

# STEVENSON DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION Strategic Plan 2022–2025





**Front cover photo:**

**Volunteers and community leaders tidy up the waterfront during the Spruce Up Stevenson event.**

PHOTO BY: PAT ALBAUGH

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**This page:**

**The Skamania County Courthouse Lawn is the future site of the Courthouse Park Plaza, a community gathering place with water features, landscaping, various seating options, and Columbia Gorge viewing areas.**

PHOTO BY: MICHAEL PETERSON

## Letter from the Executive Director

Located in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area, Stevenson, Washington captures the hearts of anyone who spends time here. I overhear residents and visitors alike using words like quaint, beautiful, friendly—and windy!—to describe Downtown Stevenson. Our downtown is a gem and the only downtown district in the Columbia Gorge with direct waterfront access. As a rural city with fewer than 2,000 residents, we sometimes have limited resources for infrastructure and development—but we always have heart, grit, pride, ingenuity, and community. Introduce the Main Street Approach™ to downtown revitalization and amazing things can happen.

A few years ago, the Stevenson Downtown Association became a Washington Main Street Community. As a nonprofit organization affiliated with this volunteer-driven model, we are dedicated to

enriching our local heritage and promoting Downtown Stevenson as the place to be. Downtown is our community's living room. Our organization—along with community volunteers, partners, and local leaders—is here to make our living room the place where you share time with friends and family, a place that gives you a sense of pride, and a place where we support one another's dreams.

There are abundant options to enhance our community's living room. Enclosed in this Strategic Plan are key actions that will focus our efforts through 2025. We can do this with the heart, grit, pride, and ingenuity of our community. We can do this together because we are #StevensonStrong.



—Kelly O'Malley-McKee



## STEVENSON DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION 2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS *(left to right)*

**Carly McKee** | Owner, El Rio Texicantina

**Kevin Waters** | Executive Director, Skamania EDC

**Pat Albaugh** | Executive Director, Port of Skamania County

**David Wyatt (Secretary)** | Branch Manager, Stevenson Community Library

**Kaitlyn Conrath (Treasurer)** | Customer Service Manager, Riverview Bank

**Bob Hamlin** | Skamania County Commissioner

**Brian Adams** | Mgr., Ash Park Properties (Stevenson Land Owner)

**Kelly O'Malley-McKee** | Executive Director, Stevenson Downtown Association



**Scott Anderson** | Mayor, City of Stevenson

**John Mobley (Vice President)** | Owner, A&J Market

**Chris Kellogg** | Owner, Clark & Lewie's Grill

**Angie Waiss** | Executive Director, Skamania Chamber of Commerce

**Chris Malone** | Owner, Pro Active Pest Control

*Not pictured:*

**Tabatha Wiggins (President)** | Co-owner, Walking Man Brewing

# OUR TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY

A Transformation Strategy is a foundation of the Main Street Approach. It is the singular overarching statement that describes our method to revitalize and strengthen Stevenson's downtown district.

**We activate the downtown district through placemaking and business support to make it the preferred destination for Stevenson area residents to spend time.**

## ABOUT US

### OUR VISION

**By embracing the Main Street Approach, we envision a historically preserved, economically vibrant downtown where locals and visitors alike come together for community, culture, and connection to the Columbia River.**

### OUR MISSION

**To promote and revitalize Downtown Stevenson and enrich our local heritage.**

### THE MAIN STREET APPROACH™

We are a Washington Main Street Community—one of 36 organizations across the state to employ the Main Street Approach™ to downtown revitalization. As a Main Street America Affiliate,™ Stevenson Downtown Association is part of a national network of more than 1,200 neighborhoods and communities who share both a commitment to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. The Washington State Main Street Program is managed by The Washington Trust for Historic Preservation under the Washington State Department of Archaeology & Historic Preservation.

## **What is Placemaking?**

Placemaking strengthens the connections between people and the places they share. It is a community-led process that helps activate and improve neighborhoods and community gathering places—streets, sidewalks, parks, buildings, and other public spaces—so they invite greater social interaction between people and foster healthier, economically viable communities. This approach focuses on the unique features of particular places, building on existing assets, and using them to attract new investment and strengthen existing businesses.

*Adapted from Project for Public Spaces ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org))*

## **OUR PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS**

We maximize our effectiveness and leverage existing resources in the community by serving as a convener and partner with a range of community institutions and organizations:

- City of Stevenson
- Port of Skamania County
- Skamania Chamber of Commerce
- Skamania County
- Skamania Economic Development Council
- Community organizations

We are a primarily volunteer-fueled organization and we accomplish much of our work through four volunteer committees comprised of community members with a passion for downtown Stevenson.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Economic Vitality</li><li>• Design</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promotion</li><li>• Outreach</li></ul> |
|--|--|

*We always seek new volunteers looking to dedicate their time and talent to projects that align with the strategic goals of this plan. Get involved by filling out our volunteer interest form at [stevensonmainstreet.org](http://stevensonmainstreet.org) or emailing [director@stevensonmainstreet.org](mailto:director@stevensonmainstreet.org).*

# OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

The Goals in our Strategic Plan are linked to the four points of Main Street, each supporting our Transformation Strategy.

