

City of Fircrest

Town Topics

February 2020

CITY COUNCIL

Hunter T. George, *Mayor*
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Mayor's Message



Offering thanks to the Names and Edwards families

This is going to be an exciting year in Fircrest as we open the new pool in the summer and then start construction on the new community center in the fall. The whole project will be completed a year earlier than planned thanks to incredible support from longtime families and businesses.

In summer 2019, we held a ceremonial closing of the old pool and announced two major financial gifts to support the project:

- The William and Joyce Edwards Foundation kicked off the fundraising campaign with a \$1 million contribution.
- The Names Family Foundation, which was started by Scott and Sis Names, pledged \$3 million.

The Edwards and Names families have deep roots in Fircrest and fond memories of the pool and community center. Both were very excited to support new facilities for the next generations. The community responded to their support with overwhelming gratitude. A few months later, the Names family contacted us and said they wanted to contribute more. And then the Edwards family told us they, too, wanted to increase their pledge.

All told, three branches of the Names family have pledged \$4.15 million toward the new pool and community center. And the Edwards family is pledging a total of \$2 million.

Tremendous, amazing, inspiring, humbling. It's tough to find the words that adequately acknowledge such generosity. We all know that Fircrest is a special place, and these two families are committed to helping us keep it that way.

At this point, we're not expecting any other 7-figure gifts. (But feel free to contact me if you know of anyone who might be interested!) However, we are in the process of reaching out to some longtime Fircrest families and business owners to gauge their interest in making meaningful pledges to the project.

Two businesses with deep ties to Fircrest — Columbia Bank and the accounting firm Johnson, Stone and Pagano — have recently committed to support the project. Fircrest is home to Columbia Bank's first branch outside of downtown Tacoma, before it became a banking powerhouse. And Johnson, Stone and Pagano, located on Regents Boulevard, was established in Fircrest in 1982.

We'll have conversations with other families and businesses over the next few months. We believe some of them may be interested in making a gift in memory of parents, grandparents or other loved ones who called Fircrest home for a long time.

And finally, we will provide a way for others to make smaller contributions, similar to the bricks in the Fircrest City Hall lobby or the fence posts at the Chambers Bay playground. We are still working on details as of this writing, so stay tuned!

Hunter T. George, Mayor

New Sidewalks and Street Improvements Planned for 2020

The City of Fircrest has received two large grants that will enable us to extend sidewalks further west on Emerson Street as well as improve the driving surface on a long stretch of Alameda Avenue.

Both projects will be completed this year, with the design getting started this winter/spring and the construction to be done this summer.

The Emerson Sidewalk Extension Project will add sidewalks to the south side of the street from Alameda Avenue to Thelma Gilmur park. The project also includes improving the existing crosswalk at Thelma Gilmur Park to enhance safety when crossing Emerson.

The Alameda Avenue project provides a grind and overlay — public works-speak for new pavement — from Regents Boulevard to Electron Way. This project will grind down the existing pavement to improve the gutter height for better drainage and also improve the existing roadway surface.

The estimated combined cost of both projects is about \$1.23 million. We will receive \$1.1 million in the form of two grants from the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board, which awards streets construction and maintenance grants to cities and counties. It's a highly competitive process that is funded by the Washington State gas tax. The remainder of the project will be funded by the City of Fircrest.

Jerry Wakefield, Public Works Director

Check out our **Up To Date Information** webpage www.cityoffircrest.net/updates for the latest information, including current meeting agendas, minutes, resolutions, ordinances, and project updates.

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City Manager's Corner



City Council defers 1% property tax increase

I have good news about the City of Fircrest's budget for 2020, which was adopted by the City Council at the end of 2019.

First, some context. The City's primary revenue source for the General Fund comes from property taxes. From year to year, property tax revenues for Washington cities are limited under state law to no more than a 1 percent increase (other than voted bonds) plus the property tax value of any new construction. It's not easy managing expenditures under that restriction, since the cost of services usually grows by more than 1 percent a year.

Under state law, cities have the option to defer the 1 percent increase in property tax revenue to some future year, but this is a rare occurrence in the state because of regularly rising costs of salaries, benefits, supplies, etc.

With that in mind, the City Council knew that property taxes are going up because of the park bond approved by voters last year to help pay for a new pool and community center.

As I noted above, voter-approved bonds are not subject to the 1 percent limitation. But the City Council wanted to limit the impact of higher taxes as much as possible.

Here's the good news I mentioned at the beginning: the City Council adopted a balanced budget without the need for additional revenue, which means they deferred the 1 percent increase in tax revenues to provide a measure of relief to property owners in Fircrest in a year when taxes are already going up due to the parks and recreation project.

