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FORCES OF NATURE

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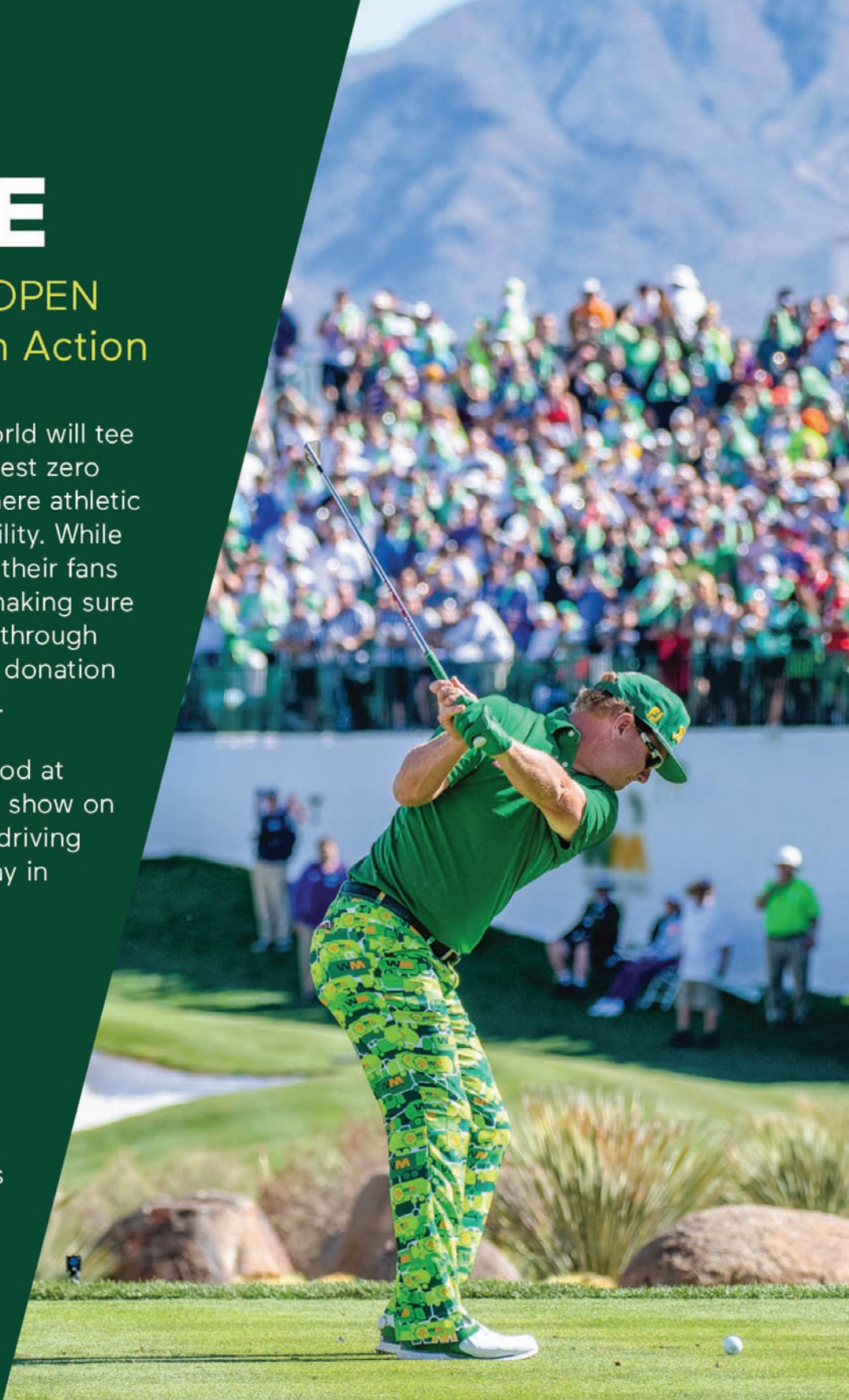
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Washington is a beautiful state.

An afternoon drive can take you through farmland, mountains, rain forests, coastlines, and everything in between. As city leaders, we have the privilege and responsibility of considering how our actions and priorities affect that natural beauty.

Our state also boasts other kinds of beauty. For the past two years, U.S. News has named Washington #1 in its *Best State* rankings. Why do they consider us to be the best? The strength of our economy, education, and other social factors put us at the top of their list.

Like the natural beauty with which we've been blessed, these social and financial resources cannot be taken for granted. We must prioritize the sustainability of the financial and social aspects of the communities we serve.

Think of it this way: Your city or town is made up of families and businesses. These families and businesses need each other. The families need places to shop, eat, and access professional services. To survive and thrive, the businesses need customers. The work that we do as city

leaders—building and maintaining infrastructure, providing emergency services, and more—helps facilitate those interactions.

While there's much more to a city than families and businesses working with each other, these interactions create an economic foundation that is critical for building strong communities. As we often say at AWC, strong cities make a great state. As you read the stories in this issue, I hope you'll take note of all the ways our cities and towns can be strengthened by sustainability that's ecological, economic, and social.

Kent Keel

Councilmember, University Place



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Cityvision

Fall 2021

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Friday Harbor taps a legacy of long-term sustainable thinking to tackle the affordable housing conundrum of a tourism-focused town.

BY TED KATAUSKAS

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Washington communities pursue a sustainable future in a time of climate change.

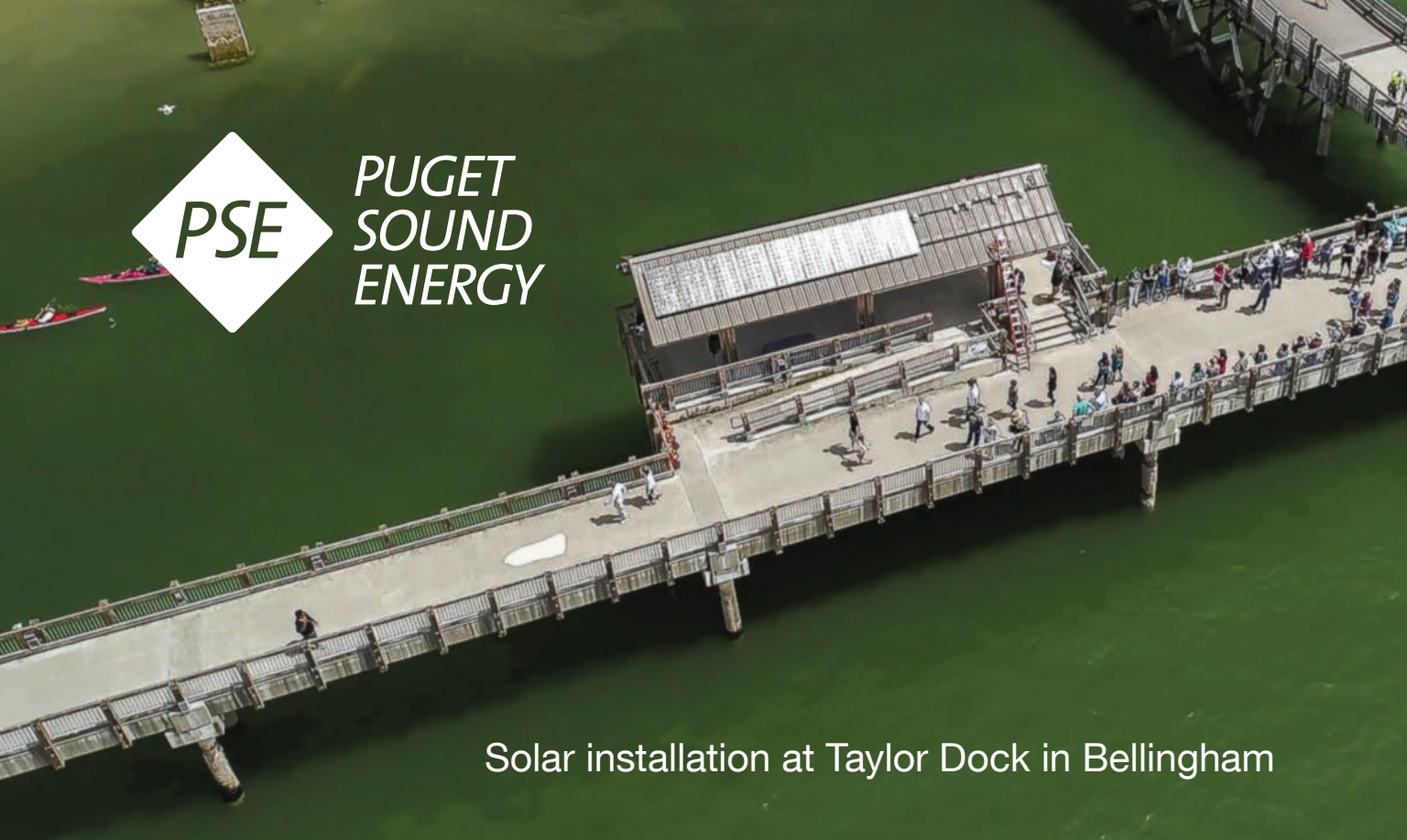
▶ Bill Gendron, longtime program director at the Friday Harbor nonprofit Homes for Islanders

REALITY ISLAND,

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Solar installation at Taylor Dock in Bellingham

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Citybeat



Waste Wanted

Long Beach would like to convert your municipal sewage sludge into pay dirt.

