

THE YORKER

MARCH 2018



FROM THE YORK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION—BRINGING THE YORK COMMUNITY TOGETHER

York General Meeting

Wednesday, March 14th

6:30 pm to 9:00 pm

at Garden Street United Methodist Church

1326 North Garden Street, Room B

6:30 pm Community Potluck

7:00 pm Meeting

For the potluck supper, please bring your favorite dish/filling for a taco-themed supper.

Topics: “Upzoning Upheaval: Fiction or Facts”—a neighborhood discussion and “Bike Lanes on Lakeway Drive”—City Transportation Planning staff

If you need childcare at the meeting, please let us know by contacting VicePresident@yorkneighborhood.org so we can plan.

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Parking headaches plague Yorkers

Too many cars and not enough parking spaces. Have you noticed? Each home is required by City ordinance to provide off-street parking for its residents. If you are renting a home and have multiple vehicles without off-street parking, please talk to your landlord about creating space behind. Most of the homes in York are accessed by alleys.



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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www.yorkneighborhood.org/newsletters



YORK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

c/o 1470 Grant Street, Bellingham WA 98225

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President's Corner

By Mark Sherman, YNA President

York needs you

York is a busy place. Yorkers are up early, Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. We see cars, bikes, and buses carrying people to work and school, as we stroll through rains that sometimes seem endless, and—not infrequently—winds that whip and howl. And there are days like today, as I write this, when the sky is an unbroken blue bowl with nary a cloud in sight, and air cold enough to make your breath a white mist. Regardless of the weather, we Yorkers bundle up and take care of business. York is going places. Always.



We live in one of Bellingham's most livable neighborhoods—a walkable neighborhood, a bikeable neighborhood, a place where you can easily stroll down to the **library** to score Sue Grafton's latest or climb on your Cannondale 10-speed and zip down to **The Pickford** to catch that documentary about Jane Jacobs, the citizen activist who fought the New York developers who sought to destroy neighborhoods in the 1960s. Afterwards you can meet your friends at **Nelson's Market** for a beverage and a rambling conversation about what you've seen. From **Harriet Spanel Park** in the south where we hold our summer picnics—mouth-watering Hemplers' dogs cooked by our resident sensei of the grill (thank you, Cory), followed by pie raffles and pinatas for the kids—but I digress... from the park on the south side, down to the bridge over **Whatcom Creek** in the north, from the freeway to the business district, our York neighborhood is a perfect place for the everyday stroller, biker, gardener, or dreamer.

And we Yorkers are speakers. We raise our voices in city matters. Over the years, Yorkers have served on the neighborhood association and together or separately have made our views clear. We have not been shy about discussing amongst ourselves and with the city, the past, the present, and the future of our neighborhood. The past? Read Anne Mackie's article in this issue (page 7) about how your neighbors and friends went to bat for our neighborhood, to do the work and research that culminated in York's designation as one of Bellingham's historic districts.

Currently, York members are speaking before the City's **Planning Commission** on affordable housing, detached accessory dwelling units, and short-term rentals. They represent York as members of the **Bellingham Neighborhood Coalition**, the group sponsoring viewings of *Don't Ballardize Bellingham*, a video documenting a way for community groups to make our voices count in planning for the future of Bellingham. Anne Mackie, YNA board member and now BNC chair, helped to draft a letter supporting neighborhood input to the Planning Commission that at last report has over 400 signatures. We are letting the city know that Yorkers are committed to preserving our neighborhood together—all of us—regardless of our backgrounds, beliefs, or orientations.

As Yorkers we stand on the shoulders of everyone who has cared about these issues in the past and continues to care in the present. We are various, the folks who share this space and our love of the neighborhood. And York needs us—needs our caring, our critical thinking, our willingness to talk and work together for everyone's benefit. Why? Because if you live in York, you have skin in the game.

So—this might just be the year for **you** to get involved. How? You might attend the **York neighborhood meeting on Wednesday, March 14th** at the **Garden Street United Methodist Church** on Garden Street. We'll be sharing a taco potluck that starts at 6:30 pm—so think about coming a little early and bringing something to go into the shells. And bring along your voice, your ideas. If you're a **Western** student living in York, consider joining our **board**. Our most recent student representatives **Audrey Roberts** has moved on; and **Ben Larson** and **Ed Tabor** graduated in 2017, leaving us mightily in need of student voices on the York Board. Why not become part of the mix? Or you might want to help maintain **Harriet Spanel Park** or **Rock Hill Park** at one of our regular work parties. All kinds of plans for our community are beginning to gel, and they could use your ideas... and your help. This is an open invitation to get involved!



