

## South Wenatchee Subarea Planning White Paper

### South Wenatchee History: A Glimpse at 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Development

PRELIMINARY

June 27, 2013

## INTRODUCTION

South Wenatchee is an area of the City that has seen repeated efforts to improve neighborhood and economic health over the last 20-30 years. Most recently, the City of Wenatchee City Council requested Staff to focus on South Wenatchee planning by developing a subarea plan to encourage citizen involvement in the implementation of programs and policies impacting the area. A subarea plan also identifies a community based vision, specific goals for improvements, and implementation strategies that help guide citizens, businesses, and government in making sustained improvements to the area. The current South Wenatchee planning effort began in 2012 with an intense public process entitled “I Imagine South Wenatchee” which was led by Council Member Jim Bailey, local Architect Tom Basset. A Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT), involving 6 professionals from various cities in the nation, assisted the community in developing ideas that provide the impetus for the development of a subarea plan specific to South Wenatchee. This process yielded a report to the community presenting unbiased opinions of what type of improvements could be implemented in South Wenatchee based on community feedback and the professional experience of the team. A copy of the report is available at [www.wenatcheewa.gov](http://www.wenatcheewa.gov). Click on the “What’s Happening” heading and look for “Progress in South Wenatchee”.

City staff has been gathering technical information to assist in the continued process of subarea planning. Technical information and data collection is critical to the development of a vision and a plan that can be practically implemented. A series of white papers address specific technical issues to help support the community in strategy development associated with the ultimate development of a subarea plan. The objective of this white paper is to present a general history of South Wenatchee development from the late 1880’s to present. Important aspects of the area’s economic formation and unique social fabric are central features of this narrative. Contents include:

1. Early South Wenatchee
2. Railroad Progress and South Wenatchee
3. Wenatchee and South Wenatchee Merge
4. Recent Development in South Wenatchee
5. Progress in South Wenatchee
6. References

## EARLY SOUTH WENATCHEE

“The adage that states behind every good male there is great female can be deflected to say, behind every important town is a thriving community. In relation to the town of Wenatchee, Washington, “Apple Capital of the World,” South Wenatchee is the active community that helps it to flourish.

-Odin A. Baugh - A Place Called South Wenatchee

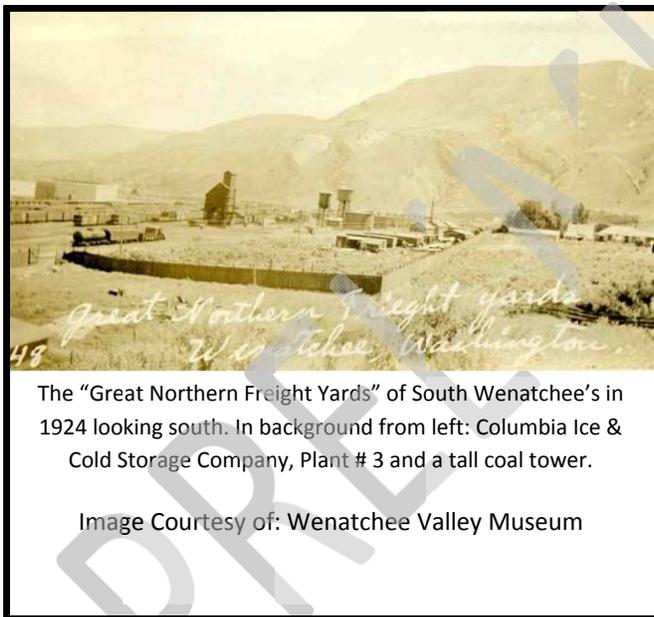
In the late 1880's, when Washington was still a territory on the great American frontier, the first seeds of a new western community were being planted. Early pioneers from across the nation ventured west to the Wenatchee Valley in eastern Washington State to cultivate the rich agricultural soil, a geologic blend of volcanic and glacial sediment. Planting fields of alfalfa, corn, wheat and a renowned assortment of apples, early settlers took advantage of Wenatchee's reliable sun and renewable water

sources to nourish their fields and feed their families. A small alcove of land, fondly known as South Wenatchee, proved particularly enticing for

homesteaders. At that time South Wenatchee's borders expanded from the southern city limits of Wenatchee to the base of the Wenatchee Heights foothills.

