

# Colville Stakeholder Interviews

## Interview Comments

Colville Library

August 17-18, 2016



*The following pages summarize the conversations had with stakeholders at the City of Colville in development of the city's strategic plan. Many themes were addressed by numerous stakeholders. The conversations were conducted in confidence, and the comments related in this summary are not intended to be attributable to any individual. In all cases, topics included in this summary were discussed by more than one interviewee, though opinions on any given topic may have varied.*

*Stakeholders were identified with input from the City. A total of 17 stakeholders were interviewed by Ryan Hughes and Emily Adams of Studio Cascade, Inc. The majority of these conversations occurred at the Colville Library over the course of Wednesday, August 17<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, August 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016.*

*Interviewers sought to ensure that discussions covered questions related to prioritization of funding and the vision for the City. Interviews were conducted informally, allowing respondents to voice their thoughts and opinions. Respondents were encouraged to discuss what they liked about the City now, what issues may be present, and what improvements they would like to see.*

## Summary

*Each stakeholder has a different background, and different experiences that made their answers unique; despite this, there were common themes amongst many of the discussions. The reason people have chosen to live in Colville, or stay in Colville, was a common thread throughout- they all made similar references to the outdoors, the people, and the small-town feel. The stakeholders often touched on the fact that they felt as if Colville had the potential to improve in a multitude of ways. Much of this improvement centered on growth, Main Street, and the mindset within the City.*

*The majority of stakeholders had a similar outlook on the project, and hoped to see improvements to the community as a whole. Colville serves a population much bigger than just the population within the City limits, it has a regional draw, and that is an aspect many believe should be capitalized on. Projects and/or events they like but feel as if could be improved upon included: the Farmer's Market being in a better location, the potential to increase the amount of bike lanes in the City, and having more and easier access to outdoor activities.*

## Stakeholders Interviewed

- Greg Knight, Executive Director Rural Resources
- Izzak Edvalson, Resident
- Bob Anderson, Colville Senior Center Board Member
- Dave Harper, Building Official
- Genevieve Young, Sandra's Furniture
- Carolyn Byrd, Citizen
- Dr. Ron Rehn, Providence Health
- Glen Durall, Planning Commission
- Debra Hansen, WSU Extension Office Director
- Ozzie Wilkinson, Rotary Member
- Ron Frostad, Engineering Tech
- Tiane Shoemaker, Chair of Vinson Committee
- Barry Bacon, Doctor
- Mary Selecky, Former WA State Secretary of Health
- Muriel Meyer, Historic Preservation Committee Board Member
- Vickie Strong, City Treasurer
- Paul Wade, Planning Commission

## Topics

### Community Facilities

*The city's recent improvements have been appreciated. The extension of Hawthorne Ave will connect downtown to the hospital and schools. Water and sewer improvements are also a good step, providing business with needed infrastructure for expansion activities. Stakeholders mentioned recent projects that they thought went well- such as the Heritage Court Plan. Concerns largely centered on updating the pool and even potentially building a recreation center (with aquatics) for residents and visitors use. This would allow for year round use and the potential to host more sport-related events. The airport expansion was also mentioned as an opportunity for economic development. A number of stakeholders suggested that the farmer's market be given a permanent home. A larger site which includes covered space and utilities would attract additional vendors and a longer market season.*

### Tourism

*Tourism has huge potential. Stakeholders want to create a reason to stop in Colville, to have something that draws people in. It is a natural stop on the way from Canada to Spokane, and it was said that many groups stop in surrounding towns but not in Colville. City and regional events and attractions should be used to draw people in. A few stakeholders mentioned the usual events are not doing as well as they used to and it may be time to consider new ones. A well-developed branding and tourism strategy (plan) can articulate Colville's competitive advantage.*

### Rural Community

*Colville's residents value many of the things which make a rural community great: family, social gathering (both religious and community groups), seasonality (eg. "closing shop to go hunting"), etc. But, this may constrain economic productivity and progress, workforce development, as well as business vitality. It also may constrain the diverse expression of ideas, lifestyles, and pursuits which lead to new opportunities. At the same time the peaceful culture is an aspect people like about Colville. Stakeholders believed that those core values at the center of the community are important and should be acknowledged, while seeking ways not to hinder progress.*

### Community Assets / Attractions

Colville is the largest town in the county, so it is a natural center of commerce, government, and community gathering. With a population of 5,000 that increases during the week when people come into town to work and shop. It's a natural pathway from Canada to Spokane and places further south. The proximity to the outdoors has been highly cited as one of Colville's greatest assets; access can be improved. Seasonal events and activities are highly promoted and large part of life in Colville. The medical facilities located in Colville are top-notch and a plays a large role in drawing people. People can retire in Colville, because they know they can receive care.

