



The City of Covington

UPDATE



Parks Are An Investment That Pays Far Into The Future

In 1900, the City of Seattle had a population of 80,000 and was swelling with people moving to and from Alaska to reach the Klondike gold fields in Canada's Yukon Territory. In the midst of this boom, the Seattle City Council had the wisdom to look to the future. In a bold and visionary move, they set out to develop a system of city parks that would meet the needs of Seattle residents for 100 years and serve 500,000 people. Now that is thinking ahead!

In 1903, the City Council hired the Olmsted Bros. landscape-architecture firm to design a plan for a Seattle park system. The Boston-based firm was famous for designing New York City's Central Park. John Olmsted spent 33 days surveying the Seattle landscape by boat, canoe, and bicycle and developed a plan for 37 parks connected by scenic trails and boulevards. The plan called for a park or playground within a half-mile of every home.

Between 1906 and 1912, in the midst of skyrocketing property values, Seattle voters approved \$4.5 million for parks, the equivalent of at least \$80 million today. This visionary plan and the civic determination to implement it helped Seattle become the great and beautiful city that it is today. It is unlikely that Seattle would be known now as the Emerald City were it not for the vision and determination to build a first-class system of parks 100 years ago.

Time travel 100 years ahead to 2006 and 25 miles southeast and you find yourself in Covington. The City of Covington, through citizen input, has completed a parks plan based on principles the Olmsted's developed a century ago. The plan recommends that the city develop athletic fields and community parks, renovate existing park areas, extend trails and paths, and acquire additional natural areas. The City Council and the community now face the question: Can we afford it? A variety of funding options were discussed at length over the last three years about not only construction costs, but operations and maintenance of the system. Citizens will have to weigh the cost versus the benefits that parks and recreation services provide.

- Parks provide us a place to play with kids, throw a ball, and walk the dog.

- Americans need more exercise. We face an epidemic of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and skyrocketing health care costs. The Centers for Disease Control tells us that we are far more likely to get the exercise we need if we have accessible places to go -- nearby parks and trails.

- As the last of the open space and pastureland is developed, we need to conserve these areas and turn them into parks. Trees in community parks clean the air, provide shade to cool us, and add humidity to moderate our climate.

- Parks provide habitat for birds, butterflies, and other creatures that remind us we are part of a living world. There will be no areas left for birds to sing and nest if we do not provide a network of parks and nat-



ural areas.

- Parks and recreation programs and events enhance our sense of community -- they provide opportunities for us to play, eat, and celebrate with friends and neighbors. This is especially important for low-income families that may not have other opportunities.

- A strong parks and recreation system is essential for a thriving community. 4 out of 5 Americans use their local parks or recreation system, and 70% have a park or recreation facility within walking distance from their home. In the 21st century, skilled workers flock to attractive, livable communities graced with parks, youth athletic programs, trails, and access to public lands.



- Good water quality and the availability of clean drinking water are related to open space preservation and make both good environmental and fiscal sense. In a random 2006 survey, Covington residents responded that maintaining water quality was a high

priority. This type of response is consistent with opinions expressed through out the region and Country over the years. There are several aquifer recharge areas within the City of Covington.

- Dr. John Crompton of Texas A&M is developing a model that calculates the economic value of a park system to a city. His studies have shown that private property near parks can increase up to 20 percent in value.

- Rep. Mike McIntyre has introduced legislation in the U. S. House of Representatives to establish the second week in July as National Youth Sports Week. Congressman McIntyre stated, "Over 42 million children participate in youth sports all across our Country, and their activities contribute greatly to their positive development and enrich the quality of life for all. Volunteers, parents, officials, coaches, and youth sports organizations are doing a great job building our future leaders, and we as a nation should take the time to stop and celebrate just how special youth sports are to our nation."

Covington has started implementing its plan by acquiring park areas and providing recreational services in the most cost effective manner possible. Park properties have been acquired through donations and through the use of grants. Consistent with the Vision that residents established for the City, the park plan calls for the systematic acquisition and improvement of properties that link together schools, community parks, the downtown core and neighborhoods in between. Unfortunately, without a new revenue source, the City will no longer be able to continue the implementation of the plan.

Good parks and recreation facilities don't just happen. The citizens of Seattle had the foresight 100 years ago to think ahead and develop a first-class park system that became one of the city's best investments. Let's show the same vision and community determination in Covington to develop a park and recreation system that we can love, enjoy, and share with our children and grandchildren.



*A Message From Covington
Police Chief Kevin Klason:*

School Will Be Back in Session Soon – Things to Watch For

Children will soon be returning to the classroom following summer break. Some will be walking while others will be driving themselves to school. They will be excited and nervous, talking with their friends about everything from what they did over the summer to what teachers they will have. Young minds sometimes become easily distracted! The driving public needs to be especially observant, particularly during the first few weeks in September. We also need to remind our children of their responsibilities going to and from school, whether walking or driving.

