

# The South Kelso Revitalization Plan

June 2013



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

## Implementation Manual

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# South





Kelso



# How to use this document

The Implementation Manual is a useful tool for current and future organizational partners, stakeholders, and South Kelso residents interested in participating in revitalization efforts. The manual outlines ten revitalization strategies divided into five focus areas. The reader will find sources for additional information at the end of each strategy.

Each strategy section includes:

- An overview of the strategy, including an explanation of its intended outcomes and high-level methodologies
- An explanation of why it is relevant and applicable to South Kelso
- The key steps for implementation
- Reference to appendices with additional information

The strategies that have been identified here are either implementable with existing local resources or through potential funding options identified. These strategies have been prioritized and designed to catalyze additional investment, action, and community engagement in the future. As such, they may be considered first steps in laying a strong foundation for a revitalized South Kelso.

The strategies presented in this document are synergistic; as such they should not be considered as isolated and independent actions. When implemented as a holistic Plan for South Kelso Revitalization, these 10 strategies will result in a safe, vibrant, and empowered neighborhood.

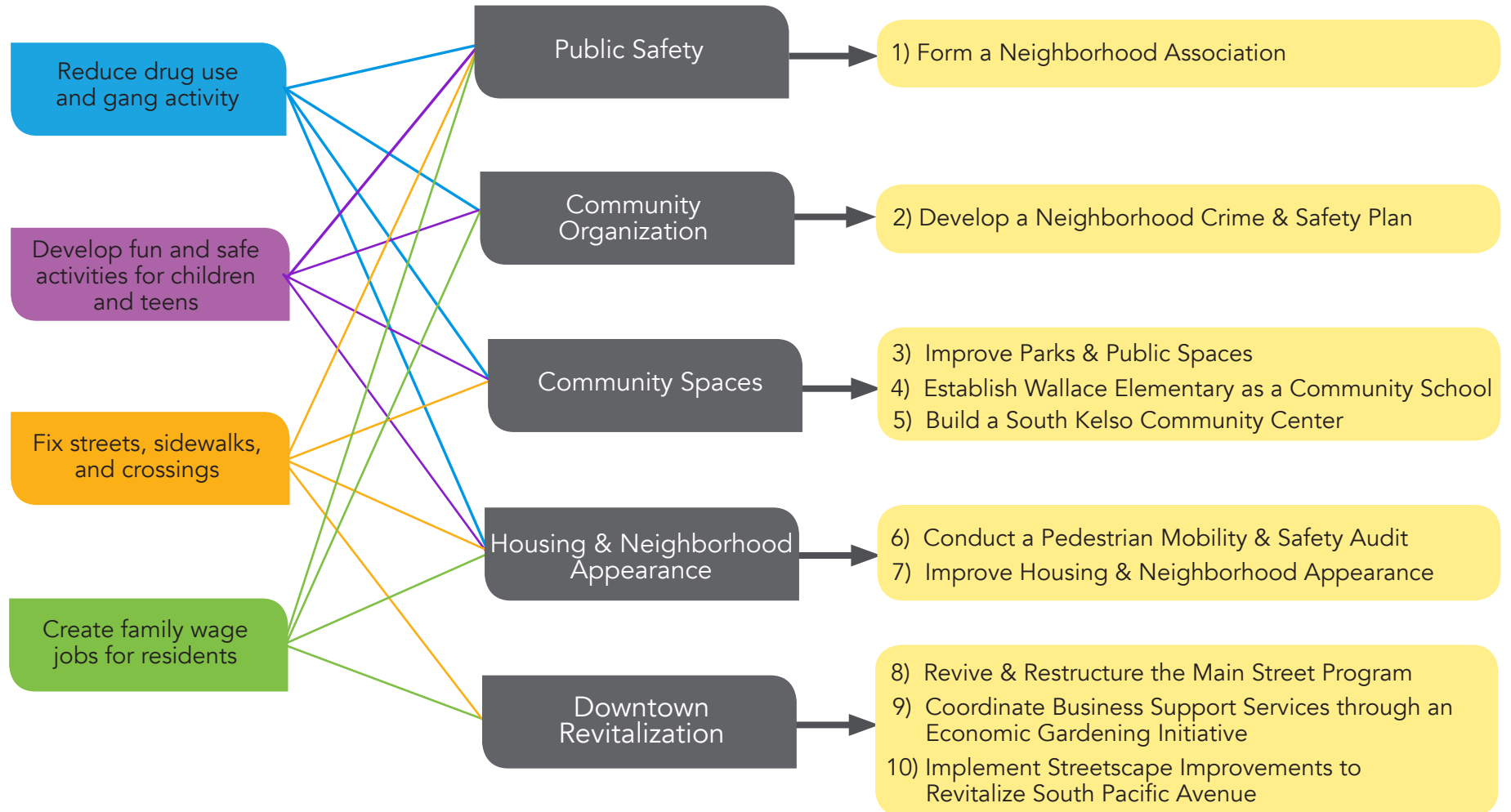
**"A** community needs to actively be a part of creating pride in their environment for real change to take place." *-Kelso Resident*





# SOUTH KELSO REVITALIZATION PLAN:

## Linking Community Priorities to Focus Areas & Strategies



# Communication Engagement Participation

## COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Building an empowered community is the first step in neighborhood revitalization efforts. Residents need an organizational structure to coordinate engagement, participation, and communication. Community engagement builds a sense of contribution in residents, increasing confidence, social capacity, and a sense of ownership in the community.

An organized community provides residents clear and transparent pathways to service and volunteer activities, social events, democratic participation opportunities, and two-way communication with the City. Community engagement activities give residents the opportunity to improve the livability of their neighborhood, building residents' confidence in their ability to shape the future of their lives and their community.

Neighborhood-based groups offer residents the opportunity to work directly with their

neighbors in shaping the future of their community. These groups help break inter-generational and multi-cultural divides, building a stronger social fabric and a community of sharing, understanding, and trust.

An organized community will be able to respond to a call for action from their neighbors and communicate their needs to the City. Community organization is at the heart of a revitalized and empowered neighborhood. The Neighborhood Association is a vital and

foundational component of the South Kelso Revitalization Plan.

In the ASK! Community Priorities Survey, 72 individuals said that they would 'definitely be interested' in being a part of a Neighborhood Association and 74 more said that they 'might be interested'. Even more indicated interest in programs that the Neighborhood Association would run, such as clean-ups, community gardens, and block parties. The Association will act as a mechanism to strengthen the capacity of residents to shape the renewal of their neighborhood.

## Strategy 1: Form a Neighborhood Association

A neighborhood association is a group of residents that regularly meet to identify neighborhood issues, plan events, lobby city government, and collaborate on projects in their neighborhood. They help identify and prioritize actions, support improvement efforts, recruit volunteers, serve as mediators and opinion representatives for the neighborhood, and find resources to improve neighborhood livability. Similarly, the City may consider the Neighborhood Association as a valuable tool to enlist neighborhood leaders as liaisons, recruit program leads, and aid in communicating City needs.

The Neighborhood Association will provide the organizational framework to:

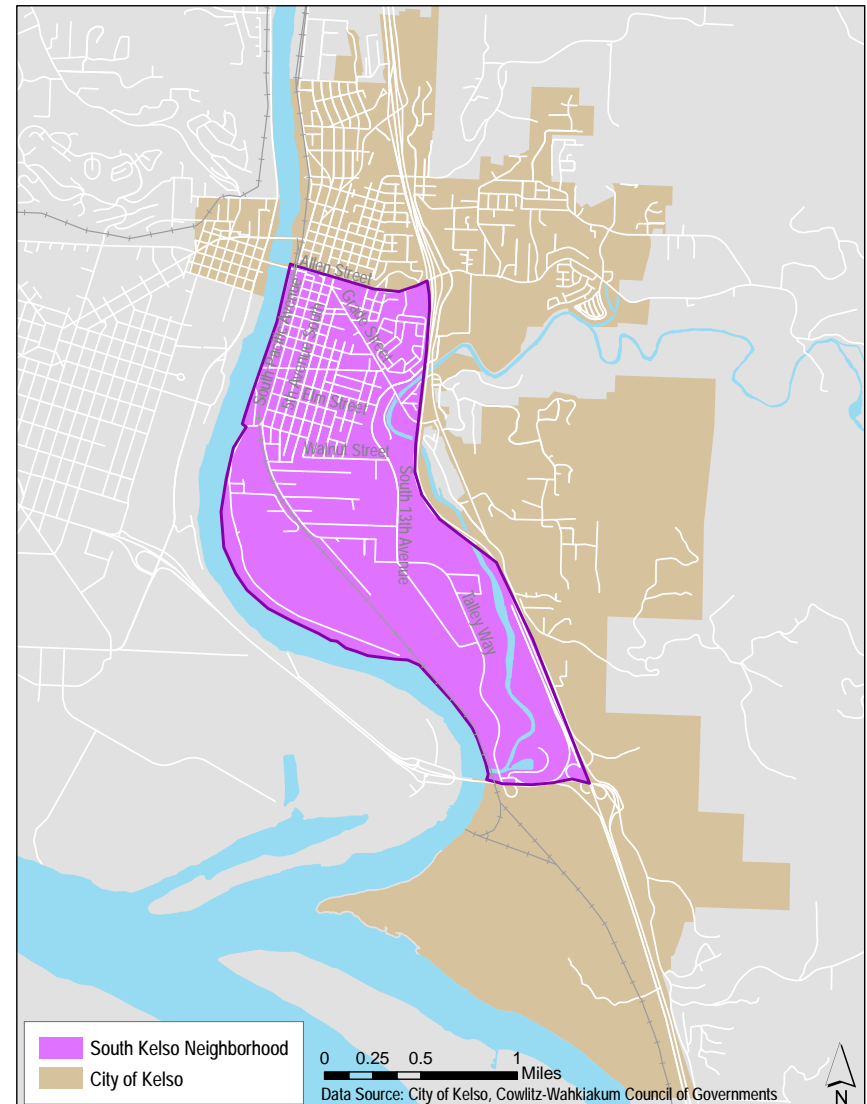
- 1) Gather resident input
- 2) Prioritize actions
- 3) Advocate for change
- 4) Administer programs and coordinate public events
- 5) Coalesce neighbors under the banner of community betterment

The Neighborhood Association will be an invaluable partner for achieving neighborhood aspirations, including the repair of streets/sidewalks, programming for youth, housing maintenance and repair, and others. The successful implementation of these programs will require the continued, targeted, and strategic involvement of local residents. The Association will act as a mechanism to strengthen the capacity of residents to shape the renewal of their neighborhood.

