

NPSG Conference Workshop

Economic Development Strategies for Diversifying Small Towns

South Kelso Story: *Neighborhood Revitalization*



Presenters:

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Kelso, Washington

**Population –
12,000**

Little to no
residential growth
anticipated

Low income
community with
significant transient
community

Aged &
deteriorating
infrastructure

Resource-based
economy in
transition hit hard
by Great Recession





South Kelso Neighborhood

- Largest neighborhood, widespread poverty
- Includes:
 - Downtown
 - Residential area (5,800 pop.)
 - Elementary school
 - Two small parks
 - Three Rivers Golf Course
 - Southwest Washington Regional Airport
 - Talley Way Industrial Area
 - Amtrak Station/bus depot
 - “Donut hole” of unincorporated Cowlitz County



Sources: City of Kelso, 2014; US Census TIGER Line Data, 2010; Strategic Economics, 2014.



Organic Chronology of Study

- 2012
 - Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments received EPA “Building Blocks” technical assistance
 - 2-day workshop with officials to help local communities achieve Economic Vitality and Fiscal Health
 - “What tools are needed to make this happen?”
- 2013
 - Portland St. Univ. MURP graduates performed subarea revitalization plan
 - Delivered *South Kelso Revitalization Strategies*
 - Began implementing identified focus areas



Organic Chronology of Study

- 2014
 - EPA SGIA 3-day community workshop re: South Kelso:
 - Downtown
 - Residential neighborhood
 - Talley Way industrial corridor
 - Defined the context for each area
 - Set measurable goals
 - Identified existing assets and barriers
 - Selected implementing tools
- 2015
 - Developed and adopted CDBG program income re-use plan:
Neighborhood Revitalization & Community and Economic Revitalization (NICER) Initiative





Steps to Renewal





South Kelso Revitalization Strategies

1. Form neighborhood association
2. Develop Neighborhood Crime and Safety Plan
3. Improve parks and public spaces
4. Establish Wallace Elementary as Community School
5. Build/acquire South Kelso community center
6. Conduct pedestrian mobility and safety audit
7. Improve housing and neighborhood appearance
8. Revive Main Street Association
9. Coordinate business support services through economic gardening initiative
10. Implement downtown streetscape improvements



Results: Downtown

Goals

- More shops/restaurants
- Year-round events
- Attractive & walkable destination

Assets/Barriers

- New businesses moving downtown
- Public investment (City Hall)
- Run-down buildings & unkempt properties
- Lack of communication between groups and businesses with common goals

Tools

- Downtown website/calendar
- Improved wayfinding signage
- Façade improvements



Source: City of Kelso, 2014; US Census TIGER Line Data, 2010; Strategic Economics, 2014



New Investment at Three Rivers Mall





Results: Residential Area

Goals

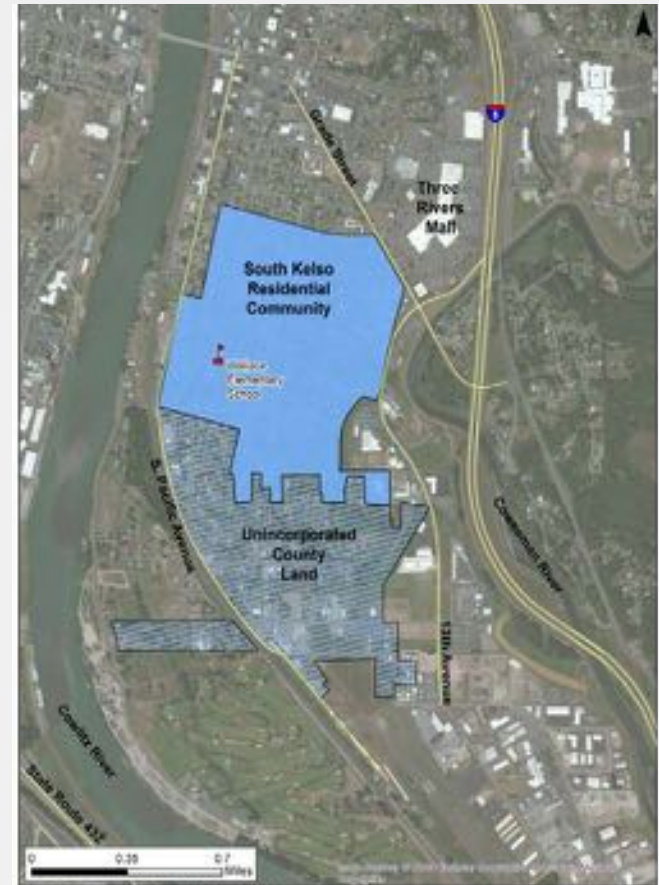
- Improve quality of existing housing stock
- Build community pride
- Enhance residents' health & well-being

Assets/Barriers

- Energetic residents
- Neighborhood association
- Untenable housing
- Lack of coordination among entities and government

Tools

- Assessment of housing conditions
- Enhanced code enforcement program
- Evaluate first-time homebuyer program with local employers



Sources: City of Kelso, 2014; US Census TIGER Line Data, 2013; Strategic Economics, 2014.