To the South of this small community flowed the deceptively powerful Squilchuck creek and on the East the

mighty Columbia River. Often remembered as an agricultural and industrial satellite community of its larger namesake, South Wenatchee was in fact an epicenter of early 20<sup>th</sup> century development for the Wenatchee Valley. Family farmers, railroad tycoons and small business entrepreneurs alike would choose this rich soil and beautiful landscape to grow their dreams and seek prosperity. From humble



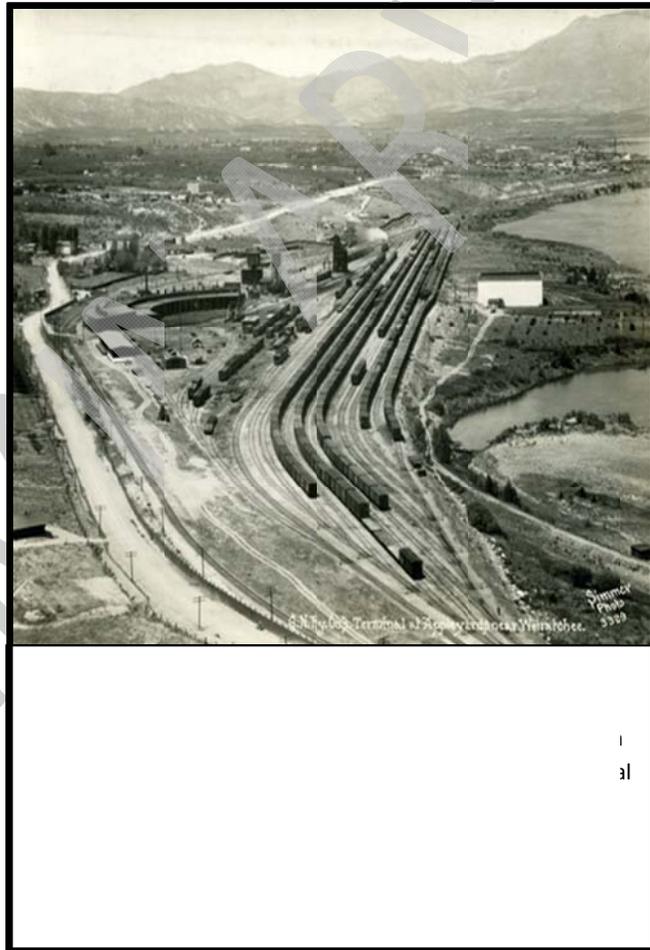
The “Great Northern Freight Yards” of South Wenatchee's in 1924 looking south. In background from left: Columbia Ice & Cold Storage Company, Plant # 3 and a tall coal tower.

Image Courtesy of: Wenatchee Valley Museum

beginnings, these early settlers would model the spirit of community and independence while making economic growth possible for the entire region.

## RAILROAD PROGRESS AND SOUTH WENATCHEE

The success of the world renowned apple industry in Wenatchee was made possible by the burgeoning railroad system and “Appleyard Terminal” built in South Wenatchee. In 1890 James J. Hill the illustrious founder of the Great Northern Railroad Company (GNR) announced plans to extend his rail system from St. Paul, Missouri to Seattle, Washington. Despite the wall of doubt constructed by his critics, Hill completed the line in a matter of three short years (Baugh, 1992).



The tracks quickly bustled up the Columbia River, reaching Wenatchee in 1892. Initially, the main the Division Point Terminal for GNR was located in Leavenworth, Washington. This ultimately relegated Wenatchee to a momentary stop on the great line headed for the Pacific. Leavenworth would go on to serve as the primary terminal for the GNR railroad for shipments between Spokane and Seattle

for 30 years (Baugh, 1992). Then in 1917 a decision to eliminate a number of terminals, and extend the distance between stops, would dramatically change the GNR strategy. Rather than routing trains through Leavenworth it was announced that additional development on the turn table yard in South Wenatchee would serve as the new division point terminal for the region.

Over the next five years the company would spend \$1 million dollars building a new 24-stall round house, turntables, machine shop, oil and water tanks and hundreds of feet of new yard tracks. In total 14 side tracks paralleled one another each stretching one mile long. These lines held hundreds of box cars that were loaded with crates of apples waiting to be shipped nationally and around the globe. In October of 1922 the terminal was completed and would act as the only division point between

Spokane and Seattle. It would aptly be called the "Appleyard".



The Wenatchee "Appleyard" a few years later, post-1924. Original date unknown. In this picture, additional houses and businesses have been constructed on the western edge of the yard. The Columbia Ice & Cold Storage and Plant # 3 are still visible.

