

If I Were Mayor

By Mario Welliver, Lake Oswego OR

Throughout life, you live somewhere. That could be a small farm town of 500, or a huge city consisting of millions of people. Even though these communities might seem like opposites of each other, just a closer look and you'll find many similarities. They both have loving neighbors, the "go-to" restaurant, and most importantly, someone who loves and cares for the city, striving to make it the best it can be. In other words, a mayor.

Similar to other cities, Lake Oswego has fallen victim to designing the city for only cars. Being a mayor, I could help break my town free from this labyrinth of asphalt and motors, giving the population clarity from vehicles that many never knew existed.

Many examples can be seen of LO's car dependency, from 4 lane roads with weathered, thin sidewalks to a downtown main street with no bike lanes. Many problems can arise from designing cities with such an auto-dependency, from unbearable rush hours to inducing Climate Change and even giving the community poor well-being of life. These three things are what Lake Oswego prioritizes to improve upon, yet how can a community do that when these complications are rooted into the veins of the town? As a mayor, if I wanted to uproot this problem and make Lake Oswego a better place for all, I would need to get to the source.

It's clear that because Lake Oswego was established in 1847, it wasn't always so car-oriented. The Downtown and First Addition neighborhoods are both in small, easy-to-walk grids. However, newer neighborhoods such as Palisades or Mountain Park have a distinct focus on vehicular ways of transportation.

As a mayor, I would need to make sure I wouldn't dive into something blindly and have the solution poorly designed. To make great pathways that connect community members, you would need to look at examples across the globe.

One great example to model after is Oulu, Finland. Oulu is a suburb town that still has car dependency, however, it has another set of pathways designated just for bikers and pedestrians, separate from roads. This is essentially what would be needed to design a new LO - a new infrastructure made for ways of transportation besides cars.

Another example Lake Oswego could follow for new pedestrian and biking paths would be the train tracks that run throughout the city. Not only do they run near neighborhoods, but they also are mostly separated from roads, having minimal interaction with cars.

A plan of making the paths for the city could consist of citizen surveys and votes to determine where paths would go, and where they are most needed. As a mayor, it should be

in the best of my ability to care for my people and take into consideration the ideas and suggestions of my people.

Once I have gotten the interest of the masses and showed what the pros of the new infrastructure could do, I could make votes for bonds that would be on the local ballots, just like Lake Oswego did for repairing the schools of the city.

An idea that could be taken into plan could be having different loops that intersect in different areas, making any part of the city accessible by walking or biking. Loops could start around Interstate 5 and the Stanford neighborhood around Interstate 205 and use existing paths (such as the ones on Kruse Way) to make these loops, then go into different neighborhoods.

With these examples, there could be a clear plan constructed as a mayor to make new paths to cut carbon emissions of the city significantly, give the citizens of LO a better well-being, and even possibly improve tourism of the town. All of these things are something that is desired greatly by the citizens of Lake Oswego and other communities across the globe, which I could improve upon, being a mayor. Lake Oswego could become a role model for other suburbs across the nation to break free of auto-dependency, which is another key desire of a mayor, helping, partnering, and building great relationships with other cities.

If I were mayor, I would use these designs of new pathways for bikes and pedestrians to, directly and indirectly, take out many core problems of our city. I would use my power and responsibility to the best of my ability, to make Lake Oswego as great as it can be.