



Port of Kennewick



AGENDA

***Port of Kennewick, City of Kennewick, and Kennewick Public Facilities District
Special Joint Meeting
Three Rivers Convention Center
Kennewick, Washington
Tuesday, April 7, 2015
6:00 p.m.***

- I. Calls to Order
Welcome: City of Kennewick Mayor Steve Young,
Port of Kennewick Commission President Don Barnes
- II. Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Public Comment *(Please state your name and address for the public record)*
- IV. Columbia Gardens Revitalization Project
 - A. Introduction: Steve Young, City of Kennewick, and Don Barnes, Port of Kennewick
 - B. General Concepts: Marie Mosley, City of Kennewick, and Tim Arntzen, Port of Kennewick
- V. Vista Field Redevelopment Project
 - A. Introduction: Steve Young, City of Kennewick, Don Barnes, Port of Kennewick, and Barbara Johnson, Kennewick Public Facilities District
 - B. General Concepts: Marie Mosley, City of Kennewick, Tim Arntzen, Port of Kennewick, and Corey Pearson, Kennewick Public Facilities District
- VI. Joint Elected Discussions
- VII. Public Comment *(Please state your name and address for the public record)*
- VIII. Concluding Remarks
Steve Young, Don Barnes, and Barbara Johnson
- IX. Adjournment

PLEASE SILENCE CELL PHONES



Port of Kennewick

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Port Commission

FROM: Larry Peterson, Director of Planning & Development

MEETING DATE: April 7, 2015

AGENDA ITEM: Vista Field Master Planning update (Coordination between Port, City and Kennewick Public Facility District efforts)

- I. REFERENCE(S):** Vista Field Charrette II Report (2015-02-15) via website;
Vista Field A Project pattern Language (2015-02-09) via website;
White Paper Development Strategy Assessment (2014-08-12);
White Paper Regional Benefit Strategy (2014-10-21);
White Paper Off-Site Connectivity (2015-04-02);
- II. FISCAL IMPACT:** None related to pending discussion;
- III. DISCUSSION:** In November 2014 the Port with the assistance of Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) conducted a week long Charrette (creative burst of energy to solve a complex problem) to develop a master plan concept for the Port's Vista Field properties. Notification of this opportunity was prolific and over 200 individuals representing numerous perspectives and agencies participated in crafting a vision for the redevelopment of the former Vista Field airport. One underlying comment from most participants as well as the DPZ team was the site should not be consider in a vacuum but rather in the context of the surrounding area. During the Charrette the Port reached out to these adjacent owners (both public and private) to ask questions and share ideas as the concepts evolved and in many cases their representatives participated in the Charrette. *[It was/is known that discussion with a representative from a public agency or with a private owner should not be considered binding approval of the ideas generated at the Charrette]*

On February 6, 2015 the Charrette report was posted on the Port's website and a link sent to the 275+ people who comprised the stakeholders list. This Charrette Report is just that; a report of the ideas and concepts generated in November 2014. The Port Commission, the Vista Vision Task Force (V.V.T.F.), Leadership Tri-Cities, Young Professionals Tri-Cities, and the Kennewick Public Facilities District (KPPFD) have all received a presentation on the ideas and concepts contained in the Charrette Report. Generally the idea, similar to the concept contained in the March 12, 2013 Vista Field FEIS is the development of a regional urban town center. The ideas of developing mixed land uses,

densities higher than existing in the Tri-Cities, and street patterns focused on small blocks and interconnectivity between blocks were all the result of the Charrette.

The Port has been seeking comment on the Charrette Report over the last 60-days in order to help the Port Commission decide which design elements from the Charrette Report become part of the Final Vista Field Master Plan. Just as occurred with the Port's Clover Island Master Plan, the City would be asked to adopt the Vista Field Master Plan as a Sub-Area Plan to their Comprehensive Land Use Plan. At present there has been little discussion regarding design elements proposed on the former airport site, which comprises the bulk of the land area addressed in the Charrette Report.

However there has been substantial discussion regarding the implications, both positive and negative, of elements contained in the Charrette Report which encompass properties not owned by the Port of Kennewick. Specifically the suggestion that the drive isle abutting the Convention Center be extended to the northeast past the Toyota Center to a proposed NW/SE boulevard has resulted in concern. Although this concept was shared during the Charrette subsequent review by the owners and operators of the Convention Center (City, KPFD & VenuWorks) resulted in strong objection to the suggestion of creating this roadway.

In addition, suggested off-site elements included street network enhancements to break down the street pattern dominated by the runway footprint and the general "super-block" configuration were included in the Charrette Report. As the Port moves forward towards the adoption of a Master Plan for Vista Field redevelopment, knowing which of the proposed off-site elements are either supported or opposed by the property owner(s) and/or community is crucial. The Port has and will continue to explain the rationale for inclusion of these various elements and how these possible elements could enhance not only the overall area but also the adjacent properties. Since the Port does not poses the powers of zoning like a City, the off-site issues will come down to self-determination by the entities/individuals controlling those properties. Simply stated the Port cannot force other properties to incorporate the ideas suggested in the Charrette Report.

Attached are three "white papers" (2 of which have already been shared with the V.V.T.F.) on the topics of:

Development Strategy Assessment;
Regional Benefit Strategy;
Off-Site Connectivity;

These documents were prepared by DPZ as supplements to the Charrette Report. And, although the energy generated at the Charrette is hard to explain to those who were unable to attend, videos of the Charrette presentations are linked from the Port's website along with a documentary prepared by Northwest Public Television during the Charrette process.

IV. ACTION REQUESTED OF COMMISSION:

Discussion with City of Kennewick Council and Kennewick Public Facilities Board members.

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD
Offsite Connectivity Challenges and Opportunities (Draft 4)

April 2, 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	2
Current Situation	3
Opportunities for Improvement.....	7
Alternative Concept – New Lane.....	9
Benefits for Vista Field	13
Benefits for the Convention Center.....	13
APPENDICES.....	14-15

DUANY PLATER-ZYBERK AND COMPANY
Michael W Mehaffy, Project Manager
1023 SW 25th Ave. Miami, FL 33135
305-644-1023

Executive Summary

As a followup to the November 2014 Vista Field charrette, this report assesses the challenge of offsite connectivity, opportunities for improvement through a coordinated partnership, and potential benefits to be had by the Port of Kennewick as well as its partner agencies and stakeholders.

As previous analysis has shown, **the Vista Field vicinity is currently highly fragmented and disconnected**. This condition results in part from the inherent need of an airport to prohibit access along its mile-long runway. It also results from a **1960s-era model of planning**, which featured:

1. **Transportation planning** that is oriented **almost exclusively to the automobile**.
2. **Large “superblocks”** featuring **large buildings surrounded by large parking lots**.
3. **Wide streets** spaced far apart that are dangerous to pedestrians and bicyclists.
4. **Activities and uses that are far apart** from one another, and often **empty and inactive**.

By contrast, in recent years many jurisdictions have embraced a **“Main Street model”** that offers strong economic and social benefits:

1. Transportation planning that is geared to **mixed transportation modes**, including **walking, biking and transit** as well as car. **The car is integrated** into walkable neighborhoods.
2. **Smaller blocks** with a **greater variety of smaller buildings and parking areas**, including on-street parking.
3. **A mix of narrower streets** that slow traffic and accommodate pedestrians and bicycles, and that **feature attractive buildings and activities along the street**.
4. **Mixed activities and uses** within compact, walkable areas, and that overlap and provide vibrancy at different times over the course of the day and week.

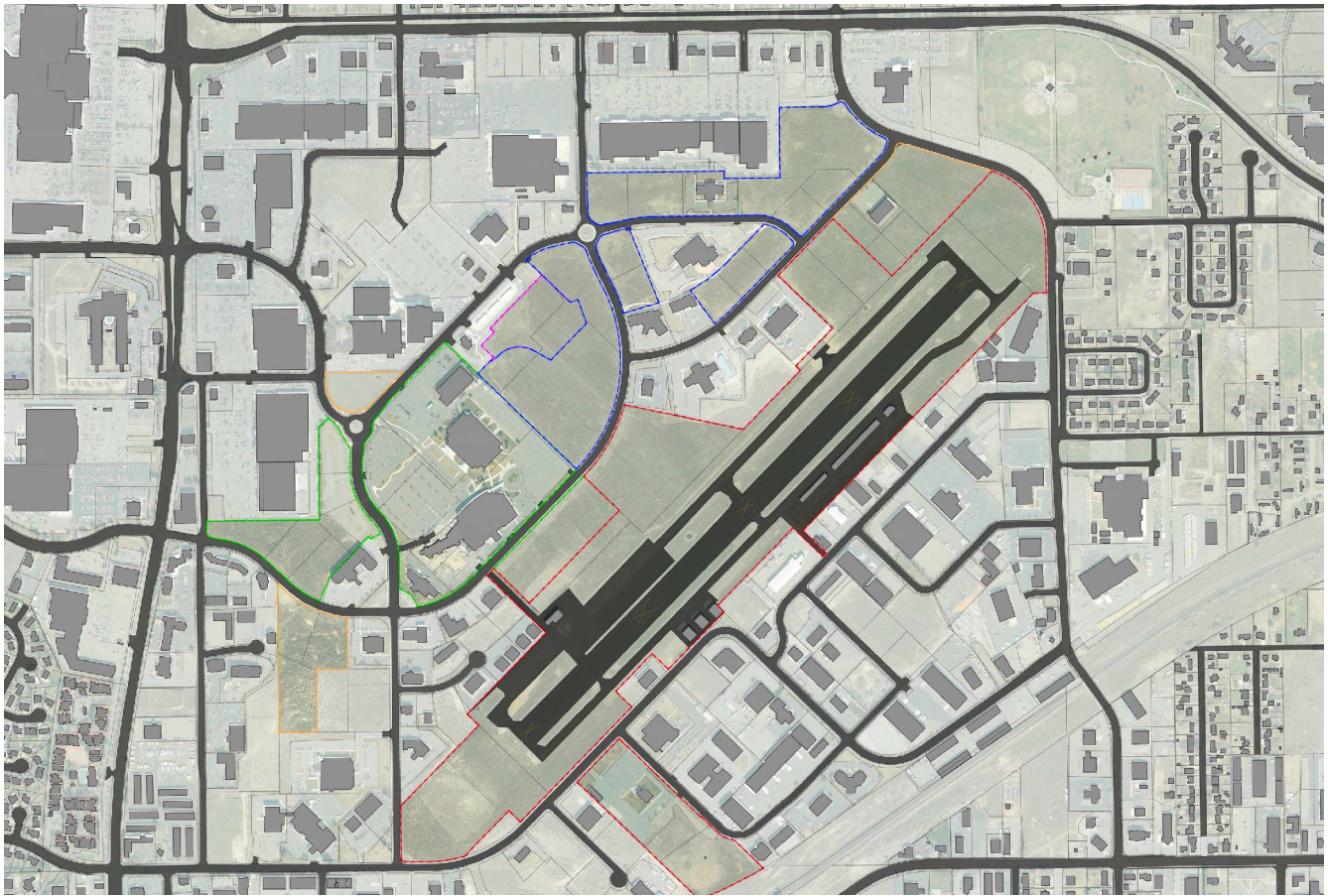
It has been found that the current fragmented condition **poses a long-term threat to the viability and the success** of redevelopment at Vista Field. It also **limits the market appeal of surrounding developments** including the convention center (a point we will examine in more detail in Section 5). Overall, it **limits the competitive position** of the Tri-Cities relative to the opportunities.

Nonetheless, there are **significant opportunities to improve connectivity**, and thereby enhance the appeal and likely success of both Vista Field and surrounding developments. The opportunities are **amply demonstrated in case studies** from around the US, which are discussed in this report. The case studies show that **increased connectivity as part of a mixed-mode, mixed-use development**, with a **more interconnected network of narrower walkable streets**, can provide important benefits.

However, to realize these opportunities, **an integrated plan will be required** between the Port of Kennewick and its partner agencies and other stakeholders.

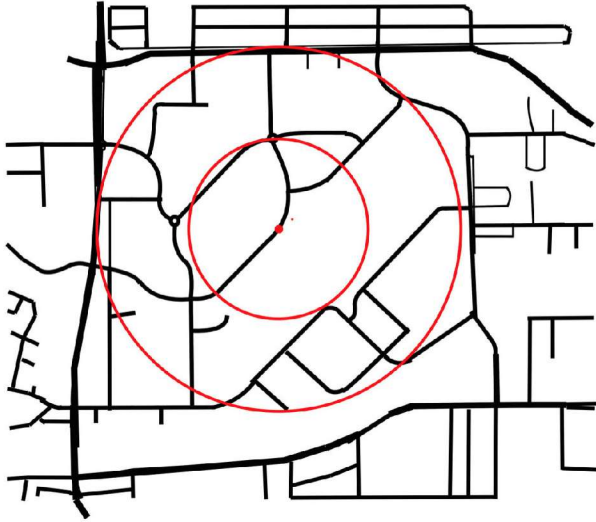
This plan **would take forward the momentum from the November 2014 charrette**, an open public process in which all citizens of the region were invited to participate, and over 300 participated. Many representatives of partner agencies and civic groups also participated. **The plan that emerged from this process does place primary emphasis on connectivity** both within Vista Field, and between Vista Field and the surrounding vicinity. This outcome will likely deliver the highest overall benefit for residents and taxpayers in the long term.