Image Courtesy of: Wenatchee Valley Museum

The expansion of the rail yard would encourage new residents and other industries to locate in South Wenatchee. In 1922, capitalizing on this period of prosperous development, local Wenatchee contractor Henry Shultz purchased a 400 acre piece of land in the

Appleyard terminal with plans for a new town site. This was the first major land purchase in South Wenatchee. The planned site would host 324 plats with 50 acres devoted to town lots. The remaining acreage would function as agricultural land for fruit orchards. In this same year the Terminal Hotel was

also completed. This modern three story building had accommodations for 100 people and was equipped with a game room, restaurant, barbershop and confectionary (Baugh, 1992).

In total, about 500 hundred people lived in Appleyard, with most working for the railroad. The residents of Wenatchee commonly referred to the neighboring village as “Terminus” an equally suitable name for a place where so many locomotives would end or begin their journey. At one point, in 1923, the first post master Carl E Emmitt would attempt to give the town a more colorful name donning it

“Delicious” after the type of apple. The name apparently left a bitter taste in people’s mouth. In 1925, Post Master Clifford C. Daniels would change the name of the town’s post office to South Wenatchee forever altering the identity of this small community.



Terminal Hotel September 1925. This picture was taken several days after a major cloudburst flooded the Squilchuck creek causing extensive damage to buildings in the Appleyard.

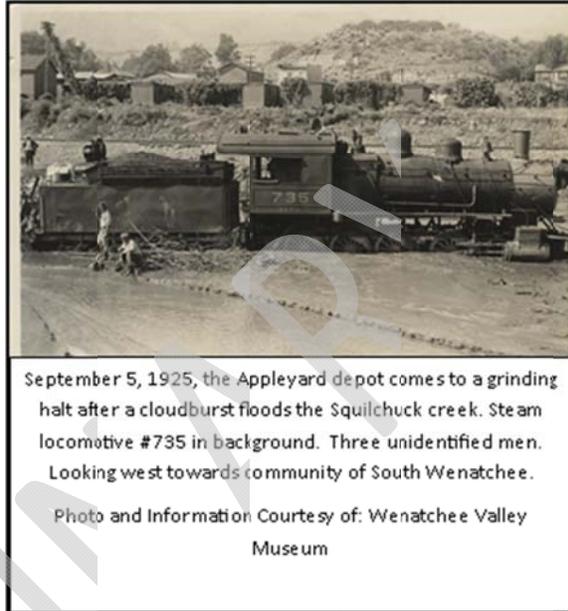
Image Courtesy of: Wenatchee Valley Museum

The first main Street of South Wenatchee ran along a county road now considered the Malaga – Alcoa highway running South East along the Columbia River. Early businesses were clustered between Squilchuck Creek Viewdale Street to the north, both of which also exist today. The majority of homes, an auto-campground and

the additional lots purchased by Shultz, fell west of the central train yard fanning out along Squilchuck flood plain.

Unbeknownst to founding residents, the choice of this location would prove a poor one. In September 1925 a flash flood thundered down Squilchuck creek carrying a wall of water reportedly 12 feet high and 100 feet wide. The event killed 14 people, and caused approximately \$500,000 dollars’

worth of property damage (Baugh, 1992). The Community of South Wenatchee however, would prove resilient. In a Wenatchee World Daily newspaper article, dated September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1925, staff reports described the community's willingness to lend a helping hand for their neighbor writing, "...but when the extent of the calamity was realized, Wenatchee awoke to its responsibilities. Physicians went to the rescue, willing hands began to deliver victims among the wreckages, ambulances were summoned, the fire department, the sheriff's office, the Howitzer Company and the service and fraternal organizations responded to assist" (Wenatchee World, 1925). The Community organized and cleanup efforts began immediately. And although repairs and reconstruction would take months, residents and volunteers would rebuild South Wenatchee determined to move forward and maintain their independence.



## WENATCHEE AND SOUTH WENATCHEE MERGE

Despite the damage and hardship caused by the Squilchuck flood, South Wenatchee continued to expand North after 1925. Despite approximately 2 miles of open land and orchards separating South Wenatchee and the "South End" of Wenatchee proper, development in both directions quickly began filling the empty space South Wenatchee however, insisted on maintaining its independence. In 1924 they seceded from the greater Wenatchee School District choosing instead to provide education under

the purview of Chelan County (Baugh, 1992). The town also purchased electricity through private industry from Wenatchee Gas and Electric Company, Washington Coast Utilities and Puget Sound Power and Light. Despite the space between them attempts to remain autonomous became increasingly difficult. South Wenatchee and Wenatchee quickly converged, further blurring the lines between the two communities. Eventually, the increase of local services and shopping opportunities boarding South Wenatchee would expand the area both physically and conceptually.



