

CITY OF VANCOUVER Newsletter

A QUARTERLY NEWS UPDATE FOR THE COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 2023 | VOLUME 1 | ISSUE 2

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN VANCOUVER

State of emergency declared to respond to the growing crisis of homelessness

While the City and other partners have worked to address homelessness, the recent growth in complexity and magnitude of the related issues has been significant in Vancouver. We also know the topic is top of mind for many residents and businesses.

To enable the City to continue its urgent response, on Nov. 6 the City Council passed an Emergency Declaration to allow the City Manager to immediately issue emergency orders that provide the agility needed to address the evolving issue of homelessness.

“Consistent with Vancouver’s track record so far, we are committed to doing everything we can to address homelessness in our city,” said City Manager Eric Holmes. “While not all

actions need the declaration, this mechanism will give us the flexibility we need to take action quickly as we continue to develop effective outreach-led, enforcement-backed solutions.”

Emergency Orders

The first order provides increased financial agility – authorizing a streamlined process for accepting donations, accessing financial reserves for budgeting needs, and buying goods and services needed to address homelessness. The second order allows the City Manager to open or close specific parcels of public land to outdoor habitation as needed to address this humanitarian crisis while ensuring public health and sanitation needs are being addressed. Additional emergency orders and actions are anticipated such as targeted



The Safe Stay Community at 11400 N.E. 51st Circle provides 20 modular shelters housing up to 40 people.

outreach and behavioral health response, alignment of enforcement efforts, and eventually a congregate “bridge” shelter with support and recovery services that feed into existing programs.

Singular crisis, multiple actions

Over the years, the City has made significant progress in addressing homelessness and related issues on multiple fronts. But the issue continues to grow. The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the state require each county to conduct a census of individuals experiencing homelessness called the Point in Time Count. The last Clark County count

showed a 54% increase in chronic homelessness and 78% increase in chronic unsheltered homelessness since 2022.

With the emergency declaration, the City will build on its track record of successful programs aimed to help people and to respond to this growing crisis. Learn more about the different programs.

Our **Homeless Assistance and Resources Team (HART)** is on the frontlines and forms the core of our efforts to ease homelessness. HART’s role is to provide compassionate outreach and assistance to our unsheltered neighbors and to serve as a point of contact for community members seeking information or reporting

concerns. They respond to reports of active or abandoned campsites, assess campsites for hygiene and sanitation needs, and connect people living in camps to lifesaving resources and social services.

The Safe Stay Community and Safe Park Zone programs

transition people from unsheltered homelessness into housing. These programs are the direct result of the City’s urgent vision to establish an effective pathway for anyone seeking a permanent route off the streets. The sites provide safe, healthy and humane living conditions that stabilize their transition and provide direct access to services.

Continued on page 2



Aerial view of the Safe Parking Zone at the Evergreen Transit Center.

The City of Vancouver newsletter is published quarterly for residents and those who receive services from the City.

Questions, comments and suggestions should be directed to Laura Shepard at Laura.Shepard@cityofvancouver.us.

The information is current as of the publication date. Visit cityofvancouver.us to verify meeting dates and status of events.

Scan the QR code for translations in Español, Русский, Tiếng Việt and 中国人.



City of Vancouver Washington
415 W. 6th Street
Vancouver, WA 98660-1995

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PERMIT NO. 728

Homelessness, continued

The Safe Park Zone opened in 2020 offering roughly 60 parking spaces for people who live in vehicles. Two-thirds of the spaces can even accommodate RVs or trailers. We've also opened two Safe Stay Communities with two more scheduled to open before the end of the year. Each Community features 20 shelter units housing up to 40 people and is managed 24/7 by on-site nonprofit organizations. The sites provide sanitation and hygiene services alongside a range of health services such as health care, counseling, drug treatment and job assistance. As of Aug. 31, our Safe Stay Communities:

- Served a total of 186 people;
- Helped 48 residents gain employment; and
- Placed 73 in stable housing.

The **City's Affordable Housing Fund (AHF)** is another vital resource to address the crisis. Grants awarded by the fund support people who earn 50 percent or less of the Area Median Income (currently \$56,400) by developing affordable housing capacity,

providing rental assistance and offering services to help families remain in their homes.