### Key duties and projects for the Neighborhood Association:

- Recruit and support a diverse membership. (The Association could partner with the Ethnic Support Council to provide translation/interpretation services).
- Identify neighborhood leaders and train them in organizational, advocacy, and public policy skills.
- Develop a Memorandum of Understanding between key neighborhood partners to fund a full-time staff position.
- Establish communication channels and a supportive relationship between the City and the Association.
- Identify easy and high visibility “quick-win” projects that will catalyze future actions.

Proposed Boundaries of the  
South Kelso Neighborhood Association





# How to Start a Neighborhood Association

**STEP 1:** The City of Kelso Community Development Department applies for a grant, such as the Northwest Health Foundation Kaiser Permanente Community Fund grant (or other comparable funding sources) to launch a South Kelso Neighborhood Association.

The Northwest Health Foundation grant is one of the most promising sources of funding for the South Kelso Neighborhood Association, because it can be used to build capacity within the organization as opposed to implementing specific programs once the organization is up-and-running. This funding source was used by the Highlands Neighborhood Association and their successful grant application is included in Appendix (D).

Additional funding sources can be found in Appendix (A).

**STEP 2:** The City of Kelso hires a Community Coach.

The Community Coach is a temporary position that serves as the champion to inspire community members to launch the Neighborhood Association. The Coach will build a strong foundation for a socially and financially sustainable South Kelso Neighborhood Association by building partnerships, securing long-term funding, establishing an effective organizational structure, and building a supportive volunteer



photo: Alex Rogers

Available grant funding will be used to support the Community Coach and the organization for the first three years of operation, after which long-term support from partner agencies will be used to fund the Neighborhood Coordinator and office space. The Coach will work with outside community partners to secure funding for a South Kelso Neighborhood Coordinator, who will succeed the Coach as a permanent, full-time position. The Coordinator will shift their focus from capacity-building to long-term organization, coordination, and administration of neighborhood programs, projects, and events.

*What does South Kelso need?*

**"Anything that would bring the neighborhood together for positive gains for their community....church involvement; youth groups; community projects."** -Kelso Resident

membership. He/she will work to strengthen the Association so that it may serve as an active and effective neighborhood revitalization partner in future efforts by the City and other agencies and organizations.

A full time staff person (referred to as the Community Coach) is necessary to ensure the formation of the neighborhood association. Rallying the community, convening initial meetings, establishing legal structures and bylaws, and building partnerships will be best achieved by one dedicated person supported by volunteers. The Coach is necessary to form and run the Neighborhood Association in the beginning stages.

### **STEP 3: Community Coach recruits members and convenes a series of 'Kick-off' meetings.**

The objectives of the Neighborhood Association 'Kick-off' meetings are to establish organizational goals and general association structure. During these initial meetings, the organization will establish bylaws, work with the City to define official neighborhood boundaries, decide on meeting structure and ground rules, and frame roles and responsibilities. At the kick-off meetings, members should also consider temporary and long-term office space for the Association. Some locations to consider are the Kelso Housing Authority and Wallace

Elementary School.

Neighborhood Association guides from Lincoln, NE, Vancouver, WA, and Providence, RI are included as an Appendix (B) to help with drafting bylaws and creating meeting structure. A guide to organizing a kick-off meeting is also included in Appendix (C).

### **STEP 4: Community Coach leads the Association in incorporating as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.**

Non-profit status confers federal and state tax benefits to the organization and increases the organization's capacity to raise funds. Without this status, the Association would be unable to apply for grants on their own, and would have to work under an organization that is eligible to receive charitable grants.

In a healthy and thriving neighborhood, the local neighborhood association may not require non-profit status, as the group primarily organizes volunteers and disseminates information. However, in struggling, disinvested neighborhoods such as South Kelso, the neighborhood association plays a more prominent role as lead catalyst for social empowerment and organization. During a neighborhood revitalization process, the neighborhood association identifies and builds capacity in the residents so that they may directly advocate for change. Such a vital need in the community requires a



committed, paid staff person who is familiar with the principles of social justice and social determinants of health, community service networks, and who has a clear understanding of the political dynamics of low-income/minority communities.

A partnership between the City, as the primary fiscal agent, and a non-profit incorporated neighborhood association, will increase the likelihood of securing grants. The tax-exempt status adds legitimacy and fundability to the group as many grants require that applicants hold non-profit status. In addition to supporting personnel, grant funding can be used for physical improvements, to administer programs, and hold neighborhood events.

The Highlands Neighborhood Association's application for non-profit status can be used as a guide (a copy of their application can be obtained by contacting the Highlands Neighborhood Association). Pathways 2020, a local non-profit dedicated to improving quality of life in Cowlitz County, provides guidance and support to organizations seeking to incorporate as a non-profit.



IT HAPPENED THERE...

IT COULD HAPPEN IN SOUTH KELSO

### **HIGHLANDS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

The Highlands neighborhood formed a neighborhood association as the first step in their revitalization process. This organization was able to successfully collaborate with outside groups to implement programs. The group first secured a Northwest Health Foundation Grant with which they hired a Community Coach (see application in Appendix D).

The Highlands Community Coach is the linchpin for building capacity within the Highlands Neighborhood Association. The Community Coach assisted the Association in organizational and leadership development to help build long-term viability in the organization.

The Longview Police Department served as a key partner in supporting the residents of the distressed district. The Police Department and Neighborhood Association shared office space in the Highlands Police Satellite Office. The Community Policing Collaboration is the umbrella for a network of 49 community partnerships that work to improve the neighborhood and quality of life issues.

Some early projects:

- Highlands Community Center
- Highlands Community Library
- Highlands Community Garden
- Highlands Time Bank
- Highlands Neighborhood Outreach
- Highlands Graffiti Removal Team
- Neighborhood Clean-Ups
- Summer Movie Nights in the Park



Photo: Flickr user Lower Columbia College



# You Gotta have a Good Coach...

The Community Coach will assist the South Kelso Neighborhood Association (SKNA) in becoming an effective community partner for comprehensive neighborhood revitalization. The primary purpose of the Community Coach is to increase the long-term sustainability of the Neighborhood Association. S/he will increase the capacity of residents to be active participants in neighborhood revitalization efforts. This will be accomplished by strengthening local leadership and building long-term, strategic alliances in the community.

## Desirable Skills

Five or more years in social work and/or community organizing; knowledge of environmental and social justice principles as well as social determinants of health; experience working in diverse economic and multicultural neighborhoods; an understanding of the socio-political dynamics in minority communities and service networks; and experience with grant-writing, fundraising and building strategic partnership.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Organizational development

- Lead the SKNA in the development of educational campaigns.
- Provide organizational development services to the SKNA.
- Identify and train community leaders in the neighborhood in organizational advocacy and public policy skills.
- Build a diverse volunteer base for the

South Kelso community members identified the following priority activities:

- Neighborhood Community Clean-up Day
- Community Gardens
- Park clean-up and improvements. The Wallace Elementary playground and Cowlitz River Trail were identified by the community as the most important parks to start with. (See Strategy 3: Improve Parks and Public Spaces.)
- Volunteer to inventory streets, sidewalks, and crossings (see Strategy 6: Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit.)
- Paint murals to deter graffiti
- Adopt a Block' Programs and other community safety programs (see strategy 2: Develop a Neighborhood Crime and Safety Plan.)

SKNA through outreach and recruitment.

- Lead the SKNA in developing a workplan that includes "easy-wins" that will catalyze further action.

### Community Resource Development

- Lead the SKNA in building networks capable of large-scale mobilization and change.
- Initiate relationships of trust with community partners and train members in sustaining those relationships.
- Create a Partnership Agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding, in which community partners identify funding for a neighborhood coordinator.

### Project Management

- Develop and launch community campaigns that address local interests.
- Coordinate and assist the SKNA in implementation of community-based projects.
- Support the SKNA in brokering community partnerships that will bring resources to

the community to support change on a larger scale.

### Financial Sustainability

- Train the community in resource development, grant management, fundraising, and policy/project advocacy.
- Develop an organizational structure that will build sustainability into the organization, including a diverse and robust volunteer pool and a full-time, paid coordinator position.

### Additional Resources:

Northwest Health Foundation Funding: <http://nwhf.org>

Social determinants of health: [http://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/key\\_concepts/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/finalreport/key_concepts/en/index.html)  
Washington Nonprofit Handbook: How to form and maintain a nonprofit corporation in Washington State. 2009 Edition. [http://www.sos.wa.gov/\\_assets/charities/Washington%20Nonprofit%20Handbook.pdf](http://www.sos.wa.gov/_assets/charities/Washington%20Nonprofit%20Handbook.pdf)

# SAFE & Sound

## PUBLIC SAFETY

Residents from any neighborhood want to feel safe in their community. This sense of safety directly relates to real crime and the psychological perception of safety. Improvements in Public Safety will result in a positive feedback loop- more positive community presence in yards, parks, and streets- further reducing criminal behavior and building trust within the neighborhood.

