

INSIDE Bellingham

NEWS ABOUT OUR CITY

COB.ORG | FALL 2024



The Future of Civic Athletic Complex

Join us on November 6 to be a part of designing the future of the Civic Athletic Complex, located on Lakeway Drive and home to Civic Stadium, Joe Martin Field, Arne Hanna Aquatic Center, and more. We've evaluated opportunities to redevelop sections of the Complex and will be presenting – and seeking your feedback on – scenarios that outline where we'll construct and upgrade the amenities needed at our community's top

recreation center. This unique opportunity to reimagine Civic Athletic Complex as an exceptional space for generations to come includes options to relocate Carl Cozier Elementary School, presented in partnership with Bellingham Public Schools, and potential locations for a new indoor community recreation center. Learn about the project, get meeting details, and find out about other ways to provide input at cob.org/civic-athletic-complex-planning.



GET INVOLVED AND BE INFORMED

There are many ways to learn more and get involved in your City government.

Subscribe to City news emails

Get the latest City updates delivered right to your inbox. Visit cob.org/news to sign up.

Submit service requests

Let us know what needs fixing. Submit a service request at cob.org/fix or download the SeeClickFix smartphone app to report everything from street maintenance concerns to illegal dumping.

Share your opinions on Engage Bellingham

Use your voice to shape your city. Learn about important issues, provide feedback, and ask questions at EngageBellingham.org.

Serve on an advisory group Dedicated volunteers appointed to more than 25 groups advise policy makers and support City services.

To learn about current vacancies and apply, visit cob.org/bc.

Watch City Council meetings

Tune in to what's happening at City Council. BTV streams Council meetings live at cob.org/meetings, on the City's YouTube channel at cob.org/btv, and on Comcast channels 321 and 10.

Follow us on social media

Find us on one of our many social media sites. Visit cob.org/social.

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Northside transportation improvements for growing neighborhoods

To meet the needs of the rapidly growing area, Bellingham is investing significantly in transportation infrastructure in the north end of town. We are upgrading roads, sidewalks, and bike lanes to urban standards to create safer, more accessible connections throughout neighborhoods and mitigate increasing traffic and pedestrian congestion.

COMPLETED PROJECTS:

- **Orchard Drive Extension:** This project connected James Street and Birchwood Avenue, providing a multimodal route for pedestrians, cyclists, transit and vehicles.
- **Cordata/Stuart/Horton Safety Improvements:** We re-channelized several arterial streets in Cordata, adding buffered bike lanes, new pedestrian crossings, and a roundabout to improve safety and traffic flow.

ONGOING AND UPCOMING PROJECTS:

- **Telegraph Road:** Construction is underway to add sidewalks, bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, and traffic signals along Telegraph Road from Deemer Road to James Street.
- **Bakerview Roundabout:** A roundabout is scheduled for construction in Spring 2025 at the intersection of James Street and Bakerview Road to improve traffic flow and safety for all users.
- **Cordata Parkway:** We're resurfacing Cordata Parkway to enhance its durability and extend its lifespan, as well as improving bicycle access on Cordata Parkway and Kellogg Road.
- **James Street Multimodal Pathway:** This project, expected to be completed in two phases, will create a shared-use path for pedestrians and cyclists alongside James Street between Orchard Drive and Kellogg Road.

These investments are not only improving transportation but also contributing to a more sustainable and livable community by encouraging active transportation and reducing our carbon footprint. Learn more about completed, active, and upcoming projects City-wide at cob.org/projects.



MOVING Downtown FORWARD

Downtowns define great cities, and when a downtown thrives, the rest of the city benefits, too. That's why we've focused City resources on making downtown safer, cleaner, and more welcoming for everyone. And, according to our recent pulse survey, those efforts have been effective – 63 percent of people who responded said they feel positive about the future of downtown.

ABOVE: Attendees at the Downtown Forward celebration shared their ideas to make downtown even better.

Last month, more than 200 community members joined us as we kicked off Downtown Forward – our plan to ensure a thriving future for downtown – with an event to spark bold ideas for our city's center. If you missed it, there's still a chance to tell us what you want to see for downtown. Find us this fall at various community events or have your say online at EngageBellingham.org and share what you love about downtown and your dreams for its future. Learn more at cob.org/downtown-forward.

A preview of more to come for downtown in 2025

While we continue to gather feedback and ideas for a long-term plan for downtown, the City will also be taking action in 2025. A few of things we're doing to move downtown forward next year are:

- **Bringing back the Bellingham Police Department's bike unit** – The bike unit will resume regular patrols through downtown early next year.
- **More art and activities** – If you've been on Prospect Street downtown lately, you may have noticed a new mural on the Old Fire Station No. 1 building next to Old City Hall.

This and several other art installations and experiences will be rolling out throughout the year.

- **Library renovations and outdoor space improvements** – Coupled with renovations to the interior of the Central Library, we are also updating plans for Lee Memorial Park to create a fun, family-friendly space all can enjoy.
- **Vacancy and redevelopment strategy** – Starting with a comprehensive look at economic conditions downtown, we will develop strategies to eliminate building vacancies and encourage redevelopment of underutilized buildings.

LEFT: In the mural on the Old Fire Station No. 1, vibrant red paint accents black and white photographs featuring people and animals of Bellingham's past, with arrows inviting downtown visitors to explore Maritime Heritage Park and the waterfront. This is the first of several murals, art installations, sculptures, and galleries coming to downtown.





