



American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

Making Great Communities Happen

Downtown Aberdeen

Community Planning Assistance Team Report

March 3, 2015



A report prepared for the City of Aberdeen summarizing the outcome of the APA Community Planning Assistance Team Workshop of November 14, 2014

Aberdeen – Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT)

Bob Bengford, Partner, Urban Design, MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design

John Owen, Partner, Urban Design Expert, MAKERS Architecture and Urban Design

Greg Griffith, Historic Preservation, Washington State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Morgan Shook, Economic Development, Director, ECONorthwest

Patrick Lynch, Transportation Planning, Associate Director, Transpo Group

Paula Reeves, Community Transportation Expert, WSDOT, Washington State Department of Transportation

Ben Frerichs, Economic Development, Senior Economist/Principal

Farzana Rahman, Community Planning and Design, Community Outreach, City of Bellevue

Genevieve Hale-Case, Graduate Urban Design Student, University of Washington

Matthew Donoghue, Graduate Urban Design Student, University of Washington

Debmalya Sinha, Graduate Urban Design Student, University of Washington

Executive Summary

Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA), sponsored a group of professionals for a Community Planning Assistance Team or (CPAT) workshop on November 14, 2014. This workshop focused on the downtown core area of the city of Aberdeen, shown in Figure 1, emphasizing three priority issue areas and their associated goals and priorities are set forth in the side bar.

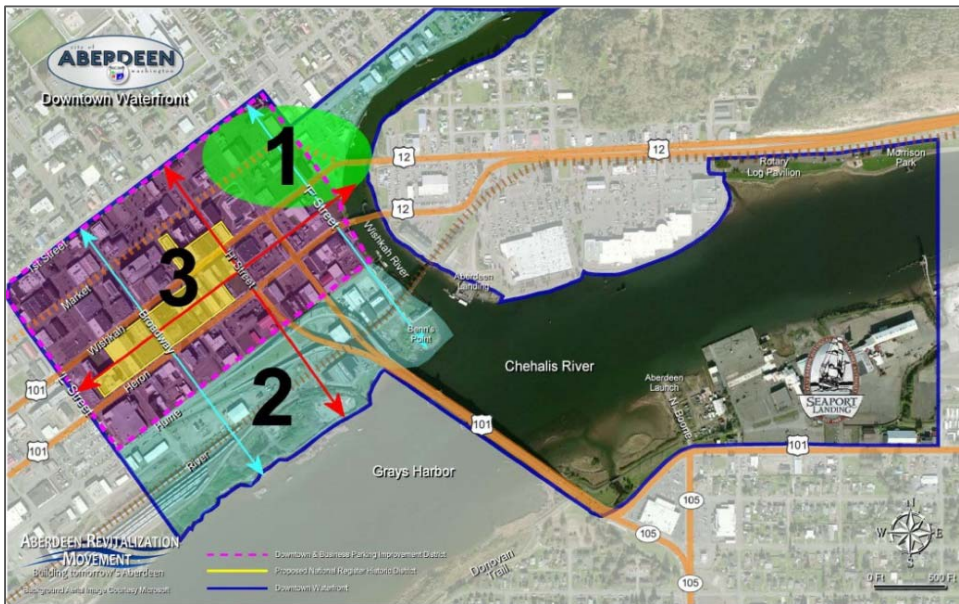


Figure 1: Three focus areas in downtown Aberdeen

1. The entry (SR-12 just east of the river crossing)
2. The E. Wishkah Street corridor (making it more pedestrian friendly)
3. The Chehalis Riverfront area (connecting it to the City)

Three priority issue areas and associated goals and priorities:

Reconnect the City to the Riverfront

Create a plan to purchase and redevelop property adjacent to the river near downtown, providing access to a world class park, public market, retail, and new housing.

Create a Bold and Impressive Entrance to Downtown

Welcoming over five million people each year who drive through downtown Aberdeen visiting our ocean beaches and national parks is something we must do. Purposely building attractive and interesting entry as travelers cross the bridge into the center of Aberdeen is a priority. This can be accomplished by locating a Visitors Information and Enterprise Center to promote tourism and economic development at the entrance of downtown.

Moderate the Traffic Impacts on Downtown

Downtown Aberdeen is dominated by high volume and fast moving traffic driving, dedicated three and four lane streets going east and west through town. It is unsafe, unattractive and prevents the downtown from attracting retail shops, office tenants, or people wanting to live in the downtown area. We must work with the State Department of Transportation to establish a new quality arterial street improvement program based on the Urban Street Design Guidelines to help moderate traffic, create safer and more welcoming opportunities for pedestrians and bikers, which will help improve the appearance of downtown area.

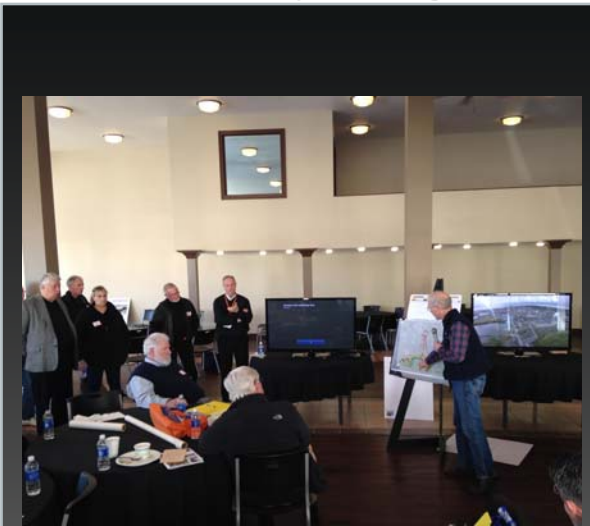


Figure 2. Community leaders and CPAT team members during the workshop in Aberdeen, WA.



CPAT Workshop – The Day’s Event

Mayor Bill Simpson, opened the CPAT workshop by welcoming the team and highlighting the community’s recent initiatives and goals in revitalizing Aberdeen’s historic city center. The CPAT team started by asking the group to discuss strengths and opportunities related to the top priority goals and the three key project areas in Aberdeen downtown, including:

- (1) The Gateway area
- (2) E Wishkah/Market Street corridors
- (3) The Riverfront area

After an initial discussion about the vision, opportunities and threats of these priority areas, the workshop attendees split into three groups to focus on three key project areas. The teams then discussed issues associated with each area and conducted walking tours of the area. During the discussions, each group observed opportunities for public improvements, signage, and private development and the whole range of access, identity, historic preservation, economic development and community design issues associated with the areas.

On the working lunch session, each breakout groups appointed a spokesperson who presented their observations and findings for the three key project areas. After the presentation, each breakout groups reported to the large group about their identified priority action steps and ideas about resources and implementing strategies for these projects.

In the afternoon, the CPAT team invited people from the community in an open house and presented the proposed actions plans, concepts and recommendations, derived from the day-long workshop to guide the opportunities to revitalize the key priority areas in Aberdeen downtown. The event ended up with thoughtful discussion among participants and invitees in the workshop about the proposed action plans to revitalize Aberdeen’s historic downtown.

Table 1. Downtown Aberdeen “Blueprint” – Highest Priority Action Steps

Themes	Priority Actions	Resources	Responsibility
<p>Connecting the Riverfront <i>(see pages 10-22)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate concepts into the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update • Update zoning to allow for recommended uses. • Do due diligence by ARM/City/Others? • Improving riverfront access from I and H street, F street improvement • Link existing trails, parks, riverfront access • Environmental study: flood plain and land testing • Planned –Action EIS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative effort between City, Aberdeen Revitalization Movement (ARM), Grays Harbor Council of Governments, WSDOT, property owner (s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City (and/or ARM) will likely need to take the lead on most items with strategic help from ARM • Waterfront property owner will take the lead or major role in property development.
<p>Downtown Entrance (Enterprise & Visitor Center) <i>(see pages 23-27)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feasibility study and implementation plan including the following elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review similar facilities ○ Decide on facility components and space programming ○ Market analysis ○ Operations forecast ○ Operating structure ○ Governance ○ Public return on investment assessment ○ Capital costs ○ Infrastructure needs ○ Capital funding plan • Acquire land 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative effort between City, Aberdeen Revitalization Movement (ARM), property owner (s), and other applicable agencies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARM is the likely project lead with considerable City support
<p>Moderating Traffic Impacts <i>(see pages 28-39)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate concepts into the ongoing Comprehensive Plan update • Physical improvement recommendations including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ US Route 12/101 westbound couplet realignment, ○ Downtown signal coordination ○ Traffic calming on US Route 12/101 through Downtown • Conduct future studies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corridor Planning Study and Route Jurisdiction Study ○ Multimodal Access and Circulation Studies ○ ITS Strategic Plan ○ Speed Surveys ○ On Street Parking Studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative effort between City, Aberdeen Revitalization Movement (ARM), Grays Harbor Council of Governments, and WSDOT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City is the likely lead with support from Grays Harbor Council of Governments and WSDOT.

