

2008

Mid-year ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A Message from Mayor Mary Verner

When I became Mayor, I committed to listening to our citizens, taking action, and creating a government that is open and accountable. This mid-year report is designed to keep you current on what's happening at your City. There are many things I want to tell you about, and I hope you will take a few moments to look through this entire newsletter.

The City's role includes delivering excellent services to our citizens and providing leadership on issues critical to our community's future. My priorities are our citizens' priorities:

- Infrastructure
- Public Safety
- Sustainable Economic Growth
- Community Quality of Life
- Leadership & Administration

As I reflect on our challenges and accomplishments for the first half of the year, I am struck by what a difference six months can make!

Of course, the year started with record snowfall, and we won't soon forget the tremendous work required by our Streets and other Public Works employees to keep our City plowed and our citizens moving. Overall, we survived winter's storm in stride, just as our citizens expect we would.

From the snows, we moved to a healthy crop of potholes, very high water in the Spokane River, and some minor flooding in Peaceful Valley and along Upriver.

To deal with street issues, we initiated a plan to improve street maintenance now and in the future. We added more pothole crews to City streets immediately and moved \$500,000 for additional street maintenance this summer. As of the first of June, we had filled nearly 3,000 potholes!

Now, the summer construction season is well under way, and we have 21 significant street and infrastructure projects planned this summer, totaling about \$30 million that is being invested in the local economy.

Since I took office, we have enhanced public safety, hiring and training new firefighters and police officers. We are buying four badly needed new fire trucks, restructuring our Municipal Court in a collaborative process, and working with County representatives to plan a new Detention Facility that will include community corrections components designed to reduce recidivism.

Big news for both Police and Fire is the voters' approval of the sales tax measure for public safety communications and the restoration of Crime Check. Thank you, Spokane!

On the economic front, Spokane—and the rest of the nation—has seen some slowdown this year. We have been striving to make it easier to do business in Spokane. We held a series of three Mayor's Community Roundtables on these topics:

1. How We Pay for City Services
2. How We Use Incentives to Encourage Business and Development
3. How We Drive Growth into Centers & Corridors

We had hard-hitting comments from our panelists and audience members, and we are listening to their advice and taking action. Our low per capita revenues at the city are linked to low per capita incomes in Spokane. We are focused on workforce development and encouraging higher-wage jobs. Planning for business growth is accelerating in the University District and in the Neighborhood Business Centers.

Where City processes and regulations frustrate our customers, we are examining the way we do business to see what it will take for us to improve. We immediately fix the simple problems and identify steps to address the more complex situations.

Not shying away from difficulty, courageous employees are taking risks to be successful, even when the probabilities of success seem low. We are engaged in meaningful conversation with the County about planning for urban growth and annexation that fairly distributes tax revenues. We are asking developers and neighborhood advocates to come together to design balanced development plans.



[more...](#)



2008 Mid-Year Accomplishments

Infrastructure

One of the City's primary functions is to build and maintain infrastructure. Traditional infrastructure includes streets, water, and sewer and water reclamation, but we have expanded our definition of infrastructure to include our urban forest and bicycle and pedestrian amenities. We are working hard to serve our citizens, while conserving our resources and protecting our environment. All of our infrastructure keeps our citizens and economy moving and accommodates growth.

During the first half of 2008, we:

Launched a grant program to plant new street trees in downtown Spokane, with a goal of replacing or adding up to 50 trees a year.

Convened an ad hoc work group to prepare a plan for maintaining the 10-Year Street Bond projects and all of our streets. Another work group

is addressing how we can include and pay for Comprehensive Plan features as we rehabilitate streets with bond money.

Began meeting with County and municipal elected officials and business leaders to address regional transportation funding priorities, trying to balance completion of the North-South Freeway with ongoing maintenance of streets and implementation of mass transit, bicycling and pedestrian plans.

Hosted ongoing meetings of the Regional Water Management Dialogue with Post Falls Mayor Clay Larkin to discuss regional water quantity and quality issues.

Continued to work on updating to the City's Master Bicycle Plan and began a regional update to the community's pedestrian plan. Shoreline Master Plan work is wrapping up.

Arranged to restore alley garbage pickup in the Corbin Park area, with more neighborhoods to follow.

Proceeded with a proposal to implement traffic impact fees. The proposal has moved through the Plan Commission and will be heard by City Council soon.

Public Safety

Police and firefighters are often what citizens think of first when they think of public safety. At the City, though, we have a far broader definition, including disaster preparedness, municipal court, and our public defender's and prosecutor's offices. Our goals include promoting safety, reducing crime, and addressing nuisance problems like graffiti.

During the first half of 2008, we:

Reached a tentative agreement with the Police Guild on the creation of an ombudsman office.

