



Julie Woodward

The City of Spokane

Weekly News Update for July 6

Information about Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) is evolving rapidly, and our important work as a City is continuing . We want to make sure our City employees have up-to-date information on both COVID and employee news. We will provide this update, as needed, to communicate what you need to know, while we work to reduce the spread of this disease in our community and continue to provide critical public services.

A Message from Mayor Woodward

Years of steady, slow, manageable growth has kept Spokane in a bit of a housing nirvana of relatively attainable housing. As a region, we have prided ourselves on availability and affordability. It is a point we have marketed as a desirable quality of life to companies looking to expand and relocate.

While that is still true for those coming from out of the area, the cost of housing has caught up to those who already call Spokane home. The lack of urgency we enjoyed for decades has now shifted to concern about an extremely tight rental and ownership market, short and costly supply of construction materials to affordably add inventory, and limited space to build under current regulations.

A global health pandemic that has people rethinking where they live, adapting their employment arrangements to a virtual environment, and a tight squeeze on supply puts Spokane in the middle of a perfect housing storm. This is a challenge years and years in the making with market conditions that have accelerated and exacerbated the problem.

Achieving the dream of homeownership, once just assumed by much of the population, is now more and more a concern. From entry-level to move-up to forever home, the lack of inventory is driving prices up faster than almost anywhere else.

Desirability is usually good, and it is in many respects in this case too, but it has also created a complex challenge that requires calm conversation and comprehensive solutions. We are listening and discussing with the many stakeholders options that emphasize prioritized permit processing, code fixes to ease pressure, and rethinking land-use requirements.

Record housing permits through the first half of the year give us reason for optimism, but a long-term solution requires a comprehensive plan that will be announced soon. It's going to take a methodical approach and the urgency we all feel channeled toward an outcome of available and affordable housing.

COVID Testing and Treatment Cost Shares

The City of Spokane has extended paying all COVID related cost shares for employees and dependents in Kaiser Permanente or Premera Blue Cross Medical Plans through Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021. This includes cost shares that you would normally pay as part of your deductible, coinsurance and/or copayment for you and/or your dependents. We are in this together!

Voluntary Hearing Aid Benefit

The City of Spokane has partnered with AudioNet America to offer a discounted Hearing Aid Program with fixed out-of-pocket costs.

**NEW VOLUNTARY
Benefit:**



VOLUNTARY HEARING AID BENEFIT
Effective Immediately



The City of Spokane has partnered with AudioNet America to offer a discounted Hearing Aid Program with fixed out-of-pocket costs*.

***FIXED OUT OF POCKET COST:**

Member (Employee with FT Benefits or Eligible Dependent) pays maximum one/two ears

Mid Level	Mid-High Level	Advanced Level	Flagship Level
• \$1,050/\$2,050	• \$1,300/\$2,550	• \$1,550/\$3,050	• \$1,700/\$3,350

Call AudioNet Customer Service for assistance

 (586) 256-5465

or

Visit the website for a participating provider today!

 www.audionetamerica.com

More Information to Assist Our Employees

Here are some more resources from our Employee Assistance Program:

- [Effective Communication in Caring for Older Adults](#)
Good communication is an essential part of the healing process. Effective doctor-patient communication has research-proven benefits: Patients are more likely to adhere to treatment and have better outcomes. They express greater satisfaction with their treatment and are less likely to file malpractice suits.
- [Nonverbal Communication](#)
Good negotiators must first be good communicators. Unfortunately, many negotiators think of communication only as oral or written verbal exchanges, but verbal exchanges account for only a fraction of the messages people send and receive. Research has shown that 70–90% of the entire communication spectrum is nonverbal. Consequently, you should be aware of the different forms of nonverbal communication that you are likely to encounter.

To access more topics related to COVID-19 visit: EAPHelpLink.com, using company code: **CITSP0**

Employee Information Portal (covid19.spokanecity.org/)

Remember, this Employee Information Portal is a great resource for employees to stay current on what's happening with the COVID-19 response. The [Employee Information Portal](#) can be accessed from work or home, using a computer or mobile device. All of the emailed information we have sent to employees is archived here.