### Outdoors

*Most stakeholders made reference to the fact that the outdoors is one of Colville's major assets. From mountains, lakes, rivers, and pristine forest land, the proximity to outdoor activities and the beauty of the surrounding scenery should be capitalized on.*

### Housing (Affordability / Availability)

*Colville is suffering from a lack of quality housing for families, workers, and low-income residents. A few mentioned that housing which is being built is in the county. Retirees moving into the community in are able to pay higher prices, leaving very few affordable options for*

others. Low-income residents are often forced to live in sub-standard manufactured homes. Colville lacks an ample variety of housing choices for its residents. There are also concerns about fire-life-safety, and both residential and commercial building and fire codes being enforced. It is uncertain what the city is doing to remedy these concerns.

### **Economic Development**

Stakeholders mentioned the success of light industries which Colville is home to; including Colmac Coils, Hewes Craft Boats, Hearth and Home and Vaagens Lumber. The success of WA Dental locating its call center Colville has created numerous employment opportunity. Many believe it's vitally important to support existing businesses while developing an environment which encourages and supports both entrepreneurs and small businesses setting up shop in Colville. The health sector plays a major role in the economics of the City. With a sought after residency and a draw of 40,000 people the medical care in Colville allows people to age in place. Despite this there are issues with obtaining a workforce.

### **Main Street**

As its center of community, Main Street is what greets Colville's visitors and residents. However, it is not receiving the attention it deserves. The branded big-box has affected the 'mom-and-pops'. There are speed concerns about Main Street, and the ease at which both cars and pedestrians can get across it. It is not regarded as a pedestrian or bike-friendly street. The stop lights were an often mentioned topic and the back and forth that has been witnessed about them. Stakeholders also felt that downtown needs to improve its welcoming feel and Main Street can play a big part in that. Redevelopment of Heritage Square can play a part of creating a safe environment for pedestrians.

### **Workforce Development**

There's a significant need to align economic development goals with educational and training opportunities. There are vacancies at the hospital (and clinics) that aren't being filled. Furthermore, it's in the city's best interest to assess the health of existing industries and employers, determine the future of these industries, and provide opportunities for residents to train for these roles. Colville benefits when businesses set up in town and hire locals. A vibrant ecosystem of innovation and entrepreneurship is also important; providing local entrepreneurs access to the resources to achieve success.

### **Demographics – Changing make-up of community**

The community's demographics are changing. This affects the way businesses respond. It affects resident's needs, the tax base, as well as the way governments manage their resources. It's also an opportunity. Recognizing these changes; the city can present itself as a viable community for senior residents to age-in-place. Quality healthcare, housing design, pedestrian friendly environments, a strong sense of community as well as universal design elements in infrastructure are all components of successful age-in-place communities.

### **Multi-Generational Services (opportunities)**

The concern for multi-generation services, including recreation, was voiced by a number of stakeholders. Expanding (and improving) options for kids, families, and seniors was mentioned. The city's parks and recreation facilities have suffered from neglect and deferred maintenance. Updated and developed parks, trail-systems, and recreation center (including aquatics) were all mentioned. Serving seniors is also greatly important. The new senior center has been a success, but faces financial constraints and can be utilized even more effectively.

### **Community Programs (services)**

*The community has a large variety of service programs, availability of medical resources, and is central to many regional and county-wide public agencies and organizations. However, there are a significant number of Colville residents which who are also vulnerable. The community suffers from rural poverty, alcohol and drug addiction and homelessness. Law enforcement and courts are punitively focused. The community needs strong policy and programs guided by its leadership to serve its most marginalized.*

### **Traffic**

*The traffic situation on Main Street needs to be addressed. Going through town feels like a freeway to some. It does not feel like a pedestrian or bike friendly environment. Traffic calming, landscaping and better signage would slow traffic. It's difficult for the city to feel inviting with the current vehicle speeds and unsafe pedestrian experience.*

### **Growth, not stagnation**

*Stakeholders noted that Colville is not growing within City limits. There is growth in the county, but a lack of land and lack of strategic attraction is preventing the City's population from growing and gaining the benefits that come along with that growth. The historical resource-based economic drivers, Timber, Mining, and Agriculture, are in decline. The City needs a larger population base to sustain its economy and help support the local businesses. Development opportunities appear constrained due to limited (or, expensive) development sites.*

### **Government (culture / leadership)**

*Multiple discussions centered on the perceived (and experienced) culture of City Hall. Many opined that the City has become complacent and is moving forward without a unified vision. This makes progress sporadic at best. It's believed more can be done to foster an environment that businesses want to join. Stakeholders believe Colville has great potential, but a disconnection with and within the government slows progress and frustrates those wishing to move forward. Stakeholders desire a "can-do" attitude from their leadership, and a solutions-based approach to harness great ideas.*