Current Situation



The Vista Field site (shown in the red boundary) is a long, thin, 103-acre tract, roughly one mile long and 1/6 mile wide. The surrounding area poses a number of challenges that must be addressed in the redevelopment process. Among the most important issues:

1. ***The surrounding street network is fragmented and poorly connected to the site.*** In part this is a result of the site's former use as an airport, requiring separation for security and other operational needs, rather than connectivity.
2. ***Key connections to intersections, particularly to the northwest, do not exist.*** The surrounding block system comprises large "superblocks" which are suitable for a "big box shopping" format but not for a walkable civic and entertainment district that meets contemporary standards.
3. ***There is a fragmented ownership pattern of surrounding properties.*** This fragmentation requires that multiple property owners work closely together in order to provide the needed connectivity and better orientation to the new development. However, like many regions, the Tri-Cities contains multiple jurisdictions that are not always working in unison.
4. ***Existing facilities are oriented away from the site.*** This was an understandable response to the former airport use, but now presents challenges. For example, the access, parking and entry to the existing convention center and hockey arena are all oriented in the opposite direction from the Vista Field property, presenting challenges to the creation of a larger and more cohesive district.



Above left, the Vista Field area showing its current “superblock” structure. Above right, downtown Portland at exactly the same scale, showing many more and smaller blocks. The pattern on the right is more typical of walkable city plans before the 1950s and 1960s.

The problem of “superblocks”

In order to understand the current challenges of the Vista Field vicinity, it is necessary to consider the changing models of urban planning over the last several decades.

The planning models that arose in the 1950s and 1960s emphasized what are known as “superblocks” – very large tracts separated by very wide and fast arterials, often with large parking fields adjoining them. These block structures do not promote walkability, and in fact they can make walking an unpleasant and even dangerous experience. This was not considered to be a problem at the time, as it was felt that all passengers would be transported by automobile.

Since that time, the demand has grown for greater choice in transportation and in neighborhood walkability. Many people (though certainly not all) want to have a choice of whether to walk, bike, drive or take transit, and to experience neighborhoods that are more diverse, walkable and interesting. These people represent a significant market demand, which is currently unmet in the Tri-Cities.

There are also potentially significant economic benefits of walkable neighborhoods relative to superblock zones. The taxpayer burden of maintaining streets and infrastructure over a larger area can be notably reduced. Walkable, compact neighborhoods can also perform better as economic draws, offering attractive amenities that can confer a competitive advantage.

All of these factors have influenced a change in planning over the last decade, away from the superblock model and towards smaller, more interconnected block structures. Indeed, these are the time-tested structures of the great old towns and cities – the “main streets” and “good old neighborhoods” – that so many people know and still love.

The problem of wide streets

Along with superblocks, the 1950s-1960s model of transportation also included wide, fast streets. These too were created with the assumption that virtually all transportation would occur by car, and it was not necessary to accommodate pedestrians or other modes beyond the most minimal accommodations. As a result, such streets are also very dangerous and unpleasant for pedestrians.

Once again there are potential economic benefits with a shift of models, toward a more interconnected system of smaller streets. Congestion can actually be relieved with a more diffuse pattern of streets which avoids “choke points.” A more even flow of lower-speed traffic reduces crashes and pedestrian fatalities. A more compact settlement pattern that includes “liner buildings” along streets can increase the revenue to municipalities from taxes and other economic activity.



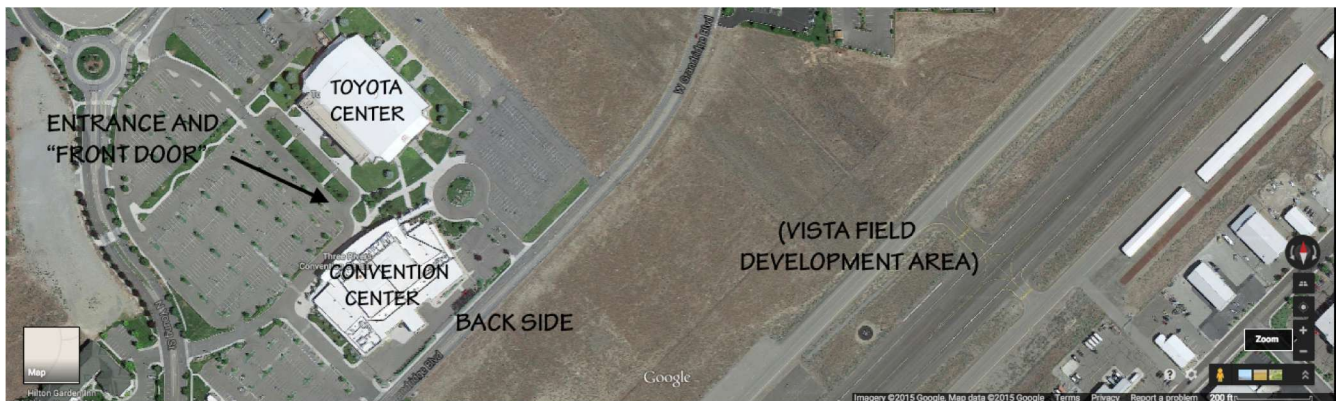
From the Federal Highway Administration: “Wide suburban streets like this one were not built to accommodate walking.”

The problem of fragmented public space

The cities and parts of cities that people find most appealing and desirable often have characteristics of well-organized public space, connected together into walkable chains that invite exploring and lingering. In such places, the streets themselves serve as part of the connective chains, offering a sequence of interesting and lively experiences: shop fronts, cafes, plazas and other appealing amenities.



The beautiful system of connected public spaces, including streets and squares, in Savannah, Georgia. There is a network of walkable streets with mixed activities at their edges – “multi-modal streets” – that allow cars and pedestrians to move smoothly. Photo by Bing Maps.



The convention center and other facilities were historically oriented away from Vista Field, with the main street access and parking lots to the northwest. Photo by Google Maps.

The problem of orientation away from Vista Field

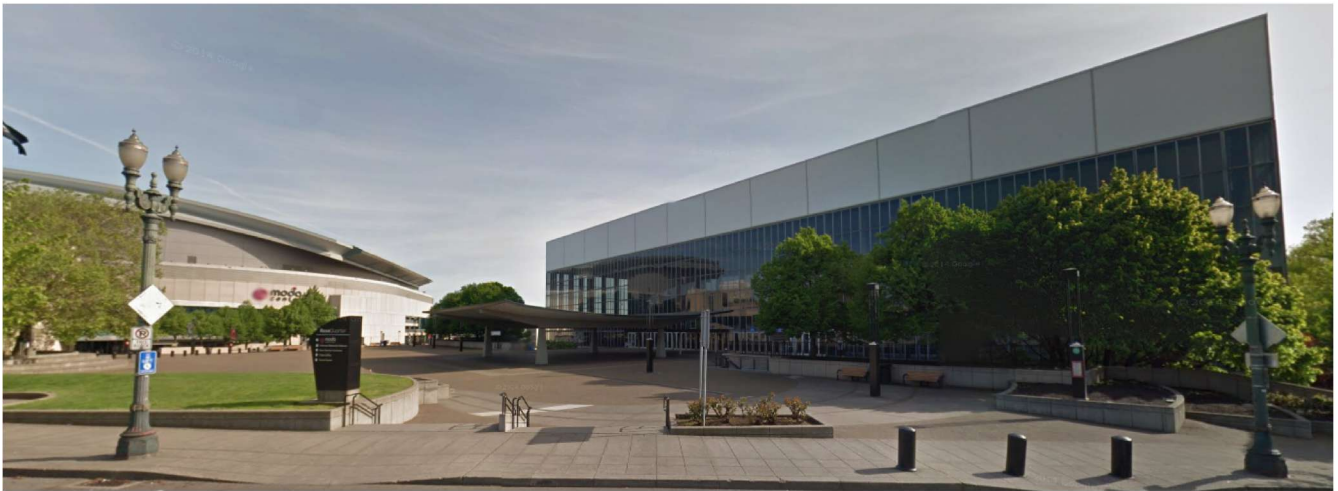
As noted, the current orientation of the convention center and Toyota Center is to the northwest, facing away from Vista Field. At the time that the airport was in operation, this was a sensible relationship, but at present it poses a severe problem for the project. In effect, Vista Field is behind a large wall, the convention center and other proposed future events. This problem is likely to be exacerbated with the enclosure of the space between the convention center and the hockey arena, as proposed under current plans by the Kennewick Public Facilities District. In effect, the connection between the true front door of the convention center and the center of Vista Field will not be closer as a result of these proposed changes – it will be farther away.

A proposal has been made to allow a pedestrian connection through the building at this point. However, this is unlikely to promote connectivity to the center of Vista Field, as it will be only a minor passageway through the building that few pedestrians are likely to utilize. At most times this connection is likely to be locked, and at other times pedestrians are not likely to attempt to get through via this path.

The problem of “dead zones” when events are not under way

The current plan is oriented to single uses such as the convention center, and the streets and parking are typically sized for the maximum event that could occur. But at most other times when such events are not occurring, the infrastructure is greatly under-utilized. This is in contrast to mixed-use districts where infrastructure is used by a succession of events and activities, and where neighborhood vitality is much easier to sustain.

A further problem is the potential for dead zones created by pedestrian-only areas, which are also empty at most times other than major events. By contrast, mixed-use zones with a mix of pedestrians and low-speed vehicles tend to be much more lively at different times (as discussed further below).



The Moda Center in Portland. City officials are struggling to get more activity in this district during the many times when events are not occurring, and it is inactive and even unsafe for nearby residents.

Opportunities for Improvement

Members of the public and other stakeholders who participated in the Vista Field charrette process asserted very clearly that they preferred a change to the planning model. Examples of terms that we recorded in the Pattern Language Workshop:

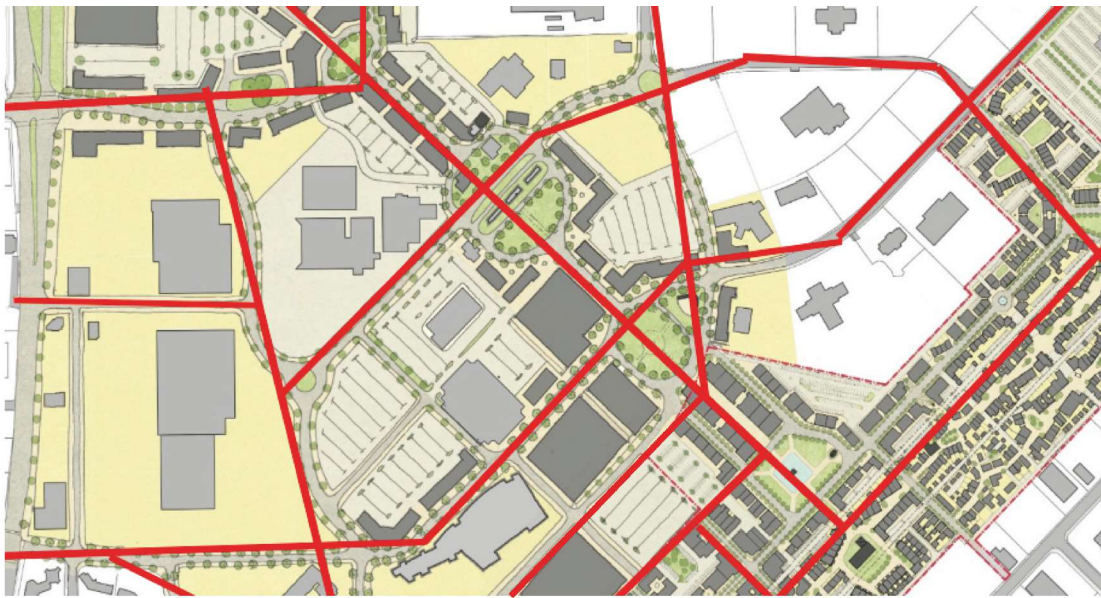
- Walkability
- Mixed use
- Interesting things happening
- A place like other favorite places where we didn't get into a car the whole time

Complaints about current planning:

- Everything is too spread out, too much driving
- The streets are wide and unattractive
- We don't like the tyranny of the automobile
- We don't like buildings that seem plunked down because of a vacant piece of land there

The plan that emerged in response, with strong positive feedback and clear contributions from residents, was a **more walkable grid of smaller streets with a mix of uses and buildings lining the streets**, with parking accommodated along the street, or in easily accessible rear parking lots screened by buildings. **The public realm was integrated into a walkable system** that included streets and public spaces such as greens and plazas. The Vista Field development itself was also shown connecting to the areas to the northwest, including the convention center.

