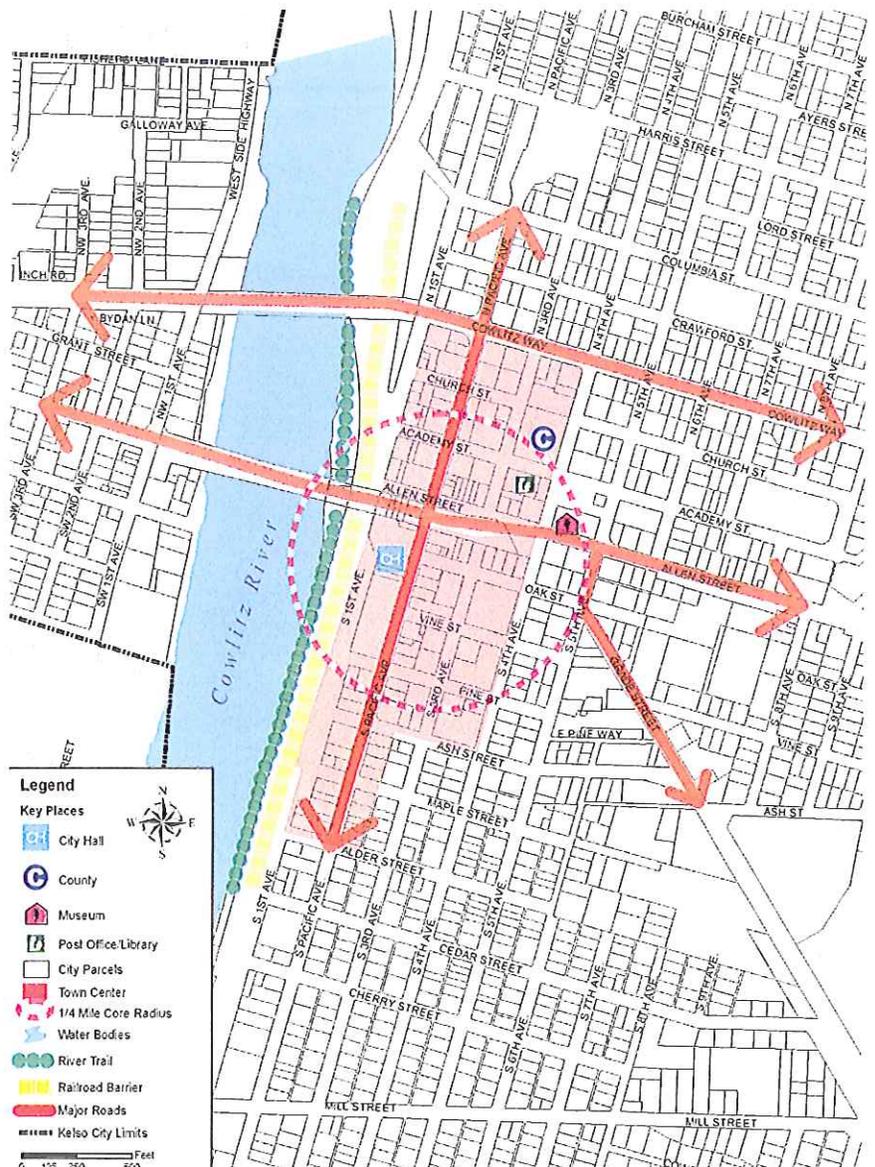


City of Kelso 2005 DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN



Phase One Report
Berryman & Henigar/Greg Waddell
June, 2005

DOWNTOWN KELSO – OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

This report describes the current status of Downtown Kelso in terms of the physical environment and the perceptions of the downtown stakeholders. It also provides recommendations for further community and technical work that will lead to a new action plan.

Background

Nearly 20 years ago, the City of Kelso completed *The Downtown Revitalization Plan* with broad community participation. That effort was triggered by the opening of the Three Rivers Mall as well as a broad consensus that the historic downtown area needed attention on a number of fronts. The resulting Plan identified over 30 discrete action steps that were recommended to address those issues. The actions ranged from the installation and maintenance of flower pots to construction of a new city hall. A surprising number of the actions have been completed.

In spite of the successes, the Downtown has not recovered as envisioned, and other events such as the construction of the new bridge on Allen Street have created new issues. These factors are addressed in the following.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Study

The City of Kelso received a matching grant from the State of Washington Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development to revise and update the 1988 *Downtown Revitalization Plan*. The purpose of the study is to review prior studies; examine existing conditions and identify changes that have occurred since the 1988 Plan; identify what recommendations have been implemented since the plan was adopted and evaluate their effectiveness; identify the recommendations that have not been implemented and evaluate why not; and develop a set of revised and/or new action strategies aimed at boosting the revitalization of downtown Kelso.

