

Meeting Summary

St. Helens US 30 & Columbia Blvd./St. Helens St. Corridor Master Plan

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting #2

December 17, 2013

3 – 5 pm

St. Helens City Hall

1. Introductions and Meeting Objectives

- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members attending:
 - Ginny Carlson, St. Helens City Council
 - J.J. Deuhren, owns apartment building on 2nd Street in Olde Towne, St. Helens Economic Development Commission
 - Kannikar Petersen, Arts Commission
 - Don Patterson, The Chronicle
 - Al Petersen, architect, Planning Commission and Historical Landmarks Commission
 - Jim Wilson, resident at Columbia Boulevard/6th Street, business owner

- Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) members not attending:
 - Trent Dolyniuk
 - Shannon Vaerewyck

- Project Management Team (PMT) consulting team members attending:
 - Matt Bell, Kittelson & Associates
 - Chris Brehmer, Kittelson & Associates
 - Jacob Graichen, AICP, City of St. Helens
 - Matt Hastie, Angelo Planning Group
 - Tim Strand, GreenWorks
 - Naomi Zwerdling, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)

1. Project Overview and Status Report

Matt Hastie reviewed work completed to date and next steps, including the following:

- Work completed
 - Initiated project
 - Developed project Website
 - Conducted initial meetings with project Citizen Advisory Committee and local business and property owners
 - Prepared draft Project Vision, Goals and Guiding Principles
 - Conducted City Council Visioning work session and briefing
 - Prepared Technical Memoranda 1-5 to address:
 - Relevant local and state plans, policies and regulations
 - Access management
 - Transportation conditions and projections
 - Land use, zoning and urban design conditions
 - Streetscape design ideas and strategies
- Next steps
 - Conduct meetings with local business and property owners, Planning Commission and other community members (January 14)
 - Update Technical Memoranda 1-5 to reflect meetings with advisory committees, Planning Commission, local business and property owners and others
 - Begin work on Streetscape Design Concepts (February – March)

Matt also reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives, including:

- Provide an updated on work completed to date and next steps.
- Review and discuss draft Project Vision and Guiding Principles.
- Review and solicit comments on Tech Memos 1-5.
- Discuss preparations for upcoming meetings.

2. Project Goals and Objectives

Matt reviewed a set of draft project vision statements and guiding principles. He noted that they are similar to those reviewed by the CAC at their first meeting. Since that time, they have been updated to include vision statements for the US30 and Houlton area corridor segments and incorporate CAC comments. The City Council also reviewed them at a work session in November. They generally supported the draft document and had relatively few comments or suggested changes. Their primary issues of concern were related to the cost and cost-effectiveness of streetscape design projects recommended as part of this project. Similarly, the CAC did not recommend any changes to the document, other than to correct conflicting use of the terms St. Helens Road vs. St. Helens Street. St. Helens Street is the proper term.

3. Relevant Plans, Policies and Requirements

Matt reviewed highlights from Technical Memorandum #1, a summary of state and local plans, policies and regulations relevant to the corridor planning area. CAC members did not have any comments on this memo.

4. Transportation Conditions

Chris Brehmer of Kittelson and Associates provided a combined summary of Technical Memoranda #2 and #3 (Access Management and Transportation Conditions). He and Matt also noted comments provided by Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members in an earlier meeting. CAC comments included the following:

- The railroad's concerns are understandable but people crossing US 30 and the railroad tracks are headed to specific destinations, including the food bank and other locations along Milton Way. Crossing issues also are based on a history of the railroad repeatedly closing existing crossings. If pedestrians are going to cross the railroad tracks, maybe a better solution would be to provide a specific, organized location where they can cross.
- The traffic peak near the noon hour is probably partly due to the fact that kindergarten classes get out at noon.
- The US 30/Columbia Blvd crossing is very challenging for pedestrians who have a long distance to cross both at the highway and at Milton Way. Drivers also often aren't looking for pedestrians in that area or their vision is hampered by things that obstruct their line of sight. Also, the signal at that location is timed perfectly for people to hit bicyclists who are crossing there.
- The right turn lane from Columbia Blvd to 18th Street is often used by delivery trucks as a loading zone, blocking the turn lane. It seems like that turn lane is rarely used and may not be needed.
- The study area extends to Pittsburg Road but we haven't talked about US 30 crossing issues north of St. Helens Street. There also are crossing safety issues at Wyeth Street for both pedestrians and cars.