The South Wenatchee School Band, 1953

Photo and Information Courtesy of: Wenatchee Valley Museum

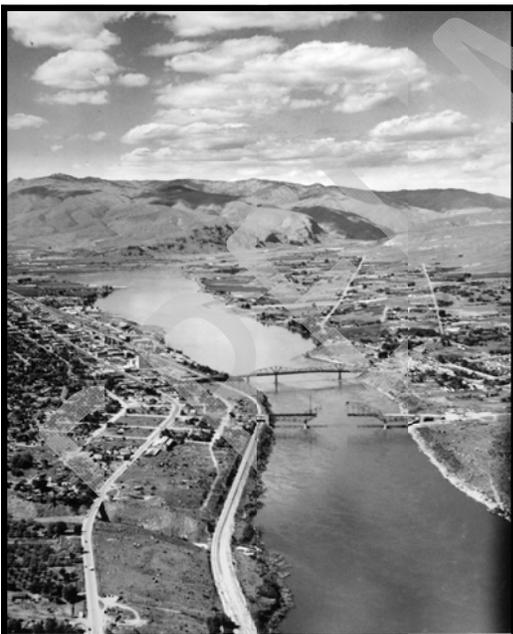
The majority of the area that is considered “South Wenatchee” today, between Kittitas Street and Crawford and West to Okanogan Street technically fell within Wenatchee City limits and not the community named Appleyard – a distinction that is often diminished in available historical reports. Commonly referred to as the “South End”, this poor working class neighborhood housed much of the labor force for Appleyard terminal. Much of the growth and early prosperity that would come to define South Wenatchee occurred here.

Personal accounts from longtime and former residents of this area convey stories of a safe and friendly neighborhood, characterized by diverse community activity and plenty of corner shops. In an article written in 2011 for the Wenatchee World Newspaper, Author, Rick Steigmeyer paints a picture of the Early South End with an alternative look and feel. He describes neighborhoods peppered with corner markets, like the Mission Street Grocer store owned by the Grubb family and Joes Meats and Grocery

occupying the corner of Ferry and Methow. These markets provided fresh fruits and vegetables and an assortment of local meats. According to residents interviewed by Steigmeyer, these shops were not only supported the economy, but served as gathering spaces for conversations amongst neighbors and a source of information about local happenings. Open space in the form of several neighborhood parks also brought people together. Mission Park once stood where the Department of Social and Human Services building sits now, hosting nightly softball and baseball games during the summer and sledding in the winter. Linked to the growth of the Appleyard terminal the South End of Wenatchee came into full bloom between 1918 and 1950. The Federal Building and Post Office, Police Station, Fire Station and a number of schools were all constructed the growing South End region. Additionally, Deaconess Hospital -the valley's largest medical facility - would expand in 1948 adding a 100-bed nursing wing to

the existing building. Expansion did have its perks as residents also enjoyed a healthy collection of small family owned retail and service businesses.

According to [A Place Called South Wenatchee](#) by Odin A. Baugh, South Wenatchee laid claim to several small grocery stores, a gas station, the Shrock-Nelson meat-packing plant, two cafes, two hotels, a barber and shoe repair shop. Although the national grocer chain Safeway, would open the largest supermarket in in the area in 1955, to this day South Wenatchee business district is predominantly characterized by small locally owned businesses.



South Wenatchee prior to the completion the Columbia River Bridge. Later named after Senator George Sellar, the bridge would be completed in 1950.

Photo Courtesy of: Wenatchee Valley Museum

The link forged between South Wenatchee and Wenatchee would only grow stronger following the Second World War. In 1948, the City of Wenatchee extended their water systems to South Wenatchee. Consolidation continued in 1953 when the South Wenatchee school district merged with Wenatchee. Possibly a more dramatic display of losing its former identity was the fire of 1951 that destroyed the original South Wenatchee post office/grocery store. Although the post office would be rebuilt that same year, it would only champion the South Wenatchee identity for 6 more years before becoming a branch of the Wenatchee Post Office. Before long even the outpost would be dissolved and mail routed directly through the Wenatchee postal center (Baugh, 1992).