Several smaller meetings during the charrette looked at ways to connect the front of the convention center to the center of Vista Field. The meetings included representatives of City and the Kennewick Public Facilities District. **A plan emerged that would resolve the connectivity and “front to back” problem by creating a low-speed lane in front of the convention center**, extending to the main entry axis to Vista Field. (This plan is shown in more detail on the following pages.)



The charrette scheme proposed creating more connections and smaller blocks – still far larger than those of competitors like Spokane, but addressing the need for improved connectivity at, and to, Vista Field.

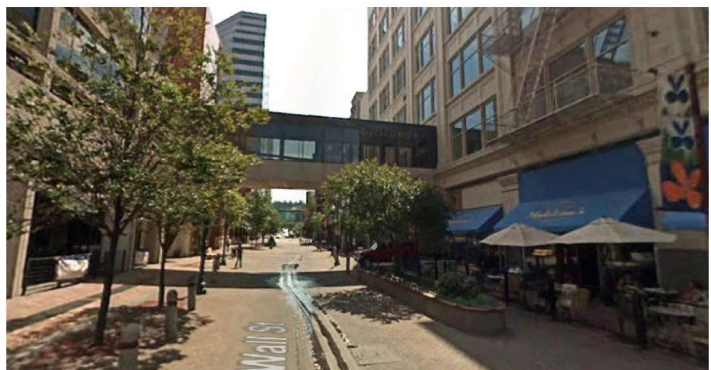
Breakdown of superblocks

The existing superblocks could be reduced in size with small lanes fronting along existing buildings. These would not be high-speed arterials, but rather, slow, low-volume and pedestrian-friendly streets. In some cases these new lanes could follow the paths of current drive lanes in large parking fields, with eventual “liner buildings” to be added later. In other cases they could be added to currently vacant property, so as to create a framework for a better-connected, more walkable block system.

“Road Diets” and “Woonerfs”

With the breakdown of the superblocks, the existing streets could be made safer and more attractive to pedestrians by reducing their width. There are several successful techniques for making these changes to existing streets that are considered too large, and these techniques are often applied under the term “road diet.” For example, planted medians can be added, lanes can be narrowed, on-street parking can be added, and other modes can be accommodated with wider sidewalks, bike lanes, and other similar features.

A similar idea is the “woonerf” - a very low-speed street that also allows pedestrians. An example is Wall Street in Spokane, around the corner from the convention center. It is a street that looks more like a pedestrian promenade, but that actually allows cars to move through slowly. This helps to keep the area more active, and to allow functional activities like dropping off elderly or mobility-impaired passengers.



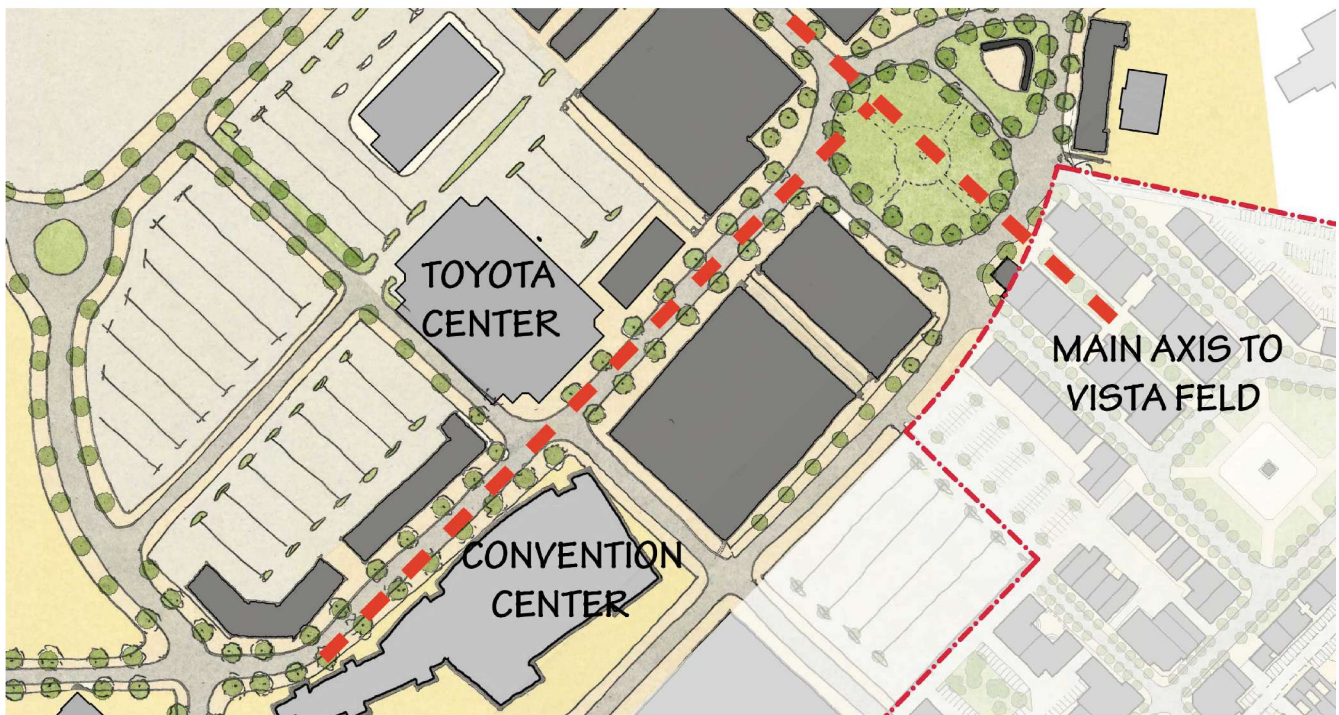
Wall Street, a woonerf-like street in Spokane. Photo: Google Maps



Before (top) and after (bottom): A “road diet” for a street that includes narrowing lanes, adding on-street parking, bringing buildings and activities to the edge, and providing spaces for pedestrians. Photo: City of Overland Park, Kansas

New lane in front of current convention center

During the charrette, the team met with a number of representatives of adjacent stakeholder agencies and discussed options. One of the options was for a lane to connect the front of the current convention center to the main axis entering Vista Field. This main axis, following the former cross-wind runway alignment, is believed to be a critical link between Vista Field and the high-volume “gateway” to the northwest.



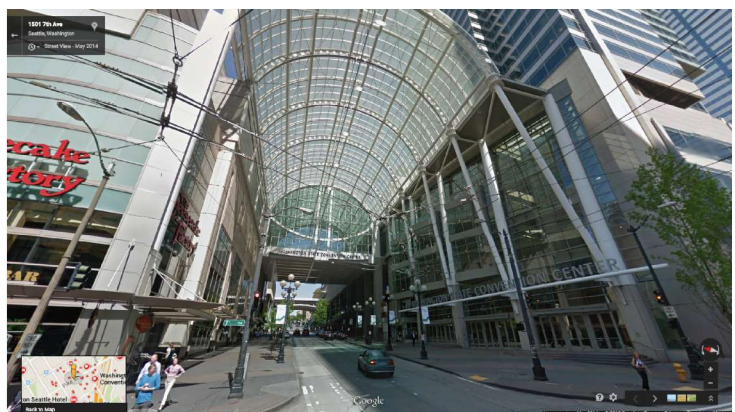
The proposed pedestrian-friendly lane that would connect the convention center to the main entry axis of Vista Field.

Similarly, the current front of the convention center is a point of high activity, and it is felt that a connection to Vista Field from this point will also be critical. A pedestrian-friendly lane extending to the northeast, perhaps under a connecting roof or bridge if needed, could provide this very important connection.

It should be emphasized that this idea emerged from the charrette after discussions with the Chair of the Kennewick Public Facilities Department. Like all charrette proposals, it is ultimately subject to further evaluation, refinement and/or rejection.

It should also be noted that the idea of a lane in front of a convention center is not at all unusual. Nor is the concept of a connecting roof or bridge, as examples from Spokane, Seattle and Portland demonstrate.

Such a feature could be a benefit for both the Port and the Kennewick Public Facilities District, as a good connection to the amenities of Vista Field will be a strong asset for the convention center itself. It could also contribute a distinctive feature that could offer a memorable experience to convention-goers. Many convention centers are changing their model of development from an entirely inward-facing orientation to a much more outward orientation, as discussed in Appendix 1.



Seattle's convention center, with adjoining street and covered roof



Left: The “Jumptown” proposal by the Portland Trailblazers and their partners, a project that would bring a mixed-use street under a roof adjacent to the arena. Right, Spokane’s convention center has a new hotel with a street between them, and an overhead skybridge. Photos: The Cornish Companies, Spokane Convention Center.

In its report, “What’s next for convention centers,” Associations Now reports that meeting planners want venues that are “walkable to dining and entertainment options...” and “convention centers that offer up flexible and different types of meeting space—whether gardens, outdoor space, or small theaters... giving attendees the opportunity to go beyond its walls...”

Collaborate, an association of meeting planners, featured in a recent publication, “Convention centers of the future designed today,” the importance of “a convention center project [to] better integrate with the life of that neighborhood because it strengthens both”... “better integrating with the community and becoming more competitive as a destination.”

These are all creative ideas that were explored during the charrette, in the interest of identifying collaborative, win-win solutions. Of course, the Kennewick Public Facilities District must ultimately decide what is best for their own district.

In any case, the need for connectivity for Vista Field is still great – particularly to the convention center – and achieving better connectivity would be a “win-win” for all the stakeholders and for the Tri-Cities region. Should the “convention center lane” option not be considered feasible, it is strongly advisable that the Port and its agency partners work together to identify an equally effective way of connecting the front of the convention center to the Vista Field development.



Re-orientation to human-scale public spaces – that don't exclude cars

The charrette participants expressed a strong desire for a **chain of public spaces** that include **walkable, people-friendly features**, extending up from Vista Field **through the surrounding vicinity**. This would include a small section of restaurants and other entertainment venues, which would be convenient to the convention center.

It is important to note that this area is not pedestrian-only, but it includes cars. It is certainly true that a wide, high-speed arterial would destroy the pedestrian vitality of such a zone. On the other hand, removing cars entirely is very risky, and often results in a “dead zone” where criminals feel more empowered to operate and where others feel more vulnerable. A zone that allows low-speed cars also allows “eyes on the street” and helps to make a zone feel more connected and vital.

The plan below, developed on behalf of the Kennewick Public Facilities District, does show a strong axis of connection in front of the convention center, and intersecting another axis leading into the center of Vista Field; but the axis is pedestrian-only. As can be seen in Portland and other cities, such areas can become empty and dead – even unsafe – when events are not under way. It is therefore important to create a mix of activities and modes of transportation, including cars, bikes and pedestrians.



2013 KPFD plan showing an axis between the convention center and Toyota Arena, bisecting another axis leading to the center of Vista Field. With the exception of pedestrian-only design, this solution seems to provide the needed connectivity.

Benefits for Vista Field

Improved connectivity in the area adjacent to Vista Field offers a key ingredient for economic success of the project: good access and visibility, and good synergy with the surrounding uses, including the convention center. In fact, it is not too much to say that the connectivity *to* Vista Field is at least as critical as connectivity *within* Vista Field – and probably more so. This connectivity will not occur at just at one point, but as previously described, must form a network that makes it easier to see, walk, drive and otherwise connect to Vista Field.

Benefits for the Convention Center complex – and beyond

The benefits of a more connected street system would not only accrue to the Vista Field project. One important and evident benefit is in the connection to the new amenities of Vista Field, **giving convention-goers access to key competitive assets.**

Secondly, **better connectivity offers a more attractive and competitive convention center district.** As a complement to its currently exclusive focus on generic 1950s-1960s model of car-friendly superblocks, wide arterials and big-box buildings set far back from streets, the region could offer what evidence is showing is in increasing demand: more walkable, distinctive, human-scale streets, tied together with an organized system of appealing public spaces.



Mixed, multi-modal streets can make wonderful public spaces and vibrant neighborhoods.

APPENDIX A: Precedent studies for connected convention centers

<http://associationsnow.com/2013/10/whats-next-for-convention-centers/>

"Meeting planners want it to be safe, **walkable to dining and entertainment options**, and near an airport. Panelists also said that convention centers that offer up flexible and different types of meeting space—whether **gardens, outdoor space**, or small theaters—will be more in demand... Nashville's newly opened Music City Center offers plenty of hotels, entertainment, and restaurants within walking distance of the convention center, really giving attendees the opportunity to **go beyond its walls** and experience the city while they're in town. And Oklahoma City's new convention center, scheduled to open in 2018, will have **a planned park surrounding it and be within walking distance of downtown's entertainment district.**"

<http://www.pcma.org/be-in-the-know/pcma-central/convention-and-meetings-news/news-landing/2014/12/01/5-key-trends-that-will-impact-convention-centers-in-2015#.VMmFHSYRnV0>

"What's outside will matter even more: Millennials don't see the convention center as the place where the event is happening," Priest-Heck said. **"They look at the whole city as the venue."**... "It's important to celebrate the cities we're meeting in," Smith says."

