**Mayor’s Corner**

with Mayor Rod Higgins

As we approach a new year, we can look back at some very exciting successes in 2019, including:

- The Appleway Trail from University Road to Pines Road received several new amenities this past summer including a restroom, bike racks, benches, a drinking fountain, grass and landscaping due to a $539,000 appropriation from the Washington State Department of Commerce. The city also received a $25,000 grant from the Community Economic Revitalization Board and $8,333 in matching dollars to study the trail’s economic viability. Thanks to our 4th District legislators for their representation on this project.
- Browns Park saw the addition of a new lighted walking path, restroom, fencing and two picnic shelters. Browns Park will also see a new skate dot and a renovated storage building. These improvements were possible by a $535,000 appropriation from the 2019-2021 Washington State Capital budget. Thanks to our 4th District legislators for their representation on this project.
- An updated Parks and Recreation Master Plan, providing a framework for the operation, acquisition, and development of parks and recreation resources was approved by City Council.
- The city’s northeast industrial area now has nearly 500 acres of shovel-ready property for development. The area is served by water, sewer, and other utilities and is supported by a robust transportation network with nearby access to State Highway 290 and Interstate 90.
- A new Farmers Market was introduced on Friday evenings this past summer in the CenterPlace Regional Event Center parking lot, thanks to the JAKT Foundation. The market was a success and will be back again next summer.
- Also, these road projects were completed in 2019:
  - Sidewalk was installed between Bowdish Road to Union Road along with new asphalt from University Road to Union Road.
  - Reconstruction and widening of Barker Road to three lanes from Euclid Avenue to the Barker Grade Separation and installation of sewer infrastructure.
  - Street preservation work on sidewalks and roads in the Midilome neighborhood from 34th to 37th Avenue between Bates Road and Loretta Drive.
  - Widened pavement and installed curb, gutter, and sidewalk on one side of the road from McDonald Road to Evergreen Road.

This being my last Mayor’s Corner, let me end by saying it’s been a good ride. We’ve shared successes and near-successes. Thank you for caring for your city. Spokane Valley is a very special place and I’m honored and proud to have served with you in making it even better.

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**Let It Snow. We’re Ready!**

**Plowing**

When the snow starts to fall, the City of Spokane Valley crew goes into action. The primary routes—which include main arterials, critical intersections and hillsides—are plowed whenever there is accumulation of snow.

Residential streets are considered for plowing when traffic flow is significantly inhibited. Currently, the city uses contracted graders to plow residential areas within the city. There are 624 lane miles to plow, and it takes about 48 hours.

If you want to be notified when the city of Spokane Valley starts a full residential plow, you can sign up for email alerts at spokanevalley.org/signup or follow us on Facebook or Twitter.

There are areas that are not plowed by the city including Trent Avenue (SR 290) and Highway 27, which are plowed by the Washington State Department of Transportation. For more information, contact WSDOT at 509-324-6000.

Privately owned roads within the city limits are not plowed by the City. To find out if you live on a privately owned road check out our snow map at spokanevalley.org/snowinfo.

**SIDEWALKS**

To help keep sidewalks safer for schoolchildren, seniors and those with mobility concerns, community members are responsible for keeping sidewalks cleared when three or more inches of snow/ice accumulate.

This year, the city will be initiating a pilot program to assist in clearing sidewalks along arterials that are designated Tier 1 and Safe Routes to School, which is a total of 22 miles of sidewalk. The city recognizes that street plows can throw snow on sidewalks and our goal is to lessen the impact to property owners in these areas. Learn more about the sidewalk ordinance and which areas are Tier 1 at spokanevalley.org/snowinfo. If you need assistance to clear your sidewalk call Sun City Church at 509-868-1272, Sister Green at Spokane Mission LDS at 509-924-8932, or dial 2-1-1 to be referred to resources in the area.

**REPORTING A PROBLEM**

If you believe your street has been missed, see a problem area, or have a snow-related question, you can report it with SVexpress online at spokanevalley.org/311 or download the SVexpress mobile app on iOS or Android.

Submitted requests are monitored during business hours. You may also call the city at 509-720-5000. Visit spokanevalley.org/snowquestions for answers to frequently asked questions about plowing and snow removal.
An updated version of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) was approved by the Spokane Valley City Council in November. The updated plan reflects changes in the community since it was adopted in 2013. The 2019 plan incorporated new studies and plans, including the 2017 Comprehensive Plan and a Master Plan for the expansion of parks and recreation resources. It includes creating new parks that are accessible to a variety of users in different locations throughout the city. This plan reflects the community’s ongoing involvement, including stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and a number of tabling events at local parks throughout the summer of 2019. The plan is a framework for the operation and development of parks and recreation. Since adopting the PRMP in 2013, the citizens have told us that they want more parks.”

