

Kuna Downtown Revitalization Stakeholder Assessment



September 2015

Executive Summary

The City of Kuna is developing a Downtown Revitalization Plan to identify strategies and projects that will help implement the community's vision for downtown. As a part of this plan, the city would also like to quickly identify a project that will qualify for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). In order to determine a broad sense of what the community's "vision" for downtown is, the city first held a visioning workshop in October 2014 to gain a sense of the types of high-level features and improvements community members would like to see.

To build off the efforts of this workshop and develop a more detailed understanding of what the community's specific goals, priorities and concerns are, The Langdon Group and J-U-B Engineers conducted a stakeholder assessment in September 2015. Fourteen (14) community members representing a diverse set of interests and organizations were interviewed. During these interviews, stakeholders were asked to share their ideas on what projects they would like to see included in the plan, what projects they think would be appropriate for the CDBG, and what concerns or questions they had about the revitalization plan in general. The majority of these interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to one hour.

There was a significant number of overlapping or similar ideas and suggestions shared throughout the interviews. While most of the interviewees were not able to provide overly-detailed suggestions, many expressed a *strong desire for an improved, cohesive image for the downtown*. Most stated that the *façade of the buildings needed to be cleaned up* while still *preserving the historic character* of the downtown. Others suggested *art* be incorporated into the downtown to enhance this cohesive image, such as *murals or even a clock tower*.

The need for *improved parking* was a continuous concern heard throughout the interviews. Slower foot traffic downtown and a difficulty in attracting new



business were both attributed to the lack of parking near store fronts. Another primary concern voiced by almost every stakeholder was the inconsistent, *narrow sidewalks*. Stakeholders expressed frustration with the gaps in the sidewalk in that they prohibit pedestrians from being able to access certain parts of downtown without walking on the roads. Connected, wider sidewalks are necessary for pedestrian and bicyclist access and safety. Improved lighting, benches and trash cans were also all very common suggestions.

Many stakeholders were concerned about the ability to *attract new and diverse businesses to the downtown*, and questioned what it would take to convince current property owners to invest in renovations and beautification efforts. Enrique's restaurant was unanimously considered the one major draw to downtown, often called the "anchor", and was used as an example of one of the few local business owners who were investing in improvements.

In sum, community members see a very real need for a downtown revitalization plan and are excited to hear that the city is taking steps toward creating and implementing tangible projects. Both small and large opportunities for improving the look and feel of the downtown were identified, with the goal that these efforts will attract both new businesses as well as increased visitation.

Stakeholders Interviewed

1. Richard Cardoza, Kuna City Council
2. Pat Jones, Kuna City Council
3. Sheri Russell, Kuna Business Owner / Downtown Property Owner
4. Sharon Fisher, Gem Community Development
5. Anne Hankins, Kuna Library
6. Ryan Head, Ada County Highway District (ACHD)
7. Wendy Howell, Kuna Planning and Zoning
8. Charlie Long, Paul's Market
9. Ron Morgan, True Value Hardware
10. Sue Oswald, US Bank
11. Ana and Enrique Paz, Enrique's Restaurant
12. Mike Smith, SPI Transportation
13. Tam Svedin, Kuna Library
14. Patrons of the Red Eye Bar

Question No. 1

Stakeholders were asked *what types of projects* they would like to see the city support, as well as where they thought the city should focus its initial efforts for the *CDBG grant* in November. Responses varied between identification of high-level needs and specific project-level ideas.

