

SPRING & SUMMER 2018



INSIDE Bellingham

AN INFORMATIONAL SOURCE FOR CITY NEWS www.cob.org



City implementing solutions to homelessness

By Mayor Kelli Linville

Affordable housing and homelessness are always on our minds at the City of Bellingham. Our most recent community survey listed homelessness as the number one concern of residents, and significant data has shown that this statewide issue has been getting worse. An unprecedented number of people are living on the streets in Washington state, and it is often left to local governments to solve these complex issues.

Homelessness is growing sharply in Washington state, spurred by a lack of affordable housing and a poorly funded mental health and substance abuse system. After years of decline, we have recently seen an increase in the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness. In Whatcom County, 7 out of 10 of those experiencing homelessness had their last home in Whatcom County, and preliminary survey results show that our unsheltered homeless population grew from 299 individuals in 2017 to 380 in 2018. Meanwhile, median home values have increased 137 percent since 2000, and one in four working families in Bellingham can't afford their basic needs.

So what can be done about this complex issue? The City of Bellingham has adopted a suite of long- and short-term solutions to provide more affordable housing, support a "housing first" model for addressing

homelessness, and provide immediate relief for those who are unsheltered.

Challenges with homelessness are tightly tied to difficulty finding affordable housing, and the City of Bellingham has helped address this by supporting both market-rate and subsidized housing. The City provides \$4.9 million annually in housing and services for low-income and homeless residents.

The good news is that our planning department has been busy, with 200 single-family homes permitted last year, as well as 500 multifamily permits issued and 500 more currently in permitting. In the past year, several key community development projects have also moved forward, including Eleanor Apartments (low-income senior housing) and 22 North (homeless youth and adults).

We are also joining with other communities to ask the state for tools to raise resources to invest in our domestic violence shelters, youth and young adult services, outreach services, rental assistance, permanent supportive housing services, and more.

Homelessness does not exist in a vacuum. To solve this ongoing crisis we will all need to work together – the government, the private sector, nonprofits, religious institutions and residents – to be successful in finding solutions. For more information on our local housing statistics, visit cob.org/housingstats and cob.org/stateofhousing.

742+

PEOPLE ARE HOMELESS in
Whatcom County on any given night

BELLINGHAM'S HOME FUND ALLOWS US TO PARTNER WITH AND SUPPORT THESE HOUSING ORGANIZATIONS:

Bellingham Housing Authority,
Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services,
Catholic Community and Housing Services,
Kulshan Community Land Trust, Lydia Place,
Mercy Housing NW, Northwest Youth Services,
Opportunity Council, Pioneer Human Services,
Sun Community Services and YMCA

1 in 4

WORKING FAMILIES in Bellingham
can't afford their basic needs

25,000

PEOPLE HELPED BY THE CITY in any
given year with services, including crisis
support, food, housing and literacy.

7 in 10

PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS in
Whatcom County had their last home here

\$4.9 Million

PROVIDED BY THE CITY in a given year
for housing and services for low-income
and homeless residents

**CITY OF BELLINGHAM'S
NEWEST FUNDED PROJECTS**

Francis Place (42 permanent housing units)
Eleanor Apartments (80 senior housing units)
Villa Santa Fe (50 units for farmworker families)
22 North (40 units, half for homeless youth)

INSIDE

2 WATERFRONT
UPDATE

3 MAPLEWOOD
AVENUE

4 POLICE CHIEF
DAVID DOLL



Waterfront park opens to the public

Roads, Granary Building, acid ball art provide amenities

After decades as an industrial site, the central waterfront is opening up for public use. Work is underway on new streets to provide access to a redeveloped Granary Building and the City's new Waypoint Park, as well as onsite art as the former acid ball becomes a beacon on the bay.

Granary Avenue and Laurel Street, under construction since late 2017, will feature bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as well as parking, utilities, landscaping and lights. The new infrastructure will provide a framework for future development to complement the public use of the waterfront.

The street construction costs nearly \$11 million, which is mostly federally funded but includes local investment.

"Our community is making investments that provide public access to our waterfront," Mayor Kelli Linville said. "We are building the infrastructure needed to support housing and jobs for the community."

