



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Department of Public Works

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www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager

From: Daryl Grigsby, Public Works Director
Ray Steiger, P.E., Capital Projects Manager

Date: June 12, 2006

Subject: CENTRAL WAY BUSINESS SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP – FEEDBACK

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council review the information gained from targeted businesses along Central Way impacted by the Central Way Improvement Project.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The Central Way Improvement Project is nearing completion and involves the reconstruction of a number of underground utilities that had reached their design life. In addition, aerial utilities (telephone, cable, TV) were transferred to underground conduits. Final roadway restoration includes the creation of new traffic bulbs at various intersections, landscaped median islands, and improved pedestrian crossings. Construction on the approximately \$4M project, between Sixth Street and Market Street began in June of 2005 and will be substantially complete at the end of this month.

During construction, which was performed in six specific stages based on feedback from the business community, the impacts to the surrounding community were felt in a number of ways including traffic diversions, congestion, utility interruptions, loss of parking and access issues. In response to the feedback from businesses, and with future CIP projects anticipated in other business districts (i.e. NE 85th Street corridor in 2007), Council asked staff to undertake a survey of Central Way businesses to ascertain the impacts of construction and to solicit feedback for future CIP project planning.

In conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and the Kirkland Downtown Association, a list of representative businesses was assembled and contacted for feedback (Attachment A). The feedback was obtained through a two step approach: first, a survey was assembled to request feedback on a number of specific issues surrounding the project and was sent to each of the identified businesses (Attachment B). The businesses were asked to fill out the survey and to provide any additional comments that they felt were appropriate. The second step was to conduct a focus group meeting which was held at the Crab Cracker on the morning of Wednesday, May 31. As a third step to get more feedback, the Chamber President, Bill Vadino and Economic Development Manager, Ellen

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Miller-Wolfe distributed surveys and talked with businesses in the effected area on June 5. However, given the limited response to the written survey, the minutes of the focus group discussion, which covered the major areas of consideration in the survey, are included in this memorandum (Attachment C).

Following is a summary of key elements from the feedback:

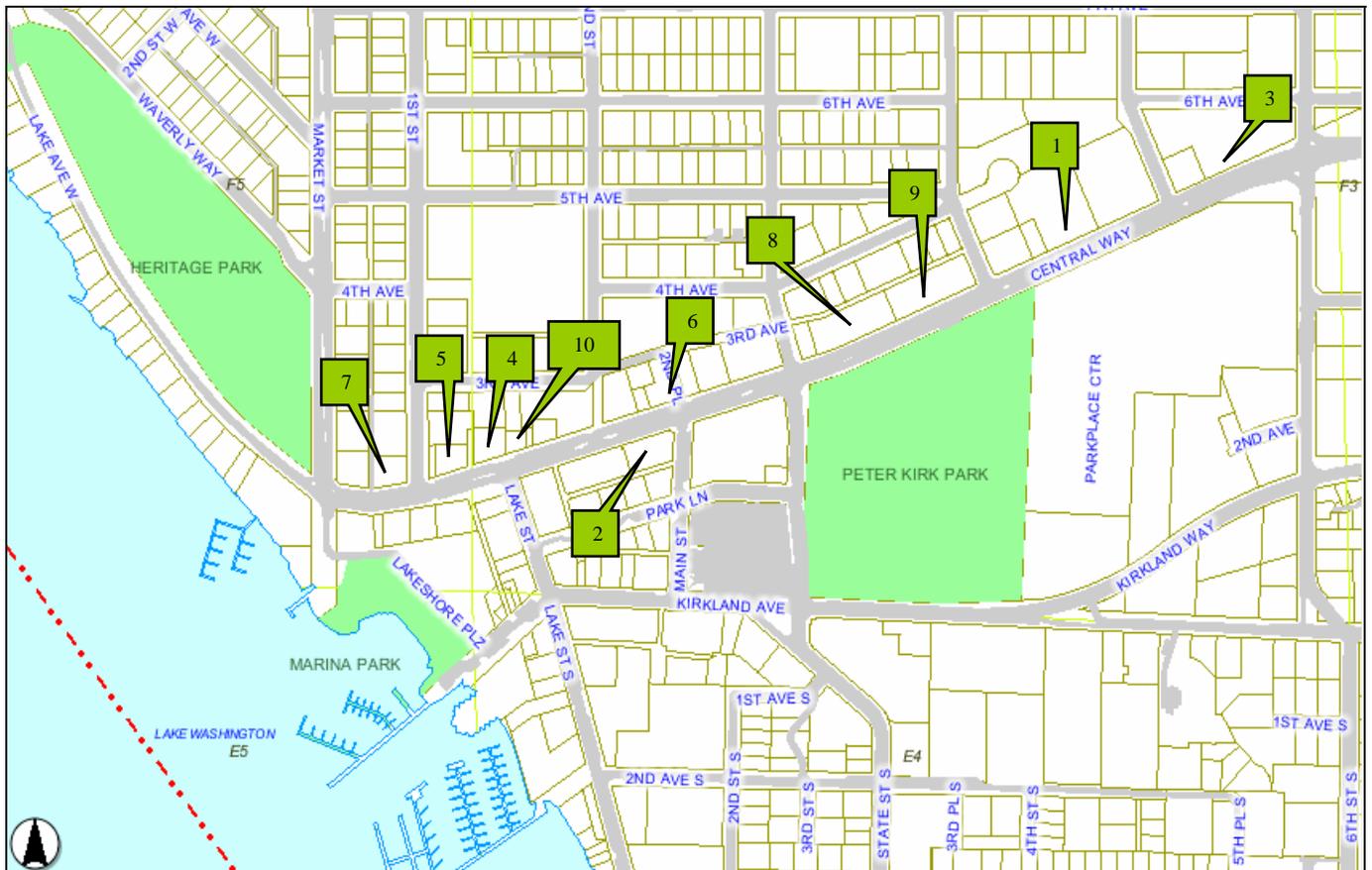
- Direct mailings and one on one meetings were the most important forms of project updates and information to the businesses;
- More realtime updates should be available to the public: web-sites, variable message reader board;
- Staging opportunities along Central were limited, on 85th Street the contractor should be required to stage equipment and supplies on private property behind the businesses (there are some large parking lots available);
- Staff should explore night-time construction on NE 85th Street;
- Appreciated the construction of multiple elements combined into one project vs. coming back year after year;
- All businesses identified financial impact of the project to varying degrees; most understood the necessity for projects, some had anticipated impacts more than others
- Mixed reaction on some sort of “grand re-opening” of Central Way celebration; Staff is proposing limited event concurrent with possible newspaper “We are open for business” advertisement.