WHEN THE WASHINGTON Department of Ecology called four years ago about a sewage problem, Long Beach City Administrator David Glasson knew he was about to confront a sticky, if not stinky, situation. The Pacific County city had been spraying biosolids (a.k.a. “sludge” left over from the wastewater treatment process) onto a forested swath on a small oceanfront peninsula since the 1980s, adding nutrients to nourish the soil. But the state had determined those nutrients weren’t being adequately absorbed during winter, which left the water table at risk of contamination. Long Beach—and its neighbor three miles to the

south, Ilwaco, facing a similar issue—had to find another solution.

So the city commissioned a study that determined the most ecologically sound answer was to build a Class A biosolids plant. Municipal sewage would be treated to exceptional quality (EQ) compost—cooked in an oven and mixed with wood chips and sawdust until it was ready to be used as topsoil.

Glasson, elected officials, and staff from the city’s sewer department visited an existing biosolids plant up the coast in Westport a half-dozen times to help inform the design and operation of their own facility. One crucial lesson Long Beach learned from Westport was that salt from sea air could cause **CONTINUED ON P.10** ▶



Hot Topic

As temperatures spike, rules are revised for protecting employees from heat.

BY DEVON O'NEIL

OVER THE FINAL five days of June 2021, a scorching high-pressure air mass stalled over the Pacific Northwest, creating what became internationally known as a “heat dome” that affected hundreds of cities and millions of residents across the region. In Washington, the event was blamed for dozens of heat-related deaths, with climate change experts opining that this statistically once-in-a-millennium anomaly would almost certainly happen again—and potentially soon.

On July 5, the United Farm Workers of

America filed a petition with Washington’s Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) seeking proactive protection of outdoor workers from the lethal heat. Four days later, the state filed emergency rules to do just that, “because we agree that existing rules to protect workers from heat could go further,” says L&I Public Affairs Manager Matt Ross.

The updated rules, which apply to both public and private employees and supplement measures adopted in 2008—when heat events were less severe—are triggered

when the mercury hits 89 degrees Fahrenheit; additional protections come into play at 100 degrees. According to Ross, they illustrate just how seriously the state and, by extension, cities are taking the risk to outdoor workers. Instead of simply requiring an employer to provide “shade,” for instance, the rule *defines* shade as “not adequate when heat in the area of shade defeats the purpose of shade, which is to allow the body to cool. For example, a car sitting in the sun does not provide acceptable shade.”

The state averages 55 heat-related workers compensation claims per year, typically from the construction and agriculture industries. But, Ross notes, city parks and rec and utility staff are

“WE’RE GOING TO HAVE TO GET USED TO HEAT EVENTS LIKE THIS BECOMING MORE REGULAR.”

also at risk. The emergency rules, effective through September 30, dictate that workers must be allowed preventative cool-down rest when needed at 89 degrees and must have access to “suitably cool” drinking water. When temperatures reach 100 degrees, they must be provided with paid 10-minute cool-down breaks every two hours and receive heat-exposure safety training to recognize early signs and symptoms of distress.

It all makes for a lesson in risk management that may seem odd in Washington, particularly on the historically temperate west side of the Cascades. “In other parts of the country these things are more ingrained in the work culture, but we’re going to have to get used to heat events like this becoming more regular,” says AWC Legislative Policy Analyst Matt Doumit.

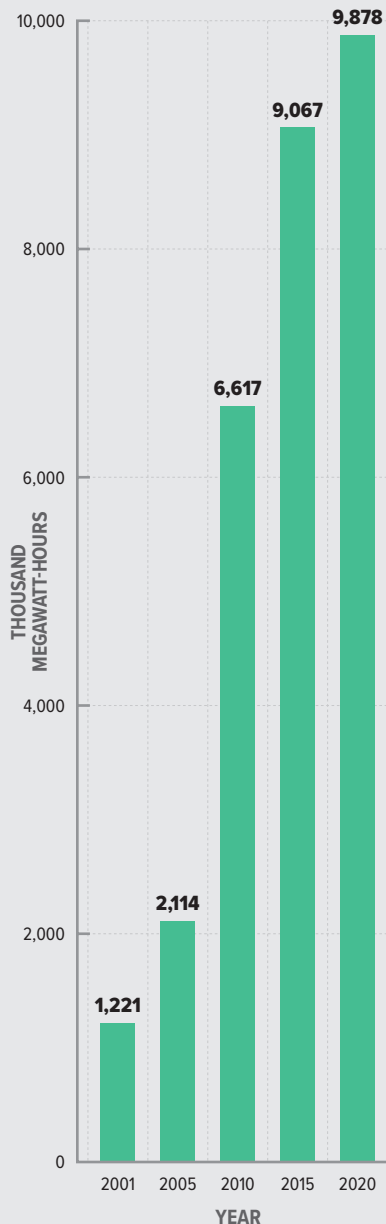
Sure enough, another stifling three-day heat wave arrived in the Northwest in mid-August. Although the mercury didn’t climb quite as high as it did in June, temperatures hit 100 in many parts of the state, triggering the new safety rules—which, Ross says, may be here to stay, as L&I has begun the process of developing permanent heat rules to protect outdoor and indoor workers from heat illness for summers to come. **C**



EVER GREENER

Washington State has long been the national leader in hydropower, but we've also increasingly utilized alternatives to fossil fuels from other renewable sources, as these electricity generation statistics for the past two decades show.

Electricity Generation in Washington from Wind, Biomass, and Solar



Source: US Energy Information Administration

TOOL
KIT

CAPITAL IDEA

Seeking long-term financial sustainability, the City of Kenmore hatches a plan.

BY DEVON O'NEIL

KENMORE CITY MANAGER Rob Karlinsey could see the collision coming. For more than a decade, whenever the city produced a financial forecast, the graph lines depicting revenues and expenditures were slated to cross two or three years in the future.


Thankfully, those lines never actually crossed in real life, but only because the city repeatedly took what Karlinsey calls “temporary Band-Aid measures” to delay the inevitable: adding a franchise fee for water and sewer, then a car tab fee. But the forecasts remained foreboding. “When your cost of doing business is growing at 4 percent a year and revenue is flat, that’s a problem,” Karlinsey says.

Kenmore, a bedroom community of 23,000 residents just north of Seattle, doesn’t have many cash registers or credit-card machines. Sales tax reaps around \$3 million a year, with another \$5.4 million coming from property tax, Kenmore’s top revenue generator—which, by law, can’t increase by more than 1 percent a year. Eventually, Karlinsey had to tell his city council: *I am running out of rabbits to pull out of the hat.*

In early 2019, Karlinsey and city staff, including Finance Director Joanne Gregory, began studying neighboring Kirkland and Shoreline, which had developed financial sustainability plans. At Kenmore’s invitation, leaders from Shoreline came and spoke to the city council, explaining what worked and why. Ultimately, Karlinsey says, Kenmore modeled its process after Shoreline’s, with input from a number of other municipalities as well.

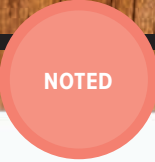
The council approved the formation of a seven-member citizen task force in November 2019. In 2020, the task force met regularly from January through August, with a three-month pause in the spring due to the pandemic. Kenmore also hired a regional consultant, Management Partners, to evaluate where it could trim its expenditures and bolster its revenue. City staff held online open houses and, in August 2020, implemented an interactive tool called Balancing Act to solicit ideas from residents. “We basically said: Tell us where you would cut and where you would add. And you build a budget,” Karlinsey says. “We got several hundred submissions.”

While city staff worked to refine the plan, they decided to make permanent a handful of temporary budget cuts they’d implemented due to the pandemic. The adopted financial sustainability plan calls for revenue generators like a cable TV utility tax and photographic traffic enforcement (both programs will be phased in starting in 2022), as well as tapping into property tax banked capacity and a garbage utility tax in later years. Council approved the plan in October 2020, guaranteeing Kenmore a sustainable budget—no ominously crossing lines—through 2028. Reserves are forecast to grow from \$5.2 million to \$6.3 million over that time.

“It was messy, and there were hard conversations,” Karlinsey says of the process. “It took guts for the task force to propose what they did and for the council to adopt it.” As for what happens in 2028? “Then we’ll have to do it all over again.” 



For more information:
kenmorewa.gov



SELECT PROVISIONS FROM THE LONG-TERM SERVICES AND SUPPORTS TRUST ACT (A.K.A. WA CARES FUND)

The WA Cares Fund is a first-in-the-nation, state-run long-term care benefit initially passed in 2019. To take long-term care benefits under the program, a person must make minimum contributions to the trust fund.