Phase One Process

The primary purpose of Phase One was to collect and review existing information and initiate a public outreach process.

The following were reviewed and the goals, policies, objectives, recommendations and regulations, as they relate to downtown Kelso, were documented: Downtown Kelso

Revitalization Plan, Kelso Comprehensive Plan, Kelso Planning and Zoning Code and Design Review Handbook for Downtown Design Review Overlay District.

Public workshops were conducted on June 2 and June 20, 2005. The purpose of the meetings was to disseminate information that had been collected and to engage the participants in a discussion of the positive and negative aspects of downtown Kelso. Attendees were encouraged to express their feelings on what has worked (and why), what hasn't worked (and why not), and what actions or strategies might work in the future.

In addition to the two workshops, interviews were conducted on June 15, 2005. Seven persons were interviewed in five interview sessions. An overview of the results of the interviews was presented and discussed at the June 20 workshop.

Summary of Findings

As a result of review of existing documents, workshops and interviews, the following is a summary of findings:

- There was a general feeling expressed that the City of Kelso does not support downtown businesses.
- It was repeatedly voiced that what downtown Kelso needs is more "activities".
- There was general consensus that it is crucial to relocate the U.S. Post Office and build a new Kelso Library to act as downtown "anchors."
- The need for small cafes and coffee shops was often expressed.
- The Allen Street bridge extension has been detrimental to downtown Kelso.
- The City of Kelso has taken partial steps toward implementing the 1988 study by building a new City Hall, renovating the train station, establishing a parking Business Improvement Assessment, adopting Downtown Design Guidelines and installing historic style streetlights.
- The shabbiness of the gateways to downtown and other areas of downtown provide a negative image.
- Vacant and deteriorating storefronts need to be rehabilitated.
- There is general support for a public funding program to assist property owners to improve their buildings.
- There is a need for a program to recruit new businesses to downtown Kelso.
- There was general support for increasing the number of residential units in downtown in mixed-use buildings.

Next Steps

Based on the findings and conclusions of Phase One, the following recommended steps should be taken in the next year:

Complete Review of Current City Policies and Regulations – Develop recommendations for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, and other legislative framework affecting future growth and development.

Assess the Development Potential of Downtown – Evaluate the size, zoning capacity, and configuration of the Downtown and allowed/desired uses in comparison to the Mall and West Kelso.

Describe the Physical Environment – Map and illustrate the contextual conditions of the Downtown including block sizes, street grid, riverfront, access and circulation, topography, buildings, view, and adjacent neighborhoods.

Organize the Downtown Stakeholders – Initiate a community-based organization of business and property owners, public officials, and interested citizens committed to working with the City to define a vision for Downtown and implement the Action Plan.

Prepare the Downtown Action Plan – Produce a strategic plan that identifies short-term, mid-range, and long-term actions to be taken by the City, Downtown Organization, and individual stakeholders, along with associated costs and funding sources.

Summary of Existing Documents

The Kelso Comprehensive Plan, Kelso Planning and Zoning Code, Design Review Handbook for Downtown Design Review Overlay District and the 1988 Downtown Kelso Revitalization Plan were reviewed to assess the pertinent information relating to downtown Kelso. This section presents the results of that review for the first three documents listed above. A summary of the review of the 1988 Revitalization Plan is included in the next section entitled "Status of Prior Recommended Actions."

Kelso Comprehensive Plan

Commercial Development and Land Use

Goals:

A: To centralize commercial services while providing improved vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation to the benefit of the business and the customer.

B: To attain a higher level of commercial and retail services in the city.

Policies:

- Commercial uses should be centralized around the Interstate-Allen Street area and the existing Central Business District, including West Kelso, in order to minimize traffic movement and congestion.
- Commercial development at Schroeder Field should be compatible with an integral part of the existing downtown retail core area.
- The city should encourage, through the provision of improvements and area, the siting of professional offices in the central business district.
- Professional offices should be allowed to locate in residential areas. *Negative policy to CBD*

Goals:

C : To improve the existing commercial areas of the city.

D: To develop an overall design scheme for the downtown and West Kelso area.

Objectives:

1: Establish a committee of downtown and West Kelso business people and property owners to develop and implement a revitalization plan for improvements based upon an agreed-upon theme. As part of this theme and for the enhancement of retail trade, the following tasks should be accomplished by the city and its business:

- a. Storefront remodeling and painting
- b. Landscaping or planter boxes where appropriate
- c. Street and sidewalk improvements to encourage downtown parking and pedestrian shopping
- d. Provide awning or canopies over the sidewalks to provide an incentive for greater shopping activity in the downtown area.
- e. Provide some benches and rest areas.
- f. Reconstruct building interiors and exteriors to meet all building codes and improve downtown appearance.

