



## **Message from the Mayor | Quarterly Message from the Mayor**

Happy Spring, North Bend Residents,

I write to you today, occasionally gazing outside my window here at City Hall. The highest point of Mt. Si is covered in spring snow, with dramatic clouds overhead threatening more of the same.

Simultaneously, the sun is shining on North Bend Way, the maples are leafing out, and two families are strolling Tanner Trail, with a jogger close behind them.

This is spring in North Bend, and we are now in a state of pre-pandemic normalcy that is in stark contrast to the past two years. High rates of vaccination throughout North Bend and the rest of the County, a steep – and welcome – decline in the number of hospitalizations due to COVID-19, and our community’s vigilance and resilience through every wave, dip and change in mandate is awe inspiring.

And with that, our City Hall was able to re-open to the public last month, with in-person customer service making an encouraging return. This month, I had the honor of rescinding previously issued Executive Orders 20-01 through 20-06 that addressed operational aspects of City Hall during the pandemic. Staff, the Human Resources Department and legal counsel have been preparing for months, both reviewing the CDC’s Community Level of risk in our county and preparing technology here at City Hall so as to serve everyone, whether visitors are comfortable participating in public meetings or prefer/need to remain virtual. Our commitment to the livability and character of our small City continues, and I am happy I get to share with you a most positive and full look back at our first quarter.

### **Infrastructure & Transportation Improvements**

Like many communities throughout the Puget Sound region, North Bend was hit hard this winter, starting the new year off with a perfect storm of record-setting weather and, simultaneously, a garbage strike that lasted between three and five weeks, depending on location. I issued an emergency health and safety order during the extended pause in service, and our Public Works crews took on solid waste operations with the help of a separate contractor. Reliable, consistent solid waste collection is an expectation of our residents, as well as your City Council and staff. We will continue updating you as we move forward with discussions with procuring a new solid waste collection contract.

This winter’s dramatic snow events provided for follow-up evaluations with City staff and Council. Together, we reviewed a wide range of proactive investments that take into account both drivable high priority roads and preservation of our nearby drinking water supply, services and staffing. Our goal remains to best serve you through any and all weather events.

Our mountain town is no stranger to extreme weather. While not record-setting, local residents and businesses contended with heavy rainfall in late February. At its height, the rainwater pushed the Snoqualmie River to flood Phase 3. To help contend with events of this nature, the City collaborates with King County’s Flood Control District, and as a member, we serve as a year-round Sandbag Center. Located at our Public Works facility, residents and local businesses utilized the Center during this event, and we encourage you to do so as well if you find your North Bend home or business in need.

We are always looking for ways to reduce the possibility of flooding and improve riverbank habitat in North Bend. We understand that what we do in town affects the health of the Snoqualmie River and the rest of the valley. With that, I am proud to share with you two projects that were announced this quarter:

- Ribary Creek Flood Risk Reduction Project: A portion of Ribary Creek often floods after heavy weather events, and the creek's proximity to homes and local businesses make this spot a high priority for flood risk reduction work. This winter, the King County Flood Control District and the City have entered into an Interlocal Agreement to begin design for the project, with specifics expected this spring.
- North Bend's [Stream Channel Widening and Wetland Creation/Enhancement Project](#): This spring, U.S. Representative Kim Schrier, M.D. announced that she secured funding for the widening and realignment of a stormwater channel that receives a substantial amount of stormwater runoff during storm events, often backing up as the river rises. In addition, the project will deliver significant wetland enhancement in the area by removing invasive plants, planting native shrubs and trees, and follow-up maintenance.

Flood risk mitigation and environmental stewardship is a high priority for your elected officials, and so is water conservation. We take pride in the fact that City of North Bend water service customers have not increased water consumption in 20 years, for a variety of reasons, including ongoing efforts to replace old, leaking watermains with new, longer lifespan ones, our requirement of more water efficient fixtures in new homes, smarter irrigation practices, the City's Water Conservation Ordinance and replacement of older water meters.

It can be difficult to imagine drought conditions in the valley while we are experiencing high levels of rain between the months of October and May, but it is a reality we must contend with. Last summer, we joined the Seattle Public Utilities [Saving Water Partnership](#), which in addition to offering our residents water saving tools and valuable rebates, it also provides youth conservation education through a program called Nature Vision. In March, North Bend Elementary welcomed Nature Vision into their classrooms, beginning with "Water Cycle Terrariums" and "Water Cycles Round." Every class will have an chance to participate in a Nature Vision program, and we hope more schools join in on the opportunity. Keep a lookout for the Saving Water Partnership booth at Downtown Block Party, in July!

