



Snohomish County
County Executive's Office
Aaron Reardon
County Executive

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County Executive Aaron Reardon's 2007 budget focuses on expanding the winner's circle

Executive's recommended budget balances
without a tax increase for third straight year

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon today delivered a budget for 2007 that speaks to the County's success in delivering the critical services that citizens expect in an efficient and effective manner. For the third straight year, Executive Reardon has recommended a balanced budget that does not rely on a tax increase.

In his first budget three years ago, Executive Reardon set out to make Snohomish County a better place in which to live and do business. The 2007 budget continues building on past budget practices by restructuring government spending based on priorities and uses innovation to improve services with fewer resources.

"For the first time in almost a decade, Snohomish County is giving promise to an era of renewed prosperity and wealth," Executive Reardon said. **"Three years ago, we set out to make Snohomish County a better place in which to live and do business. Through decisive, deliberate action, we have yielded great success and new opportunities."**

2007 revenue trends are up 4.6 percent, as inflationary costs driving government are up by 7 percent. The County is managing operations in this inflationary environment by focusing on citizens' priorities, improving the use of technology and implementing better workflows.

"In the face of these additional costs, we are proud to present a 2007 General Fund Budget that is less than one percent larger than last year's budget," Executive Reardon said. **"Snohomish County's greatest success over the past three years has been its ability to deliver essential services to its citizens without disruption or significant reductions."**

"Across the region, we are the only government that has achieved this standard without a general tax increase," Executive Reardon said.

The 2007 budget keeps its commitment to Executive Reardon's most important priority: a safe and secure community. In the 2007 budget, Executive Reardon proposes:

- Adding four new motorcycle deputies to enforce traffic laws, including an increased effort at schools to protect our children. This recommendation builds on last year's successful efforts to add 10 new Sheriff's deputies, 6 new deputy prosecutors and additional law enforcement tools.
- Dedicating additional resources for the Victim Guardian Ad Litem program to train and support an additional 240 volunteers. These efforts will increase the County's support for hundreds more children while saving the County tens of thousands of dollars in attorney fees.
- Providing the option for judges to assign non-violent offenders to inmate work crews as an alternative to total confinement. Those non-violent offenders will be put to work paying off their debt to society in a manner that will both benefit the community and save taxpayers' money. Inmate work crews will provide direct cost savings to the County by providing more than 80,000 hours of inmate labor cleaning parks and roadsides rather than sitting in a cell. As a result, the County can generate more than \$500,000 in new revenue by leasing secure beds in the County jail.
- Partnering with the Prosecuting Attorney to create a new Identify Theft and Complex Fraud Unit in the Prosecutor's Office. As technology advances, so do the methods of the criminal. To protect our citizens in this new information age, this new unit will aggressively pursue, catch and prosecute those who would steal the identity of our citizens.
- Hiring three new full-time code enforcement officers to expand junkyard abatement efforts, keep neighborhoods clean and safe, and tackle the growing problem of graffiti in Snohomish County.
- A 55 percent General Fund increase to strengthen our ability to respond to local and regional disasters. On January 1, 2006, the formerly independent Department of Emergency Management became a County agency. The 2007 budget builds the Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management into a first-class emergency preparedness and response agency. In addition, this budget sets aside \$3.25 million toward the initial funding of a new Emergency Operations Center to replace the existing failing structure.
- Ongoing support for the Law and Justice Center project in order to ensure the security and safety of the public and employees in County courtrooms.
- To create a safe and secure environment for Courthouse employees and the public, \$200,000 will be used to implement the most urgent recommendations of the 2006 courthouse security audit.

“Not only are we working to provide a safe and secure community, but also a prosperous community,” Executive Reardon said.

“The private sector is the engine that drives our local economy. Government’s role is to create an environment that enables business to flourish,” Executive Reardon said. Snohomish County is now recognized as the County in which to do business.”

Corporate investment and hiring is moving full speed ahead, and Snohomish County is leading the state in business and job creation. From aerospace to biotech, from hospitality to education, the County is helping to create real family wage jobs in Snohomish County.

Last year, new and existing businesses added more than 16,000 new jobs, allowing more residents than ever before to live and work in Snohomish County. In less than three years, the unemployment rate has been cut from 7.87 percent to 4.1 percent.

The 2007 budget continues advancements made in technology and County processes that will keep Snohomish County at the forefront of business and job growth.

