



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY 2023

Purpose Statement

The mission of the Port of Columbia is to maximize public resources and private investment to **create jobs, provide infrastructure, and maintain and improve the economic vitality of Columbia County and its communities**. The Port also contracts with the State of Washington to provide county-wide economic development coordination. This economic development plan outlines the methods we use in pursuit of the mission.

Core Elements of Work

1. Create Jobs

Business Retention and Expansion

- Continue to assist businesses with COVID-related challenges.
- Meet annually and as needed with business owners to express appreciation for their business and help identify their future needs and opportunities.
- Host events that support business retention and education, such as Cup of Joe and Cash Mobs.
- Continue work on the growth of the value-added ag and local food processing sector.
- Work with community partners to increase tourism and recreation opportunities in support of related businesses.
- Work with green business, similar to Columbia Pulp and the wind industry, on expanding Columbia County's environmentally friendly jobs.
- Continue to hold virtual monthly Economic Development Steering Committee meetings in which COVID response coordination is the primary focus.
- Develop and support a sustainable Shop Local program.
- Market and educate investors on the Opportunity Zone tax incentive.

Benchmarks

- Number of businesses requesting assistance
- Number of businesses visited, assisted, and retained
- Number of local businesses expanding operations
- Number of jobs created

Small Business Development

- Promote the utilization of the Small Business Development Center through referrals to the regional representative.
- Continue to contribute funding and support to SBDC annual operational costs for 2021.
- Work with the schools and The Club to develop a career connected learning program that educates and trains students in entrepreneurship.
- Host at least two workshops annually on topics relevant to small business development.
- Continue to explore connection with Mercy Corp NW.

Benchmarks

- Number of Columbia County businesses utilizing the SBDC.
- Number of SBDC Columbia County Office Hours held annually
- Track the number of website hits to the Choose Columbia County *Starting a Business* page
- Number of students and businesses participating in career connected learning program.

Business Recruitment, Marketing, and Advertising

- Utilize Washington State Department of Commerce and other business recruitment sources in obtaining and responding to leads whose criteria match Columbia County
- Market to business clusters that are similar to existing Columbia County businesses – agriculture, value-added ag, food and beverage processors, renewable energy, health and human services.
- Maintain a list of available properties and greenfield locations for new businesses to locate.
- Promote commercial buildings available for lease or purchase through one or more of the following media:
 - Portofcolumbia.org
 - Choosecolumbiacountywa.com
 - www.zoomprospector.com
 - www.portengine.net
 - Regional Craigslist sites
 - Social media sites (i.e. Facebook)
 - Radio ads
 - Other media as appropriate
- Create promotional packets on facilities, land, and community as needed for business inquiries.

Benchmarks

- Number of leads responded to
- Number of properties listed as available
- Number of properties leased or purchased
- Number of new businesses that locate here

2. Provide Infrastructure

Site and Infrastructure Development

- Work with Touchet Valley Trail Steering Committee, WSDOT, and consultant to complete design of the Touchet Valley Trail.
- Seek funding for design and construction of a port-owned open-access fiber network.
- Seek funding for the construction of a new spec building for the Rock Hill Industrial Park.
- Seek funding for the construction of a new spec building for Blue Mountain Station.
- Continue implementation of Marina Facilities Plan.
- Support efforts to construct affordable housing options in Columbia County.
- Support a transportation funding package to address deficiencies in roads, streets, and bridges in the city and the county.

3. Maintain and improve the economic vitality of Columbia County and its communities.

Economic Profiling

- Maintain Economic Indicators on Port of Columbia website.
- Provide updated Economic Indicators at the annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Meeting.

Economic Development Advocacy

- Develop and communicate positions on economic development issues important to the economic health of the region.
- Develop a proactive profile by communicating economic development efforts and economic development success stories.
- Work with local government agencies to advocate for sound public policies on land use development and regulations, transportation, growth management, and the cost of doing business.
- Participate in County and City updates to their comprehensive plans. Make sure plans support proactive economic development policies.
- Coordinate with the Workforce Development Council to respond to skill gaps, meet changing industry and business needs, and increase competitiveness of area employers.
- Represent economic development interests before governmental bodies.
- Participate as a member in the Washington Economic Development Association and Washington Public Ports Association.

Community Development

- Participate in Dayton Development Task Force and support their projects
- Provide support for annual events, such as All Wheels Weekend, and area nonprofit organizations that add to the cultural interest in our community.

4. Other Important Economic Development Elements

- Tourism is important to the economic development of Columbia County. The Dayton Chamber of Commerce is the lead agency for tourism as they receive the hotel/motel tax which is the primary funding source for tourism marketing. The Port of Columbia provides financial and technical support to the Dayton Chamber of Commerce.

- The Dayton Development Task Force is the primary group that promotes downtown development and redevelopment. The Port of Columbia assists them with their projects and work.
- The Port of Columbia recognizes that in the small communities of Columbia County, it is important to provide assistance to all businesses and potential businesses seeking assistance. The services of the Port and staff are available to anyone seeking assistance for a business in Columbia County.
- The underlying goal of the plan is to enhance the economic well-being of all Columbia County residents and families, including those living below the poverty line.