We are also continuing in our work to replace aging watermains that have outlived their lifespan, and the Northeast 6<sup>th</sup> Street Watermain Replacement and Street Repair Project fits well for this goal. With design work nearly finished, and a construction contract awarded to D&G Backhoe, we expect the project will break ground later this spring. While 2021 leakage rates rested at approximately 15 percent, once complete, we anticipate our leakage rates will be reduced by another 0.5 percent.

Another integral component to nourishing our town's infrastructure – and an element in the City's [Comprehensive Plan](#) – is the Meadowbrook area. In 2021, Meadowbrook property owners formed a petition for a potential [Meadowbrook Sewer Utility Local Improvement District](#) (ULID). The proposed sewer improvement project would provide a mix of commercial and residential property owners the opportunity to install sewer or convert aging septic systems to a modern and environmentally sound sewer system. In February, Council unanimously approved an amended resolution confirming the inclusion of City-owned properties. This resolution does not create the Meadowbrook ULID, but it is a required preliminary step, given the City owns a significant amount of land in the area. This month,

Council unanimously approved a resolution to set a Public Hearing date for the formation of the ULID and accept property owners' petitions. We hope to see you at the Public Hearing on May 17<sup>th</sup>.

On the transportation front, we have made great strides in securing funding and planning for new projects that will enhance safety and diminish traffic in town. I am pleased to share with you that in March, the Puget Sound Regional Council approved funding for the recipients of their 2021 Rural Town Centers and Corridors. North Bend's [South Fork Avenue Extension Bypass Project](#) was recommended to receive \$967,500 for preliminary engineering and design. The project includes extending South Fork Avenue Southwest to West North Bend Way, providing drivers – notably heavy truck traffic – with an arterial level connection between West North Bend Way and Bendigo Boulevard South. In addition to reducing truck traffic volumes and emissions impact within our Historic District, the project aims to improve safety for everyone – drivers, pedestrians and cyclists – while also improving access to and from I-90.

Work continues on our [Sidewalk Reinvestment Program](#), tackling the challenge of sidewalk replacement and connection throughout North Bend. After seeing great results with the \$160,000 investment last year in Forester Woods, City Council approved nearly doubling the program's funding this year, focusing on more improvements in Forester Woods, the New Si View neighborhood and the downtown corridor. This project will also replace the storm drainage system, watermain, curbs and gutters. While the project was delayed for a time due to a concrete strike impacted projects throughout the region, we are working hard to get back on track, with work anticipated to begin in June.

To better smooth current traffic patterns while also looking ahead to mitigate potential future traffic impacts, two new roundabout projects are in the works, both of which are developer-funded, with no tax dollars being spent:

- Roundabout at 436<sup>th</sup> Street: Construction of the roundabout is now over 85% complete, though completion was slowed due to the aforementioned concrete strike. The traffic improvement project is part of the Cedar River Partners development.
- Roundabout at 436<sup>th</sup> at Southeast 136<sup>th</sup> Street: Construction is expected to start on this project later this year. This project is part of the River Run Apartments development.

### **Community Development Projects**

This quarter, projects moved forward in multiple phases, and while construction always slows during winter months, City staff worked hard to assist in getting projects where they need to be. You may have noticed that single-family home development activity in town has dropped. Instead we are seeing more multi-family housing being built. The last significant multi-family housing build here in town was in the 90s. New, diverse housing options are a welcome addition to North Bend. The River Run Apartments project, a 128-unit, multi-family housing development located south of Chinook Lumber, have begun clearing and grading, after receiving their permit to do so in March. Approximately 28 of the new apartments will be designated as affordable housing for households earning 80% or less of the King County Area Median Income (AMI).

Taylor Town, an affordable townhome community, is in construction right now, and Habitat for Humanity is inviting volunteers to join in the community work of building it. The new community is named in honor of the property's former owner, George Krsak, who donated it to Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Krsak was a masonry and brick layer who lived in the Spokane suburb of Taylor before relocating to North Bend.