5. Land Use and Urban Design Conditions

Matt and Tim Strand of GreenWorks summarized key findings from Technical Memoranda #4 related to land use and urban design conditions and development code standards. CAC comments included the following:

- Where do you (the consultants) see opportunities for redevelopment?

- Do we know how much right-of-way is available on the west side of the highway, adjacent to the right-of-way used by the railroad? That is a very important question and will have a lot of bearing on what we can do in terms of streetscape improvements, including a possible pathway or landscaping in that area. *Note: The consulting team and ODOT staff responded that based on the available mapping data, it appears that in most places, there is approximately seven feet (7') of right-of-way between the curb and the railroad corridor/easement. More precise or detailed information may be available from ODOT right-of-way staff and the team will attempt to obtain that information.*
- The “crossing to nowhere” shown in the presentation is at Sykes Road. That is also one of the two highest accident locations in the study area.

6. Streetscape Design Ideas

Tim Strand summarized information from Technical Memoranda #5 related to a variety of streetscape design ideas that may be incorporated in streetscape design concepts to be development in subsequent stages of the project. CAC comments included the following:

- Improving conditions for pedestrians, especially in the Houlton area will be beneficial since pedestrian activity is crucial for a successful business area.
- Narrowing the roadway on Columbia Blvd. and St. Helens Street will help reduce vehicle speeds.
- I like the idea of drinking fountains. They would be especially nice to have during community festivals or activities during the warmer months. There are very few places for people to buy things to drink in town.
- Some trees could work as street trees in the area planted in the ground if they have small or shallow root systems and are tolerant to low water use and other conditions that we have. We shouldn't just write them off for the whole study area. Also, some plantings can be placed on top of the concrete if they don't require deep soil.
- Does the City have the resources available to maintain additional street trees?
- Wayfinding signs are really important. We need something besides ODOT's directional signs to draw people into the Houlton Area. It also is important to have signage to continue to draw people towards Olde Towne and let them know it is there. Informational, interpretive and directional signage for pedestrians also is really important and has done a lot in other communities to improve the economy.
- Maybe we should consider providing similar setbacks between the Houlton and Olde Towne areas to provide more consistency between those areas. Banners, planters and other amenities also could provide consistency.
- The Pendleton example in the presentation is a good example of something that makes the space more attractive and creates a gathering space. We need more areas like that here.

- The area near the post office would be a good spot for an informational kiosk. It already is a natural gathering place for residents and there seems to be enough space for something like that there.
- Are we just looking at permanent improvements? What about considering using portions of the on-street parking area for seating or other amenities like they are doing in parts of Portland and San Francisco. That would be a good low cost strategy from a public improvement perspective and would help get business owners to invest in improvements.
- A lot of kids cross the street midway down the hill between the school and 1st Street. It is a safety issue that needs to be addressed.
- Pervious paving installed at the National Armory in town was observed to have frozen over whereas adjacent standard concrete did not. Need to do some research on freezing issues with pervious paving before proposing as part of this project.
- Ornamental street/pedestrian lights were previously installed in Olde Towne and could be incorporated into the streetscape design proposals. *Jacob has asked around but is unable to find information relating to these lights, though some have been installed on River Street in the 1990s, as well as a couple in front of the courthouse.*

7. Next Steps

Matt summarized next steps again, including the following:

- Conduct meetings with local business and property owners, Planning Commission and other community members (January 14)
- Update Technical Memoranda 1-5 to reflect meetings with advisory committees, Planning Commission, local business and property owners and others
- Begin work on Streetscape Design Concepts (February – March)
- Review the results of that work with the TAC and CAC in March