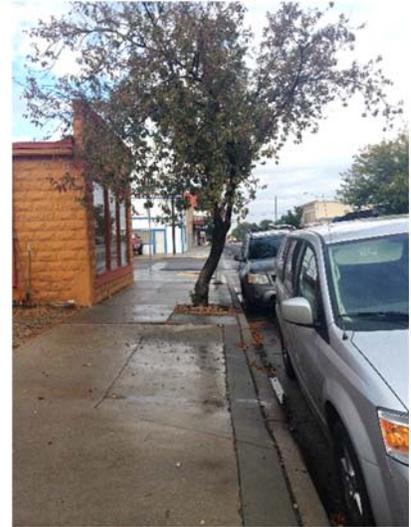
High-Level Needs and Ideas

- Improved safety for pedestrians and bicyclists
- A cohesive theme throughout downtown
- A diversity of shops and attractions to draw foot traffic to the downtown
- Preserve the historic look and feel of the buildings
- Options for youth recreation, such as an arcade or ice cream shop
- Desire to attract a coffee shop in the downtown core
- Desire to attract professional offices
- Desire to attract quaint shops and maybe an art studio
- Do something with the old 4th Street Gym property – find ways for better maintenance and accommodating daytime and nighttime activities. It is a good space for parking.
- A more centrally located City Hall
- Tear down chain link fences and clean-up/utilize the empty lots
- Greenery should be added to make the downtown feel more appealing
- Need to prohibit trucks from driving downtown – create a truck route
- Beautification efforts all around
- Plan's boundary line needs to be expanded to Kay Street, which will add numerous additional businesses
- Create a new and snazzy "theme" rather than continuing the "Birds of Prey" theme; but please no sagebrush
- Start at Main Street from Avenue D to Avenue C (most elaborate improvements) and work to the east along Main (ease into less-elaborate improvements) as funds are available. With the investments happening around the Sandstone Plaza, the initial project could continue from west to east
- Ambiance atmosphere
- Do one block at a time – get it the way we want it from the beginning versus a longer project that doesn't reflect what the community wants
- Carry new Main Street theme throughout town – design standards for Avalon, side streets and Linder as projects are completed and development comes in
- Sign standards should be looked at – don't want tacky signs/billboard-type signs in the downtown core
- There's some private parking areas along Main and 2nd (between Ave D and Ave C) that the city could lease for public parking
- Keep parking areas spread throughout downtown to keep walking distances shorter
- With improvements surrounding the Senior Center, there could be more use of the facility
- Need to understand the problem we are trying to solve
- Want to spend grant money wisely, as well as local city funds
- Evaluate an incentive program to get businesses to improve their store frontages and recruit more businesses
- City code barriers – might be an issue as businesses are recruited to downtown buildings

- Wants to make sure decisions are collaborative about (i.e. recommendations from the committee w/city council approval) how grant money is used on this project and moving forward as future phases of downtown improvements are implemented. The reason is the more input, the better the results.
- Money budgeted for the greenbelt this year – possible to wait and put it towards the DT project first?

Project Ideas

- Main Street – 1st priority
- 2nd Street should also be a priority
- Improved, connected sidewalks
- Bike lanes
- Bike racks
- Improved parking/parking lots
- Create diagonal parking?
- Extend the greenbelt
- Improve lighting by adding lampposts
- Large flower pots along Main Street
- Decorative lamp posts with hanging flower pots
- Plant trees
- Get rid of old trees blocking buildings
- Traffic signal to protect pedestrian crossings and alleviate backed-up traffic
- Way-finding system that highlights the different local attractions and activities to do around Kuna
- Downtown information center
- Metal trash cans
- A pavilion or gazebo in the park for concerts
- Sidewalk seating
- Rooftop seating
- Improve intersection at Linder and Main
- An overpass over the railroad tracks
- A community center for kids to spend time at after school
- Utilize a revolving loan program for façade improvements, similar to Nampa’s
- A movie theater
- Increased handicap-accessible parking
- Put parking lot in by old 4th Street Gym
- Turn 4th Street and Main Street into one-way streets
- Create a “boulevard look” with trees and wider sidewalks
- Put artwork, such as a clock, in the middle of the roundabouts
- Partner with the boy scouts or the FFA welding class to install art
- Create a walking trail similar to the one in Meridian
- Hang a “Welcome to Kuna” sign



- Raise up the rock “Welcome to Kuna” sign along Avalon (south side of the tracks). It is too low to see/doesn’t stand out
- Summer pool
- “Park and Ride” lots
- Benches
- Murals
- Keep on-street parking wherever possible, particularly along Main Street from Ave C to Avenue B
- Some on-street parking could be reduced along Main Street from Ave C to Ave D to accommodate bulb-outs and maybe a center island w/low-growing flowers, plants, and lighting
- Sandstone-colored stamped concrete/pavers instead of red
- Sidewalk along Avenue C from greenbelt to 2nd Street to Main – connect recreation to downtown
- Is it possible for the downtown lighting and landscaping theme to be incorporated into the Main St / Linder roundabout project?
- Pave city-owned parking lot next to the Senior Center and parks
- Improve old BMX track area (priority no. 2 – Main St first)
- 4th street – one way in the future? Find ways to help the area transition to commercial.
- Improve the area behind Pizza Hut – there’s piles of dirt
- Community Hall improvements needed – need to get more use. Air conditioning and other improvements might help w/underutilization of the facility. It is owned by the Lyon’s club, American Legion, and Chamber of Commerce (third-owners).

