

# INSIDE Bellingham

AN INFORMATIONAL SOURCE FOR CITY NEWS [www.cob.org](http://www.cob.org)



## Housing affordability becomes top concern for City

By Mayor Kelli Linville

Affordable housing is an important issue that we at the City think and talk about every day. It's been very clear through feedback from our most recent community survey that this, along with homelessness and jobs, is a top concern of our residents.

"Affordable housing" is defined as spending no more than 30 percent of a household's income on housing expenses, and while housing affordability is mostly a function of prices and income, the City has an important role in helping all of our residents find safe and affordable housing.

- **ZONING AND PERMITTING.** The City is responsible for determining zoning and issuing building permits. We have seen an increase in permit applications as housing projects move forward after the recession.
- **INFRASTRUCTURE, INCENTIVES AND UTILITIES.** We provide the road, water and sewer to allow new housing to be built as well as incentives for both residential and commercial buildings.
- **BELLINGHAM HOME FUND.** The City is the steward of the Bellingham Home Fund, which provides dollars for low-income housing construction, rehabilitation of existing low-income housing, and services to help people stay in their homes. The results of these investments have exceeded expectations.

- **COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS WORKGROUP.** Councilmembers Dan Hammill and April Barker and I have convened a workgroup on the continuum of housing in Bellingham with the goal to make recommendations for the City's five-year Consolidated Plan and potential new housing levy.
- **CITY COUNCIL ACTIONS.** The Bellingham City Council has been actively discussing affordable housing, including hosting a town hall meeting on June 13 and conducting a series of planning committee work sessions on residential rental barriers.
- **JOBS AND THE ECONOMY.** Living-wage jobs are essential to making Bellingham affordable, and the City works hard to support businesses to help them succeed.

These are just a few of the ways the City of Bellingham is investing in new solutions every day. It's not just us — housing affordability, homelessness and living wages are challenges for communities across the state and country.

This is why we will continue to focus on this issue and work toward helping our businesses grow and create jobs and exploring creative housing solutions that fit the unique character of our neighborhoods. Thanks for your hard work and support in helping to find solutions to this complex issue and for supporting those among us who need help.



## FEVER CREEK BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

The Roosevelt neighborhood has a new pedestrian bridge over Fever Creek after this important connector was closed for more than a year.

Bellingham Parks and Recreation replaced the bridge due to public safety concerns after an inspection found rot and erosion damaged the bridge and abutments.

The previous bridge was constructed more than 20 years ago and was repaired several times over the years.

The bridge is located at East Illinois Street and Michigan Street, connecting to Superior Street, and serves as an important connector from the Roosevelt Neighborhood to Roosevelt Elementary School. The bridge also connects the neighborhood quickly and safely to the Railroad Trail and Barkley Village, which greatly improves the walkability and livability of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Because Fever Creek Bridge is located in a critical environmental area, the replacement took around 18 months to complete, mostly because of environmental investigations and permitting restrictions required to protect fish and habitat.

Fever Creek Bridge is now open.

## INSIDE

2

CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

3

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY EDUCATION GOAL

3

STREET CONSTRUCTION

4

G.R.A.C.E. PROJECT



# CLIMATE >> ACTION >> PLAN

In 2007, Bellingham was recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as the state's first Green Power Community. That same year, the City set aggressive goals to reduce emissions and lessen our impact on the environment. In 2009, Bellingham City Council solidified that commitment, adopting "Legacies and Strategic Commitments" that included a focus on "Healthy Environment" and reducing contributions to climate change.



▲ PSE presents rebate check for LED conversion at City Council Meeting

A long-term, multi-phase Climate Action Plan (CAP) led to the City's purchase of renewable energy credits to offset 100 percent of our emissions from electricity. Going forward we will reduce electricity use in buildings and find cleaner energy sources for the City's fleet.

With work underway to update the CAP before the end of the year, here are several recent achievements:

- City of Bellingham **STREET LIGHTS ARE NOW ALL LED**, resulting in brighter, safer streets – as well as an annual energy savings of approximately \$200,000 and a hefty \$442,443 rebate check from Puget Sound Energy;
- Because transportation accounts for more than a third of our greenhouse gas emissions, we now have **12 HYBRID AND ELECTRIC VEHICLES** and plan to purchase more as we renew our fleet;
- We continue to implement the City's **BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLANS**, which make travel by foot and bike more accessible and interconnected;
- The City funded \$9 million to the Whatcom Transportation Authority's **ENHANCED TRANSIT SERVICE**, including Sunday services, from 2010 to 2016;
- We are getting guidance on the best places for **SOLAR PANELS**, which will be possible thanks in part to a \$760,000 grant from the Northwest Clean Air Agency;

- This year we began planning for **RESOURCE RECOVERY OF BIOSOLIDS** – to replace incineration at the Post Point wastewater treatment plant;
- Mayor Kelli Linville has demonstrated the City's commitment on the international stage by joining the **U.S. CLIMATE MAYORS** as well as the **GLOBAL COVENANT OF MAYORS FOR CLIMATE & ENERGY** to uphold the Paris Climate Agreement goals.