2: To modify the zoning ordinance to provide incentives and standards which will put the design theme to work. Standards could be developed or changed for signs, building setback, height and bulk, landscaping, off-street parking requirements and the provision of amenities.

Policies:

- The city and the downtown merchants should cooperate in the purchase, development, and maintenance of conveniently located off-street parking.
- Warehouse uses in and around the downtown business area should not be allowed to expand or increase in number and should be encouraged to relocate to industrial zoned areas. If a warehouse business moves or goes out of business, alternative use of the facility should be researched and established to provide for a greater variety of retail and service activities in downtown and West Kelso.
- Existing warehouse building exteriors and yards should be improved and maintained so as to make them more compatible with adjacent and nearby commercial and residential uses.
- The city, downtown merchants, and Burlington Northern Railroad should jointly participate in a program to clean up, landscape and otherwise refurbish the railroad depot and area to tie it in with downtown Kelso.
- To enhance improvements along the railroad and Cowlitz river shoreline, the back ends of buildings along First Avenue should be remodeled and improved in appearance.
- The city should seek ways to expand and diversify the commercial uses in downtown and West Kelso. Incentives such as lowered off-street parking requirements combined with multiple use of large buildings are possible techniques to attract potential retail outlets.
- If economically feasible, older buildings and former residences should be renovated to house new and different uses whose functions enhance other businesses in Kelso.
- The city should earnestly research and pursue application for the use of federal and state funding or loans for downtown improvements. Local funding and participation, both public and private, should, when necessary, supplement such grants or loans.
- Multi-family housing is encouraged to locate in the downtown area and West Kelso, but only as a use secondary to commercial uses. This can be accomplished by a variety of methods: Use vacant lands for new structures with commercial uses on the lower floors and living units above; or encourage the turnover of incompatible or inactive uses, such

as warehouses or abandoned buildings, to combination multi-family/professional office/retail facilities.

Goals:

E: To utilize existing natural resources as an element of downtown development and improvement.

Policies:

- East and West banks of the Cowlitz River shoreline should be developed to enhance public access and recreational use as an element of improving commercial activity in the downtown and West Kelso area. Provisions for safety should be incorporated into development plans.
- Commercial development along the Cowlitz River shoreline in the downtown/ West Kelso area should be limited strictly to those uses which provide public access to the river and shoreline and are shoreline related uses. Such uses may include a boat laune facility or restaurant with provisions for enhancing public access. Easement provisions or dedication arrangement should be used to implement public access.
- To tie the Cowlitz River shoreline in with the downtown retail activity, the city and downtown businesses should develop a safe means of crossing the railroad tracks.
- Existing trees and other vegetation in areas planned for commercial development and be incorporated into the overall development plan.

Transportation/Circulation

Goals:

A: To provide for a safe, convenient, and economical transportation and circulation system.

Objectives:

2. To acquire and develop additional conveniently located off-street parking in the central business district.

Policies:

- Traffic circulation patterns in downtown and West Kelso should be designed to allow through traffic to pass through or around Kelso as safely and smoothly as possible.
- The city and downtown business people should study and, if found desirable, implement one-way street patterns in the central business district.
- Since the establishment of conveniently located off-street parking would benefit the entire business district and the city/county buildings, a Business Improvement District should be established and coordinated action taken to acquire parking facilities.

Historical Preservation

Goals:

A: To identify and preserve sites and structures of historic, archeological or architectural significance to the city and region.

B: To enhance local and visitor interest in Kelso's origin and its involvement in the area's growth and development.

Objectives:

1: To work with the Cowlitz County Historical Society and Museum to inventory, identify, and initiate steps to preserve and restore houses and buildings of historical and architectural significance to the city.

Policies:

- Improvements and re-development of the central business district, as advocated in other plan policies, should be coupled with the identification and rehabilitation of historically significant buildings.
- The owners of historically significant buildings and residences should be encouraged to rehabilitate and otherwise maintain their buildings in a manner which reflects their architectural and historic design.

Planning and Zoning Code

Pertinent zones:

- CTC – Town Center Commercial
- CWK – West Kelso Commercial
- DDO – Downtown Design Guidelines Overlay
- DPO – Downtown Parking Overlay

Purpose – Town Center and West Kelso commercial zones:

The Town Center and West Kelso commercial zones should strengthen the vitality of downtown and West Kelso as places for people to live, shop and work.