Criminal behavior in a community affects both real crime (as evidenced by crime report statistics) and the perception of crime. A perceived lack of safety, individual disempowerment, disconnection among residents, and the loss of options or hope detrimentally affect the health of a community, regardless of statistical reports of crime or safety.

Communities that engage residents as partners in law enforcement increase their number of trained eyes and ears on the street. By building a sense of engaged community presence in a

neighborhood, criminal behavior is reduced while residents' perceptions of safety increases. Including residents in coordinated efforts to reduce crime gives back to residents a sense of ownership over the neighborhood; they are taking their community back from those who would do it harm.

This focus area strives to leverage existing programs and partnerships more effectively and comprehensively through increased collaboration, communication, and promotion of programs.

## Strategy 2: Develop a Neighborhood Crime & Safety Plan

A Neighborhood Crime and Safety Plan (NCSP) will convene neighborhood partners under a shared mission, increasing the impact and efficiency of existing programs by centralizing data and aligning compatible programs with similar objectives. The NCSP will engage, educate, and empower residents by enlisting the Neighborhood Association to promote programs, build awareness, and organize many of the resident-led efforts.

The NCSP will inventory existing programs and projects to address redundancies and highlight areas in need of enhanced coordination. As a written document, the NCSP is a comprehensive and accessible tool to educate the public about existing agency efforts and their program's impact in the community. It can also provide residents with information and resources for increasing their own personal safety at home and in the community.

As group of many organizations and agencies, a Regional Safety Coalition can utilize the NCSP to increase efficiencies so that future resource allocations and funding can be procured and administered by a single organization, rather than individual agencies and initiatives.

### Why the NCSP will work in South Kelso

The South Kelso community shares a strong sense of pride and an eagerness to make the neighborhood safer. Residents would like to connect with their neighbors through social activities that promote safety enhancements. They hope to build upon existing relationships with the Kelso Police Department and established crime reduction programs.

South Kelso residents have expressed significant concern over high levels of crime and a lack of safety in their community. Through the ASK! campaign, residents, stakeholders, and children shared stories of suspect housing, gang activity, graffiti, a proliferation of offenders living in the neighborhood, and drug trafficking. The community identified 'reducing drug use and gang activity' as their number one priority in the ASK! Community Priorities Survey.

In developing a NCSP, the community will improve their understanding

of the many program offerings, strategies, and objectives that will help achieve a safe neighborhood. The NCSP will bring together the various public safety-related agencies and stakeholders to examine root causes of crime and address impediments to neighborhood safety.

There are many programs targeted at decreasing crime in the South Kelso neighborhood. The impact and efficiency of these programs can be improved through collaboration, communication, and increased public awareness.

The City of Kelso should bring together multiple agencies to draft the NCSP. Recommended partners to convene include:

- South Kelso Neighborhood Association
- Kelso Police Department
- Kelso Fire Department
- Kelso School District
- Longview Police Department
- Longview Fire Department
- Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office
- Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments
- Washington State Highway Patrol
- Peace Health St. John Medical Center
- Family Health Center
- Kaiser Permanente – Mental Health Division
- District Attorney's Office



# HOW TO MAKE A NEIGHBORHOOD CRIME AND SAFETY PLAN

Addressing criminal activity and increasing safety in South Kelso will require cooperation between residents and local agencies. The steps listed below can help organize the initial effort to develop the NCSP. For more information, reference Appendix (I).

**STEP 1: The City of Kelso convenes a Regional Safety Coalition that is composed of multi-agency stakeholders to develop a Neighborhood Crime and Safety Plan (NCSP).**

A NCSP is a public document that contains a clearinghouse of safety and crime reduction programs in the community. It also contains key steps that neighborhood residents can take to improve their safety, additional resources for them to consider, and a plan to improve safety in the community in the future.

The NCSP will serve as a single resource for community members to gain an understanding of all of the safety agencies serving the area; the mission of those agencies; criminal data; programs, resources and personnel available; and serve as a roadmap for future safety-related programs and efforts in the future.

**Examples of Existing Crime and Safety-focused Programs in Kelso**

PROGRAM	KELSO POLICE DEPARTMENT	COWLITZ 2 FIRE & RESCUE	COWLITZ 2 FIRE & RESCUE	KELSO SCHOOL DISTRICT
Citizen's Academy	●	● High School Program	●	● Stop Program
Landlord & Tenant Training	●		●	
Every Fifteen Minutes	●		●	
Volunteer Program Opportunities		●	●	
Community Policing	●			
Block Watch	●			
National Night Out	●			
Project Lifesaver				●

**"South Kelso does not feel safe, and it is not safe"**  
*– South Kelso resident*

To develop the NCSP, the Coalition should outline beneficial action items the NCSP can accomplish, such as:

- Inventory existing crime reduction and safety enhancement programs in the region. The NCSP should provide a full assessment of which programs are currently in place, their enrollment numbers, and participant feedback on the programs. This is also an opportunity to analyze redundancies in similar programs or partnerships between complementary programs.
- Outline recommended steps on how the programs can be coordinated, including resource allocation, sharing of duties, etc.
- Develop a co-produced project with the Neighborhood Association and Lower Columbia College to conduct an in-depth survey on South Kelso residents' crime-reduction concerns, safety-enhancement needs, and knowledge of or participation in the existing programs.
- Lead an effort to consolidate data and programming efforts beyond South Kelso, to the entire region.
- Establish a framework for action items, including timelines, responsible parties, metrics, and goals.

**Step 2: The Regional Safety Coalition promotes the NCSP to increase neighborhood participation by conducting an Outreach Campaign**

The Coalition should partner with the Neighborhood Association to educate the public on the available programs, serve as an additional connection between the community and the agencies, and survey residents on resources or programs that currently are being provided to South Kelso.

A preliminary list of existing and potential programs can be found in Appendix (J).

For an initial list of funding sources, reference Appendix (A).

**Additional Resources:**

Citizens Academy references:

Cowlitz County, WA, Citizens Police Academy: <http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/index.aspx?nid=963>

Klamath Falls, OR Citizens Academy: <http://www.kfpd.us/volunteer-services/citizens-academy>

Redmond, WA Citizens Academy: <http://www.redmond.gov/Residents/citizenAcademy/>

City of Kelso, WA, Police Department: Community Policing:

<http://www.kelso.gov/departments-services/police-department/community-policing>

City of Portland, OR, Office of Neighborhood Involvement

Crime Prevention: What if <http://www.portlandonline.com/oni/index.cfm?c=28395>

Crime Prevention (Shelton, WA):

[http://www.ci.shelton.wa.us/police/police\\_crime.php](http://www.ci.shelton.wa.us/police/police_crime.php)

Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington:

Youth Violence and Crime Prevention Programs (State of Washington): <http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/pubsafe/le/le-jvenile.aspx>

Example Neighborhood Safety Plan (Northside Neighborhood of Cincinnati, OH) <http://www.northside.net/PDF/Safety%20Plan%20-%2030-2008.pdf> <http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/pubsafe/le/le-jvenile.aspx>

# Green Playful get-together

## COMMUNITY GATHERING PLACES

Community Gathering Places encompasses three distinct, yet interconnected strategies that focus on providing neighborhood residents of all ages with places to come together, engage in a variety of activities, and restore a sense of community cohesion.

The three strategies featured in the Community Gathering Places focus area all address directly or indirectly many of the most pressing issues identified by South Kelso residents. Together, these strategies will use both existing neighborhood structures and new spaces to provide places for neighborhood children to play, activities to keep them busy, social services to those who need them most, and places that bring together neighborhood residents to restore the neighborhood's sense of community.

Communities require centralized and

publically accessible venues for many activities that build social capital and resilience. Parks, community centers, schools, and other public venues build pride and ownership in a community.

Community gathering places provide public spaces for the community to come together for casual social events, educational and life-skills classes, and academic support programs. As a positive community anchor centered in South Kelso, Wallace Elementary is a prime candidate to serve as neighborhood hub for much needed

academic assistance, and social activities for students, families and neighborhood residents.

Together, these strategies will provide places for neighborhood children to play, bring social services to those who need them most, and provide the South Kelso community with safe and attractive venues for community interaction.

### Strategy 3: Improve Parks and Public Spaces

The parks and public spaces in South Kelso are a vital component of the neighborhood and will play a key role in its revitalization. This strategy focuses on the existing parks and public spaces located in South Kelso and the steps needed to restore them as places where neighborhood residents can gather, play, exercise, and relax. It will require a coordinated community effort by the City, the Neighborhood Association, and service organizations.

A 1992 nationwide survey by researchers at Pennsylvania State University found that community venues, such as parks and recreational facilities, promote a positive sense of community and that perceived community-level benefits are considered more important than individual or household-level benefits.<sup>1</sup>

South Kelso is fortunate to have a good variety of existing neighborhood parks, but neighborhood resources have fallen into disrepair and to serve as a magnet for illegal behavior. Since most South Kelso residents live within a ½ mile walk of a community park, this strategy is focused on maintaining and improving existing parks and public spaces, rather than creating new ones.

Cleaning up and improving neighborhood parks addresses the desire of neighborhood residents to take immediate action to begin revitalizing their neighborhood. Restoring South Kelso's parks and public spaces can be done relatively quickly and with little financial investment, making it a perfect initial project for the City of Kelso and Neighborhood Association to partner on. For most of the parks

in South Kelso, maintenance can be as easy as litter pick-up and landscaping to make the spaces appear welcoming once again to neighborhood residents. This work can be conducted jointly by City staff, neighbors, and community volunteers, and can be done quickly and with little resources.

