

MEETING SUMMARY

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

Business and Property Owners Meeting #3

March 17, 2014

11:30 am – 1:00 pm

St. Helens City Hall

1. Project Overview and Status Report

Matt Hastie reviewed work completed to date and next steps. He noted that the project team has completed a set of draft streetscape design concepts, including three options for each corridor segment in the project area, as well as a number of intersection improvement options. The team also will review these concepts with the project Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) later on the same day. The next steps will be to review these concepts with the Planning Commission (PC) and public on April 8; summarize comments from all advisory committees, the PC and the public; and then identify a preferred streetscape design for each corridor segment for further review.

2. Streetscape Design Concepts

US 30 Corridor

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- Is the 25 feet buffer adjacent to the rail line measured from the actual rails or the gravel area next to them? *Response: We will need to clarify that.*
- Are you proposing to underground utilities along US 30? *Response: Given the cost, we are not necessarily assuming that although it can make a significant difference in the appearance of the area. It can be a condition of redevelopment but the City has not always required it.*
- Trees and overhead wires are a bad combination. If you aren't going to underground the wires you need to be careful about those conflicts.
- Could you consider relocating the utilities to the other side of the road?
- How far apart would the trees be spaced on the business side of the road? I would be concerned about potential impacts on the visibility of businesses. *Response: There are ways to reduce those impacts through tree spacing or clustering or by planting trees that have narrower forms or higher branches that don't block views of the businesses.*

- It will be a challenge to coordinate the improvements with business owners.
- Be sure that street trees don't damage sidewalks. In Scappoose, they planted trees and then had to remove them when they damaged the sidewalk.
- In some areas, there is additional state-owned right-of-way on the west side of the road located beyond the sidewalk. Who maintains that area? *Response: In Columbia County and the City of St. Helens, ODOT typically only maintains the area of the road between the curbs and does not maintain sidewalks, planting areas or areas beyond them. That is generally left up to the City or adjacent property owners. ODOT also will sometimes remove temporary signs from the area east of US30 (within the railroad ROW) but does not typically do so on the west side of the road.*
- I'm concerned that the fence could trap litter and/or be a target for vandalism. It will be important to choose the fencing material carefully.
- You need to coordinate these efforts with the current plans for a gateway feature.
- How were the locations of the medians determined? *Response: We have located them to provide adequate space for turning and deceleration at intersections and to avoid significant impacts to access. More work would need to be done to locate them more precisely and manage access to individual properties and businesses.*
- Be careful about doing too much landscaping if it requires a significant amount of maintenance. We have limited resources here for maintenance.
- Look at Linnton for median treatment ideas. Be careful that landscaping in the medians doesn't block the view of businesses.
- Safety is as important as aesthetic issues.
- I don't see a lot of demand for pedestrian movement on the east side of the highway. Is the cost of the pathway worth the benefit?
- Are you proposing new street lighting in these concepts? *Response: Option 3 includes pedestrian oriented street lighting. The intent is for it to be an amenity without it further contributing to the visual clutter in this area.*

Houlton/Olde Towne Corridor – West of 13th Street

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor segment, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- I like these concepts but I'm concerned about the impacts of trees on paving in parking lots and sidewalks. Make sure that the tree species are compatible and don't result in damage.
- There are pedestrian safety issues on 1st Street.
- Are you expecting pedestrian and bicycle use to increase in this area? Right now I'm not sure there is enough of it to justify these improvements.
- The reverse angle parking may be hard for people to get used to here.
- How will you decide who (which businesses) get the benefits of the parklets? Locating them in front of one business may benefit them to a greater degree than other nearby businesses.
- Consider a meandering sidewalk. There is a good example of one on SW 190th between 15th and 20th Streets in Vancouver.
- I think the gateway concept is beautiful but I'm not sure if you have enough room for the arch in the location where it is shown. You should look at that more closely.

- I don't necessarily think that narrowing travel lanes and adding bulbouts will improve safety. I think providing more space with fewer obstacles is a safer approach. I also think that the bulbouts can give pedestrians a false sense of security. *Response: A lot of research shows that narrowing lanes reduces vehicle speeds, which in turn improves safety. Bulbouts reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians and give drivers a visual cue that pedestrians are present, both of which improve safety for pedestrians.*
- Consider the impacts of bulbouts and narrower lanes on truck movement. It is important for them to be able to navigate the area for deliveries, etc.

Houlton/Olde Towne Corridor – East of 13th Street

Tim Strand reviewed streetscape design concepts for this corridor segment, including special opportunity area sites. Committee members provided the following comments.

- Consider moving the gateway in Olde Towne from 1st and St. Helens Street to the intersection of 2nd Street. **Basis:** First, this is where the major cluster of remaining historic homes begins (c. late 19th century to 1920 more-or-less) along this corridor. Secondly, this could help prevent motorist confusion. For example it has been noticed that many people turn around at 2nd or so because they feel lost (not knowing that the downtown is just around the corner). S. First Street between Columbia Boulevard and St. Helens Street blocks the view of the downtown and is lined with homes, which can be deceiving to the unsuspecting motorist looking for the Olde Towne commercial area. In addition to turning around before 1st Street, people also sometimes ask nearby residents for directions as it does not “feel” like they are heading the right way.
- Have you considered grade separated crossings of the railroad? *Response: Yes, we considered them in the Transportation System Plan (TSP) process and determined that they were too expensive to implement.*
- Whichever option you choose, it is really important to implement one of them. Improving the appearance of these streets is very important to improving the economic vitality of the area. There are some really good ideas here.

3. Next Steps

Matt summarized next steps again, including the following:

- Conduct meetings with local business and property owners, Planning Commission and other community members (April 8)
- Summarize the results of all meetings and public comments (late April)
- Draft a preferred set of Streetscape Design Concepts (April – May)
- Review the results of that work with the TAC, CAC, Planning Commission and other community members (June)