In 2016, voters approved a \$42 million property tax levy to support AHF projects through 2023. This year, voters renewed the levy to provide \$100 million in AHF funding through 2033. The funding is projected to:

- Assist 2,500 households with rental assistance and housing services
- Help 150 households with home ownership
- Preserve or construct 2,400 affordable units
- Support 550 shelter beds

Learn more

Learn more about the City's response to homelessness, read the emergency declaration and emergency orders, and watch the meeting where the declaration was approved. Scan the QR code or visit cityofvancouver.us/homelessemergency



Courtney Ligman in the lobby of her new home at Fourth Plain Community Commons.

From the streets to stable housing: "It's so night and day different"

Vancouver's Courtney Ligman didn't choose to become homeless. As with so many others who find themselves unsheltered, it happened for a variety of unfortunate reasons. But she has come a long way since first living in a tent in 2019, thanks in part to the City's Homelessness Response Program. After spending 17 months at a Safe Stay Community, Courtney moved into her own apartment in mid-September. Her new home is at the recently opened Fourth Plain Community Commons, a 106-unit affordable housing project supported in part by the City's Affordable Housing Fund (\$1.5 million contribution).

"It's so night and day different. It has been heaven," Courtney said. "I was homeless. I couldn't even look people in the eye. I'm still having a hard time with that just because of the shame back then, but it's a safe place that offers progress."

Courtney credits staff – both with HART and at the Safe Stay Community – for cultivating her path to success. She says the care, consistency and trust that the outreach teams fostered and built with her over time was the most important factor. While at the Safe Stay Community, she was able to find work, attend classes and eventually earn her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) certificate.

"I want to give back any way that I can because I am so grateful for all the help and the resources that I didn't know about," Courtney said. "I have a different perspective on life; I'm not in a shelter anymore and that increases my confidence."

Not long after accepting her first CNA position, Courtney was offered – and accepted – another position at a different facility that increased her salary by almost 50 percent.



One of many affordable housing projects underway.

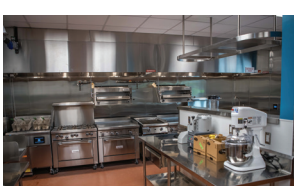


City Affordable Housing Fund Project Grand Opening

A colorful program stacked with diverse entertainment and food highlighted a ceremony to celebrate the recent grand opening of Fourth Plain Community Commons at 2200 Norris Rd. The project is a collaborative effort between the City and the Vancouver Housing Authority.



The Commons' 10,000 square feet of ground-floor space is managed by non-profit partner Fourth Plain Forward and features indoor and outdoor public event spaces, shared office spaces and Vancouver's first commissary kitchen. The upper floors house 106 units of affordable housing managed by the Vancouver Housing Authority and made possible, in part, by a \$1.5 million donation from the City's Affordable Housing Fund.



Charter Review Committee Seeks Input from Residents

Every five years, the City recruits 15 citizens to review the City's Charter and make recommendations for amendments to the Charter. The committee started its work in October and is looking for community input.

How to provide comment

Vancouver residents can share possible Charter amendments with the Committee at their upcoming meetings on Tues., Nov. 28 from 6 – 8 p.m., Tues., Dec. 14 from 6 – 8 p.m. or Tues., Jan 23 from 5 – 7 p.m. The meetings will be hybrid to enable residents to provide comment in a way that is best for their schedule. Please RSVP to kerry.peck@cityofvancouver.us to receive meeting log-in information if you wish to attend on-line. Attend in person, City Hall, 415 W. 6th Street, Aspen Room.

Residents can also provide input and comments in person or email by contacting aaron.lande@cityofvancouver.us.

If the changes are approved by the council or through a citizen petition, they are then placed on the November 2024 ballot for a public vote.

What is the City's Charter

Vancouver's charter was approved by voters in 1952. It serves as Vancouver's "constitution" and directs the City government's structure and operations. The last review was in 2019 and changes were approved by voters in the November 2019 election.

City Expands Access to Criminal Diversion Program

In August, the City began offering participation in its criminal prosecution diversion program at a reduced fee for those with limited financial means.

Previously, participants were charged a fee of \$500 to \$700 to enter the program. The new flat fee of \$50 reduces the cost by 90% or more and removes financial barriers that may have prevented participation based on an inability to pay.

