

THE YORKER

MARCH 2025



FROM THE YORK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION—BRINGING THE YORK COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Wow, what a work party!



On Saturday, January 25, the City's Parks Department led a Community Work Party at Rock Hill Park that saw an amazing turnout of **82 volunteers** alongside Parks staff... a record high number for this little park's periodic maintenance efforts. **Ryan Robie**, the Parks Department's Volunteer Program Coordinator, reports that "we planted 45 native trees and shrubs, removed approximately 10 cubic yards of invasive species, and spread about 4 cubic yards of mulch."

Thanks so much to all the volunteers from both within and outside York who pitched in that great morning, and to our terrific Parks Department for organizing and directing the event... and to **Woods Coffee**, which generously provided delicious coffee to keep you all fueled as you dedicated your time and energy to ecological restoration.

IN THIS ISSUE

Rock Hill Park work party success	1
President's Corner	2
Rock Hill Park Refresh designs	3
YWCA shelter opens	4
Sponsoring York events	4-5
Rental management changing	5
The Humboldt-Iron alley mural	6
Local business spotlight	6
The Way Station has opened	7
Calendar of events	8
Still got those yard signs?	8

...and see page 3 for the new playground designs for Rock Hill Park!



Photographs courtesy of Ryan Robie

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YORK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

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President's Corner

By Colin Beazley, YNA President

Spring is springing in York! The days are getting longer, the birds are singing (or maybe squawking about parking), and our neighborhood garden gnomes are starting their happy dance. While we eagerly anticipate the vibrant greenery and blossoming gardens, let's also remember the opportunity this season presents to strengthen our community bonds, especially with those who might need a little extra support.

As we emerge from the winter months, let's be mindful of our elderly neighbors and those who are marginalized or less fortunate. A simple check-in, an offer to help with yard work (even if your own yard looks like a jungle gym for squirrels), or even just a friendly conversation can make a world of difference. Open up your garden bounty and front porches to neighbors, and take the initiative to introduce yourself to someone new.

With the warmer weather, we'll see more pedestrians, cyclists, and families enjoying our sidewalks and streets. Let's all do our part to keep these spaces clear and safe. Trim back overgrown bushes (before they start demanding rent), ensure pathways are free of debris (especially rogue frisbees), and drive with extra caution—especially around those corners where you can't see around the giant rhododendron.

York is also excited to partner with the City of Bellingham on several environmental and social initiatives this spring. We'll be participating in a **May 31 Work Party at Rock Hill Park** to clean up the Pollinator Gardens, promoting sustainable gardening practices via the **York Garden** where plots are still available, and supporting the



Sehome/York proximity with a neighborhood event in early June. These events are fantastic opportunities to meet new people, contribute to our neighborhood's well-being, and celebrate the beauty of our shared space.

Let's use this spring as a time to cultivate our community. Extend a hand to those in need, foster connections (even if you're socially awkward), and work together with the city to make York an even more vibrant and welcoming place for everyone.

Mission Statement

of the York Neighborhood Association:

To reduce isolation among residents; to enhance the quality of life in a low- and moderate-income urban neighborhood; to create a sense of community; to reduce or prevent crime; and to preserve the historic character of the neighborhood.

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★ **College students: please consider joining us as a student rep!** ★

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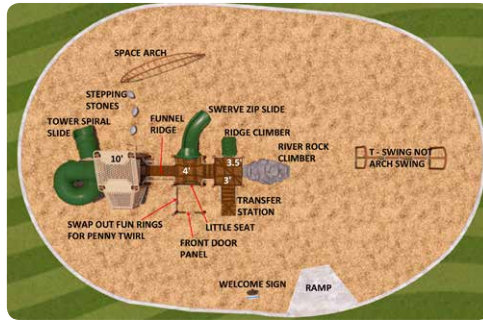


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Rock Hill Park's getting a big new life!

At the York Neighborhood Association's first General Membership meeting of 2025, on February 27, the City of Bellingham's Planning Department staff revealed the designs for what our little hometown Rock Hill Park will become in the next year and a half... and you are going to love this!