Findings and Recommendations

The following pages present the Team's findings and recommendations. Aberdeen leaders and the Action Committee, an implementation committee potentially comprised of some of those who attended the CPAT workshop in November, 2014, should view this report as details fleshing out the ideas developed during the CPAT workshop and suggesting possible approaches to implementation. Keeping this information in mind as you pursue initial short term steps can be a helpful resource in developing specific project scopes of work. These materials are based on presentations by CPAT members and/or information used by them in their official capacity, with web links or other resources for use by the Action Committee.

Community Assets

Before the CPAT workshop, the team compiled background information and community assets and opportunities, augmenting these by several discussions and walking tours during the Workshop. This report's recommendations build on these assets including:

- **Rich and varied history.** Known as the Gateway to the Olympic Peninsula, Aberdeen began its life as a center for forestry and fishing. But it is more famous these days as the birthplace of grunge and the home town of Nirvana's Cobain and Krist Novoselic. Other biggest celebrity of Aberdeen is the Lady Washington, a replica of the original ship that was sailed by Captain Robert Gray, the namesake of Grays Harbor. The Lady resides at the Grays Harbor Historical Seaport, which also offers many sailing programs, charters and a learning center for visitors. Aberdeen Museum exhibits artifacts and scenes from 1880 through 1920, when fishing and lumber were dominant industries. The D&R Theater located in downtown Aberdeen regularly features nationally acclaimed celebrity performances. A stroll through downtown area reveals local shopping, art galleries and architectures that are historically significant. Until the 1980s, Aberdeen was booming logging town. As the industry began to decline, however, so did Aberdeen's economy. But, in the last few years a grassroots revitalization effort led by area businesses, the city and the residents, focused on retail and tourism has made Aberdeen the largest retail center of Washington's coast.

-
- **Riverfront shoreline.** The city has approximately 11 miles of shorelines located along the Chehalis and Wishkah Rivers. Aberdeen's riverfront is used for activities like fishing, recreation, commercial and industrial uses. The community recognizes their riverfront as one of the most important economic and natural resources. Thus, providing appropriate development and redevelopment of these riverfront areas has become increasingly important these days.
 - **Active historic preservation.** After 1980s, the City of Aberdeen faced many challenges like other Washington towns in adjusting economic changes. As a result of losing a large part of its historic maritime, lumber, and milling economic base, Aberdeen experienced a decline in jobs and population. These losses led to the demolition of many of the city's early industrial and downtown buildings in past decades. Recently, the city of Aberdeen has taken steps to preserve their architectural and historic resources to promote downtown redevelopment, encourage investment in residential areas, and increase cultural and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Such initiatives include consideration of preserving resources significant to the community such as the rehabilitation of the Armory and the D&R Theater, number of financial incentives such as tax abatements and façade loans to stimulate investment downtown and within adjacent neighborhoods, the federal historic rehabilitation tax credit which has the potential to provide property owners with opportunities for restoration and adaptive reuse.
 - **Major gateway community.** As a gateway to Pacific Ocean beaches and the Olympic National Park, Aberdeen is easily accessible to travelers seeking cultural attractions, historical sites, and the unique biodiversity of the area. Keeping these potentials in mind, Aberdeen Revitalization Movement (ARM), an organization formed in 1998 to work with the City of Aberdeen towards the revitalization of the city, focusing on community involvement to enhance Aberdeen as a destination to shop, work and live. The organization planned many projects to bring positive changes in this community. Among them the most important one is the "Three Year Action Plan" with three major revitalization projects; (1) Downtown Riverfront Park; (2) Gateway Center; (3) Traffic Opportunities. The overall goal of this project is to develop and plan three transformational sites within the downtown of Aberdeen over the next

three years which will attract new investments, help establish partnerships, promote tourism as an economic sector, and sustain the timber and fishing industries in Aberdeen.

- **Generous public investment in downtown.** The city of Aberdeen developed a comprehensive plan in 2011, which indicates how the City wants to grow and function within a designated future time frame. Since 2000, the City of Aberdeen has invested over 5 million in infrastructure in the downtown area. The infrastructure includes new sidewalks (with brick), new bulb out's on all the corners, sidewalk lights, street trees, benches, banners, kiosks, metal sculptures and the Aberdeen Stars (located in the sidewalks). Aberdeen local non-profit has also been working to restore and create new murals in Aberdeen. To date 4 murals have been completed of which 3 are in the downtown.
- **Downtown special events.** The Event Guru's a special event committee of Aberdeen Revitalization Movement (ARM) has been success in implementing a "First Friday" event in the downtown, planned and put on an "Octoberfest" Celebration and began Founders Day. This event is a weekend long function that celebrates the beginning of Aberdeen. In June, 2014 there was a parade in the downtown area of which they have not had for over 30 years.
- **Downtown planning efforts gaining momentum.** Various community meetings were held over the last few years to identify the goals and policies to redevelop Aberdeen's downtown area and the riverfront. In Mach 2013, the City hired Bozeman and Associates to put together a plan and identify funding sources to make this happen. The top three items are; connect to the riverfront from the downtown; move the visitor information center to the entrance (before the traffic split) of downtown and; find a way to make the downtown more pedestrian friendly in terms of highway traffic.

Maintaining an Action Committee

The CPAT recommends that Aberdeen capitalize on its extremely active and committed community and establish an Action Committee to help implement the vision and priorities developed during this workshop. Based on the experience of the CPAT team, there are several characteristics of Action Committees that lend to their success. The Action Committee should consist of a maximum of 6 to 12 individuals who can motivate others and should include representatives from affected interest groups. Such a committee can be a very helpful tool in providing overall direction and ongoing energy. An Action Committee typically consists of a variety of local people who have made a commitment to accomplishing these important next steps. It should be limited in size so that the group can hold a conversation around a table. This group should consist of individuals who can be optimistic—yet realistic—and can both think holistically and focus on project details. Lastly, the committee should be a representative mix of the community in terms of gender, race, age, and economic status.

It is helpful to identify a Committee Chair to run the meetings and/or assign a member to communicate logistics and meeting outcomes with rest of the group on a regular basis. Action Committee meetings should occur on a published schedule (i.e., third Monday of the month). Most communities that have had CPAT workshops have chosen to keep these committees independent of local government; however, it is not uncommon for the committee to include elected officials in their membership. This independent membership structure enables the Action Committee to hold the local government accountable. An added benefit of a non-government Action Committee is the incorporation of more residents for tackling community problems allowing greater efficiency within local government staff – often necessary in smaller communities with constrained resources.

The following sections present the findings and recommendations for each of the three focus area in Aberdeen downtown that has emerged during the CPAT workshop, including:

Section 1: Reconnecting the Riverfront

Section 2: Develop an Enterprise and Visitors Center

Section 3: Moderate the traffic Impacts in Downtown



Figure 3. Aberdeen downtown riverfront and CPAT focus area



Section I. Reconnecting the Riverfront

Background and Workshop Direction

Industrial areas in cities and towns of the Pacific Northwest originally developed in the first wave of urbanism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of these areas have been successfully repurposed, redeveloped and revitalized to take advantage of very different opportunities in the 21st century. Still others are in the process of being brought back to productive use with a wide range of types of development. A noticeable number of these sites are located in riverfront areas. Some sites are large, but many are smaller. The City of Aberdeen has just such a site; it is large and strategically located, shown in Figure 3. The potential to complement and supplement economic and real estate development for the downtown area of Aberdeen is an important attribute for redevelopment of this area. Redevelopment in this focus area has importance beyond downtown. The Aberdeen is the central business district that serves as a commercial center for all of Grays Harbor County and a large region of west central Washington.

