



Happy New Year North Bend residents,

Like me, I'm guessing you were ready to say goodbye to 2020 and hello to 2021. Rarely has a new year brought so much hope as this one does. With Covid-19 vaccines rolling out, they offer the promise of that proverbial 'light at the end of the tunnel.'

Although it may still be many months before we see each other mask-less on a regular basis, just knowing normalcy is on the horizon sparks positivity at City Hall.

As we move into 2021, we wanted to look back at the last quarter of 2020 and all the accomplishments of those final three months of a challenging year. Despite the continuing pandemic, City staff and your elected officials continued to push forward; marking new accomplishments and milestones that help make our small mountain town one of the best places to live in King County.

### **Infrastructure Planning**

Phase 1 of the HPI (High Priority Improvements) Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) improvement project is now 85% complete and the design/build plan of Phase 2 is 50% complete. Phase 1 upgrades the aging facility, adding redundancy and, very importantly, improving safety features for employees. Phase 2 will add treatment and hydraulic capacities, replace and upgrade remaining aging facilities, and complete employee and environmental safety updates to the high expectations of best practices under state and federal requirements. This will allow the City to move forward with an updated Economic Development Plan focusing on bringing desired amenities and services to residents, increases to local living wage jobs and move us toward long-term fiscal stability. The final phase of WWTP construction is anticipated to be complete in 2024 and will provide a significant improvement to Snoqualmie River water quality, increasing safety for all the flora and fauna - including you!

Significant progress was also made on addressing the city's long-term water delivery needs. The King County Utilities Technical Review Committee (UTRC) gave final approval of the City's Water Service Plan (WSP), and it is expected the King County Council will approve it in the coming months. The WSP has received preliminary approval from the Dept. of Ecology and the Dept. of Health. This plan guides our water infrastructure system to ensure the safest, best and most affordable water system we can deliver to you.

Part of our plan is aggressively working toward our goal of reducing water system leakage; recording a 33% leak reduction over the past two years alone. Every drop saved helps us control waste and ultimately the cost to you, our ratepayers. We are also making good progress on converting a well at the old Cascade Golf Course into a backup mitigation water source; completing significant design and permitting work. If you didn't know, North Bend is the only city in the Snoqualmie River water shed required to mitigate its water use by ensuring the river meets certain flow levels. We wear this honor of protecting the river proudly, yet it is costly and creates challenges meeting the long-term supply needs for both you and the river.

With this in mind, the City continues evaluating multiple long-term mitigation options to meet all future mitigation requirements of its Centennial Well Water Right. Those options include potential projects like a Hobo Springs expansion, a deep well aquifer, a Chester Morse Reservoir Mitigation pipeline and/or construction of a mitigation reservoir tank to capture water during the wet season for mitigation use during dry months.

On the transportation front, last quarter, Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) studies began for a future Outlet Mall Roundabout and for the 468<sup>th</sup> Ave Corridor at exit 34. Both future projects are anticipated to improve traffic flow in these busy areas of the City. Coincidentally, the City has begun talks with Simon Properties regarding a long-awaited redesign of the Outlet Mall toward more hospitality and restaurant uses.

Thanks to grant funding, we also completed the Park Street mid-block crossing project, with a new Rapid Flashing Beacon Crosswalk becoming active to increase pedestrian safety. This crosswalk not only serves residents in the immediate area but provides better safety for pedestrians and bikes between Si View Park and Taylor Park thus improving trail connections from the neighborhoods to our downtown amenities.

### **Community Development Projects**

As I'm sure you've noticed, site work began on the Dahlgren property on SE North Bend Way. This project will bring 210 new multi-family housing units to our City, along with a new 4-acre city park that will connect to King County's Tanner Landing Park to provide direct access to Middle Fork Snoqualmie River.

Construction continues on the new Snoqualmie Valley Athletic Complex, with significant site work completed this past quarter. The local developer hopes to open phase 1 of the facility – located along SR 202 - by summer 2021.