Additional parks related projects mentioned in the plan include:

- Exploring the potential to create and establish a Spokane Valley River Trail along the north side of the Spokane River between Plante’s Ferry Sports Complex and Barker Road
- Developing a master plan to replace the horse arena with a bicycle pump track and/or skate park at Valley Mission Park
- Extending Appleyard Way to the west connecting to the Dishman Hills Natural Area and also creating a connection to the Centennial Trail
- Completing Phase 2 of the CenterPlace West Park project improvements
- Developing a master plan for the expansion of Sullivan Park
- Begin to implement the master plan for Balfour Park

Parks & Recreation Master Plan Approved by City Council

Transportation Funding Request: Bridging the continues tradition to make headway on the multi-phase Bridging the Valley project to replace three at-grade crossings that bisect north/south commerce in the city. With the State’s assistance on the Phase 1 Barker Road Grade Separation Project in the 2017-2019 budget, the city is making significant progress to improve the safety and economic competitiveness of our community. The city successfully secured the only project in the state granted in the State Transportation Funding Request, and those grant funds were applied to the Barker Road Grade Separation Project. This project is fully funded, engineering design and right-of-way acquisition is underway, and construction is programmed for 2020.

Phase 2: Pines Road / BNSF Grade Separation Project The city respectfully requests that the State make an investment in the safety of the Spokane Valley region through the Bridging the Valley project by allocating an additional $2.9 million to the Pines Road/BNSF Grade Separation project. Pines Road is one of the region’s key transportation corridors, carrying both private and commercial/industrial traffic from the north (across the Pines Road/BNSF tracks) to the south. The project will realign traffic from the Pines Road/BNSF tracks to the Spokane River to I-90 and commercial areas south of the I-90 freeway. In 2018, the Federal Highway Administration Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) rated this at-grade crossing as the highest ranked unfunded Tier I rail crossing in the State out of 1,471 at-grade crossings based upon freight mobility and safety. The project will also improve the intersection of two state highways, Pines Road (SR 27) and Trent Avenue (SR 290).

On average, 60 trains travel through the Pines/BNSF crossing each day, blocking traffic movements for nearly 3.5 hours. Vehicle delay is expected to increase with the addition of a second mainline BNSF track across Pines Road from the Spokane River to I-90 and commercial areas south of the I-90 freeway. In 2018, the Federal Highway Administration Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) rated this at-grade crossing as the highest ranked unfunded Tier I rail crossing in the State out of 1,471 at-grade crossings based upon freight mobility and safety. The project will also improve the intersection of two state highways, Pines Road (SR 27) and Trent Avenue (SR 290). On average, 60 trains travel through the Pines/BNSF crossing each day, blocking traffic movements for nearly 3.5 hours. Vehicle delay is expected to increase with the addition of a second mainline BNSF track across Pines Road in 2020. In addition, about 34,000 vehicles pass through the adjacent Pines/Trent intersection, including traffic on local and regional roads. The average daily traffic volume on Pines Road is more than double the vehicles of the funded Barker Road project. Pines Road is also the primary access to almost 23,000 acres of undeveloped mixed-use, commercial and industrial land.

The total project cost is estimated at $29 million, and the city has thus far secured $7.8 million, including $4.7 million in city funds, $1.1 million in funding from the Federal Highway Administration Planning Organization (MPO) and a $1.25 million CRISI grant. We have yet to receive any State contributions toward improving this intersection of two State highways and require an additional $7.8 million of State support. This level of funding could be indicative of TIB, FMSIB or a direct legislative appropriation. With this State commitment we believe we can be successful obtaining the balance of the project through Federal sources.

I-90 Barker-to-Harvard Project Cost Overruns The city of Spokane Valley supports WSDOT in its continuing efforts to achieve state and local transportation purposes, including safety, mobility, connectivity and safety. In doing so, the City seeks to continue advocating its position that WSDOT projects need to remain the financial responsibility of the State of Washington. Projects by local agencies generally have a beneficial effect on regional and state facilities as well, and State and regional projects generally have a beneficial effect on the local transportation network. However, this does not imply that a financial responsibility should exist between the agencies since there is no policy or operational control of another agency’s project absent an agreement to do so. For example, the city supports its neighboring jurisdiction, the city of Liberty Lake, in supporting budget proviso language stating that WSDOT is responsible for any cost overruns on the Harvard Bridge project. WSDOT bases compensation on the project within the City of Liberty Lake. Liberty Lake has agreed to fund any cost overruns on the components of the project located within its boundaries.