Here are a few simple reminders for drivers:

- Slow down when approaching pedestrians
- Slow down when approaching intersections
- Slow down when approaching and while in School Zones

- Obey the crossing guards and flaggers
- Stop for school buses with lights flashing
- Look for children suddenly appearing from between cars

- Let children off at the curb, not in the roadway

Please remind your children that will be walking:

- Walk only on the sidewalks and shoulder of the roadway

SCHOOL – see page 23

A community newsletter produced by the City of Covington for residents and businesses.

August 2006 *City of Covington*

16720 SE 271st Street, Suite 100, Covington, WA 98042

Tel: 253.638.1110 Fax: 253.638.1122 Website: www.ci.covington.wa.us

Mayor
Margaret Harto

Mayor Pro Tem
Bud Sizemore

Council Members
Don Henning, Mark Lanza,
Marilla Mhoon, James A. Scott,
Jeff Wagner

The City of Covington UPDATE

SCHOOL – from page 22

- Do not walk in the roadway
 - Cross only at crosswalks or at intersections
 - Look both ways before crossing
 - Cross straight, not diagonally
 - Do not assume the drivers see you-- if there is any doubt, wait!
 - Obey the crossing guards
 - Only cross to the bus when the driver has the lights flashing and the stop paddle out
- Students attending Mattson Middle School and Kentwood High School should be even more atten-

tive due to the major road improvement project underway along SE 256th Street, from 156th Avenue SE to 170th Avenue SE, and on 164th Avenue SE, from SE 252nd Place down to SE 264th Street. There will be heavy equipment, construction workers, and materials in and along the road. The roads and shoulders will be in various “under construction” conditions. All of this requires everyone to be alert to congestion, limited access, and pedestrians near the edge of the road. Typical northwest rainy weather can certainly make the drive or walk all the more challenging.

In an effort to minimize driving in this area, we

ask that students utilize the Kent School District bus service that is provided to the majority of students. Parking will be extremely limited at Kentwood High School. Streets and neighborhoods around the school are not adequate nor were they intended for “overflow parking” for the high school. The City of Covington strives to maintain safe walking and driving routes to and from the schools. Congested parking in residential neighborhoods does not meet that goal.

In our ongoing effort to maintain public safety, Covington Police will spend as much time as possible near schools and walking routes to assist pedestrians

and motorists, as well as enforce all appropriate ordinances and laws. This road project will take 25 months to complete; everyone’s patience will be greatly appreciated. The City of Covington asks for your assistance in making this another safe school year for yourselves, your children and our community.

If you would like to submit comments, questions, complaints or suggestions, please do so at the following website: <http://ci.covington.wa.us/connection/cfm>. For quick status updates, please check out the SE 256th Street/164th Ave SE project website at: <http://www.g-o.com/covington/main.html>.

SE 256th St/164th Ave SE Street Improvement Project Update

The SE 256th Street/164th Avenue SE Street Improvement Project is underway! The contractor, R.W. Scott is fully mobilized onto the site and the Covington Three French Hens building has been demolished. The contractor is clearing and grading the edges of the roadway and is now working and coordinating the relocation and installation of the utilities. Puget Sound Energy has begun installation of the new 4-inch diameter polyethylene natural gas line on the west side of 164th Avenue. This work and also installation of the joint utility trench may warrant lane closures and will require that traffic be routed through the work site under the direction of warning signs and flaggers. At the west end of the project, work is progressing on the joint utilities trench (power, phone, cable, and communications) on the north side of SE 256th Street. A major utility crossing will be installed at the intersection of 156th Avenue SE and also 164th Avenue SE. There may be temporary lane closures for the trenching, placement of materials, and movement of equipment. Drivers should use extra caution or avoid these areas altogether, if possible.



Demolition of Three French Hens



Excavation and installation of joint utilities trench on SE 256th Street

As the underground utility work continues for the next year, traffic delays should be expected. In particular, when school starts on September 5th, parent, students, and faculty should take some extra time for arrival and departure until the traffic patterns settle out. A flyer will be prepared for the Kent School District for distribution during the first week of school. The flyer will provide an update to the project, and identify any notable changes to bus routes and parking as may be necessary to facilitate traffic movement around the schools. One item that is certain at this time is that parking will no longer be allowed on SE 256th Street or 164th Avenue SE. The School District may attempt to accommodate additional parking through arrangements with nearby churches, to prevent overflow into the adjacent neighborhoods. Any overflow parking into the surrounding neighborhoods will be met with scrutiny, as many streets are not designed to accommodate on-street parking, and also to minimize the disturbance in nearby neighborhoods.