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Thank-you to these businesses for their support of the 2017 Holiday Horse Wagon rides in December:

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York Neighborhood Association Board

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President: **Mark Sherman**

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Andrew Molitor • Megan Gould

Anne Mackie • Sean Wheeler

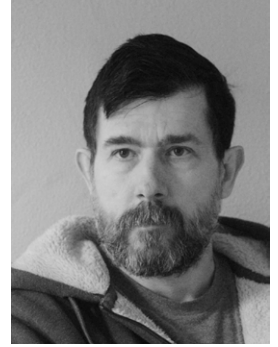
Newsletter layout: **Mark Ellis Walker**

Meet new members of York's Board

Andrew Molitor and wife Meg Bartelt bought a house on Grant Street in the York neighborhood two and half years ago. He's a Full-Time Dad to daughters Alice and Beatrice and shares the home with their wonder dog Julia.

Before qualifying for the job as FTD, he worked as a software engineer and mathematician and lived in Virginia and California before landing in Bellingham. Andrew has a passion for photography and makes and repairs books. He likes living in York because it's close to everything, especially Nelson's Market. He can often be seen walking Julia up at Rock Hill Park.

Joining the York Board is a way he can, as he says, "help strengthen the neighborhood's collective voice in city government."



Megan Gould has joined the York Board because she finally has more time to be involved and wants to help preserve the integrity of the neighborhood. She has lived in the neighborhood for five years. She loves York's character and the fact that she lives so close to downtown, close to the businesses she enjoys.

Megan grew up in Whatcom county and still has a lot of family nearby. After high school she moved away for a while but "just couldn't stay away," she says. She worked for Morse Steel Service for six years but now is exploring new opportunities. She and her husband Dan have a lot of shared hobbies.

"We love to garden and create dinners around what happens to be growing. Currently, that's just parsnips, so it's not that exciting," she says. Neighbors have enjoyed honey from their bees, produce from their garden, and books from their "Little Library" on York Street. Megan and Dan can be seen zipping around the 'hood on their vintage Vespas or walking their wild-and-crazy dachshunds Charlie Brown and Lucy.

Sean Wheeler owns a home in the southern section of York and is often seen walking his dog at Harriet Spanel Park. He works for a health services company, but motorcycles are his hobby. He is known in local social media for his writings on growth, housing issues, and the economics of real-estate investment. As a recent recruit to the York Board, Sean has volunteered to coordinate the newsletter distribution and might be asking you to help out, too. He will also chair the York Land Use and Planning Committee.



Infill or overfill: all of Bellingham's neighborhoods deserve a say in self-determination,

By Bobbi Vollendorff and Mark Sherman

In the past, the City of Bellingham actively sought, obtained, and acted on input from its neighborhoods. Over the years, the City has held dozens of planning meetings and asked scores of owners, renters, and interested parties from the neighborhoods, from York and Samish, from Sehome and Birchwood, from all the Bellingham neighborhoods to attend and to participate in planning for the future—our future. If we did not exactly rule, we believed there was goodwill and open ears for our neighborhood concerns. The residents—people with actual skin in the game—could feel with some justification that the City valued and acknowledged the character and unique qualities of our individual neighborhoods. And that those same neighborhoods had a say—an important and necessary say—in the process of making our city's future.

False Promises?

This summer **Rick Sepler**, Bellingham's Planning and Community Development Director, promised multiple groups—multiple times—that the neighborhoods would not be treated in a top-down, one-size-fits-all manner. No cookie-cutter approach for Bellingham. Each individual neighborhood could decide for itself what was appropriate.

This seemed credible. Given that the City's own website quotes **Kelli Linville**, as mayor of Bellingham, speaking of her commitment "to go neighborhood-by-neighborhood." Saying "I agree that not all housing types meet every neighborhood.... Prior to throwing something out there, go to each neighborhood and educate them so that you get more participation, more kind of grass-roots conversation where people can ask questions.... We need to be there reassuring them that it does potentially mean change, but it doesn't mean change that disrupts your whole neighborhood character."



Unfortunately, that "kind of grass-roots conversation" never happened.

Despite the concerns from residents of the city's neighborhoods, and without buy-in from those same neighborhoods, the City's Planning Commission is now moving forward with a proposal for city-wide zoning changes. Instead of the original plan, a single neighborhood—Happy Valley—serving as a voluntary test case, to test whether an idea is feasible for our city, we are now faced with a plan that is both anti-neighborhood and top-down in origin and execution.

The original plan came about as a result of a **Happy Valley Neighborhood Association** meeting, when the 10 people in attendance discussed the possibility of allowing homeowners to build detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs). One of the board members had a friend who wanted to build a detached ADU, and she asked Happy Valley to "get on board." The proposal was based on the now completely disproven idea that allowing detached ADUs would create more housing, and more housing would—inevitably—mean cheaper housing. Solve the housing crisis!



