

**CITY OF KALAMA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
JULY 19, 2017 @ 6PM**

KALAMA DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mayor Pete Poulsen opened the workshop. Councilmembers present were Mike Truesdell, Sandra Macias, Mike Dennis Langham, Rosemary Brinson Siipola, and Mary Putka. City staff present were City Administrator Adam Smee, Superintendent of Public Works Kelly Rasmussen, Clerk/Treasurer Coni McMaster, and Police Chief Ralph Herrera. City Attorney Sam Satterfield was also present. Project consultants from Mackenzie were City Planner Mark Person, Todd Johnson, Gabriella Trask, and Chris Blakeney. Members of the public present are listed on the sign-in sheet.

City Administrator Adam Smee made team introductions and explained that about 4 years ago the conversation to increase vitality of downtown began. It was not desired to go down the path to big box stores or national chains, but to find ways to build and grow the downtown economically while not largely changing the flavor of the community. The City secured a grant for state funds, found funds to provide the match, hired a consulting firm through a request for proposal which is Mackenzie and began the process leading to the draft document presented tonight. The team from Mackenzie are Gabriella Trask, project manager, Chris Blakeney, economist, Todd Johnson, and Mark Person, who is also the City's Planner by contract. This has provided a nice connection between the staff planner and the consultants on the project. Gabriella Trask began that they started a little over a year ago on the project which is constructed in 3 chapters: 1. Existing conditions – 2. Visioning – 3. Implementation. Most know what the existing conditions are and everyone's vision may be different, but the plan does provide some ideas and concepts of what could be. The goal is to provide a program and strategies for growing into the future with the focus on the downtown core area. Chris Blakeney explained that the local economy has not grown as much as other areas in this region. Over the last 12 years there have been many development efforts including the 2004 Community Action plan, First Street Streetscape Project, Port of Kalama's Feasibility study for the East Port development, East Port annexation and Master Plan for Spencer Creek Business Park and the McMenamins lease to name a few. In the last 2-3 years the City and Port have updated their respective comprehensive plan which the consultants use in building this plan. It focuses on only the downtown area providing for a revitalization strategy, identifying redevelopment opportunities and showing possibilities for a growing community. Currently Port employment is at an all-time high. During the project, the consultants found the area to be under served in apartment type housing availability to meet the needs of new employees. The plan also uses the unique assets of Kalama including the rail, the highway and the river to help in marketing opportunities. It was found that those that live here don't shop here when they analyzed the data. So, they looked to target the activities that would benefit downtown which would include housing, professional services, and niche commercial such as small production/retail coffee roasters, or boutiques or galleries that would draw citizens to stay local.

The plan identifies 11 parcels that could offer some opportunities in the long term of which they picked six to look closer at and provides some thought on how the character of the building and downtown could be enhanced by repurposing or revitalizing the structures. Included were the Hendrickson Mall, the office/apartment space by the pharmacy, the old Texaco site, the vacant lot on the corner of Fir and First, and the satellite site at the south entrance of town. The team presented story boards as visual tools what could be possible, focusing the vision on three of the sites. The vision includes establishing some connections within the community to the waterfront, which is somewhat difficult with the freeway and the expense for a new overpass. The thought is to make vision markers throughout the community that lead to the waterfront and from the waterfront into town. All of the amenities of the community should be a part of the branding and identity of Kalama. There also is a need to create a visually stimulating draw from I5 that catches the attention and draws people to come back and stop. Currently the backs of building showing to I5 are not very pleasing. Enhancing both the gateways from north and south of town is a critical component of revitalization plan. Most traffic doesn't come down First Street, but uses Frontage to the Chevron and leaves down Frontage back to I5. There needs to be a draw to pull them to First Street. One thought was to make one-way streets on First and Frontage for four or five blocks, which would be a major change but has the potential to help support local commerce.

Mr. Blakeney presented the three concepts for what they call the catalyst sites, with the first being at the south end of town at the satellite shop which as the entrance to town it should draw attention and be a gateway to the community. Making the parking areas more park like to draw from Toteff Park across the street, or having a covered area to extend outside available during at least 3 seasons and have an open market inside the building. The vacant lot in the center of town could be used as an area for food carts with a small investment or for mixed used with housing and office space in a multi-storied building made to be consistent with its neighbor so as not to disrupt the visual in the area. On the north end, the old fairground site, which they feel is a great site, could serve multi-function with an open courtyard for market place and using the buildings to provide spaces for incubator business such as the local in-home bakery or a coffee roaster. This could draw people to the north end of Kalama. All three sited provide possibilities that could provide opportunities for growing small businesses to thrive. None of these things can just happen on their own, but will involve a partnership between the City and the property and business owners that will encourage strategies to make it happen.