Providing children with a safe place to play and giving them positive activities to participate in emerged as top priorities of neighborhood residents, thereby reversing the culture of drugs and crime that has emerged in South Kelso.



Photo: planning team

Removing the chain link fence that surrounds Lads and Lassies Park will integrate the space into the neighborhood and allow residents to better monitor park activity.

<sup>1</sup> Godbey, G., A. Graefe, and S. James. (1992) . "The Benefits of Local Recreation and Park Services: A Nationwide Study of the Perceptions of the American Public." Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Parks Association.



## HOW TO IMPROVE PARKS & PUBLIC SPACES



Photo: Robert and Talbot Trudeau Hopewell Cemetery and watershed community cleanup

Although this strategy involves multiple parts that require an increasing amount of time and resources, it is crucial to achieve the outcome of giving South Kelso residents of all ages a place to go and helping bring the community closer together.

### **Step 1: The Neighborhood Association launches South Kelso Investing in Parks (SKIP) Campaign**

Following the South Pacific Avenue Clean Up model, the Neighborhood Association should organize neighborhood residents and members of local service organizations for this effort, with financial support provided by the City.

SKIP will start with cleaning up Wallace Elementary School playground and the Cowlitz River Trail, the two parks identified as top priorities at the Open House.

Once a park has been cleaned up, the Parks and Recreation Department will implement low-cost physical improvements to make the park more inviting.

### **Step 2: The Parks and Recreation Department assesses current park usage and identifies desired additional uses.**

The Parks and Recreation Department solicits feedback from the neighborhood about how they are currently using the parks and what additional programs and services they would like to see. Both the Neighborhood Association and School District can help solicit feedback and host neighborhood forums.

**"Any activity that better our community and allows kids to just be kids, I want to be a part of it and be able to see firsthand what we started and how it grows."**  
– Kelso Resident

**Step 3: The Parks and Recreation Department develops programming and activities for neighborhood residents of all ages.**

Programming will be directed by the feedback received in Step 2. Examples of programming and activities that could be offered include: arts and crafts; music and dance; sports; aerobics; nature and science; and child, parent, and senior recreation.

**Step 4: The Parks and Recreation Department expands or enhances parks facilities.**

Based on the assessment it, may be necessary to expand existing parks or create new parks to ensure that every resident has access to quality, safe parks and that the facilities are meeting the needs of all residents.

Appendix (A) identifies sources of additional funding for park construction and improvement. While these funding sources can provide an immediate infusion of capital, they are usually a one-time benefit. Creating a Parks District, as proposed in the 2008 Kelso Parks and Recreation Plan, would establish a steady source of parks funding, but would entail additional taxation on residents. City staff should weigh the benefits of establishing a Parks District, as opposed to applying for grants on an as-needed basis, and increasing funding for parks in the City budget.



Photo: Robert and Talbot Trudeau Hopewell Cemetery and watershed community cleanup

The Trust for Public Lands recommends jurisdictions spend at least \$98 per capita annually in operational and capital funding to properly operate and maintain park systems.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Harnik, Peter. (2013, April 6) "The Excellent Park System: What Makes It Great and How to Get It There." Trust for Public Lands. 2006. Web.

### Strategy 4: Establish Wallace Elementary as a Community School

A community school is an arrangement between the local school district, local government, and social service agencies to utilize a neighborhood school facility as a community hub. This arrangement brings together multiple partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities for youth, families, and communities. Community schools extend normal school hours to stay open and accessible to the community.

Taking an integrated approach, community schools offer academic support, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement, in order to achieve improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities. The support offered by a community school is especially critical in low-income communities with negative social factors and/or family circumstances.

Community schools seek to make use of existing resources as efficiently and effectively as possible. They rely on strong partnerships between resource providers, including local government, the school district, community social service organizations, and the community at large.

#### Why a Community School will work in South Kelso

Two issues arose during the planning team's outreach efforts: 1) the need to provide an environment that facilitates academic success among neighborhood students, and 2) the need to break the cycle of poverty by improving the home environments of youth.

Teachers at Wallace Elementary shared stories of students whose challenging home environments prohibit them from being able to engage and concentrate in class. A lack of adult supervision, nutrition, and an uncertain future all limit the capacity of these students to perform in school. These students are at a disadvantage compared to their peers who have stable home environments; each year they fall farther behind in their development.

The Community School approach adopts a more holistic perspective to breaking this cycle by providing these students with a safe place

outside of home and outside of school hours to receive additional academic support or engage in structured physical activities.

Wallace Elementary's central location in the community, both geographically and socially, makes it the best candidate for a community school. Further, many residents in the neighborhood are tied to the school through their children.

In the 1990s, Wallace Elementary hosted a "community learning center"-- similar in scope to the community school framework-- using grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers Grant. This effort was considered a success by the community; unfortunately, this program ended when funding was exhausted. Teachers and administrators at Wallace Elementary have indicated support for the reinstitution of the community school framework. Wallace Elementary facilities remain under a joint use agreement between the City and School District.

#### Examples of services that could be offered at a Wallace Community School:

- After school tutoring and academic support for youth
- Youth leadership training and community volunteering
- Mural painting and public arts
- Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Financial literacy classes
- Parenting classes
- Multicultural fairs
- Mentoring
- Latino Nights
- Hobby Clubs
- Adult computer training
- Mentoring
- Youth cooking/carpentry/sewing classes
- Onsite food pantry



# HOW TO ESTABLISH WALLACE ELEMENTARY AS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

It will require a committed group of partners who are willing to work together to identify strong program leaders, secure long-term stable funding, and design programs and services that are responsive to the needs of the students and the community.

## **STEP 1: The Kelso School District identifies and convenes necessary service partners.**

The Kelso School District should be the lead agency for developing Wallace Community School and should take the initiative in identifying and convening services partners. Potential partners include:

- City of Kelso
- Cowlitz County Health and Human Services
- Lower Columbia Community College
- Lower Columbia Community Action Program (CAP)
- Washington State University Extension 4H
- Kelso Housing Authority
- Kelso Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

The School District should bring these partners together to identify which organizations are already providing services and programs for the South Kelso neighborhood, and how organizations could benefit from establishing a satellite office at Wallace Elementary. Programs and services can be reconfigured to maximize their effectiveness and efficiency.

## **STEP 2: The School District hires a Community School Coordinator**

Past experiences show that the most critical element to the success of a community school is the hiring of a Community School Coordinator. This individual can be an employee of the school district, local government, or local nonprofit organization, and will be responsible for identifying local resources to integrate into the school.

The Coordinator should have experience working in education, community development, and with multicultural communities. They will oversee both academic and community-resource programs and should be familiar with the administrative functions of the School District and local service agencies.

The amount of funding necessary to run the Community School will depend on many factors, including the level and type of programs and services provided and whether those programs and services are new expenses or the reallocation of funds from other parts of the parent agency. Appendix (A) identifies additional sources of funding.

**“The community could benefit from child development, parenting, and nutrition classes. Organizations should work together to sponsor workshops to get adults trained and back to work.”**

*– Kelso Resident*

## **STEP 3: The Community School Coordinator designs programs and services that meet the needs of students and the community.**

Wallace Elementary families and all South Kelso residents should be consulted on what programs and services should be offered and how the community school can effectively engage with the South Kelso neighborhood.



IT HAPPENED THERE...

IT COULD HAPPEN IN SOUTH KELSO

### ***SCHOOLS UNITING NEIGHBORHOODS (SUN)***

Multnomah County, Oregon's Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) program uses schools to meet two goals: 1) Support education and school success, and 2) Improve the way resources for students and their families are delivered by developing a school-based delivery model.

The program, which currently exists in 67 schools across 6 school districts, began in 1999 as a partnership between Multnomah County, the City of Portland, local school districts, and local nonprofits. It was initially funded through City and County general funds and a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant from the U.S. Department of Education.

Since its inception, schools participating in the SUN program have seen a 75% increase in state benchmark scores in reading and a 77% increase in state benchmark scores in math. In addition, there has been an 80% improvement in general classroom academic performance.



Photo: Howard County Library System

#### **Additional Resources:**

Coalition for Community Schools  
The MetLife Foundation's "Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action"  
The National Center for Community Schools  
Multnomah County SUN Schools

## Strategy 5: Build a South Kelso Community Center

Constructing a South Kelso Community Center is a longer-term strategy to provide a permanent home for a distinct set of programs. Unlike a community school, in which programs and services make use of school facilities outside of the school day, the community center would house specific programs within designated spaces.

A community center is a safe, welcoming place that encourages physical activity and social interaction. It's a place where community members can gather for group activities, connect with neighbors, get public information, and hold community celebrations.

Community centers offer numerous benefits to neighborhood residents, serving as an affordable place for people to take advantage of offered programs and services and gather as friends and family. Community centers also serve to make neighborhoods more attractive to potential new residents.

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. Bringing these organizations together will allow them to share resources, develop mutually supportive relationships, and build stronger social connections between diverse residents. With these anchor tenants, the Community Center can serve as a physical community hub for social activities, adult education opportunities, and youth development programs.

### Why a Community Center will work in South Kelso

Both the Kelso Parks and Recreation Plan and the Kelso Downtown Revitalization Plan advocate for a community center - with the latter identifying the downtown core as the most suitable location for its siting. A Community Center located downtown would be a vital component to revitalizing the businesses along South Pacific Avenue because it would draw residents from the South Kelso neighborhood and across all of Kelso.

