

Highway 99

Focused Public Investment Area

Action Plan



Department of Community Development
Long Range Planning - Economic Development



proud past, promising future

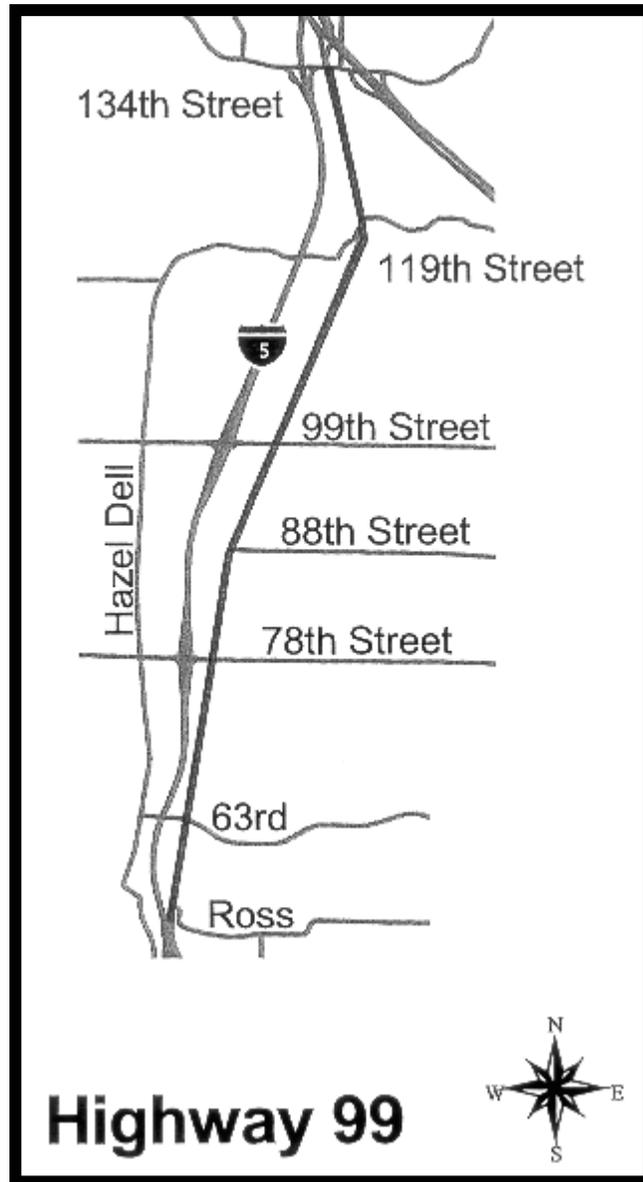
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AREA MAP



INTRODUCTION

The History

Highway 99 located within Clark County, Washington, is rich in local lore and tied to the earliest settlements in Washington State. The original trail linked the homestead settlers to the army barracks at Ft. Vancouver and the Columbia River crossing into Oregon. During the Indian Wars of the 1850s, this old trail was built as a military road known as the Pacific Highway. It extended beyond the local farm settlements, linking the area north beyond Seattle to the Canadian border and south to the Mexican border at Calexico, California.

In 1926, under the new U.S. Highway System, the Pacific Highway was renamed US Highway 99 from Blaine, Washington to Los Angeles, California. Over the next 40 years, US Highway 99 became the primary route along the west coast linking the major cities of Washington, Oregon, and California. Like its cross-country cousin Route 66 which found fame in popular music, movies and a television series, US Highway 99 developed a roadside commercial culture of ten-room motels, teepee-shaped restaurants, and full service gas stations.



The completion of Interstate 5 through Seattle in 1965 was a turning point for US Highway 99. Between 1964 and 1972, the remaining road segments were either decommissioned as a US Highway or converted into a state highway of the same number in all three states.

In Vancouver, Washington, US Highway 99 was decommissioned in 1972 and returned to Clark County. Today, Highway 99 stretches approximately 4 miles from the Main Street and Interstate 5 interchange north to the junction between Interstate 5 and 205.

PROCESS

Team 99

While Highway 99 is a key transportation corridor adjacent to Interstate 5, it also serves as a regional business district for the Hazel Dell, Salmon Creek, and Felida unincorporated areas. Since the 1950's, this business district has experienced periods of prosperity, stagnation, and recession. Today, Highway 99 continues to function as a commercial strip reminiscent of the original US Highway 99, but has not redeveloped significantly since through traffic moved to Interstate 5.

In September 2000, a group of concerned residents, businesses, and property owners formed "Team 99" to launch a concentrated revitalization effort for the Highway 99 corridor. The core group received financial support from Hazel Dell /Salmon Creek Business Association and logistical support from Fire District #6 and other community groups to research how to spur quality redevelopment. Team 99 identified the study area as the section of Highway 99 that begins at the City of Vancouver's city boundary near NE 63rd Street north to NE 134th Street where it joins with Interstate 5. The group began gathering information from local business sources and other communities in the Portland metro area to provide insight into their successes and lessons learned.