Neighborhood Park Cleanup - Americorps





Results: Talley Way Industrial Area

Goals

- Stronger relationship between Talley Way businesses and City
- Opportunities for workers to live close to jobs
- More transportation links/options

Assets/Barriers

- Diverse array of living wage jobs
- No workforce collaboration between City, neighborhood, and business community

Tools

- Regular engagement with Talley Way owners
- Tracking of business activity through private data sources
- Explore local improvement district to fund streetscape/walkable infrastructure improvements on Talley Way





Words into Actions

- South Kelso Neighborhood Association
 - Graffiti Abatement
- Downtown Landscaping improvements
 - City/Community collaboration
- Safe Routes to School project
 - Make pedestrian-oriented improvements
- Community Schools program
 - State grant administered by local non-profit





Community Action





Downtown Landscaping Project





Neighborhood Improvement & Community Economic Revitalization (NICER) Initiative

Enhanced Code Enforcement

Condemned Housing Abatement

NICER

CDBG Program
Income Re-use

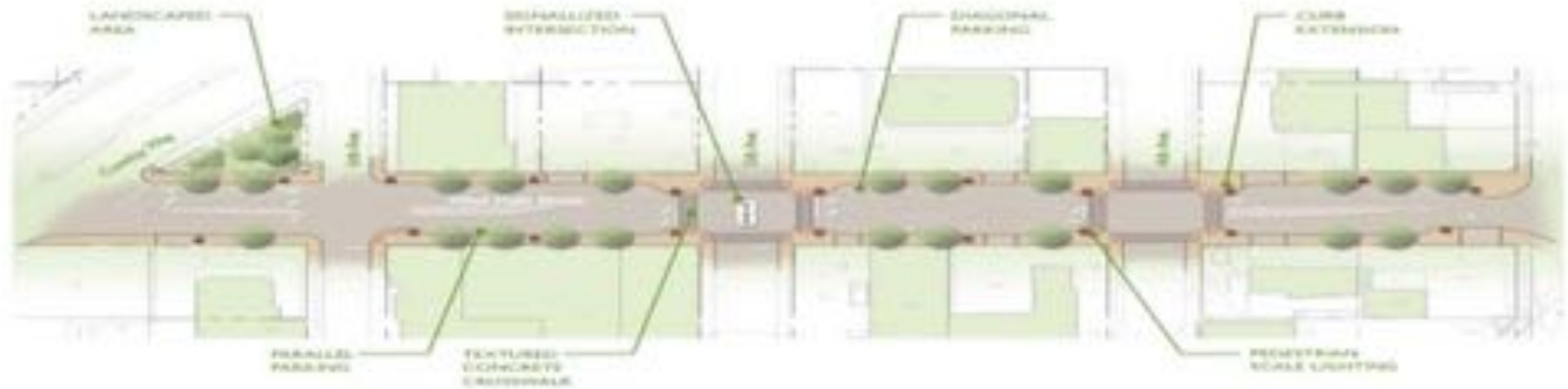
Pedestrian Oriented
Sub-Area Planning

Streetscape
Improvements

Potential Streetscape Models



West Kelso Streetscape Improvements



WEST MAIN STREETSCAPE



February, 2013



Words into Actions

- Healthy Living Collaborative
 - Community Health Workers in S. Kelso
 - Connecting residents in need to applicable resources
- S. Kelso Railroad Grade Separation
 - \$25 million BNSF mainline overpass crossing
 - Creates new housing opportunities and investment
 - Improves connectivity, noise reduction, safety
- Planning/Zoning updates
 - Adopted new Comprehensive Plan with primary theme of redevelopment & revitalization
 - Updating zoning/development code to incorporate smart growth design and strategies



Lessons Learned

- Community Renewal takes long-term commitment
 - Kelso's discussions started in 2012...
- Organic path to right strategy
 - Kelso is several planning initiatives deep with each building on the other
- Trial and error is a given
 - Each community has unique circumstances and limitations
- Community volunteers can be their own worst enemies
 - SKNA vs. Volunteer Kelso
- Embrace creativity in using and leveraging resources
 - CDBG program income, vacant city buildings, etc.

We Are Kelso!