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH WENATCHEE

During the later-half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century South Wenatchee would continue to experience new growth and challenges. More than 244 acres of land in South Wenatchee was annexed into the Wenatchee City Limits between 1985 and 2011 with sewer and water lines expanded to these areas as well. Furthermore, much of the commercial and industrial businesses are now primarily centralized near the Columbia River as zoning boundaries have consolidated. Additionally, between 1990 and 2010 the population of South Wenatchee grew 75.6% from 4,568 to 8,022 residents (Census 2010 & 1990, SF-1). In this same period of time, many young Hispanic and Latino families, emigrating primarily from Mexico, moved to South Wenatchee seeking employment in the areas prosperous agricultural industry (Census, 2000 SF – 1). According to U.S. census information from 1990 the Hispanic population comprised 19.5% of the total population. By 2010 this number had tripled in size, with residents of Latino/Hispanic origin composing more than 59.6% of the total South Wenatchee Population (Census 2010 & Census 1990, SF-1). Prior to this period 80.8% of South Wenatchee residents self-identified as non-Hispanic white , with

other racial classifications composing less than 8% of the population. This growing population of Latino/Hispanic residents, not unlike earlier generations of European immigrants, represents a community steeped in a proud tradition of diversity, entrepreneurship and independence.

## SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Today many households in South Wenatchee struggle to keep up with the median income of the region. The average household income is \$31,612 in South Wenatchee, approximately \$13,268 dollars less than the City of Wenatchee as a whole. What's more, 54% of all households live in poverty or make less than 80% of Wenatchee's median income. Within this group, 42% of households make less than \$25,000 dollars a year categorizing much of South Wenatchee as very low income. Poverty levels are highly concentrated among the Hispanic/Latino community in particular.

Increased criminal activity has also accompanied the growth in poverty and population. A recent report conducted by the City of Wenatchee in coordination with the Wenatchee Police Department focusing on crime in South Wenatchee summarized the issue the following way, "South Wenatchee has concentrated criminal activity stemming from poverty, lack of infrastructure, and cultural tensions resulting in continued neighborhood degradation... Like in many small cities, regional concentration of poverty and crime become a significant burden on municipal resources. Moreover, the city is at risk of decline through negative perception and increasing demand for public safety resources" (Byrne 2012).

The built environment of South Wenatchee also poses certain obstacles. A considerable portion of the housing stock is aging with approximately 67% of all homes built before 1940. Furthermore, inefficient densities in lot configuration and general lack of basic amenities such as street lighting, sidewalks, and parks diminish the quality of life for residents (Byrne 2012).

Furthermore, in 2012 376 code-violation letters were sent out by the code enforcement department. The majority of violations concerned overgrown vegetation, junk vehicles and garbage and debris. A recent community revitalization program in South Wenatchee known as the “I Imagine Project” coordinated by the City of Wenatchee and the American Institute of Architects indicated that issues of crime, building deterioration and infrastructure deficiencies negatively effects the identity and perception of the South Wenatchee Community (SDAT, 2013).

## PROGRESS IN SOUTH WENATCHEE

The systemic natures of today’s socio-economic barriers are not readily surmounted. Yet, as history has shown, the community of South Wenatchee has proven resilient in the face of adversity. Residents, community leaders and the City of Wenatchee are currently working together to address these issues with holistic and information driven solutions. If South Wenatchee hopes to prosper, as it did in eras past, a new vision for South Wenatchee that honors its cultural diversity, economic resourcefulness and environmental vitality must be constructed. For more information about current efforts to unit, empower and improve the South Wenatchee Community please visit the *Progress in South Wenatchee* website at: <http://www.wenatcheewa.gov/index.aspx?page=1221>

## REFERENCES

## References

Baugh, O. (1992). *A Place Called South Wenatchee*. Spokane, Washington: Aurthur H. Clark Company.

Bureau, U. C. (2013, February). *American Fact Finder*. Retrieved June 2013, from U.S. Census Bureau:  
<http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

Felden, W. (2012). *Sustainable Design Assessment Team - A Guide to the American Institute of Architects SDAT Program*. Retrieved June 17, 2013, from American Institute of Architects:  
<http://www.aia.org/aiaucmp/groups/aia/documents/pdf/aiab087502.pdf>

Steigmeyer, R. (2011, July 23). *Local News*. Retrieved June 7, 2013, from Wenatchee World.

World, W. (1909). Railroad Will Build Terminus Here. *Wenatchee World*.