

City of La Crosse Mayor



State of the City as presented at Common Council on January 8, 2026

In October 2024, standing on top of Grandad Bluff, a landmark that represents the strength and beauty of La Crosse, I announced my candidacy for Mayor. That moment was filled with pride and hope. Today, I stand before you as the 44th Mayor of this great city, delivering my first State of the City Address. It is an honor and a responsibility I hold deeply.

From the very beginning, I have spoken about a vision of a forward-thinking La Crosse where everyone belongs, feels safe, is valued and respected, and has equitable access to the resources they need to thrive. This vision is not just words it is a promise. It is something I truly believe in. It is the vision that guides every decision I make as Mayor. I ask you City of La Crosse to continue to join me in this shared vision.

This is not my vision alone. It is our vision, a shared commitment to building a city where opportunity is not limited by zip code, where safety is rooted in trust and collaboration, and where every resident feels proud to call La Crosse home.

This vision is not abstract. It is rooted in action and a joint commitment to change and progress.

Our vision looks like safe neighborhoods built through collaboration, not fear.

In 2025:

- We hired 11 additional firefighters, strengthening our ability to respond to emergencies and protect lives.
- Our Legal Department and fire department work diligently to complete the Meadery fire contract.
- Our Fire Department answered over 8,000 calls for service, working hand-in-hand with our public safety partners.
- Our Police Department implemented progressive succession planning, successfully transitioning and replacing seven positions, and completed a full department remodel to our police department (under budget I should add). This gives officers the space and tools they need to serve our community better.
- Our Planning Department began zoning code updates, laying the foundation for smarter growth and stronger neighborhoods. We also signed several development agreements that will bring nearly 400 new housing units to our community.
- Our Engineering Department implemented new processes and procedures for road maintenance.
- Our engineers inspected and replaced lights throughout the city.
- Our Legal Department successfully completed a revocation hearing and have been working diligently to prosecute OWI's Helping to change our culture with irresponsible drinking.

These are not just numbers or minor accomplishments this represent safer homes... stronger neighborhoods ... and a city that is planning for the future.

In 2026, we will continue revitalizing neighborhoods and advancing community safety through environmental design and infrastructure improvements. We will continue to explore ways to build stronger community in our neighborhoods. These efforts will make our streets safer and our neighborhoods stronger.

Our vision looks like young people who are empowered ... not ignored.

In 2025, we distributed 18 micro-grants for youth climate action projects, and we will continue this program in 2026. In addition to developing a municipal internship program for high school and college students. Our younger generation needs a platform that allows them to engage in our local political system and have their voices heard.

Our Parks Department hosted over 175 programs in our community for youth of all ages because we are all young at heart. If you missed these opportunities check out the Parks and Rec Connect activity guide.

Our vision looks like economic growth that includes our local entrepreneurs, especially those who were never invited to the table before.

In 2025, the Planning Department provided financial assistance to 44 small businesses and supported over 140 small businesses through creative partnership with various community organizations. This is how we build an economy that works for everyone.

Our vision looks like a city where belonging is not a slogan, but a lived experience. We continue to make sure our citizens are heard and are a part of the decision-making process.

Our business community and citizens have been asking about a second airline so that they could support traveling from their local airport and our airport staff have worked diligently to add a second airline and plan to continue exploring additional air service options.

The City Clerk completed handbooks for our boards, commission, and committees Making it easier to recruit and retain citizens for these important roles.

Municipal Transit has implemented a new mobile app for real-time vehicle tracking, improving accessibility and convenience for riders.

In 2026, we will be exploring more innovative options of getting citizen feedback. Our city will be partnering with another agency to develop a city strategic plan to help guide our work moving forward. We have so much to look forward to in 2026.

I would also like to take this time to acknowledge the awards and acknowledgment that our city received in 2025. La Crosse is still listed as one of the best places to live.

- Our IT Department won Federal award for sustainability initiatives through the EPEAT Program.
- The Library Archives team was the 2025 recipient of the Governors Archives Award for Archival innovation.
- The City of La Crosse is now a Certified Family Friendly Workplace, thank you to the leadership of our Human Resources Department.

Our great city has yet to reach our full potential, and I look forward to moving this city forward. The task will not be without challenges. As we look back on 2025, it is no secret that our city had to make some serious budget decisions. However, our Finance Department continues to work to find efficiencies and do more with less. They have implemented a new payroll system and a new Capital Improvement Projects software. Most importantly we were able to pass a balanced budget that met our expenditure restraint incentive program goal and we continue to have a successful bond rating. As we move forward in 2026, we will continue to work across all departments and with the council to develop priorities that will guide our financial decision making.

Most importantly, we need to hear from you. What quality of life do you want to see in our city? Our end goal is to continue to make La Crosse a desirable place to live for all.



Mayor Shaundel Washington-Spivey

VIDEO