- A. Town Center Commercial Zone. The purpose of the town center commercial district is to provide a strong residential component to encourage a lively community during both the day and night. The town center zone includes a diversity in types of housing, shopping, civic facilities, recreation and employment. A variety of land uses are allowed which promote a pedestrian atmosphere and enhance the viability of the town center. Within this district, residential uses are encouraged, but exclusive office

and/or retail uses are permitted. Land uses that require outdoor storage or which have an auto orientation, such as drive-through establishments, are restricted with the town center.

- B. West Kelso Commercial Zone: The West Kelso commercial zone is intended to provide commercial uses that complement downtown Kelso and benefit from automobile access near state routes, while creating a pedestrian friendly retail area. A variety of commercial uses are allowed that offer goods and services for the convenience of city residents and that may have an auto orientation. (Ord. 3533, 2004)

Notes:

- As addressed in the city of Kelso comprehensive plan, the US Post Office is an integral part of the downtown economy and commercial area and therefore the use has been exclusively designated in the CTC district.
- All public transportation stations shall be located at the city of Kelso multi-modal transportation facility.
- Commercial/residential mixed use developments; provided, that the residential units are located above the ground floor and are at a density not to exceed eight units per acre or at the RSF-5 residential zone density, constructed to the standards contained in Chapter 17.28 (residential multi-family) *Density in multi-family district is 32 units/acre.

Purpose – Downtown Parking Overlay District

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a downtown parking overlay district that will exempt those property owners who participate in a business improvement area to create additional off-street parking in the downtown area. It is anticipated that the overlay district will help maintain and enhance the unique characteristics and diversity of the downtown area of the city. (Ord. 3499, 2002)

Purpose – Downtown Design Guidelines Overlay Zone

The purpose of this chapter is to establish the downtown design guidelines overlay zone to protect, maintain and enhance the unique characteristics and diversity of the downtown area of the city. (Ord. 3533, 2004; Ord. 3490, 2002)

Design Review Handbook for Downtown Design Review Overlay District

A. Civic Spaces

- A-1 Streetscape
- A-2 Street Intersections

B. Buildings

- B-1 Building Location
 - B-2 Building Design
 - B-3 Building Details
- C. Architectural Elements and Materials
- C-1 Architectural Concept and Consistency
 - C-2 Human Scale
 - C-3 Exterior Finish Materials
 - C-4 Blank Walls
- D. Parking and Access
- D-1 Building Entrances
 - D-2 Parking and Vehicle Access
 - D-3 Screening Dumpsters, Utilities and Service Areas

Conclusions

The review of the existing policy and regulatory framework finds that it is logical and straight forward in general. While the framework provides a reasonable basis for approving new private development, it is not pro-active in the sense of offering incentives or encouragements. The low residential density threshold is an example of a potential "road-block" to mixed use development that could create a 24-hour lively residential community. The transportation emphasis on through-traffic and one-way streets may be a self-fulfilling prophesy that has diluted the ability of the Downtown to attract shoppers and visitors. And, the similarities in the land use designations for the Town Center and West Kelso may create unneeded competition between the two areas.

Status of Prior Recommended Actions

Description

The following table was prepared after review of the 1988 Downtown Kelso Revitalization Plan, the Kelso Comprehensive Plan, the Planning and Zoning Code and the Design Review Handbook for downtown. The purpose of the table is to list recommended actions from those documents as the related to downtown, to indicate whether or not those actions have been implemented, and, if not already implemented, should the still be valid recommendations for the future.

Status Table

Recommended Action	Recommending Document	Completed?	If not completed, is it still a valid recommendation?
Business Information Support Center	Downtown Revitalization Plan	No	Depends on who funds it.
Contact and Invite Desired Businesses	DRP	No	Yes
Advertise for Desired Businesses	DRP	No	Yes
Establish Revolving Loan Fund for Start-up Businesses	DRP	No	Needs research and detail. What if business fails?
Build New City Hall in Downtown	DRP	Yes	
Create a City Center with City Hall, Senior Center, Public Parking etc.	DRP	Partial	Yes, with Library and Post Office
Improve Accessibility to All Downtown Areas	DRP	No	Yes
Create Center Left Turn Lane on Allen	DRP	No	No
Upgrade Ash Street	DRP	New pedestrian lights	Needs more streetscape improvements

