

# LEICHNER LANDFILL

## Frequently Asked Questions

A master planning process to guide decisions about the future use of the county-owned property.

### Why are the county and city involved in what was a privately owned landfill?

The county and city directed waste to the site before it was closed. State law and agreements with the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission and the Washington State Department of Ecology require the county and the city to oversee closure activities at the landfill.

### Why did the county buy the landfill and other properties?

First, the site has the potential to create jobs and provide open space for parks and recreation. The Leichner Family owned the property and the county had an option to buy the property at an undetermined date. The county opted to purchase the site in order to plan for the future reuse of the property. The purchase also cleared up a convoluted arrangement where the landfill remains in private ownership, even though there is a public financial and management responsibility.

Second, county ownership establishes a clean title and provides a needed step toward ultimate reuse of the landfill site. Any reuse plan cannot interfere with post-closure maintenance and monitoring. A clean title also facilitates reuse of the landfill and adjacent properties. Those include the Leichner Campus site, which is relatively flat, has no buried waste and is zoned for light industry.

Third, the property was a good buy. An appraisal placed the value of the 120 acres at \$5.45 million, if it was not encumbered by the county option.

### When did the county purchase the site?

On May 10, 2011, the Board of Clark County Commissioners formally approved the purchase which closed in December 2012 after the county worked out details with state agencies. Final approval by state agencies was granted in March 2013.

### What did the county buy and for how much?

The county purchased 120 acres that includes the 74-acre landfill, as well as the 35-acre Leichner Landfill campus to the south and west of the landfill, and a couple of smaller properties. All but 4.8 acres are part of the county option that was part of an agreement signed in December 1988. The negotiated price for the 120 acres was \$1.5 million and was set by an appraisal.

### Where did the money come from?

Clark County Public Works provided \$349,000 for 11 acres that will be used to extend Northeast 99th Street along the northern boundary of the closed landfill. The remainder of the money came from the Leichner Landfill Financial Assurance Reserve Fund managed by Clark County and the City of Vancouver for post-closure maintenance and environmental compliance.

### Why was the Leichner Campus site part of this transaction?

The property was included in the county option more than 20 years ago because of the potential need for adjacent land for a “pump and treat” system to clean up contaminated groundwater. The property also was included to provide cover soil for the landfill’s closure, as well as a location for monitoring wells to measure compliance with the Washington State Department of Ecology’s cleanup plan.

### Why hasn’t the Leichner Campus property been used for groundwater treatment?

The membrane cap placed on top of the landfill when it was closed has been effective in keeping water out. Groundwater contamination has declined over time, making treatment unnecessary.

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## Frequently Asked Questions – continued

### How does the county know that it hasn't assumed an unknown financial risk, namely an expensive cleanup bill?

There has been almost 20 years of post-closure monitoring, and that indicates the level of groundwater contamination is decreasing, not increasing.

Moreover, the purchase agreement requires the county to obtain an insurance policy to safeguard against unforeseen liability. The Environmental Pollution Liability Policy provides \$40 million in coverage. The approved 2011-12 budget for Leichner Landfill provided \$387,000 for the one-time cost of a 10-year policy.

Such policies were not widely available when the Leichner Landfill closed in 1991. Because of the ability to purchase insurance today, it won't be necessary to maintain a large reserve fund as protection against future liability.

### How will possible future reuse of the landfill and adjacent properties be determined?

On Nov. 5, 2013, the Board of County Commissioners approved an agreement with Maul Foster & Alongi Inc. of Vancouver to lead a master planning effort for the landfill and adjacent parcels. The county will prepare a master plan that projects how the site could develop in the future. One example of master planning occurred earlier this decade when the county and city jointly funded a plan for future redevelopment of "Section 30," a square mile in east Vancouver that historically has been used for gravel mining.

### What will it mean to create a master plan for the closed landfill and adjacent properties?

The county will work with the community to forge a viable vision for reusing the site and attracting private investment, creating public benefit, addressing environmental concerns and allowing future development.

The plan will take into account the site's physical conditions, environmental constraints, regulation requirements and economic and market conditions. It also will consider transportation and other infrastructure that will be needed to serve development.

The master plan will not necessarily identify specific users for the property, nor will it provide specific designs of buildings and other site features. Rather, it will provide a sense of development scale and potential building layout.

### What are some of the potential reuses that could come out of the process?

Light manufacturing could potentially take place on the Leichner Landfill campus site in the near future. The landfill itself will remain largely off-limits to prevent any use from interfering with post-closure monitoring for the next five to ten years. Additional planning for future recreational use of the landfill properties will be concurrent with the planned extension of 99th Street..

### How can nearby residents get involved?

During the master planning process, there will be opportunities for the public to attend open houses and comment on different options. The first open house is scheduled for 4-7 p.m. Tuesday, April 29, at Vancouver Church of Christ, 9019 NE 86th St.



The landfill and adjacent properties the county is considering in the master plan.

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[www.clark.wa.gov/leichner](http://www.clark.wa.gov/leichner)

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