In addition, this focus area has ready access to the significant tourist traffic that stream through Aberdeen. A development strategy for a site this large is a long term and significant undertaking. Any project designated with the word 'development' is a long term proposition. This riverfront site has many attributes to signal upside development potential for the businesses and property owners in the downtown and for the community.

This large area of potential lies to the south of the downtown area and is bounded by railroads tracks and the curve of the US-101 on/off ramps; the confluence of the Wiskah and Chehalis Rivers (east of the US 101 Bridge) and the inner waters of Grays Harbor (west of the US 101 bridge). This focus area has much in common with other similarly located areas in central business districts and industrial areas of older cities and towns of Western Washington. After the arrival of the white settlers and the growth of cities and towns in Western Washington, the riverfront areas became important as places where the over-water transportation and the over-land transportation (railroads) linked long before freeways. Typically these areas are quite large and were devoted to processing, sorting, storing the bounty of our natural resources (forests, farms, fishing) or they were used as lay-down

areas for manufacturing and construction of large equipment, often shipbuilding. In several notable places in the Pacific Northwest these previous industrial/transportation intense areas have been developed into residential, commercial and recreation-entertainment-cultural areas. Having proximity to and access to water-related uses and the aesthetics of water views adds value not now necessary for modern transportation systems or manufacturing. Modern development appreciates the water aesthetic and enhances the potential for many types of non-industrial development. People are attracted to water and water views. The residual impacts of previous uses require careful consideration for environmental and infrastructure issues.

Successful examples of redevelopment in similar sites in the Pacific Northwest:

- Fremont area of Seattle ship canal/Lake Union redeveloped as high-tech and bio-tech office and residential uses.
- Olympic Sculpture Park formerly a Union Oil tank farm on the north end of the Seattle waterfront was being considered for mixed use development project prior to purchase by the Seattle Art Museum.
- Bremerton WA's downtown waterfront is a transportation hub for ferries, buses, parking and has redeveloped with lodgings, mixed uses and commercial and tourism uses, as well as connecting the downtown to the waterfront.
- Foss Waterway in Tacoma was converted with the Museum of Glass, Washington State History Museum and federal courts complex and a growing number of residential units as well as marinas and restaurants; much of the new development is between mainline railroads and the water.

- Ruston Way the former site of a copper smelting and refining complex (large condominium project) plus other areas along the waterfront were formerly sites for shipbuilding and saw mills on shores of Commencement Bay in Tacoma, W; are now redeveloped with restaurants, lodging, public parks and recreation and water access uses.
- Grandville Island in Vancouver BC a former and recently active industrial area developed as a festival retail and tourist attraction with growing residential uses; also true of the New Westminster area.
- Percival Landing in Olympia has emerged as a mixed use and commercial area with a farmers' market.
- Waterfront areas in Mukilteo between railroad tracks and the water near a ferry terminal in Snohomish County with restaurants, lodgings.
- A portion Everett waterfront redeveloped with a mixture of commercial, restaurant and lodging uses; with plans of expansion of these areas along the river east of the city.
- A large 140 ac site on the waterfront in Bellingham formerly the site of a Georgia Pacific paper products plant that is undergoing environmental remediation so that it can be redeveloped as a mixed use and public recreation project including business park space with the USA-Canadian mainline of a railroad through the site.

All are large and/or strategically located in previous industrial-riverfront sites, now recaptured. The focus of this section of the report describes an area that has the potential to support the revitalization of the Aberdeen downtown, as well as the entire community. This large site has potential not only connect the downtown to local water assets but enhance current and future development in the Aberdeen's downtown.

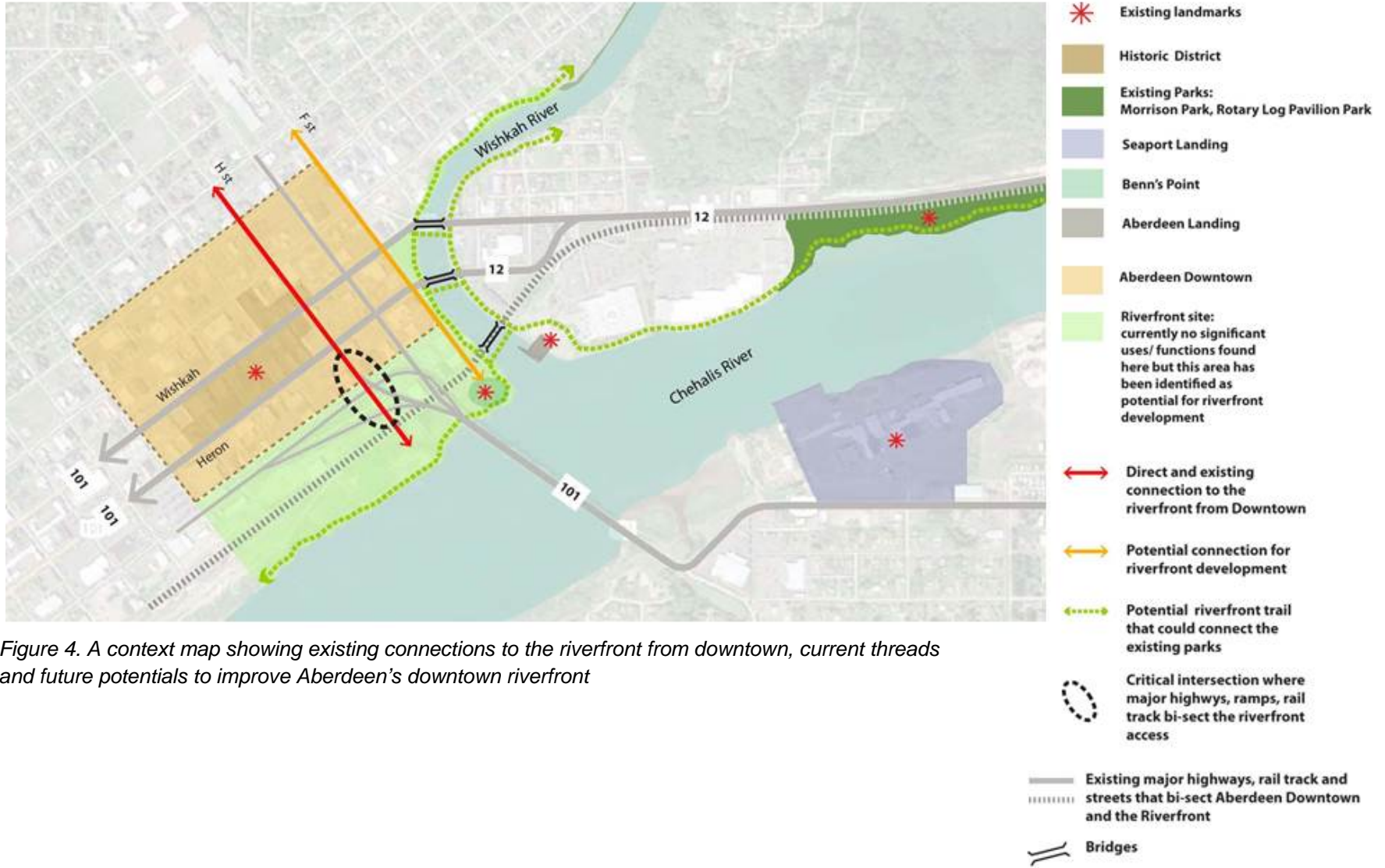


Figure 4. A context map showing existing connections to the riverfront from downtown, current threads and future potentials to improve Aberdeen's downtown riverfront



Figure 5. Aberdeen downtown riverfront from highway 12



Figure 6. Current riverfront access from “H” Street and the 101 ramp that merges on “H” street. Lack of signage and information to access the riverfront; Lack of active frontages, streetscape, designated pedestrian and bike lane.

The Riverfront Site

The Aberdeen Downtown Riverfront is strategically located within the regional market area. This site is located near the intersection of the main north-south (US Route 101) and east-west (US Route 12) highways. These highways connect a large market area of west central Washington and traffic that comes to and through the areas of natural beauty that attract tourists and visitors for recreation. The site is proximate to a significant concentration of the region’s economic engines, including industrial, commercial, retail, and entertainment-cultural activities. The site is surrounded on two sides by the waters of the Wishkah and Chehalis Rivers and the inner waters of Grays Harbor. The third border i.e., the north side, lays in common with the downtown.