The City of Fircrest's budget is posted online under the Finance Department section at www.CityofFircrest.net.

Speaking of the pool and community center project, there will be a community meeting Thursday, February 20, at 6 p.m. at the Community Center. We plan to provide an update to the community on the status of the pool construction, the timeline and design update for the community center phase of the project, and an update on fundraising. Separate mailers for the meeting will also be sent out.

Scott Pingel,
City Manager

What is the Future of 19th and Mildred?

That is the question the City Council is asking and the motivation behind three public workshops that were held in January. Over 500 flyers and emails were sent to residents, property owners, businesses, and other stakeholders. Great discussion occurred with 20 – 28 people in attendance each night.

Mr. Rangwala, the planning consultant for this project, kicked off the workshops with a presentation on Form-Based Code (a type of zoning code that could be used; see the website for more explanation) and then began helping develop a vision for the area.

Here is a brief summary of what came out of those meetings: While the majority of Fircrest is laid out with great sidewalks, parks, open spaces, and walkable blocks, this area stretches 2,500 feet from Mildred to Alameda with no access to the heart of Fircrest. People are often genuinely surprised that this area is even in Fircrest. Why don't we change that?

Looking at this "block", he began to talk about how over time and as properties naturally redevelop, this area could become more connected to, and feel more a part of, Fircrest. He presented a preliminary street grid overlay that could chop this massive area into smaller Fircrest-size blocks.

For the mixed-use area, the vision would be to allow 6 to 7-story buildings along the edge of Mildred and 19th. Behind that would be a layer that would allow 3 to 4-story buildings. This would then transition into the current 2-story residential and neighborhood commercial.

What benefit does the City get as a whole?

- It maximizes the potential of the property from an economic, residential capacity, and commercial diversity standpoint. Think more restaurants, services, and activities in our community.
- While 75-foot buildings may seem tall, they would create a City designed buffer or transition between Fircrest and the 75 to 110-foot buildings University Place is proposing on the opposite side of Mildred.
- For the increased height and density, Fircrest would require a developer to provide public streets and open spaces. This would mean over time someone could walk, drive, or bike from Regents to 19th without having to drive on Mildred. It also means some parks, courtyards and/or outdoor gathering areas for residents.
- No existing properties are being forced to change. This is designed to provide a strong blueprint for when these properties naturally redevelop so both the developer and the City as a whole benefit.

Remember, this is just a snapshot and there will be more opportunities to get involved. Visit the webpage for more information: <https://www.cityoffircrest.net/19th-and-mildred/>. Also, staff is happy to sit down and answer any questions and discuss any vision you may have.

Angeilie Stahlnecker,
Planning & Building Administrator

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Parks Projects Completed So Far Under the 2019 Park Bond

When 79 percent of voters approved the park bond in April 2019, they didn't just approve funding for a new pool and community center. Some other parks infrastructure improvements were included in the project list as well, and some have been completed.

Here's a summary of improvements to date that will enhance our parks system for years to come:

Playground at Fircrest Park

The playground equipment at Fircrest Park was over 20 years old and wearing out. We were able to replace it thanks to a combination of City funds and private philanthropy courtesy of Optimum Physical Therapy, which hosted a Friends of Fircrest Golf Tournament.

Whittier Tennis Courts

The City resurfaced the tennis courts at Whittier Park. The resurfacing was badly needed as the previous surface was over 20 years old, had several hazards and was temporarily closed due to safety concerns.

Fircrest Park Electrical Panel Repair

This project updated the electrical panel at Fircrest Park. This infrastructure supports such events as Fircrest Fun Days and National Night Out, among others.

Whittier Shelter Repairs

This project provided much needed repairs to the Whittier Shelter.

Whittier Park Irrigation

The most recent project to be completed was the installation of a new irrigation system at Whittier Park. This project replaced the aging system that was not providing full coverage to the park. In turn, large areas were not receiving enough water throughout the growing season, therefore turning to mud during the fall.

Whittier Electrical Panel Repairs

Repairs and upgrades were made to the Whittier Park electrical panel.

Jeff Grover, Parks and Recreation Director

Telephone Reassurance Program



The Fircrest Police Telephone Reassurance Program is a way to promote security and peace of mind for "at-risk" older adults or disabled Fircrest residents. A staff member will call you once a week on a prearranged day to verify your well-being. If we cannot reach you, we will reach out to local contacts you've provided us with and request they check on you. If no one can be reached a Fircrest Officer will stop by your home and do a Welfare Check. Brochures are available at the Fircrest Police Department, City Hall and the Fircrest Community Center.

