qualities of downtown, needed improvements and developed the overall vision for downtown over the next 20 years.

The city began making improvements. First was the Downtown Plaza Project which included the redevelopment of a parking lot into a beautiful centerpiece for downtown, with a gazebo, fountain, benches, palm trees, and other amenities to



*First Street Emblem*



*City Hall Ribbon Cutting*

impart the feeling of a plaza from Mexico. The next project was the Front Street redevelopment which included new sidewalks, streets, infrastructure, trees, planting areas, benches, and light poles. These projects were the start of a great transition for downtown Woodburn.

Woodburn felt the impact of the economic downturn. Downtown improvement projects were placed on hold as businesses were struggling to stay open. As Woodburn's economy began to improve, the city once again set to work re-identifying and prioritizing projects of key importance to downtown and in 2016 the transformation began with the following projects:

*(continued on page 38)*

- **Alleyway Beautification Project:** In partnership with Republic Services, the city cleaned the dirty alleys; painted alley-side of buildings; installed gated trash receptacles; and added lighting and security cameras for safety. These improvements provided a cleaner, safer alley system through downtown.
- **PIX Parking Lot:** The former PIX movie theater building had sat vacant for more than 30 years. Over that time, the building was neglected with broken windows, leaking roof, and vandals gaining access and destroying the inside. With decades of neglect, the property had become a tremendous eyesore and a public safety issue. Therefore, the city acquired the property and due to extensive structural and environmental concerns demolished the building. To provide a benefit back to the public, the city has created a secure downtown parking lot, which was identified as a need in the Downtown Development Plan.
- **Façade Improvements Program:** In 2018 the Woodburn Urban Renewal Façade Improvements Program was created to provide design assistance and funding to business/property owners to make exterior improvements. Since it began the program has transformed 11 storefronts in downtown with six more planned this year.
- **First Street Improvements Project:** In 2017, the city began its long awaited First Street project. Key elements of the First Street Improvements Project included new streets, sidewalks, infrastructure, street trees, ADA improvements, lights, benches, and other streetscape amenities. This has been a transforming project for the community and the city was dedicated to ensuring public outreach and engagement throughout. During construction of First Street, the city removed 12 unknown underground storage tanks from the right of way along with more than 1,000 tons of contaminated soil and materials. This didn't stop the city as they continued to move forward with the project and see it to completion.

There has been a noticeable transformation in the downtown over the past 10-15 years. This transformation is more than just the city investing in projects—it stems from how the city has engaged the residents, businesses, partners and even visitors in the community making them an integral part of any project or event taking place. There have been numerous other projects in downtown as a result of solid partnerships including new businesses in downtown, property owners' investment in redevelopment, remodel of City Hall, and the Library Park Playground.

Even as Woodburn continues to grow, the community transformation has been achieved through leadership, engagement, diversity, and the city's continued commitment to serve its residents, businesses and property owners. People feel safe and proud to walk downtown Woodburn, shop in its unique stores, eat some of the best Mexican food in Oregon, and be a part of this wonderful community. It is an exciting time for Woodburn—just imagine what the future will bring.

*Submitted by: City of Woodburn* ■



*Before (top) and after facade improvements*

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# City Events

**Note:** City Events is also published online and promoted on a regular basis in the weekly *LOC Bulletin* e-newsletter. Please share your city's events by sending them to Julie Oke at [jmoke@orcities.org](mailto:jmoke@orcities.org).



*Christmas in the Garden, Silverton*

## November

- 22-12/31 **Silverton** – Christmas in the Garden ([www.christmasinthegarden.com](http://www.christmasinthegarden.com))
- 28-1/1 **Yachats** – Winter Celebration ([www.yachats.org](http://www.yachats.org))
- 28-12/31 **Charleston** – Holiday Lights at Shore Acres State Park ([www.oregonsadventurecoast.com](http://www.oregonsadventurecoast.com))
- 29 **The Dalles** – Starlight Parade and Community Tree Lighting ([www.thedallescchamber.com](http://www.thedallescchamber.com))
- 29 **West Linn** – Community Tree Lighting ([www.westlinnoregon.gov](http://www.westlinnoregon.gov))

## December

- 1-1/1 **Roseburg** – Festival of Lights & Holiday Village ([www.visitroseburg.com](http://www.visitroseburg.com))
- 6-7 **La Pine** – Light Parade & Christmas Bazaar ([www.lapine.org](http://www.lapine.org))
- 7 **Baker City** – Twilight Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting ([www.visitbaker.com](http://www.visitbaker.com))

- 7 **Coos Bay** – Empire Tree Lighting and Santa Visit ([www.facebook.com/empirecommunitycoalition](http://www.facebook.com/empirecommunitycoalition))
- 7 **Eagle Creek** – Christmas in the Country ([www.philipfosterfarm.com](http://www.philipfosterfarm.com))
- 7 **Lowell** – Covered Bridge Lighting ([ci.lowell.or.us](http://ci.lowell.or.us))
- 7 **Ontario** – Winter Wonderland Parade ([www.ontariochamber.com](http://www.ontariochamber.com))
- 7 **West Linn** – Holiday Parade ([www.westlinnoregon.gov](http://www.westlinnoregon.gov))
- 7-8 **Mt. Angel** – Hazelnut Fest ([www.hazelnutfest.com](http://www.hazelnutfest.com))
- 14 **Sumpter** – Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting Celebration ([www.sumpteroregon.com](http://www.sumpteroregon.com))
- 14-15 **Portland** – Holiday Spirits Fest ([www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com](http://www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com))
- 14-15 **Sumpter** – Sumpter Valley Railroad Christmas Train ([www.sumptervalleyrailroad.org](http://www.sumptervalleyrailroad.org))
- 19-24 **Portland** – Festival of the Last Minute ([www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com](http://www.portlandsaturdaymarket.com))

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