Other work underway includes clearing and grading along both corridors. Soon the chain link adjacent to Kentwood High will be relocated and walls constructed to make room for the street widening. Also, a large quantity of materials (conduit, pipes, catch basins, etc.) have arrived on the site and the contractor will begin installation of these items as those portions of the work move forward.

What’s the difference between cement and concrete?

The curbs and sidewalks for the project will be constructed using portland cement concrete. According to Webster, the generic definition of cement is “a binding element or agency”; and concrete is “a mass formed by concretion or coalescence of particles into one solid mass”. Specifically with respect to road construction, cement is “a powder of alumina, silica, lime, iron oxide, and magnesia burned together in a kiln and finely pul-

verized and used as an ingredient of mortar or concrete”. Concrete is “a hard strong building material made by mixing a cementing material (such as portland cement) and a mineral aggregate (such as sand and gravel) with sufficient water to cause the cement to set and bind the entire mass”. In a nut shell, the cement is the paste or glue that holds the sand and gravel together.

The strength and abrasion resistance of the concrete is largely determined by the mixture of cement, water and aggregate; and also by the means and environment in which it is poured and cured. Air is typically mixed or “entrained” in the concrete to create tiny air spaces that provide a means for ice expansion when the concrete freezes, thereby protecting the concrete from the destructive forces of continual freezing and thawing. The addition of steel reinforcement in concrete adds strength to concrete structures (catch basins, manholes, building foundations, wall, or columns), however, steel is not typically used in curbs and sidewalks.

How is a Capital Investment Project generated?

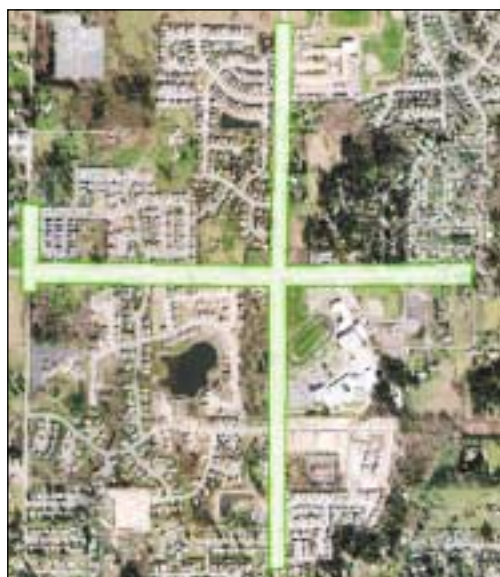
Capital projects include more than just street improvements. In the City of Covington, capital projects currently include improvements to existing facilities and construction of new facilities for streets and bridges, storm drainage, vehicles and other equipment, parks and recreation, and other governmental facilities such as City Hall. As the City grows, other public works infrastructure pieces may be added to the list including the water system, sanitary sewers, maintenance facilities and equipment, lighting, and air park.

The significance and ultimately, the priority of each individual project is established based on several factors including, in no order of preference: funding; safety; risk; community needs; growth; schedule of other projects (city projects as well as developer and utility projects); complexity; and politics. Based on engineering studies and input from the citizens, drainage, water, sewer, parks, and transportation projects are generated and prioritized based primarily on engineering judgment relevant to performance standards, safety, cost, and risk. Park projects, of course, have less to do with engineering and more to do with the need for park facilities, as defined by the citizens. Planning level cost estimates are generated for each project utilizing recent local costing information, with contingencies added for project management, design, inspection, and to cover unknown problems such as contaminated soils, unfavorable bidding climate, and other economic factors. The merits of each project and of the entire capital project list is then presented to the public and City Council for review, debate, and decision. Projects are prioritized and described on the Capital Investment Program (CIP), with specific dates and costs identified for design and construction. This is just the beginning, however.

The CIP has to be reviewed every year and, through the annual budgeting process certain projects are directed for design and construction. In the year scheduled, design contracts are drawn up and design proceeds in accordance with the scale of the project. If outside funding is required for the project, application for the funding must be made. The funding agencies typically have a specific time period wherein they will accept applications for funding. Once awarded, the monies from these agencies are usually not available until the following year. Acquiring outside funding is a very competitive process, and success is not guaranteed. Funds are allocated by the various agencies based on need and significance of the project, both locally and regionally. Another major aspect of capital projects, and in particular, street widening projects, is the acquisition of additional right-of-way. This can be a very long and arduous task as the City works with property owners to acquire property that will allow the project to be constructed as envisioned.

