
Washington APA

Concrete Community Planning Assistance Program



A report prepared for the City of Concrete summarizing the outcome of the Washington APA Community Planning Assistance Team on April 21, 2007

Concrete – Community Planning Assistance Team

Charlotte Claybrooke, *Team Lead and State Safe Routes to School Coordinator*

Greg Griffith, *Historic Preservation*

Kristian Kofoed, J.D., *Community Design and Implementation*

John Owen, *Urban Design*

Paula Reeves, AICP *Transportation, Community Design*

Trevin Taylor, *Biologist and Environmental Engineer*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2007, Concrete's Planner, Lacy Lahr, submitted a proposal to the Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association (WA APA) for a Community Planning Assistance Team to assist the town and its citizens in addressing key issues facing the community. The issues ranged from student safety, to historic preservation and economic development.

The WA APA accepted the proposal, and after a preliminary visit by a small group, the team members arrived in Concrete on April 21, 2007, for a one-day work session. Charlotte Claybrooke, Washington State Department of Transportation, functioned as Team Lead. The City of Concrete and the Concrete School District graciously hosted the work session.

Washington Chapter of the American Planning Association selected a Community Planning Assistance Team including:

Charlotte Claybrooke *Team Lead and State Safe Routes to School Coordinator*

Greg Griffith, *Historic Preservation*

Kristian Kofoed, J.D., *Community Design and Implementation*

John Owen, *Urban Design*

Paula Reeves, *AICP Transportation, Community Design*

Trevin Taylor, *Biologist and Environmental Engineer*

APA Community Planning Assistance Team

Concrete Worksession Objectives:

- Connect plans and actions.
- Inform the community of opportunities and encourage them to take action to protect local and regional resources.
- Help the community understand the structure of the place at various scales and contexts—from regional resources to the neighborhood scale.
- Explore and articulate the larger contexts and interactions of ecological, sociological, economic, and physical systems.
- Visualize potential futures.
- Recognize and describe the qualities of a place by preserving the best elements of the past, addressing the needs of the present, and planning for the needs of future generations.
- Identify and describe choices and consequences.
- Advance the principles of *APA for a Livable Washington*.
- Help the community define the roles of stakeholders.
- Develop a roadmap for implementation of plans and policies.

Lacy Lahr opened the meeting and facilitated brief introductions of the planning team members, and community participants, (local officials, community leaders, school representatives, and parents).

The work session kicked off with a brief overview of the Community Planning Assistance Program. The primary goal of WA APA's Program is to provide problem-solving expertise to small communities with limited resources. The planning professionals involved volunteer their time to provide recommendations during the planning workshop and in a follow-up report. As host of the Community Planning Assistance Team, Concrete is encouraged to follow through with the next steps identified during the day-long workshop and are invited to contact members of the team for additional support and information.

Concrete's Mayor, Mr. Jack R. Billman, Jr., welcomed the committee by focusing the group's attention to the community's three most pressing needs:

- Lack of sidewalks for the children to walk to school safely;
- A single route to the school/airport area, which is of special concern because the school is the only flood safe zone in the community and there is a lack of connectivity to it;
- The expectation for the community to grow by 20 percent, and the need to prepare for that growth.

Mayor Billman also shared that the Main Street and Thompson Bridge projects are complete and the community has an existing Transportation Enhancement grant to design pedestrian access to the Concrete School District campus.

Next, Charlotte Claybrooke presented best practices information for designing safe routes to schools including developing education programs, engineering solutions, and enforcement efforts to increase the number of children walking and biking to school safely. Greg Griffith gave a presentation about cultural resources and historic preservation.

Closing the team presentations, Trevin Taylor, gave an overview of the basic requirements of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Environmental Classification Summary (ECS). The Concrete Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) Team provided each of these presentations to the City as an electronic file attachment to this report.

After a working lunch discussion, City and School District Officials and community leaders led participants on a walking tour. The team evaluated transportation circulation, specifically pedestrian safety and mobility, and discussed economic development and historic preservation opportunities.

When the team reconvened at the school, participants discussed some of the observations from the walking tour, the community's priorities, opportunities, and next steps. The priorities identified included:

- Improving pedestrian safety in and around the schools.
- Improving connectivity across State Route 20.
- Preservation of the community's strong history through restoration of the Superior Portland Cement Company Office Building and the Old High School.
- Improving plans and codes to support economic development and better accommodate expected new growth in housing.



CPAT Walking Tour of Concrete.

The team closed the workshop by summarizing the discussion of economic development, historic preservation, and transportation safety and connectivity into three larger basic goals for Concrete to include:

- (1) Leverage new resources
- (2) Strengthen Concrete's regulatory environment to better accommodate expected new growth.
- (3) Plan big.

