

City of Ralston
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July 2020
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Our Town

Mayor's Message

Hello Ralston residents.

Well . . . we are all under a different scenario than we would have ever thought. Lots of things have changed for the time being but hopefully by the end of the year we will have a vaccine that will solve the problem for all of us. In the meantime, Ralston is being as safe as we can and cancelled the annual Independence Day Parade. This would have been the 60th year of the parade, so next year we will have to celebrate the 60th and 61st together.

We have had to cancel so many events and it will be very interesting to see how we will get back to normal. Starting this month, the City Council meetings are being held in-person again at City Hall, as all public meetings must now be held in-person.

At their June 16th meeting, the City Council passed an ordinance to allow the operation of golf car vehicles around the city. The golf car vehicle will have to have all the features of a car to be able to operate on city streets, but it will be a great opportunity to run errands or just tour the city.

On July 1st, the city announced a wonderful new development with the Hinge Project. It is a project which will start at the Ralston Granary on Main Street with a new \$14 million development. The apartment building that will be built across the street from the Fire Department will be a \$5 million development. This is just the start of the Hinge development, which encompasses from the Ralston Arena up 73rd Street to Main Street to the downtown area. There will be many new jobs in Ralston as well as new residences. Thanks to the LaDonna Johnson estate for her generous donation of over \$7 million to the Hinge Project. LaDonna believed in the Hinge Project and put her money into the trust to help fund the project.

Enjoy your summer and I look forward to seeing you around the city. Stay safe.

Mayor Don



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A Few Thoughts from the Ralston City Administrator

By Rick Hoppe

The Granary

Despite a pandemic and resulting economic slowdown, Ralston is enjoying some great news when it comes to the economy.

On July 1st, the City announced a new Hinge development at the Granary. The \$14 million project is a game changer for our community. It will create new jobs, build our local economy, and help current Ralston businesses grow.

The highlights:

- A new business accelerator that is projected to create 100 new jobs and 10 new businesses
- A new Granary Green that will bring outdoor entertainment and provide a new entryway park into Ralston along Main Street
- The historic Granary Building will be re-habitated and become host to new and current businesses
- An exciting new business to the Metro “Out of the Box”—a unique 20,000 square foot retail store that sells High Quality Reclaimed and Recycled, one-of-a-kind architectural details, furniture and home improvement accessories--- will be an anchor tenant
- New MEWS housing will offer unique row style residences that open to a shared courtyard

But that’s not all . . . The Zehv’s Place project on the former City parking lot is moving forward with an anticipated investment of \$5.1 million. And the private public partnership is looking to invest another \$10 million into the Hinge area. That is \$29 million of new investment in Ralston’s future.

It was a big moment in Ralston’s history and the start of even greater investment in the Hinge area.

Downtown Parking

The Hinge project is keeping us busy on a number of other fronts. With the sale of the City parking lot on Park Drive, we have been working with downtown business owners and City residents to ensure we have adequate parking when the lot closes.

A parking study conducted by Walker Associates suggested strategies to improve parking for clients and visitors. The primary recommendations were to implement time limited parking and develop more spaces for downtown residents and employees.

Based on that input, the City Council adopted a new downtown parking plan:

Main Street and 77th Street will be comprised of primarily 4-hour spots with some 20-minute spots for quick trip visits. The south end of 77th Street will feature 10-hour spots that will aid employees, downtown residents and other longer-term parkers. New parking spots will be created along 76th. These will be spots available by permit for employees and downtown residents. Park Drive will not have time limits.

We anticipate having the new parking system in place by some time in August.

Capital Improvement Plan

The City will soon have its first Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP is a tool many communities use to plan for large capital improvements like street repaving, sidewalk repair, or building renovations. The plan takes a 6-year look at what needs to be built or repaired in the City. It also gives an idea of the preferred funding sources for the projects. The CIP will be reviewed by the Planning Commission in August and by the City Council shortly after.

COVID-19 and the City

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on our nation and Ralston is no exception. Residents, businesses, and public institutions across the Metro struggle daily with the responsibility of protecting the public from the virus and managing budgets that have been devastated by a slowed economy.

The City has attempted to deal with the crisis by reducing expenditures. The City’s management made tough choices and we reduced our 2019-20 general fund budget by about 5%. Our library was particularly hard hit as 11 part-time employees were laid off. The Arena’s budget was reduced by at least one-third and about 160 full time and part time employees were furloughed or laid off to reduce the operational subsidy paid by the City. Even public safety was not immune as the Police Department took a 3% cut.

The Federal CARES Act funding being administered by Douglas County is critical to restoring City of Ralston services and preventing deeper cuts. The Mayor, the City Council, and City staff are working closely with the County to access these dollars. We are confident that the County Board will see Ralston’s need and move to approve our funding requests.

If you have questions or comments about what’s happening at City Hall, please email me at rhoppe@cityofralston.com or call me at 402-610-2720. I look forward to hearing from you.