Hired new police officers, who are training at the Police Academy to help fill 12 new positions created in the 2008 budget.

Mayor's Message - continued

One thing that draws citizens and businesses to Spokane is our quality of life, and we feel very strongly about protecting and enhancing it. The Parks & Recreation Department is moving full-speed ahead on the construction of new pools, spraypads, and a sports complex beside Albi Stadium. Construction on all six new pools will begin at the end of the 2008 swimming season, with the pools ready for summer fun in June 2009.

To address our community's human resources, we have commenced a work group to address high school drop-out rates, and to determine ways the City can support community efforts to safeguard our children from infancy to early adulthood. A Regional Housing Task Force has been formed and is developing recommendations for an adequate supply of housing in all price ranges.

We are moving the City ahead with solid leadership and financial management. Labor contracts have been finalized with four of our nine labor bargaining units. Negotiating teams are to be commended for overcoming large differences of opinion and settling on terms that are fair for the employees while helping stabilize the city's long-term financial picture.

Several pending matters outside the scope of contract negotiations have been resolved. We have an agreement on a Police ombudsman, and we are improving the way we address labor matters through a new City Administrative Executive Board to negotiate on behalf of the mayor, and a Standing Labor-Management Committee to bring representatives together regularly to address broad policy and long-term goals.

Our financial approach led to another upgrade to our bond rating by Standard & Poor's. This is phenomenal news in the face of national economic woes and our own local downturn in revenues. Our Finance Division and City Council are to be commended for adhering to principles-based spending plans, and all employees are thanked for "tightening the belts" on spending while continuing to deliver excellent service during these lean times.

We have been busy since January 1! My sincere congratulations and appreciation to City staff for the many jobs well done. I look forward to continued progress in the second half of this great 2008.

Mayor B. Verner

Mayor, City of Spokane

Public Safety – continued

Graduated 11 new firefighters from the Fire Academy and had six firefighters complete their probationary year.

Named a Court of Limited Jurisdiction Task Force to review our current municipal court system of processing cases with recommendations coming in early July.

Began offering the Alive at 25 program, which helps drivers aged 15 to 25 identify their specific risk factors for accidents and learn tools to reduce those risks.

Created a process to allow the public defender's office, prosecutor's office, and municipal probation to receive information electronically, including police reports, appointment of counsel notices, and probation letters.

Received a \$500,000 federal appropriation for law enforcement technology initiatives.

Sustainable Economic Growth

A strong economy is critical for Spokane's health, and it is our desire to create an economy that is sustainable and predictable for our citizens. We want to encourage growth according to our Comprehensive Plan centers and corridors strategy, and we want to attract and grow businesses that are sustainable and build on our strengths. We are looking to create a hub of "green" industry in our community, encourage the build-out of the University District on the east end of our core, and use incentives to drive the kind of growth we want to see.



During the first half of 2008, we:

Completed the North Division annexation on April 1, following a successful revenue-sharing agreement with Spokane County.

Completed a redevelopment plan for the Joe E. Mann Reserve Center in Hillyard, which is being surplus by the U.S. military.

Convened a regional task force on affordable housing that's being staffed by the City's Community Development Department.

Created the Department of Business and Development Support to streamline incentive programs that benefit business and support important projects like Kendall Yards, the University District, and the redevelopment of Hillyard.

Secured \$2.4 million in state funds to complete street construction in the University District.

Launched the development of a strategic action plan that will identify and address the impacts of climate change and energy security on the City.

Completed an unprecedented agreement to proceed with joint planning with Spokane County in the urban growth areas, providing greater consistency for local developers.

Moved forward with the process to issue a request for proposals for the redevelopment of the Playfair site.

Community Quality of Life

Spokane is Near Nature, Near Perfect. Our unique quality of life—with easy access to outdoor recreation and natural beauty—is one of our greatest assets. As a City, we are working to enhance cultural and recreational opportunities to ensure we keep that edge. We have an outstanding parks system that we continue to enhance, and arts and youth programs that build on what we have.

During the first half of 2008, we:

Moved rapidly to design and begin construction on the projects with the \$42.9 million Parks and Play Bond that was passed in November. Construction is under way on spray pads, pools have been designed, and design plans are nearing completion on Albi area improvements.

Began work to develop a strategic plan for maintaining the new pools and sports facilities and tackle other deferred maintenance and capital needs in Parks.

Achieved record attendance at the Riverfront Park Skyride, thanks to higher than normal spring runoff.

Implemented expanded hours at the Shadle and South Hill Spokane Public Library branches and launched a new Library web site.

Were named one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People by America's Promise.

