

Technical Assistance for Sustainable Communities: Building Blocks

Technical Assistance Tool: The Cool Planning Handbook Kimberly Idaho, March 12-13, 2012

To: Polly Hulse, Kimberly Citizen/Formerly City of Kimberly
Jenny Nickerson, Planning and Zoning, City of Kimberly
Mayor Tracy Armstrong, City of Kimberly

Cc: Smart Growth America

From: Mandi Roberts, Otak, Inc.

Date: March 29, 2012

Re: Suggested Next Steps as Outcome of Technical Assistance

Cool Planning Workshop Overview

The City of Kimberly was the recipient of a Smart Growth America (SGA) technical assistance grant, and representatives from SGA held a series of workshop sessions on March 12 and 13, 2012 in the community. The overall goal of the workshop series was to identify opportunities for preserving community character while enhancing economic competitiveness and quality of life with future growth in Kimberly.

The interactive community workshop series focused on key strategies and tools for implementing Smart Growth from the Cool Planning Handbook, developed by Otak, Inc., a planning and design firm based in the Pacific Northwest and a member of SGA's technical assistance team. Representatives from Otak helped facilitate the workshop sessions, along with representatives from SGA and Idaho Smart Growth.

The evening of March 12, members of the downtown business community and other interested folks attended an introductory session on Smart Growth topics. On March 13, various members of the community attended a day-long workshop to explore more in-depth ideas and opportunities for Kimberly. Workshop attendees also participated in a walking tour of downtown and then discussed potential tools and strategies for managing growth and changes in Kimberly over the coming years. Representatives from Otak gave a presentation to Kimberly City Council the evening of March 13 that summarized the results of the workshop series and provided recommendations for next steps in planning for Kimberly's future.

Applying Cool Planning Handbook Tools in Kimberly

STRATEGIES FOR SMART GROWTH FROM THE COOL PLANNING HANDBOOK

The *Cool Planning Handbook* provides a comprehensive description of topics and strategies that can help communities grow in cost-effective ways. Workshop facilitators presented Smart Growth strategies from the *Cool Planning Handbook* with a focus on specific opportunities for Kimberly. The following topics were addressed:

- Grow More Compact
- Get Centered
- Make Streets More Complete
- Put Parking in Its Place

GROW MORE COMPACT

One of the most important ways for a community to grow smart is to bring things closer together. One way to do this is by increasing density within the city's service area. When coupled with mixed land uses, higher density development gives people more transportation options and choices, makes walking, bicycling, and bus access more feasible, and reduces the distances people have to drive. Communities can also realize economic benefits as a result of lower costs for infrastructure, utilities, and public services.

Key Strategies:

- Avoid sprawl and commercial strip development and minimize travel distances.
- Provide a variety of housing choices to fit the different needs of the community.
- Shift to more compact, higher densities of housing in downtown areas.
- Concentrate density and development cost-effectively and in areas of sufficient infrastructure.
- Provide a full mix of land uses (schools, post offices, grocery stores, hardware stores, beauty salons, restaurants, cafes, bakeries, coffee shops, theaters, libraries, cultural events, various retail shops, etc.) to serve the community within walking distance from neighborhoods.

GET CENTERED

Community "centeredness" or "centrality" refers to the importance of maintaining and enhancing downtowns and other centers of a community. Getting centered often starts with looking at ways to make downtowns more vibrant and economically viable.

Key Strategies:

- Create and maintain a vibrant, attractive downtown.
- Activate sidewalks and public spaces with cafés, furnishings, public art, and other features.
- Retain historic and unique character of downtown to enhance its sense of place.
- Create a recognizable civic space that citizens will refer to as the “heart” of their community.
- Concentrate a mix of land uses and services—businesses, offices, housing, community services, schools, etc.—in downtown and focus areas already served by infrastructure.
- Reduce the need to drive for every trip by locating housing in proximity to schools, shopping, parks, and community services.
- Publicly invest in the downtown to help attract and support more private investment.
- Improve the community’s tax base by decreasing the cost of providing and maintaining infrastructure through focused growth in downtown.

MAKE STREETS MORE COMPLETE

For decades streets were designed primarily for the movement of vehicles. Street rights-of-way can take up 25 to 40 percent or more of the land area in our cities, which is important public space that can serve multiple functions. Communities of today are pushing harder for streets to be more complete—to be designed to serve the needs of all modes (vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, carry utility systems, manage and clean stormwater, and provide parking. Streetscapes can be transformed to reflect community character and attract pedestrian activity.