RCW 50B.04.050 - QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS.

(1) The employment security department shall deem a person to be a **qualified individual** as provided in this chapter if the person has paid the long-term services and supports premiums required by RCW 50B.04.080 for the equivalent of either:

- (a) A total of ten years without interruption of five or more consecutive years; or
- (b) Three years within the last six years from the date of application for benefits.

(2) When deeming a person to be a qualified individual, the employment security department shall require that the person have worked at least five hundred hours during each of the ten years in subsection (1)(a) of this section or each of the three years in subsection (1)(b) of this section.

(3) An **exempt employee** may never be deemed to be a qualified individual.

An important consideration for someone seeking the payroll tax exemption is that they will be barred from getting benefits under the WA Cares Fund. The program has a lifetime benefits cap of \$30,500.

Unlike the Paid Family & Medical Leave (PFML) payroll tax, the WA Cares Fund tax is not limited to wages under the Social Security cap (\$142,800). Only employees pay the tax.

RCW 50B.04.080 - PREMIUM ASSESSMENT - RATE - COLLECTION.

(1) Beginning January 1, 2022, the employment security department shall assess for each individual in employment with an employer a premium based on the amount of the individual's wages. The initial premium rate is **fifty-eight hundredths of one percent** of the individual's wages. Beginning January 1, 2024, and biennially thereafter, the premium rate shall be set by the pension funding council at a rate no greater than fifty-eight hundredths of one percent. In addition, the pension funding council must set the premium rate at the lowest amount necessary to maintain the actuarial solvency [...]

(2)(a) The employer must collect from the employees the premiums provided under this section through payroll deductions and remit the amounts collected to the employment security department.

[...]

(4)(a) Premiums shall be collected in the manner and at such intervals as provided in this chapter and directed by the employment security department.

(b) To the extent feasible, the employment security department shall use the premium assessment, collection, and reporting **procedures in Title 50A RCW**.

[...]

This refers to the procedures for the PFML program. Employers will withhold the payroll tax from an employee each pay period and remit them to ESD once a quarter.

This is a new development in 2021. In order to qualify for an exemption, an employee needs to have alternative coverage by Nov. 1. This leaves little time for employees to get alternative coverage.

RCW 50B.04.085 - PREMIUM ASSESSMENT - EXEMPTIONS.

(1) An employee who attests that the employee has long-term care insurance **purchased before November 1, 2021**, may apply for an exemption from the premium assessment under RCW 50B.04.080. An exempt employee may not become a qualified individual or eligible beneficiary and is permanently ineligible for coverage under this title.

(2)(a) The employment security department must accept applications for exemptions only from **October 1, 2021, through December 31, 2022**.

(b) Only employees who are eighteen years of age or older may apply for an exemption.

(3) The employment security department is **not required to verify the attestation** of an employee that the employee has long-term care insurance.

[...]

(6) An exempt employee must provide written notification to all current and future employers of an approved exemption.

(7) If an exempt employee fails to notify an employer of an exemption, the exempt employee **is not entitled to a refund** of any premium deductions made before notification is provided.

(8) Employers must not deduct premiums after being notified by an employee of an approved exemption.

[...]

This year is the only exemption opportunity for employees that want to opt out. Anyone entering the workforce after 2022 will automatically be enrolled in the program with no opt-out opportunity.

A person only has to have alternative coverage when they apply for the exemption. However, policymakers have discussed requiring exempted employees to periodically reattest that they still maintain coverage.

Employees are responsible for letting current and future employers know if they are exempt from the WA Cares Fund payroll tax. If they fail to do so, they can't get their mistakenly paid premiums back.



THE QUESTION

WHAT'S AN EXCITING SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT OR POLICY YOUR CITY IS WORKING ON?



One of our most exciting sustainability projects we're hoping to get off the ground at the City of Walla Walla includes developing a solar farm on one of our closed landfills. We're looking to partner with a solar developer to turn this flat, 78-acre landfill into a source of green energy for the city rather than an unusable eyesore.

—LEAH ROHAN
Environmental Engineer, Walla Walla



We are working on permitting urban agriculture on city property, installing more than 30 publicly available electric vehicle charging stations throughout our downtown and curbside in our business districts, implementing priority permitting for green buildings, and finalizing our Climate Action Plan to ensure an equity-centered, antiracist, and transformational approach to climate action.

—KRISTIN LYNETT
Sustainability Office Manager, Tacoma



We've been addressing sustainability for over a decade but struggled to develop a formal Climate Action Plan. With strong community support and technical resources from our King County partners, we're close to launching that process. We're really excited about integrating sustainability into all city operations, asking how we can lighten the impact of capital projects, improve habitat, and enhance stormwater practices.

—ROSS FREEMAN
Sustainability Program Analyst, Mercer Island

TRAININGS

SEPTEMBER

- 15 **How cities plan to invest ARPA funds 2021**
Online
- 16 **Mayor as CEO**
Online
- 28 **GIS Consortium showcase & office hours**
Online

TRAINING HIGHLIGHTS

MEMBER EXPO 2021

OCTOBER 13 | CHELAN & ONLINE
AWC's Member Expo gives members of the Employee Benefit Trust, Risk Management Service Agency, Workers' Comp Retro Program, and Drug & Alcohol Consortium an opportunity to attend educational sessions and make sure staff are maximizing the free services of those programs. This year's Expo is planned for Chelan and online.

ELECTED OFFICIALS ESSENTIALS
DECEMBER 4 | ONLINE

Getting elected is just the beginning! Once you start your role as mayor or city councilmember, there are many things to learn—and quickly. Get a head start by attending this popular event. Understand your roles and responsibilities, learn important ethical considerations to keep you on the right side of the law, examine real-world municipal scenarios with on-site legal counsel, and network with other city leaders in your region.

New and seasoned elected officials alike benefit from this training event exploring critical legal and functional responsibilities in office. What's more, participation in this event fulfills the Open Government Training Act's specific training requirements (including records, records retention, and open public meetings) for elected officials.

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Citybeat

Waste Wanted *continued from page 5*

corrosion and reduce the life span of the investment. So instead of a conventional open-to-the-air contraption, Long Beach decided to build a self-contained system with only two precedents worldwide (one in Michigan, one in Poland). “You want something like an oven where it’s sealed and the temperature is maintained, and it’s all controlled by air flow,” Glasson says.

The price tag was precipitous, but the city secured over \$7 million in grant funding from the state (including a \$1.8 million grant, with the balance in revolving and forgivable loans) to be augmented by rate increases. Instead of the typical 2 to 4 percent


“WE’RE LOOKING AT SELLING THE CAPACITY TO OTHER CITIES THAT NEED TO PROCESS THEIR SLUDGE. BUT WE HAVE TO KNOW WHAT’S IN THEIR SLUDGE BEFORE WE ACCEPT IT.”

annual increase, Long Beach residents saw an 11 percent increase for the first two years, followed by a 4 percent adjustment.

Ilwaco (population: 940) had initially considered partnering with Long Beach by anteing in \$25,000 toward the plant’s construction, then paying Long Beach roughly \$70,000 a year to process its biosolids. Instead, Ilwaco opted to upgrade its own treatment plant, store its biosolids for longer, and reduce the frequency of their use as fertilizer. “It wouldn’t surprise me if in the next decade we see things changing there,” says Ilwaco Treasurer Holly Beller, who notes that the city may have to send its biowaste to Long Beach in the future if the farmland it uses gets developed for housing, another critical local need.

So Long Beach is hoping to entice municipal customers from Washington and Oregon to help cover the \$425,000 annual cost of operating its plant. “We’re looking at selling the capacity to other cities that need to process their sludge,” Glasson explains. “But we have to know what’s in their sludge before we accept it.”

Meanwhile, the city’s plant continues to churn out a steady stream of compost, which is sold most of the year (typically to construction companies that purchase in bulk) but given away to anyone during an annual spring awareness event: over two weekends in May and June, the city distributed more than 600 cubic yards to local homeowners (who welcome the freebie as a trade-off for higher utility rates) and others who came from as far as 50 miles away.

And city officials from Utah have flown in to observe the process in hopes of replicating it, Glasson says. “We’re passing along what we’ve learned to anybody who’s interested.” 

—Devon O’Neil



For more information:
longbeachwa.gov

Cityscope

Q&A

Master of Disaster

Okanogan Mayor Jon Culp has learned plenty after two terms of fighting fires, floods, and plagues.

INTERVIEW BY TED KATAUSKAS



Okanogan Mayor
Jon Culp

Your family has been in Okanogan for four generations; your grandfather served on the Okanogan Conservation District's board of supervisors, as well as on city council.

That's actually what got me involved with local government: that the average person can step up and give back to their community in that way. I started working for the Conservation District and an opening came up on city council, so I filled out an application and got appointed. That was back in 2000.

In 2002, you went to work for the Washington State Conservation Commission, which oversees all 45 conservation districts in the state. What's your role there?