<http://www.collaboratemeetings.com/feature/convention-centers-of-the-future-designed-today-2/>

"Brian Tennyson, principal of convention centers at LMN Architects in Seattle, says many centers built 20 to 30 years ago were placed on the outskirts of town... Today, it's the opposite. Tennyson says meeting planners use their destinations as selling points and delegates expect to experience the flavor of the city.... "People want to experience the city and not be stuck in a windowless room," he says... **"We always look at how a convention center project can better integrate with the life of that neighborhood because it strengthens both,"** says Tennyson... [Referring to Cleveland's new convention center], Tennyson says the remodel and expansion wasn't simply about improving the space; it was about **better integrating with the community and becoming more competitive as a destination.** [Cleveland Convention Center] has bike racks and **a highly walkable location**... "The new center better integrates with [the rest of downtown]," Prusak says... **"When we create a district, it's about how to create a mass of activities around the convention center.** It's all about the experience, so they don't have to drive for miles to get somewhere," says Voth."

Appendix B: DPZ past projects that have included convention centers

At the request of the Port of Kennewick, DPZ seeks to be a good collaborator on “win-win” creative ideas for design that integrates with the convention center and with other civic elements in the vicinity. DPZ has expertise that makes it a potentially useful collaborative partner with other consultants and stakeholders who are working on adjoining projects, and who seek to explore alternative ideas that will achieve a higher level of competitive success for the region.

DPZ projects with convention centers as key elements have included:

- * DownCity Providence Plan, RI, including the Rhode Island Convention Center
- * Plan Baton Rouge (Downtown Master Plan), LA, including the Baton Rouge River Center
- * Downtown Lake Charles Master Plan, LA, including the Lake Charles Civic Center
- * Heart of Peoria Master Plan, IL, including the Peoria Civic Center and the Peoria Riverfront Museum
- * Hickory City Center Plan, NC
- * Roanoke City Market Plan, NC
- * Mableton/Cobb Co Community Plan, GA
- * Miami21, which includes coding for the new Civic Center on the bayfront
- * Ignite High Point, NC, including planning proposals for the downtown core, which hosts the largest furniture market/convention in the world
- * Downtown West Palm Beach, including CityPlace and adjacencies to the Palm Beach Co Convention Center
- * Edinburgh Garden District, Scotland, including a new stadium, and the proposed Calyx (Scotland’s National Garden and Ag Institute).

T H E F U T U R E O F V I S T A F I E L D

Regional Benefit Strategy (Draft)

Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

Draft 4: October 21, 2014

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Regional Benefit Strategy (Draft 4)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
Background	5
Direct Economic Benefits	7
Regional Competitiveness Benefits.....	9
Strategic Development Benefits.....	11
Regional Identity Benefits	13
Quality of Life Benefits.....	15
Strategic Recommendations.....	16
APPENDIX:	
Economic Analysis Data	19

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Regional Benefit Strategy (Draft 3)

Executive Summary

This report assesses the potential benefits to the Tri-Cities region of the Vista Field redevelopment project, and the recommended strategy for maximizing those benefits.

In summary, we find **important benefits for the region**, which, if they are to be realized, must be **identified and developed** through a **coordinated partnership strategy**. A “go it alone” approach (by the Port or by its potential partners) will fail to realize the potential benefits for the region.

Most obviously, but perhaps less valuable to the region than other benefits discussed below, there are the **direct economic benefits** of the development itself: the **jobs and income** that will be created from construction itself, and from the businesses that are established; the **tax revenue** for the Port of Kennewick, City of Kennewick and other jurisdictions; and the **fiscal benefits** for the Port of Kennewick and its ratepayers, and other participants in the economic development.

Second are the **regional competitiveness benefits** that address previously identified gaps in the region's economic competitiveness. These include **amenities that attract and retain key employees** in growing businesses, such as knowledge workers; **amenities that increase the popularity and brand identity of the region** to visitors, especially convention-goers; and **attractiveness to new businesses or institutions** that may be seeking cutting-edge development sites, attractive locales for employees, or new opportunities to co-locate with similar entities or other entities offering mutually beneficial strategic and physical relationships. (Examples include “innovation hub” businesses involved in energy, for example, or businesses involved in the emerging wine industry.)

The importance of amenities for the Tri-Cities Convention Center bears stressing. A gap has already been identified in evening attractions for visiting convention-goers, creating a significant long-term limit on the competitiveness of the center. An entertainment district could help to address this gap. But a separate development from Vista Field – assuming it could be funded – would compete with similar entertainment amenities within Vista Field, tending to create a zero-sum benefit. **A coordinated partnership development of a shared entertainment district offers the opportunity to create a premier amenity for the entire region, and a “win-win” for the relevant agencies and other stakeholders.**

Third, closely related, are the **strategic development benefits** that the project offers to area businesses, both new and existing. **Vista Field offers a prime site** for businesses seeking to employ cutting-edge development strategies, such as “industrial ecology.” This is a large and promising area for development – but **it will require active exploration of emerging opportunities by key stakeholders.**

Fourth are **regional identity benefits** that a distinctive, memorable development could offer, raising it above generic-level development. In particular, Vista Field could become a strongly appealing **“regional downtown district”** – not competing with existing downtowns, but providing a needed anchor and focus for a stronger polycentric region. If development is coordinated carefully with existing jurisdictions, Vista Field can actually strengthen the existing cores (for example, if a new “rubber-tire trolley” were to link Vista Field, the Convention Center and the existing downtowns, each promoted and

developed as a distinctive tourism attraction). The Port and stakeholders have discussed other memorable features including uniquely appealing water features, markets, cultural facilities, and sports facilities. **Whatever the specific elements, excellent design echoing regional character and traditions will be key to strong regional identity.**

Fifth, by no means last, are the direct **quality of life benefits** that Vista Field could offer to area residents. These would likely include public space amenities, recreation amenities, and a walkable mixed use retail destination amenity. Importantly, these elements will be stronger if they are carefully coordinated to develop synergies – for example, if residents can walk between recreation spaces and retail mixed use.

The region is already seeing important development of waterfront open spaces, hike and bike trails, sporting facilities, and other amenities. All of these existing elements can be greatly strengthened with a coordinated strategy with Vista Field serving as an anchor, and strong links between Vista Field and the other amenities of the region. (For example, a hike and bike link, and/or a regular bus link.)

We conclude that these regional benefits can best be maximized through a close working partnership between the Port of Kennewick, working in effect as the “master developer,” and other key jurisdictions, agencies and stakeholders in the region, working as co-developers.

The details of this working partnership (or in practice, many subsidiary partnerships) will need to be developed as the project proceeds, with key agreements-in-principle formed early on to lay the foundation to maximize benefits. It is in the nature of these opportunities that they are “chicken-and-egg” problems, requiring coordinated exploration and development. Many specific ideas will necessarily be examined and later discarded, but a few may well be game-changers. Nonetheless, **there is no single idea – no “silver bullet” – that will realize the potential of Vista Field.** That can only be achieved with patient collaborative development of many elements working in synergy.

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Regional Benefit Strategy (Draft 3)

Background

In December 2013, the Port of Kennewick closed Vista Field airport, a small general-aviation airport with 17 based planes on just over 100 acres. The Port concluded that continued operation of the airport was not viable given the current costs and benefits, the number of alternative airports nearby, and the prohibitive cost of an expansion alternative. The airport had been operating since at least 1943, and possibly earlier.

Following a six-month alternatives analysis with integrated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the alternative chosen was to redevelop the site into a premier mixed-use regional center, developing synergies with the adjacent convention center, shopping, medical office, civic buildings and other uses. This decision was heavily influenced by the key strategic location of the site.

This initial planning process included extensive public involvement, discussion, and community workshops, through a multi-day charrette, a scoping meeting, a public hearing, and several other public meetings and forums. The Port and its consultants presented a number of possible ideas to the attendees, and other suggestions were offered by attendees and through email comments. Many of these suggestions underwent further evaluation and refinement prior to consolidation and rigorous analysis of feasibility, economic benefit and other environmental impacts.

The full report and Environmental Impact Statement is available through the Port's website at:
<http://portofkennewick.org/uploads/flipbook/airport/>

There was strong public consensus that the site should be developed to a high standard, regardless of the specific development option chosen. Participants spoke of a major regional attraction, a destination place to go in the evenings and on weekends, a “downtown” for the region (though not competing with existing downtowns), and a facility that would provide quality of life amenities.

Our analysis showed a similar set of opportunities, with even greater potential. For example, the site might provide the opportunity to “plug the gaps” in amenities that are needed to enhance the region's economic competitiveness. One notable issue, raised by a number of citizens as well as consultants, is the need for a regional “gathering place” that meets the expectations of young professionals and other potential employment recruits. A related issue is the problem of attracting convention-goers when there are limited activities after the daytime convention events.

Another related issue is the need to grow businesses that provide a foundation for “life after Hanford.” Some of these may be tech spinoffs, while others may be related to the growing wine industry. Still others might relate to arts and other unique local businesses, which provide a needed complement to the national chain businesses. (See for example the report from Roger Brooks International for Visit Tri-Cities, TRIDEC and the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce addressing this point.) There may be other important economic activities in the region that we don't yet anticipate – but that the Vista Field site could facilitate in some important way. It will be important to search out these embryonic elements and to develop them as part of a regional competitiveness strategy. It will also be important to explore how these elements might work in synergy (for example, in the concept known as “industrial ecology” which we discuss in the section on regional competitiveness benefits below).

Yet another issue is the opportunity to enhance the region's identity and “brand”, by providing a striking, memorable asset. There are a number of ways to do this. One strong suggestion that emerged from the public involvement was the incorporation of a major water feature – perhaps a canal, lake or other similar feature. Another, related suggestion was to create a distinctive civic zone, featuring evening entertainment activities as well as shopping and other uses. Another suggestion was to incorporate distinctive local cultural and business activities, such as an arts incubation facility and/or a market.

Another category of benefit included enhancements to regional quality of life amenities. These might include public parks and outdoor civic spaces, sports facilities, museums, hike and bike trails, and similar amenities. These pose a challenge for funding, but the ability to combine them within a regional center, and possibly to attract private capital to assist with funding, might make them more feasible. (For example, previous votes to fund an aquatic center have failed, but a new proposal might succeed if it is partially funded by matching grants and other incentives.)

Finally, there are economic benefits to the region from its development of jobs and tax base, and fiscal benefits to the Port of Kennewick and the City for the revenues generated. As we will discuss in more detail, it is important to discuss the distinction between gross benefits – the benefits that would occur anyway on some other site – and net benefits, those that are specific to Vista Field.

However, in all cases, these opportunities can only be achieved if the agencies, businesses and individuals who might partner on them are active in their exploration and development. For this reason it is very important that the Port of Kennewick reach out to these potential partners – and very important that the partners respond, taking an active role in exploring the regional benefits.

The strategy, then, must be an active collaboration between the Port and the other potential partners, to explore and to develop these opportunities. It must emphasize the mutual benefits of cooperation between jurisdictions, agencies, businesses and organizations, and the dangers of “go it alone” approaches, which lose critical mass and result in dissipated resources. The Port must be seen as the convenor of a broader regional partnership, and not as an entity acting in its sole interest.

If this partnership and collaborative approach is successful for this premier opportunity site, the region has the potential to benefit enormously. If “go it alone” approaches prevail here as on other sites, the region may well remain “divided and conquered,” unable to compete effectively with more united regions.

Direct Economic Benefits

As part of the 2012-13 Vista Field Planning, Environmental and Economic Analysis, the Port requested a thorough analysis of the likely economic impacts of redevelopment. This analysis was conducted by ECONorthwest, one of the Northwest's leading economics consultants. A summary of the findings is included in Appendix 1 to this report.

As the analysis concluded, there are two geographic areas that need to be examined: the property boundary of Vista Field itself, and the larger region. For purposes of the analysis, the former is the property line of the Port of Kennewick, and the latter is the Kennewick-Richland-Pasco Metropolitan Statistical Area.

The former area of analysis affects the Port's own fiscal position, and is known as a **fiscal** analysis. The latter area of analysis affects the entire region, and is known as an **economic** analysis. The two analyses were conducted on the basis of the "redevelopment alternative" as developed in the November 2012 community charrette, and defined in the Environmental Impact Statement.

Regarding the **fiscal impacts to the Port**, the study identified significant benefits to the Port's fiscal position from the proposed development. The Port would spend \$11,897,833 on preparation for land sales (infrastructure etc.) and sell the property for \$15,613,750, realizing \$3,715,917 from the land sale and related transactions.

Per the analysis in the 2013 EIS, the Port stands to gain from additional property tax revenue from the increased value of the development, amounting to a **gross** increase of \$135,462 per year at buildout. Since much of this development would otherwise occur elsewhere in the region without Vista Field, the **net** impact to the Port (over and above what would otherwise occur) is projected to be \$70,958 per year (in constant 2013 dollars).