The focus site offers a large scale opportunity to supplement and complement development in the Aberdeen’s downtown. However, there is an important caveat with to respect the current development in the downtown. Development of large amounts of retail, restaurant, and mixed commercial space on this riverfront site would weaken the existing and future retail and commercial potential in the Aberdeen downtown. There is absolutely no need to develop new competition for existing businesses in the downtown.

The tenuous pedestrian and vehicular connections from and to this site are an especially critical challenge. An active rail line complicates access to the downtown, but in other areas in the Pacific Northwest this sort of challenge has not precluded development. Strategic collaboration between involved partners will be necessary. Despite these constraints and challenges, there is the potential to link this area to other commercial areas nearby. Traffic to and through the Pacific Coast and other areas of the Olympic Peninsula and Southwest Washington is funneled through this area. This site is well located to link other initiatives and current development within the downtown and the rest of Aberdeen.

Key Issues Identified Accessing the Riverfront

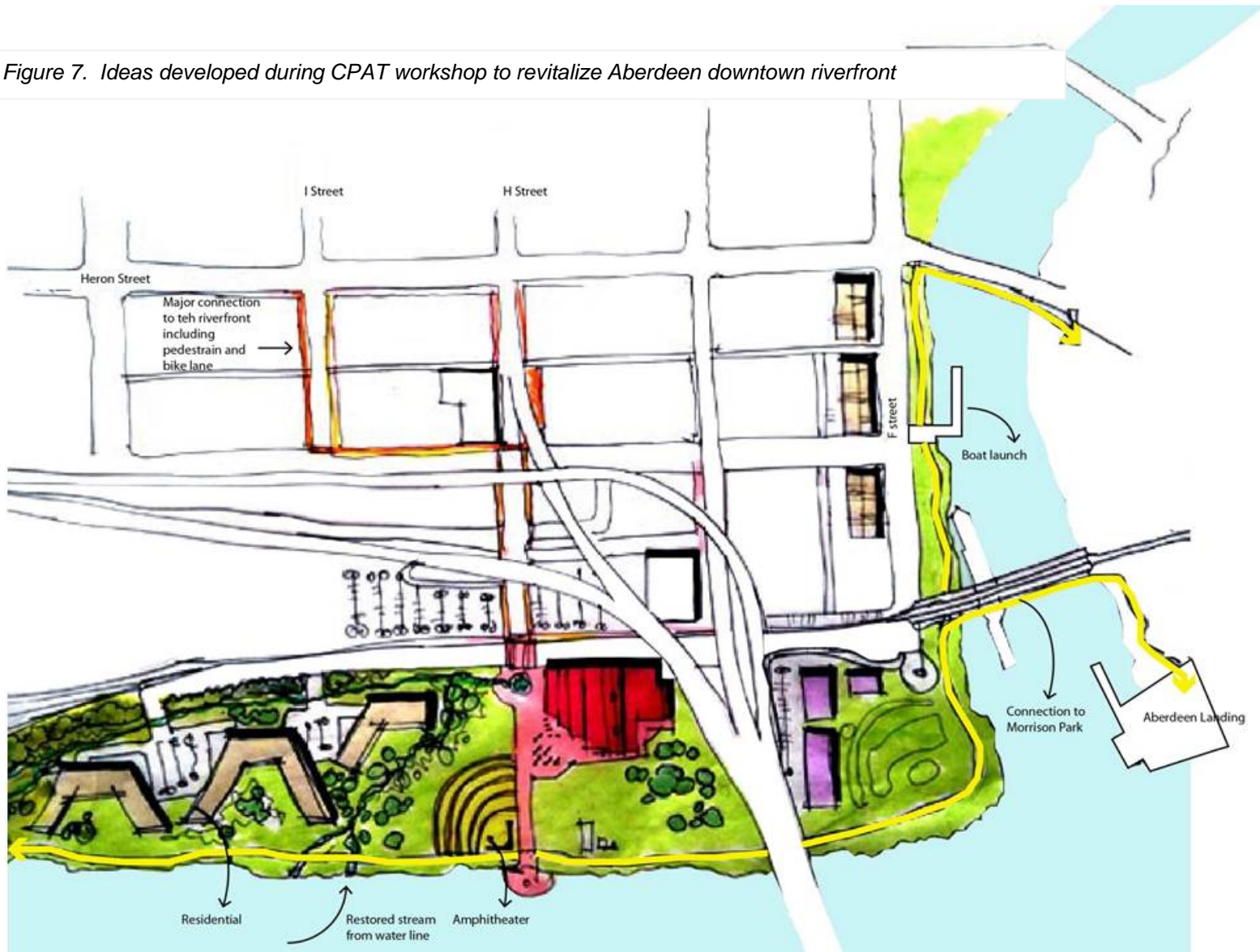
- Lack of designated vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle access connecting the riverfront to downtown, including pedestrian and bicycle lane (Figure 6.)

-
- Lack of continuous trails, pathways and bicycle lanes that would connect the riverfront to downtown and other nearby landmarks, parks and other destinations within the city.
 - “H” Street found to be the direct north-south connection from downtown to the riverfront. But this connection is affected by the impacts of the highways that bi-sect downtown area. The ramp 101 that merges on H Street and the nearby flyover structures create both functional and visual obstacles. Ways need to be found to mitigate their impact in order to provide a pedestrian friendly access to the riverfront from H Street.
 - “F” street shows potential for riverfront connection and development. A study needs to be done to find out compatible function, zoning and corridor uses.
 - Lack of signage and branding that will promote way finding and will provide information about the city and the riverfront as well as various events.

Other Issues Identified

- Both the riverfront and its surrounding areas lack appropriate and compatible zoning and functions. Updated riverfront zoning could create opportunities for social, environmental, recreational, and economic benefits.
- Lack of events (farmer’s market, art shows), activities (walking, biking, boating, fishing) and recreational facilities (public marina, boat launching, fishing decks, swimming) which could provide opportunities for community engagement, business and entertainment.
- The riverfront and the downtown area are located on the flood plain level and almost every year these areas are affected by flooding. Any kinds of development and redevelopment of the riverfront should consider this issue. A desirable form of development introduced at the workshop would be to integrate grade-level parking within structures with habitable floors above. This format helps to address the flooding issue while offering better views for upper level uses.

Figure 7. Ideas developed during CPAT workshop to revitalize Aberdeen downtown riverfront



Recommendations

Potential Uses for Downtown Riverfront

This site is large enough to provide the possibility to be reasonably segmented in to several sub-areas. Thus it can and should be considered for a range of uses. The size of the area could also mitigate potential conflicts among uses. Among the uses for future development on the site that should be explored further for the riverfront area are:

- Outdoor Recreation-Cultural-Entertainment-Sports Facilities. These types of facilities tend to serve local organizations and keep locals closer to home, but also can be used to produce events and activities that attract tourists and visitors to the downtown area: sports fields, small transient RV park, fields with that can be used for festivals, fairs, markets and like events; in addition structures with roofs, such as pavilions and similar facilitate like these uses should be considered in existing or new buildings; the riverfront access makes these types of use attractive, especially if boat or tour boat docks are possible. There is an existing large building on the site that could be converted to complementary of primary uses, e.g., a farmers market or facility for shows, and special interest fairs, boats or RV shows. There are several smaller buildings east of the US 101 bridge that should be considered carefully for reuse in conjunction with new site uses.
- Residential Uses – Multifamily/Condominiums. Increasingly with the continued aging of the population in the nation especially retirees from other parts of the US being attracted to Western Washington, there will be opportunities for housing these folks in places that have a package of amenities: the water, the scenery, walking trails that connect to the local attractions and shopping opportunities, proximity to the retail, services, entertainment, and cultural attractions of the downtown and easy access to the same sorts of attractions that attract tourists; in addition many people as they age want to stay in their community where they have attachments, family, friends, service professionals, such as health care, this provides a portion of a market for housing that more fits a change in lifestyle.

- Office and Business Headquarters. The point portion of the property immediately at the juncture of the Wishkah and Chehalis Rivers just east of the US- 101 bridge could easily be segmented (barring ownership complications), into a site for a high-quality, high-visibility office building and/or a corporate headquarters.

