



TO THE CITY OF LA CENTER CITY COUNCIL AND CITIZENS

I am pleased to present the City of La Center's 2025 Proposed Budget for your review and consideration. The 2025 Proposed Budget continues existing city services and service levels while balancing the budget and nearly eliminating use of reserve funds. The 2025 budget projects a surplus of \$60,000.

The City of La Center had several significant accomplishments in 2024, and the 2025 Proposed Budget implements several additional positive changes. Notable 2024 accomplishments included:

- **Junction Development.** In 2021 the city approved site plans for development at the Minit Management location. The proposed development includes a 101-room hotel; an 11,600 square foot multi-tenant commercial building; a 4,510 square foot convenience store with a drive-through window; a 2,800 square foot drive-through restaurant; and a 12-pump automobile fueling island. Construction of the convenience store and fuel island was completed and received occupancy in August of 2024. The store is currently open. The hotel has been approved for building permits and is anticipated to begin construction in the spring of 2025. When completed, this major development will add new jobs and set the stage for future development and increased city tax revenue.

In August 2024, the city received a new site plan application in the Junction area on the east side of NW Paradise Park Road for a five story 109-room hotel, the site includes a 3,900 square foot commercial building and a 2,200 square foot drive through quick serve restaurant. The final decision for the application is scheduled to be issued in early December 2024.

- **East 4th Street and Highland Road Traffic Signal**
The city received a Safe Routes to School Grant for \$966,000 to construct a signal at the intersection of 4th Street and Highland Road. This project also includes some electronic signs, consisting of rectangular rapid flashing beacons at 4th Street by the paver lot, a speed feedback sign just east of the new signal, and a 20-mph flashing school zone sign on 339th Street just east of the High School. The project was bid, and AES contractor was awarded the contract. The project started construction on November 4, 2024 and will complete new intersection ramps and foundations by January of 2025. The signal installation will continue in June of 2025.
- **East 4th Street Widening/Brezee Creek Culvert.** The city is in the final stages of permitting and acquiring the right-of-way for the remainder of the project, which will ultimately remove two fish barriers, reopening the length of Brezee Creek to fish, add sidewalks and buffered bike lanes on the north and south side of 4th Street just east of Cedar Avenue to Highland Road. The city has secured funding for the construction of the project. To date the city has received over \$11.3 million dollars in state and federal grants and anticipate that this project will be advertised in early 2025 for construction to start in summer of 2025.
- **New Residential Development.** The city is on pace to issue 80 building permits for new single-family homes in 2024. Several new lots will become available in late 2024 and early 2025. The



2025 Proposed Budget projects that development will continue in line with 2024 levels. The growth projections are conservative to account for the impacts of rising interest rates and rising home prices. The proposed budget includes issuing 80 building permits for new single-family homes in 2025.

The growth of the city, and the new development at the La Center junction present both a challenge and an opportunity. Growth and the resulting increased sales tax revenues will allow the city to reduce the dependency on tax revenue from the La Center card rooms, however the city must grow in a responsible manner that preserves the community's values. Responsible growth provides the opportunity to enhance public and private services, provide employment opportunities within the city, and diversify the tax base. The 2025 Proposed Budget includes several initiatives to address these challenges and opportunities, including:

- **Staffing Levels.** One new employee is included in the 2025 Proposed Budget. A new full-time Maintenance position for the Public Works Department will be hired.
- **Police Contract.** In 2024 the City Council signed a five-year contract with Clark County Sheriff's Office to cover policing for the City. The 2025 budget includes the contract with CCSO.
- **Paper to Digital Grant.** The City of La Center has been awarded \$194,500 for a 2024-2025 paper to digital grant. The purpose of this grant is to help transition the residential permit review process to a fully digital system.
- **Infrastructure Investment.** Funding for several critical infrastructure projects is identified in the 2025 Proposed Budget. Among the proposed projects are:
 - A new 10-foot wide, shared use path along Pacific Highway from Riverside Estates to the existing sidewalk is currently under design. This path will provide students with a safe route to walk or bike to school. A federal grant of \$200,000 federal grant is funding the design and \$700,000 of federal funding has been received for construction. The city is pursuing the remaining funding for construction.
 - A community welcome sign at the La Center junction with Interstate 5.
 - Roadway Safety improvements will be completed in 2025, thanks to an \$880,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Transportation.
- **Downtown and Timmen Landing Planned Action Areas.** Work will continue on these two planned action areas to establish the community's vision and set the stage for development and re-development of the areas north and south of the East Fork. In 2023 these projects started with existing conditions and marketing analysis. Through 2025 an action-oriented plan for the future development of these areas will be developed with community and stakeholder input,



City of La Center, WA
210 East 4th Street
La Center, WA 98629

and formally adopted by the City Council at the end of this year. These Action Areas are part of the Sub Area Plan, which upon adoption will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. This work will reduce timeframes and risk to developers that build projects consistent with the plans allowing for approved planned development within the city.

- **Community Center Renovation.** The city received a grant from the Department of Commerce to update the Community Center and improve the outdoor restrooms. Bid proposals are due back this month for renovation costs. The community center will be closed from December 27, 2024, through March 2025 for the renovation. We are excited to have an updated facility for the community.
- **New Public Works Shop.** The city continues to improve its services to the community with plowing, sanding, debris hauling, sidewalk repairs, road repairs, jet rodding sewer lines, cleaning of culverts, catch basins, etc. These services require adequate equipment. The city will be tearing down an existing shop and replacing it with a larger shop to house the equipment needed to provide services. This housing allows for out of the weather repairs, longevity and keeps our trucks that use pumps from freezing.

La Center is fortunate to have an engaged community, active community leaders and dedicated city employees. Those attributes, along with conservative fiscal management, will help us to continue to support a safe and thriving community with high quality city services. A complete summary of the 2025 Proposed Budget is attached to this letter. I want to thank the city's Budget Advisory Committee for their hard work over this past year in helping to develop the city's 2025 budget proposal. I look forward to receiving public input at the City Council public hearings scheduled for the 13th and 20th of November. Information is available on the city's web site or by contacting me directly at tstrobehn@ci.lacenter.wa.us.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas Strobehn

Mayor, City of La Center