The community has expressed a desire to see the Library move back downtown from the Three Rivers Mall and into a new community center building, thereby restoring one of the busiest and most popular civic institutions to the commercial corridor. When the current lease at the Mall expires, the Library will be free to relocate.

In addition, the Center could address a top priority identified by residents in the outreach survey - a safe place to go and positive activities to engage in to keep neighborhood children and teens busy and out of trouble.

**"The City should encourage and provide venues for the development of community awareness and worth."**

– Kelso Resident



Photo: Damien Cugley

# HOW TO BUILD A SOUTH KELSO COMMUNITY CENTER

Planning development for a community center is a multi-year process. This process should be commenced in the near term so that it may be implemented to serve the future needs of the Library when the Library lease expires in the year 2021.

## **STEP 1: The City of Kelso identifies and convenes potential project partners.**

The City of Kelso leads this effort with other local partners including the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, Cowlitz County, Kelso School District, Lower Columbia College, local sports leagues, local service organizations, and local businesses.

Once this group has been established, they should conduct a thorough assessment of existing community programs, facilities, and people, while also asking about needs. Within the assessment process, the partnership should identify potential service providers and resources useful during the construction of the Center and also to support its ongoing operation.

## **STEP 2: The City of Kelso selects a location.**

A downtown location for the community center would allow it to serve the role identified in the Downtown Revitalization Plan as a catalyst for downtown revitalization and would also realize the community desire for the library to move back downtown. The City should identify several locations for the community center that meet predetermined criteria, and then conduct a public outreach process to determine which locations is the most favorable for residents.

Some criteria to consider for siting the Community Center:

- Is it accessible by bike or on foot to the majority of Kelso residents, and especially for traditionally low-income areas?
- Is there space for community gardens and outdoor activities?
- Is there an existing building that can be repurposed?

**“We need a place where the community can bond and look out for each other. That will create a safer environment for all.”**  
– Kelso Resident

## **STEP 3: The City of Kelso identifies programs and services to be offered.**

In addition to the library, outreach to the community suggests there is interest in having a senior center located at the community center. The Community Center could also provide youth and teen programs and activities to supplement what is being offered at the Wallace Community School.

It is important when deciding what should be offered at the new community center to coordinate with Wallace Community School to prevent the duplication of services. Because the Community School should be in place before the Community Center, it will have time to attract a large enough user base that it will be helpful to shift some programs from Wallace Elementary to the new Community Center.

Appendix (A) identifies additional sources of funding to support both the planning and construction of a community center.

### **Additional Resources:**

Rural Development Initiatives is an Oregon-based non-profit that works with Northwest communities to restore community vitality. They published a report, “Creating Your Community Center” that provides in-depth, step-by-step instructions for a community undertaking the construction of a community center.



# SAFE Walkable Welcoming

## PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & NEIGHBORHOOD APPEARANCE

**P**edestrian Safety and Neighborhood Appearance is a two part strategy aimed at improving the aesthetics and infrastructure of the South Kelso Neighborhood using an inventory of pre-determined neighborhood appearance issues that lead to the implementation of on-the-ground solutions.

There has been a renewed interest by people across the country in relocating downtown and to close-in neighborhoods. Families are recognizing the value in neighborhood walkability. Places that are favorable for walking tend to be better served by public transit, are more central to downtowns and main streets, tend to be more dense with residences and destinations, and have varying uses, such as businesses, residences, restaurants, coffee shops, and bookstores. Throughout the country, housing markets that offer high levels of walkability are consistently in higher demand than those

without. The walkability of neighborhoods, downtowns, and cities directly correlates into increases in home values.

Walking also connects people to important social benefits. It is commonly understood that more people on the streets and sidewalks is a sign of an active and interesting urban space. This also correlates into a safer urban environment.

South Kelso has many of the qualities that homebuyers look for such as historic housing stock, proximity to downtown/main street, short blocks, and access to

parks and gathering places. What South Kelso lacks is a connected network of sidewalks and crosswalks and well-maintained properties. Completing this network and improving maintenance of homes will increase the desirability of the South Kelso neighborhood by improving the safety of the pedestrian environment, improving access to goods and services, and increasing the desirability of the properties.

### Strategy 6.

### Perform a Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit

A Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit is a common tool used to create a detailed record of the condition of the pedestrian environment in a city or neighborhood. This type of audit is usually performed by City transportation staff, other transportation-related agencies, such as the County or Council of Governments, and a volunteer effort comprised of local service organizations and residents.

The planning team has heard from South Kelso residents that they are concerned about the condition of streets, sidewalks, and crossings in their neighborhood. In order to move from anecdotal information to a fact-based understanding of the extent and location of these deficiencies, the City of Kelso's Public Works and Community Development Departments should initiate the accurate inventorying of pedestrian infrastructure. With a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian infrastructure citywide, the Public Works Department will be able to accurately identify priority needs for infrastructure maintenance and upgrades. This information will allow for the efficient and equitable allocation of City resources in the future.



Photo: Dan Burden

The data obtained through an audit provides decision-makers with the information necessary to appropriately allocate transportation investments in the most needed areas.

A Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit involves a comprehensive assessment of the pedestrian realm, including a wide variety of aspects such as:

- Sidewalks: Are sidewalks provided? Are sidewalks continuous along the length of the block and present on both sides of the street.
- Crossings: Are curb ramps present for wheelchairs and strollers? Is the paint on a crosswalk faded or worn? Can crosswalk markings be seen at night? Are crosswalks free of potholes or cracks?
- Pleasantness of the Walk: Is the environment along the sidewalk enjoyable to walk through? Is there shade provided by trees? Are there resting places along the way for pedestrians, such as benches?



Photo: Dan Burden

- Personal Security: Are there run down or vacant buildings along the way? Is there graffiti or trash littering the sidewalk?
- Is there evidence of suspicious or unpleasant activity occurring on or near the sidewalk?
- Maintenance and Obstruction: Is the sidewalk clear of obstruction? Are there cracks and uneven surfaces on the sidewalk that would endanger pedestrians and those using mobility devices?
- Wayfinding: Are there signs directing pedestrians to important destinations? Are street names visible to pedestrians?
- Crossing Distance: Are street crossings excessively long or do they prohibit comfortable crossing by all users of all ages? Could street crossings be shortened with curb extensions or narrower lanes?
- Lighting: Are sidewalks and crossings adequately lit?

Why a Pedestrian Mobility & Safety Audit will work in South Kelso  
South Kelso residents are concerned with the condition of transportation infrastructure in their neighborhood. Through the ASK! outreach effort, Kelso residents expressed the feeling that the lack of investment in their streets and sidewalks is spurring disinvestment in yards and houses. Sidewalks are viewed not just as walking infrastructure, but as a way to provide definition between the yard and the street which helps people to keep up yard appearance. The ASK! Community Priorities Survey identified fixing streets, sidewalks, and crossings as one of the top issues the City should focus on.

Challenging city budgets and a decline in the tax base has led to a lack of finished and improved pedestrian infrastructure. The lack of sidewalks and crosswalks is a major safety hazard for all residents, particularly vulnerable populations such as children, elderly, and disabled individuals.

Despite the highly walkable grid in South Kelso, the quality and connectivity of pedestrian infrastructure is deficient. Providing a

connected network of safe walking infrastructure through investments in the pedestrian environment will lead to improvements in local health, the safety of school-age children, and increased independence of elderly populations. Property values, particularly for detached single family homes, is directly linked to the quality of adjoining sidewalks, as it impacts the 'sidewalk appeal' and first impression relating to aesthetic and safety. Homes located in neighborhoods with a network of complete sidewalks have been shown to command upwards of \$34,000 more than those in areas without a connected network of sidewalks.<sup>1</sup>

**"More than 90% of Wallace Elementary School kids walk to school."**

*- Don Iverson, Kelso School District*



Photo: Dan Burden

1. Cortright, Joe (2009 August) "Walking the Walk: How Walkability Raises Home Values in U.S. Cities" *CEOs for Cities*.



# HOW TO CONDUCT A PEDESTRIAN SAFETY & MOBILITY AUDIT

The Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit Guide developed by the Institute of Transportation Engineers and the AARP is a useful resource for implementing this strategy. This extensive resource provides all the necessary information for organizing and conducting a Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit.

## **STEP 1: The City of Kelso creates a Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Task Force.**

The Task Force should be made up of City and Council of Governments staff, Neighborhood Association members, and other community partners.

## **STEP 2: The City of Kelso conducts an audit briefing.**

This exercise will prepare the Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit participants on everything they need to know about how to perform the audit.



Photo: Dan Burden

## **STEP 3: The Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Task Force conducts a Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit.**

Performing the audit on all the streets in Kelso, rather than only in South Kelso, will enable the City to take stock of the presence and condition of pedestrian facilities in South Kelso compared to the rest of the city. The Taskforce will provide

materials and lead groups of volunteers who will take note of conditions on the ground, such as the presence and condition of sidewalks, curb ramps, pedestrian crossings, wayfinding and street signs to help orient pedestrians, and sidewalk lighting.

## **STEP 4: The City of Kelso prioritizes City funds to problem areas**

The findings of the Pedestrian Mobility and Safety Audit will identify problem areas regarding the condition of the pedestrian environment in the South Kelso Neighborhood compared to the rest of the City. The City should prioritize the identified problem areas and direct City transportation funding toward bringing problem areas up to the same standards as the rest of the city.



Photo: Flickr user Steve Rees

## Strategy 7. Improve Housing & Neighborhood Appearance

Improving housing and neighborhood appearance instills pride in a community which leads to a more stable residential population. Long-term residence in a single location is the one key component for educational attainment, secure employment, and consistent access to social programs and services.