- Completing a new electronic building plans project and further enhancements to the County’s on-line permitting, integrated voice response inspection services, GIS data and mapping, and the County’s website.
- Funds to update the County’s development regulations in order to improve the quality, clarity and predictability of the construction code.
- Creating a new full-time Inclusion Manager in the Office of Economic Development to build partnerships with the County’s many diverse populations. These partnerships will ensure that everyone who lives in Snohomish County has access to all services the County provides.
- \$284,000 to continue work begun on the agriculture initiative, and \$50,000 specifically to continue research on the viability of biodiesel crops.

“Snohomish County’s rapid growth and thriving economy should not come at the expense of our unique quality of life,” Executive Reardon said.

Earlier this year, Executive Reardon introduced the Community Infrastructure Development Initiative, or CIDI. This initiative will fund the construction of 46 roads, walkways, parks and surface water projects and will improve quality of life, economic vitality and sense of community – without raising taxes.

In 2007, Snohomish County will complete the first of six CIDI projects as part of the County’s \$43.8 million transportation capital improvement budget. In addition, 13 of 14 CIDI parks projects, totaling \$2.9 million in investment, will be completed in 2007.

“CIDI carries on our commitment to build a legacy for Snohomish County that we will be proud to pass on to our children,” Executive Reardon said.

The 2007 budget will also spend \$6 million constructing major enhancements to neighborhood parks:

- Willis Tucker Community Park will add parking, a second baseball field, a restroom, two picnic shelters and an amphitheater.
- Martha Lake Airport Community Park will get a skateboard park, a baseball field, a soccer field, picnic shelters, parking, restroom and trails.
- Lake Stevens Community Park will add two baseball fields, restroom, parking, picnic shelters and trails.
- On the Snohomish River estuary, a new kayak and canoe boat launch will allow non-motorized craft to access more of the river.

Executive Reardon is determined to balance the need of essential county infrastructure, with that of our environment. **“In this budget, we carry forward the work needed to build a healthy and sustainable environment for future generations to enjoy,”** said Reardon.

Highlights of 2007 environmental projects through Public Work’s Surface Water Management include:

- An additional 22 miles of creek restoration bringing the County’s total miles of restored habitat to 101 miles—a distance roughly that of Mountlake Terrace north to the Peace Arch at the Canadian border.
- Surface Water Management Division’s River Fund will invest \$3.3 million in Snohomish, Skykomish and Stillaguamish river restoration and habitat projects.
- The County will acquire 70 acres of Snohomish Estuary property for future tidal marsh restoration.
- County employees will work with property owners between Arlington and Granite Falls to repair streamside vegetation on 4.6 stream miles of shoreline along the South Fork Stillaguamish River. More than 16,000 trees and shrubs will be planted in the next four years for this project alone.

“It is how we address the needs of our most vulnerable, that most clearly reflects our County’s character and humanity,” Executive Reardon said.

The Executive’s 2007 budget continues to fully fund over 70 programs offered by the Human Services Department. Through partnerships with non-profit organizations, as well as federal and state agencies, Snohomish County’s Human Services Department delivers \$72 million in direct and contracted services to help veterans, seniors, children, the infirm and mentally ill.

Two examples include the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Veterans Assistance Program.

- The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program will continue to offer young children facing hardship an opportunity to learn and achieve a better. Last year, Human Services served 837 children and families. That number represents 154 more children served than were funded by the state. This was accomplished by leveraging \$1.5 million more in community support from local tribes, school districts, volunteer and community contributions.
- The Veterans Assistance Program in 2006 provided over \$200,000 in emergency assistance to more than 1,800 foreign war veterans. This represents an 18 percent increase over 2005. Executive Reardon is committed to serving the needs the County's veterans, despite rising need resulting from the aging of the Vietnam War veterans and the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Already, those who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom represent one-third of those served by the County's Veterans Services.

“We have made great strides toward making Snohomish County government as dynamic as the people we serve,” Executive Reardon said.

By listening to the people—the farmers, citizens, and business leaders—the County has opened opportunities for the future that seemed impossible just three years ago. Job growth is at an all time high. **“Snohomish County's diversifying and growing economy makes us the envy of the region,”** said Reardon. Today, more people in Snohomish County are working, and we are now exceeding the great economic boom of the 1990's. In fact, job growth in Snohomish County now exceeds that of the highest year of that decade. And, we are still expanding and growing our economy.

“With continued promise on the horizon, our aim is to expand the winner's circle, to ensure that the benefits of this new tide of prosperity rise not just for some, but for all,” said Executive Reardon. **“We are creating a future of our choosing: a safe and secure future of opportunity and prosperity. As I present the 2007 budget, it is with a great deal of confidence that I say—the best is yet to come.”**

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