

# LA CENTER BULLETIN

BE IN THE KNOW WITH THE CITY CLOSE TO NATURE



## MAYOR'S CORNER

### Greetings Neighbors:

A little over year ago, none of us could have imagined the unforeseen events and challenges our community would experience as result of COVID 19. Fortunately, La Center is blessed to have an engaged community, active community leaders, and dedicated city employees who have met our challenges during these unprecedented times. These dedicated individuals, along with strong fiscal management, continue to support a safe and thriving community with high quality city services for our residents and businesses.

In spite of the myriad of pandemic related challenges and issues, the City had several significant accomplishments in 2020. Some of the notable accomplishments include: the first application for new development within the La Center Junction subarea. The proposed development includes a 101-unit 5-story hotel, a multi-tenant commercial building, a one-story convenience store, and a 2,800 square foot drive-through restaurant. In partnership with the La Center School District, the City coordinated infrastructure improvements, provided construction plan review, issued building permits and completed construction inspections on their new 77,000 square foot middle school that began construction in May 2020. The City committed capital funds to address the deterioration of the pavement on Stonecreek Road resulting in a major reconstruction project which

addressed road surface conditions and also rehabilitated the road bed to improve drainage. Thanks to a \$1.5 million state grant, the City began the design and engineering to widen 4th Street and replace a fish blocking culvert. This project's design and engineering is expected to be completed later this year. Currently, the City is working to secure a 10.5-million-dollar state grant for construction of the project. The City issued 143 building permits for new single-family homes in 2020, which was more permits issued than during the eight years from 2011 to 2018 combined. Additionally, the City received an application for a 144-unit multi-family development project expected to begin construction later this year. The Heritage Business Complex began construction on Building B, adding approximately 8,800 square feet of leasable retail and office space to downtown La Center. Plans and construction documents have been completed for renovating the former TDS office. The building is located at 210 East 4th Street. Renovation is expected to begin spring 2021.

The 2021 city budget implements a number of additional positive changes and key investments in the city's infrastructure while new home construction is expected to remain robust through 2021. Although the City is experiencing strong one-time revenue streams from new residential and commercial development, the 2021 budget will have to continue to rely on city reserves to

fund existing City service levels. Moving forward, the city will continue to thoroughly review city operations and reorganize city departments in order to align city services and service levels to current revenues and expenditures. We will take into account the impact on future budgets from one-time revenues such as development fees and building permits versus ongoing revenue streams like property and excise taxes.

Anticipated legislative mandates on law enforcement are expected to force significant operational changes on municipal police departments which will likely affect the risk and liability for municipalities. Many of these expected changes may have significant budgetary impacts. The City is currently involved in assessing police services being provided by the City's Police Department and the City's overall needs. The LCPD assessment is expected to be completed by mid-March.

The Council's long-term investment in business development in previous years has made it possible for the City to be in the position to increase in new development, the city is in a strong financial position and is able to weather these uncertain times. The City's prior actions and the planning under way now will help us emerge even stronger whenever our "new normal" arrives. As always, I welcome your thoughts and suggestions.

**Mayor Greg Thornton**

**FUN FACT: Did you know that the City of La Center is 112 years old this year? That's right! Our beautiful city is over a hundred years old!**

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MARCH 2021

## WELCOME NEW CITY EMPLOYEES

**Corey Short**, who you may see tending to our luscious city greens or helping patch up the roads with the Public Works Maintenance crew. With his experience in the Navy working on F-18 Avionics, he is a wonderful addition to our crew.

**Jessica Nash**, you may have heard her voice on the phone when you call into Public Works or when needing help with an application. With years of administrative, customer service, and operations experience, she is a great addition to our team.

**Maria Swinger-Inskeep**, our new Manager of Administrative Services,

you have seen her at City Council meetings presenting the Finance Staff report. She is the whole package, with experience in Accounting, Management, Administrative Services, and Human Resources, we are joyous to have her join our team.

**Riley Barbera**, a newer member to the team. You probably haven't seen him yet as he is working diligently as our new Senior Accountant. Equipped with a degree in accounting from WSU, a CPA, and 8 years' experience we are gratified to have him join us.

**Robert Richardson**, our newest member who will serve as the City of

La Center's Interim Administrative Chief of Police. He has a long and distinguished law enforcement career spanning over forty years. Read more about Chief Richardson on the City's Homepage.

**Dennis Hill**, is our newest City Councilmember. Councilmember Hill joined our team in December, find him at the next meeting on March 10th at 6:30pm.

**Shirin Elkoshairi**, is our newest Planning Commissioner. Commissioner Elkoshairi joined the team in January, catch him in the next meeting on March 9th at 6:30pm.

## PUBLIC WORKS

### Doggy Doo Your Part

Dogs have been by man's side for 30,000 years providing comfort, love, and loyalty. They are intelligent animals that are capable of learning complex routines, detecting blood sugar changes, and herding livestock. But from the K-9 rescue units to the lazy, couch potato family member, we still have not been able to train dogs to pick up their poop. Did you know dog poop can take up to 12 months to fully break down? When people do not clean up after their pets it can have a major impact on the whole community. A study of the U.S. revealed there is an estimated 10.6 million tons of dog poop produced every year and contributes to 30% of bacteria found in watersheds all over the country. In cities, the rainwater washes over the waste and is carried to the stormwater drains, which then go into our streams, lakes, and rivers. Washington State's Depart-

ment of Ecology has recently been testing the bodies of water around the state. The results from Ecology for the City of La Center city limits showed that of the fecal coliforms found in the rivers, dog DNA was the highest result.

Though the canine fecal coliforms are a large contributor, we do not want to make the dogs feel singled out. Other animals like cats, horses, and livestock are contributing, and their waste should be cleaned up too. The poop carries disease causing bacteria and parasites, which can contaminate yards, parks, and gardens, including the surrounding fruits and vegetables. Keeping the City clean of animal waste will help contribute to a cleaner community and river. There are City bag dispensers and trash cans located throughout town and at the local parks for disposal. With help from the citizens, we can keep the City and its waters clean!

### Snow Storm Team Work

Thank you to our Public Works Maintenance Crew for working through their weekend with some continuous shifts during the snow storm. We are privileged to have a dedicated crew that ensures our roads are plowed and sidewalks clear for our community. City staff plowed approximately 1,200 miles over the weekend, which is the equivalent of plowing a lane from La Center Washington to Missoula Montana and back. Thank you!

Thank you to our Wastewater Operators for working the holiday and keeping our sewers running during freezing temperatures and snow. Wastewater Operators monitored the WWTP around the clock during the storm and came in as early as 3:30am to address a power issue related to the storm. Our City is grateful to have them working to keep us running. Thank you!

Visit the Civic Web  
[lacenter.civicweb.net/portal](http://lacenter.civicweb.net/portal)

City Council Meetings

March 10th & 24th  
April 14th & 28th