## OUR ECONOMIC VITALITY GOAL

Activate downtown and generate economic activity by cultivating lively public and private gathering spaces and a vibrant mix of businesses that attract and serve residents.

## OUR PROMOTION GOAL

Enhance residents' awareness of and interest in downtown destinations by coordinating business promotions and communicating the benefits of coming downtown.

## OUR DESIGN GOAL

Create a welcoming atmosphere and highlight downtown's unique character by improving the appearance of downtown buildings and streets and preserving historical features.

## OUR OUTREACH GOAL

Enhance the capacity and effectiveness of our organization by building awareness of our work and expanding local participation in volunteer opportunities.





**Stevenson Farmers Market is the  
only waterfront market in the  
Columbia River Gorge.**

PHOTO COURTESY OF: RIVER TALK WEEKLY

# Economic Vitality

Economic Vitality is the energy of a healthy downtown commercial district in which thriving local businesses attract and stimulate investments that support the whole community. When residents both own and patronize local businesses, our community benefits from a year-round economic base.



Justin Gross, owner of  
SKA. CO. Skates, Big River Grill,  
and Scoopy's Social Club

## GOAL

**Activate downtown and generate economic activity by cultivating lively public and private gathering spaces and a vibrant mix of businesses that attract and serve residents.**

## OUR STRATEGIES

### ***How we lead in the community***

- 1.** Cultivate temporary and permanent public gathering spaces that encourage residents to patronize Stevenson businesses.
- 2.** Operate the Stevenson Farmers Market to create community among residents and support local entrepreneurs.
- 3.** Encourage a dense district of businesses that support resident interests by cultivating connections among merchants.
- 4.** Strengthen the expertise of prospective entrepreneurs, new businesses, and existing businesses by providing marketing consultations, orientations, networking opportunities, and connections to local business and economic development organizations.
- 5.** Provide direct grant opportunities and connections to external grants for downtown businesses and property owners.

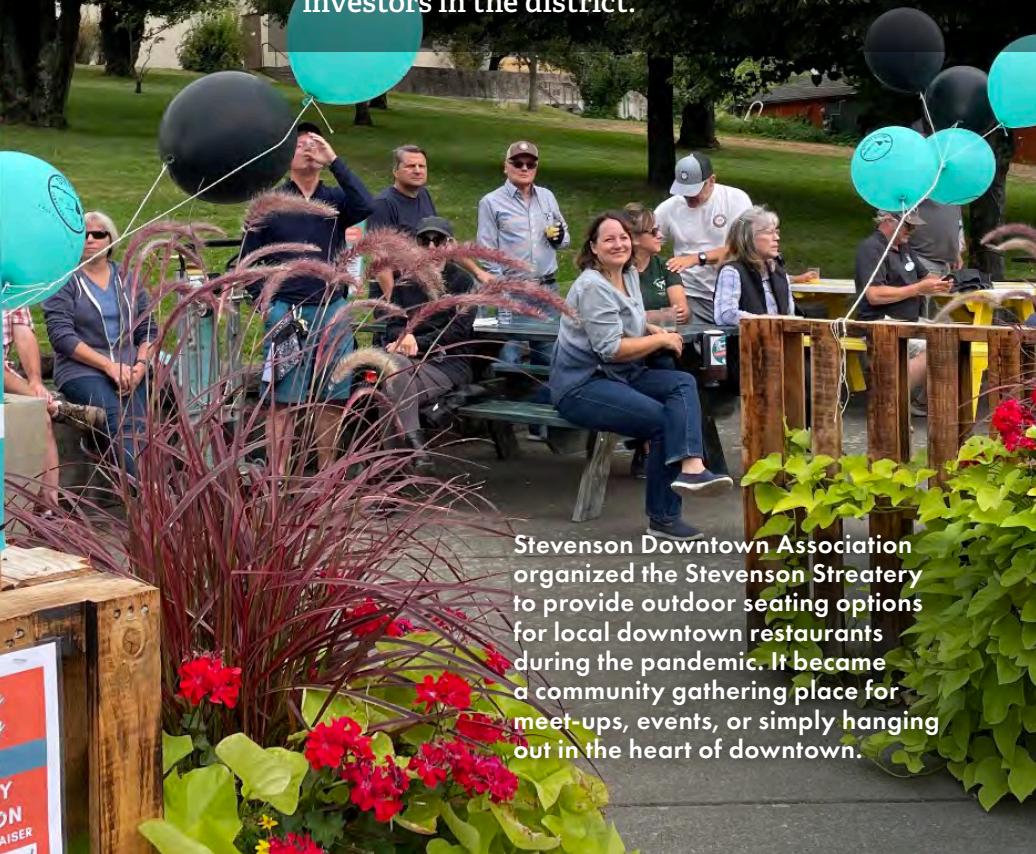
### ***How we support other organizations' leadership***

