

Cityvision

THE ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON CITIES MAGAZINE

PLAY IT FORWARD

Cities and towns embrace outdoor recreation to advance broader community goals





SUSTAINABLE CITIES, FOR TOMORROW®

There are bold plans for the future of recycling in Washington — a major shift in how programs are designed and funded. What we know for certain is that the years ahead will be a time of change.

How will EPR change the landscape for your city? Who do you want in your corner, advocating for your residents and businesses?

WM is the largest recycler in North America and a leader in recycling technology. We are also experts in education and outreach — innovative strategies that result in stronger recycling programs. Today and looking forward, no matter what changes are in store, WM has the expertise to deliver for your city.

Looking for expert guidance to confidently navigate this time of change? Let's talk.

Tami Yager | Director, Public Sector Solutions | tyager@wm.com
wmnorthwest.com | sustainability.wm.com



CITYVISION MAGAZINE VOL. 17 / NO. 1

President
Amy Ockerlander
Mayor, Duvall

Vice President
Fred Brink
*Mayor Pro Tem,
West Richland*

Secretary
Jon Nehring
Mayor, Marysville

Past President
Betsy Wilkerson
*Council President,
Spokane*

Large City Representative
John Hines
Councilmember, Tacoma

AWC CEO
Deanna Dawson

CITYVISION STAFF
Editor
Brian Parry

Contributing Editors
Gabrielle Byrne,
Candice Holcombe

Published in
conjunction with
SagaCity Media Inc.

Founder & President
Nicole Vogel

Advertising Sales
Carol Cummins

VP, Omnichannel Sales
Megan Holcombe

Managing Editor
Ted Katauskas

Art Director
Anne Reeser

Director, Custom Editorial
Allyson Wilinski

Production Director
Scott Weber

Contributing Artists
Nate Bullis,
Kim Fetrow,
Chona Kasinger



**Association of
Washington Cities Inc.**
1076 Franklin St. SE
Olympia, WA 98501
360-753-4137
800-562-8981
Fax: 360-753-0149
wacities.org

**AWC BOARD
OF DIRECTORS**

Nancy Backus
Mayor, Auburn

Carl Florea
Mayor, Leavenworth

Brett Gailey
Mayor, Lake Stevens

Micki Harnois
*Councilmember,
Rockford*

Jillian Henze
*Councilmember,
Waitsburg*

Amy Howard
*Deputy Mayor,
Port Townsend*

Rich Huebner
WCMA President

Julia Johnson
Mayor, Sedro-Woolley

Marla Keethler
Mayor, White Salmon

Stephanie Lucash
WCMA Past President

Matthew Lundh
Mayor, Cle Elum

Josh Penner
Mayor, Orting

Ed Prince
Councilmember, Renton

Maritza Rivera
Councilmember, Seattle

Dee Roberts
Mayor, Raymond

Dan Strauss
Councilmember, Seattle

Ty Stober
*Councilmember,
Vancouver*

Wendy Weiker
*Councilmember,
Mercer Island*

Ben Wick
*Councilmember,
Spokane Valley*

Zack Zappone
*Councilmember,
Spokane*



We all come into public office with different goals and aspirations, but ultimately, we are all seeking to make our cities and towns the best possible places to live, work, and play.

This issue of *Cityvision* magazine focuses on the *play*. More specifically, the importance of recreational spaces and activities to enhance quality of life, foster community connections, promote wellness, and stimulate economic growth in our urban areas.

Whether it involves the local pool, a community park, wellness activities, or hosting a major sporting event, this issue showcases examples of cities and towns embracing outdoor recreation to advance broader community goals.

Read the story of how pickleball got its start in Washington and how it's making noise, and a growing impact, all over the state. See how cities are finding solutions to keep their swimming pools operational despite aging infrastructure and regulatory obstacles. Explore the economic and community benefits of hosting high-profile sporting events. Learn how public spaces like parks and plazas can promote downtown revitalization, serving as economic catalysts and

fostering a welcoming environment that encourages people to return and engage.

It's not only *after* recreational spaces are built that they bring our communities together. In many cases, the shared desire to preserve or improve a cherished park or plot of land can itself motivate community activism—and offer an opportunity to engage with our residents to build the future we envision together.

As leaders in our cities and towns, we have the unique opportunity to guide community investments that improve the quality of life for generations.

I hope you find inspiration in this issue that helps you elevate your community, enhance civic pride, and encourage residents to get outside and enjoy every corner of our beautiful state and our 281 cities and towns.

Amy Ockerlander

Amy Ockerlander
Mayor, Duvall

Cityvision

Summer 2025

1 WELCOME NOTE

5 CITYBEAT

Creative ways cities are funding the construction and upkeep of municipal pools; the payoff of being an Ironman host city; why some cities consider bike parks and pump tracks to be critical infrastructure.

11 CITYSCOPE

West Richland Mayor Pro Tem Fred Brink on prioritizing outdoor recreation with the needs of a rapidly growing city.

14 feature

COURT ADVANTAGE

How the state's official sport (pickleball) is driving economic development in the community and beyond.

23 CITYWISE

A state leader's role in the evolution of a recreation craze; why public spaces matter when it comes to downtown revitalization; how wellness programs impact the bottom line.

29 CITYSCOPE

Lessons learned from a pioneer matriarch who established Washington's first municipal park.

West Richland Mayor Pro Tem Fred Brink articulates his city's strategy for

BALANCED GROWTH.

P. 11





Recognized for a commitment to employee health.

Access support | Make a difference | Reap rewards

123 WellCities are celebrating healthier, more productive employees, and a 2% premium discount on their 2026 medical premiums.

Congratulations 2025 WellCities!



Aberdeen
 Airway Heights
 Algona
 Anacortes
 Arlington
 Auburn
 Bainbridge Island
 Battle Ground
 Benton-Franklin Council of Governments
 Black Diamond
 Bonney Lake
 Bothell
 Buckley
 Burien
 Burlington
 Cascade Water Alliance
 Chelan
 Cheney
 Clyde Hill
 Colfax
 College Place
 Colville
 Concrete
 Coulee Dam
 Covington
 Davenport
 Des Moines
 DuPont
 Duvall
 East Wenatchee
 Eatonville
 Edgewood
 Edmonds

Electric City
 Enumclaw
 Ferndale
 Fife
 Fircrest
 Friday Harbor
 Gig Harbor
 Hoquiam
 Issaquah
 Kenmore
 Kennewick
 Kitsap Regional Library
 Kitsap Transit
 Lacey
 Lake Forest Park
 Lake Stevens
 Lakewood
 Liberty Lake
 Long Beach
 Longview
 LOTT Clean Water Alliance
 Lynden
 Lynnwood
 Maple Valley
 Mason County Emergency Communications
 Medical Lake
 Mercer Island
 Mill Creek
 Milton
 Moses Lake
 Mountlake Terrace
 Mount Vernon
 Mukilteo Water & Wastewater District
 Mukilteo
 Newcastle
 NORCOM 911
 Normandy Park
 North Bend
 Northeast Tri County Health District
 Northwest Clean Air Agency
 Oak Harbor
 Okanogan
 Olympia
 Olympic Region Clean Air Agency
 Orting

Pacific
 Pierce County Library System
 Pierce Transit
 Port Angeles
 Port Orchard
 Port Townsend
 Pullman
 Sammamish
 Sammamish Plateau Water & Sewer District
 SeaTac
 Seattle Convention Center
 Sedro-Woolley
 Sequim
 Shelton
 Shoreline
 Skagit Transit
 Snohomish
 Snoqualmie
 South Sound 911
 Spokane Regional Transportation Council
 Spokane Valley
 Stanwood
 Steilacoom
 Sultan
 Sumner
 Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
 Thurston 911
 Timberland Regional Library
 Toledo
 Toppenish
 Tumwater
 Union Gap
 University Place
 Valley Communications Center
 Valley View Sewer District
 Walla Walla
 Washington Cities Insurance Authority
 Washougal
 Wenatchee
 West Richland
 Whatcom Transportation Authority
 Woodinville Water District
 Woodinville
 Yakima Valley Conference of Governments
 Yelm

The AWC Employee Benefit Trust's WellCity designation recognizes employers that meet six best practice standards for employee health promotion. wacities.org/wellcity



AWC Member Pooling Programs

Dive into safety
and the power
of pooling!

wacities.org/MPP



RMSA is AWC's
property & liability
coverage solution

wacities.org/RMSA



security | stability | service



Citybeat

Open Swim

Cities are finding creative ways to fund the construction and upkeep of municipal pools—critical community infrastructure that expands the definition of an essential service.

