

# CITY OF LYNDEN

## ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

Scott Korthuis, Mayor  
(360) 354 - 1170



January 5, 2021

Whatcom County Executive Satpal Sidhu  
County Council Chairman Barry Buchanan  
311 Grand Avenue  
Bellingham, WA 98264

Executive Sidhu and Chairman Buchanan:

The City of Lynden respectfully requests \$250,000 in Conservation Futures Funds to help purchase a four-acre site for a park in the heart of our City. As I am sure you know, finding open space in the center of any city is extremely rare. The Glenning Street site was home to Lynden's first school. The site was selected for public use then for the same reason it continues to be a valuable community asset now; it offers a highly unique, centralized location that is accessible to the community.

Local support for the Glenning Park project can be gaged by the willingness of our residents to reach into their own pockets to pay for it: The entire cost of the property is \$1,450,000. The Conservations Future Funds we request are less than 20% of that amount.

Most of the remaining funding has already been raised locally through contributions from individuals, the City of Lynden, and a successful bond measure where residents agreed to tax themselves to help pay for the property. It is worth noting that this bond measure was passed overwhelmingly on the first attempt, an extraordinary achievement in our City.

Taken together, local funding has already provided \$950,000 for the project. With \$250,000 in Conservation Future funds plus \$250,000 more from other local sources we can complete the funding package and ensure the entire four-acre park will be preserved in perpetuity.

You probably know that Lynden is growing quickly, and that we are under a great deal of pressure to grow yet more. This growth pressure has caused us to develop property within the City limits that will accommodate 2,000 new homes and add 6,000 new residents. No one disputes the fact that there needs to be a healthy balance of outdoor space to accommodate these new residents; this property, within walking distance of homes, businesses and institutions would be critical to providing that balance.

Through a set of fortuitous historical circumstances, these four acres in the heart of Lynden remain vacant and ripe to become a park of trees, natural areas, ball fields, a playground and an event venue for the community. No other similarly situated, sizeable parcel of undeveloped land exists in the core of the city. This is a "now or never" opportunity.

The historic roots of the property also call for its continued public ownership, especially for its availability to our children. One hundred and thirty-three years ago, Lynden's founders Phoebe and Holden Judson donated the Glenning Street property for Lynden's first school. The original school building served for nearly 90 years and was demolished in the late 1960s. Since then, the property has been used by the school district for passive events including athletics, band practice and a wide range of other events.

In need of money to renovate the administration building, the Lynden School District announced its intent to sell the Glenning Street property. The announcement immediately attracted the interest of developers and the concern of Lynden citizens. Under the leadership of Harlan Kredit, the Glenning Schoolyard Committee was formed, consisting of community leaders including farmers, local residents, neighbors, business owners, educators, city planners and others.

The Committee convinced the school district not to sell the property to a developer for top dollar and formed a partnership with the City to purchase the property for \$1,450,000. The City agreed to contribute \$200,000 to the project and include another \$200,000 in the successful bond measure I mentioned earlier.

The City and the Committee agreed that if fundraising falls short, a portion of the property would be sold off to make up for the shortfall. This would significantly diminish - forever - the future value of the Glenning schoolyard property to the community. We are determined not to let this happen. And it is in that spirit of determination we ask your help.

As I mentioned, a significant amount of the needed funding has already been secured. What remains now is the need for \$500,000. There is an aggressive, region-wide fundraising campaign underway and we are confident there will be many modest and several more substantial contributions. I am asking you for half of that amount, \$250,000 in County Conservation Futures Funds.

We are confident that with your partnership, we can restore this now relatively barren, featureless property to a quality-of-life sustaining Lynden oasis. Thank you for considering this request. This is a would be a valuable investment in rare piece of open space in our increasingly urbanized environment.

Sincerely,



Scott Korthuis, Mayor  
City of Lynden

CC: **Glenning Schoolyard Committee:** Harlan Kredit (Chair), Dale Bedlington, Dick Bedlington, Cheri DeBoer, Terry DeValois, Heidi Doornenbal, Heather Flaherty, Lisa Groeneweg, Jim Hale, Mauri Ingram, Jeff Jansen, Mike Lewis, Bob Libolt, Jeff Littlejohn, Matt Maberry, Monte Maberry, Vern Meenderinck, Ron Polinder, Brad Rader, Rena Rudy, Chuck Robinson, Ken Stremler, and Sean Withrow.