



This Week from the Mayor



Armondo Pavone, Mayor

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My weekly newsletter covers all that is happening in Renton. If you have an idea, would like to share news, or want to comment, I'd like to [hear from YOU](#).

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Support our local businesses

COVID-19 has brought an unprecedented level of stress to all of us, and nowhere is this more apparent than in our business community. This public health crisis has upended our workforce and forced businesses large and small to modify, suspend or in some cases cease operation altogether. And while resources to help businesses were put in place at every level of government, the extended duration of the pandemic and severity of the economic downturn have exhausted these relief efforts and we don't currently see an end in sight.

The City of Renton acted very quickly to assist our business community in weathering this storm. We were able to divert staff from their normal duties to reach out to Renton businesses and guide them to every available resource. Partnering with Renton Chamber of Commerce, the State of Washington, King County, Port of Seattle, Renton Downtown Partnership and our neighboring communities we ensured that our businesses had access to every available form of assistance. The city devoted the largest share of its federal CARES Act funds (over \$1.5 million) to a business grants program to assist our most vulnerable small companies. We realize, however, that these funds can only go so far and the needs of our struggling businesses are more than we can supply.

Our downtown businesses are also feeling the impact of several road construction and utility projects currently underway. While these efforts will lead to a safer, more attractive and inviting district, we know the construction interruption and access challenges are placing an additional burden on small shops and restaurants in this already trying time.

We need the help of all Renton residents to support our local shops and services at this time. Buying local can indeed make a difference to our companies right now. We are launching a new "Make Yourself at Home" campaign to encourage Renton-area residents to shop, stay and eat locally at this time. This project will help equip our business community with the tools to promote themselves as part of a larger marketing effort.

In addition, I will be asking the Renton City Council to extend the emergency ordinance put in place earlier this year easing certain regulatory requirements for businesses for an additional six months. This will continue to allow more flexibility in additional business signage and simplify the process of outdoor seating requirements.

Please join me in supporting the unique shops, hotels, restaurants and services that make Renton such a wonderful and diverse community. Together we can help keep them in business so that they can thrive again in the future.



Street Maintenance crews place a sanding unit into the bed of a plow truck during their winter preparations in October.

Public Works prepared for winter weather

With fall upon us and winter just weeks away, we've all spent time preparing our homes and vehicles for the impending change in weather.

Imagine the preparation involved if you were in charge of maintaining 15 vehicles and over 750 lane miles of roadway?

In Renton that task falls to Street Maintenance Manager Patrick Zellner and Street Maintenance Supervisor John Kalmbach. This is what they have to say as they plan the city's response when snow or ice hit.

"Our goal is to take care of our residents in the best, most professional way possible," says Kalmbach. "Our crews do it with pride, commitment, and dedication."

In October, city crews complete their [winter operations planning and preparation](#) and are ready for whatever Mother Nature has in store. They outfit dump and flatbed trucks with plows, de-icer/anti-icer tanks, and sanders. Renton is divided into [five two-driver regions](#), and each region has assigned routes. Drivers do not vary from their designated priority routes, except in situations of life safety.

"The plow drivers work 12 hours on, 12 hours off once snow hits to keep our roads clear," said Zellner. "I am very proud of the work our crew performs in keeping our streets as safe as possible."

The division also introduced new ideas into their operations. One was implementing four over-lapping and staggered shifts to ensure plow trucks are always on the road during commute hours. Another is using their overnight sweeper driver as their "eyes" to alert them when a threatening weather system is identified. "When we bring the drivers in, they grab their gear, jump in their trucks, and their training takes over," said Kalmbach.

[How can you help?](#)

- Keep your fuel tank at least three-quarters full.
- Check your tires and put chains in vehicle.
- Check windshield wipers and fluid levels.
- Carry a blanket, spare clothes, water and snacks.

"Conditions change quickly," says Zellner. "If you get stuck, you'll never know how long until help arrives." He asks that trips only are made when necessary, and if you have to leave your vehicle, please do your best to keep it from blocking traffic lanes and stay with your vehicle.

"Nothing slows down our snowplows or emergency response vehicles more than abandoned vehicles blocking lanes of travel," he adds. "Please be patient and treat our plows like you would an emergency vehicle. It makes their jobs so much easier."



We did it! Census self-response rate climbs to 75.1%

Thanks to our Renton Census team's fantastic work, Renton's census self-response rate reached 75.1% when counting stopped on Oct. 15. We ranked as the highest in South King County and one of the highest in the nation. It's also significantly higher than our 2010 response rate (67.1%) when we were among the country's most undercounted cities.

An accurate census count is critical to all of us. The results direct how hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding are allocated to more than 100 programs, including Medicaid, Head Start, block grants for community mental health services, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These programs are more vital than ever because of COVID-19. In financial terms, the Census Bureau tells us that cities gain around \$2,500 for each person counted.

This was a genuine community effort with so many people to thank. The members of the Mayor's Inclusion Task Force and our Renton Census Team represented a broad cross-section of our community and led the city-wide effort. They held community events that helped neighbors in need because of COVID-19 while also stressing the census's importance. They rallied our youth through student art and theme contests. It was an impressive, dynamic and effective campaign conducted under the most unusual circumstances. To honor their efforts, we [proclaimed Nov. 9](#) as "Renton Census Champions Day" in Renton.

My thanks to everyone who had a hand in our success—whether you were on the census team or returned your census form. Our city is much better for your efforts.

Budget for 2021 and 2022 approved

The city council approved the city's [biennial budget for 2021 and 2022](#) at Monday's meeting.

In the best of years, the budget process is painstaking and involves many hours from both city staff and our residents. This year's extraordinary challenges increased their work.

My sincere thanks to our city staff who developed the budget and to all our residents who advocated for programs during the open meetings. Your input was invaluable.

Items of interest

Supporting Renton small businesses through Chip-In

We are [excited to work with](#) Renton Chamber of Commerce, One Eastside, and Chip-In to raise funds for Renton small businesses through [tax-deductible contributions](#). Think of it like GoFundMe, but Chip-In does not take a cut. Each dollar donated will support local Renton businesses meet payroll, keep their lights on and doors open.

Tourism grant deadline is Nov. 30

The deadline to submit [applications](#) for 2021 Tourism Grants is Nov. 30, at 4:30 p.m. Eligible entities include convention and visitors' bureaus, destination marketing organizations, non-profits like chambers of commerce and lodging associations, and municipalities. The grants support Renton's tourism marketing and operations and are funded through the state's Hotel-Motel Tax.