

## South Wenatchee Subarea Planning White Paper

### Planning and Research History

June 27, 2013

## INTRODUCTION

### 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 intent of this white paper is to assign credit to the previous research and data collection that has informed our understanding of the South Wenatchee neighborhood. Hopefully this information will provide development professionals with potential insight about the nature of systemic issues that have long affected this community. In particular this report will:

1. Provide general historical overview of community planning activities in South Wenatchee
2. Examine the contents and approaches of South Wenatchee research reports conducted between 1999 and 2012. Reports Covered include:
  - a. South Wenatchee Housing Analysis and Community Needs
  - b. South Wenatchee Community Profile
  - c. Community Based Income Survey, South Wenatchee
  - d. Wenatchee Community Center, Survey of Household and Needs Assessment
  - e. AIA/SDAT Report
3. Present a brief overview of the current scope of the South Wenatchee subarea plan and approaches for neighborhood improvement.

## OVERVIEW OF PLANNING HISTORY

Beginning in 1998 the city of Wenatchee began to examining how communities were actively encouraging civic engagement and participation in the planning process for Wenatchee neighborhoods. This research involved collecting elements of successful neighborhood planning programs and surveying groups of citizens and city employees to determine methods that would encourage citizens to work together in neighborhood groups (Community Profile, 2000). These efforts culminated in a list of resources and services that were made publicly available to assist stakeholders throughout Wenatchee to take an active role in neighborhood planning and improvements (Community Profile, 2000). South Wenatchee was the first neighborhood in the city to become the focus of these activities.

During this period of time the City of Wenatchee created policy papers known as “Neighborhood Community Development Plans”. These reports, the product of extensive research and community involvement, were designed to enhance services and infrastructure within neighborhoods. Focus areas included streets, sidewalks, community facilities, utilities, housing, land use, public safety and parks.

The first step in developing these plans was to determine areas of geographic priority that would receive attention for community development activities. The Planning Commission was placed in charge of dividing the city into planning neighborhoods. Initially, 7 districts were identified there boundaries were developed based on important community assets (schools, parks, commercial centers etc.) uniting each neighborhood. South Wenatchee became the first recipient of these development efforts and was identified based on a number of social, economic and infrastructure concerns emerging within the community. According to the *South Wenatchee Community Profile, December 1999*, the neighborhood was targeted after the following issues were identified:

- South Wenatchee was one of the oldest neighborhoods in the city and was suffering from deterioration in the housing stock.
- According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 62% of the households were low to moderate – income families.
- There was a large concentration of rental housing within the neighborhood, disproportionate to the rest of the city.
- Police activity was much higher in the neighborhood compared to the city. In particular, the number of gang and property related crimes had become a problem

- Neighborhood Residents were concerned about pedestrian safety. Local traffic and limited sidewalk infrastructure made travel to and from schools and commercial areas dangerous.

### Current Planning Efforts

In an effort to formalize and build upon the work that has been done in the past the City of Wenatchee is working towards producing a similar data driven, long-range planning document known as Subarea Plans. These documents are designed to foster improvements to services and infrastructure while providing information and analysis about important zoning changes and economic development strategies. Unlike the Neighborhood Community Development Plans of the past, Subarea Plans have a defined planning authority. They allow the City of Wenatchee to establish long term vision for specific neighborhoods and districts and providing the basis for acquiring grant-based funding. Subarea plans are adopted by City Council and employed in conjunction with the master Housing and Community Development Consolidated Plan for the City of Wenatchee. The Consolidated Plan is designed to effectively and efficiently allocate Community Development Block Grant funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) towards eligible HUD activities.

## EARLY NEIGHBORHOOD RESEARCH AND FINDINGS

### *South Wenatchee Housing Analysis & Neighborhood Needs Assessment, 1999*

Based on initial information gathered by the Planning Commission and the City of Wenatchee, a number of in depth research activities were planned to further investigate the conditions of South Wenatchee. The first report was prepared for the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (now the Washington State Department of Commerce). The City of Wenatchee hired CC Consulting out of Malaga, WA to prepare the contents of the report. As the title suggests, the *South Wenatchee Housing Analysis & neighborhood Needs Assessment, 1999* focused on gathering information about housing conditions and neighborhood challenges facing South Wenatchee residents. In addition to a detailed review of quantitative demographic data from the 1990 U.S. Census, Washington Department of Revenue and the Washington State office of Financial Management an extensive record of qualitative data from interviews with local contacts and community members was also compiled.