Central Pier, located in the Central Avenue right-of-way between Whatcom Waterway and the Granary Building, is Bellingham's newest public space. Constructed in 2017, the streetscape improvements and steel platform provide access to future commercial tenants and form the gateway to Waypoint Park.

Seating, lighting and planting beds were custom-designed to maximize views and use of the space, while minimizing additional weight to the existing pier. Shiny steel bollards mark



▲ Granary Building



▲ Acid Ball

the entrance off Roeder Avenue. It is a great place to watch construction happening next door.

Waypoint Park, scheduled to open this summer, will include a new beach, seating, landscaping and a natural playground. The circa 1938 acid ball, a steel industrial artifact that weighs 438,000 pounds and is 30 feet in diameter, was recently relocated to Waypoint Park where it will be transformed into a beacon of light for the city.

For more information on these projects, please visit cob.org/waterfront.

DOWNTOWN GETS NEW RETAIL STRATEGY

The City and the Downtown Bellingham Partnership have jointly funded a retail advocate position to implement a retail strategy beginning



this spring. This will include building relationships with existing operators, property owners, landlords and others as well as providing resources to assist in the fulfillment of the overall retail vision. This will be an ongoing effort to continually improve the retail landscape downtown.

"I'm excited to have a plan to enhance our great downtown and make our commercial core even stronger," Mayor Kelli Linville said. "This retail advocate position will help us build on the strengths of our city center and provide professional assistance to retailers."

The project aims to strengthen the retail mix downtown in an effort to improve the overall attraction of living-wage jobs, residential investment, street activity and fiscal health of the district.

The retail advocate position allows conscious curation of downtown to create a more cohesive shopping district and to connect the activity already happening.

For more information, contact Darby Cowles in the Planning and Community Development Department at dkcowles@cob.org or (360) 778-8389.



MAPLEWOOD AVE:

transforming a neighborhood from the ground up

Birchwood residents will be able to enjoy a safer, more accessible street experience as soon as improvements to Maplewood Avenue are complete. In addition to resurfacing, the West Maplewood Avenue Multimodal Improvements Project is adding curbs, gutters and sidewalks on the east side.

The transformation of Maplewood is more comprehensive than street work. The fabric of the neighborhood, as well as its infrastructure, will be improved with new bicycle lanes in both directions, improved street lighting, and community-inspired art by Jennifer Kuhns. The improvements also bring curbing and intersections up to current standards required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

"The ADA-compliant curbs benefit the community," said Kim Brown, Bellingham's ADA Coordinator. "It improves accessibility for those with mobility challenges, as well as those with strollers and kids on bikes, ensuring all users can enjoy the neighborhood."

The West Maplewood corridor was identified as a high-priority multimodal connection by the Birchwood Neighborhood Plan, as well as the City of Bellingham's Bicycle and



▲ Jennifer Kuhns holds art for Maplewood Ave which she created using mosaics based on self-portraits drawn by children in the neighborhood

Pedestrian Master Plans. The corridor serves children who walk to nearby Birchwood Elementary and Shuksan Middle schools.

The \$2.5 million construction project was partially funded by an \$895,000 federal Safe Routes to School grant as well as the voter-approved Transportation Benefit District #1.

Coming next, the Shuksan Meadows Park playground will be redesigned, with neighborhood and school involvement, for work in 2019.

For more information, visit our website www.cob.org and search Maplewood Ave.

CORDATA COMMUNITY PARK CONSTRUCTION TO START MID-2019

Design for phase one of the community park at Cordata is now underway and gaining momentum.

Slated for construction mid-2019, this community park will serve Bellingham's northern neighborhoods. The design reflects and incorporates the public input from both adult and children residents.

Located on Cordata Parkway between Stuart and Horton Roads, the rolling 20-acre site plan features a loop trail, picnic shelter, parking, restrooms, a fully inclusive playground, spray park, skate dot, parkour area and pump track.

In addition to fun park amenities, the plan also protects and enhances the sensitive environmental features of the site, incorporating wetland plantings and bridges to complete the meandering trail loops.

It is part of the City's 1% for the Arts program, which requires all capital projects of at least \$2 million spend 1% for an arts component. An artist will help design the pedestrian entrances and incorporate art along Cordata parkway.

Phase Two will add sports courts, a pavilion, a covered stage, and additional restrooms and parking.