Launched an on-line version of the City's popular Heritage Walks, which feature historic buildings throughout downtown.

Administration and Leadership

We have goals of solid financial management, leadership on regional and citywide issues, and open and accountable government. We emphasize strong relationships among the City's elected officials and with other governments, neighbors and business partners. These are basics that are critical for the City to be successful.

During the first half of 2008, we:

Established a new revenue reserve and funded it with \$5 million from excess revenue from 2007.

Received a bond-rating upgrade from Standard & Poor's, one of the nation's major bond-rating agencies, recognizing the City's solid financial performance.

Launched a new, searchable tool to view City Clerk records and documents on the City's web site at www.spokanecity.org, which now includes more than 28,000 documents.

Made key appointments to the City's senior leadership, including a new Public Works & Utilities Division Director and Assistant Director, a new Water Department Director, a new Parks & Recreation Department Director, and a new City Attorney.

Began work on the City's 2009 budget, based on principles and priorities.

Take Part in Your Future

City leads the way on sustainability efforts

Leading the way to a better tomorrow includes taking steps today to reduce energy and fuel consumption, to encourage the growth of “green” industry and practices, and to conserve and protect our other resources. This work saves taxpayer dollars and helps create a community that is well-positioned for the future.

“We have before us a great opportunity to save money, maintain our natural beauty and quality of life, and boost our economy,” says Mayor Mary Verner. “And time is of the essence as we consider skyrocketing fuel costs, continued expensive environmental regulation, and the need to stay competitive in a global marketplace.”

In the first six months of 2008, the City has worked hard to address these issues.

In February, the City launched the Mayor’s Sustainability Task Force—a group of citizens that is creating a strategic action plan to identify ways the City can help reduce the impacts of global warming and our reliance on fossil fuels. The task force has held a number of public meetings and will continue to meet throughout the summer in order to release a draft plan in the fall.

The City is not waiting for the results of that plan before taking action. The Mayor already has issued policies reducing the idling of City vehicles and discouraging the use of bottled water. She has directed staff to investigate ways to reduce fuel consumption and energy usage, and “green teams” have sprung up among City staff to evaluate processes and purchases.

As part of a commitment to the Mayors’ Climate Protection Agreement, the City has completed an initial greenhouse gas inventory and is considering ways to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The Mayor also teamed up with Post Falls Mayor Clay Larkin to hold the second in a series of Water Management Dialogues, which is considering concerns about water quantity and quality, following the release of a significant study that provides new insight on the finite nature of the Spokane-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer.

The Mayor—along with several City Council Members—is also proposing an ordinance that would restrict summer lawn watering to reduce water consumption.

The Spokane Regional Solid Waste System is launching a new education campaign to encourage more recycling, and staff are exploring means to expand and improve recycling options.

The City’s Planning Services Department is working on incentives to encourage green building practices.

Reducing single-occupancy commuting is another goal. The City was a major sponsor of Bike to Work Week, and the Mayor also participated in the Travel Green campaign. Meanwhile, the City is evaluating subsidized bus passes for employees to reduce commute

trips to City buildings and facilities, and new hybrid vehicles have been added to the City’s motor vehicle fleet.

And that’s just the beginning. There’s still time to get involved in the Mayor’s Sustainability Task Force work and to learn about what you can do to make a difference as you go about your everyday tasks. Go to www.greenspokane.org for a variety of information and resources.

www.greenspokane.org

By the Numbers...

Spokane Fire Department graduated **11** firefighters from the academy, and **6** more completed their probationary year.

Nearly **2,200** documents were added to the City Clerk’s document imaging system—all of which are available in a searchable, on-line database at www.spokanecity.org.

A new revenue reserve was created with **\$5 million** from additional 2007 revenue; the revenue reserve is essentially a savings account that helps the City continue to provide services when revenues come in lower than budgeted.

Five new splash pads—at Audubon, Coeur d’Alene, Friendship, Chief Garry, and Thornton-Murphy parks—are being constructed this summer as part of the \$42.9 million Pools and Play bond passed in November. **Five** more will be built in 2009.

The Spokane Police Department thanked its volunteers for donating **1 million hours** of time over the last 20 years.

A new HVAC system being installed in City Hall will save **1.4 million kwh** of electricity annually.

The City will complete **21 infrastructure projects** in 2008 providing \$30 million in local investment. Also, **3,000 potholes** have been filled through June 1.

Through June, **958,000 items** were checked out or renewed by Spokane Public Library patrons--up 9 percent from the same period in 2007.

In 2006, the City of Spokane spent **\$716 per capita** on General Fund services, including police, fire, streets, libraries, parks, and more, about half of the **\$1,424 per capita** spent on average by cities of more than 200,000 in population in the state of Washington.



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