A number of issues affecting South Wenatchee residents were identified. The following is a list of housing issues and market barriers that were illuminated at the time the report was published:

1. **Age and Condition of Housing Stock.** “A large portion of the existing housing stock in South Wenatchee is more than 50 years old and in need of renovation to bring up to current habitability standards”.
2. **High Concentration of Rental Housing.** “South Wenatchee maintains a higher concentration of rental housing units than other areas of the city or county”.
3. **Very-Low, Low and Moderate Income Households.** “The lowest income household located in the South Wenatchee neighborhood is being hurt by a lack of access to affordable housing costs.”
4. **Cultural Awareness of Ethnic Issues.** “South Wenatchee contains some of the highest concentrations of Hispanic or Spanish-speaking households.”
5. **Price of Housing:** “The average price of housing has increased throughout the greater Wenatchee area. This trend has increased the hardship for homeownership opportunities for the limited – and low-income sectors of the population”.
6. **Overall Housing Barriers.** “The City of Wenatchee is limited in the amount of financial assistance it can provide to housing activities. Developing new housing units and improving existing units in the South Wenatchee Area create a challenge for residents.”

- (*South Wenatchee Housing Analysis and Neighborhood Needs Assessment, 1999*)

Analysis of these factors included a number of strategies and resource guides to initiate positive change and progress in South Wenatchee. First, a list of housing and program resources was developed to address housing concerns identified in the community. In total 19 funding sources spread over and 13 different agencies including government, private-sector and financial institutions were recommended.

Citizen participation conducting as an element of the assessment also uncovered other specific community-based needs. It, was determined the greater Wenatchee area lacked a Community Center creating, “a void for community groups, public citizen meetings, youth groups, and local groups of all ages”. Based on this observation an additional table of competitive grants and funding sources, similar to those generated for housing issues, was assembled.

With a new level of insight and a record of successful citizen participation the City of Wenatchee continued the process of creating a neighborhood community development plan for South Wenatchee. In turn a second more inclusive research initiative began to further profile South Wenatchee.

### *South Wenatchee Community Profile, 2000*

In March of 2000, the City of Wenatchee Department of Community Development (now the Department of Community and Economic Development) produced a comprehensive profile of the South Wenatchee Neighborhood. Intended as a broad-based overview, the report consolidated a variety of quantitative data (a bulk of which had been gathered during the housing and community neighborhood needs project three months earlier) about South Wenatchee and examined the practical reality of this information.

Known as the *South Wenatchee Community Profile* the intent of this document was to highlight the new lines of communication that had been opened over the last 2 years with south end residents. It also served as a complete overview of the conditions and characteristics of the neighborhood. Throughout the analysis a number of Issues and Opportunities were presented that had been reported through the public involvement process. It was the hope of the City that a series of action plans might be developed from this research.

Unlike the *South Wenatchee Housing and Neighborhood Needs Assessment*, the community profile was intended for public and professional use. The report provided technical information, including neighborhood and demographic statistics in addition to a review of local history and a windshield survey of notable historic properties. This document also provided a list of neighborhood Services which provided individuals with starting points for improvement activities. In total, the *South Wenatchee Community Profile* was the first resource of its kind that empowered residents with the necessary knowledge to improve their community.

### *Community - Based Income Survey of South Wenatchee, 2000*

In the 6 months following the publication of the *South Wenatchee Community Profile*, City of Wenatchee in coordination again with CC Consulting preformed and in depth income study in the South Wenatchee Neighborhood. Teams of community volunteers were trained to conduct a survey of 424 households located throughout South Wenatchee. Completed surveys were then tabulated by census block groups to allow for comparative analysis.

When the report was published in September of 2000, City officials had learned that 70.3% of South Wenatchee households surveyed had incomes below the moderate to low-income level.