Definition of Roles

Port of Columbia

- Primary responsibility is coordinating and executing economic development plans, conducting the monthly Economic Development Steering Committee (EDSC) meetings, and hosting the annual CEDS meeting.

Dayton Chamber of Commerce

- The lead agency for tourism within Columbia County
- Participate in the monthly EDSC meeting
- Assist with site visitations, retention efforts, and targeted economic development initiatives.

Dayton Development Task Force

- Enhances the physical and visual assets of Dayton, including façade improvements, streetscaping, and wayfinding signs.
- Promotes downtown activities that showcase the community's unique character

Private Sector

- Provide strategic guidance to the Port in areas related to their business.
- Invest in specific identifiable economic development opportunities when available.
- Serve as advocates for public policy decisions that promote economic development.
- Assist with site visitations and retention efforts.
- Participate in monthly EDSC meeting

County and Cities

- Formulate and adopt economic policies within their jurisdictions to guide public investment.
- Provide strategic guidance to the Port in areas related to their jurisdictions.
- Invest in specific economic development infrastructure projects within its jurisdiction.
- Assist with site visitations, retention efforts, and targeted economic development initiatives.
- Provide technical support when needed, as in GMA planning support.
- Support public policy decisions that promote economic development.
- Elected official and/or administrative staff participation in the monthly EDSC meeting.

School District

- Provides updates to the EDSC on the school district's projects and needs.
- Participates in monthly EDSC meeting.

Hospital District

- Provides updates to the EDSC on the hospital districts projects and needs.
- Participates in monthly EDSC meeting.

Columbia County Transportation

- Provides updates to the EDSC on Columbia County Transportation's projects and needs.
- Participates in monthly EDSC meeting.

Community Groups (Friends of the Fairgrounds, Friends of the Dayton Community Center, etc)

- Provides updates to the EDSC on their projects and needs.
- Participates in monthly EDSC meeting as needed.

WWVMPO / Palouse RTPO

- Engages state, county and city members, as well as interested parties and the public, in cooperative planning and decision-making on transportation issues.
- Prepares plans and programs that guide federal, state, county and city investments into a multi-modal transportation network.

WorkSource Walla Walla

- Provide labor force & labor market data in support of economic development and business recruitment efforts.
- Responsive to business and industry needs for employee recruitment and training
- Partners in local initiatives that link employment services and resource to the community's needs.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS LIST 2023 – FINAL

Columbia County – Lead organization, if one has been designated, is noted in bold.

Education and Training

5 years

- Continue to improve facilities of local school district to provide service from preschool to high school. **Ongoing**
- Improve relationships with high schools and colleges.
- WWCC (and/or WSU) to open branch or satellite office.
- Continue to expand programs at Dayton High School/Skill Center with WW School District. **Dayton Schools**
- Encourage active participation in regional workforce training. **Port**
- Research community workforce need, then develop programs to meet established needs. **Port**
- Provide incumbent worker training.
- Development of STEM programs.
- Expose student to and encourage them to enter CNA and other technical training opportunities. **Ongoing**
- Support the Club and afterschool programs. **Ongoing**

Infrastructure (Roads, river, rail, air, water, sewer, energy, telecom, solid waste, transportation, utilities, etc.)

5 years

- Improve City streets, County, State & US Highway/Road infrastructure. **City & County**
- Continue Commercial Street Corridor plan implementation – **DDTF**
- Improve the water and sewer system infrastructure of the City of Dayton. **City Ongoing**
- Obtain funding for maintenance on dike.
- Install Touchet Valley Golf Course sprinkler system. **Ongoing**
- Long and short range plans for Fairgrounds (focus on East Grandstand), Golf Course, and Seneca property the county has acquired.
- Create and improve walking & biking paths throughout the community, connecting Downtown, BMS, Fairgrounds, School, etc., and potentially between Dayton and Waitsburg. Bike and walking bridge over Touchet River. **Ongoing - TVT design will be finished by Port, but trail construction will not be pursued.**
- Seek funding to maintain short line railroad. **Port Ongoing**
- Seek funding under the Safe Routes to Schools program.
- Seek funding to implement recommendations from the Lyons Ferry Marina comprehensive facilities plan. **Port**
- Work toward mental health and detox facilities.
- Improve West entrance to Dayton. **DDTF, City, Chamber Ongoing**
- Work with private sector on addressing broadband infrastructure needs. **Port**
- Downtown street improvement: add parking by courthouse, adjust four lanes to three lanes with turn lane - **City**
- Jail/Law & Justice facility **County**
- Facilitate construction of open access broadband network. **Port Project underway.**
- Implement Main Street Safety Action Plan (includes speed reminders, pedestrian crossings, etc.) **City**
- Replace viaduct in Dayton and bridge over Snake River between Lyons Ferry Marina & Park **City/County**
- Remove sediment from river and find long-term solution to eliminate build-up – **City/County**

10 years

- Improve railroad tracks to include passenger service. **Port**
- Improve safety, access, and ADA accessibility for pedestrians on Hwy. 12 viaduct on E. Main Street.