Recommended Action	Recommending Document	Completed?	If not completed, is it still a valid recommendation?
Install Attractive Directional Signs	DRP	Yes	Yes: may need more
Develop Additional Public Parking Facilities	DRP	Yes	Not now
Review Feasibility of BIA to Develop and Operate Public Parking Facilities	DRP	Yes	Not now
Install New Historic Style Pedestrian Street Lights Throughout Downtown	DRP	Partial	Yes
Assist Building Owners in Getting Loans to Rehab Buildings	DRP	No	Needs Clarification
Limit Advertising Signs Through Zoning	DRP	Yes	May need review
Provide Grants for Building Façade Improvements	DRP	No	Needs clarification
Provide Design Sketches for Selected Downtown Blocks	DRP	Yes	Done in "80s. Not distributed to owners. May still be benefit.
Inspect Downtown Buildings for Hazardous and Unsafe Conditions	DRP	Yes	Yes, for seismic.
Develop Riverfront Access and Park Adjacent to Downtown	DRP	No	Yes
Develop Visual Links to Downtown	DRP	Yes	Continue
Develop Attractive Entries to Downtown	DRP	Ongoing	Yes
Install Street Trees or Appropriate Landscaping on Arterial	DRP	No	Yes

Recommended Action	Recommending Document	Completed?	If not completed, is it still a valid recommendation?
Streets Leading to Downtown			
Require New Developments to Install Sidewalks and Landscaping	DRP	Yes	
Enhance Landscaping and Signage at Cowlitz Way and Main	DRP	Yes	
Prevent the Use of Storefronts for Warehouse or Storage	DRP	No	Yes
Install Benches, Awnings Pedestrian Lighting and Waste Receptacles	DRP	Partial	Continue
Develop Program for Installation/Maintenance of Flower Pots	DRP	Partial	Yes
Adopt Downtown Historic District and Incentives for Rehab of Buildings	DRP	No. Tried but not successful	Needs research
Work with Owners and School Art Classes to Paint Wall Murals	DRP	No	Yes. Perhaps hand prints on blanc walls.
Develop Spring or Early Summer Festival	DRP	Weekly market	Continue/expand
Establish Monthly Honor Award for Public Involvement and Service	DRP	No	Yes, but should be quarterly or annually
Renovate Historic Railroad Station and Theater	DRP	Partial	Theater still needs more restoration.
Require Design Review for New Development and Rehabs	DRP	Yes	

Recommended Action	Recommending Document	Completed?	If not completed, is it still a valid recommendation?
Encourage the Siting of Offices in Downtown	Comprehensive Plan	Yes	May need to provide more incentives
Allow Offices in Residential Areas	CP	Yes	Should be reviewed to determine if it provides disincentive.
Establish a Committee to Develop Overall Design Scheme for Downtown and West Kelso	CP	Yes	Continue
Provide Incentives and Standards to Implement Design Theme	CP	Yes	Need incentives
Enhance Public Access to East and West Banks of Cowlitz River	CP	No	Yes

First Public Workshop

A workshop of downtown stakeholders was held on June 2, 2005 between 2:00 PM and 5:00 PM in the City Council Chambers at Kelso City Hall. Thirteen persons signed the attendance sheet. There were several others in attendance who did not sign-in.

Agenda Downtown Kelso Stakeholders' Workshop June 2, 2005

Introductions	All	2:00 – 2:15
Project Objectives	Kent Anderson	2:15 – 2:30
Meeting Objectives	Roger Wagoner	2:30 – 2:40
Research Conclusions	Greg Waddell	2:40 – 2:50
“Round Robin” of Issues	All	2:50 – 3:30

Review of Action Plan Recommendations	Greg Waddell Facilitator	3:30 – 4:30
Summary	Kent, Roger & Greg	4:30 – 4:45
Next Steps	Kent, Roger & Greg	4:45 – 5:00

Workshop Conclusions

Notes were taken during the downtown stakeholders' "Round Robin" discussion of issues. The following bullet points are the essence of issues raised during the discussion.

- Get people to come out – need activity
- Kelso spirit (positive attitude)
- New library as downtown anchor
- Post Office as downtown anchor (old Safeway store?)
- There is a disconnect – not enough citizen involvement
- Businesses need City support
- Involve school kids, i.e. hand prints on blank walls
- Population is aging
- Need mix of small/diverse businesses
- Gotta be Hip! (Kelso Pub)
- Sushi bar
- Video store
- Public safety is issue (or at least perceived to be) in downtown area
- Need transit circulator
- Need more higher end residential rentals
- City management seen as not helping business i.e. permitting, marketing, keeping streets and parking clean
- City turned off street lighting around night business
- Need to improve appearance of approaches to downtown – clean up litter etc.
- Off street parking requirements are too high
- Need more professional offices
- Kelso too close to sales-tax-free Portland

- Utility costs are too high
- Should hold workshop at Kelso school
- What about a dog park in downtown?
- Concerns about crime from adjacent housing
- Need to promote neighborhood clean-ups
- Need welcoming attitude
- Need alley improvements

Interviews

Seven persons were interviewed in five interview sessions on June 15, 2005. The following questions formed the basis for the discussions.