Protecting and enhancing our precious natural resources isn't just the City's job, it is an opportunity we make available to all, like this one:

## Celebrate "Make a Difference Day" and Arbor Day October 28 at Fairhaven Park

You're invited to help restore habitat on Saturday, Oct. 28, with the City of Bellingham and the Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association! No cost, no RSVP necessary, all ages welcome. Park at Fairhaven Park, 107 Chuckanut Dr. N., and head to the pavilion to check in. Free pizza provided by Papa John's. The work party goes from 9 a.m. to noon. For more information,

contact Rae Edwards at **(360) 778-7105** or [redwards@cob.org](mailto:redwards@cob.org).

## DROP, COVER AND HOLD ON!

Each year, the City of Bellingham participates in the international Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drill on Oct. 19 at 10:19 a.m., when millions of people drop, cover and hold on.

Last year more than 1.1 million people participated in the Great Washington ShakeOut to practice what to do during an earthquake and to improve preparedness.

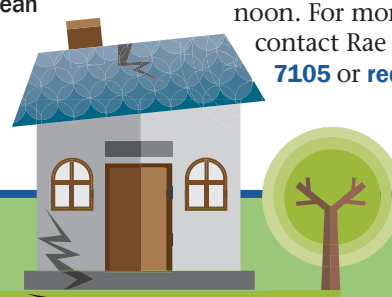
"Preparing for disasters, whether

it's a regional earthquake or localized flooding, is a part of our way of life in the Pacific Northwest," said Paul Gazdik of Bellingham's Office of Emergency Management. "Participating in the ShakeOut Drill continues our journey toward a resilient community."

While small earthquakes

are common in Washington, they are still unpredictable. It is important to practice how to be safe during and after an earthquake and have a plan set in place for when one occurs.

For more information, or to register to participate, visit the Great Washington ShakeOut website at [www.shakeout.org/washington](http://www.shakeout.org/washington).







## Pedestrian Safety Education goal: **ZERO COLLISIONS**

In one terrible four-week span, five collisions – all in marked crosswalks – claimed three lives in Bellingham and damaged the lives of many others. Each collision was preventable, and even one preventable collision is one too many.

The City of Bellingham, in partnership with the Washington Traffic Safety Commission, is taking measures to reduce collisions and increase responsible behavior on city streets.

“We are always concerned about pedestrian and driver safety,” said Ted Carlson, Public Works director. “That’s why at the City of Bellingham we are working on ways to educate drivers and pedestrians on how to be safer on the street.”

That means helping all who walk, drive or cycle on City streets understand how to be safe. In a series of PSAs, locally recognizable Bellinghamsters – from Mayor Kelli Linville to student stars – make a personal commitment to “Travel with Care” by doing things like making eye contact, wearing bright clothing or giving pedestrians the right of way in crosswalks.

“I love Bellingham,” said Malcolm Oliver, a community activist who participated in the pedestrian safety PSAs. “So I promise, when I’m driving I will pay very close attention to everyone on the road.”

The PSAs aim to both encourage drivers to choose safe behavior – and

also comply with state law. As of July 23, police are enforcing the state’s new Distracted Driving law, Driving Under the Influence of Electronics (E-DUI), making it illegal for drivers to use hand-held cell-phones while driving, stopped in traffic or at a red light. This also includes the use of tablets, laptops, games or other hand-held electronic devices.

Tickets for driving while using hand-held electronics will go on your record, be reported to your insurance provider and increase in cost per each E-DUI infraction. The first infraction will cost \$136 and increase to \$234 if you are ticketed again within five years.

As a secondary offense, engaging in any activity other than driving such as smoking, eating, drinking or grooming can add an additional \$99 to your infraction if you have been pulled over for another traffic offense.

Bellingham Police Sergeant Carr Lanham said the goal is to get people to travel with care. “Whether you are a pedestrian, bicyclist or driving a motor vehicle, we want everyone to get home safely.”

Driving responsibly can be as simple as paying attention to pedestrians, putting the cell phone out of reach, and waiting until we’re parked to eat lunch.