The Social Determinants of Health Model<sup>1</sup> provides a list of the benefits from stable, affordable housing:

- Ability to spend more on food, healthcare, and other basic necessities
- 50% reduction in iron deficiencies are seen in low-income children who live in affordable housing
- Improved academic success
- Students from stable households are more likely to graduate high school
- Improved physical and mental health
- Reduction in deaths linked to alcohol, including accidents, violence, poisoning, injury, and suicide

Upkeep of neighborhood housing stock and infrastructure investment will give both residents and property investors confidence in the South Kelso housing market, leading to additional investment and a sense of community pride.

**Why Improving Housing Appearance will work in South Kelso**  
The South Kelso Neighborhood has experienced decades of neglect and disinvestment leading to the decline of the housing stock. This cycle has led to a dilapidated neighborhood appearance with crumbling houses, abandoned structures used by squatters, yards in disrepair, and a transient population that lacks personal connection with the greater community. These conditions detract from the historic housing stock still prevalent in South Kelso.

More than half of the households in South Kelso are renter-occupied and many experience a relatively high rate of transiency, making it difficult for residents to take pride in their neighborhood and adversely affecting student performance. South Kelso would benefit from turning short-term renters into long-term neighborhood residents participating in the positive cycle of improved property appearance and value.

South Kelso also has a high percentage of absentee landlords. The neighborhood would benefit from understanding the ratio of residing homeowners, absentee landlords, and renters, in order to understand these audiences current conditions, motivations, and future plans.

Anecdotally, the planning team is aware that there exists a cycle of second generation potential homeowners leaving the South Kelso neighborhood. Understanding this condition informs the larger conversation about local real estate market trends and the stability of the neighborhood as a desirable, safe place to live.



Photo: Creative Commons

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization Social Determinants of Health. <http://www.who.int/social-determinants>



# HOW TO IMPROVE HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOOD APPEARANCE

Improving the housing and appearance of the South Kelso Neighborhood will take a coordinated effort by residents, the City, local business owners, and other stakeholders.

This strategy takes a “cause and effect” approach to understanding current conditions and ownership status in order to improve housing and neighborhood appearance. Creating an inventory of existing property characteristics (i.e. physical appearance, structural safety) and property ownership status will inform proposed targeted and effective programs that address conditions through incentives, assistance, or authoritative order.

**STEP 1: The City of Kelso creates a South Kelso Housing and Neighborhood Appearance Taskforce (the Taskforce).**

The Taskforce will include residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. This group will be responsible for determining housing appearance concerns to inventory.

**STEP 2. The Taskforce conducts a ‘Windshield Survey.’**

A ‘windshield survey’ is an inventory of housing appearance that considers only those features that can be perceived through the windshield of a car or from the sidewalk. The survey could evaluate properties based on a variety of conditions, including,

- Roofing, gutters, and downspouts
- House paint
- Yard (i.e. unmaintained lawn, trash removal, broken fence, etc.)
- Windows, steps, and doors
- Abandoned cars, trailers, etc.



Photo: Photo Dean

Examples of abatement sources, programs and partners

PROBLEM SOURCE EXAMPLES	TARGET PROGRAM EXAMPLES	PARTNERS
Owner/Tenant is lacking physical or financial capacity (i.e. disabled, elderly)	Volunteer Assistance	Lions Clubs, Youth Groups, Alumni Associations, Neighborhood Associations
Absentee/Unresponsive Landlord	Incentives and/or order (nuisance code)	City of Kelso Community Development Department, Neighborhood Association
Unresponsive Owner	Incentives and/or order (nuisance code)	Neighborhood Association, City of Kelso Community Development Department



**STEP 3: The City builds a Housing Appearance and Land Ownership map**

Data from the windshield survey in conjunction with findings from a landownership inventory will help to determine the most critical areas for revitalization. GIS mapping will be helpful for this task and will allow City staff to identify where the problems lie and to target programs as identified in chart.

**STEP 4: The City enforces current regulations and explores potential incentive and assistance programs**

The City will analyze current enforcement measures for effectiveness, (such as the nuisance code) and will research incentive and assistance-based methods for improving neighborhood appearance. Incentive and assistance programs can include: volunteer clean-up days led by the neighborhood association, Adopt-a-Block programs, and clean-up assistance crews.

Nuisance abatement programs and volunteer assistance can be offered in tandem to reach unresponsive households.



Photo: Creative Commons

**“There are a lot of dilapidated properties in South Kelso that lower morale.”**  
- South Kelso resident

**Additional Resources:**

Cowlitz County Habitat for Humanity - A Brush with Kindness.  
[www.habitat.org/getinv/brush\\_with\\_kindness.asp](http://www.habitat.org/getinv/brush_with_kindness.asp)  
[http://www.habitat.org/getinv/brush\\_with\\_kindness.aspx](http://www.habitat.org/getinv/brush_with_kindness.aspx)

Paint the town – Utilize CDBG grant to paint houses in need of fresh paint.

<http://www.masc.sc/newsroom/uptown/June2011/Pages/Improved-aesthetics-and-revitalized-neighborhoods-lead-to-economic-development.aspx>

**Neighborhood Improvement Program**

[http://www.townofcary.org/Departments/Planning\\_Department/Housing/Neighborhood\\_Improvement\\_Grant\\_Program.htm](http://www.townofcary.org/Departments/Planning_Department/Housing/Neighborhood_Improvement_Grant_Program.htm)

H.O.M.E. Housing Opportunities and Maintenance for the Elderly is based in Chicago provides home repair and basic upkeep to low-income senior citizens.

<http://www.bbb.org/charity-reviews/chicago/human-services/housing-opportunities-and-maintenace-for-the-elderly-home-in-chicago-il-14535>

**Galveston junk car abatement program**

[http://www.h-gac.com/community/waste/enforcement/leer/documents/leer\\_04-07-2011\\_galveston\\_county\\_junk\\_vehicle\\_program.pdf](http://www.h-gac.com/community/waste/enforcement/leer/documents/leer_04-07-2011_galveston_county_junk_vehicle_program.pdf)

**Housing and Nuisance Code, Portland, OR-**

<http://www.portlandonline.com/bds/index.cfm?a=25079&c=28397>

# Active Vibrant Prosperous

## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

Active streets, vibrant storefronts, and a prosperous local business community—those are the desired outcomes of downtown revitalization. Revitalization efforts targeted in downtown will restore Kelso's commercial core to its former prominence as a center of community activity and as a destination for residents and visitors.

The downtown symbolizes the heritage of a community, often containing historic properties and other cultural assets, provides a place for community gatherings, contributes a considerable share of a city's tax base, and is a critical component of a prosperous small town economy. The condition of the downtown plays a large part in the community's identity and well-being.

Yet, efforts to create thriving downtowns in small cities are faced with a unique set of challenges, such as development occurring

in larger cities nearby or adjacent to the Interstate Highway, difficulty attracting new investment and businesses, very small businesses that lack expertise or access to capital, and lack of organizational capacity amongst businesses and property owners. Kelso's downtown is no exception; the downtown has experienced a lack of public and private investment and declining market environment over the past several decades.

Improving the vitality of the downtown Main Street is a wise financial decision for any small town. Per acre, downtown

properties generate much larger revenues in property taxes for the City as compared to larger, more sprawling properties outside of downtown or along an interstate. For example, a 2011 study in Raleigh, NC<sup>1</sup> found that a six-story mixed-use building downtown generates 53 times the municipal property tax yield per acre as compared to a Walmart located outside of the downtown. Furthermore, properties located downtown burden the City's infrastructure system to a lesser degree than outlying properties.

## Strategy 8:

### Revive & Restructure the Main Street Effort

Main Street programs help align City and business community efforts to make the downtown more active, vibrant, and prosperous for all to enjoy. These programs beautify the downtown core, organize public events to draw visitors on evenings and weekends, promote the downtown as a destination, fill empty storefronts with new local businesses, and help improve the physical design of downtown spaces. This strategy invests in the many physical aspects of what is commonly envisioned as an attractive downtown, and coordinates activities to draw people in.

The Main Street approach is a national and state-wide program designed to create prosperous, sustainable communities and is specifically focused on main streets in small towns. The Main Street approach "is a unique preservation-based economic development tool that enables communities to revitalize downtown and neighborhood business districts by leveraging local assets – from historic, cultural, and architectural resources to local enterprises and community pride."<sup>1</sup>

Over the three decades the national program has been in existence, a total of \$55.7 billion public and private dollars have been reinvested across the country in physical improvements, netting 110,000 new businesses and 473,000 new jobs. In 2012, the Main Street approach resulted in a reinvestment ratio of 18:1, meaning that \$18 of new investment occurred for every dollar a community spent to assist their Main Street program.<sup>2</sup>

#### Why Reviving and Restructuring the Main Street Effort will work in South Kelso

Potential benefits of using the Main Street approach toward downtown revitalization ripple out to property owners, retail business owners, service business owners, and local residents and consumers. Benefits to these groups include increased occupancy rates, higher commercial and home property values, a better business mix to serve residents' needs, improved image of the downtown business district, increased sense of pride and sense of hometown community, and an opportunity to participate in local community betterment and social activities.

Businesses and residents in South Kelso are intertwined in a symbiotic relationship; businesses rely on residents to support their establishments as customers, while residents rely on businesses to provide the goods and services they need for daily life. In a small town like Kelso, the downtown Main Street is within walking distance of most South Kelso residents. A thriving business community on South Pacific Avenue would improve the quality of life and livability of South

Kelso. Furthermore, residents' perception of a thriving Main Street has been directly linked with the sense of community. These in turn impact community participation and engagement, the sense of ownership, investment, and commitment to the neighborhood.



