

Member Spotlight

# MERLE ASH: King in the North

Merle Ash is doing great things in Snohomish County. And you'll be able to see them thanks to his mighty sustainability efforts.



**T**here is a faraway land, they say, that resides in the North and encompasses much beauty and many square miles. It is inhabited by the very bold, and there are those among us who dare brave the long and slow journey down by the Big Lake and UFO-shaped building they refer to as the needle, then back north again—sometimes daily.

This land has a name: Snohomish County. And it has a ruler: Merle Ash. You should get to know both, because they are cooking up something big together; something formidable and full of substance. Something or some things that may just help us in the county of the King reclaim the way we lost so seemingly long ago.

Ash is known as a strong advocate for both his clients and the homebuilding industry in general. As a volunteer on the Snohomish County Planning Commission, he does things often felt but not heard; things like putting into action builder-requested changes to the Marysville Municipal Code that make it easier to get people into new homes and initiating sewer extension in the Lakewood neighborhood. Ash's contributions are felt across his county, having pre-planned many successful subdivisions, townhomes, and commercial properties throughout Snohomish.

Merle Ash is known as a man of many traits; he is passionate about designing livable

communities. He has an experienced eye for innovative planning and engineering. And he has manned the front lines of sustainability, advocating for green communities through advancements in knowledge and technology.

The latter Ash facilitates through the promotion and use of Low Impact Development, or LID. What is LID? Ash has you covered. "Low Impact Development basically describes land planning, engineering, and development as it applies to stormwater runoff management, and is a term used by the United States and Canada," he says. "Its focus is emphasizing conservation that protects our water quality."

On his dedication to LID, Ash goes on to say, "Being responsible stewards of our land and natural resources should be the primary goal of every land developer. And that is why the LID principles are so important and should be adhered to."

Snohomish County Planning and Development Services Director Barbara Mock says, "As a land use consultant for the development community, Merle has embraced using LID techniques during the preliminary subdivision process, as well as during engineering design and construction. He uses his creativity to find solutions for challenging sites and works collaboratively with PDS engineers and inspectors to find practical, workable ways to implement many types of LID features."

Mock continues, "As a Planning Commissioner, Merle faithfully serves our Snohomish County residents by bringing his perspective to policy and code development for our region. He is always prepared, asks great questions, and engages others in trying to understand the real-world benefits and impacts of development regulations."

**A**sh backs what he speaks and his contributions are felt throughout the cities and communities in which he works. Snohomish County Executive Dave Somers sums up Ash's work within the county: "Merle Ash is a champion for the environment and for smart growth. We always enjoyed working with him because he was creative, had innovative solutions, and helped us address our growth needs. Our community is much stronger and healthier because of Merle's work."

A strong and healthy community indeed starts with strong and health-conscious minds. The

new family or first-time homebuyer settling somewhere in Snohomish County may not know the name Merle Ash, but they certainly feel the effects of his work.

Leaders don't demand credit. They simply do, and when they do, their actions are felt. That's all they need to continue their quest for good.

A leader must also be fearless yet charismatic. Bold yet not brash. And versatile enough to see things ahead of time and react accordingly. MBAKS Snohomish County Director Mike Pattison sums it up perfectly: "Merle is like the quarterback who sees the entire field—he anticipates coming trends and is always ahead of the curve."

Go north, they say, and you will find the way. To the office of Merle Ash. He'll set you right, just like he's doing for our industry and region. 🏡

*"Merle Ash has been a valued participant in the ongoing constructive relationship, and he seeks to bring everyone together to bring about projects that are beneficial not only to private sector business interests but also to the community at large."*

—Jon Nehring, Mayor of Marysville

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