Capital Project Request – (Sullivan Park Water Line/Pole Precinct Parking Lot Paving Project) The city of Spokane Valley requests that the Legislature allocate $413,000 from the Capital Budget to pay for installation of a water line to Sullivan Park. The city owns property adjacent to the Spokane River that it uses as Sullivan Park. The city is purchasing approximately 14 additional acres from the Washington State Department of Transportation to expand the park. Both parcels sit in an area unserved by a water district, and which require installation of a water line by Trentwood Irrigation District under the Union Pacific rail line. Trentwood’s engineering estimate for the project is $413,000. Sullivan Park is currently served by an underperforming well that will be insufficient to service the expanded park.

Economic Development Tools The city of Spokane Valley supports legislative efforts to adopt and enhance statutory mechanisms and state programs that encourage economic development, including border communities that experience the loss of sales to other communities in neighboring states. As such, we encourage the legislature to adopt mechanisms that promote business-based economic development within our communities, including increasing funding to the Public Works Assistance Account, expanding the Rural County Sales & Use Tax Credit to public facilities to border counties, and re-investing in the Local Revitalization Program.

Defend Local Control The city of Spokane Valley incorporated in 2003 as a direct result of the desire of our citizens to be free from state control and burdensome, making it difficult to compete between the State and local governments. As such, the Council urges the Legislature to respect local decision-making wherever appropriate, and not infringe into those areas that have traditionally been regulated by elected city officials. Examples of appropriate local decision-making include the determination of whether to allow recreational marijuana home growing, and local control regarding zoning density, impacting flexibility relative to accessory dwelling units.

Protect and Restore Local State-Shared Revenues The city requests that the Legislature protect and restore local state-shared revenues. These funds include the Liquor Excise Tax Account ($487,739 in 2018), Liquor Board Profits ($786,251 in 2018), Municipal Criminal Justice Assistance Account ($576,445 in 2018), City-County Assistance Account ($271,311 in 2018), and Marijuana Revenues ($259,242 in 2018). Specifically, the city supports legislation that removes the 2011 cap on Liquor Profit revenues and restores the historical state and federal revenue sharing relationship between the State and local governments.

Protect Businesses by Reforming State Regulatory Burden The city strongly supports businesses small and large, in our city and across the state, because they are the lifeblood of our economy. Unfortunately, these businesses are forced to compete in a state regulatory environment that is increasingly burdensome, making it difficult to compete with businesses in neighboring states. If most urgent concern is the regressive state business & occupation tax, as well as reforming the Department of Children, Youth and Families oversight program. The city supports rebalancing the statewide regulatory framework to encourage and support business development and retention.

To maintain eligibility for state and federal grants, each city is required to update their PRMP every six years. This keeps the City of Spokane Valley eligible for potential funding for future projects.
City Finalizes 2020 Budget

The City of Spokane Valley has a history of responsible fiscal management to ensure sustained financial stability. The budget is built to maintain a healthy, positive fund balance providing for the city’s cash flow needs without costly borrowing. The city continues to provide key services to the community while holding down taxes, fees and other charges. For the 11th year in a row, the city has opted not to increase property taxes.

The 2020 budget was approved in November after a series of public hearings and discussions from City Council. The budget priorities are public safety, pavement preservation, transportation, and infrastructure which includes railroad grade separations, park projects, and economic development.

Every year the goal is to have recurring revenue exceed recurring expenses, and the 2020 budget has achieved that again. The general fund recurring revenues are estimated to be over $5 million more than expenditures. The budget is designed to maintain a healthy, positive fund balance at year-end.

The largest source of revenues are sales taxes, estimated at $24.6 million, is projected to be up almost 7.5% over last year and make up 51% of the general fund. Property taxes make up 26% of the general fund revenues. Overall the city anticipates more than $48 million in general fund revenues, which is nearly 6% more than 2019.

General fund recurring expenditures are estimated to be approximately $43.2 million, up 3% from 2019. Public safety is still the largest expenditure at slightly below $26.6 million, which includes law enforcement, courts, prosecution, public defense and jail-related services. That’s 62% of general fund expenditures.