I'm the water resources program manager. At the moment, we're in the middle of a drought response, because the governor just declared a drought emergency here. I coordinate with the Department of Ecology to mitigate hardships brought about by the drought.

CONTINUED ON P.12 ►



How is your city impacted by the drought?

One of our five wells is directly tied to the stream flow quantities in the Okanogan River; when the river gets to a certain level, we get a notice from the Department of Ecology to stop using that particular well. So far this year we haven't gotten to that point, but the river is going down pretty quickly... Wildfire is going to be the biggest threat to health and human safety this year. It's just hot and dry, and it doesn't take much for something to get started.

Are you thinking of the wildfires of 2014 and 2015?

We didn't have any fire come into the city limits on those, but it got a little bit Wild West: the phone goes down, and the internet goes down—it was a little bit scary. We did have a pretty catastrophic fire last year that burned on the reservation just across the river right along the edge of town. It was a Labor Day weekend, and the wind was just howling, and it was moving super-fast. So that also was pretty scary.

How did you respond as Okanogan's mayor?

I remember the first wildfire. The first thing I did was I ran down to city hall and got out the All Hazards Mitigation and Community Wildfire Protection Plan, and I opened it up to the City of Okanogan section to try and figure out what's my role in this. And all it said was, "Buy \$1 million fire truck." That's when it occurred to me that the plan needed to be rewritten.



Mayor Culp along the Okanogan River

“THE LEEVE THAT PROTECTS THE DOWNTOWN STARTED LEAKING, AND THE WHOLE COMMUNITY TURNED OUT: EVERYONE WAS FILLING SANDBAGS, HAULING SANDBAGS, PLACING SANDBAGS FOR DAYS ON END. LUCKILY, WE KEPT MOST OF THE RIVER INSIDE ITS BANKS, AND WE DIDN'T LOSE ANY STRUCTURES IN TOWN.”

What about Okanogan's water hazard: its namesake river?

The headwaters are up in Canada, and three springs ago, after a great snow year up there, super-warm temperatures came in really fast, so the river rose up into flood stage. The levee that protects the downtown started leaking, and the whole community turned out: everyone was filling sandbags, hauling sandbags, placing sandbags

for days on end. Luckily, we kept most of the river inside its banks, and we didn't lose any structures in town.

As a local leader, you must feel a bit like Moses and the 10 plagues.

The previous mayor was mayor for 13 years, and he didn't have to deal with any natural disasters. In less than half the time, if you include the pandemic, I already have had essentially four.

How was the pandemic different than those other disasters?

What made the pandemic different was the [mask] mandates. In rural Washington, as I assume it is in a lot of the country, people don't like to be told what to do.

During the Black Lives Matter protests last summer, you marched with supporters at a parade in nearby Omak. Why did you participate?

I'm a firm believer in equity and people's right to peacefully protest. I feel like it's an obligation of being a community leader that

you stand by your principles and you need to represent everybody, whether you're politically aligned with them or not. There are some people who don't have a voice, and if you're a community leader, you have to give voice to those people.

How did your friends and neighbors react to you marching?

During the march, I had people who said, "What are you doing? You're not supposed to be over there. You're supposed to be over here [with the assault rifles] protecting businesses!"

And how did you respond to that?

I just kept marching.

And now you're running for a third term. What's your motivation?

Small-town mayors are about making sure things are getting done and making sure the water flows and the toilets flush and the pool is full in the summertime. We get to spend a lot more time doing things that impact people's day-to-day lives. And that's what keeps you going. **C**

BY THE NUMBERS

Okanogan

Cityvision tracks the resilience of a scenic, snakebit central Washington community

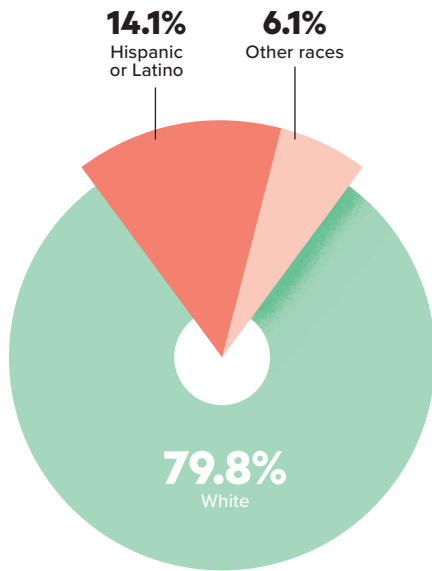
POPULATION

POPULATION DATA FROM THE 2010 US CENSUS, UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED



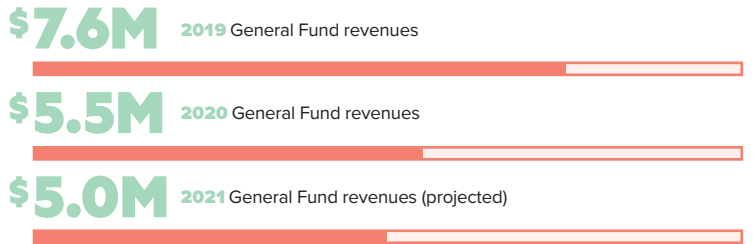
SOURCES: CENSUS.GOV

DEMOGRAPHICS



SOURCE: CENSUS.GOV

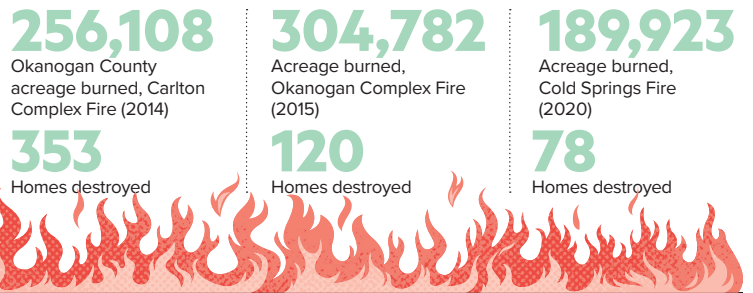
INTERNAL REVENUE



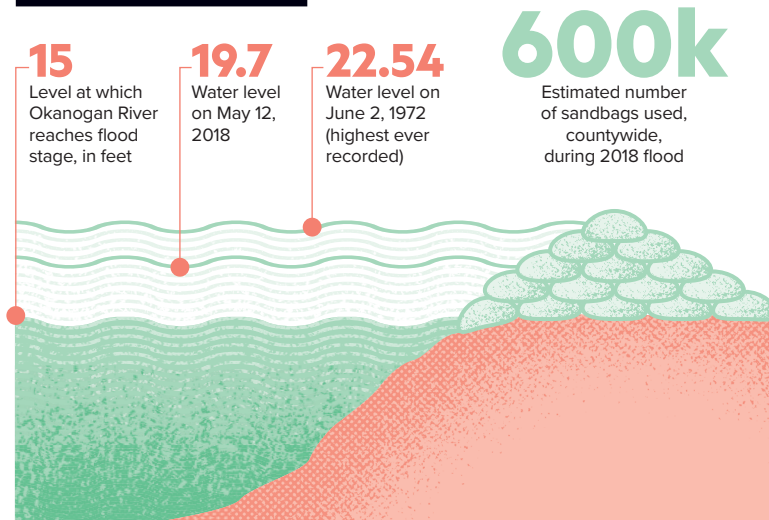
SOURCE: CITY OF OKANOGAN

FIRE LINES

SOURCE: NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP, WENATCHEE WORLD

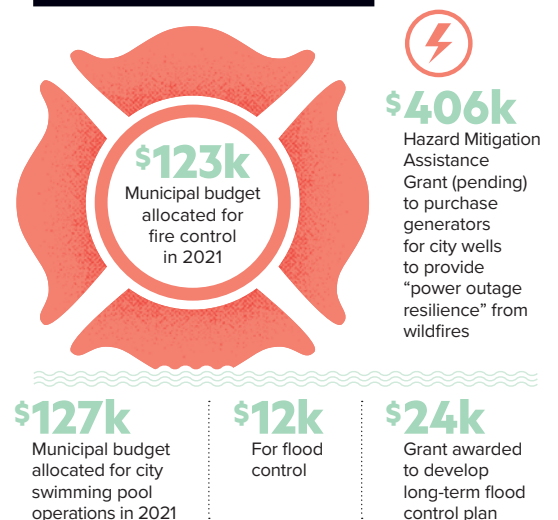


FLOOD OF MEMORY



SOURCE: OMAK CHRONICLE, SEATTLE TIMES

FACING THE ELEMENTS



SOURCE: CITY OF OKANOGAN

REALITY ISLAND

Friday Harbor taps a legacy of long-term sustainable thinking to tackle the affordable housing conundrum of a tourism-focused town.

