



City of Kalama

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Date: May 7, 2018
To: Kalama Planning Commission
From: John Floyd, Consulting Planner for City of Kalama
Re: Potential Code Amendments within the C-1: Central Business District Zone

On April 19, 2018 the Planning Commission inquired into the implementation of the City of Kalama Downtown Revitalization Study. This study, adopted by Council in 2017, examined the City's central business district and identified a road map of investments and future planning work to drive redevelopment and activity in the downtown area. This road map was based on an extensive study of existing conditions, community visioning, and economic analysis.

The study concluded with a series of recommended actions the City could take in the near, mid and long-term. One near term recommendation is revision of the Kalama Zoning Ordinance to allow "maker" space and multi-family residential development in the central business district. Expanded housing opportunities and a more diverse range of permitted business activity would increase market support for local businesses, respond to a market need for rental housing in Kalama, and create more activity along First Street. It may also address a perception that Kalama is a difficult place to locate due to limited housing and retail opportunities for their employees.

Listed below are three zoning code amendments that would aid in the implementation of the study. At this time, staff wishes to brief the Planning Commission on the purpose of these changes and gather preliminary feedback and direction.

Maker Firms and Maker Spaces

Maker firms are artisan businesses that make, process, and sell specialty goods on a small scale using hand tools or small-scale light mechanical equipment. They are ideal economic targets for small cities because they are generally smaller in scale, improve the community's "brand", and can grow into more established businesses over time. Over the last few decades the internet has removed barriers for makers to locate in areas where quality of life and lower overhead costs can supersede access to markets. By offering their goods in a local storefront, they also serve the "amenity" role in the community. Examples of maker/storefront uses include:

- Breweries, wineries, and distilleries
- Bakeries, specialty food, and coffee roasting
- Apparel and Jewelry
- Art and furniture

The small scale of these businesses is also a good match for the existing building stock within the downtown area. As noted in the study, only four buildings within the study area are above 20,000 square feet in size. The remaining 42 averaged just 5,300 square feet in size. The study also found the Old Fairgrounds site to be an ideal candidate for a small scale “Makerspace” building that could serve as business incubator and a place of interest to residents and tourists.

Presently, the Central Business District Zone allows some but not all of these uses. For example, bakeries and custom arts and crafts are permitted, whereas light production facilities are not. Similarly, some uses such as food processing require a conditional use permit, which may not be appropriate for a small operation working out of a storefront location. As a result, the Planning Commission may wish to consider text amendments to Chapter 17.60 (Usage Table), and other chapters to remove regulatory barriers and signal that the City is supportive of this type of development.

Potential text amendments could result in changes such as the following:

- New and/or consolidated land use categories;
- Changes to the status of existing uses (permitted, conditional, or prohibited); and/or
- New compatibility standards for uses with the potential to generate noise or odors.

Multi-Family Housing

While not a direct job creator, residential development was found to be a critically important factor in catalyzing downtown redevelopment. An increase in the number of residents within walking distance of the downtown area would provide a larger and closer customer base for existing and future businesses, as well as creating a greater sense of activity in the area.

The study also found Kalama to be an underserved rental market, with an approximate undersupply of 100 to 120 rental units, and a significantly lower vacancy rate when compared to places like La Center, Kelso, Woodland, and Longview.

Presently, the Central Business District Zone limits residential development to mixed-use or multiple-use buildings (i.e., apartments on the upper floors and businesses on the ground floor). The Planning Commission may wish to consider text amendments to Chapter 17.60 (Usage Table) to permit a broader variety of housing types such as four-plexes and multi-family dwellings (five-family dwellings or more).

Height Limits

The study found that a majority of the existing buildings within the study area are one-story in size. Of the 46 inventoried, only 12 were two-story and only one was three-story. The study also found that the buildings along First Street have low visibility from I-5 due to their orientation towards first street, and visual separation from one of the City’s biggest amenities, the Columbia River.

To address this, the Planning Commission may wish to consider raising the existing height limit from three stories to four stories for new and remodeled buildings. Such an increase could be supportive of community goals as it would facilitate a greater density of jobs or housing within the zone, make the buildings more visible from I-5, and provide views to and from the river. Raising the existing height limits could also make the Central Business District more attractive to potential developers looking to invest in Kalama.