

Quarterly Message

from the Mayor



Happy New Year, North Bend residents,

A few weeks ago, as I walked up the short trail leading from West Ribary Way to the site of the future Tennant Trailhead Park, I had a moment.

There among the trees and our crisp, dappled, January sunshine, were parks enthusiasts, mountain bikers, volunteers, elected officials, and staff. They all played a part in making the vision of a multi-use park for mountain biking, hiking, and trail connectivity a reality. I took in the view, and I was proud.



The Tennant Trailhead Park project is one example of a civically engaged community. It also reminded me of my goal to further engage and grow participation in the public process here in North Bend. The success of government at any level depends on the active involvement of our citizens.

So, how can you jump into civic action today?

Sign up for [“Notify Me”](#) on the city website. Doing so will deliver City news, events, and public meetings to your inbox. Simply pick your chosen subject matter and Notify Me will deliver.

- Join us for city council meetings. Stop by City Hall at 7 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of each month, and you will find Council, staff, citizens, and me here in Council Chambers, discussing local issues that affect all of us.
- Occasionally, vacancies open on a commission. I encourage you to learn more about our Economic Development, Parks, and Planning Commission because one of these could likely use your skillset and experience.



In February, I have the pleasure of introducing our city's inaugural [2023 North Bend Citizens Academy!](#) This seven-week interactive course will give participants an in-depth look into city operations, and hopefully, open a path to civic engagement that fits everyone. Registration filled up quickly this year, but we plan to offer more opportunities so keep an eye out.

At that, please enjoy my musings on this last quarter here in North Bend, where I continue to learn from the many voices in our community.

Mountain Town Climate

What a winter thus far. With two snowstorms and an unprecedented ice storm, Public Works crews worked day and night, logging 700 hours of overtime including plowing 88 travel lane miles. They have attended to more than 200 fallen or severely damaged trees and repaired frozen water meter boxes, water service lines, and other water apparatuses. Much of this labor was performed in the middle of the night during the holiday season. Public Works crews' service to our community is truly admirable. I thank those of you who reached out to show support for them, as well as the many residents I saw out there shoveling sidewalks and supporting neighbors. We are a community of helpers, and it shows in our staff, our elected officials, and our residents.



We are always evaluating where and how we can improve within the constraints of our budget, such as focusing more heavily on roundabouts and switching out rubber blades with ceramic blades, which can provide heightened scraping and faster replacements.

I am happy we were able to offer a Special Yard Waste event on January 21st as part of our contract with Republic Services. This city-staffed event served many residents in clearing wood debris from the storms. Our Public Works team saw over 102 vehicles that day, many of which were full of groups of neighbors' storm debris.

As we work to clean up the havoc wreaked by weather, it can be difficult to imagine drought conditions in the valley, but it is a reality we must contend with by creating policies that support the safety and health of our community. In that vein, the use of aerial fireworks has been a subject of discussion in town for years. Last year, our Public Health and Safety Committee delved into this subject, listening to residents, Eastside Fire and Rescue, medical professionals, and neighboring cities. The feedback helped shape the amendment to our Fireworks Code and in December 2022, Council approved an ordinance banning the personal use of aerial fireworks within city limits. Effective December 2023, the City will join a growing number of jurisdictions doing the same thing, including King County, Snoqualmie, and Kirkland.



Infrastructure & Transportation Improvements

The City was recently awarded \$1,380,610 in a grant that will provide for the design of a roundabout at the intersection of State Route 202 and Mt. Si Boulevard. The project will enhance access to the outlet mall and new hotel. It will provide a scenic landscape for our visitors, as well as shared-use pathways.

In November, Council approved two resolutions accepting grants totaling \$1,925,000 for projects that preserve flood storage, provide for a healthier riverbed, and add transportation enhancements. The South Fork Avenue Extension and engineering of the South Fork Snoqualmie River Levee Setback Capital Projects are expected to begin this year, with construction in 2025, subject to the success of construction grants.



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In December, Sallal Water Association lifted its temporary water moratorium, noting a mechanical error from their primary production water meter at their well source as the cause. This is a positive development in a challenging issue, which is so key to the future of our community. The City remains highly concerned with water availability, and it is something we are continuing to work on to help ensure we can service all property owners who rely on local water.

I look forward to engagement opportunities with both Sallal members and City water customers on solving water for the region. Please stay tuned for opportunities to meet and discuss. In the meantime, visit our [East North Bend Water Update](#) webpage to stay informed.

This quarter, Phase 2 of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) High Priority Improvements continued to make forward momentum with the start of the new headworks facility installation, nearing completion of the concrete oxidation ditch, and continued staff safety improvements. The updated plant will be prepared to accept new capacity such as the Meadowbrook ULID, as well as the potential conversion of older septic neighborhoods.