For 20 years the City's Criminal Diversion Program has reduced recidivism by providing first-time offenders an opportunity to avoid a criminal record by participating in treatment, staying crime-free and paying restitution owed to victims.

Scan the QR code to learn more.



Watch for public comment period for Interstate Bridge environmental impact statement



The Interstate Bridge is a critical connection between Washington and Oregon, approximately 130,000 vehicles cross the bridge every day. It is an important connection for commuters and regional and international trade alike.

The Interstate Bridge Replacement (IBR) program will replace the I-5 bridge across the Columbia River with a seismically resilient structure, provide expanded transit including light rail to downtown Vancouver and enhanced Express Bus service, improve interchanges, and provide new bike/ped/rolling options.

In early 2024, a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS)

for the program that describes the various investments and examines potential impacts will be released with a 60-day public comment period. Community engagement to prepare for the Draft SEIS release is underway and staff are also holding "office hours" to meet in person or virtually.

What is the Interstate Bridge Program

To provide coordinated regional leadership, the Oregon and Washington Departments of Transportation are jointly leading the Interstate Bridge Replacement program work in collaboration with eight other bi-state public agencies. In addition to the City, partners from Southwest Washington include C-TRAN, Port of Vancouver, and Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council.



More information about the program, community involvement, and recent news can be found at interstatebridge.org or by scanning the QR code.



OUR VANCOUVER

OUR FUTURE 2045

What's Happening with Housing?

Want to learn more about the future of housing in our community? We as a community have an exciting opportunity to envision the future of our community through an effort called Our Vancouver—the City's plan for growth and development over the next 20 years.

Join us for an upcoming forum to hear from and speak with a wide range of groups involved in the development and regulation of housing in Southwest Washington and learn how the City is planning to make Vancouver a more equitable, affordable place to call home.

5:30 to 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Dec. 6

Service District 112 Building, Conference Center
2500 N.E. 65th Ave, Vancouver

Scan the QR code to learn more.



Holiday Recycling Done Right

On Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays that occur Monday through Friday, your garbage, recycling and organics will be picked up one day later.

'Tis the season for gatherings, gift giving and gratitude. The joy of the season also signals the less festive reality of excess waste.

Learn how to safely dispose of or recycle common holiday items.

Cooking Oil

That deep-fried turkey was moist and tasty but what do you do with the oil now? Recycle it. Columbia Resource Company will accept up to five gallons of cooking oil per day. Smaller amounts of used oil can be poured in a jar with lid, frozen and then placed in your garbage cart. Never pour oil down the drain.

Food Scraps

Customers who subscribe to curbside organics collection should continue

to put all bones, cheese, bread, eggshells, and other foods in their bin. Not subscribed to this service? Sign up for organics service by contacting Waste Connections at 360-892-5370 or customerservice2010@wcnx.org.

Holiday Trees

Curbside organics subscribers can cut their tree into sections of five feet or smaller and place sections in the cart. If the cart is already full, place your tree alongside your cart to be collected for an additional fee, \$4.03.

Garbage collectors will pick up flocked or artificial trees, up to five feet tall, for a fee of \$9.02 in the City. Unflocked trees can also be recycled for a fee at transfer stations.

Artificial holiday trees are not recyclable, consider donating to a local thrift store.

Holiday Lights

Do not put old string lights in the recycling cart, as they can tangle

recycling machinery. Donate working lights to a local thrift store. Lights can also be recycled through many chain hardware stores.

Wrapping and Packaging

Cardboard boxes, printed gift wrapping paper, mailing tubes and paper bags that cannot be used again may be flattened and placed in your recycle cart. Ribbons, bows, yarn, foil-coated wrapping, bubble wrap, plastic bags or foam packing cannot be recycled.

Don't forget, all Waste Connections customers get free bulky item pick-up of up to five large items that cannot fit in your garbage cart once a year.

Get answers to your questions about how to recycle, reuse and properly dispose of hundreds of items. Scan the QR code or visit cityofvancouver.us/recyclerright.