Attachments

Cc: Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Economic Development Manager
Rod Steitzer, P.E., Project Engineer (Central Way Improvement Project)
Don Anderson, P.E., Project Engineer (NE 85th Street Corridor Improvements)

Map Location Contact Representing

	Bill Vadino Dick Bezell	Chamber KDA
1	Shirley Day	Crab Cracker
2	Steve and Barilyn Suskin	Eastside Trains
3	Jason Goldberg	Fedex Kinkos
4	Patricia Rovzar	Rovzar Gallery
5	Stavros Ioannou	Santorini Greek Grill
6	Representative	Scruff to Fluff Dog Grooming
7	Sydney Tanner	Sur Le Table
8	Reuben Gounder	Wendy's
9	Steve Rahl	White Swan Car Wash
10	Jesse Bactad	X Gym





How are we doing?

Central Way Improvement Project

In an effort to continue to improve our project delivery process and in preparation of significant capital investments along NE 85th Street east of I-405 beginning in 2007, the City of Kirkland is requesting your feedback on the Central Way improvement project. Five minutes of your time is requested for this survey. A follow-up focus group (still to be scheduled) will be held to discuss the results and assemble information prior to presentation to the Kirkland City Council in May 2006.

The survey and follow-up focus group is intended to gain the perspective of commercial and business interests along the Central Way corridor that have been experiencing the ongoing construction activities. Your participation is completely voluntary, and is intended to ascertain whether efforts that were taken during construction were beneficial/detrimental or of no impact.

We are focusing on certain elements of the project with a number of sources or components identified. A zero indicates completely neutral, a five indicates significantly agree/beneficial, and negative numbers indicate your degree of disagreement/dissatisfaction. Please compare the timeframe of June 2004/June 2005 to June 2005/June 2006 (anticipated).

If you have any comments or additional information that you would like to include, we have provided space for that too. In order to present this information to the Council in May, please return this information in the enclosed pre-stamped envelope by **Monday, April 3, 2006 or visit our website and complete the survey on-line**. Thank you in advance for your feedback.

Communication – How effective was information regarding the project from the identified source?

	Strongly Disagree (-5)					Neutral (0)					Strongly Agree (5)				
Direct mailings	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Project updates	<input type="checkbox"/>														
KDL open houses	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Variable message readerboard	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Kirkland Web site	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Face to face visits	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Construction personnel	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Neighboring business	<input type="checkbox"/>														
Door hangers	<input type="checkbox"/>														

(continued)

Communication (cont.)

Suggestions for improving communication (optional):

Traffic control – From your perspective, how was the identified element handled during the project?

	Strongly Disagree (-5)				Neutral (0)				Strongly Agree (5)			
Patron access	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Delivery access	<input type="checkbox"/>											
By-pass pedestrian access	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Temporary signage	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Parking availability	<input type="checkbox"/>											
General vehicular congestion	<input type="checkbox"/>											

Suggestions for improving traffic control (optional):

Construction scheduling – The project was broken into six schedules and required the contractor to conduct activities during the hours of 7:00 to 5:00 pm (except for certain activities such as watermain tie-ins). This was done to minimize interruptions to the downtown. Do you concur with the approach that was used?