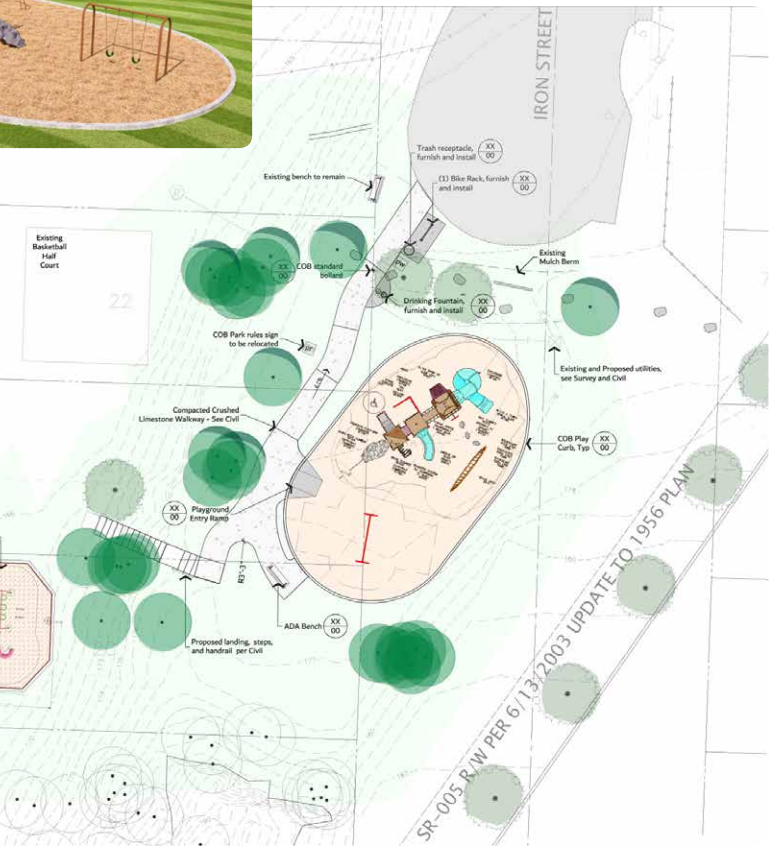
The approved designs were supplied by Great Western Recreation in response to suggestions from York neighbors who participated in the public-input process.

City of Bellingham Park Landscape Architect **Jonathan Schilk** presented the 60%-stage designs that have been developed through collaboration with the City's Parks Department, a variety of professional consultants with expertise in park and playground design, and input from York neighbors and the YNA Board of Directors. Construction is anticipated to begin next March, but in the meantime here's a look at what's coming.



The existing playground equipment dates from 1999 and, as such, was the second-oldest in the Bellingham Parks properties when it was assessed a few years ago in the City's **PRO Plan** (Parks, Recreation, and Open Space)—not just outdated but now deemed unsafe and far overdue for replacement. But, with its woefully small footprint, what was to replace it?

The new design moves the playground area up from beside the alley to just south of the Iron Street entrance to the park, behind the sign. The old playground equipment below will be replaced with an alternate structure or two, but the new area will be home to a cool cluster of features—two slides, climbing structures, stepping stones, and more—along with a pair of swings and a “space arch,” all of it accessible via an ADA-compliant crushed-limestone walkway.



As for the rest of the park, much will remain as it is: the sledding hill, the basketball court, and the Pollinator Garden, for example, although the stairway connecting the upper and lower park areas will likely be upgraded and include a handrail. A drinking fountain will be installed near the upper play area, along with a bike rack, and there will be a loop trail from the Iron Street entrance to the south end along the rock face that gives the park its name.

We'll continue to keep you updated as the construction period nears!



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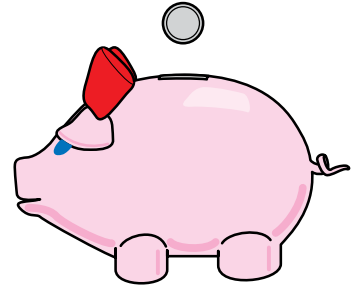
New Lakeway neighbors

Starting Wednesday, March 19, and over the next couple of weeks, there will be 19 new families moving into the York neighborhood! The **YWCA women's shelter**, now located at 315 Lakeway Drive, recently had their ribbon-cutting ceremony, and mothers with children (or pregnant) have rooms waiting for them in the newly established facility which will be staffed with more than 10 employees working around the clock in support of the residents. The building has newly installed bathing facilities, three showers and a bathtub, as well as a washer and dryer, a large kitchen area, and several common areas for both adults and children. We'll report more on our new neighbors and how to help in our next quarter's edition, so stay tuned.

Thanks to all our 2024 Friends of York!

The word from **Opie Knechtel**, the York Neighborhood Association's Treasurer, is that last year we had:

- nine household donations totaling \$365
- neighbor donations of \$240 at events
- Bellingham's neighborhood grant provided \$686
- Event sponsorships by York businesses provided \$750



Total cash donations in 2024: \$2,042.

And here's a big shout-out to **Nelson's Market, Hardware Sales, and Sanitary Service Company (SSC)** for their incalculable noncash donations for one or more of our events. Special thanks also to all our *Yorker* advertisers; without them we wouldn't have a *Yorker*!

Please support all our sponsors, patrons, and advertisers, and consider being a Friend of York in 2025! There's a donation form on **page 8** with more information.



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Would your business like to help sponsor a York neighborhood event?

Whether by way of a financial donation or services or in-kind goods, there are many ways to help out and get some visibility as a community-supporting business throughout the year. Providing refreshments at park-maintenance work parties such as **Woods Coffee** did in January is one very welcome option, but it would also be great to have portable toilet facilities made available at the Annual Picnic and the Yard Crawl, activities and foods at the picnic and the Holiday Party, and... well, there are just so many possibilities we can explore together, whether obvious or unconventional or something in between!

The YNA Board of Directors reaches out to potential sponsors, but we don't know the full range of York's businesses, entrepreneurs, artists, and services that may want to get involved.



