



## 2024 North Bend State of the City

Councilmembers, Citizens, Property Owners, and Staff,

My heart is filled with pride and hope tonight, as we come together to reflect on the state of our beloved City of North Bend and look forward to what lies on the horizon.

Three months ago, I was sworn in as your mayor. Both as a councilmember before this, and now, I have emphasized the importance of working hand-in-hand with our council, staff, project partners, and you, our residents. I am confident that our shared commitment to cooperation and unity will bring us much success this year.

In February we convened for our annual council retreat, a pivotal moment where we laid the groundwork for the year ahead. We engaged in thoughtful discussions, and together, set ambitious goals with a focus on improving transportation, bolstering infrastructure resilience, fostering inclusive community development, expanding green spaces for all to enjoy, addressing housing affordability challenges, and ensuring the safety and security of every resident.

It is within this context that I present to you a forward-looking State of the City of North Bend.

**Infrastructure and Transportation:** 2024 is a year full of engineering design, paving the way for groundbreaking on many infrastructure and transportation projects. In fact, at this very moment, there are 28 active capital and transportation improvement projects moving forward in the City. Each project is being carefully designed with safety, connectivity, the environment, and of course, our community in mind.

Expect to see fresh pavement overlays on Ballarat Avenue, Cedar Falls Way, and Ribary Way this year. And soon, you will hear of plans for a connection between West North Bend Way and Bendigo Boulevard South, called the South Fork Avenue Extension Bypass Project. The project will reduce truck traffic volumes and emissions impact within our Historic District, and it will improve safety, and access to Interstate 90.

In design phase this year are three roundabouts with construction planned for 2025 through 2027:

- At Mt. Si Boulevard and State Route 202
- At Mt. Si Road and North Bend Way
- And at North Bend Way, NW 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and South Fork Avenue

In addition to traffic calming improvements, we have several pedestrian connectivity projects both in design and construction this year. Projects like the shared use bridge over the South Fork Snoqualmie River and the Tanner Trail Extension on East North Bend Way will provide you with new ways to get around town safely.

The Council continues to support the Sidewalk Gap Program. Every year we evaluate sidewalks, identifying the highest need for repair. This year, the City will tackle four more sidewalks on East North Bend Way, NW 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Orchard Drive, and Cedar Falls Way.

Soon, we will be celebrating the completion of a monumental project: the Wastewater Treatment Plant High Priority Improvements, Phases 1 and 2. When complete, the project will decrease plant odor, improve employee safety, and comply with stricter state environmental requirements that protect the Snoqualmie River. The updated plant will also be prepared to accept new capacity such as the Meadowbrook Utility Local Improvement District and potential conversion of older septic systems. This investment in our infrastructure represents the largest capital improvement project the city has produced in a long time. It will serve us for the next 50 years.

In February, the Council voted unanimously to approve the North Bend Way Complete Street Corridor Plan. The Plan establishes a vision for five miles of North Bend Way, right through the heart of our Historic District and heading southeast. It incorporates our community's desire to maintain our rural, small-town character and it looks at ways to create a greater sense of place and safety – things like trails, sidewalks, pedestrian rest areas, gateways, trail crossings, and intersections. Like park master plans, funding for this plan will span several years and will be sourced from developer fees and construction, grants, and possibly a Utility Local Improvement District.

Now, as a resident in our mountain town, chances are you've heard talk about local water: where it comes from, who provides it, and the conservation of it. This year is an exciting time for North Bend as we continue to improve our use of this finite resource.

Both the City and our other local water purveyor, Sallal Water Association, are in the process of designing and constructing two water interties. By 2025, the interties will be ready to share water, allowing for mutual support in emergencies and providing everyone with the ability to supply water to all property owners in their service areas as is required by state law.

On our part, we will continue in our work to decrease system distribution leakage by replacing old, leaking water mains. This year, NW 8<sup>th</sup> Street will get a new watermain, and you will hear more as design is completed in preparation for a new watermain on NW 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

Thanks to your help, our community is in the forefront of water conservation. 2024 will mark our fourth year of enacting the Water Conservation Ordinance. Regardless of state mitigation requirements, being mindful of our use of water is, simply put, the right thing to do. By conserving water, we are doing our part to keep the Snoqualmie River healthy - which protects the river and saves you money.