Photo: TABauknight

Successful downtown revitalization in Kelso will depend on productive, collaborative partnerships between the City of Kelso, business owners, and the local residential community so that future efforts reflect these diverse interests. This section proposes three distinct strategies meant to be implemented in tandem. Two of the recommendations were made in the Kelso Downtown Revitalization Plan. While the first two strategies can be implemented in the short-term, to produce results the community can see quickly, the third strategy will require a coordinated and collaborative effort over a longer period of time.

Main Street efforts are directly-tailored to suit the unique needs of each community. These programs are typically considered successful if they...

- Result in more people on the street
- Increase walking or bicycling
- Lower crime and vandalism
- Increase private investment
- Increase economic vitality, as indicated by reduced vacancy rates, increases in store hours, or increases in the diversity of business types.
- Increase the city's tax base

<sup>1</sup> Washington Trust for Historic Preservation (2013). Washington State Main Street Program Guide & Handbook

<sup>2</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation. (2013, April 17). "Main Street Reinvestment Statistics." Preservationnation.org. Web.



# HOW TO REVIVE & RESTRUCTURE THE MAIN STREET EFFORT

South Kelso would benefit from restructuring and reinvigorating the Kelso Downtown Revitalization Association (KDRA) with the City's financial support and a dedicated staff person to serve as a liaison to the business community. By focusing and expanding this volunteer group's projects, the community's desire to see a more active downtown will be realized.

Existing Main Street efforts have shown that these programs have a very low likelihood of success if they are not financially supported by their City. The City of Kelso should consider contributing to the financial sustainability of the Kelso Main Street effort by restructuring future budget allocations to allow for the annual support of the Main Street Association. These funds can be used by the Association to support paid staff or other projects.

Additional potential funding sources for the KDRA include annual membership dues, support from the Chamber of Commerce, and creative fundraising efforts such as an Adopt a Flower Box campaign. Membership dues will become more tenable once the efforts of the Association begin to produce tangible results.

## **STEP 1: The KDRA selects a volunteer to serve as Executive Director.**

An organization needs a leader to set goals and steer the direction of the work to be effective and successful. In the longer-term, the Executive Director should transition into a paid Main Street Director position.

Executive Director responsibilities:

- Provide an overall vision to the work of the KDRA
- Coordinate the work of the volunteers
- Support the implementation of the work functions of each committee
- Advocate for downtown Kelso at the local and regional level

## **STEP 2: The KDRA invites additional public and private organizations to join**

These new members will add additional volunteer time and energy, knowledge of government programs and funding streams, and technical skills and resources.

Consider the following:

- City staff, City Council members, Mayor
- County staff, County Council members
- Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments staff
- Cowlitz Economic Development Council
- Kelso School District
- Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce
- Local banking institutions
- Lions Club

### 4 Points of the Main Street Program

*Organization:* a strong, representative organization provides the framework and momentum to build and maintain a long-term effort

*Promotion:* activate downtown spaces through exciting street festivals, parades, retail events, and image development campaigns

*Design:* improve the sense of place in the district through public and private investment in historic building rehabilitation, street clean-up, landscaping, street furniture, and other design elements

*Economic Restructuring:* support existing businesses and entrepreneurs through market research and coalition-building

### **STEP 3: The KDRA establishes the five sub-committees necessary to do the work of a Main Street Association**

The Main Street program dictates a specific set of sub-committees and their work programs, including the following:

- Organization Committee: raise money, oversee volunteer activities, promote the program, manage finances.
- Promotion Committee: understand the changing market, identify downtown assets, define Main Street's market niche, create new image for downtown.
- Events Committee: run special events, secure event sponsors.
- Design Committee: develop and market improvement incentives (City of Kelso façade improvement program), develop district identification signs, streetscape improvements, rehabilitation improvements.
- Economic Restructuring Committee: inventory existing buildings and businesses, strengthen existing businesses and recruit new ones, create new business owner's orientation kit.

### **STEP 4: The KDRA invites staff from the Washington State Main Street Program to facilitate a retreat.**

During the early stages of organizing, a Main Street Association needs to identify the vision, mission, and a 2-3 year work plan the organization intends to engage in to revitalize downtown. Staff from the statewide program can offer outside expertise, support, and knowledge during this fledgling stage.

### **STEP 5: The KDRA identifies and executes a small number of visible, low-hanging fruit projects to gain momentum, such as:**

- Host a series of movie nights downtown, projecting the movie on a brick wall.
- Hold a farmer's market in the WorkSource parking lot and coordinate a promotional event with local businesses.
- Install planter boxes with fresh, colorful flowers outside storefronts.
- Coordinate with Wallace Elementary to paint a mural on a building side.
- Place café seating outside restaurants, such as Backstage Café.

According to Kelso community feedback, the top businesses Kelso residents want to see downtown include:

1. Restaurants and cafes
2. Grocery store
3. Gym
4. Coffee shops



Photo: Dan Burden

To improve the likelihood of achieving long-term success, the KDRA should incorporate as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and advance to Tier II Main Street status, which confers several tax incentives benefits and would include at least one paid staff person to run the organization.



IT HAPPENED THERE...  
IT COULD HAPPEN IN SOUTH KELSO

**CAMAS, WASHINGTON**  
**TIER II MAIN STREET PROGRAM MEMBER**

Similar to Kelso and other local small towns, Camas experienced decades of economic decline due to a shift away from a resource-based economy. To catalyze private investment and reinvigorate the downtown core, Camas instituted its Main Street Program called the Downtown Camas Association (DCA) in 2001 as part of implementing the Camas Downtown Revitalization Plan. The DCA is run by 20 active volunteers and is a highly active organization with monthly events, a newsletter, a stylish website, and fundraising efforts.

The DCA is a 501(c)(3) organization.

As a Tier II Main Street Program member, Camas is eligible for the Main Street Tax Credit incentive, which provides a tax reduction to businesses that donate funds to the organization.

The organizational structure of the DCA includes:

- Board of Directors, with representatives from the Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce, Camas School District, and City Council
- Executive Committee, which reports to the Board and is made up of the chairs of each Committee
- Organization Committee, Promotion Committee, Events Committee, Downtown Design Committee, Economic Vitality Committee

**Funding:** The DCA is funded by the City, donations from local small and large businesses, encouraged by the Main Street Tax Credit, and event sponsors. Between 2005 and 2010, the City of Camas provided \$4.7 million to the DCA. Due to a sharp drop in City revenue, the City wasn't able to contribute to the DCA in 2011, but included a \$15,000 contribution to fund a paid staff person in their 2012 budget.



**Additional Resources:**

- National Main Street Program Website
- Washington State Main Street Program Website
- Washington State Main Street Program Guide & Handbook
- The Main Street Approach to Downtown Development: An Examination of the Four-Point Program – Journal of Architectural and Planning Research Spring 2004

Photo: Flickr user Curtiss Cronn



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

Economic Gardening is an approach to economic development that is centered on the entrepreneur. It supports new and existing businesses by streamlining access to business training and support services, and by providing market research that is usually only available to large firms.<sup>1</sup> Rather than hunting for outside companies, Economic Gardening grows the economy from within the local region.

Supporting existing businesses contributes more to creating jobs than recruiting outside companies. National statistics show that in the fifteen years between 1995 and 2010, local business jobs increased 23% while jobs in national chain businesses (companies with their headquarters out of state) decreased by 0.5%. In the Longview-Kelso region, existing businesses added nearly 8% more jobs between 2006 and 2010, while only 0.3% of job gains came from new companies moving to the area. Furthermore, job gains from local businesses were primarily from people striking out on their own and becoming self-employed or businesses with fewer than 10 employees.<sup>2</sup>

Why an Economic Gardening Initiative will work in South Kelso  
Economic Gardening concepts are nothing new to Kelso. The types of activities promoted in the Cowlitz Economic Development Council (CEDC) 2010 Strategic Plan form the backbone of an Economic Gardening Initiative.

The CEDC Strategic Plan identifies Economic Gardening strategies, including “support[ing] the startup, retention, and expansion of businesses,” as one of three approaches to “build resources and programs to improve economic development competitiveness.”

The plan specifically calls out the importance of expanding and retaining existing businesses as the best chance a community has for adding employment and growing the tax base of a city. Tasks to support existing businesses include contacting local businesses periodically to find possible expansion opportunities, surveying local businesses annually to gauge the business climate, and advertising existing technical and financial assistance programs to local businesses.



**“In my opinion, when a business inquires about moving to Kelso, they should be greeted with, ‘What can we do to help you be successful in our city?! We want your business!’”**

*-Kelso Resident*

The CEDC Strategic Plan also calls out supporting entrepreneur development through regularly meeting with entrepreneurs to understand barriers to their success, providing local government assistance to address these challenges, providing entrepreneurship training programs, and developing an information clearinghouse with market research and other information.

<sup>1</sup> Quello, Steve and Toft, Graham. “Economic Gardening: Next Generation Applications for a Balanced Portfolio Approach to Economic Growth.” U.S. Small Business Administration Office of Advocacy.

<sup>2</sup> “Your Economy.” (2013, April 25). Composition & Growth. Edward Lowe Foundation, n.d. Web.  
<<http://youreconomy.org/pages/growth.lasso>>.

# HOW TO LAUNCH AN ECONOMIC GARDENING INITIATIVE

Support and training services are currently provided by stakeholders within the Kelso-Longview region. However, access to and knowledge of these services could be streamlined for existing and new businesses in downtown Kelso by creating a one-stop-shop that provides entrepreneurs with everything they need to be successful in business.