	Strongly Disagree (-5)				Neutral (0)				Strongly Agree (5)			
Breaking into schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Night-time construction	<input type="checkbox"/>											
Day-time construction	<input type="checkbox"/>											

Suggestions for improvement (optional):

Environmental Issues – As it applies to your business frontage, how were the following addressed by the construction crews?

	Strongly Disagree (-5)					Neutral (0)					Strongly Agree (5)
Dust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Noise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Construction equipment/materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Suggestions for improvement (optional):

Financial impacts – to the degree possible, please identify monetary elements of your business during construction.

Type of business:

Financial	<input type="checkbox"/>	Auto/gas station	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Furnishings/gallery	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (specify) _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sales (other)	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Estimated sales impact :

Decrease > 75%	<input type="checkbox"/>	No change	<input type="checkbox"/>
51 – 75% decrease	<input type="checkbox"/>	0 – 25% increase	<input type="checkbox"/>
26 – 50% decrease	<input type="checkbox"/>	26 – 50% increase	<input type="checkbox"/>
0 – 25% decrease	<input type="checkbox"/>	51 – 75% increase	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Increase >75%	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Optional)

Business Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Person completing survey: _____
 Position with business: _____
 Contact phone number (name if different from above): _____

Other comments:

Thank you for your participation. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results of this survey please indicate: Yes
No

For questions or other information, please visit our website or contact Ray Steiger, P.E., Capital Projects Manager, Public Works Department, 425.587.3833 or email rsteiger@ci.kirkland.wa.us

Central Way Business Focus Group Breakfast 5-31-06, 8-9 a.m.

Attendees: Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Sydney Tanner (Sur Le Table), Shirley Day (Crab Cracker), Dick Beazell (KDA), Bill Vadino (Chamber), Rod Steitzer, Ray Steiger, Reuben Gounder (Wendy's). Invitees not attending: Patricia Rovzar (Rovzar Gallery), Stavros Ioannou (Santorini Greek Grill), Steve and Barilyn Suskin (Eastside Trains), Jason Goldberg (Fedex Kinkos), Jesse Bactad (X Gym), Steve Rahl (White Swan Car Wash), A representative of From Scruff to Fluff Dog Grooming.

Ray stepped briefly through the intent of the meeting and of the survey that was sent to promote dialog.

Bill Vadino noted the need for the Central Way project to be completed by the July 4th Parade. He also suggested ideas for the upcoming NE 85th Street project by minimizing staging areas, and generally being less disruptive to business. He asked whether the work could be done at night.

In response to a question about communication during the Central Way project, Dick Beazell said it was difficult to get people to show up for information meetings held at KDA's office. There was good rapport between staff and business, and the contractor and businesses. He suggested that 85th should have parking lots for staging off the street and not in front of businesses.

It was noted by staff that staging considerations were in the original bid for the Central Avenue project, and night work would have impacted residential uses. Allowing staging on the project site would increase daily production and shorten project time in front of any business.

Sydney said there were very few updates provided, but later stated that list serve updates were helpful. She mentioned customer updates that she had sent out especially when the project was in front of her store. She said team members did communicate by coming into the store, and thought that personal communication was good. She added that it is best to "Hit hard/hit fast" on a project like this, and that the 4th Quarter /November was 'no picnic'.

Reuben said he had received an early letter describing the project and that Wendy's had experience with coping with impacts like these at their other stores. He planned accordingly. He had financial losses but was glad all the improvements (each of the project schedules) had been done at once.

Regarding financial challenges, Sydney said that the project did not kill profits. Shirley said that the project cost her \$20,000 a month in profits (or \$82,000 total loss). She added that this was the cost of doing business and was not substantial as regards the bottom line

Construction impacts noted by the group included: drilling at lunchtime; time spent digging and redigging trenches four times (per Bill V) for various utilities; rodents; dirt

on awnings that it would be nice for the contractor to steam clean. Shirley mentioned flaggers were cooperative, concrete was splattered on building, and contractor and inspector were responsive.

There was discussion about the readerboard and using a routes-changed message. Shirley asked whether the exploreKirkland.com website could be used to communicate that businesses in project areas were open.

Ray asked what makes a successful project. Was it sidewalks? Shirley said that sidewalks were already there and she did not want angle parking. Reuben said that Wendy's has not seen any problems with the curb bulb at 3rd St. They all then discussed connectivity between north and south sides of Central, and bringing Parkplace customers north and Norkirk people south. Reuben asked if VMB could be used daily to display a time for work to be completed each day. Shirley added that they were well informed.

As regards project outcomes, invitees talked about whether traffic calming would lead to long lines getting in and out of Kirkland. There was also discussion about whether the frequency of customers coming from across the street (Parkplace) would increase. In response to the question of whether the project will bring tangible results, (more people coming to Kirkland), Shirley will be tracking the volumes.

Dick noted that seven downtown businesses had gone out during the project period, a number he said was statistically higher than other years.

There was mixed opinion about whether there should be a celebration noting the end of the project. Sydney and Shirley said that these kinds of celebrations do not necessarily bring more customers.

The focus session adjourned at 9 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Economic Development Manager