In addition, this year we will be evaluating the accuracy of FEMA's 100-year floodplain maps in North Bend. You will also hear more about design plans to expand the Silver Creek culvert, which will help in decreasing the likelihood of flooding in the Silver Creek neighborhood.

**Parks:** We value our parks and open spaces here in North Bend. They play a critical role in the mental and physical health of our community, and the preservation of green space is always welcome here.

Thanks to hardworking staff and a deeply committed Parks Commission and Council, 2024 will see more park planning and trail improvements, often in partnership with our local Si View Metropolitan Parks District, King County Parks, Mountains to Sound Greenway, and others. Three particularly exciting projects to celebrate this year include:

1. The new four-acre Dahlgren Family Park, opening later this spring! Enjoy mountain viewing, playground equipment, a picnic shelter, sand volleyball court, and trail connection to King County's newly enhanced Tanner Landing Park.
2. The new 32-acre Tennant Trailhead Park, opening mid-April, will offer various levels of mountain biking and hiking trails. Eventually it will link to the Raging River trail system.
3. And on the west end of North Bend, I am excited to recreate with many of you as our Parks District opens up new programs and continues their work in hosting agricultural incubator space at the completely rejuvenated and award-winning, historic Tollgate Farm Park.

I am happy to add that in February, the Council approved grant-funded work to restore the Tollgate forest. It will involve removing invasive weeds and adding back native plants that will help to improve riparian corridor and floodplain across more than 100 acres of city property and along 3,000 feet of both banks of the South Fork Snoqualmie River.

The project will include community volunteer events. I look forward to joining you as we all work together to improve local habitat!

I am going to step into this park update, take a quick pause, and just say thank you. The Council, staff, and I recognize all the community input and volunteerism – all your work – that contributes largely to park planning and preservation.

4. One of those realized visions you helped to create is the conceptual Master Plan for Taylor Park, one that could bring us a plaza, native plantings, a holiday tree, and a splash pad or interactive fountain – all in the heart of our downtown.
  - And to add to this, an exciting update near Taylor Park is McClellan Avenue, a highly visible spot that many of us rely on for parking when shopping or hopping on a historic train. The City is being awarded grant funding to move and lower the rail tracks which will make a huge impact on parking and the appearance of McClellan. Expect to see design plans this year.
5. You also played a big part in developing the conceptual Master Plan for Riverfront Park, with viewpoints, trails, native plantings, and more connectivity.
  - With a council-approved Master Plan concept for both Taylor and Riverfront Park, staff are now applying for additional grant funding. Grants will be matched with park impact fees and other city resources to permit a phased improvement of these parks.

**Community Development:** Last summer, many of you participated in our first-ever city-wide Community Survey. And you know what was noted to be of very high importance to residents? Increased economic development.

We heard you. With the Council's direction and the Planning and Economic Development Commissions' help, staff are focusing resources on bringing new businesses to North Bend that uphold our live and play where you work philosophy.

Expect to see movement:

- On the dual-brand Wyndham Hotel. Right now, the closed-up portion of the outlet mall is undergoing demolition. We anticipate that our first 121-room, full-service hotel will be under construction this year.

- On Master Plan discussions in both east North Bend – in the truck town area – and west North Bend, near Nintendo. Master plans for both locations will help to preserve community needs, such as quality local jobs and amenities from new office and manufacturing development.
- On an Outdoor Recreation Marketing Campaign. Look forward to seeing promotional material that will market responsible recreation opportunities in a variety of ways – via visitor guides, websites, and social media.
- On a Small Business Expansion Guide. We are always looking for ways to improve transparency and simplify the process for small business startup and growth, and this tool will certainly help.

Your voice throughout all this work is immensely important to the Council, commissions, staff, and the future of North Bend. Expect more opportunities for feedback this year through commission and council meetings, public hearings, and surveys.

**Housing Affordability and Diversity:** North Bend must be a city where working people can work and afford a place to live, to raise a family, and eventually, to retire.