BY JENNIFER KRAZIT

THE CITY OF KENNEWICK knows that the 8,000-10,000 people who visit its public pool each summer are swimming on borrowed time.

Kenneth Serier Memorial Pool, an outdoor recreational facility that includes a 25-yard, six-lane pool for lap swimming, a 13-foot-deep dive pool, and a small wading pool for children, was originally opened in 1955 and last renovated in 1987. About two years ago, the city switched from using potentially hazardous chlorine gas to chlorine tablets to disinfect its water—one of the last communities in the state to do so—but it still has to institute 30-minute breaks between large swim sessions to test and adjust the chemicals manually, unlike more modern pools that can adjust chlorine levels in near real-time. And much of the core piping and other infrastructure is decades old, leaving the pool vulnerable to a catastrophic failure that could take the facility out of commission.

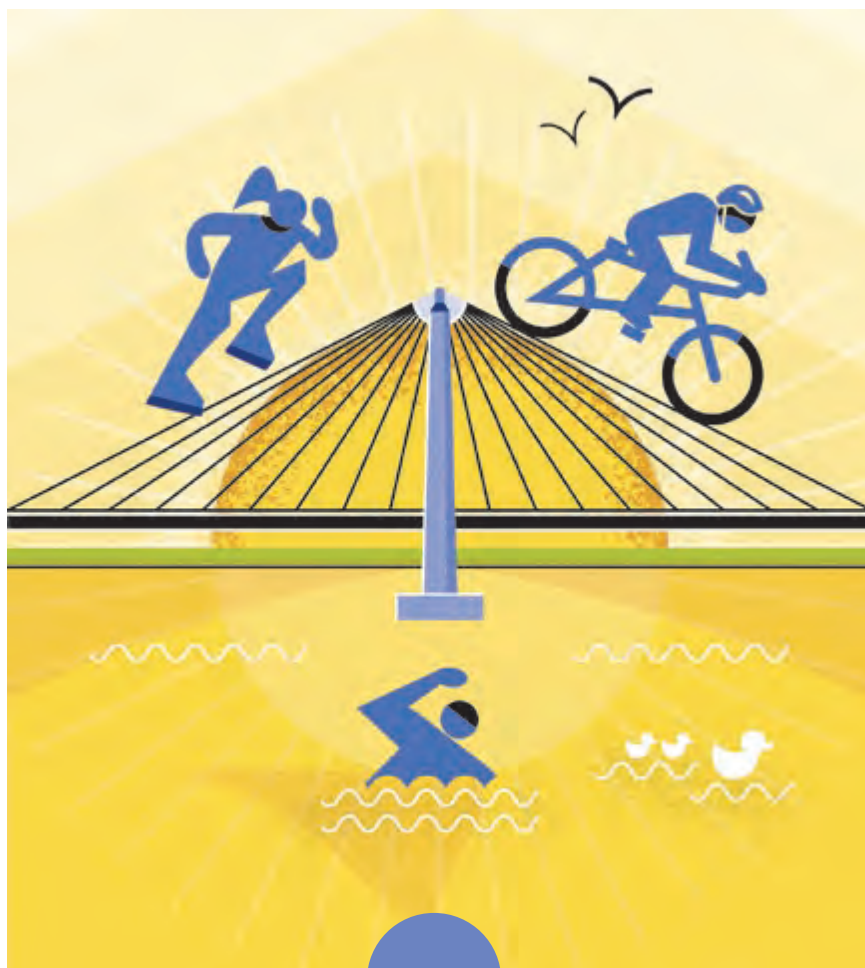
“We’re approaching the useful lifespan of the pool, and you judge that based on the amount of maintenance and fixes that need to go into it compared to what you would need to engage in a new pool design,” says Nick Farline, Parks, Recreation & Facilities Director for the City of Kennewick.

Adding a bit of urgency to the situation is HB 1684. The proposed legislation (which stalled this session) would bring the state’s municipal pool codes in line with national standards, but it would also mean that if Kennewick were to make any modifications to the pool, it would lose its grandfathered-in status and would have to make significant, costly upgrades to bring the facility up to code.

And then there’s the fact that tastes have changed. When Kennewick’s pool was built 70 years ago, having a simple “rectangular body of water” was perfectly fine, says Farline. But today users expect more from a community pool than

CONTINUED ON P.10 ►

TOOLKIT ► THE ECONOMICS OF TRIATHLON HOSTING WELLNESS PAYS ► TABULATING THE BENEFITS OF WELLNESS PROGRAMS FRESH IDEA ► INVESTING IN BIKE PARKS



TOOLKIT

Tri and Tri Again

How hosting a triathlon has yielded big dividends for the Tri-Cities.

BY KAYA WILLIAMS

WANT TO KNOW HOW luring a big-name triathlon to town might impact the local economy? Just ask Kevin Lewis. The president and CEO of Visit Tri-Cities says last year's Ironman 70.3 debut in Richland brought roughly 10,000 visitors to the area—about 2,500 of them athletes—and that more than half of them were first-time visitors. Those visitors came from 45 states and 20 countries, and because they all needed a place to stay, they filled hotel rooms not only in Richland, Kennewick, and Pasco, but in cities farther afield. That demand drove up the average daily

rate for accommodations, leading to a 59% boost in hotel revenue from the same weekend one year prior. Together, all those athletes, supporters, crews, and spectators spent around \$7.5 million while attending the event.

But that's not the way Lewis really likes to frame it. "An event like an Ironman does much more for your community than just the economic impacts of it," he says. "It goes deeper. It gets into the heart of people."

A full Ironman, at 140.6 miles, includes a 2.4-mile swim, a 112-mile bike ride, and a 26.2-mile run. An Ironman 70.3 event,

like the one Visit Tri-Cities hosted last fall, cuts each of those distances in half—still a major feat of strength and endurance.


"Athletes that come for this event are obviously dedicated, committed to overcoming difficult things," Lewis adds. "And so they bring that passion, dedication, and determination into your community, and they put it on display."

So while Visit Tri-Cities paid Ironman a host fee knowing there would be some financial rewards, that wasn't the only, or even primary, reason the visitors bureau decided to invest in the event. The Tri-Cities' proximity to the Columbia River and Washington's wine country made it a prime location for a swim-bike-run combination and, Lewis says, "the community was ready for it.... Everywhere you go in the world, you've heard of Ironman." And that name recognition comes with opportunity. "You get to demonstrate the capabilities of your community," he adds. "Can you pull something like this off?"

The answer, in this case, was a resounding "yes," thanks in large part to collaboration and preparation. Athletes ranked the competition one of "the most recommended" Ironman 70.3 events in North America." And Chris Waite, director of Richland's Parks and Public Facilities department, says he heard over and over that it "didn't feel like a first-year event," because organizers were so "dialed in." The department was closely involved in the planning process, offering both expertise and enthusiasm.

Still, he stresses, there's room for improvement. Despite signage, mailers, an interactive map, and an outreach campaign, Lewis says "there were some frustrations" about road closures and traffic. When the event reprises this year, organizers are leaning into a "grassroots approach," going door to door to make sure businesses and neighbors are aware of the impacts and the purpose behind the event.

For Lewis, this isn't just about bringing athletes to the Tri-Cities. It's about those athletes sharing the Tri-Cities with the world.

"They literally leave their blood, sweat, and tears in your soil—that's their contribution to you," Lewis says. And, in turn, "they take a part of this place back with them, wherever they go. They've accomplished something here that they will take with them for the rest of their life." 



WELLNESS PAYS

Investing in wellness activities and programs can greatly benefit the overall health of your municipal workforce. Healthy employees are better able to focus on the needs of the community and tend to be more present, engaged, and productive.

The AWC Trust has a long-standing commitment to overall wellness that improves health outcomes—and protects your bottom line. The Trust's WellCity program acknowledges members who meet or exceed specific workplace health and wellness benchmarks, and the benefits are clear in the numbers.

264

Number of cities, towns, and municipal jurisdictions that are members of the AWC Trust

85

Percentage of employees of Trust-insured jurisdictions who work at WellCities

19.3

Percentage saved by WellCities on prescription drugs

13

Percentage by which medical claims are lower in WellCities

11.4

Percentage by which hospital admissions are lower in Well Cities

2

Percent discount WellCities earn on medical premiums for employees

\$37 million +

Amount Well Cities have saved on employee medical premiums since 2012

Source: Association of Washington Cities

FRESH
IDEA

PUMP PRIMER

Investments in community cycling fuel local economic development, and civic pride.

BY KAYA WILLIAMS

A BIKE SKILLS PARK in Castle Rock started with a middle schooler's request, then flourished with the help of a seasoned mountain biker. Another track in North Bend grew out of a DIY project built by local riders. And in the tiny town of Wilkeson, local kids helped advocate for a park for skateboards, bikes, and scooters. If there's one thing that ties these community assets together, it's how leaders listened to and involved local riders.

