

Snohomish County Executive
AARON REARDON



Priorities in Action



Latest News & Upcoming Events

Friday, June 22, 2007

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 **Farmland inventory project sheds light on what's growing**

Snohomish County has recently completed an inventory project to determine how the County's designated farmland is being used and for what purposes. The farmland inventory establishes a baseline in the effort to expand agriculture and keep it economically viable. The project originated from the citizen-led Snohomish County Agricultural Economic Development Action Team, established in Executive Reardon's 2005 Agriculture Action Plan.

"Snohomish County is committed to having economically viable farmland that produces healthy food for our families while providing our farmers with good family-wage jobs," Executive Reardon said. "This farmland inventory will help the County in our next step of developing a business plan for managing our natural resources for the next 100 years."

Funded in part by a Washington State Community, Trade and Economic Development grant, the project inventoried approximately 63,000 acres of land designated as farmland of long-term, commercial significance under Washington's Growth Management Act. Of this, approximately 33,000 acres are being actively farmed or managed for commercial agriculture.

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The SnoStat system tracks how well the County is delivering services, the costs of those services, and the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery.

Simply visit our [SnoStat website](#).

A majority of Snohomish County's farmland is used to support livestock or dairies while other areas are producing seed crops, fresh market produce or are used as nurseries. Acreage not being farmed is made up of rivers, roads, forested areas, homes, and land used for non-agriculture purposes such as hunting and wetland mitigation. Snohomish County is committed to working with the farming community to take advantage of new and emerging agricultural markets that can best utilize this non-farmed land.

 **Public hearing to address road improvements in county**

On Wednesday, June 27, 2007, the Snohomish County Council will hold public hearings at 1:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. regarding the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) *Blueprint for Progress*. The RTID *Blueprint for Progress* recommends improvements for major roads and bridges in the most congested corridors in Snohomish, King and Pierce counties.

If approved by the Snohomish, King and Pierce county councils, the *Blueprint for Progress* will be combined with Sound Transit Phase 2 to create a "Roads & Transit" plan to appear on the November 2007 ballot in each of the three counties.

"The *Roads & Transit* plan represents a historic transportation investment in our County," said Snohomish County Executive and Sound Transit Board Member Aaron Reardon. "This plan will dramatically improve our highways, transit, and public safety and will fundamentally change the way people and goods get around Snohomish County for generations to come."

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Or, [send me an email](#).

And please be sure to [visit me on the web!](#)

Sincerely,



Aaron Reardon

In Snohomish County, the proposed road investments focus on our major corridors, including improvements to I-5, US 2 and the Trestle, SR 99, SR 522, SR 524 and SR 531. Combined with Sound Transit Phase 2, the proposed transit investments include light rail service northward from the University of Washington to 164th Street/Ash Way via Northgate, Shoreline, Mountlake Terrace and Lynnwood.

The public hearing will convene at 1:30 p.m. and again at 6:30 p.m. in the Henry M. Jackson Board Room, 8th Floor, County Administration Building East - 3000 Rockefeller, Everett, WA. At the conclusion of public testimony on June 27th, the Snohomish County Council will vote on whether to place the plan on the November 2007 ballot.

For more information on the *Roads & Transit* plan, please visit: www.roadsandtransit.org

County to launch 'Partners for Health'

This week Executive Aaron Reardon announced Snohomish County will launch "Partners for Health," a new long-term health improvement strategy for employees, retirees, and spouses.

"Employers nationwide have experienced rapidly increasing employee benefits costs and Snohomish County has not been immune to this trend," said Reardon. "Proactive wellness programs can reduce cost increases borne by the County."

Research has demonstrated that employees with health risk factors – obesity, smoking, inactivity – can cost between 10% and 70% more in terms of healthcare costs than those individuals with no risk factors. The same risk factors are linked to other indirect cost impacts to employers: increased absenteeism, decreased productivity and overtime costs incurred from other employees must cover for their coworkers.

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Participation in Partners for Health will be optional, but heavily promoted, beginning July 1. Some of the programs offered include health risk assessments, annual screenings and confidential feedback from a qualified personal health advisor. Individuals identified as “high-risk” for future disease will be monitored by a health coach. Partners for Health participation also includes free annual flu shot clinics, Weight Watchers at Work, a gym discount program, a healthy food initiative, and other programs designed to help individuals meet their personal health goals.

Fully 50% of any employee’s health status depends on his or her behavior. Partners for Health leverages this principle by focusing on changing the culture within the Snohomish County workplace to promote both healthy living and medical cost reduction.

The overall benefit Reardon says, “Is happier, healthier workers and fewer tax dollars going toward rising medical costs.”

In 2007, it is estimated that the county will pay nearly \$25 million for employee health insurance. Approximately 85% of this cost will be borne by the county and 15% will be paid by employees. The typical Wellness Program can anticipate generating \$1 to \$5 in health benefit savings for each dollar invested and as much as \$8 for each dollar invested when productivity gains are factored in.

Health Fitness Corporation, a third party vendor selected in a competitive bid process, will administer the new wellness program.

For information contact Rebecca Olin, Snohomish County Human Resources Analyst, 425.388.3411 x2020.

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You may also contact me directly by phone at 425.388.3460.