**STEP 1: The City of Kelso identifies and convenes an Economic Gardening Advisory Committee of appropriate stakeholders in the region.**

The Committee should serve as an advisory and supportive role to the City in launching the Economic Gardening Initiative. Their perspectives and participation are vital in order to correctly identify existing services, coverage and quality of services, gaps in the system, and establish a system for coordinating and aligning concurrent efforts. This group should conduct an inventory of existing business support services to provide to local businesses.

Potential stakeholders include:

- City of Kelso Library: computer and internet facilities
- Kelso-Longview Chamber of Commerce: Small Business Boot Camp
- Lower Columbia College: Small Business Entrepreneur Certification, Professional Development Continuing Education courses, online business classes
- Cowlitz-Lewis Economic Development District
- Washington State University Cowlitz and Wahkiakum County Learning Center
- Washington State University Small Business Development Center: Small Business Entrepreneur Certification
- SCORE Vancouver: Mentoring, training, and tools for planning, starting, or growing a business

**"We need to develop and market our assets if we are going to attract businesses and tourists."**  
*-Kelso Resident*

**STEP 2: The City of Kelso conducts a review of internal processes associated with business development.**

The City of Kelso should review the process for opening a new business from the business owner's perspective. General ease, accessibility, and costs associated with the process should be considered. This review may include:

- Accessibility of necessary information for business start-up
- Consolidation of the steps and department reviews for license and permitting
- The timeline for business license and permit approval
- Business license fees

**“I like to shop in Kelso. Get more shops downtown!”**

**-KELSO RESIDENT**

Example questions a business person may need answered include:

- What are the trends in my industry?
- Who are my consumers?
- What are the benchmarks for my industry?
- Who are my competitors?
- Are sales in this industry going up or down?
- What is the demand for my product or service?
- Are my projected costs and income similar to my competitors?
- How and where can I reach my target audience?
- Where should I locate my new business or an additional location?
- How can I recruit and retain quality employees?

### **STEP 3: The City of Kelso develops an Economic Gardening Initiative.**

The Economic Gardening Initiative offerings will consist of simplified business start-up processes and a one-stop-shop located at the City that provides streamlined access to information and services provided by regional economic development partners. The City should develop a business resource guide as a tool of the Economic Gardening Initiative that consolidates business start-up and support information that will be available online and at the City.

The City, in partnership with the Economic Gardening Advisory Committee, should address all gaps in programmatic offerings or skill capacities. Potential new capacities include the provision of market research data and information to help businesses and entrepreneurs understand their unique potential, risks, and opportunities.

### **STEP 4: The City of Kelso launches and promotes the Kelso Economic Gardening Initiative (KEGI).**

The City of Kelso should develop a “Kelso is Open for Business” web page that outlines the Kelso Economic Gardening Initiative, the business resource guide, and the services offered through this program. The partners involved in the KEGI can help to get the word out about this program and its offerings. Promotional efforts should be directed to small businesses existing in Kelso and to potential entrepreneurs.



Photo: A.V. Photography

#### **Additional Resources:**

- Longmont Business Resource Guide: <http://www.ci.longmont.co.us/econdev/business/BusinessResourceGuide.htmv>
- National Center for Economic Gardening
- Small Business Administration
- National League of Cities
- Center for Economic Vitality, Western Washington University



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

Revitalizing the downtown Main Street through a streetscape improvement is a common economic development tool used by small towns and large cities across the country. The streetscape includes the street design and conditions that impact street users, especially pedestrians. Streetscape projects brighten the public right-of-way with physical improvements to create an inviting pedestrian and commercial environment. Safe, inviting streetscapes encourage people to walk and interact with their community, stimulating local economic activity and attracting residents and visitors.



Photo: [www.pedbikeimages.org](http://www.pedbikeimages.org) - Dan Burden

Some of the types of improvements that may be involved in a streetscape project include the following:

- Improving and widening sidewalks and crossings
- Installing street furniture, like benches, garbage cans, pedestrian lighting, and outdoor seating
- Landscaping, especially street trees
- Striping bicycle lanes or creating shared streets
- Calming traffic and managing parking
- Adding unique design features to create a sense of place
- Creating design guidelines for private development of building frontages
- Defining the boundaries of the Town Center with signage and entryway features

Streetscape improvements help kick off a downtown revitalization effort with a catalytic public space physical improvement. This strategy helps show that "things are happening downtown," makes news, and establishes the downtown revitalization effort as a successful undertaking in the community's eyes.

Public investment is often necessary to spur private investment, and has been shown to do so in small and large cities across the nation. Streetscape improvements have been shown to increase residential and commercial property values, attract new businesses, and increase retail sales.<sup>1</sup>

While local governments may not often own buildings to renovate along a Main Street, cities do own the public realm of the street. The public understands that street improvements are the city's responsibility; there is little debate regarding the appropriateness of local government action in this regard. Funding for roadway improvement projects is often obtainable, although multiple funding sources may be required to generate sufficient funds.

<sup>1</sup> Benefits of Complete Streets: Complete Streets Stimulate the Local Economy. National Complete Streets Coalition.





Photo: Bikepedimages.org Dan Burden

Currently, the streetscape along South Pacific Avenue in downtown Kelso does not invite large numbers of pedestrians and does not support a strong economy built on local Main Street businesses. Improving the public realm in the Town Center would increase property values for property owners, increase retail sales for businesses, increase property and sales tax revenue for the City, and provide more variety and interest in the downtown for Kelso residents.

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments Great Streets Concept, completed in 2012, identifies South Pacific Avenue in the Kelso Town Center as a Civic Great Street, which is a "street that connects activities, acts as a gateway and evolves over time."<sup>1</sup> Civic Great Streets are currently auto-oriented but should become more walkable and multimodal over time. The Great Streets Concepts provides a toolbox of improvement strategies and design elements that could be implemented to improve South Pacific Avenue.

The ASK! community outreach campaign identified the small town charm of the South Kelso Neighborhood as one of the major assets the community has to offer. Yet, upkeep of streets, sidewalks, and crossings was also identified as a chief concern of the community and highlighted as one of the key efforts the City should focus on. Improving the public realm in downtown Kelso would build on the existing assets of South Kelso while addressing a key community concern.

<sup>1</sup> Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments Great Street Concept for Longview and Kelso



## HOW TO IMPLEMENT STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

This strategy builds on the momentum created by implementing the first strategies in the Downtown Revitalization focus area. In the short term, the KDRA will generate small successes that can be built on by a large public investment, such as getting people downtown to evening and weekend events, beautifying the street with inexpensive, short-term improvements like flower baskets, and increasing business participation in the City's façade improvement program. As confidence in downtown revitalization increases, support for public investment in downtown will grow as well.

### **STEP 1: The City of Kelso convenes a representative stakeholder group to develop a shared vision for South Pacific Avenue.**

To ensure that the diverse viewpoints and needs of the downtown stakeholders are addressed, the following interest groups in the community should be considered:

- Mayor and Councilmembers
- Planning Commission members
- Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments
- Cowlitz-Lewis Economic Development District
- Kelso Downtown Revitalization Association Design Committee
- Cowlitz County Historic Museum
- Longview-Kelso Chamber of Commerce
- South Kelso Neighborhood Association
- Architectural review team

### **STEP 2: The City of Kelso develops an implementation strategy.**

Once the stakeholders have provided a shared vision for the South Pacific Avenue streetscape, the City will develop a strategy for implementing the streetscape improvements. The strategy will be developed through an internal City working group.

Potential funding sources include:

- City transportation funds
- City of Kelso Street Fund
- Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments
- Cowlitz County
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Program
- Complete Streets & Main Street Highways Grant Program

#### **Additional Resources:**

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments Great Streets Concept  
Sustainable Environment for Quality of Life Pedestrian-Friendly Streetscapes Handout  
Smart Growth America  
American Society of Landscape Architects  
[Walkinginfo.org](http://Walkinginfo.org)



IT HAPPENED THERE...  
IT COULD HAPPEN IN SOUTH KELSO  
**CITY OF CASTLE ROCK 2011 COWLITZ  
WEST REVITALIZATION PROJECT**

In response to business community concerns, the City of Castle Rock planned and implemented the Cowlitz West Revitalization Project, which included:

- Complete infrastructure rebuilding above and below ground, including state-of-the-art communications infrastructure.
- A public involvement process that identified "Great Pacific Northwest" design elements, including pedestrian improvements, like expanded pedestrian realm, "wooden plank" concrete sidewalks, "river rock" intersections, pedestrian lighting fixtures to display banners, decorations, and greenery, and fixtures at street entrance to display banners and holiday decorations
- Shared, one-way street with bicycles, lowered speed limit to 15 MPH, reconfigured angled parking added 40 spaces, and a new street surface.

The \$2 million project cost was funded through grants, loans, and the City budget. Partnerships helped secure grant funding, including collaborations with Cowlitz County, WSDOT, CWCOC, the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board, and the U.S. Department of Energy.

As a result of this project, private investment toward storefront improvements increased, and the storefront vacancy rate decreased 18% in 4 months. Additionally, the project helped to implement a Castle Rock Strategic Marketing Plan to assist local businesses. Through participating in this project, the business community became more organized, cooperative, and involved in downtown improvement efforts.



Photo: Flickr user J Steven Conn

INTENTIONALLY BLANK



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The Portland State University (PSU) Masters of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) Program engages planning students in a 'workshop' project at the end of their final year of study. The workshop serves as a final capstone of their academic experience, and gives students the opportunity to conduct a planning project from beginning to end. These planning projects provide invaluable experiential knowledge while giving community partners high quality planning consultation. The South Kelso Revitalization Plan is the final product of these students' workshop course series.