It should be noted that a far greater portion of tax revenues from the development of Vista Field will accrue to other entities, notably the City of Kennewick, the State of Washington, Kennewick School District, Benton County, Ben-Franklin Transit and others. The breakdown of revenues is shown in Appendix One. As it shows, the proceeds from annual sales and property taxes are projected at \$13,184,431, of which only \$135,462 will go to the Port of Kennewick. \$1,764,067 will go to the City of Kennewick, and the rest will go to the State, schools, county, transit, and library districts.

Similarly, the City of Kennewick, State, County and transit district stand to realize an additional \$34,935,300 in single-occurrence revenues (construction sales tax and real estate excise tax) of which the City of Kennewick stands to realize \$4,494,600. The Port will realize no revenues from this source.

Regarding the **economic impacts to the region**, there are two main contributors: the initial construction activity, and the ongoing operational activity. The **gross** local economic output, listed in the EIS, is primarily driven by construction. However, **net** economic output would be significantly less than gross output, since some of the structures at Vista Field would find other locations if Vista Field were not developed.

The 2013 EIS identified new development of 1,065,000 SF onsite, which would support 3,383 new jobs.

It is important to note that the economic analysis contained in the 2013 FEIS was focused on the comparative impacts of closure versus maintaining the operational airport, with an emphasis on the

Port's fiscal impacts. Therefore it took a rigorous and conservative approach. It did not estimate the increase in possible outside visitors attracted by a standout development of Vista Field, or the additional spending they may add to the regional economy. It also did not assume that Vista Field will contribute to the region's economic competitiveness and subsequent growth, the ability to recruit and retain new employees supporting business growth, the ability to create economic synergies between businesses, or other opportunities for economic development that may or may not be achieved.

For that reason we consider each of these other potential economic benefits separately in the following sections. As we have noted, these and other benefits may or may not be achieved, depending on the strategy and the level of cooperation between the regional stakeholders. That is of course the focus of this document.

Regional Competitiveness Benefits

Since World War II, the Tri-Cities regional economy has been the beneficiary of considerable Federal spending to develop and operate the Hanford Nuclear Reservation, the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, and related government facilities. That spending is not assured in coming years, a fact that has prompted civic leaders to think about “life after Hanford” – that is, how the region can position itself to develop an alternative economic base, and to become more economically competitive for the 21st Century.

Much has been written elsewhere about the competitive demands of the future, but we can summarize several of the most common regional requirements:

1. A high quality of life for potential business owners and employees.
2. Attractive “opportunity sites” for potential businesses, especially offering strategic locational advantages. (Especially those that put businesses into strategic adjacency, e.g. tech businesses and “innovation hubs”.)
3. An attractive regional location, featuring air and other modal access, and other good conditions (e.g. affordable costs)
4. A desirable “brand” for the region, increasing the appeal to visitors and potential businesses.

The Tri-Cities region already has a number of strong assets in its favor in all these categories. There is a comparative low cost of living for residents, with many recreational opportunities. Problems that routinely plague large cities, like traffic congestion, are almost non-existent in the Tri-Cities. There are also a number of attractive opportunity sites, and Vista Field can be a major addition to that inventory. The region also benefits from excellent inter-modal transportation, including the Tri-Cities Airport, rail, river and truck transportation on Interstate 82. The cost to businesses is very attractive, with comparatively low costs of land, electricity, and tax rates. The jurisdictions are comparatively motivated to work with potential new businesses to streamline the hurdles to profitability. Finally the region has the “brand” of an existing knowledge economy built around energy and other high technology, a premier winery location, and a location on the confluence of three major rivers, among other assets.

At the same time, a number of notable weaknesses in the area's competitiveness have been previously identified (e.g. by Roger Brooks International, in a study commissioned by Visit Tri-Cities, TRIDEC and the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce):

1. There is a scarcity of amenities that serve to attract and retain key employees in growing businesses, such as knowledge economy employees – notably, vibrant districts that offer evening recreational activities.
2. There is a lack of cultural amenities and larger gathering places that contribute to the region's identity and attractiveness. The recently-opened Reach Museum is a welcome redress, but others that are still limited in relation to the size include arts amenities (museums, galleries, concert halls etc.), markets, festivals, sporting event facilities, and other active recreation facilities (e.g. aquatic sports, hiking, etc.).
3. There is a lack of locally developed and locally distinctive businesses, particularly those that

serve tourism, young professionals, and other economically important sectors.

More broadly, there is a perception that the Tri-Cities is not “cutting-edge” in its practices – in spite of the little-recognized fact that the region hosts some of the most advanced research in the world on energy, international security and other vital topics. This appears to be an opportunity not yet realized – to tell the story, and to make a broader story that can be told.

In this sense, Vista Field can make a major contribution toward all these factors. As a vibrant “downtown of the Tri-Cities” it can support and link the existing downtowns, and offer an exciting district for tourists (especially convention-goers), young professionals and other important sectors. As a site of over 100 acres in the heart of the Tri-Cities, it offers a premier location for attractive cultural amenities as well as businesses seeking a cutting-edge location. If it is planned carefully, Vista Field can become not just a host but an incubator of distinctive new businesses, from small to large ones in a range of sectors – from artisan products and distinctive restaurants to exciting new technology ventures.

Developing these elements will require careful coordination and synergy to get the maximum return on investment. For example, a destination cultural facility like a museum could benefit enormously from co-location with restaurants and shops, and the same is true in reverse. Businesses that locate in such a district may well be more competitive with recruitment and retention of employees, who may be strongly attracted to such a working location given its opportunity for both lunchtime and evening recreation.

In particular, the existing Three Rivers Convention Center would benefit greatly from the adjacency to restaurants, shops and other amenities for convention-goers. Research has shown that convention-goers do not want to spend their evenings in their hotels, but want to be able to go to entertainment destinations that are nearby and safe. Vista Field has an excellent location adjacent to the convention center that could offer a strong attraction to these attendees.

Currently the Kennewick Public Facilities District, the Tri-Cities Visitor and Convention Bureau (AKA Visit Tri-Cities) and other partners have proposed an “entertainment district” adjacent to the center. We believe this is an excellent idea. However, we see an opportunity to combine forces with Vista Field and the Port of Kennewick to create a single landmark asset, rather than two smaller assets that do not reach “critical mass.” This is an illustration of the principle that uniting forces is often a far better strategy than “go it alone”.

One issue for the entertainment district is financing. The Port will be working with the private sector to employ private capital to build restaurants, shops and other amenities. The public agencies may want to focus instead on public amenities, like museum or performance spaces, as part of an integrated district. The worst possible scenario would be that the public agencies fail to secure public sector financing, and the Vista Field project under-performs because businesses are waiting to see if the public-sector project will go ahead and offer competition. This would be a classic example of a “lose-lose” strategy for the region.

Even if funding were not an issue, a separate development from Vista Field – assuming it could be funded – would compete with similar entertainment amenities within Vista Field, tending to create a zero-sum benefit. A coordinated partnership development of a shared entertainment district offers the opportunity to create a premier amenity for the entire region, and a “win-win” for the relevant agencies and other stakeholders.

Strategic Development Benefits

Beyond its potential regional benefits, Vista Field itself offers a prime site for businesses seeking an attractive, potentially cutting-edge business location. This in turn offers the region a standout opportunity for economic development. There are a number of ways the development could do this, which we discuss below.

This opportunity can be examined in two categories: existing industries and businesses that are poised for growth, and new industries and businesses (new to the region, or possibly entirely new). Examples of existing industries are agriculture (notably the burgeoning wine industry), energy, and tourism. Potential new industries and businesses span a wide range, from obvious to more obscure candidates. In the more obvious category are businesses that might spin off from existing businesses (e.g. energy-related businesses, or new forms of tourism activities related to the wine industry). Less obvious are businesses that might emerge from current modest activities, or might become viable only with the invention of new technology or other new conditions.

In each case, the strategy is likely to be different. For existing businesses, there are already potential partners to work with, and to involve in the planning process. (For example, the Port has reached out to wine businesses and others.) But for new businesses, the problem is much more one of “the chicken and the egg.” It is important to understand the conditions that are most likely to encourage business development, without necessarily knowing the specific businesses that will actually emerge.

Some things are consistent regardless of the business. Research shows that employees (and therefore employers) are likely to be attracted to a location that offers nearby restaurants, entertainment and other recreation, for example. Employees also value the ability to live near their work, so that they have choices about how to get to work and do not necessarily have to drive.

For knowledge-based industries, these conditions are often more important. Much has been written about the so-called “innovation hubs” – particularly as models of high-tech cities like Boston, Palo Alto and others. These cities often have major universities, which the Tri-Cities will not have. Nonetheless the Tri-Cities has the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, a major international center of research in its own right. In addition there are universities in the area, such as Columbia Basin College and Washington State University Extension. These offer the potential for synergies with tech businesses, wine-related businesses and other potential emerging industries.

Innovation hubs are the subject of active research at present.¹ Much of this research was summed up in a presentation by Mary Jo Waits, Director of Economics, Human Services and the Workforce for the National Governors Association.² She noted that innovation hubs tend to focus on “eds and meds” (educational institutions and medical research or technology institutions). She went on:

“The most successful American places in the 21st century are likely to be innovation hubs. They are locations that support an open innovation business model, foster co-location, and promote easy and constant interaction among many different industries and a wide variety of creative workers, from artists to scientists to engineers.”

She points to two key requirements for planning an innovation hub:

1 See for example Youtie, Jan, and Philip Shapira. "Building an innovation hub: A case study of the transformation of university roles in regional technological and economic development." Research policy 37.8 (2008): 1188-1204.
2 http://www.fora.org/Reports/Colloq/Panel_2_MaryJoWaits_121213.pdf

- Looking at innovation hubs through an “ecosystem” lens and assembling a multidisciplinary leadership team and partners to ensure that the region is being ambitious and comprehensive in taking on the core elements that drive innovation and, as a result, provide a competitive advantage for businesses and cities in a global economy;
- Reimagining the spaces around universities and medical research institutions as places that can be shaped physically and strategically to anchor an innovation ecosystem, providing all sorts of critical ingredients for innovation—smart people, research institutions, entrepreneurial training and mentors, professional networks as well as **those place-making attributes (e.g., walkability, public spaces, and mixed land use) that are known to support innovation.** (Emphasis added.)

The last point offers a key synergy with Vista Field, and its proposed emphasis on walkability, public spaces, and mixed land use.

A related concept is that of “industrial ecology,” which suggests that businesses can co-locate to benefit from their ability to share resources and outputs. The original definition focused on manufacturing businesses whose waste products could be re-used as resources by other businesses. For example, waste products from one business are often used as energy feedstocks for another, and waste products like fly ash from smelting are used as components of manufactured products like cinder blocks. This practice is expanding, particularly when locational efficiencies make it more economically attractive than outsourced resources.

However, the concept also relates to the efficiencies that businesses gain by co-locating in an urban context – for example, in providing more efficient transportation to employees, or in providing so-called “knowledge spillovers” from one industry to another.

The key ingredient in all these goals is co-location – within the region, and within the specific development. In this sense, Vista Field offers a prime site for businesses seeking to employ such cutting-edge development strategies. It also offers the region a basis to pursue a strategy of developing its own innovation hub. But the specific nature of such an opportunity remains to be explored.

This is a large and promising subject for development – but it will require active exploration of these emerging opportunities by all the key stakeholders of Vista Field, led by the Port of Kennewick. This would accord well with the Port's responsibility to “partner with other private and public interests to enhance economic development potential.”

Regional Identity Benefits

We previously mentioned the work of the consulting firm Roger Brooks International to examine the regional branding issues, and make recommendations for enhancement. They have indicated that Vista Field offers a key opportunity to enhance the regional brand, and we strongly concur.

Some people object to the concept of branding, regarding it as an exercise in putting “lipstick on a pig.” But at its best, branding is simply about telling your regional story to those who don't know your region, or don't know its strengths – and no less important, it's also about improving the story you have to tell. If it's clear that there are weak or negative aspects of the region's identity, then those can be addressed through a regional strategy.

In spite of the Tri-Cities' wonderful assets, there are in fact perceptions that harm the region's identity. Common complaints we have heard – from residents and non-residents alike – are that “there's nothing to do in the evening” and “it's dry and uninteresting” and worst, “there's no there there” – no central gathering place with attractive amenities and features. One comment received at a Vista Vision Task Force meeting was that “the Tri-Cities lacks anything charming.”

One element that we have heard repeatedly proposed by stakeholders as “something special” to address this gap is a landmark water feature. The suggestion is clearly not for a little pond or fountain or other minor element. It is for an over-the-top feature, a central element anchoring many other amenities, and an element that is an attraction in its own right. Such a feature could make a major contribution to the identity of the region, and to the prestige of the agencies that help to make it happen (for example, Kennewick Irrigation District and/or others).

A precedent that stakeholders have pointed to is the San Antonio River Walk. In fact, the Port of Kennewick team has travelled to San Antonio and met with the City agency responsible for overseeing its construction and operation, and gathered lessons and advice from them. While the River Walk may be at a larger scale than what is likely to be feasible at Vista Field, and it also features many historic structures within a major urban core, nonetheless it shows how such a premier landmark can indeed be a game-changer. (There are other examples of such a feature, for example Bricktown in downtown Oklahoma City.)