Interview Questions

At our recent workshop it was stated that there is a “disconnect” – that there is not enough citizen involvement. Do you believe that the community at large supports the revitalization of downtown Kelso? If not, why not? Do you have any ideas about how to gain broader support for the revitalization of downtown?

A survey conducted for the Revitalization Plan indicated that deteriorated buildings, street appearance and vacant buildings are the major problems in downtown. Do you agree that these are major issues? If so, would you support some sort of funding mechanism to assist owners in the cost of fixing up their buildings? Would you support grants or loans, or both?

The survey also indicated that, in addition to renovation of buildings, there needs to be a program to attract new businesses to downtown in order for downtown to be rejuvenated. Do you concur with the assessment? If so, do you think there needs to be a new Business Information Support Center established (as recommended in the Revitalization Plan) or do you think this should be done by the existing Cowlitz Economic Development Council?

At our workshop there was some agreement that locating a new library and relocating the US Post Office nearer to City Hall would help stimulate the rejuvenation of downtown Kelso. Do you think this action would result in such a stimulus?

The City of Kelso has partially implemented the Revitalization Plan by locating the new City Hall in downtown, renovating the railroad station, installing pedestrian street lights, increasing off-street public parking and adopting design guidelines. Of the other recommendations in the revitalization plan, please rank the following four in what you believe to be their order of importance:

1. Provide funding mechanism for building renovation.
2. Recruit new businesses to downtown Kelso.
3. Relocate library and post office near City Hall to create a "civic center".
4. Improve appearance of streets and sidewalks.

What other things do you think are important considerations in the effort to revitalize downtown Kelso?

Notes from Interviews of June 15, 2005

Veryl Anderson – Kelso Finance Director; Cindy Keeney, Assistant

Different people now. That's why there is no interest in downtown. Roots are no longer here.

Low income renters – 52% of population is low-income.

Kelso needs a theme, like Leavenworth.

There are no jobs and no middle-class in Kelso.

Need to recruit businesses. Kelso contributes \$10,000 per year to CEDC, but gets nothing in return. CEDC is Longview-centric and recruits only industrial type uses.

Need events like an Arts Fair or a chili cook-off. Need to give away prizes or recognition to motivate people to participate. The Christmas lighting event at the train station each year is successful because they give away prizes and gifts for the children.

The Sunday market needs to do events in conjunction with market day i.e. music, contests etc.

The City has money from HUD programs that could and should be used for façade improvements of downtown buildings rather than be put back into housing.

Cam Hanna – Art Associates, Inc. and Antique Store

Agrees with the perception that there is a "disconnect". People's perception is that their opinion doesn't count. There is no "user friendliness". People are upset if they don't get their way, and they aren't always right – but the City needs to do a better job of explaining why things have to be done a certain way, not just say "No".

Need more activities downtown, like music in the park.

People's perception that there is a crime problem downtown, but he doesn't understand it. He sees no crime threat downtown.

Would support façade improvement loans and grants. Education about the availability of dollars is key. People don't know that there is money out there. The City should write a letter to each property owner and inform them of what is available.

City needs to clean up it's own properties before they expect other property owners to clean up theirs. City needs to "walk-the-talk".

Would like to see the library located downtown and provide better ADA access. Would like to see preservation of Post Office building.

Would support marketing effort. Everybody needs to buy into it.

City Council members should go out into the community occasionally and talk one on one with the business owners.

Key: City needs to "walk-the-talk".

Bill Ammons - Barber

The key to downtown is the Post Office. The idea of moving the Post Office out to the industrial area is crazy. We need to lobby our Federal Congressional representatives to get the Post Office to build a new facility downtown.

Joe Wheeler – City Council

All you hear from citizens about downtown is that there is nothing there. That's why there's not a lot of citizen involvement. The "disconnect" is with the landowners and businesses. Money is the issue with them. They want the city to pay for improving the facades of their businesses. The building owners have no pride.

City should be doing streetscape improvements, not façade improvements.

What downtown needs is a name-brand restaurant, and others would follow.

Hear complaints that the city is hard to work with.

Would support the use of public money for building improvements if the city had first lien on the property.

The city should research funding sources and educate property owners about availability of money and process to apply for it.

