City Club

- I'm glad Randy mentioned the personality tests that Council took last year. He didn't mention it, but I took one too.... and they found I didn't have a personality.
- It's always great to be back at City Club.
- I see a lot of familiar faces out there today, and I love an audience that's filled with people who care about Portland's future.
- Mayor Potter has assigned me the Parks Bureau, Cable, the Office of Sustainable Development and the Children's Investment Fund.
- One of the best aspects of this year's City budget process,
 where Mayor Potter took charge of the Bureaus, is that it
 actually did foster city-wide thinking, transcending the Bureaus,
 and I think it led to some really good decisions.
- I'd like to stay in that transcendent state for a few minutes about what I consider to be the most important challenges facing the City.
- First and foremost we need to give our children the support they need to thrive.

- A recent ride along I did in East Portland with Portland Police reinforced my focus and resolve that this needs to be our highest priority.
- That evening we entered a 3-bedroom mobile home that was serving as a meth house.
- The mobile home had more adults living there than seemed humanly possible...it also housed a young, teen girl.
- She sat quietly on the couch, choking back tears, as Police collected blood evidence of a stabbing that had taken place in that home.
- But her moist, sad eyes said it all, and I agreed: "Why is she living in a place like this?"
- Too many children in Portland face neglect and physical and sexual abuse with no caring adults to help them.
- They remain trapped in their own private hells until and unless discovered by the "system": school teachers, caseworkers, police.

- We must do a better job discovering them, rescuing them and helping them to succeed in life.
- It's not just their lives that are at stake; it's our future.
- That is why I will continue to work tirelessly to help our children.
- We've made some real progress recently:

• The Children's Receiving Center opened 2 years ago

- It provides a safe, homelike environment for children who have just been removed from abusive homes —many with parents who are operating meth labs.
- At the receiving center kids receive support, health care and comfort as they await a placement into a safer home.

- Prior to the opening of the receiving center children who
 were removed from abusive homes often had to spend long,
 scary hours in the back of a police car, or at the side of a
 caseworkers desk, waiting for a foster home to become
 available.
- The purpose of the CRC is to reduce the trauma of being removed from one's family and to give the system time to ensure that a child's first placement is the only placement.
- Too many kids are cycled through 10 or 11 foster care placements.
- It has been working very well, and the biggest concern now is that the demand for the receiving center's beds is beginning to exceed its capacity
- The Chile Abuse and Domestic Violence Team is another example of law enforcement working with service providers to help victims of child abuse

- I met with frontline workers who deal with child abuse this spring and discovered that the weakest link in the system was not having enough detectives to investigate child abuse cases.
- Commissioner Leonard and I pressed the Police Bureau to close their cold case squad and shift the detectives to cases with living victims.
- This led to 2 new detectives going to the child abuse and domestic violence team; and we were able to preserve the cold case unit, too.
- I'm told the new detectives are already having a dramatic impact.

• These are important victories for children, but there's more to do.

• Here are a couple of projects that I'll be working on in the coming year:

Anyone who reads the newspaper knows that Oregon has a foster care crisis.

- We can't find enough foster parents for kids who need them.
- All too often these children drop out of school,
 become homeless and are forced into a life of crime
- But there's a wonderful program in Illinois, called
 Hope Meadows, that converted an old Air Force base
 into a village with families raising foster kids together
 with the assistance of senior citizen "foster
 grandparents".
- Foster kids in Hope Meadows are 5 times more likely than other foster kids to be permanently adopted by their foster parents.
- The children of Portland deserve a place like Hope Meadows.

Domestic violence is a tragedy for abused spouses, but often overlooked is its devastating impact on children, who are exposed to violence.

- San Diego has an exciting new project designed to combat domestic violence: a one-stop center where victims have access to police, restraining orders, district attorneys, counselors and safe havens to escape the violence.
- This approach combines many of the aspects that have made the Children's Receiving Center so successful, and I will work to set up a similar one-stop center in Portland.

- The most important challenge for Portland's children next year: will be continuing the Children's Investment Fund:
 - 3 years ago, Portland voters said "yes" to the Children's Investment Fund
 - Today, that yes is changing lives

- The Investment Fund provides \$8.5 million annually over 5 years to expand proven programs in early childhood development, afterschool and mentoring and child abuse prevention and intervention programs.
- 50 different programs throughout the City serving 10,000 kids and 1,000 families have received funding

As a result:

- High quality childcare is available to more children
- More children are starting school ready to learn
- More teens have a safe place to go after school where they receive mentoring and homework assistance
- And we're helping to break the cycle of abuse by helping moms and dads become better parents

We've made every dollar count by limiting administrative costs to 5% and conducting annual audits

• The Children's Investment Fund has been highly successful, but it is funded by a time-limited levy. For

the Investment Fund to continue, Portlanders must step up at the polls in November 2006.

- In my first speech to City Club upon being elected to City Council I concluded by saying, "it's not easy being green". And that's true.
- But it doesn't compare with being a child, living in an abusive situation, often compounded by poverty, without the love and support that most of us took for granted as children.
- My absolute highest priority in the year ahead is to make sure that we continue to support stronger children, stronger families and a stronger Portland by continuing the Portland Children's Investment Fund

Finally I will also continue to push in the coming year for

• Adequate school funding;

- Exciting new sustainability initiatives like making
 Portland the first city in North America to get all of its
 municipal electricity from the wind power which will be
 generated in Eastern Oregon;
- Submitting to voters potential reforms of the costly and unfunded Fire and Police disability and retirement system;
- And working to improve government efficiency and city services with a mind toward reducing the cost of government.

Thank you