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housing, zoning, and livability



False Intentions

Bobbi Vollendorff has lived in Happy Valley for over thirty five years. She's been a member of the Happy Valley Neighborhood Association for twenty five years. She is disturbed by what she's witnessed these last three years in Happy Valley—and in the city of Bellingham—the way one of Bellingham's strongest and most vibrant neighborhoods was coopted by a splinter group of politicians and developers with plans to open her neighborhood to increased density, resulting in decreased livability.

How did it happen?

Some of Bobbi's fellow board members were well-meaning people, community-minded people. But it was clear to her then—as it is even more clear to her now—that the main reason the idea of detached ADUs was popular is that people were seeing dollar signs—their eyes lighting up not with the idea of housing the less fortunate but instead the fantasy of income flowing from AirBnB dollars.

In Bobbi's neighborhood, these 10 people voted to allow detached accessory dwelling units in Happy Valley. Yes, 10 people made a decision that affects a neighborhood of 7,000.

And now, 7 people on Bellingham's city's Planning Commission want to take away the rights of single families living in single family neighborhoods to maintain the livability and quality of life in their neighborhoods. The Happy Valley re-zone is no longer a test case, a trial period to see how a plan might work.

No. It is something else: a gateway, an open door to developers, flippers, and profiteers of every persuasion. Welcome to our neighborhoods. Seize the opportunity. Bring your tractors and steamrollers. Run them loud. How loud? Loud enough to drown out the voices of the neighborhoods, the voices of those who actually live in Happy Valley, in Sehome, in York, and Birchwood. The people who have a stake in what happens in Bellingham and want and deserve a say in how their communities grow and change.

Can the City of Bellingham open its ears to what the neighborhoods are saying so loudly and clearly? We want a strong voice in what happens in York.



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Preparing for spring at Rock Hill Park

Sword ferns were planted, mulch got spread, and the rain held off for a few hours on a brisk Saturday morning February 3 at **Rock Hill Park**. Under the coordination of **Rae Edwards**, Bellingham Parks Volunteer Coordinator, a large number of WWU and high school students turned out to do great work. Invasive snowberry plants have been removed along the hillside and replaced with young ferns. Soon to come will be removal of the huge barberry shrubs along the alley in the butterfly garden, making room for more flowering native plants.



Take a walk up to Rock Hill Park to enjoy all the improvements. It's located at the southern end of Iron Street up the gravel roadway, right next to I-5, and is a great place to throw frisbees or walk your dog. Thanks to all who have helped to create this special oasis in the city.

Rock Hill Park steward needed

The York neighborhood is looking for a park Steward for Rock Hill Park. Over the years volunteers have labored many hours planting trees, bushes and flowers—as well as organizing people to do the mulching, weeding, pruning, and cutting back necessary to create a neighbor-friendly park.

We need a person who would be interested in using their people-and-gardening skills to help organize groups to tend to the park's needs and planning. Like **Harriet Spanel Park**, Rock Hill is a great place to have a spring picnic or bring your ukulele for an impromptu jam session. If interested, email us at president@yorkneighborhood.org.

Curious about your neighbors? Our own **Andrew Molitor** will be crafting a series of biographies of people that give flavor to our neighborhood in future issues of *The Yorker*. With snapshots. Here's the first!

Faces of York

by Andrew Molitor

You might be surprised to learn that there's a stained glass studio in York! Well, you're probably not surprised. It's **York**, after all; we have all the best stuff.



Crosby Glass is owned and operated by **Erin Crosby**, who serves as CEO as well as Janitor. We stopped by to ask a few questions and take a few pictures.

The Yorker: *What's your deal, man?*

Erin Crosby: Mostly my deal is stained glass, man. Leaded glass. Old glass. New glass. Boring glass. Interesting glass. CrosbyGlass.com, man.

TY: *What's the oddest place you've ever lived?*

EC: I'm from the Midwest, so with that perspective Bellingham is certainly a contender. I did grow up in a building that housed both a foreign-car garage and a ballroom dance studio that I used as my own personal skating rink. So there's that.

TC: *What's the best thing about York?*

EC: Probably Nelson's. And the community. Then there's the location. The old houses. And also Crosby Glass Studio.

TY: *What's one thing your neighbors would probably say about you?*

EC: That they know where I live. And I own Crosby Glass Studio!



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Charm, character, authenticity: life in historic York puts you *someplace* instead of *anyplace*

By Anne Mackie

York's neighborhood character is worth preserving. Our small homes, historic architecture, tree-lined streets, sidewalks, alleyways, and heritage trees all come together to create the ambiance we love.