- 6.** Support creative activation of underused spaces like empty storefronts and lots, mis-sized utilization, and extra space, with a focus on shops or places where locals can spend time.
- 7.** Support the City and County in the activation of the Courthouse Park Plaza.
- 8.** Coordinate with partners to minimize duplication of effort.



## Promotion

Promotion uses media and marketing to convey a positive image and distinct identity of the downtown district as a place to shop, eat, play, and gather. Healthy promotion improves the confidence of private and public investors in the district.



Stevenson Downtown Association organized the Stevenson Streatery to provide outdoor seating options for local downtown restaurants during the pandemic. It became a community gathering place for meet-ups, events, or simply hanging out in the heart of downtown.

## GOAL

**Enhance residents' awareness of and interest in downtown destinations by coordinating business promotions and communicating the benefits of coming downtown.**

## OUR STRATEGIES

### ***How we lead in the community***

1. Conduct regular outreach and communications to residents to promote local businesses and the Farmers Market.
2. Coordinate multi-business promotions that draw residents to downtown businesses.
3. Foster a sense of pride and place among Stevenson residents by building and strengthening a community brand and identity.
4. Recruit family-friendly events to Downtown Stevenson to draw residents of all ages into the district.

### ***How we support other organizations' leadership***

5. Support and promote events hosted by external organizations that bring people downtown.
6. Coordinate communications and branding with local partners to incorporate shared elements that foster a sense of place in Stevenson.

# Design

Design improves the appearance, function, atmosphere, and memorability of downtown businesses, streets, and public spaces.



Storefronts on Russell Avenue  
in Downtown Stevenson

PHOTO BY: MICHAEL PETERSON

## GOAL

**Create a welcoming atmosphere and highlight downtown's unique character by improving the appearance of downtown buildings and streets and preserving historical features.**

## OUR STRATEGIES

### ***How we lead in the community***

- 1.** Develop branded signage around the district to promote community identity and to emphasize connections between the business district and waterfront.
- 2.** Implement programs to incorporate public art to enliven downtown's appearance, celebrate Stevenson's heritage, and support local artists.
- 3.** Beautify the district through seasonal decor and lighting.
- 4.** Organize volunteer stewardship events to maintain the district's appeal.
- 5.** Create design guidelines and resources for businesses and property owners.

### ***How we support other organizations' leadership***

- 6.** Encourage property owners to improve building facades and preserve historic buildings.
- 7.** Advocate for City or County support for property owners to restore properties or make other enhancements.
- 8.** Support walkability and accessibility improvements by the City and County.

# Outreach

Outreach is crucial to the success of Stevenson Downtown Association, ensuring adequate human capital and financial resources are available to implement projects and activities to revitalize Downtown Stevenson.



The Bricks & Clicks program  
awarded thousands of dollars in  
grants to downtown businesses.

## GOAL

**Enhance the capacity and effectiveness of our organization by building awareness of our work and expanding local participation in volunteer opportunities.**

## OUR STRATEGIES

### ***How we lead in the community***

1. Build public awareness of our organization's work and impact.
2. Recruit and engage volunteers to amplify our staff capacity and committee projects.
3. Offer recreational community-building opportunities to volunteers.
4. Formalize subcommittees within the four points of Main Street.
5. Expand our capacity by applying for grants and recruiting additional participants in the Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program.

### ***How we support other organizations' leadership***

6. Identify new opportunities for partnership and strengthen existing partnerships with relevant organizations.



**Red Bluff Tap House on 2nd Street  
in Downtown Stevenson**

PHOTO BY: MICHAEL PETERSON



This Strategic Plan was made possible in part by a grant from the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation.

### Acknowledgments

Thank you to the following members of our Board of Directors who served on a Steering Committee to guide this planning process:

- Pat Albaugh | Executive Director, Port of Skamania County
- Kevin Waters | Executive Director, Skamania EDC
- Scott Anderson | Mayor, City of Stevenson
- Tabatha Wiggins | Co-owner, Walking Man Brewing
- David Wyatt | Branch Manager, Stevenson Community Library

Thank you to the stakeholder interviewees and survey participants who provided input to this planning process.



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# STEVENSON DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

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@stevensonmainstreet