COMMUNITY BUY-IN AT NORTH BEND

ON A PUMP TRACK, bikers don't have to pedal: They can just pump their arms and maneuver their handlebars to get enough momentum. Some riders had already built some of their own features, including berms, undulating bumps, and jumps, in North Bend's Torguson Park—a "scrappy, in-the-backyard type of thing"—when the city got involved, says Mike McCarty, planning manager for the city's Community and Economic Development department.

The idea for something more substantial came from those riders, too, McCarty says. "Can we make this into a formal facility, build it up, and make it a community pride thing?" The result: A 35,000-square-foot park for beginners to advanced riders. A partnership with the Si View Metropolitan Park District and a grant from King County helped North Bend make the vision a reality, and those same riders who contributed to the design process now donate their time and labor to maintain features.

GETTING THE YOUTH ON BOARD


THE SKATE PARK in Wilkeson is one of the few places where local youth can hang out without needing a ride in a car. The park is fair game for just about anything self-powered with wheels, including bikes, scooters, and skateboards, and it's known for its giant "bacon and eggs" feature, designed by artist John Hilding and the company Grindline Skateparks to look just like a breakfast skillet. It's become something of a visitor attraction as well as a local haunt, says town clerk Marie Wellock.

Community contributions—from financial donations to volunteer labor—plus support from Grindline and a state grant made the project possible, according to Wellock. She attributes much of that success to the most frequent users of the park: the kids themselves. "If you can get the youth on board with it, they won't let their parents forget that they want this to happen," Wellock says.

IT TAKES A CHAMPION

THOUSANDS OF volunteer hours helped build the Castle Rock Bike Skills Park on four acres of city property near the Cowlitz River. It began as a BMX spot, then evolved into a pump track with many other features, thanks in large part to the ideas and contributions of avid local biker Jim LeMonds and his fellow riders.

"It takes a champion" like LeMonds to bring a project to fruition, says David Vorse, the city's public works director. It also helps when city leaders see the bigger-picture benefits, like how quality of life improvements can support the economic sustainability of a community.

This bike park, and the way it came to be, is a part of that philosophy. "When you have people that will give back to their community," he says, "everybody feels very, very proud of what gets done." 



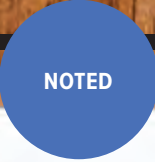
For more information:

northbendwa.gov; townofwilkeson.com; ci.castle-rock.wa.us

SUMMER 2025

CITYVISION MAGAZINE

7



WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

Park & Recreation Districts and Park & Recreation Service Areas have different powers and revenues are voter-approved and limited to six years. See mrsc.org for a comparison.

Swimming pools and aquatic facilities are a common use of the funding.

RCW 35.61.010 Creation-Territory included.

A **metropolitan park district** may be created for the management, control, improvement, maintenance, and acquisition of parks, parkways, boulevards, and **recreational facilities**. A **metropolitan park district** may include territory located in portions or all of one or more cities or counties, or **one or more cities and counties**, when created or enlarged as provided in this chapter.

Park districts are a way to fund parks with dedicated resources. The original statute limited authority to first class cities, and it expanded to all cities and counties in 2002.

Tacoma created the first metro park district in 1907. Now there are 23 districts in the state.

RCW 35.61.050 Composition of board-Election of commissioners-Terms-Vacancies.

(1) The resolution or petition submitting the **ballot proposition** shall designate the composition of the board of metropolitan park commissioners from among the alternatives provided under subsections (2) through (4) of this section. The ballot proposition shall clearly describe the designated composition of the board.

(2) The commissioners of the district may be selected by election, in which case at the same election at which the proposition is submitted to the voters as to whether a metropolitan park district is to be formed, **five park commissioners** shall be elected. ...Thereafter, all commissioners shall be elected to six-year terms of office. All commissioners shall serve until their respective successors are elected and qualified and assume office in accordance with RCW 29A.60.280. Vacancies shall occur and shall be filled as provided in chapter 42.12 RCW.

The city council may serve as the ex officio board of commissioners if it is located wholly within the city.

Creation of the district must be voter approved.

(3) In a district **wholly located within a city** or within the unincorporated area of a county, the governing body of such city or legislative authority of such county may be designated to serve in an ex officio capacity as the board of metropolitan park commissioners, provided that when creation of the district is proposed by citizen petition, the city or county approves by resolution such designation.

(4) Where the proposed district is located within more than one city, more than one county, or any combination of cities and counties, each city governing body and county legislative authority may be designated to collectively serve ex officio as the board of metropolitan park commissioners ...

RCW 35.61.210 Park district tax levy-Metropolitan park district fund.

(1) The board of park commissioners may levy or cause to be levied a **general tax on all the property located in said park district** each year not to exceed fifty cents per thousand dollars of assessed value of the property in such park district. In addition, the board of park commissioners may levy or cause to be levied a general tax on all property located in said park district each year not to exceed twenty-five cents per thousand dollars of assessed valuation. Although park districts are authorized to impose two separate regular property tax levies, the levies are considered to be a single levy for purposes of the limitation provided for in chapter 84.55 RCW.

They have two property tax levies: \$0.50 per thousand assessed value and an additional \$0.25.

...
(3) The board is hereby authorized to levy a general tax in excess of its regular property tax levy or levies when authorized so to do at a special election conducted in accordance with and subject to all the requirements of the Constitution and laws of the state now in force or hereafter enacted governing the limitation of tax levies. ...

THE QUESTION

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO PRIORITIZE OUTDOOR RECREATION DESPITE YOUR DEMANDING SCHEDULE AS A CITY MANAGER?



I prioritize my health because it helps me serve my community better. Running allows me to work workouts into a busy schedule, providing quality (often rare!) alone time to strategize, refresh, or draw inspiration. Running is also a useful metaphor: setting intention and direction, overcoming challenges, adjusting pace and effort, enjoying each step of the journey – all very much part of my daily service and leadership role. Remember to breathe!

JOHN MAURO
City Manager, Port Townsend



Running keeps me energized and focused, helping me tackle the challenges of city management with clarity and resilience. It's a stress reliever and a way to recharge, fostering balance in my busy life. Prioritizing health through running not only benefits my work and personal well-being, but also sets a positive example for others to prioritize fitness and self-care.

LAURA PHILPOT
City Manager, Maple Valley



One of my life passions centers around hiking, particularly thru-hiking. Having a passion like hiking provides an outlet that generates perspective, ultimately benefitting my performance as a city administrator. My motivation to hike contributes to my eating a plant-based diet, doing cardio workouts most days, yoga, meditation, stretching, strength training, and prioritizing sleep. When a hiking opportunity comes along, I'm ready for it.

CHARLIE BUSH
City Administrator, Sedro-Woolley

AWC TRAININGS

MUNICIPAL BUDGETING AND FISCAL MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP
AUGUST 6-7 | WENATCHEE

This popular annual workshop is an opportunity for local government elected officials and staff who have a role in developing or implementing the budget to learn more about the basics of budgeting for both small and large cities as well as taking your budgeting skills to the next level—all to enhance your city's budget and be sure city priorities reflect those of the greater community.

Elected Officials Essentials workshop

DECEMBER 6 | MULTIPLE LOCATIONS AND ONLINE

Following municipal elections every other year, AWC offers its signature Elected Officials Essentials Workshop. New and seasoned elected and appointed officials alike will benefit from this training event, which explores the most critical legal and functional responsibilities for office holders. The workshop will take place live at AWC's office in Olympia, with a live stream to each satellite location in the morning and on-site legal counsel at each location in the afternoon.

Elected Officials Essentials webinar series

- **UNDERSTANDING WASHINGTON'S ETHICS LAWS**
SEPTEMBER 10 | ONLINE
- **COMPREHENDING QUASI-JUDICIAL HEARINGS**
NOVEMBER 12 | ONLINE

MAYORS EXCHANGE
OCTOBER 3 | TBD

MEMBER EXPO
OCTOBER 8-9 | CHELAN

AWC ANNUAL CONFERENCE
JUNE 23-26, 2026 | SPOKANE

AWC ELEARNINGS
ANYTIME | ONLINE
wacities.org/events-education/elearning-by-category

Open Swim *continued from page 5*

just swim lessons and lap swimming; they also want a safe and fun aquatic playground with features like sloped or zero-entry pools, lazy rivers, water slides, and accessibility for all ages and abilities.

All of that means Kennewick will need to rebuild. And finding funding will be a challenge. So the Kennewick Parks and Recreation Department conducted a community survey to gauge public interest: 56% of respondents said they were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current pool facilities. Respondents also ranked the quality of the city's swimming pools among the top three areas they feel the parks department should emphasize over the next five years.

