

# MEETING SUMMARY

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

### **Business and Property Owners Meeting #2**

**January 14, 2014**

**4:30 – 6:00 pm**

**St. Helens City Hall**

#### **1. Introductions and Project Status Report**

- Jacob Graichen, a planner with the City of St. Helens, welcomed the meeting participants. Jacob explained that this is the second of two business and property owner meetings, and how the project has developed from prior planning efforts and direction from the City Council.
- Matt Hastie, consultant team project manager with the firm Angelo Planning Group, facilitated the meeting. He introduced other members of the project consultant team attending the meeting: Shayna Rehberg, also from Angelo Planning Group; Matt Bell, from the transportation planning and engineering firm Kittelson & Associates; and Tim Strand from the landscape architecture and environmental planning firm GreenWorks.
- Matt presented project objectives, which include creating streetscape plans for the project area; the Houlton area is a primary focus area and the US 30 and Olde Towne areas are secondary focus areas in the project area. Matt described meeting objectives, including reviewing work done to date and presenting streetscape design ideas about which the project team would like meeting participant feedback.
- Matt also provided an overview of the project status including work completed to date (e.g., project initiation, first round of meetings, a series of memos, draft vision and guiding principles) and upcoming work.
- The meeting PowerPoint presentation can be found under “Project Documents” on the project website, <http://www.sthelenscorridorplans.com>.

## 2. Corridor Existing and Future Conditions

### Key policies and regulations

- Matt reviewed key State and local policies and regulations that set parameters for the corridor planning process and/or may be modified by the corridor plan.
- These policies and regulation address access to properties, street design, crossings, gateways, sidewalks, planter strips, bicycle facilities, pedestrian and bicycle connections within sites and to adjacent sites and facilities, and parking.

### Transportation and access management

- Matt Bell of Kittelson & Associates reviewed access management regulations and transportation conditions in the project area.
- Several access points in the project area do not meet access management standards. However, the corridor plan will not be recommending access strategies for specific properties; instead, recommendations related to street design will support moving in the direction of compliance with current access management standards.
- Existing transportation conditions in the project area offer opportunities to reconfigure roadway design for specific segments of the corridor and to focus improvements such as curb extensions, re-stripping of bike lanes, and bicycle boulevard treatments at key crossing locations and along key travel routes for pedestrians and bicycles.
- The transportation conditions analysis also identified roadway needs at intersections including Milton Way/Columbia Boulevard, 18<sup>th</sup> Street/Columbia Boulevard, and 13<sup>th</sup> Street/Columbia Boulevard/St. Helens Street.
- Comments/questions

- What is the crash history at Milton/Columbia Boulevard?

*Kittelson & Associates found no crash reports. Jacob has talked to St. Helens police officers who know there have been crashes but need to go back through reports for details.*

- What does the green star/"key gateway" mean? Are you proposing some kind of monumental structure there?

*This represents a general location for a gateway between the US 30 and Houlton and Olde Towne areas of the corridor. It also represents a general concept of a gateway; so far there are no specific or preconceived ideas about what the gateway would be but gateway treatments can include street design, sculpture/public art, landscaping, and building design. Some of these ideas will be generally discussed tonight.*

- Will the corridor plan prioritize improvements?

*Yes, the plan can provide general ideas of the timing and prioritization of recommended improvements.*

## Land use and urban design conditions

- Matt Hastie of Angelo Planning Group reviewed general land use conditions in the project area, including the amount of vacant land, type of land uses, and development code requirements (e.g. for building setbacks, landscaping, and parking) in the US 30, Houlton, and Olde Towne segments of the project area.
- Tim Strand of GreenWorks walked through an urban design overview of each corridor segment. The overview addressed elements such as roadway design, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and the way that these elements as well as adjacent land uses and building design affect a sense of place and identity in each corridor segment.
- Notable urban design elements in the **US 30 segment** of the corridor include a variety of commercial uses, large areas of parking, and pedestrian facilities on the west side of the highway; and limited to no pedestrian facilities and railroad right-of-way (land that the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) leases to Portland & Western (P&W) Railroad) on the east side of the highway. Above-ground utilities are sited mostly outside of the sidewalk area.
- Notable urban design elements in the **Houlton segment** of the corridor include a variety of commercial uses along Columbia Boulevard and mostly residential uses along St. Helens Street, wide right-of-way and travel lanes, utilities sited in the sidewalk area, and limited crossings and pedestrian amenities.
- Notable urban design elements in **Olde Towne segment** of the corridor include a mix of land uses with a predominance of residential uses, right-of-way that is constrained by natural features (basalt outcroppings) in some areas, and, like the Houlton segment, utilities in the sidewalk area, and limited crossings and pedestrian amenities.
- Comments/questions
  - What are the realistic opportunities for improvements along the railroad right-of-way (i.e., what have ODOT and P&W Railroad expressed willingness to discuss as part of this project)?

