

Skagit County Community Report



Spring 2017

County, YMCA partner for future



An NCAA-sized basketball court. A competition-size pool. An indoor running track. An early learning center.

All those elements – and more – will make up the new Skagit Valley Family YMCA, scheduled to open in spring 2019.

The Skagit County Board of Commissioners, Parks and Recreation Director Brian Adams, and representatives from the YMCA signed a 10-year facility lease agreement at a ceremony March 7.

“A new YMCA has been a dream of this community for the past 30 years,” Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt said. “It’s wonderful to see what we can accomplish in this community when we all work together. The new YMCA will be a great asset for our youth and families, and I couldn’t be more pleased that Skagit County is a part of making it all happen.”

Skagit Valley Family YMCA Campaign Director Renata Maybruck

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Commissioner
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”

According to the terms of the agreement, the County will pay the YMCA \$600,000 over the course of four years, beginning in 2017 and ending in 2020, to secure leased space for sports programs and tournaments run by the Parks and Recreation Department. The lease includes an optional five-year extension, which would allow County use of the facility for up to 15 years.

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“The county is helping secure a legacy for the Y over the next 100 years,” she said.

A commitment to community health begins with our children. “It’s more important than ever to keep our kids healthy and active – and what better way to do that than with access to a state-of-the-art gym and facility space?” Adams said. “We’re excited for the possibilities of growing our youth sports program and having more than enough room to get our local kids engaged in healthy, fun activities.”

The County’s parks department currently leases space for youth sports programs – such as basketball and volleyball teams – from local school districts. Scheduling County youth programs around school sports often proves challenging for the

YMCA BY THE NUMBERS

- 62,000 square feet of indoor space
- 4,500 square-foot running track
- 2 swimming/recreation pools
- 1 NCAA-size basketball court
- 1,000 hours of classes annually in the YMCA learning kitchen
- 4 Licensed early-learning classrooms
- 3 dedicated youth-only areas: Child Watch, Kid Zone and Teen Center

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ABOVE LEFT: YMCA supporters entertain one of the youngest Y beneficiaries. ABOVE: Skagit County Commissioners Lisa Janicki, Ron Wesen and Ken Dahlstedt speak about the potential benefits of a new partnership with the YMCA. BELOW: Supporters pack the Skagit County Commissioners' Hearing Room on March 7.

Y: A culture of health

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County and districts. There are more youth sports programs than available space.

"We're playing leagues – over 1,200 games every fall and winter," said Parks Recreation Supervisor Tony Tewalt. "That doesn't include high school programs that we do, with an additional 500 games, and tournaments, youth tournaments, 450-plus games a year. And we're cramming these all into gyms within our communities. We play games from La Conner all the way to Sedro-Woolley within all of our leagues and tournaments."

Not only will the lease agreement open up space for the ever-growing, county-sponsored basketball leagues, the YMCA agrees to provide staff to help supervise the programming – a move that helps lower costs for league participants. Combined with access to two additional courts, the agreement helps ensure the future of the program and solidifies the county's commitment to youth health and activity.

Two new pools will expand community access to water recreation classes as well. The multi-lane lap pool will be large and deep enough to host area swim meets, from high school teams to the local YMCA Chinook Swim Team.

A second recreation pool will be designed for aquatic fitness classes, swimming lessons and family swims.

For families, the new Y will feature three age-appropriate youth areas: Child Watch, Kid Zone and a teen center.

Building a culture of health is important for Skagit County. A recent study found 17 percent of 10th graders are considered overweight, and only 32 percent are moderately physically active. Building a strong partnership with the YMCA would allow for more – and more affordable – opportunities for health and fitness in our community and beyond.



In addition to fitness opportunities, the new Y includes a learning kitchen, where community members can take classes ranging from general nutrition to healthy cooking.

Learn more about the new Skagit Valley YMCA at www.letsbuildit2019.org or contact Development and Campaign Coordinator Jennifer Pitner at j.pitner@skagitymca.org or 360-899-1070 ext. 104. To learn more about County Parks programs, visit www.skagitcounty.net/parks or contact Brian Adams, briana@co.skagit.wa.us or 360-416-1356.

POPULATION HEALTH SKAGIT COUNTY

- 22.5% population aged 0-17 years
- 32% 12th graders obese/overweight
- 35% 10th graders obese/overweight
- 34% 8th graders obese/overweight
- 83% 12th graders not active*
- 77% 10th graders not active*
- 72% 8th graders not active*
- 5% 12th graders in a gang
- 4% 8th graders in a gang
- 440 total arrests, youth ages 10-17
- 9.2% those <25 w/o diploma/GED
- 58.7% population aged 18-64 years
- 26.4% adults obese/overweight
- 19.5% share of heart disease deaths

*active defined as 60 minutes of activity seven days per week

All data from 2016 Skagit County Trends
www.skagitcountytrends.com

Community Justice Center set to open

Summer 2017 is just around the corner – and so is the opening of the County's new Community Justice Center. As contractors wrap up final construction elements, the Sheriff's Office is busy preparing for a massive transition of staff, programs and inmates.

"The excitement and anticipation of finally being able to work in an environment that meets our needs is palpable with our current staff," Sheriff Will Reichardt said. "It's been a long process, and we're looking forward to having a facility that lets us take a holistic approach to community corrections."

The new, 400-bed, 102,000-square foot facility is expected to be complete in late May 2017.

Of course, a completed building doesn't mean move-in ready. First, Skagit County needs its official approval of occupancy from the city of Mount Vernon, which indicates that the new justice center is a safe, functioning building ready to house people.