The department followed this up with a feasibility study, which sketched out some possibilities for location, amenities, and estimated costs (one design, featuring a new large pool for laps and lessons plus a recreational leisure pool, would run about \$12 million). Now the city needs to find the funding.

Key to that process, says Farline, is giving elected officials the information they need to get a project like this off the ground. That means gathering data about community sentiment; estimating ongoing maintenance costs and potential repair costs for when the pool inevitably does fail; conducting a feasibility study to provide a clear path forward; and having a realistic timeline in mind.

"Most municipalities don't just have \$12 million in capital that they can commit without having that thoughtful road map," says Farline.

DIVING FOR DOLLARS

Meanwhile, White Salmon and its surrounding communities are taking a highly collaborative approach to replacing a public pool that was decommissioned in 2018. That year, voters approved an initiative to create the White Salmon Valley Pool Metropolitan Park District, which is now working to secure funding for a new pool. The district was awarded \$2,770,828 in grants and other funding from the state Recreation & Conservation Office. Additional funding sources include contributions from the City of White Salmon (\$140,000), the neighboring City of Bingen (\$35,000), Klickitat County (\$50,000), private donations and in-kind pledges totaling more than \$1,402,000, and revenue from a local tax levy. The pool, which will be built on land leased from the

school district for \$1 per year, will have eight 25-yard lanes, a diving board, and a building to house changing rooms, offices, and mechanical equipment.

Kennewick's neighbor Pasco recently cleared the funding hurdle and is constructing a dome to cover its municipal pool, which will turn its formerly outdoor pool into a year-round facility. Funding for that \$1.2 million project is coming from a limited tax general obligation bond (\$978,000), the city's Park Development Fund (\$315,000), the Pasco School District (\$100,000), and a real estate excise tax (\$130,000), plus anticipated income from expanded swim programs.

And last summer, Tenino cut the ribbon on a renovated Tenino Quarry Pool. Originally an abandoned rock quarry that filled with water, the area was a popular swimming hole, which the city eventually purchased and opened as a municipal pool in 1950. Beginning in 2018, and thanks in large part to a \$350,000 Thurston County Community Development Block Grant, the city conducted much-needed upgrades to bring the facility up to code and improve accessibility, while adding a splash pad, kiddie pools, a sun deck, and shaded cabanas.

NOT JUST A "NICE TO HAVE"

Because municipal pools are not big moneymakers, it can be hard to argue for funding to support a pool when cities are weighing that cost against fundamental services such as wastewater treatment, public safety, road maintenance, and public transportation.

But having a municipal pool is "not just something that's a nice-to-have," says Kennewick's Nick Farline, who notes that municipal pools are often the only affordable opportunities for swimming and learning water safety, as the expense of private athletic clubs prices out large swaths of the community. "I think it's a core tenet of what we do in municipal government. You've got to keep people safe, make sure the toilets flush and the lights turn on. But what we're finding is that when people look for a place to move to, right on the heels of good school districts and whether a place is safe, they want to know about the quality-of-life opportunities. People are looking for trails, parks, and recreational opportunities."

And in the summertime, that means a place to swim. **C**

"PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR TRAILS, PARKS, AND RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES."



Cityscope

Mayor Brink at
Yakima River
Gateway Park

Q&A

Balanced Growth

AWC Vice President and West Richland Mayor Pro Tem Fred Brink on balancing rapid growth with outdoor space.

INTERVIEW BY JENNIFER KRAZIT

You have quite an interesting background. What did you do before running for office?

After college, I was commissioned as an officer in the United States Navy and spent about six and a half years as a surface warfare officer. I left the Navy to join the FBI and ultimately was promoted to special agent in charge of the FBI for the State of Mississippi. Then, in 2009, I took a job at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) as the counterintelligence program manager, so that's what brought my family to this area.

How did you and your family take to life in West Richland?

I have lived in about 13 states throughout my career, and we just love Washington. My family loves the climate, the diversity of geography, and, most of all, the people. We really have settled in here. My wife, Monika, works for the Richland School District as a secretary. Our two sons are grown now and are both in the military.

CONTINUED ON P.12 ►



Mayor Brink on the periphery of his growing city



How much of an influence has PNNL had on bringing people to the region?

The lab is the single largest employer within the Tri-Cities and employs more than 6,000 individuals. The Hanford Site has a lot more people working at the site, but that’s through several contractors, so if you look at the largest single employer, it’s the lab. And, of course, the lab brings a lot of scientists, researchers, and others that do work at the laboratory in both national security, climate research, and other areas, so it’s a big part of our community.

What prompted you to run for public office?

I had been living in West Richland and was looking forward to retirement, but saw that maybe I had something to offer the city with my experience. I initially ran for council in 2015, but I joined late and didn’t make it through the primary. So I became more focused for the next election in 2017 and won a seat on the council. I’m now in my second stint as mayor pro tem. In addition to being a city councilmember, I am also an elected fire commissioner for Benton County Fire District 4.

West Richland is experiencing a great deal of growth. How is that being managed?

The population of West Richland has grown by more than 50% since I moved here. The city already offers an extremely balanced, family-oriented community. When I moved here, it was pretty much all single-family homes, but we

now offer townhomes, multifamily homes, and apartments. The largest landowner in the city, the Tiegs family, has set aside more than 7,000 acres of land for development in West Richland. We are developing a master plan which will include residential, parks, pathways, light industrial, commercial, and so forth, to build a community that offers the services you need in your neighborhood, so people don’t have to drive to Kennewick or Pasco to get them. The city is looking at tremendous growth over the next several decades.

Amid all that development, how is the city also prioritizing outdoor recreation?

Having outdoor recreation areas is essential to any city. People want to get out of their houses and enjoy the nice weather during the summer, spring, and fall. West Richland’s parks are one of the pride points of our city. We have miles and miles of pathways for walking and biking. We also have several community events, including being one of only three cities in Washington to have

a Veterans Day parade that is sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. We also have the Red Mountain Event Center, which hosts races and family-friendly events. And of course, we have the Yakima River that flows through the city.

You’ve served on the AWC Board of Directors since 2022. Why did you decide to get involved with AWC?

I first attended Elected Officials Essentials in December 2017, before I even took office, and I was impressed by the quality of the presentations and discussions giving individuals insight into what they will do as councilmembers and making people aware of basics, like the Open Public Meetings Act. I then attended more AWC courses after I took office. The more I got involved, the more I found out how useful the AWC training was, and how valuable the collaboration opportunities are, along with the opportunities to learn from people who have been in a council role for much longer than I have.

How do you think AWC membership benefits your city?

It benefits us in many ways. The annual conference is something that really stands out. It’s three days of networking and learning from your peers and subject-matter experts. Membership also benefits the city with other services AWC provides. AWC provides research and information about salaries and what other cities are doing in the area helps us stay competitive in terms of hiring and retaining high-quality individuals.

What are your goals in your leadership role at AWC?

I want to make sure CEO Deanna Dawson and her staff have the support, information and feedback they need to continue to push AWC in a positive direction. We’re fortunate that all 281 cities and towns in Washington state are members. I want to retain that membership and work with Deanna and her staff to look at ways of expanding services and training to bring value to our communities. 🍌