By Ted Katauskas



IN THE TOWN OF FRIDAY HARBOR—a historic community (pop. 2,500) on the eastern shore of San Juan Island that has served as the bucolic backdrop for Hallmark Channel movies—everything revolves around the ebb and flow of water. The pace of daily life in the state’s only municipality not accessible by road is dictated by the summer schedule of the Washington State Ferries system, which conveys passengers and vehicles from Anacortes, the closest mainland city, on four vessels that arrive every two to three hours, from dawn until 1 a.m.

One of the largest, the *M/V Yakima*, which calls on Friday Harbor twice a day, carries 2,000 passengers and 144 cars and trucks; when operating at full capacity, the full fleet brings 11,361 people to Friday Harbor’s sidewalks, and 1,015 vehicles to its streets, every 24 hours. In the tourism high season, the influx stresses the quaint town’s infrastructure, and the patience of locals, to the breaking point, with bumper-to-bumper traffic snaking from the ferry landing halfway up the length of Spring Street (downtown’s mile-long primary arterial) after the ferries dock, from May through September.

After a bustling 2017, summertime congestion had become bad enough that Town Administrator Duncan Wilson proposed a—by Friday Harbor standards—radical solution: replacing the stop signs at one of Spring Street’s most notorious bottlenecks with a traffic circle.

“We put in a roundabout, and you would’ve thought there’d be rioting in the streets,” says Wilson, who was recruited to Friday Harbor from North Bend in 2011 by the town’s long-standing administrator, King Fitch, who held the position for 25 years and was revered by many locals (when Fitch announced his retirement that year, the town newspaper headlined its story “King’s Reign Nears Its End”). “This job is like walking a razor blade, because any time you suggest something new, whenever you make a decision, you always have to keep in mind the history of this place and its reluctance to change. It’s about maintaining the long-held culture here so when you improve things, you have to just tweak them ever so much.”

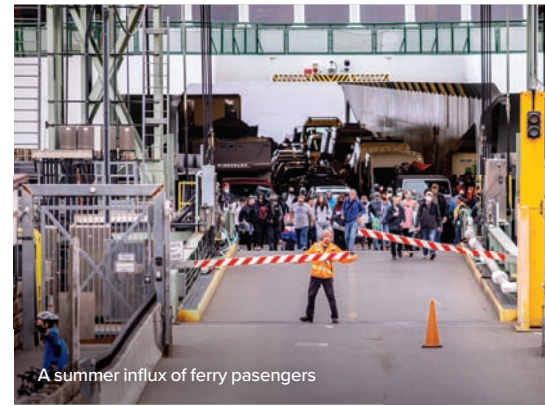
As an example, the no-frills traffic circle Wilson designed with the town engineer—inspired by an innovative roundabout he saw



Along the waterfront in central Friday Harbor



Duncan Wilson at Trout Lake, the cross-island source of Friday Harbor's water supply



A summer influx of ferry passengers



A traffic circle on Spring Street, a.k.a. "Duncan's Doughnut"

in Ireland on vacation—was built by adding torch-down plastic strips over existing pavement (allowing grocery-laden semis from the ferry to roll over it), requiring no street demolition or construction and little more than a few gallons of reflective paint and signage. Still, for months the project was the talk of the town. At the roundabout's dedication in May 2018, county officials presented Wilson with a gag gift, an inflatable seat-cushion ring referencing its local nickname—Duncan's Doughnut. Despite all the hoopla and grousing, ferry traffic flowed smoothly around it, easing congestion, so much so that last May the town added another roundabout a few blocks up the street.

"We've done an awful lot of infrastructure: we've redeveloped sidewalks, water systems, sewer systems, streets, and underground utilities—the meat-and-potatoes stuff—because my predecessor left me with some money in the bank and we went for grants," says Wilson, who plans to retire in January after a decade at his current job and a government career spanning 40 years in five cities. Still, he adds, "No matter what I think my legacy may be, it's going to get overshadowed by the fact that the roundabout I suggested was called 'Duncan's Doughnut.'"

THE MUNICIPAL HISTORY and culture of Friday Harbor, named for a Hudson's Bay Company sheepherder, has a recurring theme: fiscal restraint coupled with long-term sustainability. Three years after the town's incorporation in 1909, when the local economy revolved around a lumber mill and a salmon cannery—as well as a bustling wharf adjacent to a University of Washington marine biology field station—a well that served as the hamlet's primary source of drinking

NO MATTER WHAT I THINK MY LEGACY MAY BE, IT'S GOING TO GET OVERSHADOWED BY THE FACT THAT THE ROUNDABOUT I SUGGESTED WAS CALLED 'DUNCAN'S DOUGHNUT.'

—DUNCAN WILSON TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

water became contaminated, resulting in an outbreak of typhoid. Declaring that "the future of Friday Harbor depends on good water and sewage systems," the town council, with voter approval, adopted an ambitious plan to secure a reliable supply of water, building a dam at Trout Lake on the west side of the island and a 5.5-mile-long wood-stave pipeline that was operational within a year—a system that (after multiple upgrades) still serves as the town's primary water supply.

Some 30 years ago, long after the lumber mill and cannery closed, local leaders made a calculated bet that tourism would better sustain the economy. They funded a visitors bureau that over the decades has proved to be remarkably effective, with Friday Harbor regularly appearing on national and international lists of "Best Places" to live and visit.

Aside from a fledgling tech and research sector (anchored by UW's Friday Harbor Laboratories and Luxel Corporation, which manufactures optical filters used in NASA space telescopes), Friday Harbor's economy remains almost exclusively aligned



The town's means of connection with the rest of the state



Friday Harbor's walkable, tourist-friendly downtown



Mayor Farhad Ghatan with his piano at the Friday Harbor Grand

with tourism. High-priced retirement and vacation homes spread across San Juan Island's 55 square miles, with the square-mile Town of Friday Harbor hosting almost all of the island's tourism infrastructure, restaurants, inns, markets, and boutiques—and the expenses that come with it.

Fiscally conservative—when Wilson began serving as town administrator in 2012, he inherited a \$15 million capital reserve fund—the town, with one of the lowest property tax rates in the state and no utility tax, derives the vast majority of its \$2.5 million annual general fund revenue from the windfall it receives from sales tax. And that's driven by tourism and construction, as well as online purchases of goods unavailable on the island; per capita, Friday Harbor is one of Amazon.com's most lucrative markets. But a ferry-driven population that swells tenfold on busy summer weekends comes with its share of challenges.

"I often call us the busiest 2,500-population city in the country. Take the sewer plant, for instance," says Wilson. "The plant is actually serving 950 customers, but we have to build it and maintain it to handle the maximum capacity, which might be 25,000 people on a really big summer weekend day. Right now, we're facing a \$15 million upgrade of our sewer plant. And \$15 million is darn near the end of the world for a small town."

Heeding its culture of sustainability, the town already has made significant investments in good-for-the-planet (and the local economy) upgrades to its municipal infrastructure. After converting all of the town's streetlights to energy-efficient LED (with the help of a state grant) five years ago, in May Friday Harbor powered up a 100kW solar array (at a cost of \$579,280, 90 percent funded by state and private grants) on city-owned acreage outside the sewage treatment plant that will produce 12

percent of the electricity consumed by the plant, saving the town \$11,000 annually. With another grant, the town also upgraded the plant's pumps to energy-efficient variable-speed pumps.

Then there's biowaste, which is transported (via ferry, then highway) to the Town of La Conner, which operates a biomass plant that converts Friday Harbor's effluent into compost that's used to fertilize tulips across the Skagit Valley. And garbage: instead of sending its individual collection trucks across the Salish Sea via ferry, the town has partnered with San Juan County to build a transfer station on the island where collected trash is ferried off the island in large containers, reducing the town's carbon footprint while reaping a significant cost savings. And Friday Harbor has just supplemented one of the state's most successful municipal recycling programs with a pilot program, funded by the SC Johnson company, to add so-called "stretchy" plastic film, including bubble and shrink-wrap used in Amazon packaging, to the town's stream of recyclables.

INSPIRED BY SUCH WINS, Friday Harbor has adjusted its can-do spirit to focus on tackling the town's single greatest hurdle to achieving long-term economic viability: a dearth of affordable housing for its resident population.

"If we don't provide affordable housing for our citizens and our essential workers, we're not going to be very sustainable," says Farhad Ghatan, Friday Harbor's mayor. "This is the number one issue here. Right now, there are many good-paying jobs being offered here that cannot be filled because of the lack of housing. We hired a new community development director who searched for months to find a house for his family. He lived

for a time on a 22-foot boat down at the port. This is a guy who makes over \$100,000 a year, and it was hard to find a place to live for under a million dollars. It's brutal."

When Ghatan moved to Friday Harbor from Seattle in 1991, it wasn't difficult to find reasonably priced fixer-uppers; a contractor who specialized in historic restoration, he later purchased a three-story Victorian with a wraparound porch that was built in the 1880s by San Juan Island County's first judge. After meticulously restoring the home, Ghatan opened it in 2015 as the Friday Harbor Grand, a boutique inn referencing the 1910 Steinway B grand piano that is the centerpiece of the inn's parlor, where the mayor, a classically trained pianist, hosts evening concerts for guests and anyone from town who wanders by.