State definition of moderate-income level at the time was defined by any household with an income of 80% or less of the county's median household income. Low income was defined as any household with an income level that was 50% or less of the County's median household income (Community-Based Income Survey, 2000). The City also determined that overall 43.4% of the households surveyed were earning less than half of the County's median income.

Additionally, the study also examined community improvement preferences of the low and moderate-income families surveyed. Based on participant responses nearly 39% of households indicated that their number one facility and building preference pertained to the construction of a new community center for the neighborhood. This was followed by 30% appeal for housing improvements and a 29% request for street and sidewalk improvements. Armed with this knowledge it was clear that residents and community groups living and working within South Wenatchee needed a facility to accommodate neighborhood groups and resident activities. In 2006 the City of Wenatchee and a host of community partners completed construction on the Wenatchee Community Center. Located at 504 S. Chelan Avenue the center was established to unite the community by embracing cultures, families and individuals through collaboration, assistance and support.

#### *Wenatchee Community Center Survey, 2009*

The Wenatchee Community Center Board (the WCC Board) determined it would be beneficial for their Board to have specific data on households located in the neighborhoods surrounding the Community Center. As in 1999 and 2000, the WCC Board assigned a contract to CC Consulting to conduct a survey of households located in areas commonly known as the South End. This encompassed neighborhoods which had been identified in earlier reports. The first priority target region included Okanogan to Chelan streets from west to east and from Ferry to Kittitas streets from south to north. The second priority target region included neighborhoods from Okanogan to Mission streets from west to east and from Stevens to Kittitas streets from south to north. The survey was organized utilizing volunteer surveyors from WCC Board members, Wenatchee High School, Wenatchee Valley College, the City of Wenatchee, Community Action Council, Literacy Council, and several other interested community members.

On November 8, 2008, 24 community members gathered at WCC Veteran's Hall from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. The volunteers were split up into teams and were assigned a targeted neighborhood. Of the 511 households in the first and second priority households, 408 were targeted. Of those, 29 percent or 120 households completed the survey. The WCC Board is trying to determine a "targeted assessment" of housing needs, interest, and appeal as well as WCC program offerings, or new program development opportunities. The information in the report was intended to enhance the WCC and its programs, with the objective of increasing economic vitality, civic engagement and cultural diversity of the South End neighborhoods.

The findings of the 2009 WCC updated demographic data from the South Wenatchee Community Profile but lacked the detailed analysis of local income information that was established in the September 2000 income survey. Unlike previous reports however, the WCC survey provided greater contextual information about the Wenatchee market area with a review of both citywide and regional data. High level analysis of population and housing statistics from Chelan County were also included in this report. Findings from the WCC Community Survey were presented to the WCC board for review early in 2009. The results helped with the improvement of services and programs offered at the facility.

### *American Institute of Architects Sustainable Design Assessment Team Report, 2012*

Efforts to strengthen solutions and improvements in South Wenatchee continued in 2012 when the City of Wenatchee was awarded a technical assistance grant from the American Institute of Architects, Sustainable Design Assessment Team (AIA/SDAT). This grant provides residents and stakeholders the opportunity to work with a multidisciplinary team of nationally recognized professionals to envision positive change within their community. According to the AIA the Sustainable Design Assessment programs are “based on the principles of interdisciplinary solutions, objectivity and public participation” (AIA, 2012). This effort was organized locally by a steering committee led by Tom Bassett of Forte Architecture and Councilman Jim Bailey.

Between October 14-17, 2012 the SDAT team visited South Wenatchee to engage residents and stakeholders to determine the extent of social, economic, political and physical issues that affect the community. In doing so they encouraged cooperation across a wide range of community partners and helped to establish a new level of citizen participation. Over their three day intensive visit the SDAT team made multiple walking tours of South Wenatchee assessing both design needs and developing an objective sense of the neighborhood “feel”. Additionally they worked with a range of citizen participants in small work-groups to uncover challenges and opportunities that were important to the community.