Development Considerations

There are few sites within the market area that provide the possibility as high amenity locations for residential and office uses. There are other areas in the region, Seabrook, for an example, and to a lesser extent Ocean Shores, where market-driven development has occurred. This focus location next to the downtown is a decidedly urban setting rare in this market area, but it has precisely that bundle of activities to attractive to a segment of the retirement community who like to congregate and attend events with similar folks, particularly retirees from other parts of the nation. The downtown and this site provide a potential bundle of shopping, services and other attractions for this market segment.

Any activity that has the word development in its 'brand' is a long term proposition. We could find no overall market analysis for the Aberdeen area to examine economic and demographic trends. There is one analysis focused on several counties that is specifically meant to assist attracting and recruiting firms from outside of these countries. This story could be useful to support location of office space in the riverfront site.

Except for the first category of uses above (recreation-cultural-entertainment-sports facilities), the other uses residential and office space will be driven by regional market forces, assisted by local concerted action and incentives that may be provided by the community, see below. Actualization of these uses is contingent upon long term trends unfolding. In addition, part of the skill for redevelopment is to alter long trend trends that have produced the current malaise. Some of the uses to be considered for this large site could accomplish that trend breaking. The viability of these uses, residential and office, are also contingent upon economic growth and recovery in the overall west ventral Washington/Grays Harbor economy. The residential uses rely on the local and regional economies to a lesser extent and rely more on overall national and regional demographic and economic trends, long established.

Public-Private Partnership

To a great extent and especially for large complex multi-dimensional projects such as that envisioned here for the riverfront area; all real estate development involves some degree of a public-private partnership, not necessarily financial. The directions for this site that involve recreation-cultural entertainment-sports facilities are heavily weighted to public action, probably multi-jurisdictional public action. The residential and office uses would rely much less public involvement, but still an active role.

Because the site is so large and because the non-private uses to be considered are sporadic, i.e., they are usually not utilized daily, there is a potential way to encourage development, to provided incentive to attract private development through coordinated joint uses.

Most private development projects in there simplest form have three type of uses: the plot of land purchased to hold the building, land for landscaping areas, and land for parking either required by regulation of the market. Major publicly financed or developed use, i.e., outdoor recreation-cultural, entertainment-sports facilities also require parking surely and landscaping probably, but the requirements for parking use are often in the evening's or weekends, when private sector use may not need the parking, less so for residential uses. Joint use, with the public sector providing the capital investment or purchase of areas for landscaping and parking; it could be made available through joint use agreements allow those areas to be utilized by the private developments, an incentive for developers. Land the developer does not have to acquire.

“F” Street Area Completing the Linkages

There is a relatively small (compared to riverfront site), but strategically important area that should not be ignored. There is a small amount of existing commercial development with parking along “F” Street and adjacent to the western shore of the Wishkah River. This area has the potential to link the eastern end of the riverfront area, to not only the downtown, but also the thriving commercial areas to the east of the river and past investment in trails and park areas east of the Wishkah River and in the downtown. In addition, this smaller area could link up with new tribal commercial development northward along the Wishkah River near the envisioned Enterprise and Visitors Center.

Linking

A key concept for redevelopment to occur, and to occur in a way that benefits the downtown Aberdeen area is to make sure that the various areas are linked together so that each can benefit the other. There is a base of past public investment and private investment that should be linked to the riverfront site.

The various assets that should be linked together include: the downtown, the transit center, the shores lines of the two rivers and the eastern end of the bay, park and walking trails already in place, shopping areas and existing downtown historic, recreation-cultural-entertainment businesses and assets.

There are two significant threats to linking the contemplated and existing development nodes: the Highway US 101 ramps and bridge and the rail line. Creative design solutions and cross-organizational negotiation should be applied to these two challenges.



Proposed access



Primary bike access from I street to the riverfront and state street



Primary pedestrian access from I street to the riverfront and state street



Critical intersections

Critical intersection **A**
Potential for public art, park signage and directions

Critical intersection **B**
Potential for landmarks art, park signage and information about the riverfront

Critical intersection **C**
Tight gap between building and ramp, about 20'



Pedestrian crossing



Proposed sculpture park



Existing building

Figure 8. Proposed connections to the riverfront from downtown Aberdeen

Potential Connections to the riverfront from Aberdeen Downtown

H Street could be the major north south riverfront access from the Aberdeen Downtown, for its direct connection to the riverfront. But there are some critical intersections (B and C shown in Figure 8) found on H Street where US 101 ramp merges the street and receives heavy vehicular outgoing traffic. These two intersections need careful attention and planning in order to provide a pedestrian friendly riverfront access. A study of the current traffic flow and pattern on H Street might be useful in making decisions to turn this corridor a pedestrian friendly riverfront access.

A designated bike lane can be proposed from I Street to the riverfront. This connection should continue towards State Street to connect other existing trails and parks within the city. At present, H Street is not a suitable choice to propose bike lanes because of the existing traffic pattern as well as the critical intersections C, where the gap between the US 101 ramp and the existing building is only about (16'-18'), shown in Figure 8. A pedestrian sidewalk can continue both from I and H Street to the riverfront. These connections are potential for active frontages, will enhance walkability and will create opportunities for social activities and entertainment.

All the critical intersections, marked in Figure 8, need careful attention and planning because they are potential for landmarks, public art, park and riverfront signage, information about the riverfront, the city and the various events in Aberdeen Downtown.

Section II. Develop an Enterprise and Visitors Center

Background and Workshop Direction

Aberdeen has embarked on a concerted effort to revitalize its downtown and connect tourists to the broader Olympic Peninsula and Washington Coast. Over the past several years, community leaders have championed and developed a vision for an “enterprise and visitor center”. Preliminary concepts picture a “best-in-class” facility that will provide additional information, cultural, and tourist activities for the communities in the Grays Harbor area, as well the millions of visitors that come to the region every year.

As the process moves forward, the City of Aberdeen would like to better understand project feasibility and operation details; and, the type, nature, and level of public investments that might be needed to support the project. Further, they would also like to understand how community, tax, and economic benefits might flow from such an investment if the project were to move forward.



Figure 9. Example enterprise and visitors center illustration.

Key Issues – Themes from Other Unique Community Facilities

The following is a general overview of key issues those unique community facilities – like a visitor center – that the City should consider at this early phase of development. These “best practices” have that emerged from this research on other similar projects.

- **Capital funding.** These facilities tend to be expensive, both to construct and to operate. If there is not an income producing use on the premises, these facilities are lucky if they generate an operating profit. If the facility has debt obligations on top of operating costs, it may be unable to provide an adequate level of maintenance and service. In such cases, the facility will lose “customers” as it ages, which will ultimately lead to a further decline in use and rents.
- **Location and facility siting.** Finding the optimal location that provides the highest benefit (e.g. ability to capture the most users) at the lowest costs is a key issue for successful facilities. Some of the facilities may locate at sites because they offer the prospect of free land and lower upfront capital space. However, the location has to work for users, which will be dictated by the nature and orientation of space programming at the facility.
- **Visitor center and other use colocation.** It is important to understand if the visitor center has any complementary uses that might be the basis for a symbiotic relationship. Uses may require shared common space or ancillary uses (i.e. commercial kitchen for food or event space for meetings). It is also important to see if the uses may also benefit one another if they target similar consumer groups, and can engage in cross marketing at low to no cost.
- **Parking.** While a number of users will walk, bike, or take public transit to the facility, most users will drive. There must be safe parking within two blocks of the facility and it must be free to the customer while they visit and/or shop.
- **Social gathering.** A major feature that attracts people to these facilities is the social gathering phenomenon. People find safe, familiar, busy places very appealing. The facility design should maximize this effect. For example, it could offer a children’s play area, a large central square with ample seating, and occasional events.

- **Accessibility.** The facility must be easily visible and attractive from afar (beacon effect). For drivers, pedestrians, and public transit riders to find their way to the facility, it should provide clear signage for parking and entrances.
- **Operating hours.** Maintaining convenient operating hours is always a challenge with these facilities. To maintain consistency, which is an important factor in building user loyalty, the facility should require the uses to be open during set business hours. To serve visitors and tourists, it should stay open early and late during the peak season.

Recommendations for Next Steps

In order to address some of the issues cited above, it is recommended that the City begin to address critical components of the project's feasibility.

