



OP-ED

## Infrastructure Investments Essential to Supporting our Community

Mayor Barb Tolbert

Over the last few months, we have been sharing the City's strategy to grow smart as we plan for new industries and new population. Part of this strategy has been a focus on investing in essential infrastructure and encouraging support service industries.

Without question, our primary focus has been on the necessary infrastructure to fuel our community's economic growth and provide a better future for all our residents. All businesses depend on a network of infrastructure for their daily operations: to get raw materials in, to deliver their goods to market, to get their employees to their place of employment, and to connect with existing and potential customers. This includes the common infrastructure we think of: roads, water, wastewater, stormwater systems, electricity, telephone, and internet.

One of our highest priorities for infrastructure is roadways. Roadways don't just move goods and services to market, they also connect households to higher quality opportunities for employment, healthcare, and education. In your life and in business, time is money. That is why we have focused on improving existing roads and adding capacity.

In 2015, we successfully obtained funding for the widening of 172<sup>nd</sup> Street NE (a state highway) from the Washington State Legislature. This project is currently under design and set to be constructed in 2021-2023. While the construction is not occurring as soon as we would like, we are greatly appreciative of the investment of \$39 million in state funds to complete the project.

This June, we will be installing a temporary signal at the intersection of SR-530 and Smokey Point Boulevard. The signal will remain in place until permanent intersection traffic control improvements are made, likely a roundabout.

We have also constructed two new roads, Airport Boulevard and Arlington Valley Road, to help increase roadway capacity in key locations to take pressure off highly traveled roadways. We have worked with new developments to construct additional roadways to further reduce this pressure, such as the construction of 169<sup>th</sup> Street NE and 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to build secondary access points through the Smokey Point commercial area. Each of these investments include trails too, and we have worked to preserve our existing roadways with the work of our Transportation Benefit District. This voter approved funding source has allowed us to preserve and reconstruct 42% of the initial roadways identified, with an additional set of roadways to be reconstructed and preserved in 2019.

Underground, we work to ensure we have adequate capacity in our water, wastewater, and stormwater systems. The City has changed how it approaches this work, ensuring that the work is planned with our road improvements. This planning prevents tearing up newly repaved roads. We have also worked with Snohomish County PUD to increase electricity capacity in the area, and with local communications companies such as Comcast, to provide fiber optic networks in the Arlington and Marysville areas.

Our focus has not just been on roads, water, wastewater, stormwater, electricity, and communications. We have also been working to bring new retail and dining options, as well as service industries, such as

healthcare, child care, cleaning services, financial services, and access for those in need to human services.

To help bring new retail and dining establishments, and support service industries to Arlington, the City has engaged the services of Buxton Corporation. High on the list of requests the City has made of Buxton, is additional grocery options. This effort by Buxton is in its infancy and will not just help recruit new businesses, but will provide existing businesses with information to understand what consumers are buying and where to grow and expand their businesses.

With the establishment of the Arlington Community Resource Center and the outreach team partnership with Marysville and Snohomish County, we have greatly increased the access to human services right here in Arlington. Just five years ago, if someone were in need in our community, they would need to visit multiple locations throughout Snohomish County, taking days to get assistance. Now, with a short trip to the resource center, someone in need can gain access to the services they need in just hours.

Creating infrastructure helps provide economic equality in our community. Without these critical investments, job growth and the ability to provide a wide range of housing will shrink. We must continue these investments to keep our existing businesses, and attract the new businesses that will employ our future generations, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, to the great city we call home.

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