The program is free of charge and available to older adults and adults with disabilities that reside within the Fircrest city limits. Reassurance calls are available weekly on either Monday or Friday between 2pm and 5pm. Applications are available on the City of Fircrest website, at Fircrest City Hall, and at the Fircrest Police Department.

As always, we want to stress that you as the citizens are the eyes and ears for us here at the Fircrest Police Department and that if you see or hear anything that seems suspicious or odd to you please call 9-1-1 and allow us the opportunity to investigate your concern. Working together and looking out for ourselves and our neighbors we can keep the City of Fircrest the wonderful place it has always been.

John Cheesman
Chief of Police

Welcome Councilmember Joe Barrentine

The City of Fircrest is pleased to welcome Joe Barrentine to the City Council. He won election in 2019 to succeed Blake Surina, who served two terms and chose not to seek re-election.

Councilmember Barrentine served on the City's official steering committee for the pool and community center project, which provided valuable feedback and recommendations to staff and the City Council.

He works in the communications department at the Port of Tacoma and Northwest Seaport Alliance, and spent 20 years before that as a photo and video journalist in Spokane, Tacoma and Seattle. He and his wife Ingrid also founded a Fircrest-based photography business. They are the parents of two beautiful and precocious young girls.

Like us on Facebook



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Upcoming Events

Fish 'N Fun

March 21, 2020, 9 AM - 2 PM

Bring your fishing pole and get ready to have some fun! We'll have a pool stocked with trout and ready to catch. Your child can catch and release OR take home what you catch. It's up to you. We'll even have trout recipes available. Refreshments will be provided. This is a FREE Event for children ages 10 years and under. Registration is required. Children need to bring their own fishing poles. There are five time slots



available between 9 AM-1 PM. Open fish will happen from 1 PM – 2 PM. Tickets will be available at the Fircrest Community Center beginning March 2, 2020.

Easter Egg Hunt & Eggstravaganza

April 11, 2020, 10 AM

The Fircrest Annual Easter Egg Hunt will be held on Saturday, April 11 at 10 AM. Fircrest Tot Lot for children 4 & under and the Fircrest Park for children ages 5-9. Join us at 9 am at the Community Center for games and refreshments before the event kicks off. Cost is free.

Sports and Activities

Pee Wee Indoor Soccer

First practice will be held on Saturday, March 14, 2020

Registration Dates: January 6—February 8

Fee: \$30/Residents \$50/Non-residents

Pee Wee T-Ball

First practice will be held on Saturday, May 13, 2020

Registration dates: February 24—April 4

Fee: \$30/Residents

\$50/Non-residents

Creative Movement Ballet

Taught by Damris Caughlan, Artistic director, Metro Ballet of Tacoma.

Session 1—January 16—March 29

Session II—March 26—May 28

Day: Thursdays

Ages: 3.5—5 years old

Time: 9:00—9:45 AM

Fee: \$81 Session I

\$81 Session II

Gentle Hatha Yoga

Silver Sneakers and Silver and Fit are accepted for this class.

Days: Monday, Wednesday, Friday

Time: 9:00 AM—10:00 AM

Fee: \$30 per month or \$4 Drop-in

Instructor: Cynthia Endicott

Adult Men's 4X4 Basketball League

This self-officiated league is for men 25 years and over. Space is limited to the first 12 teams. Team registrations are due no later than March 13th.

Days: Tuesdays and/or Thursdays

Fee: \$100 per team, additional \$10 for each non-resident player

Fircrest Youth Baseball (Kindergarten—5th Grade)

The leagues offered are K/1st grade T-ball, 2/3rd grade Coach Pitch, 4/5th grade Boys Incrediball and 4/5th grade Girls Modified Fast Pitch.

Practices will begin mid-April & games begin around the first week of May.

Registration Dates: Residents: January 27—March 2

Non-residents: February 10—March 2

Fee: \$40/Residents

\$70/Non residents

2/3rd Grade Basketball Tournament

Come out and play in in our /3rd grade post season youth basketball tournament at the Fircrest Community Center. Teams will be guaranteed three games.

Dates: February 29—March 1

Registration: By February 15

Fee: \$125 per team



The 2020 Census is a once in a decade opportunity to influence decisions that directly affect your daily life. Census numbers are used to understand the local population and determine funding for everyday resources like preschool programs, health care, transportation and affordable housing. Census numbers also determine how many elected officials you have at the state and national level.

By April 1, 2020, every home will receive an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. You will have three options for responding: Online | By phone | By mail **Make your voice heard. You count!**