"What attracted me was the community and the way people treated each other," says Ghatan, who was elected in 2017 and is running for a second term. "I lived in the same house in Seattle for seven years, and I didn't know a single neighbor. Here, before I even closed on my first house, I knew all my neighbors."

Five years after moving to the island, Ghatan was invited to take an open position on the town's planning commission. (After subsequently serving six years as the commission's chair, he was elected to the town council in 2013, and four years later became mayor.) During his tenure with planning, in 2002 the town commissioned a study to assess the real estate market and housing needs of town residents, and the conclusion was less than uplifting.

"While the Town of Friday Harbor is the center of commerce on San Juan Island, the wealth generated thereby generally does not accrue to the residents of the town," the report concluded, noting that incomes of town residents (who primarily worked in the service industry) trailed incomes of county residents (typically vacation homeowners and retirees) by more than 30 percent. "This creates a seemingly insurmountable barrier for young people, those of lesser means and wage earners when it comes to achieving home ownership or even finding affordable rentals."

The study recommended three potential approaches to addressing this inequity, including requiring local businesses to pay a livable wage (noting that the town lacked regulatory authority enforce such a measure), relaxing zoning restrictions to allow for the construction of up to 200 units of infill housing, and providing subsidized housing for low-income residents. Led by the town council and the San Juan County Housing Advisory Commission, on which Ghatan also serves, the island has focused on these last two objectives, with a heavy lift provided by a pair of local nonprofits.

Aided by rural development grants from the USDA's Mutual Self-Help Housing program, Homes for Islanders developed plats and purchased lots in existing Friday Harbor residential neighborhoods, then provided technical assistance for low-income islanders who agreed to work 35 hours per week for 14 months to build a three-bedroom single-family home, for around \$300,000, less than half the market value of a similar home.

"This is not for everyone; it's a 14-month endurance project," says Executive Director Bill Gendron, who notes that dozens of nonprofits have replicated this model to create 50,000 units of affordable housing across the state and around the country. "Typically, people are renting, so when they move in we are making rentals available, which is kind of cool because it opens up the rental market. Still, more homes are needed."



Executive Director
Bill Gendron of
Homes for Islanders

But they won't likely be built by Homes for Islanders. In August, after completing the last 10 of 129 homes it has constructed since 1998, the nonprofit will suspend operations for at least two years due to a lack of available land.

For now, that leaves the San Juan Community Home Trust. Using funding from federal, state, county, and private sources, the Home Trust has built 41 affordably priced homes (from \$113,000 for a two-bedroom to \$212,000 for a three-to-four-bedroom) in three neighborhoods for locals with low to moderate incomes (earning from 50 to 115 percent of the area median income). Like Homes for Islanders, the Home Trust requires applicants to contribute sweat equity (a modest 50 hours) to each build, but unlike Homes for Islanders homeowners, who are free to sell their homes at market value, Home Trust homeowners must abide by a deed restriction that uses a resale formula to ensure that each home is sold at a below-market price to another income-eligible local to ensure that its inventory is "forever affordable." In addition to a fourth neighborhood of eight units, the Home Trust plans to build additional affordably priced homes in the future, thanks to a five-acre donated parcel annexed into the town in 2009.

"There's a big gap," says the nonprofit's board president, Sarah Crosby, who estimates that the island needs to add another 300 affordable units to meet existing demand. "Like any intractable problem, it's due to a complex set of issues, and you need to think about all of the contributing factors and address them in a comprehensive way."

TO THAT END, Friday Harbor’s council recently relaxed zoning ordinances to allow residents to add accessory dwelling units to existing homes, and it is studying an increase in building height to allow for the construction of three-story apartment complexes. As well, the Housing Advisory Commission in 2018 levied a 1 percent excise tax on real estate transactions to create the San Juan Home Fund, an affordable housing grant that is expected to generate \$15.2 million over 12 years.

“We have seen over 150 units of new housing in the town of Friday Harbor in the last two years,” says Ghatan. “That is huge in a town of 2,500.”

But because the island was perceived as a refuge from the pandemic—due to its isolation and community-wide adherence to social distancing measures—urbanites from Seattle and other cities, untethered from offices as teleworking became the norm, have snatched up what few existing homes remained in an already tight housing market, depleting inventory and driving island home prices ever higher: in 2019, the \$602,000 median home here already was more than 50 percent above the \$397,900 statewide median; according to MLS data in July 2021, the median home price on the island had soared to \$852,000.

So what is the ultimate solution for Friday Harbor?

“There’s no single answer; it’s looking at all options,” says Windermere real estate broker Gary Franklin, who once proposed anchoring a mothballed World War II troop ship off Friday Harbor to serve as workforce housing. “For a while people were saying affordable housing, we need more of that, but I’m a proponent of available housing. If there’s more housing supply, the prices will come down and become affordable.”

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NEW HOUSING IN THE TOWN OF FRIDAY
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—FARHAD GHATAN FRIDAY HARBOR MAYOR

Verne Howard, owner of Friday Harbor Marketplace and King’s Market (grocery stores that have been in business for four decades) and a co-owner of San Juan Island Brewing Company (opened in 2017), says he can’t afford to wait for that to happen, nor can he afford to pay wages high enough for his 180 employees to purchase market-rate real estate. His solution: buy apartments and lease them to those on his payroll as employee housing, a fringe benefit that ensures loyalty and longevity—some have been working for Howard for more than 30 years.

“Housing is a big deal,” says Howard. “It’s worse now that we’ve become a very attractive place for people to live.... I’ve been doing this for 55 years, and I’ve learned that it’s all about your employees: you take care of your employees.”

Victoria Compton, executive director of the Economic

CLEARING THE AIR

Q&A AMY SNOVER

Amy Snover, director of the University of Washington’s Climate Impacts Group, discusses how to talk publicly about—and more importantly, act upon—climate change.



You’re one of the state’s foremost “climate resilience” evangelists.

How do you define that?

Being prepared for, able to recover from, and capable of adapting to climate-related challenges.

In 2015, you co-authored the Puget Sound State of Knowledge Report. Why is it still a must-read?

Our goal was to assemble the current scientific knowledge about how climate change would affect Puget Sound, from our water to our forests, to our coasts, to our communities and public health through all kinds of issues, like erosion, flooding, heat waves, you name it. It’s an encyclopedic reference of what the current state of understanding was about how much and how fast changes would occur on the ground here in the Northwest.

The report also included examples of local governments that were already preparing for those impacts. Is there any commonality when it comes to cities proactively preparing for climate change?

What we’ve seen across communities, across the region, and across different levels of

government is that you can point to a leader who has made that decision and made that a priority of the organization or community, someone who recognizes the risk that’s coming and feels a responsibility to prepare for it.

How do you do that in a community that’s polarized around this topic?

Climate change is a stressor, something that causes problems or makes problems worse. If a community is facing droughts or fires or floods, talk about that, then talk about what you’re going to do when droughts or floods or fires become more frequent and worse. Go right to the actual issue, the thing that’s felt on the ground, and talk about how to address that.

In other words, focus on the immediate effects of climate change, but don’t dwell on the cause?

I’m not advocating that you only sit down and talk about what your community’s current problems are. I still think it’s important to have your scientific basis right underneath you while you have that conversation, because there are specific things we know about climate change. But what

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The dam at Trout Lake, scheduled for replacement in 2035

Development Council of San Juan County, firmly believes Friday Harbor will never be able to build its way out of its affordable housing conundrum. For her, the most relevant statistic isn't the median sales price of Friday Harbor's homes, but the average earnings per local job (\$38,593, 51 percent of the state average) and the fact that the figure has remained static for more than 50 years, ranking San Juan County 38th of the state's 39 counties.

"At some point you have to say, 'OK, there's a lot of people here who are doing worse than they were 30 years ago and are leaning on social safety nets,'" Compton says. "People can't afford to put their kids into childcare because they're not making enough money. People used to be able to afford a house, or certainly could afford an apartment, but now a lot of those have been turned into vacation homes. As a result, we've got people living in cars now, and we didn't used to have that as a problem."

To address the wage stagnation, the San Juan County EDC has launched a pilot project, free to locals, offering online training in high-paying professions, work that can be done from home or elsewhere on the island. Recently, a cohort of students received certification in computer-aided design, while another soon will begin coursework in cybersecurity, industries where the entry-level wage is more than double that of an island service worker.

"Once you start looking at wages, you've fixed everything," Compton says. "You don't have to have the affordable housing conversation. You don't have to have any other conversation. And what's the best way to do that in a rural community with an untrained workforce? You do that by having a long view."

FORTUNATELY FOR FRIDAY HARBOR, long-range planning is something the town does best. And like everything in Friday Harbor, the moral of this story circles back to water.

Farhad Ghatan thinks of Greg Bell, the keynote speaker who wowed him at AWC's annual conference in June, and the parable that is central to his book, *Water the Bamboo*.