Recyclable

	Wine bottles
	Cardboard boxes (clean and dry)
	Wrapping paper (no shiny foil or metallic paper)
	Computers and electronics
	Working holiday lights and décor



NOT Recyclable

	Cooking oil (pour in glass jar, freeze with lid)
	Gift cards
	Bubble wrap, mailing envelopes with bubble wrap
	Ribbons, bows, tissue paper
	Broken holiday lights or ornaments

View PFAS results

We are monitoring, researching and planning how to resolve the challenge of PFAS



in the water supply. Recent testing for PFAS showed that four separate samples exceeded the State Action Level for PFAS contaminants at four of the City's nine wellfields, including Water Stations 4, 8, 14 and 15. Scan the QR code or visit cityofvancouver.us/pfas to learn more and view all sampling results.

FREE Leaf Disposal Coupon

Prevent street flooding. Do NOT blow or rake leaves into the street.

Vancouver & Clark County Residents Only

Valid: October 1 - December 31, 2023

DROP-OFF LOCATIONS:

H & H Wood Recyclers
8401 NE 117th Ave
Vancouver, WA
360-892-2805

McFarlane's Bark
8806 NE 117th Ave
Vancouver, WA
360-892-6125

West Van Materials Recovery Center
6601 NW Old Lower River Rd
Vancouver, WA | 360-737-1727

Triangle Resources
612 SE Union St
Camas, WA
360-834-7253



Present this coupon at a participating drop-off location for up to 5 cubic yards of LEAVES ONLY - no bags. No trimmings, yard debris or mixed loads.

Sponsored by:



Complete the following information:

Name: _____

Street Address: _____ Zip: _____



City of Vancouver residents: Funding for this program is provided through your garbage rates. Clark County residents: Funding for this program is provided through Clark County Public Works.



City Council

Mayor & Council Office 360-487-8629

Anne McEnergy-Ogle, Mayor
Ty Stober, Mayor Pro Tem | Sarah J. Fox
Bart Hansen | Kim D. Harless | Erik Paulsen | Diana H. Perez

Call the City

Abandoned Vehicles	3-1-1
Building and Permits	360-487-7800
Business License	360-487-8410, opt 3
City Liaison	360-487-8604
City Manager's Office	360-487-8600
Code Compliance	360-487-7810
Garbage/Recycling	360-487-7160
Operations Center (streetlights, potholes)	360-487-8177
Parking Services	360-487-8650
Parks and Recreation	360-487-8311
Pay a Utility Bill	360-487-7999
Public Works	360-487-8177
Utility Customer Service	360-487-7999
Vancouver Fire Department	360-487-7212
Vancouver Police Department	360-487-7400

City of Vancouver
Vancouver City Hall
415 W. 6th Street
Vancouver, WA 98660



Be prepared for winter weather

When ice, snow, or other severe weather hits, the City is ready to respond. We keep a close eye on weather conditions and potential impacts to streets, signals, utilities and other services. To learn more, scan the QR code or visit cityofvancouver.us/severeweather



Street Priorities

Streets are prioritized across Vancouver with the focus on maintaining major routes and overpasses. Top streets are those that connect and serve public safety, including emergency vehicles. Neighborhood residential streets are not deiced or plowed.

Traffic Signal Outages

During power outages and interruptions, Vancouver's traffic signals will go dark. When signals are dark or flashing red, treat these intersections as a four-way stop, and proceed with caution.

Garbage and Recycling Updates

Snowy or icy conditions may impact garbage, recycling, and organics collections. If service is canceled, customers who are missed will get a call from Waste Connections, if your number is on file.

Reporting Issues

For urgent issues, such as traffic signal outages, downed trees blocking City streets, help turning off water when pipes have frozen, please call Public Works Operations Center Dispatch directly at 360-487-8177. For downed power lines, keep back and report to Clark Public Utilities at 360-992-8000 or 360-992-3000.

Frozen Water Lines

Take steps before temperatures drop below freezing to protect your pipes and prevent water pipes from freezing. Disconnect all garden hoses and shut off and drain water from pipes leading to outside faucets. Protect outside faucets and hose bibs with insulation. Never try to thaw a frozen pipe with an open flame.

For questions related to cancellations, schedules, and accounts, contact Waste Connections customerhelp@wasteconnections.com or 360-892-5370. Get alerts through the RecycleRight app available on app stores.