When walking the streets north of Lakeway Drive, you've hopefully noticed the "Historic District" signs above the street signs. Designed by York neighbor and artist **John McColloch** and paid for by our residents, the signs were installed at 29 intersections in 2011. A few have gone missing, but this spring the neighborhood association will replace them.

The street signs celebrate the unique sense of place, our modest working-class history, and architecture of the period from 1885 to 1930, when most of York's homes were built. Over 280 properties officially "contribute" to the historic-district designation.



Volunteer Efforts

In 2007 the city obtained a Preserve America grant from the U.S. Parks Department that paid for research consultants who headed up volunteer teams of York neighbors and college students to research all the houses, churches, and other buildings in York. To qualify for the grant, the city had to "demonstrate its dedication to historic resources" and show it "understands the role of preservation in economic development and community revitalization."

Working on the historic research about York, volunteers spent hours at the library reviewing maps, old property records, and the Polk city directories and digging into the life of each house to find out who had lived there over the years. Research was also completed for the areas south of Lakeway Drive and west of Ellis Street. Hopefully, those areas can become historic districts in the future.

The Eastlake Stick Style Victorian home at 1318 Humboldt Street was built in 1885. Peter and Margaretha Farnung, listed as "confectioners," lived in the home in 1898. From 1915 through 1925, Margaretha shared the home with August P. and Flora Erickson, who owned the York Addition Meat Market at 1912 Potter Street, current site of Nelson's Market. "York Addition" refers to the additions platted in 1888 and 1889 that joined with New Whatcom and Sehome to later become the City of Bellingham in 1903.



Thanks to the **York Historic Preservation Committee** for having the foresight to protect and preserve one of the city's great neighborhoods. And a special thanks to the committee chairs who served during those years: **Laura Witt, Kathy Johnson, Barbara Davenport, Lynn Gobush, and Don Hilty-Jones.**

From the report: "Many buildings in the York Historic District were constructed between 1895 and 1905. Out of the 502 principal buildings within the boundaries, 438 or 87% were constructed within that ten-year period. The building boom that began in the 1890s and continued on into the 1900s through a series of economic downturns and the 1893 nationwide depression is extraordinary. Equally interesting is that only one building was built between 1931 and 1936 (the Great Depression) and no buildings were built between 1941 and 1945 (World War II). The construction dates within the historic district boundaries mirror the construction dates for all of the York Neighborhood."

The full report and photos of houses are available on the City's website at www.cob.org/documents/planning/historic/york-nomination.pdf

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Hey, kids: Jon says “Free Ice Cream” for Spring Break!

York kids are invited to Nelson’s Market on Friday, March 30, for their traditional free ice-cream cones. Owner Jon Ostby started the free-ice-cream giveaway several years ago, and it’s a long tradition enjoyed by pre-school through high-school-aged Yorkers. When school lets out in June for summer break, kids get another free ice-cream cone.

“I’ve seen kids coming through here from their pre-school days all the way to high-school graduation, and I never get tired of them. Our neighborhood kids are the best,” says Jon. “Sometimes I even hire them to work here, but then, no more free ice cream.”



Kids enjoy free ice cream at Nelson’s Market, March 2017

Calendar of York Events

March						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Ⓞ 11	12 <small>cc</small>	13	Ⓞ 14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 <small>cc</small>	27	28	29	Ⓞ 30	31
April						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Ⓞ 9 <small>cc</small>	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	Ⓞ 21
22	23 <small>cc</small>	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					
May						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 <small>cc</small>	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21 <small>cc</small>	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

York General Meeting Wednesday, March 14

6:30 pm Community potluck taco dinner
7:00 pm Speakers & Meeting
at Garden Street United Methodist Church
1326 North Garden Street

WWU Spring Break March 24 to April 2

Free Ice-Cream Cone for Kids
Friday, March 30
at Nelson’s Market
514 Potter Street

Sehome High School Spring Break April 2 to 6

WWU Spring Quarter Begins
Tuesday April 3

City Council Public Hearing on
Detached Accessory Dwelling Units
Tuesday, April 9
7:00 pm—be there and speak for York!
at City Hall, 210 Lottie Street

YNA Board Meeting
Saturday, April 21
8:00 am
at Garden Street United Methodist Church
1326 North Garden Street

cc = City Council meetings, 7 pm at City Hall, 210 Lottie Street.

CONTACT

York Neighborhood Association
c/o 1470 Grant St
Bellingham WA 98225

President@YorkNeighborhood.org

website: www.YorkNeighborhood.org

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