For more information, visit [www.cob.org/travelwithcare](http://www.cob.org/travelwithcare) or phone (360) 778-7950.



▲ Holly Street construction, downtown Bellingham

## STREET CONSTRUCTION

For those who use our City streets, being able to travel safely and without delay is paramount. That’s why it’s vital to consistently repair and maintain City streets.

Each year, the City of Bellingham completes \$3-5 million in overlay projects (i.e. laying new asphalt over a scraped down surface) to maintain and extend the useful life of City streets. Which streets are done, and in which order, is based on a six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) which:

- Incorporates implementation of the City’s Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans;
- Utilizes analysis of existing pavement condition, materials, strength;
- Coordinates with other development projects and construction, so that street disruption is minimized; and
- Is approved by City Council.

It isn’t just the streets. Bellingham spends approximately \$500,000 each year to repair or replace sidewalks. For new ones, Bellingham relies on the Pedestrian Master Plan, which prioritizes citywide non-motorized transportation projects based on a variety of criteria - including safety.

For more information, visit [www.cob.org/transportation](http://www.cob.org/transportation) or email [AskPW@cob.org](mailto:AskPW@cob.org) with questions.



# G.R.A.C.E project aims to coordinate healthcare and social services for frequent users

Plans to implement the Whatcom Ground-Level Response and Coordinated Engagement (GRACE) program are underway as government agencies partner together to coordinate care for frequent users of healthcare, the justice system and social services.

GRACE aims to create a coordinated system between multiple agencies, including the Bellingham Fire Department, Police Department, PeaceHealth and others to help reduce duplication of efforts and services.

"We founded GRACE to reduce victim harm, save taxpayer dollars and improve the lives of people in the criminal justice and community health systems," said Dan Hammill, Bellingham City Councilmember and co-founder of the GRACE program.

The proposed program plans to reduce emergency medical responses, crisis situations, disruptive behaviors, and arrests by creating an agency that will provide oversight, advanced communication, shared data collection and deeper relationships between agencies that share aligned goals and expectations, said Bellingham Assistant Fire Chief Robert Kintzele.

One part of the coordinated system is the Bellingham Fire Department's Community Paramedic Program (CPM), where citizens are connected to

medical and social services for non-emergent needs.

Many clients enrolled in the CPM program have complex needs relating to aging, disabilities, mental health, substance abuse, mobility or homelessness issues. Most clients reside in more than one category, which may increase the frequency of requested emergency services. In order for a client to be enrolled in the CPM program, they must have six or more emergency medical services contacts within the last year.

"Community paramedicine is an ever changing and evolving discipline and the City of Bellingham is on the forefront of that movement," said Jeff Brubaker, EMS captain of the Bellingham Fire Department. "We strive to utilize proven, data-driven practices and provide outstanding service, while at the same time reduce our EMS call volume. Our overall goal is to improve patient care and outcomes."

Planning and design for GRACE will continue through the remainder of the year with plans to implement the program in early 2018. For more information on the GRACE project or CPM program, contact Jeff Brubaker at **(360) 739-5413** or email [communityparamedic@cob.org](mailto:communityparamedic@cob.org).



## Sales and Use tax for public safety purposes

All Whatcom County voters will have the opportunity to vote on a public safety tax ballot issue in November 2017. If approved, the sales tax rate would increase by two-tenths of one percent (.2% or 20 cents on every \$100 purchase) to provide funding for public safety purposes, including the costs associated with financing, construction, maintenance, and operation of jail facilities, plus incarceration prevention programs, including medical and behavioral health facilities and programs.



## City Council hosts Town Hall on AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Housing Affordability is a growing nationwide challenge affecting many cities in Western Washington, including Bellingham. On June 13, Bellingham City Council hosted the first ever Town Hall Meeting on Affordable Housing, where a panel of professionals presented to community members various perspectives on the housing crisis.

Presenters included Manager of Housing Assistance at the Department of Commerce Tedd Kelleher and Bellingham Planning and Community Development Director Rick Sepler. The panelists highlighted statistics on low vacancy rates, rising rental and housing costs, and the challenge of homelessness.

According to the City's 2016 Bellingham Residential Survey, "housing affordability" is rated as the second most important challenge

facing Bellingham, second only to homelessness. Both rents and prices of for-sale housing have risen strongly in Bellingham in recent years. Such increases are similar to those in the state as a whole, and in other counties in the Puget Sound corridor. While local policies can affect affordability, many factors that influence local real estate prices are regional or even national.

For more information on affordable housing and the town hall meeting, visit [www.cob.org/issues](http://www.cob.org/issues).