For more information, contact Jonathan Schilk, Project Manager, at jschilk@cob.org or visit the park website at cob.org/gov/projects/Pages/Parks/cordata-community-park.aspx.

▼ Future plans for Cordata Community Park



BTV BELLINGHAM IS NOW AVAILABLE IN HIGH DEF!

ONLINE

www.cob.org/btv

COMCAST CABLE

Channel 10 – Standard
Channel 321 – High Def

CENTURYLINK CABLE

Channel 40 – Standard
Channel 1040 – High Def
Access Bellingham – Public Access
Sunday nights 6pm-midnight



Q AND A

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

David Doll, Bellingham Police Chief

Bellingham Police Chief David Doll, a lifelong Whatcom County resident, began his position as Bellingham Police Chief on Dec. 1, 2017.

How did you get started with the Bellingham Police Department?

A: In 1980, I joined the Department's Explorer Cadet program and was hired as a commissioned officer in 1984 when I turned 21 years old. I have enjoyed various positions within the organization. Most recently as a Deputy Chief, a position I held for the past 12 years.

What are some changes you have seen in Bellingham and the BPD?

A: Technology has changed the way police officers operate, as well as shaped crime in Bellingham. Now, every patrol car has a computer, and every officer carries a phone, taser, first-aid equipment, and wears a body camera. The job has become much more technical and complex.

Nationwide, bank robberies have decreased because it is easier to rip people off through the internet, especially through identity theft. As a result, we have to ensure we have the proper technology and training to investigate these very complex crimes. We currently have three officers dedicated to electronic forensic processing. One detective works specifically on investigating internet crimes against children.

How does the BDP stay current on best policing practices?

A: We are currently accredited by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. There are 132 best practice standards laid out, including areas like evidence, use of force investigations/review, bias-free policing and how citizen complaints are investigated. Every four years we get audited to ensure we are complying with these standards. Achieving accreditation means that we have met or exceeded each one of those best practice standards.

I am very proud to say that the Bellingham Police Department was the first department in Washington State to require de-escalation training for all police officers. These important tools provide us with strategies to help people who are experiencing mental health crises with the least amount of force possible.

We are also the first department in Washington to require all uniformed officers to use body-worn cameras. This allows us to review actual film footage of our officers' activities and is especially helpful when reviewing those times that we do have to use lawful force to gain compliance. I am continually impressed with the professionalism, compassion and patience of the officers.

How can people volunteer with the police department?

A: There are a few volunteer programs: Explore Cadets, Bellingham Neighbors Together and Bellingham Citizen Patrol. The Explore Cadets, which I participated in, is for those under 18. Bellingham Neighbors Together began last year. They act as extra eyes and ears and report suspicious activity. Bellingham Citizen Patrol assists the police department with vacation house checks, disabled parking enforcement, and abandoned vehicle processing.

As police chief, what would you like Bellingham residents to know?

A: I want to encourage our residents to get to know how we do business here. Our mission is simple: "Committed to Community." Everything we do and every action we take is viewed through that lens. A community is more than a group of people – it is a philosophy of collaboration and inclusion with everyone who lives, works and plays in Bellingham.

If you ever question what we do, don't hesitate to ask. Call my office or send me an email. We also put some policies on our website and our use of force statistics every month.

My phone number is (360) 778-8600 and my email is ddoll@cob.org.

For more information, cob.org/police

BELLINGHAM: A LEADER IN SOLAR PANEL INSTALLATIONS

Bellingham is now a statewide leader in solar panel installation policy. In 2009 Bellingham created the first photovoltaic building permit exemption program in Washington State. The program, developed by Jim Tinner, Bellingham City building official, eliminated the need for a building permit and engineering for almost all residential solar installations, saving about \$2,000 in fees and two weeks for permit review time. The structural provisions of Bellingham's solar system permit exemption policy was recently adopted virtually

verbatim by the State of Washington to encourage solar installations.

The City also excludes the cost of the solar panels when determining permit fees for non-residential buildings. In addition, solar projects qualify for a fast-track review process moving review of solar projects to the head of the line.

Tinner conducted research as to what other jurisdictions did and found that for pitched residential roofs, the engineering was not needed. The requirement to obtain a building permit prior to installation didn't do much

other than adding delay and cost, and the issuing of those permits was discontinued."

For more information, call Planning and Community Development at (360) 778-8382.

