BEN WEST: County year in review

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By BEN WEST, Clackamas County Commissioner, Position 5 —

As the holiday season blankets Clackamas County in a gentle frost and twinkling lights adorn our neighborhoods, I find myself reflecting on the past year with a heart full of gratitude. As your County Commissioner, it's my privilege to serve this vibrant community, and what better time than now—amid the aroma of pine trees and the warmth of family gatherings—to celebrate our collective achievements? This year has been a gift, wrapped in progress and tied with the ribbons of collaboration, reminding us that even in challenging times, our county shines like a star atop the holiday tree, showing all what good local governance can achieve.

Grand openings

Let's start with the grand openings that have brought new life to our communities, much like the first snowflakes heralding winter's joy. The ribbon-cutting at the Clackamas County Courthouse was a momentous occasion, symbolizing justice and accessibility for all. Similarly, the grand opening of Clackamas Village has created a bustling hub for its residents, fostering connections that echo the holiday spirit of togetherness. And who could forget the festive unveilings of the new Oak Lodge Library, Community Center, and Park in the North Clackamas Parks and Recreation District (NCPRD)? These spaces are now beacons of learning and leisure, where families can gather for story hours or holiday events, building memories that last a lifetime.

Planning progress

Infrastructure and planning have also made remarkable strides, laying the foundation for a prosperous new year. We've completed the Sunrise Corridor Community Vision Plan, a blueprint for sustainable growth that ensures our county remains a welcoming home for generations. The groundbreakings for El Nido in Lake Oswego, Blossom, and Shortstack in Milwaukie marks the start of innovative housing solutions. At the same time, the decision to fund phase one of the Recovery Campus underscores our commitment to healing and support—true embodiments of the spirit of the giving season.

Health and safety

In the realm of health and safety, we've unwrapped several vital initiatives. Completing a performance-based ambulance contract enhances emergency response, providing the peace of mind that comes with a warm blanket on a chilly night. In response to the federal shutdown and loss of SNAP benefits, we acted – declaring a state of emergency and giving funding to food banks to ensure no family went hungry, reflecting the holiday ethos of caring for our neighbors. The openings of Clackamas Village and the Crisis Stabilization Center will strengthen our recovery-oriented system of care, offering hope and stability to those in need.

Culture and recreation

Cultural and recreational highlights add sparkle to our year. Distributing $250,000 in arts funding has nurtured creativity, supporting local artists whose works brighten our holidays with color and inspiration. All the grand openings and other community spots have injected fun and flavor into daily life, much like festive treats at a winter fair. As we approach the New Year, these accomplishments remind me of the magic in unity—Clackamas County's greatest strength. From courthouse halls to park pathways, we've built not just structures, but a stronger, more compassionate community. Wishing you all a joyful holiday season filled with love, laughter, and light. Together, let's make the coming year even brighter.

Ben West has been a Clackamas County Commissioner since 2023.