Travel Safely

Know before you go

You should stay off the roads during hazardous weather but if you absolutely have to get in your car, make sure you are ready to handle anything winter in the Pacific Northwest throws at you by preparing for winter travel delays and weather-related hazards.

Winter Storm Warning: Heavy snow, sleet or freezing rain is expected or occurring.

Winter Storm Watch: Heavy snow, sleet or freezing rain is possible.

Winter Weather Advisory: Light winter precipitation or blowing snow will cause slick conditions.

Get your vehicle winter ready

- Check your tires and make sure your chains fit before the first winter storm and check tire pressure during cold weather.
- Get a vehicle winter maintenance check-up. Don't wait to check your battery, belts, hoses, radiator, lights, brakes, heater/defroster and wipers.
- Keep your fuel tank full. Don't let it fall below half a tank on winter trips.
- Program your radio for traffic reports and emergency messages, WSDOT radio can be found at 530 AM and 1610 AM.

Keep a basic winter weather kit in your vehicle

Use this check list to make sure you are ready when you hit the road.

- Ice scraper/snow brush
- Bottled water and snacks
- Flashlight (and batteries)
- Cell phone charger with an extra battery pack
- Blanket
- Gloves
- Boots
- Hand/foot warmers
- First aid kit
- Flares or emergency lights
- Jumper cables
- A comfort item (book, deck of cards, etc.)

Calendar of Events

View more information and other events at cityofvancouver.us/calendar



November

- 13 City Council Meeting**
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.
- 18 Ivy Removal at Marine Park**
9:30 a.m. – Noon; Registration required
Marine Park, 4550 SE Columbia Way
- 20 City Council Meeting**
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.
- 24 Community Tree Lighting**
3:30 – 7:30 p.m.
Esther Short Park, 605 Esther St
- 25 Native Planting at Homestead Park**
9 a.m. – Noon; Registration required
Homestead Park, 1911 SE 159th Pl
- Adopt-A-Park Event at LeRoy Haagen**
10 a.m. – Noon; Registration required
LeRoy Haagen Memorial Community Park, 13200 NE LeRoy Haagen Memorial Drive
- 27 City Council Community Forum**
6:30 – 8 p.m.
The VIC, 18110 SE 34th Street
- 28 Charter Review Committee**
6 – 8 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.

December

- 4 City Council Meeting**
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.
- 9 Native Planting at Behrens Woods**
9 a.m. – Noon; Registration required
Behrens Woods, 3005 SE Bella Vista Pl
- 12 Vancouver Planning Commission**
Public hearing on Vancouver Innovation Center Master Plan and DA Amendment (tentative)
Time TBA
- 14 Charter Review Committee**
6 – 8 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.
- 15 Ivy Removal at Marine Park**
9:30 a.m. – Noon; Registration required
Marine Park, 4550 SE Columbia Way
- 18 City Council Meeting**
Public hearing on Second Supplemental Budget
6:30 p.m.
Vancouver City Hall, 415 W. 6th St.
- 21 Winter Solstice Sunset Walk**
3 – 4:30 p.m.; Registration required
Water Resources Education Center
4600 SE Columbia Way



Community Grants Program Aims to Give Big in 2024

In Vancouver, great things happen when we come together. To help create a shared sense of belonging and strengthen the social and cultural connection of our community, the City's Office of Neighborhoods announces the return of its Community and Neighborhoods Grants Program.

The program will open in January 2024 to support projects, programs and events that help build community across Vancouver.

Eligible projects may include:

- Cultural gatherings and community celebrations
- Block parties, barbecues or neighborhood picnics
- After-school, educational or youth sports programs
- Neighborhood beautification projects
- Community dialogues
- Activities for children and families

Who's Eligible?

Community and neighborhood groups, student clubs, parent-teacher organizations and informal groups of residents are eligible to apply. Office of Neighborhoods staff will also provide training and support throughout the grant cycle, through interactive application workshops, one-on-one coaching and webinars.

If you have a great idea for how to build community, we want to hear from you. Application materials will be released soon.

Subscribe to the Office of Neighborhoods Weekly Email Update for the latest news about the grant program.



For more information, please contact William Cooley, community engagement manager, at william.cooley@cityofvancouver.us or 360-624-0718.