Carol and Mike Zonich – Hardware and Marine Business, Building Owners

People are bitter about the bridge project; that's why there is no citizen support for downtown. The city should use the water bill mailings to distribute a downtown newsletter and advertise the city market.

Downtown Kelso is not retail friendly, regulatory-wise.

Grants are a good idea, but not loans. People don't have the money to pay off loans. It is a disincentive to improve your property if it puts you in debt when your business is marginal to begin with.

Attitude at City Hall is perceived as negative and difficult. There is no customer service attitude or friendliness. Public regulator rather than public servant.

Priorities to improve downtown should be:

1. Change the perceived attitude about City Hall
2. Relocate Library and Post Office
3. Recruit new businesses
4. Improve appearance of streets and sidewalks
5. Providing funding for building renovation

Common Themes from Interviews

There were several perspectives voiced during the interview conversations that were frequently repeated or where common among all of those interviewed. These include:

- City Hall needs to be more “user friendly” and perceived in a positive light.
- Very important to relocate Post Office and Library nearer to City Hall
- Need more activities and events downtown.
- Public funding for grants and loans for building renovation is good idea. Grants best.
- Needs to be a program to inform and educate owners about availability of funds.
- There needs to be more effort to recruit businesses to downtown.

Second Public Workshop

A second workshop of downtown Kelso stakeholders was held on June 20, 2005 from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM in the City Council Chambers at Kelso City Hall. Twenty three persons signed the attendance sheet.

Agenda Downtown Kelso Stakeholders' Workshop June 20, 2005

Introductions & Announcements	All	5:00 – 5:15
Meeting Objectives	Roger Wagoner	5:15 – 5:20
Report on Workshop 1 & Stakeholder Interviews	Greg Waddell	5:20 – 6:00
Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats	Roger & Greg	6:00 – 6:30
Next Steps	Roger & Greg	6:30 – 6:45
Closing Thoughts	Kent, All	6:45 – 7:00

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

During the course of the meeting, the following table was discussed. The issues identified will form the basis for action strategies for the revitalizations of downtown Kelso.

STRENGTHS

Land Availability
Gov't employees in area
Library
Post Office
Train Station/Amtrak Stop
Museum
River
Retail "Survivors"
Close-in Neighborhoods
Historic Buildings
Sunday Market
Parking
Grid Street Pattern

WEAKNESSES

Market Leakage
Through Traffic
No Public/Private Partnerships
No Booster Organization
Too Many "Missing Teeth"
Lack of Events
Income Levels
Size of the Area
Zoning

OPPORTUNITIES

New Post Office
New Library
River Access
Storefront Rehabs
Traffic Management
Downtown Housing
Streetscape Improvements
Latino Culture

THREATS

Mall, West Kelso, Longview
Crime Perceptions
Railroad Indifference
Post Office Relocation
Further Building Declines
Population Relocation

Downtown Kelso 2005 Action Strategies

The following table identifies actions that could begin in 2005 and who should lead, or share, the responsibility for that action.

City of Kelso	Downtown Stakeholders	Consultants
Clean up access gateways	Develop a vision for downtown Kelso	Develop a vision for downtown Kelso
Retain US Post Office downtown	Retain US Post Office downtown	Identify desired business mix for downtown
Develop safe access to river	Develop safe access to river	Analyze zoning
Develop Welcome Packet for new businesses	Develop Welcome Packet for new businesses	Analyze traffic and circulation in downtown
Develop "Frequently Asked Questions" for prospective new businesses	Identify desired business mix for downtown	Identify potential funding sources/programs for building improvements
Improve street lighting		Develop techniques/ programs for recruiting new businesses
Improve efficiency		
Increase staffing for business recruitment		

Next Steps

The following quote is taken from *Organizing a Successful Downtown Revitalization Program Using the Main Street Approach*, a publication of the Washington State Office of Trade & Economic Development, which describes a proven method for downtown improvement programs.

The success of the Main Street™ approach is based on its comprehensive nature. By carefully integrating four points into a practical downtown management strategy, a local Main Street™ program will produce fundamental changes in a community's economic base:

Organization involves building a Main Street™ framework that is well represented by business and property owners, bankers, citizens, public officials, chambers of commerce, and other local economic development organizations. Everyone must work together to renew downtown. A strong organization provides the stability to build and maintain a long-term effort.

Promotion creates excitement downtown. Street festivals, parades, retail events, and image development campaigns are some of the ways Main Street™ encourages customer traffic. Promotion involves marketing an enticing image to shoppers, investors, and visitors.