- **Review similar facilities.** The City should review the operations and performance of similar facilities across the country. The purpose of this analysis is to understand how visitor centers perform in other areas, and to refine the assumptions that drive facility design and programming. Typically, identifying a limited number of facilities for review is advisable – it is envisioned that these facilities should be comparable in facility characteristics, community demographics, and attendance characteristics.
- **Decide on facility components and space programming.** The facility will house a visitor center but could also consist of several unique components as well (i.e. food concession or community meeting space). For each component, it will be this section describes relevant characteristics including square footage, number and mix of uses, the relation to other components of the facility and the management structure (i.e. concessionaire-operated or public development authority for example).
- **Market analysis.** It will be important to create a demand forecast of facility use. Since Aberdeen is a unique City with unique resident and tourist demographics, it will be key to understand the different “markets” that the facility would reach. This analysis will be driven on choices regarding uses and space programming as informed by the facility review. The purpose of this market analysis is to demonstrate the feasibility of a facility, given conditions in the target area. It will focus on the use of the facility itself, based on the assumption that facility's success or failure will depend first and foremost on the ability it to capture a share of the visitor market

- **Operations forecast.** The city should complete an operations forecast for facility. The operations forecast consist an operating pro forma for the facility detailing startup and stabilized operations. This analysis would show the financial performance of facility over a ten-year period to account for start-up costs and some depreciation.
 - Revenues. The facility could receive operating revenues from four sources: (1) rent from users (information center and other), (2) operators of the ancillary elements (restaurant, commercial kitchen, and event space), (3) sponsors, and (4) any proprietary merchandise sales.
 - Expenses. The City will need to plan for the operations of facility – the main components that should be considered: (1) payroll and benefits, (2) utilities, (3) pest control, legal, and professional services, (4) marketing, (5) insurance, (6) taxes, and (7) parking validation (if pay parking is used).
- **Operating structure.** The City should consider different operating structures for managing the facility. Unique facilities have used a range of structures elsewhere. Using a matrix format it will illustrate the attributes, advantages and disadvantages of each.
- **Governance.** The City should explore how the facility should be governed (i.e. public, private, hybrid, etc). In the simplest terms, defining the responsible parties and how routine and investment decisions are made. The likely contribution of public money underwriting construction may mean that the City should focus on some form of Municipal Corporation to govern the facility such as a public development authority.
- **Public return-on-investment assessment.** The city may desire to assess project impacts that city leaders may choose to consider if public support might be necessary. Understanding how the facility strengthens the local community by providing additional tourist amenities in the area leading additional tourist visits and spending in the downtown core will be a critical part of “telling the story” to potential project sponsors.
- **Capital costs.** While preliminary concepts for the facility have been prepared, advanced design plans will help cost estimators develop construction costs. The analysis should also consider land acquisition.

-
- **Infrastructure needs.** The City should also focus on any supporting infrastructure that would be necessary for the project. This analysis could cover project demands for road, water, and sewer and storm water facilities.
 - **Capital funding plan.** Being relatively debt free on the capital side will allow the facility to focus their longer term funding and financing plans on on-going operations. The intent of this analysis should be to provide the City with the identification of various funding sources that have been used for similar facilities in other communities, and to identify a range of viable public and private funds sources that could be drawn from the region, as well as from the state and nation. There is a portfolio of possibilities that range from public agency and private foundation grants, to tax credits, and crowd funding. In addition to identifying these potential funding sources, it will be important to assess the likelihood and/or challenges of accessing those sources for capital purposes.

Section III . Moderate the Traffic Impacts Downtown

Introduction and Workshop Direction

Aberdeen's transportation system serving downtown is laid out as a traditional grid street system along the Chehalis River. Small blocks (block length ~325') in a grid pattern of a mix of one-way and two way streets enhances walkability and circulates traffic as compared to other transportation network designs. US Route 101 and US Route 12 pass directly through Aberdeen's downtown core via a one-way couplet system (comprised of Wishkah and Heron Streets). Bridges to the southeast and east of downtown connect Aberdeen to the cities of Cosmopolis and Hoquiam, respectively. West and south of Aberdeen, US Route 101 connects to points north and south along the Washington coast, popular destinations for recreation and fishing.



Figure 10. Diagram from
Aberdeen Conceptual Master
Plan. Source: Rice Fergus
Miller

The existing street network has both opportunities and challenges regarding vehicle circulation, vehicle speed through the downtown corridor, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Average daily traffic (ADT) on Wishkah Street and Heron Street has remained the consistent from 2010-2014 at 14,000 and 15,000 ADT respectively. Many of the roadways in the city are wide and provide ample right-of-way space for streetscape improvements and for adjusting circulation patterns. A concept discussed and supported by the CPAT team is to shift the westbound couplet of US Route 12/101 north one block from Wishkah Street to Market Street. This provides opportunities to create a pedestrian-orientated downtown area between Market Street and Heron Street.

Many of the buildings in the downtown core also contain mixed-use development with retail on the ground floor and sidewalks on each street, which can be beneficial to pedestrian traffic. Due to the city being traversed by wider streets and US Route 101, there are issues with speeding and traffic backups during peak times.

Traffic Impacts

During the CPAT workshop participants identified safety and traffic impacts in the downtown core as priorities for the City. Both State Routes carry higher volumes on wide streets, especially during recreational peak times (Friday afternoon and Sunday afternoon). Higher volumes on the couplet result in backups during peak times. One-way couplets also tend to result in higher speeds. The City has articulated these issues and potential new ideas in recent planning documents such as the Aberdeen Conceptual Master Plan and the East Aberdeen Mobility Project.

Street Network Realignment and Traffic Calming

The CPAT team recommends considering actions to reduce traffic volumes and speeds along Wishkah Street to create a more pedestrian-friendly corridor. One option discussed is to shift the westbound route of the State Route 101 couplet to Market Street from its current location on Wishkah Street. At the intersection of Wishkah and Olympic Highway, the team recommends considering a partial closure of Wishkah Steet from F Street to the bridge, allowing only Greys Harbor Transit westbound access onto Wishkah Street.



Figure 11. Existing Traffic Flow Direction



Figure 12. Downtown Aberdeen



Figure 13. Proposed Traffic Flow Direction.

This realignment and rerouting is intended help to divert traffic away from the pedestrian-focused downtown core area. This pedestrian-orientated Downtown Main Street (as seen in the previous figure) could support community events, and gatherings while promoting a more walkable community. Shifting this traffic north to Market Street and implementing design features that lower vehicle speeds will help to reduce traffic near the proposed Downtown Main Street and will also help create a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

WSDOT has assigned a level-of-service (LOS) threshold of “D” on the US Route 12/101 couplet, meaning that future traffic operations must meet this criteria. Due to the proposed operational changes in the vicinity of the State Route 12 bridges and S. F Street, additional studies are needed to determine existing LOS operations and potential project traffic impacts. Traffic impacts to and from State Route 101 would also need to be addressed as the roadways lead directly into the downtown core. In addition, a Corridor Planning Study¹ and a Route Jurisdiction Study are required by WSDOT in order to make any changes to a State Route. Alterations of intersecting streets may also be necessary in order to direct traffic to and from both the bridges and downtown core. Such alterations may include converting streets to one-way, additional Traffic calming, and turn restrictions at intersections. Future traffic impact Scenarios would be part of the recommended traffic studies.

Managing vehicle speed through downtown was also addressed by the CPAT team and it is recommended that traffic calming devices be included in street design. Possible solutions to speed management include curb extensions, speed humps, and radar speed signage. Traffic calming devices may also promote safe pedestrian access².

