

Media Advisory – Aug. 17, 2009

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County fairgrounds' initiative offers renovation options

Snohomish County has proposed more than \$61 million in capital improvements and redevelopment options at the Evergreen Fairgrounds, home to the county's annual fair, which runs this year from Aug. 27 to Sept. 7.

Anchored by the annual 12-day Evergreen State Fair, the fairgrounds is a major regional asset and tourism destination, offering first-class agricultural, educational, recreational, entertainment, commercial and social activities to residents, institutions and businesses.

The fairgrounds boasts more than 1.2 million annual visitors and contributes about \$23 million in economic impact for the Puget Sound. However, 72 percent of the annual revenue generated by the fairgrounds comes from the 12-day fair.

The redevelopment plan -- which was put together with stakeholder input that included local agricultural groups, youth-oriented organizations and the regional racing community -- looks toward increasing opportunities for revenues and activities during the remainder of the year.

“Through private-public partnerships, we have an opportunity to create a world-class facility for year-round use,” said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. “We know the fair will continue to be a draw, but we believe that the right improvements will make this 186-acre facility an everyday success story.”

Among suggested improvements in phase one of the redevelopment initiative are:

- Completion of improvements at the fairgrounds' equestrian park;
- Upgrade and reconfiguration of the speedway and grandstand;
- Construction of a 25,000-square-foot multi-use agriculture/expo pavilion.

Future improvements through public-private partnerships could include:

- Construction of a 100,000-square-foot multipurpose exposition center;
- Construction of two additional 25,000-square-foot multi-use exhibition buildings
- Expansion of recreational vehicle camping areas.

“Recent improvements to the equestrian center are first-class and have become the standard by which other equestrian parks throughout the state will be built,” said Tom Teigen, the county's Parks and Recreation director. “With the right funding, we'll be able to say the same about other improvements at the fairgrounds.”

What won't be compromised are the fairgrounds' history and strong ties to local agriculture.

“People expect to see the legacy that farming, logging and mining have had in this region, and that won’t change,” Reardon said. “Now, more than ever, those cultural links are an important aspect of the offerings at the county’s fairgrounds.”

The county also expects to continue its relationships with dedicated community organizations that now utilize the fairgrounds, including 4-H programs, local racing, swap meets and law enforcement training.

To view the report, go to www.snoco.org.

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