

The South Kelso Revitalization Plan

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PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF KELSO BY
CONFLUENCE PLANNING ASSOCIATES
PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF URBAN & REGIONAL PLANNING PROGRAM

Executive Summary

Kelso
Welcomes
You

South





Kelso

Executive Summary

Active Vibrant SAFE South Kelso

The South Kelso Revitalization Plan (the Plan) was developed through a partnership between the City of Kelso and the Masters of Urban and Regional Planning Program at Portland State University. This plan is intended to serve as a key component of the updated Comprehensive Plan for the City of Kelso.

The City of Kelso has a rich history based in a strong community ethic, hard-working people, and an economy deeply rooted in the bounty of the natural environment. This economy has changed over the last several decades, however, and the difficult transition has left its mark on the community. South Kelso in particular- one of the four neighborhood quadrants- is battling its fourth generation of disinvestment and widespread poverty. The aim of the South Kelso Revitalization Plan is to give voice, strength, and direction to the concerns and priorities of the South Kelso community. Their home-grown

Problem Statement: The neighborhood of South Kelso, which encompasses a mostly single-family residential area and the downtown core, has experienced generations of widespread poverty and dis-investment. The City of Kelso desires to better understand the specific concerns and priorities of the community to ensure that revitalization efforts will meet local needs.

knowledge and local experience provide invaluable insight into what community-building strategies will be most effective.

South Kelso residents and business owners are interested in revitalization strategies that build upon and enhance the community's strengths, such as the impressive inventory of historic commercial buildings and residences, scenic and natural areas, and a highly walkable residential neighborhood and commercial core. The Kelso community wants to create a more vibrant neighborhood for present and future generations.

Successful implementation of these strategies requires the collaborative participation of the City and other local governments, community members, business leaders, and local organizations. By leveraging existing assets to achieve multiple objectives, the Plan can achieve real, measurable results in South Kelso.

The South Kelso Revitalization Plan consists of five focus areas and ten strategies. The details of each strategy, including implementation steps, partners, and applicable case studies can be found in the Implementation Manual. The planning team evaluated proposed strategies according to several criteria, including the potential to achieve multiple objectives, staff or resources required, funding availability, as well as short and long term impacts.



Focus Area: Community Organization

Strategy 1: Form a Neighborhood Association.

The Neighborhood Association will provide an organizational structure and venue for community participation, communication, and will forge fruitful partnerships between the City, residents, School District, service organizations, and donors.

Focus Area: Public Safety

Strategy 2: Develop a Neighborhood Crime and Safety Plan.

Residents can work toward a crime-free, drug-free, and gang-free neighborhood by collaboratively creating a Neighborhood Crime and Safety Plan with the City, public safety agencies, social service organizations, and community leaders.

Focus Area: Community Gathering Places

Strategy 3: Improve Parks and Public Spaces.

This strategy enhances existing parks and public spaces, and identifies the steps needed to revive them as integral community asset for play, exercise, and relaxation.

Strategy 4: Establish Wallace Elementary as a Community School.

Community schools integrate academic support, health and social services, and youth and community development in order to achieve improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.

Strategy 5: Build a South Kelso Community Center.

The Community Center — which will house the Kelso Public Library, a youth center, and a senior center — will provide a venue for Kelso residents of all ages to participate in activities and strengthen community connection and pride.

“When people feel like a community, they bond and look out for others, and in return it creates a safer environment for all.”

-Kelso Resident

Focus Area: Pedestrian Safety and Neighborhood Appearance

Strategy 6: Conduct a Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit.

A comprehensive assessment of the pedestrian realm will help to accurately characterize location-specific concerns and identify areas where additional maintenance and improvements are needed. Infrastructure improvement allocations based on this inventory will ensure more equitable and efficient distribution of City funds.

Strategy 7: Improve Housing and Neighborhood Appearance.

By targeting incentive programs to problem sources, the City can improve housing conditions, create a stronger local housing market, and build confidence in the long-term growth potential of the South Kelso Neighborhood.

Focus Area: Downtown Revitalization

Strategy 8: Revive and Restructure the Main Street Association.

Main Street programs help align City and business community efforts to make the downtown more active, vibrant, and prosperous for all to enjoy. Main Street programs engage in beautification efforts, coordinate public activities, and promote downtown businesses and social events.

Strategy 9: Coordinate Business Support Services through an Economic Gardening Initiative.

The City's Economic Gardening Initiative will support both new and existing businesses by streamlining access to business training and support services, and by providing market research typically available only to large firms. This program will build the reputation that the City of Kelso is “open for business.”

Strategy 10: Implement Streetscape Improvements to Revitalize South Pacific Avenue.

Streetscape projects brighten the public right-of-way with physical improvements to create an inviting pedestrian environment. These actions build community pride, increase the marketability of the district, and show that the City is investing in South Kelso.