Community Housing & Business Projects

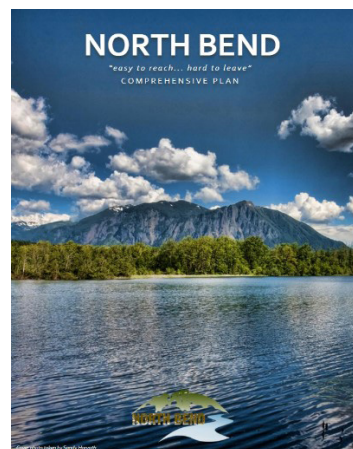
Essential to a healthy community is a diverse array of housing. Needs such as these are at the forefront of councilmembers' minds and my own. This fall, we joined a housing task force, made up of Umpqua Bank, the SnoValley Chamber of Commerce, many other local organizations, and City leaders in the Valley. We are meeting quarterly and by the end of the year, we plan to present our findings to you.

Work on the Housing Needs Assessment/Action Plan, a collaborative grant project that incorporates North Bend, Carnation, Duvall, and Snoqualmie, is coming along nicely. Now that the valley-wide Housing Needs Assessment portion is complete, staff will work on the Action Plan with the Planning Commission and Council this spring. Stay tuned for participation opportunities.

Living wage jobs, enhanced services and amenities are all part of community development. Several projects that address these needs moved forward recently, and are now ready for or being constructed, including:

- Alpentel Logistics
- The SeaCon Industrial building
- The King County LOOP Maintenance Facility
- The Youth Activity Center (YAC) Barn and Patio

You may have seen or participated in sports at the Snoqualmie Valley Athletic Center (SVAC). While the field is operating, work continues. We recently issued the Certificate of Occupancy for Phase 1 and look forward to next steps.



Work continues with the Comprehensive Plan as well, chapter by chapter. In November, Council adopted the Transportation Element (TE) Update of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan, which provides a framework to guide transportation investments over the next 20 years. These investments are in line with our community's vision and goals, and the Update is vital to maintaining the City's eligibility for grant funding.

Another integral part of the Comprehensive Plan is the Parks Element. It establishes levels of service and policies relating to park and trail planning and development. Like the TE, the Parks Element guides park improvements in

20-year increments. In November, we held a Parks Workshop, where citizens met with staff and Parks Commissioners, learning and sharing feedback. Many aspects of the Element were gleaned from the popular Parks Survey held in the fall. For details as we move forward with the different elements of the Comprehensive Plan, visit our [website](#).

This month, we held two park planning events on the Riverfront and Taylor Park design project. Public meetings such as these are crucial to guiding our work. Our park planning events were well attended, and thanks to you, we gained more valuable insight.



Complete Streets is also an essential part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Staff is working right now with a \$300,000 grant for the North Bend Way corridor. We look forward to providing you with enhanced lighting, accessibility, and incredible connectivity.

New Businesses

We have had the pleasure of welcoming several new businesses to town this last quarter, including:

- Columbia Sportswear Factory Store
- The North Bend Trading Company
- Main Street Pilates
- Sno Falls Plumbing

Budget

In December, Council adopted the 2023-2024 Biennial Budget Ordinance. The \$104.5M (2023) and \$101.7M (2024) budget reflects Council's investment in community priorities, and multiple ongoing and new infrastructure improvements. This is a milestone in that the City's budget has reached the \$100M level and reflects the growing needs and expectations of our residents. An overriding theme for these next two years is one that honors our commitment to maintaining our small-town character while enhancing the quality of life for all residents.



The budget includes an increase in investment in human services funding, dedicating \$498,000 over the next two years. I am particularly proud of this commitment as it is a stretch for small communities to support social services among other required services. This was possible because of Council's commitment to supporting a fiscally sustainable city. It also highlights our work to increase staffing, and in turn, move some services in-house, which will provide long-term strategic cost savings in areas such as public works, finance, and IT technical support.

In addition, Council has been working with staff on a community investment plan for the \$1.1M in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds which will be disbursed over the next two years. These funds will be used to support:

- Economic development and tourism
- Public facility improvement
- Direct aid to the community
- Internal services, such as financial technology

In 2020, the City funded the federal CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) to help small businesses and community organizations impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, working with approximately 50 local grantees. We recognize these funds represent a once-in-a-generation investment in our community and an exciting opportunity to strategically invest in initiatives that will have a positive, long-term impact.

Community Engagement

Looking back at this quarter, I am reminded of the abundance of our community spirit. The North Bend Downtown Foundation hosted a full Trick-or-Treat Street on October 29th, and despite being in the final throws of our first snowstorm of the season, on December 3rd, you persevered, joining us for Holly Days, along with a tree lighting, crafting, and performances emceed by Councilmembers Alan Gothelf and Mary Miller. Events such as these are always free to the community and in the center of our historic downtown.

My connection to North Bend is rooted in the people here, and I would not be your mayor had I not had the opportunity to serve the City, share my voice, and absorb our local history by learning from mentors devoted to our mountain town. Civic engagement leaves a legacy that benefits all of us. My hope is that you take the opportunity to do the same.

Sincerely,

Mayor Rob