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On streets of Portland, Adams recall isn't a top concern

By Janie Har, The Oregonian

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Portland Mayor Sam Adams will deliver his State of the City address Friday.

Portland Mayor Sam Adams delivers his State of the City speech Friday to what should be a sold-out luncheon before the Portland City Club.

The last time Adams gave the annual address he had just confessed to lying about a sexual relationship with an teenage legislative intern.

Since then, he's survived one recall attempt and faces another.

"It's going to be a packed room," said Charity Fain, executive director of the nonprofit civic organization.

But outside City Hall and its power structure, interest may not be as high in the mayor.

The Oregonian interviewed more than a dozen people plucked at random this week from MAX stations, parks, a coffee shop and a mall, and asked: What do you know about the mayor, and how do you think he's done in his first year?

Responses varied. Most had heard about Adams' sex scandal but didn't know enough about his mayoral record to rate it. No one expressed enthusiasm for a recall -- especially, they said, given the personal sins of so many politicians.

"All the recall does is cost so much money, cause conflict, and why are they doing it a second time?" said Daisy Schmidt, shopping for shoes with her daughter at Mall 205.

"Just leave him alone."

The first recall attempt failed in October to get enough signatures to make the ballot. A second recall campaign fronted by former state Sen. Avel Gordly has been low-key, despite organizers' pledge to use paid petition gatherers to collect more than 32,000 signatures by April 20 to qualify for the ballot.

Adams' address

Gordly has said voters should have a chance to vote again on the mayor because he lied about his 2005 relationship with the teen when Adams ran for mayor in 2008.

But if random residents were weary of a recall, they also were hard pressed to state what the mayor has accomplished in his first year.

"I know he's openly gay, and I think that's fine," said Barbara Becker Donner, who was waiting for her daughter at Pioneer Courthouse Square. "As far as I know he's doing a good job."

At the Rose Quarter, a trio of young moms enjoyed a sunny afternoon as their children, five in all, lolled in their arms or bounced around on bikes.

"I'll be honest, I've been a little buried in kids," said Allison Wyand, 37, cradling daughter Ruby, just shy of a first birthday.

"I don't want to recall him. I want him to do his job."

Her friend Erin Harrington, 32, said she was excited about the mayor's plans for education, pre-scandal. "A lot of his grand ideas, as far as schools, hasn't happened," she said.

East of the Rose Quarter in Portland's Montavilla neighborhood, a singer with the Portland band Drats!!! sat in the Bipartisan Cafe and said he appreciated that Adams is a "big supporter" of the arts.

Jeffrey "Chairman" Couch, 35, said he didn't care about the mayor's scandal.

"That's personal-life stuff," he said. "Everyone's got their own crazy personal stuff going on."

Outside the cafe, Derol Whiteside, 29, also confessed to not knowing much about Adams.

"I know he had a scandal," he said. "And I know he's trying to make the city a bit greener."

"I know his name and his sexual orientation. I know what he looks like."

Not bad, given that many voters don't know the name of their governor and couldn't recognize him if they did. State legislators? Many could glide incognito through the supermarket.

Still, that's not to say Adams doesn't suffer from lack of recognition.

When told that Sam Adams was the name of the current mayor, one young woman at Holladay Park said:

"Who's the Potter guy?"

Tom Potter was mayor before Adams. He delivered his final State of the City speech before the City Club in 2008 but made members take buses to Jefferson High School in North Portland to hear it.

-- **Janie Har**

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What: Portland Mayor **Sam Adams'** State of the City address

Where: The Governor Hotel, **614 S.W. 11th Ave., Portland.** Hosted by the **City Club of Portland.**

When: Friday. Doors open at 11:15 a.m. Speech to start at 12:15 p.m. Lunch reservations are sold out but \$5 no-lunch seats may be available for nonmembers.

Feb. 12: State of the County address by Multnomah County Chairman **Ted Wheeler.**