The overarching goal of this SDAT process was to develop a vision for sustainability for the South Wenatchee neighborhood that incorporates the following needs:

- 1) In light of the highway interchange project, provide recommendations for developing connections – physical, economic, social and cultural – to tie the neighborhood together, while acknowledging the importance of this regional transportation improvement.
- 2) Provide a framework for upgrading the residential and commercial areas of south Wenatchee that honors the needs of residents, business owners, property owners and cultural interests and provides a unique sense of place.
- 3) Provide recommendations for resources within the neighborhood that could be leveraged to



assist with neighborhood revitalization i.e. programs at the community center, community based improvement efforts, projects for youth engagement and empowerment, entrepreneurial efforts that could reinvigorate the commercial area, and strategies for building leadership within the neighborhood.

4) Provide guidance for the sustainable investment of CDBG and homeless funds to address the needs of low income/at risk populations that reside in the neighborhood.

5) Provide goal and policy guidance to the city for the development of a sub area plan as a part of the update of the overall comprehensive plan of the city and associated capital improvement programs.

Since the completion of the 2012 AIA/SDAT program the City of Wenatchee has been working to maintain the momentum of public engagement. After the AIA published their final report for South Wenatchee, the City of Wenatchee Department of Community and Economic Development has conducted several meetings to review the findings and present the information to the community. This process has generated several important recommendations for future improvement projects and civic engagement activities in South Wenatchee. Chief among these however, is the communities desire to develop a formal structure for a grassroots community-based organization. This organization would work in coordination with the City of Wenatchee to identify local stakeholders, promote civic engagement and increase community ownership of sustainable development efforts in South Wenatchee.

### *GMA Grant and Current Subarea Planning*

Utilizing more than 10 years of recorded public input and extensive community research the City of Wenatchee has been actively preparing to develop a subarea plan for South Wenatchee. Several recent grant funded activities have greatly assisted in this process. As previously identified, the AIA/SDAT grant provided the City of Wenatchee, community leaders and stakeholders with a fresh perspective on old challenges and new opportunities existing in South Wenatchee.

A grant from the Dept. of Commerce under the GMA act has also been vitally important in supporting extensive economic, transportation and community development research in South Wenatchee. With funds received from the GMA grant, the City has been formulated a number of descriptive reports in the following areas:

1. Public Engagement
2. Transportation Analysis
3. Economic Assessment including a business survey and commerce analysis
4. Historical Overview

5. Public Infrastructure Inventory
6. Demographic summary
7. Compilation of past planning efforts

A series of goals and objectives for each of these elements will be developed to address deficiencies and challenges. Subsequent strategies to accomplish goals and objectives will require continued public input and community cooperation to determine the most effective and efficient solutions. The Subarea plan will assist in the future allocation of grant funding and additional resources towards these areas.

## SUMMARY OF INSIGHTS

Rather than preparing a conclusion to the data and information collected in this white paper, the objective may be better served by preparing a list of significant insights to help place the data in context. The reader is invited to share their insights as differing perspectives will provide various interpretations to the data. These insights about the data contained within all of the whitepapers are intended to be the basis for discussion and strategy development for the South Wenatchee subarea plan.

1. Considerable efforts have been put forth over the years to help improve the social and economic environment in South Wenatchee. The information today is better than in the past, however, many of the same themes surface in terms of the existing conditions in South Wenatchee.
2. The results of these studies need to be synthesized into meaningful and implementable strategies. Formalizing these strategies through the adoption of a subarea plan can provide a mechanism for sustained improvements in South Wenatchee.
3. These documents will be made available for public use via the City of Wenatchee website at [www.wenatcheewa.gov](http://www.wenatcheewa.gov). Click on the “What’s Happening” heading and look for “Progress in South Wenatchee”

## REFERENCES

1. American Institute of Architects. (2012). *Wenatchee SDAT Report*. American Institute of Architects .
2. City of Wenatchee. (1999). *South Wenatchee Housing Analysis & Neighborhood Needs Assessment*. Wenatchee: City of Wenatchee.
3. City of Wenatchee. (2000). *Community-Based Income Survey*. Wenatchee: City of Wenatchee - Department of Community Development.
4. City of Wenatchee. (2000). *South Wenatchee Community Profile*. Wenatchee: City of Wenatchee.

PRELIMINARY