# [***FUTURE TO REINFORCE TIES TO PAST***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:47KH-01B0-010F-N220-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** TOM VOGT, Columbian staff writer

**Body**

William Clark and Meriwether Lewis could, at least, stop and ask for directions.

Sure, they were trekking into uncharted territory. But a lot of people were there ahead of them, able to tell Lewis and Clark what was around the next turn as their Corps of Discovery followed the Columbia River toward the Pacific Ocean.

Today we head into really uncharted territory, and nobody got there before us: We take our first step into 2003.

The route isn't totally unknown, however. Some of the paths we followed through 2002 will continue into the new year, and beyond.

Fittingly enough, they include the saga of Meriwether and William. Vancouver's three-year observance of the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial will begin with an artistic flourish in February. That's when New York artist Maya Lin, designer of the nation's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, is to deliver drawings of two works of art for Vancouver: a bridge over state Highway 14 from Fort Vancouver to the Columbia River and a landscape design at Blurock's Landing near Frenchman's Bar.

Vancouver's first bicentennial display, "End of Our Journey," will open May 8 at the O.O. Howard House on the Vancouver National Historic Reserve.

City on the move

Vancouver may be on a journey of its own over the next few years, marching out into unincorporated areas as it expands its city limits. As county commissioners decide whether to push out urban growth boundaries for local cities, Vancouver's top priority is to push the line right to Camas' city limits. Vancouver would like to see its urban growth boundary expanded by about 12 square miles to allow for more industrial and commercial development.

Camas also is keenly interested in someday annexing the Fisher's Swale area between the two cities.

That outward march of city limits will be part of updating the 20-year growth plan for this county that bears Clark's name. The county commissioners have projected annual population growth of 1.5 percent in their land-use planning for the next 20 years. They have pledged to preserve and create industrial land to lure family-wage jobs. How many acres they open to housing and commercial development will set growth patterns for years to come.

Employment will continue to be a big story in Clark County, after a recent cycle in which high-tech manufacturing companies and telecom employers cut jobs and then cut jobs again. But as some sectors chopped, others -- including health-care employers and retail stores -- have been adding workers.

Outlook is brighter

Many local business people expect Clark County's economy to pull out of the doldrums in 2003. High-tech businesses tied to the semiconductor industry are expected to make a modest recovery this year as worldwide demand increases for computers, ***cell phones***, digital cameras and a host of other gadgets.

Health care will continue to be an economic driver as construction gets started on a new Legacy Health System hospital in Salmon Creek, an expansion at Southwest Washington Medical Center, a new Kaiser Permanente medical office building and a possible expansion by the Vancouver Clinic. Retailing will continue to expand as WinCo, Target, Wal-Mart, Costco and Albertsons bring new stores here.

On another construction front, 2003 will be the make-it-or-break-it year for Vancouver's long push to build a downtown convention center. The city must have construction under way by the end of the year or it will lose a state sales tax credit worth more than $ 700,000 a year. The tax credit is considered essential to finance the project.

If mortgage interest rates remain low, homebuilding will continue to contribute 10,000 jobs and $ 300 million in capital investment a year to the county's economy.

It all should result in improvement in the county's employment picture. Unemployment hit a 15-year high of 9.6 percent in early 2002, then slowly declined to 7.9 percent (14,500 unemployed) in November.

Leading the way

Leadership has changed since the days when Thomas Jefferson could tell a guy to walk west until he was ankle-deep in saltwater.

In Vancouver, six members of the city council will appoint a replacement later this month for Jim Moeller, who was elected to the state House in November and will resign his council seat. It will be the first time the Vancouver council has had to fill a vacancy since September 1990.

In the fall, Mayor Royce Pollard is expected to run for a fifth two-year term as mayor. Council members Jeanne Lipton and Dan Tonkovich will be up for re-election. The person appointed to fill Moeller's term also will need to run.

Schools will continue to reflect forces affecting the larger community.

The state's $ 2 billion budget shortfall hasn't made its way down to local districts yet. But early conversations indicate that recent initiatives approving pay raises for teachers and money for reducing class sizes are in jeopardy. That could mean more crowded classrooms in the future, or cuts in other school programs if districts want to maintain current staffing levels.

Demands of the technology-based economy will influence local education as Clark College and Washington State University Vancouver start work on a four-year engineering program. The partnership will answer demands for a four-year college education in an area where the closest four-year public campus The Evergreen State College -- is in Olympia, 110 miles away.

Schools also are an indicator of local growth. Camas will open a new high school and the Evergreen School District a new elementary this year to accommodate expanding enrollments. Vancouver will begin work on a new middle school.

The school construction also reflects another continuing theme. Vancouver's new school will be named for Thomas Jefferson. Evergreen's elementary will bear the name of York, the slave of William Clark.

What's ahead in 2003?

\* Population growth and an expansion of city limits.

\* Economic recovery.

\* New faces in local politics.

\* State budget to put strain on Clark County schools.

\* New construction.

Columbian staff writers Julia Anderson, Dean Baker, Gregg Herrington, Erin Middlewood and Jeffrey Mize contributed to this story.

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