The rubber really meets the road when construction begins. Once the City has obtained a qualified contractor through the public bidding process, contracts are signed and the final phase of the project begins. Although the City has been through years of studies, public review, funding, right-of-way acquisition, and design, it is usually the construction phase when the majority of citizens take a real interest in the project. This is, of course, when the noise, dust, traffic delays, and other inconveniences begin, particularly for those living or working in the vicinity of the project. It is very rewarding, however, as the project starts to take form, for the citizenry to see the manner in which their tax dollars are being spent. Hopefully, it is communications such as that found in these newspaper articles, websites, and general correspondence with the public through the Staff and City Council, that we all begin to better understand the complicated planning and implementation of a Capital Investment Project. One more item to consider is the long-term obligation for the operation and maintenance of the new street. A key component of the capital investment process is understanding the amount of time and money necessary for the operation and maintenance of all components of the infrastructure, thereby maximizing the return on the significant investments made for those items.

Over the next two years, City staff will be providing monthly updates regarding this project (and other projects) through articles in this newsletter, official news releases, and the project’s website: <http://www.g-o.com/covington/main.html> Citizens are encouraged to periodically view the website for updates and to provide feedback to the City staff regarding the project. Specific comments can be addressed through the Covington Connection link on the project website, or the City’s main web page at <http://ci.covington.wa.us/connection/cfm>



Limits of S.E. 256th Street and 164th Avenue S.E. Street Project

The City of Covington UPDATE

Covington Residents and Local Leaders Join Together to Spend a Night Out to Fight Crime



Covington Mayor Margaret Harto and Parks and Forestry Commission member Larry Harto communicate with citizens in the Stonefield neighborhood for Covington Night Out.

Covington Mayor Margaret Harto, Mayor Pro Tem Bud Sizemore, Councilmember Jim Scott (attended - not pictured), Police Chief Kevin Klason, and Parks and Forestry Commission member Larry Harto join citizens in the Lakes at Winterwood neighborhood for Covington Night Out.

On August 1, 2006, neighborhoods throughout Covington joined forces with thousands of communities nationwide for "National Night Out 2006." Covington Night Out, in conjunction with National Night Out Across America, was created to:

- Heighten crime prevention awareness;
- Provide a forum for neighbors to "meet and get acquainted" with each other;
- Generate support for and participation in local

anti-crime efforts;

- Strengthen neighborhood spirit through crime prevention campaigns;
- Send the message to criminals that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back!

In the past, many citizens of Covington have found National Night Out to be a fun time for themselves and their neighbors. Through traditional activities such as keeping outdoor lighting on in addition

to hosting barbeques and enjoying live music, residents found spending the evening outside with neighbors to be an enjoyable and effective way to promote police/community partnerships.

We find that Covington Night Out is a very effective way for officers to get to know members of the community, as well as give neighbors the chance to become better acquainted with one another. This also gives City leaders the opportunity to speak with citi-

zens about concerns or questions they might have about the City of Covington," said Covington Police Chief Kevin Klason.

Thank you to those citizens who participated in this year's Covington Night Out.

We hope to see you again next year!

Covington Night Out is sponsored by the Covington Police Department.

City Adopts Interim Sign Code Modifications

The City of Covington's Sign Ordinance was last updated in 2002, and the City staff is currently working on an update that will significantly simplify the existing regulations. In the interim, the Staff asked the Council to consider amending the existing ordinance to simplify the process of issuing citations and criminal complaints for violation of the Code.

Two months ago the City of Covington hired a Code Enforcement Officer (CEO) to investigate and help prosecute various code violations throughout the City-- including zoning, building and permit violations as well as other nuisances. New CEO Louis Quintanar joined the City after serving in a similar position in the City of Burien. The biggest ongoing problem that Louis faced upon his arrival was addressing the numerous sign violations throughout the City. Within a week of his employment, the Downtown core was already less cluttered.

While many of the individuals and businesses contacted have quickly corrected their violations, the City has some chronic sign violators that take additional effort and enforcement activity. For these problems, the previous sign code provisions were

inadequate to timely and efficiently eliminate problem situations. At their meeting of July 18, 2006, the Covington City Council remedied this concern when they adopted an Interim Ordinance amending the Sign Code and authorized a streamlined civil infraction process. In addition, repeat violators will face ever increasing fines for violations and after the third offense in a 12 month period will face criminal prosecution.

Because changes to the City's development regu-



This is an example of a code enforcement target



Covington MultiCare conforming monument sign and nonconforming Advertisement Sign in yard

lations require the submission of proposed amendments to the State of Washington for comment, the modifications were adopted here on an Interim basis and will be effective for only 6 months unless extended or made permanent. In addition, a public hearing on this Interim Ordinance is tentatively scheduled for September 12th during the Council's

regular meeting. The public is invited to provide any comments they may have on the changes made to the Sign Ordinance at this time. As the City works through the preparation of a complete new Sign Code, the public will be given additional opportunities to comment of that draft in the future.