BY THE NUMBERS

West Richland

A statistical snapshot of the City of West Richland

POPULATION

2010 **11,811**

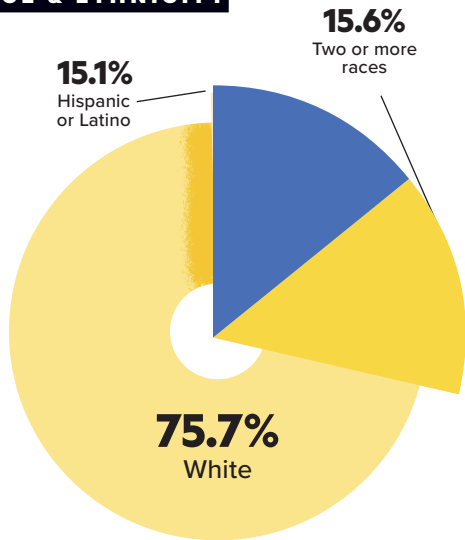
2025* **18,456**

56.3%
Increase

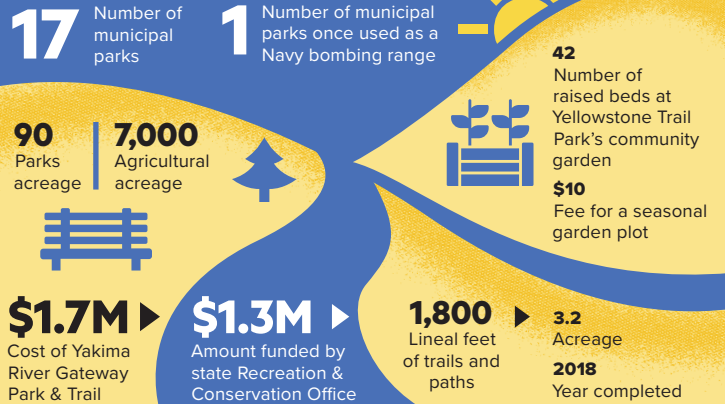
*ESTIMATE

SOURCE: U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

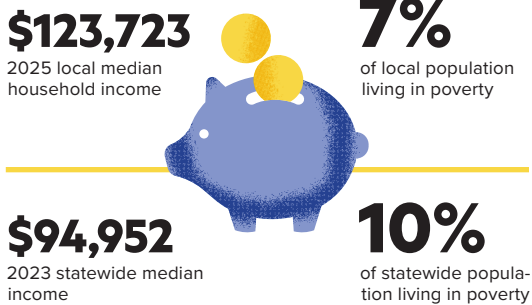
RACE & ETHNICITY



PARKS & RECORDS



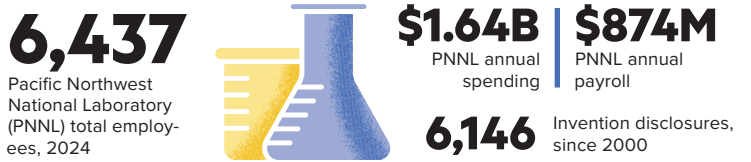
INCOME FACTS



BUDGET BALANCE



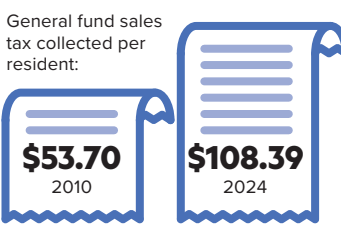
LAB BENCHMARKS



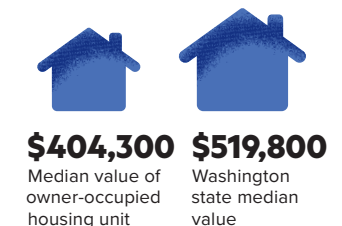
PAY SCALE



VALUE-ADDED FACTS



HOME RULES



COURT



STORY BY
JENNIFER KRAZIT

ADVANTAGE



AS PICKLEBALL POPULARITY SOARS, WASHINGTON CITIES ARE CREATING PUBLIC PLAY SPACES FOR THE STATE'S OFFICIAL SPORT—HOPING TO BOOST THE LOCAL ECONOMY WHILE FOSTERING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND HEALTH.

If you've spent any time around a resort, an athletic club, or a municipal park in the last five years, you've no doubt heard the hallmark *dink dink dink* of pickleballers volleying back and forth to score their next point. In cities all across Washington, that sound is only becoming more common. There's no question: Pickleball is having a moment.

Its growth in popularity in recent years is unprecedented. For the third consecutive year, pickleball was the fastest-growing sport in the United States; in 2023, 13.6 million Americans played pickleball, rivaling the popularity of outdoor soccer.

And although pickleball has a reputation for attracting seniors, in 2023, some 2.3 million players ages 25-34 dominated the sport; more than 1 million children under the age of 18 began playing from 2022 to 2023 as the sport was added to curricula at public and private schools and summer camps.

Of course, all those newly anointed pickleheads need somewhere to play. And that means new challenges for Washington cities as they try to meet the sudden demand for welcoming and accessible pickleball facilities, while also creating opportunities to fuel economic development, promote community engagement, and improve public health.

A GAME OF SPARE PARTS

Pickleball was invented on Bainbridge Island in 1965. As the story goes, Joel Pritchard, a Washington state legislator (and future lieutenant governor) with a vacation house on the island, and his friend and neighbor Bill Bell returned from a day of golf to find their kids bored and frustrated with the gloomy weather. So they grabbed a couple of old ping-pong paddles and a wiffle ball, headed out to a badminton court in the yard, and started dinking around. Two more neighbors, Dick Brown and Barney McCallum, soon joined in and the four began creating and refining the rules. When they found their ping-pong paddles lacking, McCallum, who had a bandsaw in his basement, went home and cut a few versions of a larger, sturdier wooden paddle. One model, which he called the M2, stuck and served as the prototype for the paddles still in use today. Joel's wife, Joan, is credited with naming the sport—a reference to the ad hoc “pickle boats” at crew races on Lake Washington that are made up of a mix of non-starting rowers.

Pickleball eventually moved off the island and gained popularity in Seattle, then spread organically throughout the country as curious onlookers tried it and found the game to be more fun than badminton and easier to master than tennis. But its roots in Washington still run deep. In March of 2022, as



Bainbridge Island
Mayor Ashley Mathews
at Wing Point Golf &
Country Club, where
she plays pickleball
with her husband and
75-year-old father.



**“PICKLEBALL IS
PART OF THE
FABRIC OF OUR
COMMUNITY AT
THIS POINT”**

—Ashley Mathews

pickleball's popularity soared across the country, Governor Jay Inslee signed a decree making pickleball the official state sport. At press time, a specialty pickleball Washington state license plate was under consideration by the state legislature.

HOME COURT

Perhaps nowhere is the energy around pickleball felt more keenly than in its birthplace of Bainbridge Island.

"Pickleball is part of the fabric of our community at this point," says Ashley Mathews, Bainbridge Island mayor and city councilmember.

Pickleball, she adds, has been a galvanizing force for islanders of all ilk to coalesce around the goals of physical fitness, community-building, and economic growth.

"One really cool thing about it is all the different age groups that play. It gets our seniors out, active, and playing," says Mathews, who plays pickleball with her husband and recently recruited her 75-year-old father to take up the sport.

"I also think many of us are dealing with a loneliness epidemic and a lack of connection, and it's one of those things that gets folks out and together, and that's great for both mental and physical health," she says. "As a community leader, it's great to have something positive that, especially in these times, can get folks out together, connecting, playing and communicating, instead of engaging in activities that further polarize and divide us." Today, pickleball is played at five locations with 21 public courts on Bainbridge Island, but that wasn't always the case. The game was invented on a family's private badminton court, and for the most part, private courts are where the game was played for decades. As pickleball grew in popularity in the 2010s, conflicts between pickleball players and tennis players arguing over who got to use public tennis courts became more common. It was clear pickleballers needed a dedicated space to play, but getting those courts built took a bit of doing.

On Bainbridge Island, parks are managed by the Bainbridge Island Metro Park & Recreation District, which consists of five elected commissioners and operates independently of the city council with a budget funded by city taxes. Parks get additional support from the Bainbridge Island Parks & Trails Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that raises funds, facilitates trail acquisition, and organizes volunteer work parties to help maintain parks and trails.

Without sufficient funding for a new dedicated pickleball facility, the Park & Recreation District couldn't push the project forward, and without it being a city-approved project, the Parks & Trails Foundation couldn't raise money for it. So a grassroots group of pickleball fans organized to form a new nonprofit and began raising funds from private donors.

"It was a chicken-and-egg thing," says Melissa Bang-Knudsen, chairperson of the nonprofit Bainbridge Island Pickleball (BIP). "If we wanted courts, we needed to raise money. But we had no way to raise money for new courts because it wasn't a parks project, and we couldn't be a parks project until we raised the money."



The first thing visitors see when stepping off the Bainbridge Island ferry: Pickleball souvenirs for sale outside Island Life Artisan Gifts.

Together, BIP and the Park & Recreation District funded the project, and Founders Courts at Battle Point Park (named in tribute to the local founders of the game) officially opened in the summer of 2020. Today, the facility includes six permanent pickleball courts that are free to play on, with community equipment available for those just getting started.

The Park & Recreation District handles insurance, maintenance, and trash for the facility, and BIP volunteers pitch in to help care for it by pressure-washing the courts, pulling weeds, and organizing play and competition schedules.

"You don't have to be a serious player to come and play and be part of the community," says Bang-Knudsen. "That's why we like working with Parks, because pickleball really does belong to the community."

It's also clear that pickleball is attracting players from outside the community.

"We receive a ton of inquiries from people who would like pickleball tours, who want to play here, or who just want to learn more about the history of the sport," says Lindsay Brown-ing, executive director of the Bainbridge Island Chamber of Commerce.