Key Strategies:

- Maximize the number of people and functions that the city’s streets serve.
- Improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, including students.
- Make city streets bicycle and pedestrian friendly by designating bike lanes and/or sharrows and providing continuous sidewalks.
- Enhance walkability by maintaining smaller block scale, narrower streets, and good pedestrian connectivity.
- Make it easier to get from place to place by bike or on-foot by providing a mix of land uses near housing.
- Maintain on-street parking.
- Provide curb extensions (curb bulbs) and landscaped medians, which can serve as refuge areas for crossing pedestrians. Curb extensions improve visibility and lines of sight between motorists and pedestrians.
- Design streets to calm traffic and lower speeds in downtowns, neighborhoods, and school zones.
- Integrate sustainable stormwater management solutions.
- Replace tall “cobra-head” streetlights with pedestrian-scale lighting.

- Install attractive street furniture, such as benches, landscaping, street trees, and public art.
- Design building faces and signs with human-scale in mind, so as not to overwhelm pedestrians.
- Pedestrian friendly streets and districts are good for business.
- Provide good linkages to transit.

PUT PARKING IN ITS PLACE

One of the most important influences on travel behavior is the way parking is planned and managed. While it is very important to provide a sufficient level of parking for downtown shops and uses, having too much parking with large empty lots can threaten the vitality of a downtown. The best and most attractive cities and downtown areas are designed for people, not cars.

Key Strategies:

- Factor on-street parking into the required parking quantities for redevelopment.
- Encourage as much on-street parking as possible, which provides a buffer between street traffic and pedestrians.
- Look for opportunities to share parking between uses (school parking areas can be used for special events parking on weekends when school is not in session).
- Change minimum parking requirements to maximums.
- Develop design standards for parking and streets.
- Locate buildings along the street frontage, at the right-of-way line in downtown (fronting the sidewalk); place parking lots behind the buildings or consider eliminating parking requirements depending on the use.
- Provide parking where needed, but avoid providing more parking than needed.
- Look for opportunities to redevelop in underutilized parking areas, leveraging a higher value use of the land.
- Screen parking areas from view and provide landscaping and trees in parking lots.
- Provide bike parking.

Kimberly-An Ideal Hometown

The technical assistance team observed that Kimberly has many excellent qualities that make it an ideal hometown. Planning can build upon these qualities as the town prepares for growth and change, such as:

- Orientation to Main Street with downtown buildings fronting the street;
- Strong local businesses supported by the community;
- Reputation for good schools, which is attracting more residents;

- Smaller scale blocks and development patterns, ideal for creating a walkable/bicycle-friendly town;
- Good start on the variety of residential, schools, parks, retail/commercial, and other uses in and near downtown; and
- Opportunities for redevelopment/new development, as long as it is compatible with Kimberly's goals.

At the workshop, the technical assistance team posed the question: "How can Kimberly keep its unique character and identity and increase its economic competitiveness?" With the nearby construction of the Chobani Yogurt plant, as well as other industry growth in the Magic Valley, and Kimberly's desirable hometown character and school system, now is the time to plan for growth and change. Retaining and enhancing the qualities that make Kimberly a special place should be the foundation of that planning.

Summary of Key Issues & Opportunities

Workshop participants were given post-it note pads in four colors and asked to provide comments about issues and opportunities related to each of the four topics. Comments and input received is summarized in the attached table. The map graphic attached to this report also summarizes workshop participants' ideas for various planning focus areas in Kimberly. Other issues, ideas, and opportunities discussed at the workshop are summarized below.

- There is a need for continuous sidewalks in downtown, especially for kids walking to and from school.
 - School areas/walking routes are a higher priority for sidewalks.
 - During the morning drop off and afternoon pick up, the intersection of Center and Main Streets gets extremely backed up in all directions; look for alternative route for the buses.
 - More school bus use could be encouraged to reduce congestion related to dropping off and picking up students.
 - Promote walking and carpooling to school to help eliminate congestion at these key times.
 - A detailed multi-modal circulation study of the school campus and surrounding transportation network is needed to understand how to resolve these issues.
- There is a need for more walking paths/trails in and around Kimberly; connect to regional trail system (trail to Twin Falls).
- Some of the main draws that bring people to the Kimberly central business district are:
 - Schools