The previously discussed “innovation hub” concept might also help to clarify and strengthen the regional identity, by elevating the importance of the existing high technology base, and in turn encouraging its development. That identity might be further strengthened with appropriate naming and anchoring with key institutions – if for example an area of the development were designated the Tri-Cities Innovation District. (But to achieve the full benefit of synergy, such a facility must not be removed from the walkable mixed use fabric of the overall development, but must be integrated into it.)

To address the perception that there is no “there there,” the Vista Field site might also emerge as a kind of “regional downtown” – not replacing or even competing with existing downtowns, but in fact supporting and anchoring them within a connected polycentric system.

Each existing downtown already does have a distinctive character, potentially addressing the concern about a lack of locally distinctive businesses. Pasco has the Hispanic restaurants and markets; Kennewick has the small-town charm of the West, with new wine-related businesses; and Richland has the riverfront parkway and its associated businesses and activities. In that sense the problem may be less that distinctive local businesses don't exist, and more that they aren't connected, and aren't very visible

or accessible.

Vista Field, by serving as a regional hub adjacent to the convention center, could connect to these other downtowns with, for example, a rubber-tire trolley, bringing convention-goers and other tourists to these other destinations for a delightful evening excursion. In this way, Vista Field might not compete with, but could actually support, the downtowns and their attractions within the other cities of the region.

Similarly, Vista Field will be most valuable to the region and its identity if developed as a visible regional hub of other systems, including transportation, cultural facilities and recreational spaces. The Port of Kennewick could partner with Ben Franklin Transit to provide an enhanced transit center, with close proximity to the convention center (and perhaps co-operating of a rubber-tire tourist trolley line). A hike and bike trail could link to the river and to its pathway, as well as other destinations. Recreation and sporting events might have one or more central facilities there. A regional market might include a facility there. Businesses seeking to grow, such as art studios and galleries, might have a central and very visible “incubation” facility there, helping to give their growth a “critical mass”.

One key requirement for the successful identity of the region is to develop a clear expression of the regional character, its environment and its traditions. History shows that an emphasis on “trendy design” quickly fades, and fails to distinguish the region from other regions also chasing the latest design fads. An emphasis on local character is much more enduring, and helps to reinforce the appeal of other aspects of the local character. For example, the river and its ecology has distinctive characteristics, as does the area viticulture, as does the historic architecture, as does the landscape and its vegetation. These elements are potential assets to be celebrated, as part of the story of the Tri-Cities.

Quality of Life Benefits

The potential contribution of Vista Field to quality of life for area residents is one of the most evident potential regional benefits.

Under the current working concept, Vista Field's redevelopment would feature generous parks and open spaces that would offer opportunities for recreation, exercise and social interaction. The proposal for a walkable mixed-use district would also offer a strong amenity for recreation, social interaction and entertainment.

These elements are likely to be achievable by the Port of Kennewick without the collaboration of other stakeholders. But their value as regional quality of life amenities could be greatly enhanced with the partnership of the other stakeholders. For example, a coordinated hike and bike trail system could connect between jurisdictions, allowing Vista Field to become a valued part of a much larger and better-connected system. A transportation system carefully integrated with the development planning could make the amenities at Vista Field available to more residents. Coordinated recreation facilities could form a stronger system of complementary elements.

In addition, the coordinated location of cultural facilities could achieve more “critical mass” and result in a stronger regional system. For example, a performing arts facility coordinated with the Vista Field development might anchor a network of smaller facilities (e.g. high schools, clubs, etc.)

We have already referred to the importance of coordinating entertainment district elements, and the same is true for other elements in the area surrounding Vista Field (sports facilities, transportation planning, etc.). We urge all jurisdictions, including the Port and others, to work together and avoid a “go it alone” approach to planning and development. We suggest that the long-term regional benefits of doing so far outweigh the short-term difficulties.

The same advice applies to private entities. The many existing retail and restaurant businesses in the area would greatly benefit from a coordinated approach to beautification and branding, and to planning of transportation and other shared amenities. Residents would greatly benefit from a choice of modes of transportation, including walking and biking, which might allow them to enjoy more access to the amenities as well as more exercise.

The amenities that contribute to quality of life for the region could be compared to cylinders firing in an engine. If they can be made to fire in coordination, the engine will perform far better than if they fail to do so – in fact the engine may misfire and stall out. Costly amenities could fail to produce a value “greater than the sum of the parts.”

Conclusion: Strategic Recommendations

Vista Field represents an extremely rare opportunity, not just for the Port of Kennewick, but for the entire Tri-Cities region. It is rare indeed to find such a prime development opportunity at the center of a growing region. But to be blunt, there are several factors that, without careful strategy to overcome them, may result in an opportunity missed.

One is the fact that the Tri-Cities region is in fact not one city but three main cities (and a fourth smaller one, West Richland). As a result there is a natural tendency to see gains in one city as losses for other cities -- even though the gains may represent net wins for the region as a whole. (This effect likely helps to account for recent votes against regional public facilities, which were higher in cities that were not proposed to host the facilities.) This makes it harder to cooperate on the regional opportunities offered by a project like Vista Field.

This situation is complicated by jurisdictions that are also separate (e.g. the Port of Kennewick and the Port of Benton) and, further complicating the picture, they also roughly overlap City jurisdictions. The tendency to see gains by, say, the Port of Kennewick, as coming at the expense of its potential partners is natural, but potentially detrimental to the regional benefit.

The question then arises, how can the development go forward with strong partnership, and at the same time with effective leadership? A model that seems to make good sense is common in private developments, where a single entity acts as the “master developer”. That entity then partners with a series of entities, and/or sells property to them under carefully structured collaborative agreements, who then serve as sub-developers. This model may work well for the property owned directly by the Port of Kennewick.

Regarding the surrounding property, there are a number of potential development projects and infrastructure plans that, as we have suggested above, need to be carefully coordinated to maximize regional benefits. This coordination might be best achieved through two means, one informal and the other formal.

The informal coordination can occur through the stakeholder involvement discussions that are already occurring, through the charrette process, and through the Vista Vision Task Force. Through these processes, opportunities can be informally identified, explored, reviewed, assessed and refined (as this document itself can be). Thus the strategy can itself be developed as a partnership, and an evolutionary process.

The formal coordination could occur through specific interlocal agreements and development partnerships. These would also likely evolve and develop as subsidiary projects go forward. But they would evolve from an overall strategy to maximize the regional benefits. Key in-principle agreements would lay the foundation for mutually beneficial agreements – and agreements that maximize the benefits for the region overall.

The process of uncovering and developing opportunities is critical to the long-term success of the project, and the strength of its benefits to the region. It will be important to explore a wide range of opportunities initially, but equally to converge on a feasible set of planning elements as the project goes forward. These can be further refined as development proceeds and new opportunities emerge – but since the first steps will limit what can happen subsequently, it will be important to assure a thorough exploration of alternatives and a sound strategic plan in the early stages.

The first stage in that process is perhaps for the stakeholders to review and refine this document. Additional strategic opportunities might well be uncovered, as potential partners share their strategic objectives and explore possibilities for co-development at Vista Field. (Obvious examples of candidates are universities, hospitals and medical clinics, technology businesses, and other potential anchor uses.)

An additional stage is to involve potential private-sector partners. We have proposed a “developer round table” for selected developers who have done similarly scaled projects in other cities. These developers are not necessarily likely to be involved in Vista Field, but they can offer important guidance about what private-sector partners will bring to the table, and what they will expect in return.

The framework concepts will of course be the subject of intense discussion during the charrette, and notably during the pattern language development process at the beginning of the charrette. This will be an important “checkpoint” to assess the planning elements and strategy to date, and to make additions and revisions as indicated.

The charrette and its follow-up will need to produce a functional master plan, which must accommodate the likely development types contemplated. Because these will not likely be known with great precision by then, it will be important to create a flexible framework with suitable designations of a variable range of elements depending on the evolution of project opportunities.

As discussions progress, the time may soon be right for selected agreements to be made as key elements of the development going forward. These can take the form of framework in-principle agreements, or, if suitable, interlocal agreements or other more formal agreements.

It will be very important to uncover key anchors and other elements that could become “game-changers.” But even more important will be to recognize that great projects do not succeed because they contain “silver bullet” elements, but rather, they have a careful mix of ingredients that build strength on their inter-relationship, and the relationship with a wider regional system.

Achieving the full potential regional benefits of Vista Field will require the patient collaborative development of many elements working in synergy.

To summarize our recommendations:

1. Convene the partners, review the strategic opportunities, and gather feedback on ideas and opportunities (beginning with this document, reviewed by the Vista Vision Task Force).
2. Work with partners to identify and develop additional opportunities.
3. Conduct the charrette, including the pattern language development, and explore any additional opportunities that emerge; then create a framework that is most likely to accommodate the elements identified to maximize the regional benefits.
4. Recognize the natural tendency to think “zero-sum” (a gain in one jurisdiction equals a loss on others) and the need to overcome it.
5. Develop a coordinated planning process for the immediate area surrounding the Vista Field site, including the convention center, entertainment district, retail developments and other elements.
6. Recognize that while key elements could be game-changers, there is no “silver bullet” for the project, and achieving the full potential regional benefits of Vista Field will require the patient collaborative development of many elements working in synergy.

7. Recognize that the design of Vista Field will reach a higher potential if it reinforces the identity of the region, its climate, landscape and history, rather than the latest trendy designs.
8. To maximize the benefits, the Port of Kennewick can work on its own property in effect as the “master developer,” and other key jurisdictions, agencies and stakeholders in the region can work as co-developers.
9. To maximize the benefits, the Port and other stakeholders should collaborate in the planning of other offsite components of elements at Vista Field, including elements of the proposed entertainment district.

APPENDIX ONE: Summary Analysis of Tax Revenues Generated

VISTA FIELD AREA REDEVELOPMENT

ANNUAL PROPERTY & SALES TAX REVENUES at BUILD-OUT

TAXABLE VALUE \$408,600,000

RETAIL SPACE 680,000 Sq. Ft.

AVERAGE SALES of \$150 Per Sq. Ft.

ANNUAL RETAIL SALES \$102,000,000

ECONorthwest

ECONOMICS • FINANCE • PLANNING

ANNUAL PROPERTY TAX

Levy Rate Per \$1,000 AV	Factor	TAX
2.19546602 x	\$408,600 =	\$897,067
4.90629235 x	\$408,600 =	\$2,004,711
1.27708468 x	\$408,600 =	\$521,817
2.31535791 x	\$408,600 =	\$946,055
0.38032039 x	\$408,600 =	\$155,399
0.33152716 x	\$408,600 =	\$135,462
0.14175035 x	\$408,600 =	\$57,919
11.54779886		\$4,718,431

ANNUAL SALES TAX

Rate	Factor	SALES TAX
6.50% x	\$102,000,000 =	\$6,630,000
0.85% x	\$102,000,000 =	\$867,000
0.60% x	\$102,000,000 =	\$612,000
0.25% x	\$102,000,000 =	\$255,000
0.10% x	\$102,000,000 =	\$102,000
8.30%	\$0	\$8,466,000

ANNUAL TAX REVENUES

TOTAL	Entity
\$6,630,000	STATE
\$1,764,067	CITY-Kennewick
\$2,004,711	SCHOOLS-Local
\$612,000	TRANSIT-BFT
\$776,817	COUNTY-Benton
\$946,055	SCHOOLS-State
\$102,000	COUNTY-Benton (Criminal Justice)
\$155,399	LIBRARY-Mid Columbia
\$135,462	PORT-Kennewick
\$57,919	HOSPITAL-KGH
\$13,184,431	

Sources:

Property Tax Rates - Benton County Assessor 2012 Tax Booklet

Sales Tax Allocation - City of Kennewick Budget

Development Value - Vista Field FEIS March 8, 2013

Retail/Commercial Sq. Ft. - Vista Field FEIS March 8, 2013

Average Retail Sales Per Sq. Ft. - Estimate based on review of available sources.