Without an official museum dedicated to pickleball, and since the badminton court where the game was invented sits on a private residence, the Founders Courts serve as an unofficial mecca for pickleball fans making a pilgrimage to play in the





Melissa Bang-Knudsen
at Bainbridge Island's
Founders Courts

sport's hometown. In the equipment shed at the Founders Courts, a world map that invites people to place a pushpin on their home courts is riddled with pins across the United States and as far away as Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America.

Local businesses help serve visitors who want to celebrate pickleball's heritage too. Just off the Seattle ferry landing, shops sell books about the sport's rules and history, shirts advising people to "Dink responsibly," as well as pickleball-themed totes, hats, stickers, paddles, balls, and other merch.

One indication of how closely connected pickleball is to Bainbridge Island's ethos: The annual Founders Tournament

is put on, not by any athletic organization, but by the Bainbridge History Museum. Last year's five-day event netted \$42,000 and attracted 542 competitors and an estimated 2,000 visitors. This year's tournament, scheduled for August 13-17, will likely be even bigger: It's honoring the sport's 60th anniversary.

Meanwhile, local investment in the sport is not slowing down, with even more opportunities for players on Bainbridge Island being developed. The Bainbridge Island Pickleball nonprofit has raised money and is partnering with the Park & Recreation District to expand the Founders Courts complex even further, converting two existing tennis courts into six new pickleball courts, as well as upgrading fencing and entrances and adding picnic tables. BIP is also fundraising to build covered courts in another park so pickleballers have a place to play year-round.

PARTNERED UP

Bainbridge Island might boast the longest history with the game, but the largest facility in the state is in Kennewick.

Lawrence Scott Park, a 26-acre public sports complex just a few blocks from the Columbia River, was home to five pickleball courts (three regulation-size and two that were undersized), as well as baseball, softball, and soccer fields; basketball, tennis, and volleyball courts; a children's playground; and a walking path.

In a scenario that has become familiar in communities throughout the country, the rapid rise in pickleball's popularity meant more demand for public court time than courts available to support it. Meanwhile, run-down tennis and volleyball courts often sat unused.

Similar to the strategy taken on Bainbridge Island, a group of pickleball players in Kennewick formed a nonprofit organization to begin advocating with the city for new public courts so they'd have a reliable place to play. The group, called Club 509 Pickleball, solicits donations and sells branded merchandise and modestly priced annual memberships (\$15/year for individuals, \$25/year for couples, \$30/year for families) to collectively raise the profile of pickleball among the local government and business community and to invest in local facilities and events.

Club 509 argued that the Tri-Cities area needed one central location where pickleball players throughout the region could come together to play.





Bainbridge Island's Founders Courts complex includes a map (upper left) with pushpins designating visitor hometowns, and a plaque commemorating the sport's local founders.





Nick Farline at Kennewick's Lawrence Scott Park pickleball complex.

“Around the Tri-Cities, there were little pockets of courts—two, three, four, maybe five courts—or oftentimes you’d see pickleball being played on tennis courts,” says Nick Farline, City of Kennewick Parks, Recreation & Facilities director, “but there was no hub with dedicated courts.”

It was deep collaboration between pickleball enthusiasts, local businesses, and the city that ultimately made a new facility possible.

“We had a lot of different funding sources that came together, so we’re really proud about that,” says Farline.

In May of 2022, the city council agreed to spend \$1.3 million on construction of new pickleball courts as well as other amenities that would benefit all park users. Funding for the project included \$800,000 in federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act, \$250,000 from the city park impact fees, \$210,000 in corporate sponsorships, and \$70,000 from Club 509 members.

“Bringing all those different people to the table was challenging, but it was also very rewarding, because each and every one of the partners had a different goal, and you have to be able to meld those goals together with the outcome being a recreational complex for the community,” says Farline. “We did that well.”

Completed at the beginning of 2023, the new wheelchair-accessible facility has 15 dedicated pickleball courts. As part of the project, the city also replaced an existing decades-old restroom and installed a 74-by-45-foot picnic shelter, which provides shade during tournaments and is also now available for users to rent for large-group gatherings.

In the spirit of continued collaboration, a year after the ini-

“BRINGING ALL THOSE DIFFERENT PEOPLE TO THE TABLE WAS CHALLENGING, BUT IT WAS ALSO VERY REWARDING...”

—Nick Farline

tial buildout, a Club 509 member came forward and offered to sponsor the cost of adding lights to four of the courts to accommodate evening play. A local electrical union then volunteered the time and labor required to install the lights.

As part of the initial agreement, Club 509 gets some dedicated court time exclusively for its members each week, but the courts are otherwise open to the public and free to play. The club hosts sessions with a volunteer coach twice a week to teach beginners the fundamentals of the game, and it handles some basic maintenance.

The facility at Lawrence Scott Park is large enough that it draws players from all around the Tri-Cities area, and it serves as the venue for the 509 Summer Classic, a three-day tournament for ages 12 and up that’s now in its third year.

Since the facility opened to the public, Farline says he has re-



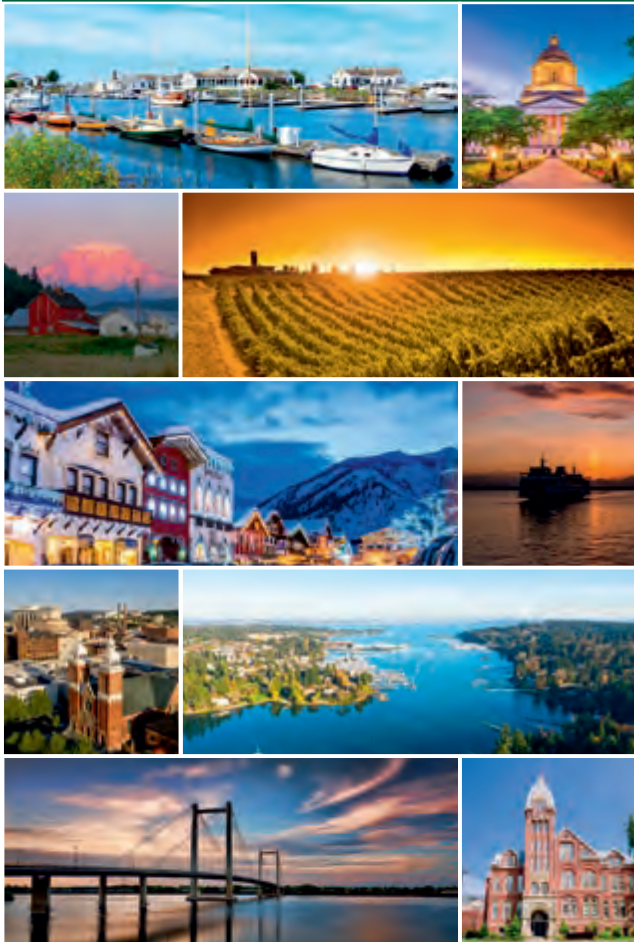


Pickleball-themed souvenirs (including a 60th anniversary collection of merchandise) at Bainbridge Island's Island Life Artisan Gifts. "My pickleball collection has been a huge success," says proprietor Alex Sanso. "People from around the world visit and learn that they're at the birthplace of pickleball."



HELPING WASHINGTON CITIES PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Utility Rate and Fee Consulting
Utility Management
General Government Financial Analysis
Economic and Funding Strategies Analysis



As of July 2024,
FCS has officially joined Bowman

Bowman is a national professional services firm. This change provides a strong foundation for us to merge our comprehensive skillsets while offering the same level of commitment to our clients and employees.

bowman.com | fcsgroup.com
425.867.1802

ceived numerous calls from cities and parks departments from around the state asking how Kennewick succeeded in getting it built. While the pickleball courts do bring people to the area for big events like tournaments, a public facility like this is unlikely to be a big economic driver. So collaboration is key.

“Rarely do municipalities want to add staffing and maintenance costs and all those things that will be associated with a new facility,” he says. “You’ve got to find somebody that can engage and invigorate the community to not only express a desire for pickleball courts but to bring something to the table and help offset those costs. You’ve got to partner and find a community champion.”

ADVANCING THE GAME

As Washingtonians of all ages continue to adopt pickleball as their passion, cities throughout the state are working to meet the moment and provide their residents with places to play.

The city of Deer Park earmarked funds for two pickleball courts in its 2025 budget. In November, Spokane completed a renovation at Underhill Park that included two dedicated pickleball courts, renovated basketball courts, new sidewalks, ADA ramps, and other improvements.