The first step toward transformation of the Highway 99 corridor included identifying opportunities and issues affecting the area and developing a vision for the corridor. Then, Team 99 researched a variety of tools to achieve the desired end result of attractive redevelopment including land use and zoning, streetscape improvements, design standards, transit investments, code enforcement and funding mechanisms. Several short-term goals were set and achieved. A key product of this process is this Action Plan through which Team 99, the county and other partners will implement the community vision and begin the transformation of this corridor.

Issues and Opportunities

In order to identify opportunities and issues affecting the Highway 99 corridor study area, Team 99 approached the Board of Clark County Commissioners to fund a survey. By September 2001, Team 99 launched the "Team 99 Study." The study was a random-sample telephone survey of residents in Fire District 6 performed by Riley Research and Associates. The purpose of the study was to gather community input and impressions of Highway 99. The survey was designed to prioritize improvements that would contribute to safe travel and the commercial viability of the corridor. Key results from the survey:

- 65% of the respondents rated mobility along Highway 99 at 5 - 8 on a 10 point scale where 1 means the most difficult to get where you want to go.
- 8% of the respondents had traveled by bicycle along the highway; 82% of those who biked did not feel it was safe to do so.
- 28% of the respondents had crossed the highway on foot. Of these, 68% felt it was safe crossing the street.
- 50% of the respondents felt strongly that it was necessary to improve Highway 99 to be more bike or pedestrian friendly.
- Amenities that would make respondents more likely to shop along Highway 99 included a wider variety of shops and services (63%), trees to minimize view of overhead wires (45%) and a better pedestrian environment (43%).

- Overall, respondents ranked the highest priority for improvements on the corridor to be 1) safety and traffic issues, 2) appearance/aesthetics, and 3) retail variety.

Developing a Vision for the Corridor

On September 17, 2001, Team 99 and Clark County hosted a community open house. Over 100 people attended including residents, business people, property owners, and staff from various county departments and service providers. The open house generated a great many ideas, a good deal of enthusiasm and community support for revitalizing Highway 99. The following emerged as the vision statement for the group:

Vision Statement

“To revitalize historic Hazel Dell as a vital, attractive, cohesive, prosperous, accessible, safe community and destination in which to work, shop, live, and play.”

Stakeholder Interviews

While there was clearly community support for revitalization, at this stage the level of support among property owners and business tenants remained uncertain. To assist Team 99 in reaching property owners and business people along the corridor, the Board of County Commissioners contracted with the JD White Company, Inc. on December 18, 2001 to perform a stakeholder survey. The survey included one-on-one interviews with 15 stakeholders representing a diverse mix of interests and an analysis of the information obtained throughout the process.

The “Property / Business Owner Stakeholder Interview Report: Highway 99 Revitalization” was completed in May 2002. The report concluded that the main obstacle for revitalization along Highway 99 is the lack of a cohesive vision for the corridor by local business owners.

Other conclusions were that many property owners would support revitalization efforts as long as these efforts had a demonstrable positive financial benefit. Revitalization strategies should emphasize partnerships, include private sector funding, provide incentives for higher quality development, and demonstrate a positive return on investment over time.

Short Term Goals

Building on the base of information provided by the survey and stakeholder report, Team 99 continued to research successful revitalization projects and techniques. The group solicited and received presentations from a broad variety

of sources, from real estate professionals to Main Street managers. This research along with the recommendations that emerged from the surveys pointed out the need for action to achieve several short term goals.

In October 2002, the Board of County Commissioners agreed to provide Community Development staff support to assist Team 99 in achieving these goals:

Design standards: Determine what changes, if any, are needed to site design standards to effectively meet revitalization goals.

Roadway Cross-section: Develop a consensus on the desired cross-section for the right-of-way and amend the Arterial Atlas if needed.

Streetscape Pilot Project: Define the scope and objectives for a streetscape pilot project and modify road design standards if needed.

Building Effective Partnerships: Communicate and build effective partnerships with a broad base of community members, property owners and service providers including the Board of County Commissioners.

Accomplishments

To date, Team 99 has made substantial progress on each of these goals.

Design standards: Following extensive review of the existing design standards and how they have been implemented in recent developments in the corridor, there was no clear consensus on needed changes. One concern expressed was the available option to reduce the front yard setback to zero under the Commercial District Design Guidelines (CCC 18.313.130). A workshop with the Board was held on June 4, 2003 on this topic. There was no direction to initiate Code amendments at this time.

Further action needed: 1) Request Board approval to review access management, cross-circulation and parking standards for all commercial districts and 2) Review and consider requesting that the Board adopt monument sign standards similar to the old Mill Plain Overlay District.

Roadway Cross-section: Team 99 recommended an amendment to the Arterial Atlas to reduce the classification of Hwy 99 to a four lane arterial with center median/turn lane, bike lanes and sidewalks (Pr-4cb). The Board approved this amendment on July 14, 2003.

Streetscape Pilot Project: Team 99 approved a preliminary streetscape and design for the pilot project on December 16, 2003. The objectives of the project are to:

1. Increase pedestrian safety and improve bike and traffic safety by reducing conflicting turning movements,

2. improve appearance / aesthetics, and
3. stimulate revitalization and private investment.