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

ITS technology provides an alternative to capacity construction and complements existing infrastructure. ITS has proven to be a cost effective method of improving the safety and efficiency of traffic flow in cities of all sizes across Washington State. ITS consists of a combination of technical tools, concepts, software, hardware, and advanced communication technologies. Examples of ITS

¹ <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/studies/default#Development>

² http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/traffic_calm.cfm

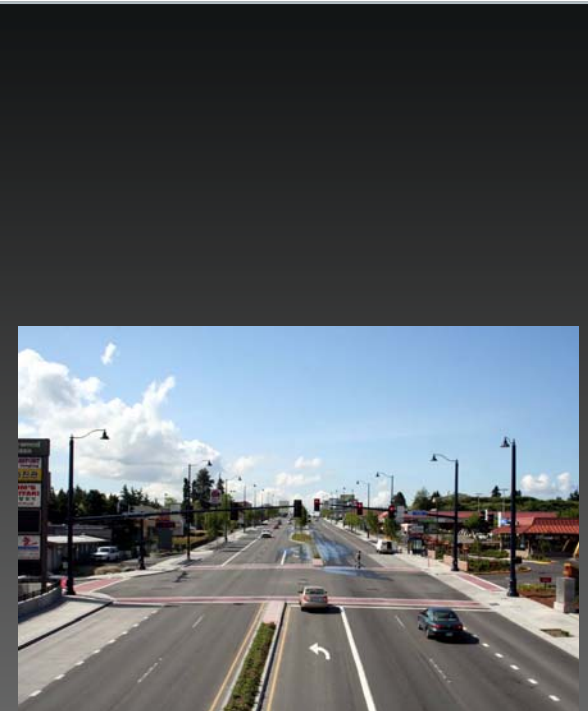


Figure 14. Signalized intersection crossing treatments



Figure 15. NACTO "Green Wave" – Coordinated signals on corridor with bicyclist prioritization

applications include traffic signal management, transit signal priority, incident management, traffic management centers, traveler information systems, and traffic data collection.

The CPAT team recommends integrating ITS solutions as part of the overall improvement identification process.

Physical Recommendations:

- State Route 12/101 westbound couplet realignment from Wishkah Street to Market Street.
- Coordinated signals throughout downtown.
- Traffic calming devices on State Route 12/101 through downtown.
- Bicycle lanes connecting the downtown core and Pedestrian Corridor to Sculpture Park and regional trails.
- Traffic calming devices on major roadways in downtown and adequate pedestrian crossing facilities on Market Street and within Pedestrian Corridor.

Future Studies:

- Corridor Planning Study and Route Jurisdiction Study
- Multimodal Access and Circulation Studies
- ITS Strategic Plan
- Speed Surveys
- On Street Parking Studies
- Non-Motorized Urban and Regional Plan
- East Aberdeen Mobility Improvements Project (in progress)
- Freight Access and Circulation Study

Policy:

- Speed limit changes
- Explore an "Open Streets" program for where designated streets are closed to vehicular traffic and bicyclists and pedestrians are encouraged to ride/walk freely throughout downtown, similar to the Sunday Streets program in San Francisco. This can help raise awareness for non-motorized modes in the City.

Early Actions: Coordinated signals on downtown corridors, ensure adequate speed limit signage in problem areas. A vehicle circulation study in the Downtown core to gather information on existing operations.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Friendly Community

Transportation system connectivity is drawing increased focus within local, state and federal planning circles as smart growth, active living, growth management, sustainability and climate change policies and programs stress smarter decision-making and place greater importance on multi-modal connectivity. The quality of connectivity is inversely related to the number and severity of environmental and infrastructure barriers to walking and bicycling. The physical barriers that affect travel behavior is felt at the neighborhood level and these barriers take many forms, either inadequate networks (lack of optional routes) or disconnected routes, but also rivers, steep terrain, rail lines, freeways and major arterials pose significant barriers to network connectivity. Land use and neighborhood street design patterns can also form barriers to pedestrian and bicycle travel. For example, overly large blocks and the lack of mid-block connections cause pedestrians and cyclists to travel further to reach local destinations, often resulting in a decision to utilize a vehicle for short trips that would otherwise be completed on foot or bike.

Providing safe and adequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the downtown core is recommended by the CPAT team. According to Walk Score, the City's downtown core has a score of 79, which is considered "Very Walkable." The score is based on walking distance to amenities, population density, block length, and intersection density. Concerns were raised during the CPAT workshop over the negative stereotypes about bicyclists and pedestrians in the community, as Aberdeen has been primarily auto-centric. Conflict between motorists and non-motorized users can be addressed by creating an environment that reduces potential conflict. Good infrastructure design can also deter these potential conflicts. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) publishes two guides that provide cities with transportation solutions that make streets safe and enjoyable for everyone using them – the Urban Street Design



Figure 16. Example street and park design from CPAT Workshop



Figure 17. Shared lane marking



Figure 18. Curb extension and bicycle racks



Figure 19. Example of a cycle track

Guide³ and the Urban Bikeway Design Guide⁴. WSDOT endorses both guides. Design solutions such as crosswalk, curb extensions, adequate pedestrian crossing times at signalized intersections, bike lanes and buffered bike lanes, and bicycle parking can improve the street environment and are some of the recommended solutions discussed in the NACTO publications. Crosswalks at signalized intersections are currently marked in the downtown area, though the paint has worn on non-state highway roadways.

Low cost, high benefit projects are recommended to promote walking and bicycling in Aberdeen. These projects could include: gathering information about travelers and travel patterns to determine which projects would benefit the most people in the beginning stages of development, improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities through simple, creative methods, and improving access to outdoor destinations.

Street uses in the Downtown Main Street could also be used for street fairs, festivals, farmer's markets during certain periods during the week, closing off the roadways to vehicular traffic. Another recurring event such as the "Open Streets" program where roadways are closed to vehicular traffic and are open to bicyclists and pedestrians may increase awareness of non-motorized uses in the City and help promote safety and health. Improving access to the regional trail network can promote Aberdeen as a final or stop-over destination for cyclists. Connectivity to riverside outdoor areas and the regional trail system is also recommended, though

access to the trail system may require bridge roadway enhancements to safely accommodate additional bicycle and pedestrian activity accessing the trails located on the opposite side of the Chehalis River from downtown Aberdeen. A bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan is recommended to study the current network and provide specific recommendations on enhancing connection to regional trails.

Physical Recommendations:

- Bicycle lanes connecting the downtown core and Pedestrian Corridor to Sculpture Park and regional trails.

³ <http://nacto.org/usdg/>

⁴ <http://nacto.org/cities-for-cycling/design-guide/>

- Traffic calming devices on major roadways in downtown and adequate pedestrian crossing facilities on Market Street and within Pedestrian Corridor.

Future Studies:

- Non-Motorized Urban and Regional Plan

Policy Recommendations

- Explore an “Open Streets”⁵ program for where designated streets are closed to vehicular traffic and bicyclists and pedestrians are encouraged to ride/walk freely throughout downtown, similar to the Sunday Streets program in San Francisco.⁶ This can help raise awareness for non-motorized modes in the City.

Early Actions: Community outreach on bicycle and pedestrian safety and awareness. Exploration of an “Open Streets” program.

Freight Mobility

The movement of freight is an important issue for the City of Aberdeen. The Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) is used to classify state highways, county roads, and city streets according to average annual gross truck tonnage they carry as directed by RCW 47.05.021. The FGTS is primarily used to establish funding eligibility for the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) grants. In addition, it also supports designations of highways of statewide significance, pavement upgrades, traffic congestion management, and other state investment decisions.

The FGTS classifies roadways using five freight tonnage classifications, T-1 through T-5. Routes classified as T-1 or T-2 are considered strategic freight corridors and are given priority for receiving FMSIB funding. US Routes 12 and 101 are classified as T-2 through the downtown core, which means it carries 4 million to 10 million per year. Navigating potential opportunities and existing constraints for each of the transportation modes is discussed in the following sections.