Design enhances the attractiveness of the business district. Historic building rehabilitation, street and alley clean-up, colorful banners, landscaping, and lighting all improve the physical image of the downtown as a quality place to shop, work, walk, invest in, and live. Design improvements result in a reinvestment of public and private dollars to downtown.

Economic Restructuring involves analyzing current market forces to develop long-term solutions. Recruiting new businesses, creatively converting unused space for new uses, and sharpening the competitiveness of Main Street's traditional merchants are examples of economic restructuring activities

The City of Kelso is an Affiliate Member of the Main Street Program, which provides access to this information and some technical assistance, but not the full benefits that it could receive if it were to become a designated Main Street Program participant. This latter commitment is significant in terms of costs and staffing. Consequently, the following recommendations are intended to provide the community with an exposure to the components of the program, develop local capacity, and produce an action plan that can become the basis for full Main Street participation, if appropriate.

Based on the findings and conclusions of Phase One, the following recommended steps should be taken in the next year:

Complete Review of Current City Policies and Regulations – Develop recommendations for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, and other legislative framework affecting future growth and development. The assessment of the framework

identified some gaps and weaknesses in policies and regulations that may not create as strong a position as is needed for the Downtown to be competitive in attracting new investment. This task should involve both technical and market-based perspectives of the framework. Planners will compare Kelso's with that of other comparable jurisdictions and interview likely developers with experience in similar downtowns to derive proposed amendments for City review.

Assess the Development Potential of Downtown – Evaluate the size, zoning capacity, and configuration of the Downtown and allowed/desired uses in comparison to the Mall and West Kelso. This will involve a review of economic and market studies, such as the recent *Downtown Longview Comprehensive Plan*, state OFM and Auditor's data, and other relevant information to compare the Downtown Kelso real estate picture with market indicators.

Describe the Physical Environment – Map and illustrate the contextual conditions of the Downtown including block sizes, street grid, riverfront, access and circulation, topography, buildings, view, and adjacent neighborhoods. The urban design potential of the Downtown is a function of the lay of the land, current development features, and the compatibility of this context with the type of land uses that would be most appropriate to such an area. The unrealized potentials of the riverfront, and possible civic center will be an important element of this analysis.

Organize the Downtown Stakeholders – Initiate a community-based organization of business and property owners, public officials, and interested citizens committed to working with the City to define a vision for Downtown and implement the Action Plan. The *Main Street* Program depends on having an active, organized downtown constituency that can support marketing, self-help projects, and public-private partnerships. As a first step, the Kelso community should establish an initial organization with some staff support to guide the drafting of the Action Plan, learn about downtown development, and create wider community support.

Prepare the Downtown Action Plan – Produce a strategic plan that identifies short-term, mid-range, and long-term actions to be taken by the City, Downtown Organization, and individual stakeholders, along with associated costs and funding sources. The Action Plan should be a user-friendly "blueprint" for moving ahead. It should include legislative and administrative commitments of the city government, the "business plan" for the Downtown Organization, conceptual implementation plans for specific capital projects, and approaches to further intergovernmental cooperation with the County, state, and federal governments. Each strategy should include a realistic time-frame, budget, and other resource requirements with related potential funding sources.

Finally, again from the "Main Street Approach", we list:

The Eight Principles Guiding Successful Downtown Revitalization Programs

- 1. Comprehensive.** *A single project cannot revitalize a downtown or commercial neighborhood. An ongoing series of initiatives is vital to build community support and create lasting progress.*
- 2. Incremental.** *Small projects make a big difference. They demonstrate that "things are happening" on Main Street and hone the skills and confidence the program will need to tackle more complex projects.*
- 3. Self-Help.** *The State can provide valuable direction and technical assistance, but only local leadership can breed long-term success by fostering and demonstrating community involvement and commitment to the revitalization effort.*
- 4. Public/Private Partnership.** *Every local Main Street™ program needs the support and expertise of both the public and private sectors. For an effective partnership, each must recognize the strengths and weaknesses of the other.*
- 5. Identifying and Capitalizing on Existing Assets.** *Unique offerings and local assets provide the solid foundation for a successful Main Street™ initiative.*
- 6. Quality.** *From storefront design to promotional campaigns to special events, quality must be instilled in the organization.*
- 7. Change.** *Changing community attitudes and habits is essential to bring about a commercial district renaissance. A carefully planned Main Street™ program will help shift public perceptions and practices to support and sustain the revitalization process.*
- 8. Action Oriented.** *Frequent visible changes in the look and activities of the commercial district will reinforce the perception of positive change. Small, but dramatic, improvements early in the process will remind the community that the revitalization effort is underway.*