The project area selected was NE 78th to NE 88th Street, because it has the highest pedestrian fatality rate and it offers the greatest potential for redevelopment and private participation. The proposed design includes:

- increase sidewalk width by 6-7 feet , reducing excess pavement width,
- adding street trees in tree wells,
- installing a landscaped median, pedestrian scale lighting, bus shelters and pullouts (where feasible), and
- re-striping lanes; relocating overhead wires underground (where feasible).

This design is fully consistent with the current Pr-4cb designation and would not require a road modification or new standard. Team 99 recommends that this design be applied consistently throughout the corridor.

Further action needed: 1) Include project in the TIP and 2) Identify funding sources and opportunities to leverage public investment.

Building Effective Partnerships: This is an on-going effort the success of which will become more evident as projects come to fruition, particularly those that are volunteer-based. Team 99 has strong ties to the Hazel Dell / Salmon Creek Business Association, NE Hazel Dell Neighborhood Association and a number of other local organizations.

The Board of County Commissioners has identified Highway 99 as a top priority location for focused public investment. Focusing resources on economic development in this corridor supports and is fully consistent with the *Clark County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan..*

At the state level, the Office of Community Trade and Economic Development (CTED) has expressed a great deal of interest in this revitalization effort. The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is sponsoring a Walkable Communities Workshop in May, 2004. This workshop presented by the National Center for Bicycling & Walking will provide another opportunity to engage a variety of partners in making Highway 99 and Hazel Dell a safer walking and cycling environment.



ACTION PLAN

Land Use and Zoning

Develop strategies and create incentives for high quality redevelopment and the conversion from a strip commercial environment to one with a mix of uses.

1. Monitor and provide comments on development applications, site specific requests and other land use proposals.
2. Continue to request regular code enforcement inspections along the corridor.
3. Evaluate the prospects for re-designating some areas (e.g. from Highway Commercial to Mixed Use or Office Campus) to reduce the strip commercial character along the corridor.
4. Promote changes to the sign code to reduce signage, eliminate “stick” signs and to require monument signs with new development in the corridor.
5. Evaluate the need for an overlay district to allow the application of corridor specific design standards.



Transportation

Improve safety, comfort and circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motor vehicle users.

1. Develop public support and help to secure funding for the ten block pilot project.
2. Support and participate in the Walkable Communities Workshop.
3. Evaluate the current code provisions on access management, medians, cross-circulation, parking design and driveways in commercial district.
4. Plan and advocate for shelters and lighting at all transit stops in the corridor.
5. Build partnerships to locate, design, fund and construct safe mid-block pedestrian crossings and to remove obstructions in the sidewalk area.



Landscape and Environmental Design

Implement landscaping and other visual enhancements on public and private land to improve the image, identity and aesthetic environment of Hazel Dell.

1. Design and develop partnerships to fund and construct entry features south of the railroad bridge and on the north end near Salmon Creek. Investigate the potential for a community plaza or entry feature on NE 78th Street between Highway 99 and I-5.
2. Coordinate with WSDOT and community organizations to landscape the I-5 right-of-way from Main to NE 99th St.
3. Explore a wetlands enhancement project or wetlands bank for the area east of NE 13th Avenue, north of NE 78th St.

Economic Development

Understand market conditions and address the constraints to achieving a positive return on investment with revitalization.

1. Form an Economic Development Committee with a work program to include:
 - Tracking private and public investment, job creation
 - Business expansion and retention assistance
 - Identifying and addressing constraints to redevelopment
 - Identifying available incentives, training and resources
2. Collect up-to-date market research relevant to the corridor.
3. Provide technical assistance to property and business owners.

Promotions / Marketing

Improve the image and commercial viability of Highway 99 by coordinating promotional activities such as joint marketing, public relations and festivals.

1. Form a promotions committee to build on existing events and create new events that effectively promote the business district.
2. Explore business owners' interest in cross-promotion and joint marketing. Programs could be based on business clusters such as entertainment packages (bowling, miniature golf, movies, restaurants), a cruise-in or car show (auto parts and repair businesses) and other '50s or '60s theme auto events.
3. Create a restaurant /business guide for motel customers.
4. Initiate an after hours get-together for business owners.

Community Participation

Create a broad base of support in the community for revitalization of the Highway 99 corridor. Build partnerships to help complete projects and advocate for proactive change.

1. Provide support to the Walkable Communities Workshop, May 13, 2004.
2. Communicate on a regular basis with the general public, neighborhood and business associations, elected officials, the media and others regarding Team 99 goals and activities.

FUNDING STRATEGIES

- Traffic Impact Fee Exemptions
- Public Development Authority (PDA's)
- Tax Increment Financing District
- Community Revitalization Financing (RCW 38.98)
- Improvement District:
 - Road Improvement District (RIDs)
 - Business Improvement District (BIDs)
 - Local Improvement District (LIDs)
- CTED
 - Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
 - Public Works Trust Fund
 - Façade Improvement Program
- Transportation Improvement Board
- Public Works
 - Service Transportation Program
 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ)
 - Transportation and Community and System Preservation (TCSP)
 - Transportation Enhancement Funds
 - Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)

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Current Team 99 Participating Organizations

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