Business Development

5 years

- Continue to improve stability of local hospital district, including workforce training. **Ongoing**
- Continue development of Blue Mountain Station Food Park. **Port Ongoing**
- Facilitate youth internship/entrepreneurial program in school. **Chamber/Port**
- Increase coordination with downtown businesses and the school. **Chamber**
- Develop value-added agriculture. **Port**
- Facilitate small business technical assistance and workshops. **Port**
- Continue to encourage development of wind generation projects.
- Encourage biomass energy production.
- Building capacity of local contractors to get on small works rosters, Sustainable Living Center list, etc. **Chamber** list resources and contractors on its website.
- Create targeted marketing strategy for downtown business recruitment. **Chamber/DDTF**

- New Industry at Lyons Ferry to take advantage of new infrastructure. **Port**
- Continue work with Choose Columbia County shop local campaign. **Chamber/Port**
- Construct new speculative building at Rock Hill Industrial Park and/or Blue Mountain Station. **Port Budgeted Funds for Design**
- Continue work on the development of the local food system
- Help local businesses with online presence (i.e. Google, social media, TripAdvisor, etc) **Chamber**
- Evaluate possibilities regarding of Main Street second floor improvements
- Develop assisted living facility. **Hospital 4 units complete**
- Train businesses in online sales. **Chamber**
- Develop a plan to target specific industries to look at downtown buildings through building tours and other events.
- Improve broadband internet service for the business sector. **Port/Chamber/Private Sector Project underway**

Tourism

5 years

- Develop additional opportunities for ag tourism and seasonal recreation (hunting/fishing, biking, camping, horseback riding, outfitting, skiing, snowmobiling, zip lines, etc.). **Chamber/Port/DDTF**
- Improve tourism web sites. **Chamber**
- Achieve funding for regional Way Finding program. **DDTF/Port Ongoing**
- Encourage the establishment of cabin rentals.
- Maintain and enhance existing railroad depot. **DHDS**
- Incorporate recent tourism survey into work and evaluation of current tourism and retail business operations.
- Improve courthouse grounds.
- Develop agri-tourism through signage or tours of crop locations.
- Coordinate with Walla Walla Chamber on new Recreation Hub concept

Housing

5 years

- Address and encourage affordable housing needs in Dayton and Starbuck. **Port, City, County, Starbuck, DDTF, Community Council Ongoing** (*Affordable housing is generally defined as housing on which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.*)
- Develop adequate senior and retirement housing.
- Rehab community housing (possibly with CDBG funds).
- Temporary/emergency housing assistance.
- Develop a sequential housing environment.
- Consider master plan for commercial/housing mixed use development - **Port**

Community Development

5 years

- Develop Community Center and Pool **Ongoing – Needs discussion**
- Expand recreational opportunities at Bluewood **Bluewood Ongoing**
- Encourage youth activities, support development of The Club **Ongoing**
- Encourage development of Sports Complex for events and tournaments
- Fund and construct ADA pathways.
- Develop a community town center, including identifying potential location.
- Develop, Construct, and Operate Childcare Facility – **CCHS, Port, City, YWCA, ESD 123 Needs discussion**
- Consider feasibility of putting a Parks and Rec Taxing District on the ballot – **Friends of the Pool**

Planning and Capacity Building

5 years

- Continue Implementation of the B&O Main Street Tax Incentive Program **DDTF Ongoing**
- Partner with Columbia County Transportation for additional van pools to new Columbia Pulp facility and the Dam
- Plan for the highest use for all industrial lands
- Encourage the community to adopt a leadership development program. **Port/Chamber Ongoing**

See next page for accomplishments.

2022 Accomplishments

Infrastructure

- Port – Continued Touchet Valley Trail Design, found funding for construction. The project was stopped by the Port Commission.
- Port – Completed pole attachment agreement with PacifiCorp. Completed franchise agreements with Columbia County and City of Dayton. Purchased 230,000 feet of fiber optic cable. Completed design of Dayton Community Broadband Project which is out for bid.
- Port – continued work on design of pull-thru RV sites & new upland restroom for Lyons Ferry Marina
- Touchet Valley Golf Course built water retention pond for irrigation system

Business Development

- CCHS – holds ongoing CNA classes
- Port: Attracted and/or located 4 new businesses in Rock Hill and BMS business parks – Sweet Cheeks Bake Shop, North Home Bees, Columbia River Detailing, SE WA Alliance for Health. Leased additional space to Red Band Cellars. Working on another BMS business expansion.
- Port – worked with 13 small businesses as users of the BMS Commercial Kitchen
- Port – assisted Table Rock Meat Co with funding and location for expansion into USDA certified meat processing.

Tourism

- DDTF – Completed Fairground/Golf Course wayfinding sign for west Main Street, replaced damaged sign in front of old Frontier Too.
- Port – provided funding towards creation of Accessible Walla Walla website to promote tourism for folks needed ADA facilities.
- Port – funded 3 months of commercials on KAPP TV plus 4-minute segment on regional value-added ag show.

Housing

- CCHS – completed construction of 4 assisted living units adjacent to hospital complex.

Community Development

- CCHS – exploring options for Childcare Facility