

Kingston Citizens Advisory Council

Business Roundtable Meeting Notes, August 2, 2017

KCAC members present: Glenn Malin, Mary Gleysteen, Sally Christy, Steve Heacock, Dennis Hedlund, Kathy Nikirk, Beth Worthington, Mark Libby, Jim Pavarnik, Linda Fyfe, Annie Perry

Meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. A motion was passed accepting meeting minutes from May and June. Following the roundtable, a motion was passed adjourning the meeting at 8:35 p.m.

Reminder: The September 6 meeting of KCAC features a town hall with Commissioner Rob Gelder and Sheriff Gary Simpson.

Business Roundtable moderators: Colleen Carey, executive director of the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, and Dave Wetter of the Kingston Stakeholders, former KCAC member and project manager of the community center construction

Business Roundtable participants: Cam Fletcher, owner of the old Kingston Lumber site; Mark and Amy Anderson, owners of Cup & Muffin; Paul Barrett of Westside Pizza; Lisa Maxwell of Little City Candy Company; Johnny Walker of Almost Candid Photo & Frame; and Micki Monroe of d’Vine Wines at Cleo’s Landing

These notes are not meant to be verbatim and some questions and answers were combined for brevity.

Question: What’s good about operating a business in Kingston?

- Strong sense of community and connection with other business owners
- Low crime
- Provides an opportunity in a small town to be connected in creative ways, where you won’t get lost
- Provides opportunity to help shape a small town and manage growth
- Kingston is in a beautiful location but an underserved market

Question: How do you anticipate passenger-only ferry service to Seattle beginning next summer impacting your business?

- Anticipate substantial bump in business during summer months not only due to ridership in the short term, but also the population growth in the longer-term
- Kitsap Transit has not presented a plan for where cars will be parked other than the park-n-ride at Albertsons. Why hasn’t an impact study been done to look at how increased traffic may impact downtown?
- Likely to see an increase in foot traffic throughout downtown and hopefully as residential density increases, drawing younger families to the area
- Uptown will need to figure out how to draw those ferry riders up to their businesses
- It may take three to five years for ridership and population to grow so in the meantime, it’s necessary to be building those relationships during the shorter-term transition
- Be watchful about parking – how Kitsap Transit manages it for its riders, its impacts on Port of Kingston and downtown parking

Question: How does the parking and traffic in downtown impact your business?

- Kingston has a reputation as a roadblock where you have to stop and wait
- All of the traffic coming through downtown is a huge amenity but let’s give them a reason to stop here (entice drivers to pull over, have dinner or drop in at the port for a concert instead of waiting in line)

- Speeding down Highway 104 to the ferry not only keeps people from taking in the local businesses and parks, but also puts pedestrians in harm's way.
- Identified as a priority by participants: ferry traffic backups are a huge issue that Washington State Department of Transportation needs to address immediately. This summer has been especially bad and during traffic backups in the middle of the week, when Washington State Patrol is not hired to manage traffic lines, cars are backed up down the middle of the road keeping people from patronizing local businesses and impeding local traffic. Businesses report the number of customers coming in totally drops – when it should be increasing with so many people in town
- Until WSF/WSDOT/WSP manage the traffic, locals and visitors alike will be hesitant to come into downtown on a regular basis, which is vital to supporting businesses
- Port-a-potties installed in downtown and at the holding area at Lindvog would take a lot of the burden off local business to provide restroom facilities for those waiting in line for the ferry

Question: How can the community support local businesses during 'off-season?'

- Community events downtown, especially family centered ones, help draw customers
- Kingston is a grab-and-go community, a drive-through town, where carry-out businesses do well
- Need to make sure that those who live in downtown Seattle taking the foot ferry over for the day know what's available here for shopping and recreation
- Local businesses need to embrace and plan for the future or they will become a victim of it

Question: What are the challenges that impact businesses further uptown – from Cleo's Landing to the shopping center?

- No continuity between the core part of downtown and Cleo's landing
- No trashcans or public restrooms, not enough sidewalks, and too many weedy parking lots don't make downtown very welcoming to visitors
- There is also a lack of connectivity between what are seen as the four economic districts downtown (old town, shopping centers and surrounding area uptown, George's Corner, Kennedy Business Park). There needs to be a discussion to create actionables to address ways to increase this connectivity
Implementation of the Complete Streets will help

A main concern about doing business in Kingston is the public infrastructure of the areas surrounding Highway 104. What do you see as the greatest challenges and what can be done to help overcome these obstacles?

- Streamline the permit process with the Kitsap County Department of Community Development. There needs to be more clarity and fewer ridiculous stumbling blocks, code needs to be equitable and fair and applied equally. The cost of permits, number of regulations and the pace of government also weigh on the ability to do business, especially as small business owners
- Planning for sewer and water infrastructure needs to be done to make sure needs are met as the community expands
- Housing in the downtown core needs to include apartments to keep economic diversity intact and increase density so there are more residents to support local downtown business..
- Public parking can be confusing, especially to visitors. There needs to be better signage. The property WSDOT owns at the corner of Lindvog and Highway 104 should be utilized as a holding lane for ferry traffic
- WSDOT needs to increase signage and communication to the public about where to wait in line for the ferry. Those stuck in the line of traffic downtown may not even know they are in a ferry line or where the line is supposed to queue up. Having this traffic mess at the entry into town does not make it look like a very welcoming community