

Road RENEWAL

Washington town sees benefit of making downtown more inviting for all users

Grandview, Wash., is a small city in south central Washington located in the Yakima Valley about halfway between Yakima and the tri-cities of Richland, Pasco and Kennewick.

Grandview is known for its agriculture: apples, cherries, grapes, hops, asparagus, corn, wheat, dairy and other fruit and vegetable production. There are a number of processing plants and cold-storage facilities that support the agricultural production. Grandview

is home to about 9,100 people.

With snow-capped Mount Rainier and Mount Adams to the west and the Rattlesnake Hills and Horse Heaven Hills to the north and south, respectively, Grandview does indeed have a “grand view,” from which the city gets its name.

Back in 2006, Grandview wanted to reinvigorate the downtown and created an action plan to do so. The action plan was developed by the community and city officials with a focus on redoing a six-block area of Grandview. The plan, “Downtown Alive!,” looked to create a welcoming streetscape, one that was more comfortable and safer

for residents and visitors to enjoy downtown. This initiated an effort to look for funding.

By 2008, Grandview had accumulated \$3.8 million in funding from 10 different sources, including federal, state and local. The largest portion Grandview received was \$2.03 million in federal American Recovery & Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds in late 2009 for the construction of “Downtown Alive!” Washington State Department of Transportation’s (WSDOT) Office of Highways and Local Programs (H&LP), who administered the federal and some of the state funds, helped make the project



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happen. However, H&LP's director, Kathleen Davis, recognized the importance of local involvement and decision making in making the project a success.

"It can't be Olympia telling them what to do," said Davis. "Grandview created a vision for themselves and made it happen."

On their own two feet

According to Cus Arteaga, Grandview's city administrator/public works director, the "Downtown Alive!" concept was actually born in the early 1990s when the city hired a streetscape architect. The architect said the city needed improvements to downtown to get people out of their cars and walk around. The very first step in the process started when the city bought a parking lot a block off Main Street and provided access via an alleyway/passageway from the parking lot to Main Street. But to do the "Downtown Alive!" project, Arteaga noted, "We had to figure out how to get this funded. It's hard to get funds without a plan."

The first phase of Grandview's "Downtown Alive!" improvements included grinding and an asphalt overlay, reconstruction of curb and gutter, storm-water facilities, relocation of utilities, widened sidewalks and new and improved street lighting.

Arteaga noted that in the beginning there were three merchants opposed to the project. This required him to initiate one-on-ones with these merchants (and other downtown merchants, as well) to listen to and address their concerns. The merchants' main concern was parking. Grandview's Department of Public Works (DPW) addressed the merchants' concerns by providing additional parking both on Main Street with diagonal parking on one side of the street, as well as better using space behind the stores accessible by existing alleys. At the end of the project, the merchants had a BBQ to thank the contractor and DPW staff.

Streetscape treatments included flower pots, textured paving, street trees and shrubs. To accommodate pedestrians, sidewalks were widened, benches and other street furniture



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were installed, trees and landscaping elements were added, a pocket park was created and a large mural of historic Grandview enhanced the community flavor. Narrowing street widths from 36 to 24 ft and including bulb-outs, textured paving and bold striping made street crossings safer.

The city surveyed available downtown parking before the project and made sure the loss of on-street parking was replaced by off-street parking in lots or behind merchants' shops. Truck deliveries were accommodated by rerouting to alleyways. Previously, Main Street was used for truck deliveries to downtown businesses. The plan was to reduce truck congestion on Main Street.

Public project

The key to making this project work for Grandview was the reaching out, Arteaga noted. The city went



out on the merchants' time to make it work for them. If he needed to meet with the merchants on Saturday morning, then he met with them on Saturday morning.

City council members, merchant block captains (who were to talk with their neighbors and share information) and Arteaga met frequently to discuss issues and concerns during project development. The chamber of

commerce joined in and opened up a web page with designs to help allay merchants' concerns and show what the project could look like.

When asked if there were any issues during construction, Arteaga noted there were none to speak of because of the outreach and coordination done by DPW. DPW listened to the merchants and worked with the contractor to keep storefronts open during construction. Also, the contractor didn't tear up all the blocks at once, Arteaga noted. They did it one or two blocks at a time. This minimized inconvenience and helped give other merchants an idea and some comfort of what was to come.

When construction was done Arteaga recalled going into one of the stores and the owner saying, "Your project looks so good I'm going to have to remodel my place." Other owners started painting their businesses, as a result. All this has led to growth for existing businesses, and another nine or 10 new businesses have moved in.

They saw, they came

One merchant asked Arteaga before the project, "Do you really believe people will come?" After the project was completed that same merchant said, "You've built it and they have

Complete case study

Grandview's "Downtown Alive" project was featured as a case study in Washington's Complete Streets & Main Street Highways Program (Case Studies & Practice Resource, WA-RD 780.1, November 2011) which was conducted in cooperation with the U.S. DOT, Federal Highway Administration.

The following is an excerpt from the case study:

Complete streets is a national movement that promotes accessibility for all users. Typical complete-streets components accommodate pedestrians, bicycles, transit users, personal vehicles and freight trucks. A growing number of communities in Washington state and nationwide have existing complete-streets policies or ordinances. Washington state passed a Complete Streets Bill (HB 1071) that went into effect July 2011, creating a program that would provide grants to communities that met appropriate criteria.

come." Arteaga said, "It's been nothing but good."

With the success of Grandview's "Downtown Alive!" project, a number of other cities have come to Grandview to see what they have done. The cities of White Salmon, Othello and other mayors and city councils have come by. Arteaga said, "It's been fun for us. The city of Sunnyside is going to be doing it, too."

Grandview Mayor Norm Childress

has said, "I've never received so much positive feedback as I've received on the project." Childress has been mayor for 20 years.

The project won two state awards based in part on community involvement, community results, a demonstration of sustainable community development and being creative in finding and using various funding sources. Specifically:

- Grandview was awarded the 2011 People's Choice Award for Best Community Impact from the Washington State Infrastructure Assistance Coordinating Council; and
- Also in 2011, the project was awarded the Director's Award by WSDOT's Office of Highways & Local Programs and the Washington Division of the Federal Highway Administration.

In Grandview's future, the town will be doing some resurfacing over the next couple of years, and although there isn't funding to do a wholesale makeover as they did with the "Downtown Alive!" project, they will incorporate some of the same concepts in those resurfacing projects. **TM&E**

Mathis is division administrator, FHWA Washington Division.



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