Although pickleball has won over legions of fans in recent years, one aspect of the game people don’t always love is the noise associated with it. Because the game uses a hard plastic ball instead of the rubberized, felt-covered ball used in tennis, it comes with a louder, more distinctive sound. Giving careful consideration to the location of public courts seems to be key to avoiding potential conflict. On Bainbridge Island, the city hasn’t fielded noise complaints from its Founders Courts complex. The larger problem on that front, according to Mayor Mathews, is the dozens of private courts situated in people’s backyards, which do occasionally generate noise complaints from neighbors. And in Kennewick, the park with the 15-court complex is in a commercial district, right off a major highway and adjacent to a large mall and shopping complex. That central location makes it easy to access and means there aren’t many neighbors around to bother.

There is an element to pickleball that is getting more serious—as evidenced by the development of professional leagues such as Major League Pickleball, and organizations like USA Pickleball and the World Pickleball Federation, which are dedicated to advancing its growth and recognition globally. But for the most part, the game maintains a reputation for being low-key, welcoming to beginners, and playable at all ages—largely due to the small court size, short games, and easy-to-learn rules.

That makes pickleball a welcome addition to public parks and a natural priority for cities looking to foster community engagement and public health. **C**



ILLUSTRATION BY NATE BULLIS

Citywise



“

Out of all the things he'd done in his life, he was most proud of [pickleball]. It's made such a lasting impression...it's made people healthy and happy.”

— CITY 101 P.24 ►

24 PICKLEBALL'S ORIGIN STORY **26** WHY PUBLIC PLACES ARE VITAL FOR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION **28** A PRIMER FOR WORKPLACE WELLNESS



The Name Game

The origins of how pickleball got its name are somewhat in dispute.

Joan Pritchard wrote in a 2008 newspaper column that she had mentioned that the hybrid nature of the game reminded her of the “Pickle Boat” in the sport of crew, where “oarsmen were chosen from the leftovers of other boats.” Barney McCallum claimed it stemmed from him telling his opponents, “I’ve got you in a pickle.” Joel Pritchard said they just needed a “nutty name,” and he told a reporter that “tenny pong” was under consideration at one point. The widely spread notion that the game was named after Pickles, the Pritchard family dog, was debunked by Pritchard himself, who said the dog came later and was “named after the game”—although plenty of people advised him to stick to the other story because it “works better.”

GAME ON

The origins and evolution of Washington state’s official sport.

JIM KERSHNER

ON FEBRUARY 13, 1968, future U.S. Representative and Washington Lieutenant Governor Joel Pritchard (1925-1997) and several friends file articles of incorporation for Pickle Ball Inc., a corporation intended to promote the new sport they had invented three years earlier at Pritchard’s Bainbridge Island cabin.

One summer afternoon in 1965, the kids were bored and said they had nothing to do, so Pritchard vowed to create a new game they could play on the cabin’s badminton court. Pritchard, with friends and neighbors William Bell and Barney McCallum, lowered the net, got out some paddleball paddles, and borrowed a wiffle-type ball. Over the next weeks they invented rules and designed better paddles, creating a cross between badminton and tennis, fast and fun but easy enough for everyone in the family to play. It soon became the rage on Bainbridge Island and began to spread, including to Olympia, where Pritchard introduced it to fellow legislators.

Invention

In the summer of 1965, Joel Pritchard was a veteran representative in the Washington State Legislature and had just helped engineer a winning gubernatorial race for his friend and fellow Republican Daniel J. Evans (1925-2024). Pritchard would go on to become a six-term U.S. Representative from Seattle and a two-term lieutenant governor.

However, that summer he, Bill Bell—the brother of Nancy Bell Evans and


so Governor Evans’s brother-in-law—and Barney McCallum were obsessed with their game-in-the-making. When Pritchard’s children had complained they were bored, he told them that as a kid, he would invent games and said, “I can make up a game.” When they first came up with the idea, the friends left the net at badminton height and volleyed the ball back and forth in the air. But they soon discovered two important things. First, the plastic ball bounced well off of a hard surface. Second, in Pritchard’s words, “You’ve got to be able to hit the ball hard. Nobody plays golf to putt.” So, they lowered the net to 36 inches and started smashing shots tennis style. The sport of pickleball (sometimes spelled Pickle-Ball) was born.

The exact date of pickleball’s founding is unknown—the memories of the inventors are vague on the subject. Pritchard himself once said it was in summer 1963, and Joan Pritchard, Joel’s wife at the time, wrote that it was the summer of 1966. However, in most accounts both Barney McCallum and Joel Pritchard narrowed it down to July through August 1965, which is the date that the USA Pickleball Association and Pickle-Ball Inc. now specify as the correct date. The inventors said they deliberately crafted the rules so that it would be fun for all ages, with no height advantage for adults. For this reason, and because the court was small enough to fit in backyards, on driveways, or even indoors, it caught on quickly. Soon it was being played by people up and down Bain-



bridge Island, the eastern Kitsap County island a short ferry ride across Puget Sound from downtown Seattle, where at the time many Seattle families, like the Pritchards, had summer homes.

In 1967, a neighbor on Bainbridge Island paved the first permanent pickleball court. The sport also caught on in Olympia, where Pritchard introduced it to Dan Evans and future U.S. Senator Slade Gorton. Gorton built pickleball courts in both of his homes, in Olympia and Whidbey Island. U.S. Representative Norm Dicks and his wife built what Suzie Dicks called “the first outdoor Pickle-Ball court in the District of Columbia.” Nancy Evans said, “We all got really pretty good at pickleball,” but Pritchard “was *very* good—Joel was a good athlete.”

Pritchard accrued a long list of weighty accomplishments as a politician, yet in some circles he remains best known for pickleball. And that would not have bothered him, according to his daughter, Peggy Pritchard-Olson (herself a city councilmember in Edmonds from 2003 to 2009) who recounted her father’s words at a party in his honor just before he died in 1997. “He said that out of all the things he’d done in his life, he was most proud of that game. It’s made such a lasting impression on so many people. It’s made people healthy and happy. It’s been growing for 40 years. It may last forever.” 

Editor’s Note: This essay was excerpted with permission from *HistoryLink.org*.

Spokane-based journalist **Jim Kershner** is a contributing historian at *HistoryLink*, the online encyclopedia of Washington state history.

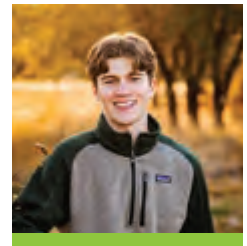
CQC

AWC Center for Quality Communities
scholarship program

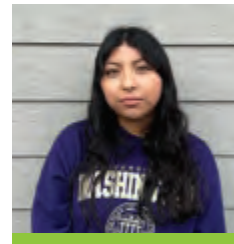
Congratulations 2025 CQC scholarship recipients!



Emily Jones
Burlington



Hayden Swartzel
Okanogan



Alexandra Corona Hernandez
Lakewood

Leaders of the future - and today!

The AWC Center for Quality Communities scholarship supports high school seniors who are nominated by cities and towns for their leadership in their city government, community, or school and plan to pursue post-secondary education.

Your gift today supports our leaders of tomorrow. Learn more and donate at cfqc.org.





Looking for Inspiration?

Washington has many unsung heroes whose accomplishments enrich our state:

Spokane's Riverfront Park and Vancouver's Esther Short Park exemplify major downtown parks with a variety of amenities and activities that attract visitors. my.spokanecity.org; cityofvancouver.us

Washougal's Reflection Plaza is an excellent example of a publicly owned plaza designed to help activate the city's downtown. cityofwashougal.us

Redmond's Downtown Park exemplifies a strategically located and well-designed new park that successfully links both the historic and newly developed sections of the city's downtown. redmond.gov

Mount Vernon's Skagit Riverwalk Park showcases how minimal planted vegetation can still yield a highly utilized public space, while in this case also serving as a physical barrier during high floods. mountvernonwa.gov

Several of **Seattle's downtown parks** provide recreational equipment like ping-pong tables, oversized chess boards, and bocce ball courts, along with entertaining programmed activities such as summer noontime concerts, which help activate public spaces that might not otherwise draw visitors. seattle.gov

VITAL DESIGNS

Understanding how parks, plazas, and public spaces impact downtown revitalization efforts.

STEVE BUTLER, MUNICIPAL RESEARCH & SERVICES CENTER

DOWNTOWNS ARE the commercial center of most cities, serving as the “heart” for a community and helping define its image. Many downtowns suffered during the COVID-19 pandemic, as people stopped going out in public and many employees shifted to working remotely. As many communities strive to bring the public back to their downtowns, it is important to recognize the crucial role that parks and open space can play in making those places more welcoming.

Downtown Revitalization and the Importance of Public Gathering Places

A major goal of downtown revitalization is to maintain or expand the economic activity of existing commercial/mixed-use development levels. Parks, plazas, and other types of public open space can serve as a significant economic catalyst by attracting people to your central business district/commercial core.