In November, the Council approved the purchase and sale agreement of land for this very purpose. Located downtown, 230 Main Avenue will provide rental homes for local workers, affordable to families making no more than 60% of King County median income. It will help ease the workforce shortage among businesses. Staff are drafting a Request for Proposals to be presented to the Council and once approved, we will begin work with a housing developer that shares our mission of keeping North Bend an economically healthy and highly livable town.

**Comprehensive Plan Update:** In addition to ensuring diverse housing that fits the needs of all our residents, we are working hard to update our guiding documents – the Comprehensive Plan being a big one – so that we keep our promise of a healthy North Bend not just now, but well into the future.

Under the requirement of the Growth Management Act, staff and the Council have been working to update the 2015 Plan. Thanks to hard work, lots of citizen engagement and cross-collaboration with many organizations, the Critical Areas, Transportation, Parks and Open Space, Economic Development, and Shoreline elements are now complete.

This year, you will see updates for the Land Use, Housing, Utilities, Capital Facilities, Natural Resources, and Energy and Sustainability elements.

With these updates will be requests for your help. I've said it before, and I will say it again: your feedback, concerns, and expectations matter. Please join us as more opportunities for feedback arise. We expect to have a fully updated Comprehensive Plan by the end of year.

**Public Safety:** The Council and I are united on many fronts, one of which is public safety. Residents and business owners have expressed concern over recent incidents of crime in town. At a council meeting in February, Police Chief Lynch acknowledged growing concerns and gave context to this surge in crime, noting that it is not only a North Bend problem, but a larger, Washington State issue.

He addressed a pathway moving forward, sharing new and expanded efforts that will combat issues like property crime and traffic violence. One neat collaboration to look forward to is a satellite police station that will be moving into the North Bend Premium Outlets! Thanks to collaborative work between outlet mall

owners Simon Properties, Snoqualmie-North Bend Police, and the City, you can expect to see more local police presence in this area.

I want to thank Police Chief Lynch and Fire Chief Lane for all their work keeping residents safe. They have supported both departments through a tough winter. We brought our chiefs downtown this month for a well-attended Chat with the Chiefs event. This form of direct access at the community level is important, and we plan to offer more of these opportunities this year.

A big part of my work as your mayor is working with neighboring cities. As you may know, the City of North Bend contracts with the City of Snoqualmie for police services. Our current contract will end on December 31, 2024, so we are beginning work with our neighbor city right now to renegotiate a new police services contract and ensure public safety and level of service meets your expectations.

**Fiscal Sustainability:** Being fiscally responsible is a duty your city takes very seriously, and this year, North Bend will be one of a few cities in Washington State who have taken a big step toward safeguarding our financial future with a long-term, deep study, called a Fiscal Sustainability Analysis.

An analysis of this sort will be a real gem for our city, providing a realistic look at our future in a variety of scenarios, and identifying strategies for long-term economic development and financial sustainability with each. The study is providing the Council with an evaluation tool for peeking into the future, so to speak, to see what direction a policy may lead with respect to our finances. The first scenario was presented to the Council in a Workstudy in February.

Also, in the way of fiscal responsibility, we will be working this year to develop the Biennial Budget for 2025 and 2026. The Fiscal Sustainability Study will already be at work providing us with important revenue projections. Staff looks forward to working through the budget preparation process with the Council in the coming months, ensuring we do our best in creating a balanced budget that reflects community priorities, infrastructure maintenance and city-wide improvements you can be proud of.

And the City received over \$2 million from the American Rescue Plan Act. We have been using these funds to support economic development and human services organizations, to replenish lost City government revenues, and to make investments that support long-term growth and opportunity. This year, listen for updates on ARPA funds that support park improvements, more social services, and tourism efforts. The funds are focused on those in our community that were disproportionately affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**IN CLOSING:** Thank you to our Council, thank you to our staff, and thank you to our residents for your support. As we navigate the opportunities and challenges of 2024, let us remember that our greatest strength lies in our unity. By working together, we will thrive as the vibrant, resilient, highly livable community that we are.

Together, let us write the next chapter of our city's remarkable story.

*Mary Miller*

Mayor, City of North Bend