BARIGHT PUBLIC LIBRARY Ralston, NE

Ralston's Baright Public Library has been doing our best to adapt our services since building closed on March 16, 2020. The library has been offering curbside service for people to check out materials and between March and May, 672 people checked out books and materials. Our curbside service is contactless as we check out reserved books to patrons, put them in bags, and leave them outside on a table in front of the library for patrons to pick up. We have received great feedback from the public.

We are doing our best to stay connected with the people in our community. For the children, YouTube videos of storytimes have been posted for families to enjoy in the comfort of their home. There is also "Reading with Tess" online with ZOOM. Tess is a standard white poodle who has been trained to be a reading therapy dog. Children find comfort in reading to therapy animals as they are always there to listen and not judge. The kids have missed the weekly Lego Club, but they still are able to participate in weekly challenges with Virtual Lego Club. Every week a new challenge is posted on our website and our Facebook Group page, Children's Corner. Once a kid completes the challenge, they send the library a photo of their completed LEGO creation. Every week a child completes a challenge, their name goes into a drawing to win a brand new LEGO kit.

Children, teens and adults have all been participating in the weekly Make & Take Crafts. We have made everything from a unicorn mask to a fire breathing dragon to rock painting and paper beads.

From June 8th to the 13th, there was a Book Buddy Hunt in downtown Ralston. Ralston businesses had a storybook character (buddy) hidden in their windows. Children had a scavenger hunt sheet to mark which characters were in each business' windows. Eighteen businesses participated. It was a blast to hear back from both the children and the businesses who loved seeing the kids walking by.

All of our adult monthly Lunch & Learns have been taking place over ZOOM. In May, Jackie Collette discussed League of Women Voters. In June, Mandi Matlock

from Senior Helpers discussed Stages of Alzheimers and help for caregivers. Be sure to continue to check our website with upcoming Lunch & Learn programs to request your ZOOM invite!

There will be a StoryWalk in Wildewood Park every Wednesday this summer. A StoryWalk is when there are pages from a children's book attached to signs along a path. As you stroll down the path, you are directed to the next page in the story. By the end of the path, you will have completed the story. StoryWalks allow families to enjoy a community-wide event without touching anything as well as being able to practice social distancing. The StoryWalk Project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with the Kellogg-Hubbard Library. There is new story ready to be viewed every Wednesday. This is great fun for all ages! We hope you enjoy!

*Top photo: Anthony and Axel Lett
Bottom photo: Carolyn Broderson*



Ralston Arena Events

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the following events at the Ralston Arena!!

September 2020

Sep 25

Hairball

November 2020

Nov 19

Baby Shark LIVE

- ◆ **Styx Concert** - The Styx concert originally scheduled for Tuesday, August 18th 2020 has been rescheduled to Wednesday, March 17th 2021. Please hold on to your tickets as they will be honored for the new date!
- ◆ **Omaha Beef Football** - Beef Fans, the CIF unfortunately had to make this official and cancel the 2020 season. The Omaha Beef will be in contact with fans and sponsors regarding 2020 tickets and sponsorships and options for 2021. The Omaha Beef can't wait to welcome everyone back to The Slaughterhouse in 2021!
- ◆ **Juanes** announced the cancellation of the tour. If you purchased tickets through the arena, the tickets will be refunded.
- ◆ **Hillsong Worship** scheduled for August 22 has been postponed until 2021. Once we have a date, we will update all ticket holders with the new date and refund information. Please keep your tickets at this time.
- ◆ **Lancers Hockey** - USHL has canceled the remaining games this season. The Lancers will be issuing the ticket exchanges and refunds. Contact Kristyn Otter at kotter@lancers.com with any questions on Lancer tickets.
- ◆ **Golden Gloves** scheduled for July has been cancelled.
- ◆ **Peppa Pig** scheduled for April 7 has been postponed. We are working on a new date and ticket information. Once we have more information, we will send out an email to the ticket purchasers.
- ◆ **Omaha Red Devils** - has cancelled their 2020 season at this time. All ticket purchases will be refunded.

New events are added daily! Keep up on the events by visiting the Ralston Arena website at www.ralstonarena.com

City of Ralston

Our Vision Statement

"The City of Ralston will deliver economic, creative, cultural, and community development strategies to generate a quality of life that is a beacon of dynamic and independent small town culture within the metro area."

Local Government Officials & City Department Heads

Mayor—Donald Groesser

City Council Members:

Ward 1—Maureen Konwinski

Ward 2—Lee Fideline

Ward 3—Brian Kavanaugh

Ward 4—Jerry Krause / Council President

Ward 5—Michael Sanchez

Ward 6—Ben Preis

The Ralston City Council meets on the first and third Tuesday of every month at 5:30 PM in the Council Chambers, City Hall, 5500 S. 77th Street.

City Administrator—Rick Hoppe

Finance Director—Tim Bohling

City Clerk—Rosie Russell

City Attorney - Don Ficenec

Chief of Police—Marc Leonardo

Public Works Director—Dan Freshman

Library Director—Bailey Halbur

Arena General Manager—Brian Krajewski

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Independence Day "Parade"