Climate change and water security: Our commitment to Lake Whatcom

Climate change impacts every aspect of our lives, including our drinking water supply. Lake Whatcom is the heart of our community's water system, and we're dedicated to protecting it for future generations.

WHAT WE'RE DOING:

- **Climate vulnerability assessment:** Over the next few years, we will conduct a comprehensive climate vulnerability assessment to understand how rising temperatures and other climate impacts could affect Lake Whatcom. Our goal is to develop strategies that will safeguard this vital resource.
- **Forest management and wildfire prevention:** We are enhancing our forest management practices to reduce

wildfire risks, which can threaten water quality. This includes collaborating with local organizations to educate property owners about wildfire risk reduction strategies.

Our efforts are guided by a 5-Year Work Plan, which outlines strategies for adapting to climate change and protecting Lake Whatcom. This plan reflects our commitment to proactive management practices.

Reliable, clean drinking water is essential for our community's health. By taking steps now, we can safeguard Lake Whatcom for the future.

For more details on our climate adaptation efforts and the draft 5-Year Work Plan, go to engagebellingham.org/lw-work-plan.

City Council deliberating proposed 2025 budget throughout fall

The City budget process is underway, with the Bellingham City Council now considering a proposed 2025 budget presented by Mayor Kim Lund on September 30, 2024.

As the Council considers the 2025 budget, it faces a flattening of sales tax revenues this year and an ongoing general fund operating deficit.

In her budget message to the Council and the community, Mayor Lund said her proposed budget seeks to address deficit spending and maintain services while leaders develop strategies to put the City in a stronger financial position in the coming years. The proposed budget reflects hard decisions, made in collaboration with the City's leadership team, and is reflective of our commitment to a one-City approach and our newly adopted financial policies, she said.

"My proposed budget expresses my vision for our City being among the best cities in the nation, with excellent government in service to our community and strong fiscal stewardship of public dollars," she said.

The Council will deliberate the proposed budget during meetings and work sessions this fall and adopt a final budget before end of year.

LEARN MORE AND SHARE YOUR PERSPECTIVE:

- See the proposed budget at cob.org/budget
- Watch the September 30 budget presentation: meetings.cob.org
- Budget work sessions and meeting schedule: meetings.cob.org
- Provide feedback to City Council: ccmail@cob.org or (360) 778-8101

Unauthorized encampments on private properties present unique, complex challenges

The City is deeply aware of the health and safety impacts unauthorized encampments have on area residents, businesses, and the people who live in or spend time in them. We are committed to finding long-term solutions that balance public health and safety, private property rights, and the well-being of individuals experiencing homelessness, substance use disorders, and behavioral health challenges.

We are actively pursuing solutions to unauthorized encampments on private properties, including a long-standing encampment on E. Stuart Road and a growing encampment near the corner of Northwest Drive and W. Bakerview Road.

While we respond as quickly as possible within our authority and resources, it is the private property owners who bear the primary responsibility for addressing unauthorized encampments on their land.

City leaders understand firsthand the costs and complexities involved with upholding our responsibilities as land managers. As the stewards of extensive public properties – parks, trails, conservation sites and others – we hold ourselves to the same standards of stewardship that we expect from private property owners. We are committed to addressing encampments on public property with diligence and compassion, and our approach can serve as a model for private property owners as they navigate similar challenges.

Learn more at cob.org/encampments.

Work begins on newly named pier

Construction begins this fall on the newly-named Little Squalicum Pier. The official name was selected by the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and approved by the City Council in August after more than 900 community members provided input. The pier's renovation will include new pedestrian guardrails, deck grating to improve accessibility, and wind- and solar-powered lighting. The Greenway Levy and state grants provide funding for the project, which has an estimated cost of \$1.6 million. We expect Little Squalicum Pier to be open to the public in spring 2025.



Working together for cleaner water in Bellingham Bay

We care about the quality of our water and are committed to keeping Bellingham Bay safe for everyone. This summer, we investigated reports of high bacteria levels in stormwater outfalls. While we haven't been able to pinpoint a single source of pollution, we're dedicated to ongoing efforts to improve water quality.

Why is it difficult to find a single source of pollution? Bacteria pollution often comes from many small sources, such as pet waste, wildlife droppings, yard debris, and other contaminants carried by rainwater. This makes it challenging to identify a specific culprit.

What are we doing? We're actively testing stormwater samples, examining infrastructure, and reviewing permits to

identify potential sources of pollution. We're also working closely with community partners to develop solutions.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- **Practice responsible pet ownership:** Pick up after your pet to prevent bacteria from entering our waterways.
- **Check your sewer line:** Regularly inspect and maintain your sewer line to make sure it's in good shape
- **Report pollution concerns:** If you notice anything unusual in our waterways, please report it to us at cob.org/fix.

By working together, we can protect our waterways and ensure a healthy future for Bellingham. For more information, visit cob.org/stormwater.



Plant trees with us this fall

We love trees for their beauty and numerous benefits, including shade, pollution reduction, climate benefits, and enhanced property values.

This fall, join our tree-planting efforts! Use our Tree Coupon Program to buy discounted trees at local nurseries and easily plant them on your private property. We'll also give away free tree saplings at select events. Don't have your own property? Contribute by joining a volunteer work party in one of our local parks.

Grow a greener Bellingham and enjoy the many benefits of trees. For more information and to get your tree coupon, visit cob.org/trees.