



**Planning and Business Development Committee Special Meeting
April 13, 2023**

**5:30 PM
City Council Chambers**

325 Metcalf St

Sedro-Woolley, WA 98284

- **AGENDA:**

Review of Draft Economic Development Action Plan

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Sedro-Woolley Economic Development Action Plan (Draft)

Ideas generated from economic development focus group

Retail & Services

- Support retail businesses providing local services and drawing people to shop in the community
- Support infill development
- Long-term potential for Skagit Industrial Park as an extension of Downtown

Housing Development

- Businesses need housing to support a local workforce
- Support infill development

Wealth Generating Employment

- Health care is a growing industry

Local Businesses, Especially Small Businesses

- Provide programs that can help businesses
- Support businesses to better work within the City code
- Support infill development
- The traffic impact fee is too high for small businesses
- Focus on Downtown
 - Keep Metcalf clean
 - Paint the light poles on Metcalf
 - Replace old planter boxes in the Downtown
 - Update the Woolley Market
 - Downtown has a lot of potential and is classic. It needs to stay clean and needs attention to detail. Make it pristine.
 - Develop parking regulations
 - Develop temporary use of unused BNSF land for a “mobile art walk”

Tourism

- If we can't get hotels, support more vacation rentals, more ADUs could be helpful in this regard
- Leverage lodging tax funding
- Become the basecamp of the foothills
- Work with the North Cascades Institute
- Leverage outdoor recreation
- Tap into the City's history
- Tourism has very few negatives
- Promote and develop sports tournaments

Infrastructure Development

- Continue to fund and build projects to support growth. Review impact fees and project funding to make sure there is financial support for the planned projects.
- Develop small parks – ex. the lot by Tricky Busiu could be used for a park and parking if received from BNSF
- Plant beautiful trees
- Develop an archway to cover the railroad trestle and point tourists to Downtown
- Work to get Ferry Street properties improved on the entry to Downtown from Highway 9, perhaps some funds could be used for environmental studies, as needed, in this area
- Possible food truck pads at our parks (especially Olmsted and Memorial)

Workforce Development

- Provide opportunities for youth to get into apprenticeships, build partnerships with schools
- Possible education uses of SWIFT Center

Sedro-Woolley City Council Planning and Business Development Committee

Economic Development Focus Group Notes, 3/7/23

Attendees: Paul Woodmansee; Anna Johnson; Peter Whited; Brock Stiles; Dirk Meyers

City Council Committee Members: Nick Lavacca; Joe Burns (Chair); Brendan McGoffin

The meeting opened at 5:00 PM and closed at 7:08 PM. The committee will follow-up in the fall with this group

1) What types of businesses and industry do you think are missing in Sedro-Woolley?

- Not enough available housing stock
- Businesses need housing to support their employees
- Construction creates jobs and that will help the economy
- Sedro-Woolley is well positioned to attract retirees – Baby boomers retiring are an opportunity – having more communities like Brickyard could be helpful to attracting retirees - Sedro-Woolley has an edge for attracting retirees and they have money.
- Trader Joe's, there is nothing like it other than the Co-op in Mt. Vernon, why shouldn't we have one?
- Cities are malleable – it scales to a person – when a person experiences something new, they might not be used to it but after a while it becomes normal – we just have to do it rather than waiting for it to happen.
- We are likely to get retirement people and be a bedroom community – they buy art. It would be good to see more funding spent on art other than wood carvings.
- Why is a bedroom community seen as a negative? Why wouldn't you want to have a place where everyone wants to live? Jobs should not be the driving force for everything we do. Something like a Trader Joe's makes sense to try to attract because it is unique. Spending more money on drawing local people here is worthwhile.
- Trader Joe's – another vote for it
- Council member McGoffin mentioned that he had inquired with Trader Joe's a year ago about moving to town and had not heard back from them.
- Innovation is in our genes
- Oliver Hammer draws people to our community
- We do not have any car dealerships and would benefit from some

- Supporting the local companies we have and help them be financially solid across the board – focus on what is here vs. what we can have
- There could be programs to help businesses – to help them through tough times.
- Policy decisions matter – conversations about businesses operating outside of the City code and how to help them through it.
- Having a shop that is attracting people to come here – retail, etc. – something with a big draw
- It takes many millions of dollars, people who want to work, people who want to invest. Find them. People don't seem to want to work in retail right now. There is not a problem drawing people in – we work hard to do it. We are there to make money.
- What about the small businesses? Not the big franchise outfits. How do we get little independent stores in here to make money and get the rent affordable so they can make money. It takes initiative to do it and if people don't have it, nothing will happen. It takes lots of money.
- Not being reactionary. Maybe we should be open to Air BNB, and inviting to it. It is coming anywhere. Infill development. It won't cover our density issues. Why not be proactive, make it inviting. Do it, plan ahead. See what other communities are doing that are having success with them – transitioning to another economy. Maybe it is more than reaching out to Trader Joe's. Someone has to show them what to do first – instead of waiting say we are willing to offer these things that you are not going to find anywhere else. The answer is thinking ahead and not being reactionary.
- Businesses are always reaching out to get money from other people, other communities.
- Lodging Tax funding – make sure we are collecting it and use it

2) Should the City promote tourism, and if so, how?