In 2020, the city will add 1.5 full-time-equivalents (FTEs) staff to increase from 93.75 to 95.25 FTEs. The two positions impacted include adding a second code enforcement officer and increasing the half-time attorney position to full-time. Since incorporation, the city has taken a conservative approach to adding new staff and continues to have the lowest per capita employee count of any Washington city with a population of 50,000 or greater.

Local nonprofits awarded funding for social service and economic development

Each year, the Spokane Valley City Council sets aside funds in the city’s budget to contract for services with organizations and activities that benefit Spokane Valley citizens. City Council selected 13 nonprofit organizations to share in $182,000 in economic development and social services funding from the city’s 2020 budget. Agencies and amounts include:

- Elevations - A Children's Therapy Resource Foundation - $3,929 to support therapy for children with special needs.
- Family Promise of Spokane - $9,071 to equip families and communities to end the cycle of homelessness.
- Greater Spokane County Meals on Wheels - $12,969 to deliver meals to vulnerable seniors in Spokane County enabling seniors to maintain their independence.
- JAKT Foundation - $14,862 for funding related to the Spokane Valley Farmers Market, CRAVE, and Oktoberfest.
- NAOMI - $7,254 to help women in our community seeking to end their cycle of dependence.
- Spokane Valley Center for Independent Living - $5,071 to empower people with disabilities to be in control of their lives.
- Spokane Valley Arts Council - $25,548 to help support and promote local arts.
- Spokane Valley Heritage Museum - $9,326 to preserve and maintain access to local history.
- Spokane Valley Partners - $39,780 to help provide food, clothing, and other basic needs to thousands of families.
- Spokane Valley Summer Theatre - $4,183 for operation assistance to support the theater arts program for youth.
- Teen & Kid Closet - $6,500 to provide children and teens from low-income families in our community with new or gently used clothing at no cost.
- Valleyfest - $28,146 to help promote Valleyfest.
- Widows Might - $15,361 to help with rent, health care, and programs for widows in need.

Holiday hours

Christmas: City business offices will be closed Dec. 24 (Christmas Eve) and Dec. 25 (Christmas Day).

New Year’s: City business offices will be closed Dec. 31 (Noon on New Year’s Eve) and Jan. 1 (New Year’s Day).

Martin Luther King Jr. Day: City business offices will be closed all day Monday, Jan. 20.

President’s Day: City business offices will be closed all day Monday, Feb. 17.

Snow plowing/deicing: City crews will continue monitoring conditions around the clock and respond as needed.

University Road Transfer Station: Holiday hours are available at sunshinedisposal.com or by calling 509-924-5678.

Waste Management: A holiday schedule can be found at wnnorthwest.com/spokanevalley or by calling 877-466-4668.

City business offices include City Hall and the CenterPlace Regional Event Center.

Christmas Tree Disposal

Waste Management curbside pickup of Christmas trees will be provided to subscribers on your normal service day between January 6-17. There is a charge for non-yard waste subscribers. Trees must be unflocked, have decorations removed, and cut into 4-foot lengths and widths or less and put either in their yard waste container or next to it. Trees can also be cut into 4-foot lengths/wdths or less and taken to the University Road Transfer Station for a charge. Details at sunshinedisposal.com.

More details at 1-877-466-4668 or wnnorthwest.com.
City awarded $100,000 grant to develop housing action plan

The city of Spokane Valley has been awarded $100,000 in grant funds for the 2019-2021 Biennium to assist with the development of a housing action plan. Spokane Valley was one of 53 communities that will receive a portion of $5 million funding to address affordable housing. The Washington State Legislature passed the bill during the 2019 legislative session to create this new grant program to help address the housing crisis throughout the state by providing financial incentives to cities that take certain density-related and affordable housing-related actions.

"The rising cost of housing is weighing on our economy, burdening struggling families and leaving our most vulnerable people outside," said Washington State Department of Commerce Director Lisa Brown. "These grants will help strengthen communities by helping them plan for more diverse and affordable housing across Washington State."

City staff will be refining the scope of work, selecting a qualified consultant next spring to begin working on the project.

Tapping into the tourism market

Area businesses that want to more successfully market their products and services to tourists and visitors are invited to attend a free one-hour "lunch and learn" workshop.

- Wednesday, Jan. 29
- Noon to 1 p.m.
- Spokane Valley City Hall 10210 E. Sprague Ave

Jamie Rand and Kaylen Bucher from Visit Spokane, the region's lead tourism agency, will discuss tourism trends and how to connect with visitors utilizing digital media, social media and other marketing strategies. Bring your lunch! RSVP to tdillard@spokanevalley.org or call 509-720-5333. This event is sponsored by the city’s Economic Development Division.