"It's the most amazing parable in governance," he says. "A bamboo farmer plants his bamboo seed and starts watering it on day one. And at the end of year one, he's still watering, and the end of year three, he's still watering. He hasn't seen anything, and at year five the sprout emerges from the ground. And in 60 days, it grows 90 feet and is harvestable. That's the parallel to the work we do in government: you have to be patient. You have to keep doing what you feel is right and just keep at it."

That explains why in 2016, despite its present-day challenges, the town council voted to allocate a sizable sum from each

I'm saying is that you can be attentive to language that may push buttons and get in the way of effective conversation.

How do you do that?

I don't shy away personally from describing the state of scientific understanding about the human role in climate change and what science tells us needs to be done to slow and stop it. Where I am careful and thoughtful—and listen more than I talk—is when we're talking about what people's hopes and goals are for how to address it.

What's one thing local leaders need to consider when talking about climate change?

It's really important to understand that climate change pushes on our sore spots, and it's going to make a lot of things that really challenge us a lot harder to deal with. So actually spending time to identify what we value as communities and what we're hoping to build together or preserve together is a really important step in preparing for these impacts.

What's the priority for local budgets: investing in initiatives to fight global warming, or

infrastructure projects to protect against its impact?

Unfortunately, the choice is no longer whether you put all your eggs in the "reduce emissions" basket or the "just deal with the consequences" basket. Both are essential, and both are unavoidable.

What advice do you have for local leaders?

Do what you already have to do, which is be strategic about finding opportunities to achieve more than one thing with a decision or an investment, while making sure that building climate resilience is in the mix. We're really going to have to think hard about how we "multi-solve," how we solve for more than one problem at once.

Any last thoughts?

Climate change pulls almost every thread; it connects to all kinds of things you might not think about. What every leader can do is remind people that every decision, every investment, every policy we make right now can set us up for either climate resiliency or climate risk. Every single day, we're making decisions and investments that will determine our future vulnerability or risk to climate change.

year's budget to a capital fund for a replacement dam at Trout Lake, work that won't begin until 2035.

"We're not short-term here in our thinking," says Ghatan. "The first iteration of our water system got built a hundred years ago, and it has been looked after since then. . . . The irony is that on many other parts of this island, wells are going dry or being inundated with salt. Yet this little one-square-mile town has the necessary water infrastructure to provide service for the next 100 years." **C**

Citywise



Make certain all town records, ordinances, policies, etc., are backed up safely off-site and quickly accessible if you cannot enter your town offices or if they have been destroyed.

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22 LESSONS FROM A SMALL-TOWN MAYOR ON DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

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Survivor Strategies

Living through a catastrophe like wildfire can affect residents' mental health profoundly. To begin to help, consider these steps:

- Identify and train Disaster Case Managers, and triage your residents to get DCMs to those most in need first, but ultimately work toward assigning a DCM to everyone.
- Create public opportunities for residents to share their stories of what they experienced on the day of the disaster, and how they have been coping since, with their neighbors so everyone is heard, receives validation, and has an idea of what other people in the community are going through.
- I cannot stress enough how important this will be as you work to move forward with recovery and rebuilding efforts. Residents need to start healing emotionally and mentally before they can truly work with each other, the town government, and state and federal agencies in a positive way.
- Plan for mental health services for 2–3 years after the disaster.

COMMUNITY CARE

A small-town eastern Washington mayor advocates action now to combat natural disaster.

DAN HARWOOD MAYOR, MALDEN

A S A WHITMAN COUNTY mayor, I am reaching out to my peers across the county to share some of the things we have learned in the aftermath of the Babb Road fire (and steps the town's government should have taken prior to this disastrous event). I also cannot stress enough the importance of providing immediate and ongoing mental health care for residents and members of town government after a catastrophic event. If even one of the items listed in the attached document helps another community avoid some of the difficulties we have encountered in the past year, my time spent writing them down will have been well worth it.

I also want to encourage you to take one more step toward ensuring the safety of your town, especially given the current situation (drought conditions, record-breaking heat waves, early onset of fire season, frequent windstorms, and not enough trained firefighting personnel in most areas). Ask the landowners at the edge of your town limits to consider plowing a wide fire break around the community *now*, and commit to keeping it clear of vegetation from June through September. The Babb Road fire moved with such speed, from the time it started until it roared through Malden and Pine City, that there was no time to effectively do anything to defend the towns. This may spare you and your townspeople the terror experienced by the residents of Malden and Pine City on September 7, 2020, and the physical, mental, emotional, and financial struggles they have repeatedly endured on a weekly, if not daily, basis since.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the destruction of Malden and Pine City, it is my hope that by sharing some of our lessons learned, we can in some way help other communities.

RURAL TOWN GOVERNMENT DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

To do NOW ... BEFORE the disaster

- Figure out in advance how to quickly warn residents of a town-wide emergency without using your public warning system, as a power outage may render it useless.
- Make certain all town records, ordinances, policies, etc., are backed up safely off-site and quickly accessible if you cannot enter your town offices or if they have been destroyed.
- Collect, in advance, current contact information for residents—phone number and/or email—so the town can reach people even if they are not currently living in town if their dwelling was destroyed. Develop a way to have residents update this information annually.
- Designate an area of your website for emergency communications with residents so that when the need arises, they know in advance where to go for information. Then, post information there on a regular basis.
- Make sure town water and septic systems are secure, and develop city codes to make sure residential well caps (if applicable) are required and up to code to prevent contamination.
- Build/modify municipal structures with an eye toward fire resilience and ease of defense for firefighters, and develop or modify city codes to do the same for residential and commercial buildings.

To do AFTER the disaster

- Set up multiple ways to communicate with residents to accommodate anyone with a disability or poor/no internet or computer access.



■ Set up a system to quickly and efficiently have residents complete and return right-of-entry forms for property cleanup. When residents scatter, not having signed forms will stall your cleanup, and therefore your rebuilding efforts, for possibly the entire town, or it will prevent people from receiving government-provided debris cleaning and removal services at no cost.

■ There are different kinds of FEMA disaster declarations: Individual Assistance and Public Assistance. Know what each one means as far as what kind

DESIGNATE AN AREA OF YOUR WEBSITE FOR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS WITH RESIDENTS SO THAT WHEN THE NEED ARISES, THEY KNOW IN ADVANCE WHERE TO GO FOR INFORMATION. THEN, POST INFORMATION THERE ON A REGULAR BASIS.

of aid the town and its residents are eligible to receive, and especially note the differences.

■ Be careful about disturbing too much soil during cleanup, and know what kind of building activity is restricted by NEPA and SEPA evaluations, as these will need to be done in order to receive certain grant funding from the state or federal governments for rebuilding infrastructure and municipal facilities.

■ *Starting the day after the disaster*, make mental health care a priority—not only for your residents, but also for yourself, your staff, and councilmembers, as you will have many difficult, emotionally draining days ahead. See “Survivor Strategies,” at left, for more. **C**

Malden Mayor Dan Harwood composed this open letter, including the two-part disaster preparedness action plan, to his county peers on July 13, 2021. Cityvision reprints a lightly modified version here for the benefit of small towns across the state and elsewhere.



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Sizable Task

Compliance deadlines for the Clean Buildings Standard vary by space, but they are arriving quickly if your facility requires substantial upgrades.

- Buildings greater than 220,000 square feet must comply by June 1, 2026.
- Buildings greater than 90,000 square feet must comply by June 1, 2027.
- Buildings greater than 50,000 square feet must comply by June 1, 2028.

GETTING CLEAN

How municipal buildings can meet Washington's new Clean Buildings Standard

BONNIE FRYE HEMPHILL UMC, INC

IN 2019 GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE signed HB 1257 into law. Also known as the Clean Building law, this legislation gave the Department of Commerce (DOC) authority to develop and implement energy performance standards for nonresidential buildings greater than 50,000 square feet in floor area, with the intent of encouraging more energy-efficient structures and reducing costs and pollution from fossil fuel use.

Existing nonresidential buildings are among Washington State's primary consumers of energy, and together they produce over a quarter of our state's total carbon pollution. The new Clean Buildings Standard provides both incentives to encourage early adoption and penalties for noncompliance. The law applies to both public and privately owned buildings.

When and how will the Clean Buildings Standard take effect?

Many buildings will need several years of dedicated improvements to comply with the law on schedule, including a year's worth of data showing compliance. Compliance with the Clean Buildings Standard is tiered by a building's amount of conditioned space, but deadlines begin in 2026 (see "Sizable Task," at left). Sound far away? There are incentives for early adoption and substantial penalties for failure to comply.

Building managers should start now by benchmarking a facility's Energy Use Intensity (EUI) against the building's statutory EUI target (EUI_t). Benchmarking puts you in position to apply for early-adopter incentives, seek low-cost options toward timely compliance, or even give you enough time to implement substantial infrastructure upgrades if needed ahead of your compliance deadline.

