



Ammon - 2024 State of the City Address

Dear Ammon residents, employees, council members--I am humbled to be able to speak to you today about the state of our great city. Ammon has a rich history and heritage, and a bright future. But if there is anything that we have within our control, it is the here, and now. We build our tomorrows today. What we do here, now, MATTERS. And whether we're seated as a member of the council or seated as a child in an elementary school, we ALL have the power to make Ammon great by lifting where we stand. We have seen wonderful acts of service by those who work in our parks and recreation programs, library, schools, keeping our streets clean, helping a neighbor, being a friend. Giving service above and beyond in a position at the city--something we see from our outstanding city employees all the time. It's these acts that make Ammon a place Where Tomorrow Begins, a place where people want to live, work, play, and come back to.

I am so very proud of the work that has been accomplished in 2023, which work trends us in a positive direction for 2024. Many years ago the city knew that its biggest street need was going to be fully building out 1st Street from Ammon to Hitt Road. But we did not know how--or when--we were going to be able to accomplish it. This past year we have been blessed with the knowledge that federal funding will make 1st Street a reality in 2024, and we have prepared accordingly by starting to create more access on Curlew and John Adams, coordinating power pole moves, and obtaining right-of-way. We also designed the bridge at John Adams. We were also informed that state funding will help us rebuild one of the worst bridges in the state--the 17th Street bridge. This all leads to a 2024 which will prove to be the biggest street and bridge building year in recent memory. In 2024, 1st Street will be built out to five lanes, with curb, gutter and sidewalk, including the 1st Street bridge. John Adams will be extended through to Hitt Road, including the John Adams bridge. Curlew will extend south from 1st Street to John Adams, soon thereafter to fully connect to the rest of Curlew to the south. And the 17th Street bridge will be completed in the fall. We have a lot to look forward to when it comes to road work in 2024.

But this leads to what may be our most important street task of 2024--creating an ongoing funding source for our roads. We need a tool that can give our street department the ability to do multiple road maintenance projects every year, expand its staff, and put away money for street capital improvement projects. We require more from our developers as far as street improvements due to impact than we have ever done in the history of the City of Ammon (and more than most other cities--that doesn't mean we shouldn't require more), but this cannot address existing street needs on the vast majority of our roads. Water, sewer, sanitation, and fiber all have a dedicated revenue stream to cover ongoing costs of capital improvement and maintenance. Streets do not, and they are our biggest source of strain for the residents. It's time this year for us to make that consistent street funding source a reality, which will also help us solve funding issues for two other important areas in our city--parks and law enforcement.

So it goes without saying that streets are our highest priority for 2024.

We have also begun work on a multi-year project to make Ammon more pedestrian-friendly. In 2023 we completed phase 1 of the 21st Street pathway, which extends from the east entrance to the



Cottages into town. We also added bike lanes and markings to Owen Street, transforming the safety and functionality of that road. These projects, and continued pathway funding in the budget and through grants, should give us the goal of making all of Ammon pedestrian-safe and accessible. Grant funding will help us transform two other roads with bike lanes and markings and will provide a similar pedestrian pathway along 49th South, and I'm optimistic to be able to connect the rest of 21st Street and also the southern portion of town by additional pathways in the very near future.

A big success was our Safe Streets for All grant funding, which will make it possible to plan and design all of Ammon's major corridors for safe access by all Ammon residents and will open up more opportunities for grant funding to construct important road and pathway projects in the future. With steady street funding and greater access to pathway funds, the Ammon of the future will have a solid transportation footing.

The City Council made an investment in Ammon's future when it decided in 2023 to put some savings toward expanding our City Hall. I'm proud of what Mayor Ard and the city council of 1995 did to give us the city building we are in today. But we all know that it is insufficient for the needs of the future as Ammon grows. The expansion, which is making amazing progress, will double the size of this building and give us another 30+ years of needed and more efficient space.

The Council also determined to invest sanitation funds in a much-needed new sanitation building, which will help preserve the life of our biggest asset in that department--our garbage trucks--for much longer than if we didn't have the building. This was an investment in the future which will pay dividends. Thanks to our public works department for providing leadership and getting this project completed. We have solid professionals in all of our public works departments.

In 2023, we continued the process of renovation of the Ammon Pool by commissioning a feasibility study. That study starts its work this month with public information gathering sessions and will expect to wrap up within the next four months. My goal is to be able to construct a new pool within the next four years. 2024 will be an important year for Ammon to determine the direction it intends to go with the pool, and then put the tools together to make it happen. Thanks to our parks and recreation department for continuing to help lead the charge on the pool. And we'll finish major repairs to the splash pad in 2024 as well.

In 2023, we substantially completed LID 5 for our fiber optics and are well into LID 6, Ammon's second-to-last LID before we have fiber installed all across the city. Ammon's fiber and technology crews are the best in the business, and I'm proud of what they've accomplished and will accomplish by making Ammon one of the first cities to be fully fiber-built.

I consider it a major success that, led by our planning and zoning department, we made critical improvements to our comprehensive plan and future land use map in 2023. These changes came following many meetings and visits with the public, and I do believe that we have a better product now than we did before the changes. They also incredibly secured a new and improved area of impact agreement with the county--something I was beginning to believe was not going to be possible--but they did it. And that's just it--the City of Ammon will always seek to improve in its operations--that's a commitment to the community.



2023 saw improvements across the city. Our public works department worked hard to remove two sewer lift stations, which required major road projects along south Ammon road and Crowley road. I know that these were extremely inconvenient for many residents, but these improvements will be hugely beneficial to our internal collection system into the future. And I expect we will be able to remove a third lift station soon on Taylorview.

Ammon's parks and recreation saw even more improvements in 2023, including the hiring of a new parks director, Tyler Draney. The Groundwater Conservation Park is finished. Sandcreek Park is beginning to get improvements. Ammon's events continue to be a huge draw for residents and non-residents alike. I am constantly stopped by people telling me how much they love our events, which bring our community together. This past year we added the Nogathon and the Ammon Farmer's Market.

Our customer and employee service employees are second to none. We pride ourselves on providing top-notch customer service to Ammon residents and businesses. Our Planning and Zoning and Building Departments processed a substantial number of applications and permits, and their processes for doing so continue to become more streamlined. I appreciate the hard work of our code enforcement officer, Clarissa Jones, in securing a successful new contract and partnership with Snake River Animal Shelter. We have good working relationships with our fire district and law enforcement, the both of whom we consider to be Ammon's fire and police. We've obtained over a million dollars in new groundwater rights. Our sewer district received judicial confirmation to consolidate the city's sewer bonds under the district, and is working toward plant expansion. We've been served with excellent legal counsel. And it goes without saying that our city administration is the best there is.

And that leads me to the city council. We will miss our work with long time councilmember Rex Thompson, who was committed to seeing smart growth in Ammon. His influence will continue to be felt even as he leaves us in an official capacity. And George Vander Meer, who served the city nobly following a difficult period. I have no doubt that Rex and George will stay active in city operations, and I hope that they will.

We also saw an incredible council election, which brings us new council members Kris Oswald and Jeff Fullmer. Their passion for the city is evident and I look forward to working with them. But even more than that, the election was electric--I have not seen so much positive energy for a long time as what came from all of the candidates for council seats. That drive to serve the community is contagious, and exciting.

I am proud to be a small part of the city of Ammon. I am proud to call it my home. I am proud of what we've accomplished. And I am excited for Ammon's future! Thank you.