Question No. 2

Stakeholders were asked if there were any *other cities with downtowns* they thought were *done particularly well* that Kuna could look to as an example. The following cities were identified:

- Jackson, Wyoming
- Sisters, Oregon
- Baker City, Oregon
- Nampa, Idaho (older part)
- Boise, Idaho
- Bend, Oregon
- Ashland, Oregon
- Caldwell, Idaho
- Eagle, Idaho
- McCall, Idaho
- Bozeman, Montana
- Weiser, Idaho (has not seen it, just heard they have revitalized downtown)



Jackson, Wyoming



Sisters, Oregon



Baker City, Oregon



Nampa, Idaho



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Bend, Oregon



Ashland, Oregon



Caldwell, Idaho



Eagle, Idaho



McCall, Idaho



Bozeman, Montana



Weiser, Idaho

Question No. 3

Stakeholders were next asked if they had any *concerns about the Downtown Revitalization Plan*. No true concerns with the plan itself were voiced, but there were several concerns provided regarding the implementation of the plan and development within Kuna generally. These concerns included:

- That a project will not happen – wants to see action, this has been 20 years in the making
- Increased taxes to pay for improvements – this would hit the senior population very hard
- Wants to make sure long-standing businesses like True Value are involved in the decision-making for the Main Street improvements – do not want to jeopardize their business
- It will be hard to get some of the property owners to invest in improving the exterior of their buildings
- Currently the downtown is not very family friendly. There are quite a few bars.
- Current lack of parking negatively impacts the retail stores
- With rapid growth occurring outside of the downtown area, attracting and keeping businesses downtown becomes even harder
- How do we foster a sense of pride in the downtown from all of the businesses?
- If we don't do something to revitalize the downtown soon, all the new businesses coming to town will decide to build out near the freeway
- Current residents have gotten into the habit of going to Meridian or Boise for their shopping needs. It will hard to attract them back to Kuna.
- It would be a shame for Enrique and Ana to invest their money into making improvements and have none of the other business owners follow suit
- Rent in the downtown lots is too high, which contributes to the high number of vacancies
- Don't want to see downtown turn into a bunch of chains; would like to keep it local
- Kuna is not sufficiently capitalizing on the outdoor recreation and winery tourism industries. We need to reach out to these communities and ask them what they would like to see, or what they would be willing to stop in Kuna for.
- Kuna is in need of far more than just a revitalized downtown. We also need attractions, such as a fair or rodeo grounds. How do other small communities use their limited resources to provide such amenities to their residents?
- We need to make sure we don't focus all of our efforts on just one particular landowner. Efforts and support to be spread throughout.
- There may be some potential impediments to receiving the Community Development Block Grant if ACHD is involved in the project.
- ACHD likes to partner on projects, but there are limits to this when HUD is involved
- ACHD has had some challenges working with community members in Kuna. Support for improvements seems to vacillate.
- An implementation strategy will be a critical piece to this plan.