- Post office
 - Banks
 - Senior Center
 - Shopping/retail (Quilt Barn)
- Examples of improvements that are needed in Kimberly:
 - Making it easier to get around town (intersection controls, pedestrian facilities, bicycling lanes/routes, better connectivity, etc.).
 - Improved sight distance as intersections and pedestrian crossings. (It is sometimes hard to pull out at an intersection because you can't see oncoming traffic very well.)
 - Railroad separates town – need better crossings of railroad tracks (including pedestrian crossings).
 - Clear and safe routes to school.
 - Future plan for road improvements.
 - Does bicycling make sense to procure services? Post office, hardware store, bank, grocery store, etc.?
 - If bicycling facilities are provided and if people feel safe bicycling, they will bicycle for some of their trips – maybe not all, but some. Need to think about not just the way people travel through town today, but providing more choices for how they can travel in the future.
 - Would you need higher density housing close to center?
 - Makes sense to concentrate development with infrastructure.
 - The downtown core needs to work well – this means more rooftops in the downtown.
 - Better delineation of and improvement of parking along side streets is a priority. We could probably get a lot more parking spaces if we formally delineated/striped spaces on the side streets that connect to Main Street.
 - Side streets right-of-way? Need to document space available for parking? Will there be impacts to lawns, driveways, etc.? How do you deal with street improvements that affect private property improvements (lawns, landscaping, fences, driveways, etc.)
 - Designers/engineers typically work at a property by property level with each owner to determine how to fit improvements within the right-of-way. Street projects often include rebuilding of driveways, fences, and landscaping.
 - Older part of town to west currently has no sidewalks and cars park in odd configurations – need to better define spaces.

- Some have been concerned about the loss of parking spaces with the proposed curb extensions/bulb-outs in the downtown revitalization plan.
 - Bulb-outs/curb extensions can be designed to minimize loss of on-street parking spaces. The bulb-outs do not have to extend into the parking areas.
 - Parking needs to be set back from intersections a minimum of 30 feet anyway for good sight distance.
 - Some towns use temporary features to test bulb-outs – such as moveable planters, which can be used in the summer when more people are walking, but removed in the winter when there is less walking and more snow plowing.
 - Bulb-outs and curb extensions are common in all sorts of small towns, not just big cities. They add to the character of downtowns.
 - They increase visibility of pedestrians and put pedestrians further out so they can easily see oncoming traffic. They also help approaching motorists on side streets see oncoming traffic better. *(Note: This was demonstrated in the downtown walking tour and workshop participants agreed that there are advantages to the bulb-outs for pedestrian and motorist safety.)*

- Our current sewer system capacity constrains our ability to grow 10-15 years. (We can't actively pursue wet industries.)

- We really need to preserve Kimberly's hometown feel (small shops/stores, friendliness, strong schools, water, good neighbors).

- As we grow, it will be important that we encourage our citizens to continue to support downtown businesses (Quilt Barn, Nature's Gate, etc.). We have strong businesses in downtown. People come from all over to go to the Quilt Barn.

- Many business owners have lived in Kimberly most of their lives. That home grown feeling = good service. People are providing service to their neighbors, friends, and families.

- What area would you consider to be the "heart" of Kimberly/downtown?
 - Old City Hall space
 - City Park (one block off of Main Street)

- Is there an opportunity to create a festival space?
 - Shared street with special paving, bollards, furnishings, etc. that can be open to traffic except during special events – maybe extend the sense of the park by doing this on Madison.

- Could have this type of street on Madison on both sides of Main Street. It could also be a nice pedestrian corridor – connecting both sides of town.
- What about the underutilized Wells Fargo parking lot? It was the past location of the farmers’ market but we were told we had to relocate. Parking area seems like a great redevelopment opportunity for downtown, either as a new mixed use building, or as a new public space.
- The new health services center will be developed at the southeast corner of Main Street and Madison. Really important for that new building and the street frontage improvements there to blend with Kimberly’s character and also set an example of what the City wants redevelopment to look like downtown.
- What should Kimberly be like for future generations? What legacy should always be a part of Kimberly? How should your kids remember their hometown?
 - Hometown feel
 - Friendly
 - Good schools
 - Focus on agriculture – that is what Kimberly has always been – a hub for the surrounding agricultural industry.
- How can you protect businesses during construction of improvements?
 - Maintaining business atmosphere throughout construction.
 - Good communications before, during, and after construction process—critical!
 - Coordination with Kimberly Business Owners Association.
 - Help local businesses with promotions and advertising.
 - Phased development.
 - Clear wayfinding and signage.
 - Door hangers/clear information to businesses.
 - Tools for minimizing impacts – clear communications with the residences.
 - Studies have shown economic benefits result from redevelopment of downtowns. Improving main streets can add customers and increase business activities – so the message to businesses is that there may be some inconveniences during construction, but over the long term business will be better/stronger.
 - Strong contract management is important – hold construction contractors to a schedule.
- Capitalize upon the historic buildings and strong “main street” presence of downtown.
- Old buildings to be preserved – need to identify what buildings are important to Kimberly history/culture.