Excludes Annual: Gas Tax, Hotel/Motel Tax, Utility Tax, Admission Tax, B&O Tax, State Share Revenue

ALL Numbers in 2013 DOLLARS

Calculated by ECONorthwest and the Port of Kennewick. Updated: July 1, 2013

SINGLE OCCURENCE TAX REVENUES Based Upon BUILD-OUT

TAXABLE VALUE \$408,600,000

% SOLD POST CONSTRUCTION 50%

EXCISE TAXABLE AMOUNT \$204,300,000

ECONorthwest

ECONOMICS • FINANCE • PLANNING

REAL ESTATE EXCISE TAX

Rate	Factor	TAX
1.28% x	\$204,300,000 =	\$2,615,040
0.50% x	\$204,300,000 =	\$1,021,500
1.78%		\$1,021,500

CONSTRUCTION SALES TAX

Rate	Factor	SALES TAX
6.50% x	\$408,600,000 =	\$26,559,000
0.85% x	\$408,600,000 =	\$3,473,100
0.60% x	\$408,600,000 =	\$2,451,600
0.25% x	\$408,600,000 =	\$1,021,500
0.10% x	\$408,600,000 =	\$408,600
8.30%		\$33,913,800

SINGLE OCCURENCE REVENUES

TOTAL	Entity
\$29,174,040	STATE
\$4,494,600	CITY-Kennewick
\$2,451,600	SCHOOLS-Local
\$1,021,500	TRANSIT-BFT
\$408,600	COUNTY-Benton
	SCHOOLS-State
	COUNTY-Benton (Criminal Justice)
	LIBRARY-Mid Columbia
	PORT-Kennewick
	HOSPITAL-KGH
\$34,935,300	

Sources:

Property Tax Rates - Benton County Assessor 2012 Tax Booklet

Excise Tax Rates - www.dor.wa.gov

Excise Taxable Percentage - Based upon Public/Private Partnership development scenario (www.uli.org)

Initial Port Land Sale Exempt from Real Estate Excise Tax, However resale from Developer to Builder likely

ALL Numbers in 2013 DOLLARS

Calculated by ECONorthwest and the Port of Kennewick. Updated: July 1, 2013

Sources:

Property Tax Rates - Benton County Assessor 2012 Tax Booklet

Sales Tax Allocation - City of Kennewick Budget

Development Value - Vista Field FEIS March 8, 2013

Retail/Commercial Sq. Ft. - Vista Field FEIS March 8, 2013

Average Retail Sales Per Sq. Ft. - Estimate based on review of available sources.

Excludes Annual: Gas Tax, Hotel/Motel Tax, Utility Tax, Admission Tax, B&O Tax, State Share Revenue

ALL Numbers in 2013 DOLLARS

Calculated by ECONorthwest and the Port of Kennewick. Updated: July 1, 2013

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Development Strategy Assessment (Draft)

Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company

Draft 2: August 12, 2014

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Development Strategy Assessment (Draft)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	3
Background	5
Precedent Lessons: Florida	7
Precedent Lessons: Orenco Station.....	9
Precedent Lessons: Texas	12
APPENDIX:	
Precedent Studies	TBD
Development Model Alternatives	TBD
Financing Alternatives	TBD

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Development Strategy Assessment (Draft)

Executive Summary

The **options for development** by the Port range from **selling the entire property to another development entity** at one extreme, to **acting solely as the development entity** at the other extreme. Within this range, there are many alternative models, each of which presents a distinct set of issues and opportunities.

Selling the property to another entity (even with nominal stipulations and specifications of use) is likely to **compromise the high aspirations of the project** (in turn aligned to the Port's core mission of quality economic development). But **acting solely as the development entity** is also likely to present overwhelming logistical challenges and even legal restrictions for the Port.

An attractive option that has emerged is for **the Port to function essentially in the role of the master developer**, while other entities perform sub-developer or builder roles. It would be assisted by private entities performing staff-extending duties on a fee basis. A variation is for **the Port to have a strong partnership with an entity that would serve as a master developer** essentially for hire, under the Port's direct control.

Financing Issues

A key question is how the financing would occur. The Port is interested, as much as possible, in a **pay-as-you-go approach**, and/or a way of **leveraging its assets** (primarily the land) **with private equity** from sub-developers, builders or their investors.

In addition, **the Port is likely to benefit modestly from increased tax revenue collections** as a result of the development, and **this increment may be used as a rationale for strategic general revenue investments.** (In Washington State, there is no formal Tax Increment Finance mechanism, but informal approaches may accomplish similar goals.) However, **other jurisdictions may benefit more substantially from increased tax collections, and may be willing to participate in strategic investments for infrastructure upgrades** to leverage existing revenues. This in turn will help the Port to leverage its own relatively modest revenues and staff management support.

Phasing Issues

There has been discussion of the phasing, particularly in relation to the existing facilities. **Development of a first phase adjoining the convention center**, providing a first complete nucleus of the development, **would set the stage for orderly development of future phases.** However, it should be noted that this first phase would require essential connectivity and visibility in order to offer viable retail sites beyond the limited traffic generated by occasional convention events.

Future phases could be timed to respond to the growing market and to fill out the site, but providing a complete and attractive market-facing development at each stage.

Public Amenities

In the previous charrette, **the stakeholders indicated a desire for parks, plazas and water features.** These elements will **need to be evaluated with regard to cost and feasibility,** and a strategy for **financing and phasing** will need to be developed to address their specific requirements. It is expected that financing for these amenities could be structured within the development phasing, and supported by the income and/or investments in co-developments. There is limited opportunity for support from tax revenue increases or general obligation bond sources. However, these sources should be examined along with pay-as-you-go approaches.

Co-locating Facilities

There is a possibility that **a major regional facility could locate within the development.** Examples include university campus extensions, public service offices, or regional amenities such as aquatic centers. Precedent tours suggested that care should be taken not to let such projects dominate the development. At the same time, such a co-development **could, if strategically aligned, be a positive asset** and even a “game changer” for the development.

Potential Co-developers and Other Partner Agencies

A key challenge will be to **identify potential private co-developers,** and other public entities that might function as co-developers (e.g. public agencies). While their feedback certainly should not be taken as the final word, it will be invaluable, in combination with other assessments, in refining the ideas emerging from the charrette and their feasibility from a private developer's perspective. Through an iterative process, **the outcome of the charrette can evolve toward a more market-facing plan** that is more likely to be financially successful, while **also reflecting the aspirations of the stakeholders.**

At the same time, the **number of developers with expertise in this kind of development,** and also with a **potential interest in the Kennewick real estate market, is limited.** Therefore an **active recruitment process** is advisable, to identify a pool of **perhaps ten candidate developers,** of which perhaps **three or four might participate in some way in the charrette.** The motivation to participate might come from their interest in participating in a later RFP process for the site, or alternatively, a forum might be established through a professional body such as the Urban Land Institute. (However, such a formal involvement might increase the likelihood that the process becomes politicized, for example between local and out of town developers, or between developers with different ideas as to feasibility.)

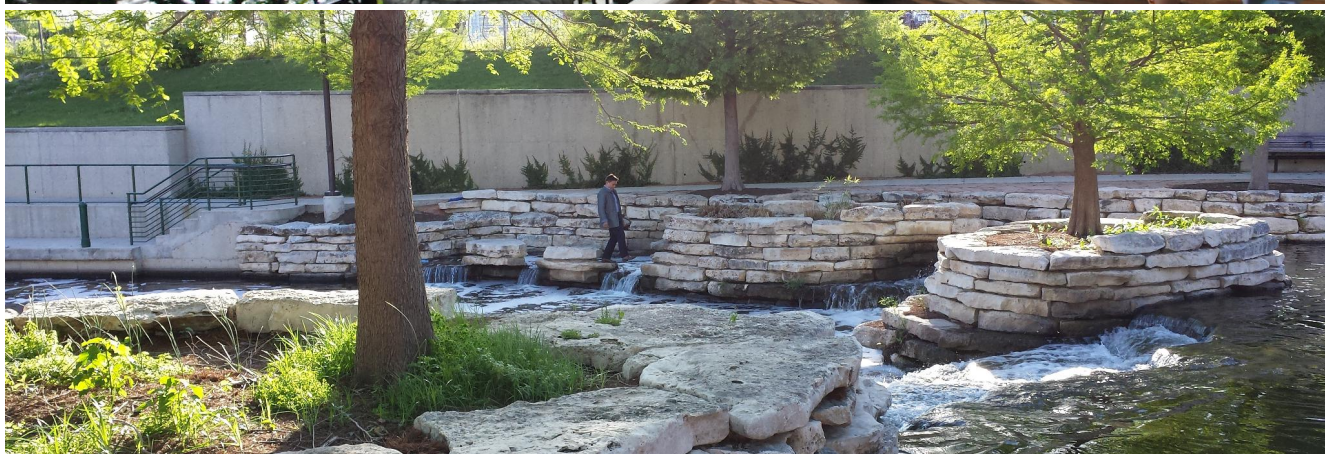
Overriding Design Issues

Placemaking is essential. That is, it is essential to create attractive, interesting and beautiful locations where people will want to come and spend time and money, year after year. We have seen many examples of successful and unsuccessful placemaking on our precedent tours. Good placemaking requires good DNA (good patterns), well-detailed, people-pleasing architecture, strong commitment,

and great care and skill in design and execution. Many other ingredients have to be there too – champions, tools, strategies, etc. (as discussed below).

Priorities and Next Steps

The Port would benefit from a careful **review of all available development and finance options**, and a **strategic mapping process** for the subset of options it chooses to pursue. In part this will be dependent on the outcome of the charrette process and the public input, but it will be beneficial to begin these activities early as background research, to clarify the issues and opportunities.



Top: Southlake Square, Texas; Middle: The Grove, California; Bottom, Pearl Brewery, Texas

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Development Strategy Assessment (Draft)

Background

This report is an evolving strategy document that presents and assesses findings from research for the Vista Field Redevelopment Project by the Port of Kennewick and its partners. It is intended as a briefing document for those who are participating in the development of the Vista Field development strategy, including the Port, its consultants, and its key strategic partners.

While this document discusses strategies and key lessons, it does not present any of the Port's decisions as to the actions to be taken. No statement in this document should be taken as an indication or evidence of the Port's own decisions with regard to the future of Vista Field. The concepts discussed herein are instead to be understood as development strategy alternatives presented by the consultant team for assessment and discussion by the Port and its partners.

The Port has embarked on a process to study precedents, learn lessons, develop and assess models, and formulate its strategy for Vista Field development. Some of the materials gathered in that process are presented here, along with key issues and priorities for further study. The Port has a strong interest in gathering the opinions and feedback of its potential agency and private partners as to the feasibility of the concepts herein, as well as other related issues and opportunities.

To date the Port's representatives (including its Executive Director, Director of Planning, and three Commissioners) have personally toured a number of precedents and their development models, and met with their development agencies and/or other knowledgeable parties, including:

- CityPlace, Florida
- Mizner Park, Florida
- Charleston Place, Florida
- Bermuda Village, Florida
- Downtown West Palm Beach, Florida
- Worth Avenue, Palm Beach, Florida
- Dadeland, Florida
- Merrick Park, Florida
- Wynwood Arts District, Florida
- Coral Gables, Florida
- Miami Beach and Espanola Way, Florida
- Orenco Station, Oregon
- Seabrook, Washington
- Downtown San Antonio and Riverwalk, Texas
- Pearl Brewery, Texas
- Blue Star Arts District, Texas
- Mueller Development, Texas
- SoCo Redevelopment, Texas
- Rainey Street redevelopment, Texas

In addition, the team has gathered case study review material for the following projects:

Southlake Square, Texas
Addison Circle, Texas
Legacy Town Center, Texas
Santana Row, California
Fruitvale Village, California
Fourth Street Berkeley, California
Santa Barbara Historic Arts District, California
The Grove, California
Playa Vista, California

Each of these projects offers “lessons learned” both in how to achieve development success, and in how to avoid mistakes that can compromise or jeopardize the success of the project. The following pages of notes document the key lessons learned for these projects.



Meeting with the project executives of Mueller Austin, a mixed-use airport redevelopment project with similar goals. The project offers many lessons on alternative development models, challenges and successes.

THE FUTURE OF VISTA FIELD

Precedent Lessons

Lessons drawn and discussed in Florida precedent tours:

The most successful projects have combined three key ingredients -

A strong visionary champion (or sometimes several champions), willing to fight for the project and inspire others.

A clear framework for collaboration with other needed partners, including a good master plan, codes, guidelines, pattern languages and other related planning and design tools.

A key early element that sets the character and quality of the entire project, and gets potential participants motivated and committed.

In our meetings we discussed the following points:

1. It may be possible and desirable to start right away on a commemorative and information center, as a visible sign of the progressing work.
2. “Tactical urbanism” allows something to go forward when resources are limited. The work can be temporary and replaced later, so risk is much more limited as is start-up cost and time. This is not a suggestion in lieu of more permanent development but a complementary and interim approach.
3. Some more permanent things should be started now however. For example, the first crossroads may need to go in soon. Also the plants, landscaping and trees can be installed, or at least banked in an on-site nursery.
4. It will be critical to plan strategically, not only for Vista Field but for all the Port's properties, and for the entire region.
5. It will be critical to plan not only the product but also the process – how public entities will work together, how public and private will work together, what are the funding models, strategies, phasing, etc etc.
6. Perhaps the next major planning event should be a “round-table” in which a select group of developers participate, drawing on national and international expertise as well as local parties with relevant experience – not as ultimate participants, necessarily, but as invited guests to share their early expertise and explore possible future mutual interest. (Perhaps through an RFQ process?)
7. There is a range of models, from the Port serving as total developer, to the Port selling everything off to another developer. The optimal course is somewhere in between – but we can not know exactly what is best yet. We do advise that the Port remain “master developer” in some form, partnering with other private developers who have the expertise, capital and ability to execute the actual phases of development. But the Port must remain in control of quality at all times.
8. There is a “chicken and egg” problem, so we need to start somewhere, and avoid a stalemate. Perhaps with a first increment, a “seed” kind of project, get people excited and see the possibilities in concrete form.
9. Water features are a big question mark – how feasible? Need to look into this. Nonetheless

there is a range of water features, from the most extensive watercourses to simple fountains. Again the optimum may be in between the full-blown version and the minimal one. (We agreed we will look at some water features.)