Once approval is in hand, Skagit County gets the keys to a facility filled with empty offices, empty cells, empty control rooms and more. From desks to cabinets to meal trays to pencils, the entire facility needs to be outfitted for round-the-clock occupation.

"We've got to bring in everything it takes to run this place – really, anything not bolted to the floor," said Dan Fitting, Skagit County Facilities Director. "Because of the vast breadth of what we're putting in, this is one of the biggest procurement projects we've ever worked on."

Fixtures like furniture, computers and monitors are some of the most basic facility needs. But this is a justice center charged with housing up to 400 people day in and day out – which makes the process of outfitting the facility more complex, Fitting said.

"It's more than just medical equipment and appliances," he said. "Our miscellaneous items list is a mile long. We're talking trash cans, work benches, inmate flip-flops, underwear, breathalyzer machines, vacuum-sealers and bags, and more."

The hope is for most equipment and special-order items to be delivered and installed by the end of June, a milestone that'll transform the justice center from walls and windows to a functioning facility.

The next hurdle is training. Once Skagit County receives approval to occupy the building, the more than 65 corrections employees need to get into the building and get familiar with it. That means learning a new



LEFT: Charlie Wend, Chief of Corrections, stands with Project Manager Marc Estvold and Corrections Lieutenant Deanna Randle-Secret in the central control room of the new community justice center. **BELOW:** Randle-Secret and Wend tour one of the inmate pods currently under construction.



layout, new control room features and new integrated technology. Corrections officers need hands-on experience to get up to speed before taking charge of inmates. Needless to say, it's not an overnight process.

"When we're taking care of inmates, our corrections staff has to be proficient right from the start," Reichardt said. "That means more than just training: Staff will be working on learning all the new policies and protocols that come with a new facility. We're expecting the process will take up to 90 days."

Not only will the new community justice center be larger than the existing jail, it will provide more oppor-

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JOIN US OPEN HOUSE

Here's your chance to go inside the new Community Justice Center. Join our corrections staff on a guided tour.

TUESDAY, JULY 11:

2:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Ribbon-cutting ceremony at 2:30 p.m.

Guided tours every half-hour

PARKING: Free with shuttle service at
S. Mount Vernon Park & Ride
Old Hwy 99 and Hickox Road

SATURDAY, JULY 15:

9 a.m. to noon

Open house and guided tours

PARKING: Free on-site
201 Suzanne Lane, Mount Vernon

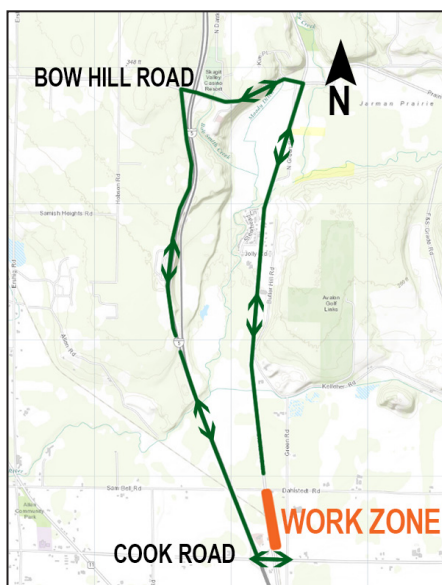
Demolition starts on #SkagitBNOP

It's really happening: On May 1, contractors working for Skagit County Public Works closed Old Highway 99 at the Burlington Northern Overpass, just north of Cook Road, to begin demolition of the 81-year-old structure.

The closure marks the first part of a nearly 18-month project to build a wider, stronger overpass above the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks.

During the project, a signed detour will direct drivers around the project area using Old Highway 99 north of the overpass, Bow Hill Road and I-5. Public Works staff expects that drivers will test out other local routes around the project area during the first weeks of construction, so commuters are asked to factor a little more time into their schedules - just in case.

Commute changes aren't the only thing local drivers and residents can expect during construction. Beyond the obvious demolition work, crews will also build in storm drainage and detention ponds during construction - which should reduce standing water in



nearby fields and ditches. Drivers can also expect to see an uptick in construction trucks entering and leaving the project area.

Look for project updates at www.skagitcounty.net/BNOP, or on social media with the hashtag #SkagitBNOP.

Project questions? Get in touch with us on social media, call 360-416-1309, or email bronleam@co.skagit.wa.us.



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tunity for inmates to gain social, work and life skills – easing their ability to transition back into community life.

“Of course we’re housing inmates securely and making them available for court appearances, but we’re also able to do more,” Reichardt said. “Our

hope is that if we can address some of the root causes of why someone finds themselves in jail, perhaps we can reduce the rate of recidivism.”

The Skagit County Sheriff’s Office plans to celebrate the opening of the facility with a ribbon-cutting and open house Tuesday, July 11, and again Saturday, July 15.

The new community justice center includes several classrooms designed for inmate programs. The Sheriff’s Office intends to partner with local agencies and entities to offer educational, faith-based and employment-centric programs to inmates. The intent is to break the cycle of recidivism so that inmates can return back to the community with skills that will enable them to lead productive lives. Planned is a 15-station computer lab that will enable those nearing release to explore job opportunities.

The Justice Center will also address the behavioral health needs of the jail population by continuing and expanding its residential substance abuse (RSAT) program. With new screening and assess-

ment tools, corrections staff will be better prepared to identify and respond to the needs of inmates with mental illness and addiction issues.

Corrections Division staff has also been at the table regarding efforts to create accessible and affordable housing in Skagit County. Stable housing is correlated to success following release from confinement, and the work of Justice Center staff to support housing access in turn supports the successful re-entry of former inmates.

The proposed creation of a permanent supported housing facility will greatly improve the opportunities for former inmates with behavioral health challenges to succeed after release.