- Promotion of locally owned businesses – as well as locally produced and grown foods and products.
 - There is a big movement across the country related to restaurants that feature locally grown foods, meat, wines, etc. Kimberly is well positioned to promote this given the surrounding agricultural focus.
- Agriculture base is absolutely critical, community was founded on agriculture.
 - Agricultural land preservation in outlying area, farmland is very valuable. Sprawl from growth can impact valuable farmlands.
 - We are seeing farmland purchases from people out of state to keep as farmland; don't envision that farmlands would be affected by growth- not for a long time. Farmland is too valuable right now.
- We are local! Big box, chains, corporate owned businesses do not belong in Kimberly.
 - This can be managed through formula business restrictions.
 - We should pursue who we want to be in Kimberly. We need to be proactive and not reactive to businesses coming into town.
- We're seeing a need for housing and employment for the younger generations so they can come back here to live after college or spending time away.
- We need more youth/teen activities in Kimberly, such as a recreation center, swimming pool, theater, etc. (Need more things to do here so the kids don't have to drive to Twin Falls.)
- Kimberly is in the process of developing a Master Parks Plan.
- Reuse underdeveloped/brownfield properties.
- Methodist Church recently changed ownership – possible opportunity.
- Seed company and surrounding parcels – plans underway for future redevelopment. Is there an opportunity to look at higher density in scale with downtown?
- If you look at a lot of the existing buildings in downtown, they were designed as mixed use – with shops below and shopkeepers housing or offices above.

- Need a Capital Improvements Plan – so that improvements to streets, utilities, parks, and other facilities and services can be planned, phased, and funded in line with anticipated growth.
- Homes for the 55+ age group, such as active retirement housing – senior and assisted living.
- With future build out, need a connection street to the west of town.
- Do not want Main Street to turn into Blue Lakes Boulevard; don't want Kimberly to become a suburb of Twin Falls with no distinction between the two.
- Evaluate places where the land is worth more than the structures for redevelopment opportunities. (Can provide Missoula, Montana example to Kimberly staff.)
- The block with the post office is beautiful and considered “historic,” but has significant structural issues.
- NW of the commercial business district in downtown has rehabilitation potential.
- East of the commercial business district = healthy neighborhoods.
- Multi-family going in as rental housing/low-income residential northeast of central business district.
- Consider creating an overlay zone to add higher density residential next to central business district.
- Consider intermediate zoning to allow for smaller or attached single family homes, cottages, duplexes, townhomes, rowhouses, etc. (Breaking R2, Residential Limited, down into more categories, or expanding Residential Professional; clearly define mixed use opportunities and where they are desired.)
- Need to determine what the housing demand is for the area. How much will it grow?
- Need market analysis to address land values and demands for business/redevelopment.
- Grange Hall should be rehabilitated or rebuilt.

- Incorporate a public art program – walking gallery within businesses. Consider the potential for attracting artists/galleries/studios to Kimberly.
- ELK – Everybody Loves Kimberly.
- Need to create a strong sense of entry into Kimberly on all routes coming into town but especially from the north. Look at opportunities at corner of Main where Highway 30 makes the turn. This would be a great place to create a gateway. Evaluate potential of a roundabout here; work with ITD.
- Supermarket may move to a new site away from central business district of downtown. How can we keep them in the downtown core? It is important to have a full-service grocery store downtown.

Recommended Next Steps

PREPARING FOR GROWTH

A lot of things are happening in and around Kimberly. There will be more growth and more changes in the community as new residents and businesses come to the area. Now is the time to prepare for this growth and change.

Through Smart Growth practices and implementation of the recommended next steps from the Cool Planning Workshop, Kimberly will be able to:

- Proactively address growth and change rather than being reactive.
- Plan smartly for infrastructure improvements to support growth, reducing unnecessary expenditures related to sprawl or growth outside of utility and public service areas;
- Reduce the amount of time, energy, and fuel devoted to driving by creating an environment where more people can choose to walk or bicycle to get to and from school, work, park, community center, post office, bank, shops, and other locations.
- Improve the local tax base through higher value development.