Earn incentives, avoid penalties

The Early Adopter Incentive fund is a limited pool of \$75 million dollars to be allocated rapidly on a first-come, first-served basis. The incentive for individual buildings is \$0.85 per square foot and is additional to other energy efficiency incentives through utilities and any grants your building may also be eligible to receive.

Start your planning now: buildings that fail to meet compliance with the Clean Buildings Standard by their statutory deadlines will face a *substantial penalty* of up to \$5,000 + \$1 per square foot.

Utilize the Energy Savings

Performance Contracting program

Washington State administers an Energy Savings Performance Contracting (ESPC) program for public entities. This program saves you internal resources by supplementing your staff with contractors from agency-vetted firms. The ESPC process delivers guaranteed energy savings and equipment performance, all at a guaranteed cost for your public facility. ESPC is easy, effective, and affordable.

Simplify the business case, and benchmark your energy use today

Do you know your building's benchmark EUI target? Add life to your building, cut energy bills, take the lead on green jobs in our region, avoid penalties, and earn incentives. Take action now for your public building to meet the challenge of Washington's new Clean Buildings Standard. **C**

Bonnie Frye Hemphill is Director of Policy & Partnerships at UMC, Inc. She brings 15 years of experience in climate and clean-energy policy to drive UMC's public engagement and strategic alliances with a broad range of regional leaders in the built environment.



Mark your calendars



5 great conferences

Member Expo
October 13-14, 2021

City Action Days
February 10-11, 2022

Healthy Worksite Summit
March 9-10, 2022

Labor Relations Institute
May 4-6, 2022

AWC Annual Conference
June 21-24, 2022



wacities.org



BE PREPARED

Anticipating climate-influenced events and managing risk

EXCERPT FROM THE AWC CLIMATE RESILIENCE HANDBOOK

A **DAPTATION STRATEGIES** generally focus on risks associated with climate-influenced events and a changing environment. These events can have dramatic impacts on public health and safety and pose a threat to human life, infrastructure, and property. Such events can significantly impact city budgets for operations, capital, and infrastructure.

Fortunately, most of these events can be anticipated and planned for. Data and information identifying risks are readily available and frequently updated. These data should serve as an essential platform for adaptation planning and emergency preparedness.

Assessing risks involves first identifying risks for a city, and then analyzing potential impacts over time using best

available science. The University of Washington Climate Impacts Group (CIG) suggests three key components needed to accomplish this:

- **Educate:** Raise awareness and understanding of climate risks by educating key decision-makers.
- **Analyze:** Use science and local information to assess risks and likely climate impacts that matter to your city.
- **Act and adjust:** Take multisectoral, adaptive, responsive, and flexible actions to manage and address those risks, then learn and adjust as needed.

For example, a city assessing risks from sea-level rise would likely follow these steps:

- **Identify the risk.** Based on best available science, projected sea-level rise is expressed in terms of probabilities. Scenarios range from approximately 8 inches to approximately 2 feet by 2050, and they vary for different locations in the state. The low and high estimates are low percentage probabilities on either end of a bell curve. However, the middle range at the top of the curve—1 foot of sea level rise by 2050—has a 50 percent probability.
- **Identify risk variables.** Based on best available science, what factors might modify sea-level projections for your city? Factors to consider include soil uplift or subsidence, flooding, or estimations of tidal influences that may impact severity of risk and local variability.
- **Identify what is at risk, and develop response scenarios.** What is at risk from sea-level rise in your city (e.g., population centers, parks, beaches, water or wastewater treatment facilities)? What does the science reveal regarding worst-case scenarios, such as king tides during flooding and storm events and the estimated timing of such events? What are the scenarios, options, timing, and costs for responding?
- **Formulate and implement a response.** What operational, regulatory, and/or capital measures will be considered and taken, and how will they be paid for? What emergency planning is required? How will decision-makers and the public be educated and informed?



CITY 101



Primary Source

The National Climate Assessment is a publication of the United States Global Change Research Program, comprising 13 federal agencies including NOAA, NASA, EPA, DOT, DOD, Commerce, Interior, and others. In the Fourth National Climate Assessment, “Chapter 24: Northwest,” often referred to as NCA-24, focuses specifically on Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

LOCAL FLOODING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSLIDES WILL OCCUR MORE FREQUENTLY AND WILL FACTOR INTO FUTURE PREPAREDNESS FOR CITIES.

■ **Monitor and evaluate the efficacy of the response and evolving climate risks.** Update response as necessary, incorporating the best available data and information.

These five steps are generally applicable for assessing and responding to all of the risk factors associated with climate change. Please note that risk factors are dynamic; it is essential to integrate best available science into this work and to monitor and update these efforts.

What follows is a description of two common types of risks and challenges associated with a changing climate and climate-influenced events.

Surface water management

Increasing frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events will require additional surface water management capacity. Such events are projected to increase under all climate scenarios, particularly for areas west of the Cascade Mountain range. According to the NCA-24 (see “Primary Source,” at right), “Average winter precipitation is expected to increase . . . and extreme events, like heavy rainfall associated with atmospheric rivers, are also anticipated to occur more often.”

In response to surface water challenges, cities are incorporating nature in the form of “green infrastructure” or “green and gray” infrastructure. Such approaches incorporate nature-based solutions with more traditional engineering approaches.

Green infrastructure strategies can complement legacy systems, taking some of the burden off of pipes, pumps, and treatment facilities. These systems—such as bioswales, rain gardens, permeable pavements, green roofs, infiltration planters, and rainwater harvesting systems—can also provide

additional water resources and can be designed to meet different needs. At larger scales, the preservation and restoration of natural landscapes such as forests, floodplains, and wetlands are also critical components of green infrastructure.

Flooding and landslides

As climate changes, snowpack decreases, and heavy rainfall events become more frequent, local flooding and associated landslides will occur more frequently and will factor into future preparedness for cities. Areas with streams, drainage, slopes, and soil profiles indicating potential instability and greater risk should be monitored, particularly during periods of intense rain events.

The geology of the Pacific Northwest is complex, shaped by plate tectonics, volcanoes, and glacial recession. Different geological areas or zones are more prone to landslides resulting from slope failure, mudflows, debris flows, and rockfalls. Much of the state, and in particular western Washington, is characterized by layers of sediment including sandy soils, clay, and gravel. When soils become saturated due to rain and storm events, the moisture serves as a lubricant. The layers of soil become less stable and more susceptible to slope failure, leading to landslides.

Rainfall events are projected to increase in frequency and intensity, bringing periods of heavy precipitation. These events will result in increased flooding and saturated soils, contributing to more frequent landslides. The risk of landslides can increase even further after fire events where vegetation and root systems have been damaged, reducing soil and slope stability. Landslide risks can have major impacts on development and infrastructure such as roads and railways. [C](#)

*AWC’s recently released **Climate Resilience Handbook** provides basic information, resources, references, and examples regarding climate change and climate action planning, as well as hazard mitigation planning due to climate change. Find it at wacities.org.*

Cityscape

Trees, brush, and property burn throughout the night during the 2015 Okanogan Complex Fire, the largest, most destructive wildfire in Washington history.



The Heat Is On

Washington communities don't wait for the pot to boil as they pursue a sustainable future in a time of climate change.

ON A SWELTERING summer afternoon in July 1941, the temperature in the City of Seattle hit 100 degrees Fahrenheit for the first time since record-keeping began in 1870. Exactly 80 summers later, a weather phenomenon known as a heat dome (a blanket of sinking hot air) nearly strangled the Emerald City in a suffocating embrace that lasted for three days: after 48 hours of triple-digit misery, on June 28, 2021, the temperature in downtown Seattle soared to 108 degrees—eclipsing 100-degree days in 1955, 1994, and even 2009, when the temperature soared to 103 degrees, the previous record.

The heat caused extraordinary conditions and provoked extraordinary responses. Pavement buckled on stretches of Interstate 5. Road crews sprayed drawbridges with cold water to prevent them from sticking shut as steel expanded. Amazon's downtown HQ, all but deserted since the dawn of the pandemic, filled with WFH refugees seeking the solace

of air conditioning (an amenity found in just of 44 percent Seattle homes).

"It's a stunning shift, even in government," Mayor Jenny Durkan's chief of staff told *The New York Times*. "We have to fundamentally shift how we think about infrastructure here—roads, homes, and office buildings."

For Washington's largest city, the least air-conditioned of the nation's 25 largest metro areas, that fundamental shift includes retrofitting libraries and other public spaces with AC. In Friday Harbor, it entails investing in a future dam rebuild to make sure its water supply lasts another 100 years. In Okanogan, it means updating emergency response plans to protect citizens from the recurring threat of wildfires. Whatever their specific circumstances, municipalities around the state recognize that preserving their communities requires adapting to changes they can't afford to ignore. **C**

ZERO WASTE

WM PHOENIX OPEN Sustainability in Action

When it's over, after the last putt falls, the real work continues at the WMPO. Every plate, cup and napkin, each bottle, fork, and morsel of leftover food is recycled, composted, donated or used to produce green energy. **Nothing is wasted.**

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