These public spaces can function as gathering spots to create an authentic sense of place that brings people together, as well as serving as areas of calm and respite for visitors and community members alike. Some urban planning experts view public space as being “the glue that connects the physical downtown environment.”

When examining the evolving role of public spaces in economic recovery, with a focus on the post-COVID era, a Brookings Institute study of three cities found that “public spaces play a crucial role in shifting perceptions of downtown areas, inspiring infrastructure improvements, and incubating small businesses.” To use them as a means to draw more people downtown, a concentrated and deliberate effort, along with a financial investment, may be needed to enhance your parks, plazas, and other public open spaces.

Plazas and pocket parks may be located on either public or private property, the latter of which is often associated with an office, mixed-use, or multifamily residential building. For downtowns and commercial centers, it is important for privately owned public spaces to be open and accessible to all members of the public during “reasonable hours,” meaning times of the day when people would normally be working in or visiting downtown.

Because they successfully activate the broader public realm, *sidewalks* (with space for sidewalk cafes) and *parklets*/*“streateries”* (i.e., restaurant seating or retail display areas that occupy curbside parking spaces, usually adjacent to a pedestrian-oriented business using them) should also be a component of a community’s downtown revitalization efforts.

A MAJOR GOAL OF DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION IS TO MAINTAIN OR EXPAND THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF EXISTING COMMERCIAL/MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT LEVELS.

Key Characteristics and Attributes of Successful Public Spaces

A successful public space needs to fundamentally address the following needs:

- **SAFETY:** People will congregate where there is a sense of protection against unpleasant or unsafe experiences.
- **COMFORT:** A park, plaza, or other type of open space needs to take human comfort into account, which includes opportunities to sit, relax, and be protected from inclement weather, as needed.
- **ENJOYMENT:** Public spaces need to be pleasant and fun places to be, which allow people to experience the space and surrounding areas, passively view nearby activity, and even engage in active recreational opportunities, in some cases.

One consideration concerning the issue of safety: Although people need to feel safe and protected within a public space, this does not mean that a security guard needs to be stationed at every park or plaza. Instead, a sense of safety is created by high activity levels, such as areas with busy sidewalks or adjacent buildings that frame the area and have large windows people can see in and

out of. The latter condition creates an environment where there are “eyes on the street,” allowing for natural surveillance to occur.

The three elements listed below are critical for a public space to successfully achieve the above-mentioned goals of safety, comfort, and enjoyment.

An enticing and welcoming location

Public spaces flourish when people have a variety of reasons to be there. On the other hand, isolated locations with low pedestrian activity and poor visibility from sidewalks or adjacent buildings will almost always result in underutilized spaces. People want to feel safe in their public spaces, and they will intuitively sense when it is missing.

Attractive, interesting, and human-focused design

The design of a downtown park or plaza should be appealing and enticing enough to attract people to want to use it. Good lighting (either natural or artificial) and comfortable seating are two key components of any successful open space. Landscaping, both softscape and hardscape, is another important design feature. Natural vegetation, such as trees and groundcover, is often found in an urban park or plaza but isn't necessarily an essential feature. Having high-quality “hardscape” materials (such as pavers and artistic benches) is also important.

Public art, water features, and even some recreational options can also contribute to the appeal of public space.

Programmed activities

Some parks and plazas do not have enough positive characteristics to attract users to a location that doesn't normally draw visitors. In those cases, it may be beneficial to provide site-specific “play equipment” and to program fun activities that will attract people to that space.

The bottom line

It will likely take a few years before downtowns adjust to the “new normal.” In the meantime, cities and towns need to focus on new, innovative strategies they can take to encourage people to visit and use their downtowns. Providing attractive, safe, and enjoyable parks, plazas, and public open space can play an important role in downtown revitalization efforts. **C**

MRSC Planning & Policy Manager Steve Butler has been involved in most aspects of community planning for over 30 years, both in the public and private sectors. He received a B.A. from St. Lawrence University and a M.S. in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Steve has served as president of statewide planning associations in both Washington and Maine. He was elected to the American Institute of Certified Planners' College of Fellows in 2008.





Six keys to designing a worksite wellness program

AWC WellCity standards serve as guidelines for designing a workplace wellness program that has a positive impact on employee health and productivity. They are based on best practice models. To earn the WellCity distinction and a 2% discount on health insurance premiums, a city must complete all requirements.

1. LEADERSHIP

All levels of leadership support employee health by their words and actions.

2. POLICY AND ENVIRONMENT

Adopt health-related policies and environmental supports to impact large groups of people and create a workplace that supports employee health.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

Tap into the resources and influence of internal and external partners to extend the reach of wellness committee efforts.

4. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Plan wellness activities that are relevant to the employee population, reflect multiple dimensions of health, and provide opportunities to learn, experience, and practice healthy behaviors.

5. ENGAGEMENT

Help employees move beyond simply participating in wellness activities to truly engaging in their health.

6. ASSESS, EVALUATE, AND REPORT

Assessment, evaluation, and reporting is the continuous improvement process in your wellness program.

WIN-WIN

The benefits of combining workplace wellness with community involvement.

BY AWC STAFF

IN ADDITION TO INVESTING IN recreation and wellness activities for residents, city halls across Washington are creating worksite wellness programs for their employees. It doesn't just make sense; it often saves money.

Beyond the benefits to personal health, encouraging employee interactions through wellness programs and events strengthens relationships and allows for easier collaboration in the workplace. And when employees are healthier, they use less sick time, their overall healthcare claims costs decrease, and they are happier and more productive.

While myriad employee wellness activities are offered in Washington cities, these, in particular, have found unique ways to combine employee wellness and community involvement.

BIKING

West Richland holds an annual wellness bike ride for city staff—including first-time riders—with a stop at a local coffee shop to build camaraderie and fun.

GARDENING

In April, Lacey hosted an Earth Day event at a local library where city employees and residents gathered to exchange seeds, plant starts, and gardening tips.

CANOPY TOUR

In Bainbridge Island, a local arborist recently led city staff on a guided walking tour, identifying trees and shrubs

planted around city facilities, and teaching employees how to cultivate their own at home.

SOFTBALL

Medical Lake expanded an adult recreation softball league for city staff and residents at local parks to include a coed slow pitch softball team.

TAI CHI

Algona's wellness committee hosted a Tai Chi class to teach employees how to relieve stress through slow movement, while practicing mindfulness and improving mobility and flexibility.

BASKETBALL

Issaquah hosted a series of basketball-themed rec center events, including free-throw and timed shooting contests to promote exercise and teambuilding. **C**

WELLNESS PROGRAMS AND EVENTS STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AND ALLOW FOR EASIER COLLABORATION IN THE WORKPLACE.



Cityscape

Mother of All Parks

Remembering Esther Short, a 19th-century trailblazer who foresaw the civic landscape-altering potential of public spaces.



ON CHRISTMAS DAY 1845, Esther Clark Short, her husband Amos, and their nine young children arrived by wagon train at the end of the trail in Oregon Territory and built a homestead near Fort Vancouver. Over the next eight years, the Shorts defied many attempts by the Hudson's Bay Company to evict the American settlers: once, while Amos was away, soldiers from the fort set Esther and her children adrift on a raft in the Columbia River; on another occasion, when a company of French-Canadian soldiers attempted to drive the family across the river to Oregon, the feisty matriarch stood her ground and knocked their commanding officer off his feet.

Ultimately, the Shorts prevailed. With the passage of the Land Claim Act of 1853, the year her husband died, Esther Short was granted 640 acres at the heart of present-day Vancouver. She established the city's first restaurant in 1853, the first hotel in 1854, and the

first park in 1855, donating a five-acre parcel as a public square that still bears her name.

Esther Short Park—Washington's oldest municipal park—serves as a model civic gathering space. It draws young and old year-round with a covered performance pavilion, a Victorian rose garden, an interactive water feature, a bell tower and glockenspiel, and (dedicated in 2023) the city's first fully inclusive playground—a pilot program called Project Play that is being replicated across the city, and around the state.

"The City of Vancouver has a really amazing vision for what the future will look like," says Jeremy Robbins, a disability educator who serves on the Vancouver Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission.

A vision firmly rooted in the past, with the Pioneer Mother—a life-sized bronze of the park's namesake, flanked by a passel of children—standing as a sentinel at the center of the plaza, watching over it all. **C**



Partnership makes it possible.

For over 150 years, Puget Sound Energy has fueled one of the most innovative regions in the world. Today, we're partnering with our customers and local communities to build an energy future we all can be proud of.

[PSE.com/PoweringGenerations](https://www.pse.com/PoweringGenerations)



**PUGET
SOUND
ENERGY**