Phoenix Plaza, located adjacent to the Cedar Falls Roundabout where a natural gas explosion destroyed multiple downtown buildings in 2014, is now complete. The owner will soon begin renting the 32 apartments located above street-level retail space. This project also includes a new walking path on the west side of the building connecting North Bend Way to Torguson Park thus providing a new, safer walking entry to the park. Try it out!

Local company, Karakoram Splitboard Bindings, is making great progress on its new headquarters located directly across from City Hall (somewhat behind NAPA). The owners hope to move into the brand-new building this spring. It's great to see a local business owned by local residents growing jobs right here at home.

In early December, the City Council approved a Development Agreement for a marijuana retail store to be located on North Bend Way near 436<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. The decision was preceded by two public hearings in which many residents weighed in on both sides of the proposed store's location. It was great to see this citizen involvement!

And the City is ready to issue building permits on a 25-unit residential condominium townhome project on Park Street that will provide a much-needed residential ownership choice in the heart of the city and at a price-point lower than typical single-family detached homes.

On another positive note, a historic North Bend home was saved in October. Initially scheduled for demolition, structural movers stepped in to save the Maloney Grove 1920s era Craftsman home; relocating it in the wee hours of the morning to a new home on E. North Bend Way. See video of the move on our Facebook page [HERE](#).

With many new projects in the planning and construction stages, in late October the City launched an interactive online development map to help you follow along. This user-friendly tool gives residents a brief overview of the projects and their locations. See the map [HERE](#).

### **New Legislation, New Budget**

City Councilmembers acted quickly in early October to approve a resolution to keep the revenue from a planned King County sales tax increase here at home and designated for North Bend affordable housing initiatives and projects.

Last month, the Council also approved the new 2021-22 biennial-budget that included a 30% increase in Human Services Funding for our local community organizations that support North Bend residents in need.

The City's Finance Department worked tirelessly to produce a balanced budget, as required by law, while facing ongoing pandemic revenue challenges. The City's history of conservative spending and budget planning helped us navigate revenue shortfalls better than many of our neighbors while maintaining a high service level in most areas for our residents. While this will become an increasing challenge in the months and years to come, we are confident we will find the right solutions to deliver to your expectations.

### **Community Engagement, Continuing Support for Local Businesses**

Amidst continuing pandemic-related local business struggles, late in the fall we reopened our Rapid Relief Grant Program and assisted many more businesses who did not receive funding over the summer. We are grateful to our community's positive response to the Support Local campaign. If you need additional information on North Bend's many great businesses, go to the new business directory on our revamped Discover North Bend website [HERE](#).

Halloween brought a three-city Snoqualmie Valley Triple Treat Trek, offering socially distanced Halloween fun for our littlest residents. While I know I am biased, turnout and North Bend business support for the triple treat trek seemed to exceed that of our neighbors.

As the holidays approached and Covid-19 cases began surging, it became clear that our traditional holiday events would be pushed to the back burner and new, safe events would be required.

Our annual community tree lighting went virtual – evolving into a Facebook Live streaming event. Thank you to all who tuned in. Our beautiful Noble Fir was generously donated by Christmas Creek Tree Farm and Tanner Electric donated equipment and labor to string over 2,000 lights.

North Bend was brighter than ever thanks to the North Bend Downtown Foundation that funded extra lights for our new and still growing street trees. On an especially bright note, those trees will remain lit this year through February to light up downtown throughout the dark winter months.

We also launched a Hometown Holly Days calendar to highlight local holiday happenings and initiatives, along with a Holiday Lighting Contest called 'Light up North Bend.' 27 homes, businesses and neighborhoods entered the contest – far exceeding the planning team's expectations. Winners received gift cards to the North Bend business of their choosing – which also aided the Support Local campaign.

Without a doubt, 2020 was an unprecedented and challenging year, but your City Council and dedicated City staff never lost sight of our mission to create a highly livable community by working in partnership with our citizens. We are very optimistic about 2021 and all the possibilities it holds for our beautiful, small mountain town.

Sincerely,

Mayor Rob