*There is the potential for landscaping and sidewalk or path improvements along the railroad right-of-way, with consideration for viable maintenance and safe rail operations.*

- Is there the possibility of modifying lane widths on US 30?

*A slightly narrower center turn lane may be a possibility on US 30. Otherwise, the lane widths are currently as narrow as standards allow and will not be reduced.*

- Can there be median planting/landscaping on US 30? It was thought that this would be done during the US 30 widening project, but it was not.

*Yes, median planting/ landscaping is identified as a potential option in the TSP.*

- The project team will be looking for feedback about potential reconfiguration of the street cross sections for Columbia Boulevard and St. Helens Street in the Houlton segment of the corridor, given the wide right-of-way and travel lanes there.

### **3. Streetscape Design Ideas**

- Tim Strand of GreenWorks then presented streetscape design ideas, grouped into the following categories and represented by the following examples:
  - Traffic calming features – bulb-outs/curb extensions, crosswalk enhancements, speed tables
  - Pedestrian amenities – special paving, pedestrian-scale lighting, street furnishings, street trees, planting areas
  - Civic identity and wayfinding features – gateways, signage, banners, community kiosks
  - Green street strategies – stormwater planters, vegetated swales, rain gardens, permeable paving
- Comments/questions related to traffic calming features and pedestrian amenities
  - Uniform streetscape design and lighting can really knit an area together, even if there is a diverse mixture of land uses and building design.
  - Can the lighting in Olde Towne be changed (to be more historic in style)?

*This is not in any plans currently but could be in the corridor plan and as a recommendation to City Council.*

- The Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) expressed that improving pedestrian amenities in the corridor is important (e.g., drinking fountains), as is slowing traffic.

- Comments/questions related to civic identity and wayfinding features

- Can utilities be relocated underground on Columbia Boulevard?

*That can be considered. The cost may be very high but may be able to be combined with other projects. (A meeting participant cited that a project to underground utilities at his business on US 30 cost approximately \$100,000. The site was not constrained by basalt as in other parts of the city but the cost was still very high and ultimately undergrounding wasn't a viable, economic option. However, doing so would make a big visual improvement in the area.)*

- Can the transition between Columbia Boulevard and 1<sup>st</sup> Street be improved?

*It is a confusing transition; there is not signage to Olde Towne, the road curves, the sidewalk ends, and there is a rock outcropping. Is there an opportunity area in the vacated street/gravel drive there? Can pedestrians be safely moved up to the frontage street above the outcropping? Some of the best views in town are from that frontage street.*

- The CAC recommended improving wayfinding and signage; a community kiosk in front of the post office; and temporary uses of on-street parking (e.g., café seating).

- Comments/questions related to green street strategies

- Who will maintain green street improvements?

*Currently, the parks and public works departments maintain these types of improvements, but these departments are limited in resources and what they can maintain. Future options could include maintenance by property owners (e.g., basic maintenance, keeping free of litter), the City or a business or other association.*

- The project team encouraged meeting participants to complete comment forms about the transportation, land use, urban design, and streetscape design ideas presented during the meeting, as well as a visual preference survey of specific streetscape design elements. The responses from the comment forms and visual preference survey are summarized in Attachments A and B of the Planning Commission work session/public meeting summary.

## 4. Next Steps

- Next steps in the project include:
  - Summarize feedback from meetings today in meeting summaries and use meeting feedback to revise the memos (January).

- Prepare preliminary streetscape planning concepts and options (February and March).
- Meet with the CAC, TAC, and business and property owners about the streetscape planning concepts and options (March).
- Meet with the Planning Commission and community about the streetscape planning concepts and options (April).