With that, North Bend, along with Carnation, Duvall, and Snoqualmie, were awarded funding for a joint Housing Needs Assessment/Housing Action Plan this year. We are confident that joining our neighbor cities in this subregional assessment will positively impact future development of individual housing action plans in the way of affordable housing. As community-minded cities coexisting in a valley that rely on one another's success and health, we agree that we should all share the responsibility for achieving an equitable distribution of diverse housing to meet the needs of a wider range of incomes. North Bend will serve as lead city for this \$135,000, multi-city assessment. Work is expected to begin later this spring.

In addition to multi-family housing, there are multiple light industrial/commercial business projects that made forward momentum this quarter. Knowing that new projects will bring with them living wage jobs is both a local achievement and an expectation of your elected officials. The SeaCon Industrial Building, a 40,067 square foot light industrial building on 2.5 acres, is anticipated to receive their Notice to Proceed this spring. This building will house 7,000 square feet of office space and 36,000 square feet of light industrial space.

The Snoqualmie Valley Athletic Center continues moving forward as well, with work on ballfields, critical areas mitigation and frontage improvements. You may see activity on the field, as a temporary Certificate of Occupancy has been issued for the project.

### **New Businesses**

In February, we welcomed Arete Coffee Bar, located downtown, within Pro Ski and Mountain Service. Arete serves Lighthouse Roasters coffee and food, and prides themselves on a mountain town community atmosphere that is perfect for sipping a local cup of joe.

While Volition Brewing is not new to town, their February John D. Spellman Award for adaptive reuse is new for this building and team. Volition has worked hard to breathe new life into what was once, in the 1920s, the popular Glazier Dry Goods Store. The building was vacant for years, beginning in the 90s, and the Volition team transformed it back into a gathering place, as our first local brewery in town, in 2018.

### **Budget**

Due to proactive staff work the City has been fortunate to receive several grants during the first quarter of 2022. These include:

- A collective \$135,000 Housing Action and Implementation grant, in conjunction with the cities of Carnation, Duvall and Snoqualmie.
- A \$782,000 Transportation Improvement Board grant for an overlay project on North Bend Way, from Northwest 8<sup>th</sup> Street to the western city limits.
- A \$1,596,000 Federal Surface Transportation Program grant for preliminary engineering of the Bendigo Boulevard/Mt. Si Boulevard roundabout project.
- A \$300,000 Transportation Improvement Board Complete Streets Grant, to be used for the development of a Complete Streets corridor plan, installation of three lighted crosswalk systems, and installation of additional sidewalks where gaps currently exist.

## Community Engagement

In addition to snow, the Snoqualmie Valley Kiwanis sprinkled heartwarming messages of love and support throughout the Historic District in February, in celebration of Valentine's Day. These hearts hung from pedestrian light poles, sharing their own form of warmth all month.

Now that we can say goodbye to lowland snow in town until next winter, residents are itching to get outside and beautify yards. Your City is prepared! The [North Bend Yard Waste Program](#) returns, starting April 23<sup>rd</sup>. This annual recycling program is open to North Bend residents and property owners on select Saturdays, from 8 to 12 p.m. at the North Bend Public Works building. Funded by the King County Waste Reduction and Recycling Program, this event is an appreciated service.

April also brings with it our second annual [North Bend Beautification Days](#). In honor of Earth Day, City Council, staff and I invite community members to join us on April 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>, along with participating organizations such as the North Bend Downtown Foundation, Snoqualmie Valley Hospital, Empower Youth Network, the Girl Scouts of Western Washington and Republic Waste. Our plan is to team up over the two days, cleaning up areas of downtown that are in need. We have also put out a 'Clean up Call' to North Bend residents - to beautify their own areas of the City, neighborhood or favorite park. We hope you can join us.

In March, I resumed a series of outreach opportunities called [Meet up with the Mayor](#), where I invite residents to stop by a local business and enjoy coffee and conversation. I saw many familiar faces, and a few newer community members, and together we connected on a wide range of City-related topics folks care about. You can keep up with City happenings by visiting [www.NorthBendWA.gov](http://www.NorthBendWA.gov), and I hope to see you at the next meet up, on May 18.

Regardless of our new year, record-setting weather events, our beautiful mountain town continues to be a highly livable, thriving community, and City staff and your elected officials appreciate the opportunity to support and enhance this place that many of us call home.

Sincerely,

Mayor Rob