If you have any ideas for how your business (or one you know of) might contribute to the York Neighborhood Association's events, please start a conversation with us—via email to vp@yorkneighborhood.org, or in person

at events such the upcoming Annual Plant Exchange in April and the Rock Hill Park work party in May.



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Big local housing change!

Some tenants of **Lakeway Realty** property management company, which owns many houses throughout the York neighborhood, report that they've been notified the company will be ending operations at the end of this month and that their leases will be taken over by a new, as-yet-unspecified company. We'll report on this York-shaking development when more is known!



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The story behind the new Humboldt-Iron alley mural

Blank garage + artist friends = BAM! The Riley-Beazley family's garage in the alley overlooking Rock Hill Park just got a seriously colorful makeover! **Jessamyn Irvine** and **Rae Baix**, via **Alphabet Studios' Jessie Levison**, transformed it into a vibrant mural, packed with Bellingham favorites and family icons. Charlie (6) and Wesley (3) played a key design role in helping select the images, and they are inviting everyone in the neighborhood to pick out which icon they like the best. Snap a pic and soak up the park vibes this spring!



Stitching for good

Recently, the *Yorker* stopped into **Madrona Wear**, located on the “fringes of York,” at 770 East Holly Street. This sustainable clothing and repair shop specializing in repairing clothing, sports gear, purses, backpacks and more has hundreds of York customers as well as at least one employee who lives in York. **West Persons**, the owner, is a tailor and an outdoor enthusiast who learned at an early age to appreciate small businesses.

“My mom definitely inspired me in a major way because she ran a hatmaking company for 15 years when I was younger. Simultaneously while she was hand-making super-high-end wool hats, she was also raising a family and was learning how to sell real estate in a busy ski town. She moved out to the West and built herself up, and I always wanted to do that for myself too.”



West continues, “I worked at a local sporting goods store, and I saw how much clothes were returned and discarded just because a zipper was broken. I saw such a huge waste that I thought, ‘maybe I could start a business doing that.’ I knew I wasn’t going to make a crazy amount of money fixing gear, but I did see it as something that is central to having a healthy economy. You’ve got to have people who are willing to fix the stuff that breaks.” And with only one other store that sells used outdoor gear, it was a safe bet in a larger college town with so many adventure enthusiasts.

The shop’s biggest challenge has been keeping up with the demand for repairs and alterations, so his primary focus is training the staff of four to handle the workload. Last year alone they repaired over 650 zippers! “When we’re slow, we explain it to people: we are really focused on quality and taking care of

your things the best we can, and the only way to do that is to treat every single item with care.”

When asked what his patrons can look forward to in the near future, he stated he will be offering basic alterations classes and he’s currently working on the curriculum by teaching family and friends. “There’s a huge demand for sewing classes in town,” he states, and with the recent fire at RagFinery the options are quite limited in a town with over 90,000 people.

Also on the horizon, the shop will set up a space where people can come to pick out certain specific notions such as buckles, clasps, pieces of webbing, etc., for hikers and backpackers that are more affordable than going to a hardware store. “We’re also working on our own line of high-quality, sustainable merchandise that has our logo on it so we can try to spread the word even more.” But first and foremost, according to the Madrona Wear website, “we encourage you to make use of our repair services and consider shopping for secondhand items before buying new ones.” The shop is also looking to add larger used hard goods such as kayaks, canoes, bikes, skis, and paddleboards, so if you have any of those items you’re no longer using consider their store so that others can enjoy the item at a more reasonable price.

And keep your eyes open for the next **bag sale**. The first one was a great success, with over 200 people lined up out the door. Shoppers filled up a bag for \$25 and could do free block printing on their own clothes they brought in with symbols that the store made. The next bag sale will have DIY sewing, so you can sew patches onto your clothing, in addition to the \$25 bag.

www.madronawear.com



The wait is finally over for the Way Station

By Opie Knechtel, YNA Treasurer

Unity Care NW’s new Way Station opened up their Hygiene Services on November 12, 2024, with their Healthcare Services following suit on the 19th. As of the third week in February, the Way Station had provided 7,855 services to 597 clients. These services are in the form of showers (36%), laundry (20%), restroom (35%), case management (5%), medical (3%), and behavioral health (1%).

The Respite Center will have beds available for patients referred by PeaceHealth sometime this spring. The Opportunity Council is in the process of hiring staff for the center.

The Way Station does not receive any operational grant funding from the city or the state. PeaceHealth’s plan was to charge back to Medicaid for patients referred to the Respite Center. In light of current threatened and/or probable funding cuts by the federal government and the potential effects on the Way Station and Respite Center, Marissa McGrath of Unity Care NW had this to say:



“For the hygiene side, any cuts to Medicaid or to our grant programs (HRSA/HUD) would impact all of Unity Care NW’s services, including those at the Way Station. It is unclear what may be cut, or if anything will be at all, at both the state and national levels. There is a lot of uncertainty, and as we learn more we will be able to better understand any impacts. The Opportunity Council and PeaceHealth are not aware of any funding cuts that will impact the respite program and cannot predict whether future actions in Washington, DC, will affect their plans.”

unitycarenw.org/the-way-station



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