- North Cascades Institute – being the basecamp of the foothills makes sense to tap into for tourism, capitalize on nature.
- Outdoor recreation
- Tapping into the City's history is good as well, and the wood art
- Tourism has very few negatives – people with the time to go somewhere have the money to do it and spend it where they go. If there is a way to do that here, it would be great. Tourism should be high on our list of things to promote.
- Sports tournaments are a great opportunity for the City, do we have a parks department to coordinate events?

- Short-term rentals, hotels, etc. are missing – hotels would support other goals (ex. Places for family to stay, support for tourism) – finding the right hotel fit will be key – takes industry to build up base, sports tournaments, etc.
- ADUs could be helpful for housing and to support tourism, etc.

3) What infrastructure investments and services would you like to see from the City of Sedro-Woolley to support economic development?

- City staff are good. Funding for infrastructure is needed. The City needs to start planning for spending to do some of the projects that are planned. There are some things being planned now that need to be built soon. Impact fees are helpful. Property taxes help as well. There is a traffic plan in place. It needs to be funded fully. There should be a review on impact fees for new housing, they could probably be raised.
- For the small local businesses, the traffic impact fee is too much for them – it stifles or eliminates their ability to open.
- Crime – theft, some homelessness related crimes – the shortage in housing is an issue with the result being why people are out doing some of these lower-level crimes.
- Opportunities for youth could help
- Opportunities to get young people into apprenticeships, outreach to schools
- What if we pushed kids to get into trades and to start businesses? Having more events geared towards that and building more direct connections between industry and kids. Sedro-Woolley School District is working with STEM. Janicki Industries is involved as well. There are enough people out there who want to make things but they've been sent on a different path. It might be helpful to have the Superintendent do a presentation on what the district is doing.
- The SWIFT Center is huge. It could have educational uses.
- Health care is growing – there is a shortage of workers. People need raises or people won't be doing the work anymore. People are retiring as well.
- Some discussion of Skagit Industrial Park and SWIFT Center's potential. A lot of Skagit Industrial Park is empty and could be better utilized. In the long-term, what could it be?
- These buildings used to be vibrant (both the SWIFT Center and Skagit Industrial Park)
- Skagit Industrial Park – make it an extension of Downtown. Some cities buy land like it and redevelop it.

4) My business would be better off in Sedro-Woolley if _____.

- Metcalf is kept clean
- Light poles needed to be painted, freshened up
- Planter boxes on the main street need to be retired.
- It is the little detail things that need to be cleaned up. Their downtown building needs to be painted. The owners can be a challenge on some of these issues.
- The Woolley Market needs to be updated
- The Downtown has a lot of potential and is classic. It has a great layout. It just needs to be cleaned with attention to detail. Make it pristine.
- Do more of the same here – build on our strengths. Competition is good for business.

5) Are there any City fees or regulations that you would change or that are inhibiting you? If so, please share some additional detail.

- Parking – the City does not have parking regulations. Anyone can park anywhere at any time, which is great to an extent. Downtown 48 parking – people park their second car in the public right of way (only one car is allowed). The City needs to look at public lots and parking regulations. Lots get filled by people who are not using them directly. We need to figure out a new parking situation throughout town. We need to have a plan for vacant lots, for example, to be parking lots.
- If the property near Tricky Busiu could be used for a park and parking, received from BNSF, it would be amazing.
- Plant beautiful trees.
- Temporary use of BNSF land for “mobile art walk” in that BNSF area
- If you cause people to walk through town, it will draw in more people
- Grants – Highway 9 onto Ferry Street is not an appealing entry to town. Maybe we can talk with the land owners about working to get those properties improved. Maybe help with studies and other things. Redevelopment is needed in that corridor.
- An archway was described to cover the railroad trestle across highway 20 at Metcalf. This idea was supported by people in the room. Business advertising revenue could help to pay for the sign.
- Economic Development Funds – could the other \$160,000 be used for environmental studies?
- Possible food truck pads at our Parks (especially Olmsted and Memorial)
- Business rent is not a problem in Downtown Sedro-Woolley
- We are stuck in our ways/patterns here in town. It makes it difficult for new businesses to come into town.

- Maybe kids can help clean the Downtown corridor?
- Don't leave the Downtown corridor to the kids
- The hanging baskets are a big attraction.
- Housing drives business. You need more housing to support additional businesses in town. There is a housing crisis.
- The only way to bring down housing costs is to have an oversupply.
- Reach out to stakeholders when big discussions are happening.

6) If you imagine the City of Sedro-Woolley 30 years from now, what do you see? What would you like it to be?

- This question was not asked.

7) General questions of the group, from the group.

8) Housing

- Council member Lavacca asked that housing be added to the list as item #8. There was conversation about housing throughout the evening.

9) Community Development Grant Program

- Council member Burns asked to have a discussion on this topic.
- Introduction by Council member Joe Burns of a grant program that would provide up to \$5,000 grants to various groups and individuals for various projects that would beautify the City.
- This is a great idea. It could help the Downtown corridor. It is something I could get behind as a community owner or a business owner.
- That number (\$5,000 is probably too low). Just one garage door is \$6,000. A 58' owning was \$52,000. Maybe \$10,000 per application.