The projects we saw offered the following notable lessons, among others:

1. Sometimes quite modest facilities can be used, with ingenuity and creativity, to produce remarkably interesting and attractive places (e.g. Wynwood).
2. It is not necessary to go much above one story in the early stages. It is also possible to make a second story that is only a facade.
3. Sometimes facades and thin liner buildings can create the key public spaces, then additional interior square footage can be added later.
4. High architectural quality is essential. This is not necessarily high *expense* architecture.
5. Successful pedestrian spaces have a number of consistent ingredients: a sense of enclosure or “urban room,” good fine-grained variety, many human activities expressed in building form, natural forms and amenities like plants, water, and natural shapes (so-called “biophilia”).
6. Projects are all about the phases and phasing strategy: some things can be done early, others need to wait, but the key is to sequence them so that the early ones make the later ones feasible.
7. Almost all successful projects rely on many partners, public and private, and many sources of funding/financing. At the same time, the best projects have one (or at most a few) visionary and strong leader(s).
8. Regulatory and process complexity is the death of many a good project. Streamlining is essential. Successful projects learn to cut through the red tape, or create their own light-red or “pink” tape. Regulatory complexity equals uncertainty, and uncertainty equals risk, equals cost – and the project does not get done, or gets watered down beyond recognition.
9. The best projects leave some room for more informal actions, quirkiness, growth, response to new opportunities. Espanola Way had new lights, planters, sidewalk dining, and a “pedestrian table” – all added over time, making it much richer and more lively.



Espanola Way in Miami, a successful and remarkably intimate public space.

Lessons drawn and discussed from tour of Orenco Station, Oregon:

Lesson 1: Maximize the “movement economy” by bringing traffic and visibility to the key retail locations. The contrast between Orenco Station and The Round (the other comparable nearby project that went into bankruptcy twice, and still has high retail vacancies) is marked. Orenco Station has high vehicular connectivity and traffic right at the Town Center, unlike The Round. But at the same time, traffic can be disruptive to the walkable appeal of a town center, so a design strategy is needed that carefully balances these potential conflicts. For example, we saw in Espanola Way a perpendicular pedestrian street intersecting with a much busier multi-way boulevard with a median, Washington Ave.:



Similarly, at Orenco Station, we created a quieter pedestrian axis perpendicular to the busier Cornell Road, which was also a divided median street:



There is one regrettable feature of Cornell Road however: whereas Washington Avenue has on-street parking, which makes a much calmer and more appealing pedestrian experience, Cornell Road does not. We were unable to get the County transportation department to agree to this change. (We did get them to agree to reduce the eventual width from seven lanes at 45 miles per hour – almost a freeway through the town center!) Another related lesson: cooperation of other agencies is critical!

Lesson 2: Plan the development incrementally, recognizing that what is not feasible today may be feasible in a few years. This is related to Lesson 1. When the City and regional agencies pushed us to develop at the light rail, as The Round did, we said not now – wait until we get more development and more demand, and then it will be feasible to do more mixed use and higher density – the market will support it. This is exactly what happened – there are 6 new projects by three developers, all at higher density and most with mixed use retail. And PacTrust, with a low basis in the land and low carrying costs, did much better economically by waiting. (The Port is in a similar position – but the only caution is to be sure key external conditions are secured – access etc. – as the area will continue to develop and important opportunities could be lost.)

Lesson 3: Keep control. This lesson was learned the hard way – by making a very big mistake! We “sold our front door” right across the street to another developer early on, and then they did not move forward in a timely way. Worse, we lacked a buy-back clause, and when we wanted to develop it ourselves after being assured of a much better market, we had to negotiate a re-purchase cost with them, which was prohibitive. Worse still, when they finally did go forward, we had weak control over the quality, which I think was unsatisfactory. (One project by another developer actually sold poorly, which created misperceptions about how well we were selling overall – extremely well in fact. But this negativity did not help the project.)

Lesson 4: But do bring in other co-developers and other architects, to create more vitality and variety – just make sure they will be held to a high bar of quality! We did not have any written design standards, and our ability to regulate quality with co-developers was not very strong. It was mostly a back-and-forth negotiation and compromise, rather than a clear set of expectations up front. This inevitably watered down the quality and did not produce an optimal result. I think it would have been far better had we had clear design standards, and a strong position to assure they were met.

In the portions we controlled outright, we felt good about the quality, but overall, it had a feeling of one developer and one architect – we wish it had more variety and character. It is important to have a feeling of a place that has “grown there” with good bones and good quality. But this is a challenge given the economies of scale and standardization, which can result in a loss of vitality.

Lesson 5: So use design codes (and pattern languages) to get more vitality. But there are tools that can balance these conflicting needs, exploiting the economies of scale and standardization while still providing the flexibility for growth and vitality. Georgian and Victorian neighborhoods of London had remarkable degrees of scale and standardization, and are still revered as beautiful and valuable places. (Some of the most valuable in the world.) There are other examples, including DPZ projects where the “bar was set high” by design standards, visual illustrations, and key parts that were developed as “prototypes” to provide examples to guide the character of later developments.

Lesson 6: Build a great team. Create a sense of shared vision, mission and enthusiasm for the end result, which will help to sustain the cooperation and hard work that will be needed. Give people a voice in the process, without giving them the power to cause problems for the project. Often this means giving them more control over subsidiary parts of the project, and parts that will not disrupt the overall character – for example, the interiors of buildings, and buildings that are not on main streets.

Lesson 7: Set the pattern with great “bones.” If the basic pattern is not right, no amount of detailed development will overcome the fundamental problem it will create. Great bones come from the tried and true – the great old places that proved they worked. Once the bones are right, exciting and innovative features can be added – without risking the basic functionality of the neighborhood.

Lesson 8: Mitigate risk. There are a number of ways to manage risk, including sharing it with a larger group, diversifying the market offering, and finding simpler and more streamlined paths to entitlement. (A subjective entitlement process, or one filled with red tape, creates risk, which translates into cost, and creates an economic drag on an otherwise feasible development.)

At Orenco Station, we took several steps. We sold off several parcels early (making a mistake in the process – see #3 above). We created an adjoining and complementary “big box” development that was more conventional (though it had much more walkability and better design). We developed a close working partnership with the City and other agencies (to varying degrees, but generally positive) that allowed us to resolve a number of serious problems in a “win-win” way, and lower our risk.

Lesson 9: Don't be market-following – but DO be market-facing. What is planned today will be in a market years in the future that doesn't yet exist, but that in part is shaped by what is offered. When Apple's Steve Jobs planned the iPhone, there was no real “market” for it. But he paid attention to what people wanted (NOT just what they said they wanted, or had already bought) and he developed a latent market that is now enormous. On a much smaller scale, we took a market that had R10 lots, segregated strip shopping and virtually no attached homes, and created a mixed use project at four times the density, with over 300 attached homes, that sold for a 30% premium on comparables. (And very low vacancy rates.) We did it by doing careful research, taking one step at a time, and “growing a market”.

Lesson 10. Make sure you have a “guy in the tent.” There is a famous bird's eye view drawing of Savannah, Georgia, in the early stages of its construction. There is a little tent in the foreground and people often ask what that is. It was James Oglethorpe's tent – the planner of the city. Even though there were many different people who built out parts of Savannah, Oglethorpe was there to assure that the details worked together as a whole, and contributed to a strong public realm (making the city people love so much today). He was coordinating what we might call a “culture of building” – all the people who were doing their various building projects. He could police things that were real problems, and help people constructively to do better.

For most projects regarded as high-quality and successful, there is someone “in the tent” who is on site to coordinate and resolve problems that could harm the quality. For Orenco Station I served in that role. For Laurence Qamar's Seabrook project it was a landscape architect named Stephen Poulakos. Sometimes (usually for smaller projects) it is the visionary developer who can monitor the site closely through the process, if they have good design judgment – like Robert Davis in Seaside, Florida. We at DPZ (and Laurence and I specifically) will of course continue to work closely with The Port of Kennewick on follow-through as long as our services are wanted! But we can also help to get someone local who can serve this critical “in the tent” role. That would round out the core team as far as master developer design and execution are concerned, I suggest.



Scenes of Orenco Station, Oregon, including its popular Farmers Market

Lessons drawn and discussed in Texas precedent tours:

1. ***Placemaking is essential.*** That is, it is essential to create attractive, interesting and beautiful locations where people will want to come and spend time and money. We have seen many examples of successful and unsuccessful placemaking on these tours. Good placemaking requires good DNA (good patterns), strong commitment, well-detailed, people-friendly architecture, and care and skill in design and execution. All the other ingredients as discussed above have to be there too – champions, tools, strategies, etc....
2. ***Building relationships and partnerships is crucial – but so is staying in control.*** While Austin used the model of an RFP to a private master developer, they had a cooperative and experienced developer and they had many safeguards for the public interest and the quality of the project. Even so, they said that they had problems with quality of the architecture and other headaches.
3. ***It's important to develop the right tools for the job.*** In each case we saw, the agencies developed a highly customized mix of organizations, processes and agreements, based on the unique goals and requirements of the project.
4. ***Financing is a major challenge – but there are a variety of tools available to overcome gap finance issues.*** We heard about a number of mechanisms, some of which are not available in Washington State – but many others are, as well as other potential mechanisms. Again, the real key is to develop the right tools for the specific job, guarding against unintended consequences.
5. ***Phasing and incremental development are key.*** As we saw in Florida, some things can be done early, others need to wait, but the key is to sequence them so that the early ones make the later ones more feasible. Build momentum, and build your market (The leaders of the projects we have seen were surprised by how strong the market became, proving the naysayers wrong – and surpassing their own expectations. But it takes time and careful strategic planning). Determining “where” the first phase would be critical (e.g. the commercial/town center first, or a complete residential street/builders’ square first etc.).
6. ***Early political support is critical.*** This creates the “tailwind” to carry forward into the key issues and partnerships that will be needed for the project in the long run.
7. ***Incentives and “hand-holding” are crucial.*** The goal is not to get development of any kind, but to get the strategic mix of development that meets the goals of the project, in a strategic phasing. Often this kind of development faces economic and regulatory barriers, or there are few developers who have the experience. The public entities need to be prepared to assist – but that doesn't necessarily mean large subsidies. It can come in the form of regulatory streamlining, up-zoning and other incentives.
8. ***Arts/creative activities and civic/community amenities – even rather modest ones – can be significant catalysts of economic activity.*** We saw this at The Pearl, Blue Star, Rainey Street and other locations. The River Walk channel was decorated with art installations that helped a great deal to humanize some otherwise harsh spaces and make them appealing. Similarly, civic amenities such as greens, plazas and civic buildings, and even small incubator commercial spaces such as cafes, public houses, food trucks and small restaurants can help effectively establish a sense of place and community even at the very early stages of a development. Conversely, we observed that those places that did not provide such civic/community amenities, though urban and dense in form, lacked that sense of place/community.
9. ***Dedicated project personnel -- “champions” – are crucial.*** Pam Hefner has been on the project full-time since 1999. Lori Houston has several dedicated people including one person who is exclusively dedicated to incentives and “hand-holding.” All said that consistent points of contact are key, and disruptive changes in staff have been problematic.

10. ***Design from the macro to the micro is critical.*** We have heard of a number of tools and strategies for ensuring good design – some of them not as adequate as hoped – including guidelines, form-based codes, review committees and other mechanisms. The problem may be in their complexity -- a long and uncertain process can pose yet another regulatory barrier, making it harder to get a project completed. The goal is therefore to fine an “agile” approach to working through good design, making sure the people who are participating are highly qualified, and the standards are clear and as simple as possible.
11. ***Guard against cannibalism.*** Some potential users will be financially attractive but may hurt the critical mass and the economics of the project. While 113 acres may seem like a lot, it is a small part of the area and any peripheral development must be compatible with the ultimate goals of the project – not just “more of the same.” At the same time, it's important to use potential users as risk-mitigators (because they are profitable in early years, for example) and as catalysts and anchors for other things. But they must not become the “tail that wags the dog” – which is all too easy.
12. ***Form linkages and partnerships “outside the frame.”*** Vista Field will succeed far better if the surrounding properties and their agency owners work in tandem, just as San Antonio’s River Walk needed to weave into the surrounding downtown. Mueller Field might be better communities if its internal components were designed to transition more carefully together.



The River Walk in San Antonio is a much-loved place today, with many valuable lessons – and one lesson is that its completion required strong champions, close partnerships, and years of refinement.