⁵ <http://openstreetsproject.org/>

⁶ <http://www.sundaystreetsf.com/>

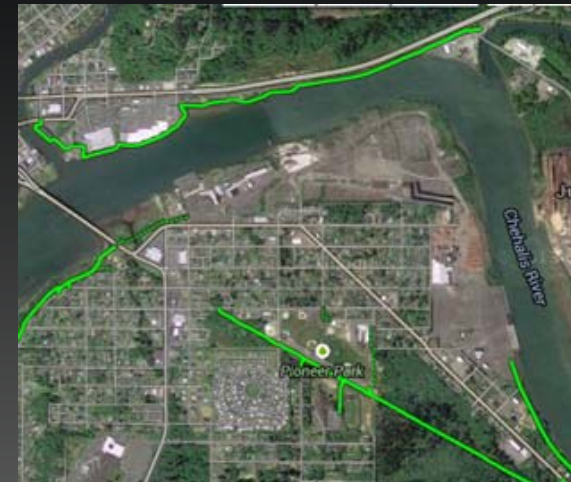


Figure 20. Regional non-motorized trail network



Figure 21 Open streets

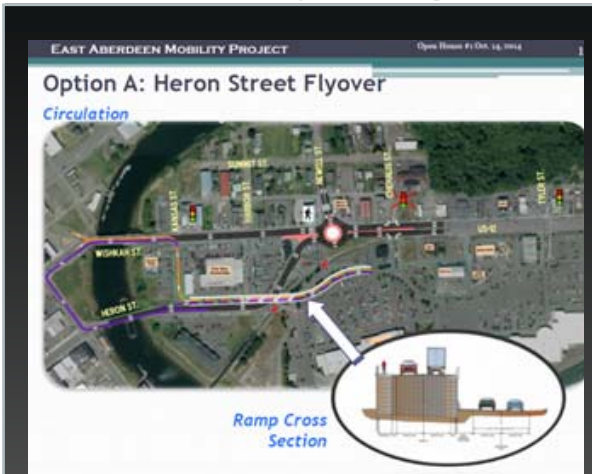


Figure 22. East Aberdeen Mobility Project Freight Concept



Figure 23. US Route 101 in Aberdeen

The CPAT group discussed freight mobility during the workshop as an area of concern. As plans to increase multi-modal connectivity to the downtown core are recommended, bridge access can become increasingly important given bridge space limitations and the costs associated with bridge expansion. US Route 101 is an important corridor for industry and movement of goods through Aberdeen safely. It is recommended that freight access be assessed in traffic and circulation studies concerning the realignment of the State Route 12/101 couplet and subsequent revitalized downtown core. Freight access options were explored in the East Aberdeen Mobility Project, with various options proposed. As the project name describes, freight access was primarily analyzed in East Aberdeen. Of note, a roundabout at US Route 12 and S Newell Street is recommended in all 3 alternatives.

Future (and continued) Studies:

- East Aberdeen Mobility Improvements Project (in progress)
- Freight Access and Circulation Study

Early Actions: Continued development of East Aberdeen Mobility Improvements Project.

Financing

This list includes some of the primary resources available to Aberdeen for accomplishing the recommendations for improving transportation connectivity in this report.

Transportation Improvement Board

<http://www.tib.wa.gov/>

Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board

<http://www.fmsib.wa.gov/>

Local Improvement Districts,

<http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/PubWorks/lidpg.aspx>

WSDOT Funding Programs for Local Agencies – funding opens spring 2010,

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/localprograms/ProgramMgmt/funding.htm>

Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB), Provides assistance with economic development,

<http://www.cted.wa.gov/site/64/default.aspx>

Rural Washington Loan Fund provides loans for projects creating new jobs,

http://www.cted.wa.gov/portal/alias_CTED/lang_en/tabID_87/DesktopDefault.aspx.

Improvements Required Prior to Building Permit Issuance and Other Methods of Obtaining Streetscape Improvements,

<http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/PubWorks/subsw.aspx>

Local Improvement Districts

<http://www.mrsc.org/Subjects/PubWorks/lidpg.aspx>

Summary of Recommendations:

Personal Vehicles:

- US Route 12/101 westbound couplet realignment from Wishkah Street to Market Street.
- Coordinated signals throughout downtown.
- Corridor Planning Study and Route Jurisdiction Study or Route Development Plan
- Multimodal Access and Circulation Studies
- Speed limit changes?

Non-Motorized:

- Bicycle lanes connecting the downtown core and Pedestrian Corridor to Sculpture Park and regional trails.
- Traffic calming devices on major roadways in downtown and adequate pedestrian crossing facilities on Market Street and within Pedestrian Corridor.
- Non-Motorized Urban and Regional Plan
- Explore a program for where designated streets are closed to vehicular traffic and bicyclists and pedestrians are encouraged to ride/walk freely throughout

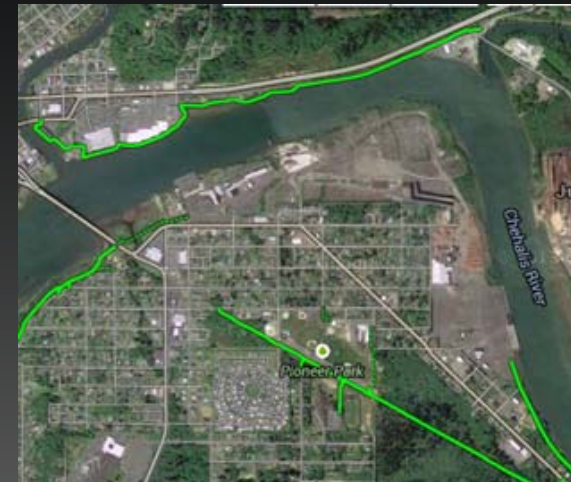


Figure 19. Regional non-motorized trail network



Figure 20. Open streets



Figure 21. East Aberdeen Mobility Project Freight Concept



Figure 22. US Route 101 in Aberdeen

downtown, similar to the Sunday Streets program in San Francisco.⁷ This can help raise awareness for non-motorized modes in the City.

Freight:

- East Aberdeen Mobility Improvements (in progress)
- Freight Access and Circulation Study

⁷ <http://www.sundaystreetssf.com/>

Other Recommendations

- Both public and private sectors can work together to provide creative parking solutions for Aberdeen Downtown in order to create more room for pedestrians, bicyclists, space for social gathering and entertainment (shown in Figure 23 below).
- Implement the recent historic preservation plan.

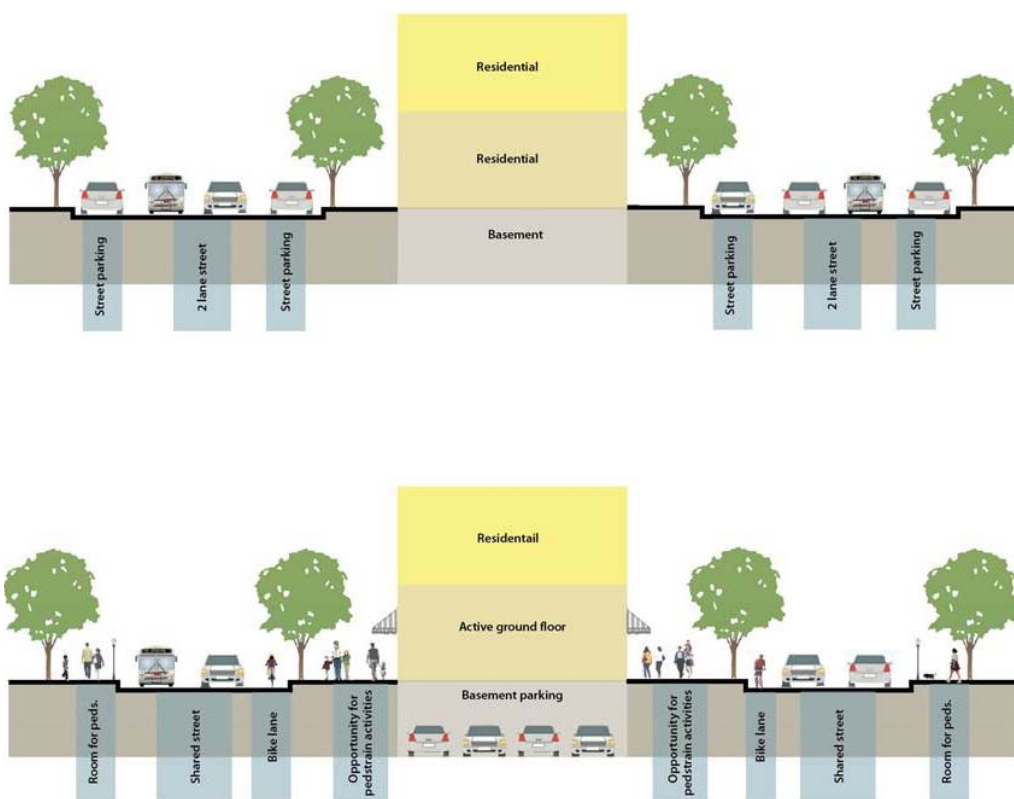


Figure 23. Typical parking in Downtown Aberdeen (top). Different Parking Solution can Create Room for Pedestrians, Bicyclists, Streetscaping and Various Social Activities (bottom)