

## **Whatcom Middle School Rebuild on Schedule for Fall Opening**

Progress continues on the rebuilding of Whatcom Middle School following the Nov. 5, 2009 fire. In February 2011, Superintendent Greg Baker announced that Whatcom would reopen one year earlier than projected. Students will start to attend Whatcom again beginning Sept. 6, 2011. This expedited reopening is only feasible because of a team approach with this project by our district office staff, Dawson Construction, our structural engineering firm of Reid Middleton, our architectural firm Dykeman, our insurance providers, and the City of Bellingham for expediting the permitting process.

Construction is on schedule. The floors have been poured on all levels. Spaces are framed and drywall is complete. Painting, casework, floor covering, lighting, and ceiling tile work are well underway. Exterior windows have been installed.



The new Whatcom has been designed to meet the learning needs of today's middle school students and will be fully modern inside and code compliant, including an elevator and features that meet American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The facility will be a "green building" with a LEED silver equivalent certification, resulting in superior indoor air quality and reduced energy costs.

The 1903 entrance is being restored with an inviting commons area and exterior plaza, the school's library will be centrally located, and the historic auditorium will remain preserved. To view pictures of Whatcom post-fire, now and into the future, [please click here to see the presentation shared at the Feb. 8 meeting.](#)

The district's insurance is covering the cost of the rebuild.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony and community grand opening celebration for Whatcom Middle School is scheduled for noon on Sept. 1, with student-led tours to follow.

**Thank you to voters who approved a 2006 bond to fund several capital projects, including these:**

## **Cordata Construction Scheduled for Completion in Early August**

The construction of Cordata Elementary School on Aldrich Road is on schedule for completion this summer. Tiger Construction, a Whatcom County company, started building Cordata in June 2009. The bids received were very competitive and the district is pleased to be working with a local, quality construction company that has built both Northern Heights and Wade King elementary schools. We are taking advantage of a limited time opportunity to get the federal government to pay for all of the interest on the bonds that will be used for construction. Paying no interest is easily saving our community more than \$2 million.

As the building nears completion, final carpeting will be installed, exterior painting will be finished in July, and sod and landscaping will be put in during August.

**SEE REVERSE**



This is one of the most rapidly growing areas of our Bellingham community for young families with children. Cordata Elementary will serve most of Birchwood's current students, while Birchwood is being rebuilt, as well as some students from Sunnyland and Alderwood who live close to Cordata.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony and community grand opening for Cordata Elementary is scheduled for 5 p.m. on Sept. 8.

## Seismic Update

Seismic work for improved earthquake safety is complete at Columbia, Larrabee, and Lowell elementary schools. The final seismic work project was originally designated for the district office on Dupont Street. Because of the age and condition of this facility, staff would need to relocate and the building would need to temporarily close for this work to occur. As part of the decision to open Cordata as an elementary school for students this fall, district staff do not have a relocation space. Therefore, this project has been put on hold and instead, these funds were authorized in January 2011 to rebuild Birchwood Elementary School. The work on the district office will remain on hold until a Superintendent's Facilities Advisory Committee can evaluate all facility needs as part of a longer-term facilities plan and make recommendations to the Superintendent. Meanwhile, it was proposed to reconfigure current district office work areas to align with organizational restructuring by relocating some departments/offices within the building and possibly to schools.

## Birchwood Rebuild Update

By having Birchwood students and staff at Cordata while Birchwood is being rebuilt, we save the cost of operating another elementary school in this economy. The intention is that when the new Birchwood reopens after the rebuild in fall 2013 or 2014, many Birchwood students would return to their new school and some would stay at Cordata, according to revised northside attendance areas. We anticipate that once the economy recovers, and growth occurs in the north end of the district — as evidenced by recent city annexations and several large housing projects in the planning stages — Birchwood's attendance will increase and the large housing projects surrounding Cordata will begin to fill with families who have school-age children. This means we would need both Cordata and Birchwood in the future for elementary school children.

Families attending northside schools received information this past spring about the fall 2011 boundaries for elementary schools on the northside of Bellingham. [Click here for the fall 2011 elementary attendance areas.](#)

## Land Purchase on Hold for Future Sudden Valley School

Property purchase for a future elementary school in Sudden Valley remains on hold, pending new development regulations in the Lake Whatcom watershed area.

## Funding Sources

Funding for school construction, facility improvements and property purchases comes from a capital projects fund. This is separate from the district's general fund and by law, cannot be used for day-to-day operations or to address budget shortfalls.