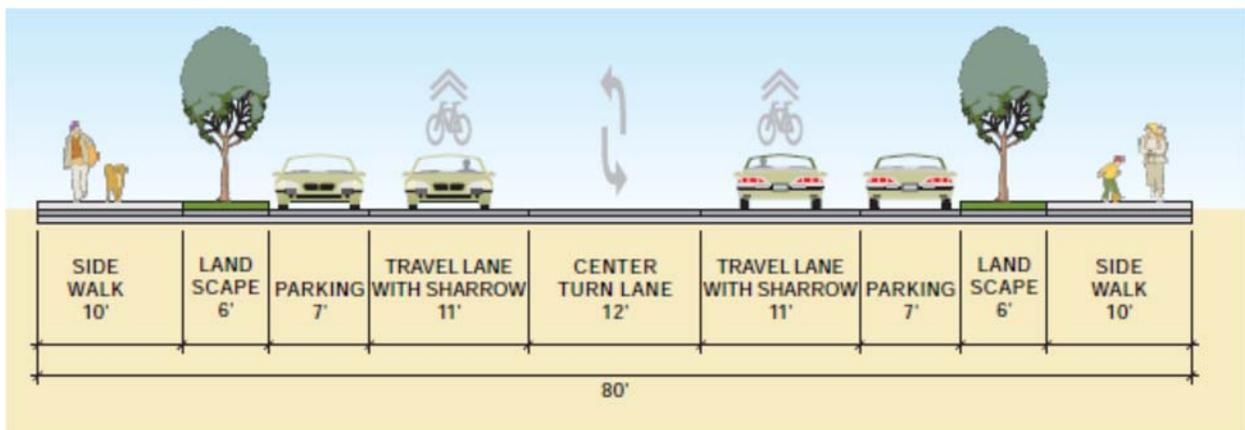
- Some people would like to avoid having city hall moved to the old 4th Street Gym. City Hall needs a newer, better building.
- When considering a “theme”, make sure it is also incorporated into the park.
- Need ACHD at the table to make this work. Need to coordinate closely.
- Concerned about building vacancies

Question No. 4

Stakeholders were presented with the *corridor plan recently created by ACHD*. Within this plan is a streetscape that proposes improvements to the sidewalks and street. Stakeholders were asked if they agreed this was the *appropriate direction to move, or if they would prefer a different layout*. Just about every stakeholder agreed that the proposed streetscape was a good goal to aim for, though some wondered if it was realistic.

Additional comments

- Need to add decorative street lights w/hanging flower pots to the design
- Also need to incorporate benches, bike racks, bulb-outs, maybe mid-block bump outs wherever possible
- Stagger light poles
- Make sure trees do not block the flag or business signage. Low-growing vegetation is preferred, with trees strategically placed between businesses.
- Would it be possible to add lights in the center of the road in an island along Main Street from Avenue D to Avenue C?
- Make sure landscaping is low-maintenance
- Concerned about maintenance w/trees – leaves, mess, etc.
- Center island concept – could it be incorporated?



Concept Presented to Stakeholders (preferred option from the 2012 Kuna Downtown Corridor Plan)

Question No. 5

Stakeholders were asked if they would be *interested in partnering* with the city on future projects, or becoming further engaged in the planning process. Few voiced a specific interest in getting involved beyond their current roles and activities, but most would like to remain informed about the progress of the plan and any projects that are likely to be implemented. The library is interested in supporting the planning process by sharing updates and information about the plan with its visitors. They also offered its large meeting room for use.

Additional ways partnering could occur

- Sheri Russell offered an opportunity to partner with the city on parking needs. She has two parking areas – one along Main Street and another along 2nd Street. Depending on what type of business rents the 3,000 sq. ft. building on Main Street, the parking area could be shared. For example, if a daytime business comes in, the parking could potentially be available in the evenings for restaurants, etc.
- Maybe reach out to the FAA at the High School – they do community projects and could help with the flowers and plantings for planning, planting, and maintenance.
- Business owners might be willing to pitch in on decorative street lights as part of the overall project
- Maybe reach out to the High School “Cast” group to get their input and involvement in the downtown plan and ongoing efforts
- Maybe see if business owners would want to sponsor bricks or pavers, flower pots, or keep some kind of ongoing beautification program going where business owners can participate
- Maybe see if any specialty trades would be willing to pitch in – electricians, etc.
- Newsletters should continue to reach out to a broader group of people (beyond the committee)
- Look into utilizing city website more to share info and gain input

Question No. 6

Last, stakeholders were asked *who they thought the city needed to reach out to* as the plan develops. The following individuals and organizations were identified:

- Bob Salesky, property owner
- Sheri Russell, business owner (completed)
- Dan Everhart, Preservation Idaho
- Doug Grueten, prior superintendent
- Dave Szplett, community member
- City Council and Mayor candidates
- Include the bars in the process - 4E’s owner (might be selling property?), Longhorn etc.

- Need to be in front of the ACHD Commission and staff – make sure we are on the same page and have the support needed
- Ada County Commissioners?

Other comments

- Open house
 - Hold at the 4th Street Gym?
 - Split concepts out by block, take comments at the block level
 - Share timelines and possible phases with the public
 - Include pictures if possible