HERE'S THE "TO DO" LIST :

The technical assistance team recommends the following next steps for Kimberly as it prepares for its future. Some of these recommended steps could be completed in the near term.

Others could be tackled as time and resources allow.

- Prepare a capital improvements plan that works in tandem with the City's comprehensive plan to focus and prioritize needed improvements to public services and utilities (streets, sewer, water, stormwater, parks, etc.)

- Conduct a multi-modal circulation study focused on the school campus and surrounding street network. Determine how best to address congestion issues at peak periods through on-site roads, better cross connectivity, and routes through parking areas. Explore opportunities for shared parking and use of school parking areas for special events. Avoid designing Main Street/Center Street intersection for the peak school hour traffic. This could create a wide, multi-lane intersection that is out-of-scale with downtown and becomes a barrier to pedestrian crossings.
- Communicate the envisioned type of redevelopment and desired direction of growth to developers and realtors.
- To preserve the hometown “look and feel” of Kimberly, consider developing a set of design guidelines that would include drawings, images, and narrative descriptions of the desired character for downtown and other planning focus areas. (Refer to the City of Cheyenne Streetscape/Urban Design Elements prepared by Otak as an example: http://www.wyopass.org/Documents/Upload/File/Downtown_Street_Scape_Handbook_Cheyenne.pdf)
- Improve the downtown shopping environment and local economic returns by encouraging and recruiting businesses and activities that are a good fit for Kimberly. (What’s missing? What does the town need? A sidewalk café? A bakery? A art gallery? Determine what you need and actively pursue those businesses.)
- Conduct market research to help determine the types and levels of development that the market can support in Kimberly. (Don’t overdevelop—develop the right amount. Too much of a certain type of development or land use will dilute values.)
- Focus first on redevelopment opportunities before new development.
- Prepare for new development by:
 - Examining existing zoning and standards and revising/improving where necessary.
 - Improving processes and tools.
 - Providing incentives to developers to encourage implementation of desired types of projects/results.
- Plan and zone to allow for a variety of housing types to be developed in and near downtown. Provide choices that fit the diverse needs of Kimberly citizens (families, young couples, empty-nesters, seniors, etc.)

- Identify buildings and sites that are historically/culturally important to Kimberly. Conduct condition assessments to determine how to preserve and protect these buildings and sites.
- For street improvements, implement the proposed downtown revitalization project. If there are concerns about bulb-outs, you can test them with temporary features (removable planters for example). Provide education and in-the-field demonstrations about the benefits and effectiveness of bulb-outs/curb extensions. They can create an enhanced “front door” environment for businesses.
- Update the City’s comprehensive plan to describe a clear vision for town growth and change, as well as more in-depth narrative descriptions of how City services and utilities should be improved to serve growth.
- Combine these recommended actions and others identified by citizens, staff, and town leaders into an “Action Plan” that can be part of the updated comprehensive plan.

See key steps to developing an Action Plan – next page.

Assistance provided with grant support from US EPA's Office of Sustainable Communities under their Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program.



Developing an Action Plan

The action plan should describe:

- Regulatory changes needed to implement desired vision for Kimberly
- Proposed actions (projects, programs, activities, improvements) needed to support the City's vision and plan and estimated costs of implementing these actions (which then feed into the capital improvement plan)
- Partnerships
- Potential sources of funding
- Time frames for initiating and completing each action

An Action Plan can be created through a simple three-step process:

1. Identify what needs to be done (actions)
2. Prioritize actions
 - Short-term (one to three years)
 - Mid-range (three to six years)
 - Longer-term (Beyond six years)
3. Program short-term actions into a three-year program.

Recipe for Success:

- Identify Year 1 tasks needed to set you up for Year 2
- Repeat for Year 2 and Year 3
- As Year 1 is completed – update the plan:
 - Year 2 becomes the new Year 1
 - Year 3 becomes the new Year 2
 - Add a new Year 3

This approach allows for ongoing monitoring and adaptive management. The City can monitor progress on actions being implemented, and report on progress to City leadership and the public. It is also important to involve the community, as well as key partners and stakeholders in the planning process, before annual updating. Engage the community in identifying what other actions need to be added to the action plan.

Creating an action plan will help the Kimberly community by:

- Identifying local partners and common objectives;
- Better positioning projects and improvement needs for funding opportunities;
- Keeping the community focused on growing in a direction that supports its vision; and
- Building and maintaining momentum by achieving tangible results that benefit the town and its citizens.