Ms. Gabrielle Trask continued the presentation explaining that these are all ideas of what could happen, or could be embraced for redevelopment, and what fits with the community. How do we implement? What do we all need to do to make something happen? They have developed some broad strategies with actions that can happen, including timelines, but nothing will happen overnight. There are some things that can start now and then there are long-term goals as well. The six strategies for implementation are:

1. Improve opportunity for housing and encourage diverse development

2. Establish a stronger connection to the Kalama waterfront
3. Increase property owner and business engagement in downtown revitalization
4. Establish a reenergized branding campaign for downtown Kalama
5. Enhance visibility from Interstate 5
6. Prioritize redevelopment and marginal improvements to catalyst sites

With all they have looked at ways for implementing including potential partners, potential funding and how to measure the outcomes. The plan also has possible timelines based on the efforts that each strategy would involve. Mr. Chris Blakeney explained what it could mean to the economy of the City. The improvements proposed or something similar could create over 300 jobs and a possible quarter million in tax revenues. The diversification for the community in employment opportunities right here is already good but the Port has found it hard to recruit if people it those people can't find places to live, so that is a priority.

The workshop was opened for comments and questions. There were some hard copies of the report made available to the audience and staff will have a copy posted on the website for public access. There were comments that other businesses see the amount of people that only stop for gas and that the locals need to do more. It was asked how do you motivate the property to owners to upgrade? It is understood that upgrading is costly and will people come if you do rebuild is a concern when spending substantial dollars. The consultants explained is that the study tried to look at what people will come here for and it won't be just one thing. It will take a cultural transition for the community. The plan includes some resource possibilities plus improvements will increase market value and add value for the whole community. Another question is what are the impacts to the community from the new McMenamins. This is why the connection is important and better wayfinding signs are an important factor in the plan. Business seems to follow McMenamins and with the hotel will have people looking for opportunities so signage to draw people into town is vital. Mayor Poulsen asked for a show of hands of how many property owners (about 10) and business owners (20+) and what drew them to the workshop. Most wanted to see what the City is talking about. April Hoffman has a vested interest since she is currently totally renovating the brick building at Fir and First Streets. She commented that she sees what can make community awesome with a lot of potential. The discussion focused for a bit on the need for more and options for signage, as well as the suggestion for the revision of the traffic flow downtown. Mayor Poulsen noted that the City has had this discussion before; on and off for years. The community gets excited but then the interest falls off. He hopes the property owners see the vision and will take steps to make something happen. The City will help where it can, but the property owners have to get it going. The City wants to put things into action but needs the property and business owners to step up. Everyone would like to see some progress and work to move forward, so we need to keep the conversations going. It was asked if the City has a plan for traffic revisions and parking improvements. Currently the City and Port are doing all the improvements and they are not seeing property owners stepping forward to make properties desirable to new business. So now it the time to seize the opportunity and the City will help in those efforts. If the downtown businesses are supportive of traffic

revisions then the City will move to the changes started, but it won't happen immediately. Consultant Todd Johnson noted there will need to be more meetings and possibly a group developed to focus and plan how to make things happen based on the ideas presented in the plan. It is now up to the community to engage with Council and staff to help move things forward to make things happen. Some things in the plan may work and some may not. The plan is not legislation, but a collection of ideas and proposal. As for the traffic piece, City Administrator Adam Smee explained that First Street will need some maintenance work in the next two to five years, so that would be the time to incorporate traffic revisions to reduce the budget impact. A traffic study may be required as well as discussion regarding pedestrian traffic. Discussion needs to start now and the City needs to hear from the business owners and property owners. Signage on the freeway is limited by WSDOT guidelines and the railroad so we will need to do more signs after the exits Also adding something that is visual from I5 like the plan's idea for having it spell Kalama along the sight line as you drive by could help make people remember this as a place they want to come back to. Something that would make a statement for Kalama. These are all options as presented and some may be simple to do and get ready for development which may attract more to us. It was noted by one attendee that things that have been the same for her lifetime and she thinks there are some great ideas that she would love to see happen Mayor Poulsen requested that we not sit on this, but pick some items and have future for discussions, so we can see what can accomplish in the next year. He noted his and the Council's appreciation for all that came out to show an interest in revitalizing the community.

Mayor Poulsen adjourned the workshop at 7:07 p.m. These minutes are not verbatim. A copy of the recording for this meeting is available for review upon request.

Pete Poulsen - Mayor

Coni McMaster, Clerk/Treasurer