Table 1. lists some more immediate next steps that the team recommended in closing. A more detailed discussion of recommendations and resources are presented to the City of Concrete in the following report.

Table 1. Recommended Next Steps

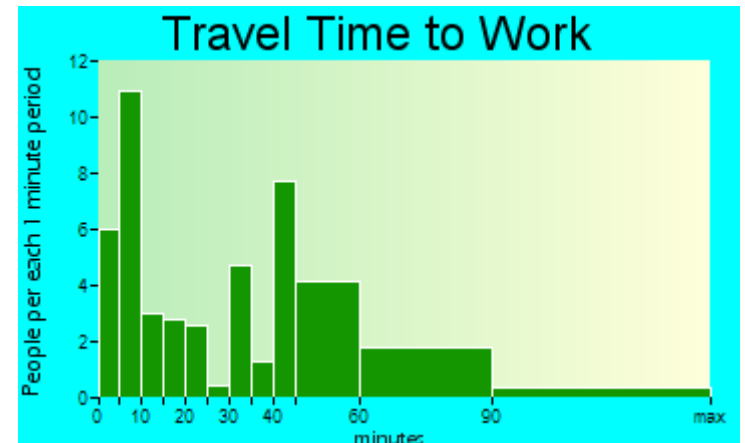
THEMES	ACTION	RESOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY	RESEARCH
Transportation Connectivity	Review subdivision regulations, street standards, etc... --ensure a parallel route to Superior and connection to schools/air field. --Address speed on SR 20 thru design	CTED, WSDOT, WA APA, MRSC	City Staff and Planning Commission	Contact WA APA and MRSC
Safe Routes to Schools	Seek funding for Safe Routes to Schools/Pedestrian Safety: --on and off campus sidewalks and railings --"Pace Car" and "Walking School Bus" programs	WSDOT, Regional Transportation Planning Organization	City Staff, Planning Commission and School Staff/Administration	Request additional technical assistance from State Safe Routes to Schools Program 360-705-7302
Historic Preservation	Seek funding and technical assistance for the new City Hall/Rehab of Superior Portland Cement Company Office Building. Review and update inventory of historic properties.	Certified Local Government Designation Grant WA Trust – Washington Preserves National Trust – Planning Grant	Concrete Staff and community volunteers	Contact granting agencies and WA APA CPAT Team
Economic Development and Community Growth	Conduct a market study or "Gap" Analysis --review regional retail regulations	CTED	Concrete Staff/consultant	Review samples from other cities in WA.

THE REPORT

Concrete Today

Based on April 2006 reports from the Washington State Office of Financial Management, 832 people live within Concrete today. Concrete is a family oriented community. There are approximately 326 households, the majority of these are families and many have young children. The median age in Concrete is 33 years. This is younger than the Washington state median age of 35.

Both Concrete and the surrounding area within Skagit County are growing. From 2000 to 2005, Concrete experienced a comfortable 1.3 percent growth in population annually. Because of Concrete's proximity to nearby Sedro Woolley and affordable home and land prices, the community is likely to experience growth in commuter households. Travel trends based on US Census data show that many people living in Concrete today are commuting over 30 minutes to work. See Transportation Connectivity discussion for more detail and recommendations.



There is currently not one predominant industry or employer that supports the community. Primary occupations include:

- fishing, hunting, agriculture, and forestry
- construction
- educational, health, and social services
- retail trade

Downtown businesses are currently a mix of service, retail, and industrial supply.

Economic Development

Because of Concrete's location on State Route 20, planned residential development, and unique setting and history, the community is anticipating and planning for growth. This section of the CPAT report provides some recommendations and resources to help Concrete with the work they have already started.

Analysis

Economic development starts with analysis. Concrete's officials and staff should consider resources to fund a complete economic analysis. Possible resources include:

1. The Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) can provide some funding, training, and technical resource assistance specifically focused on economic development (<http://www.cted.wa.gov/>).
2. A local resource is the Skagit County Economic Development Council (<http://www.skagit.org/subcategorypages/mission.htm>)
3. CTED's Growth Management Services (GMS) at <http://www.cted.wa.gov/growth> can provide planning resources that include potential planning funds through the Emerging Issues Grant.

Recommendations

The CPAT recommends the following steps be taken for economic development:

1. Perform economic analysis, including identifying local resources and opportunities.

An appropriate scope of work for economic analysis should include market analysis and recommendations. The analysis should consider regional and local trends in real estate development, city and state funding resources, including bonding capacity, and known or likely opportunities for development.

The analysis should also identify market “gaps”, using some standard tools such as Claritas (<https://www.claritas.com>). The Claritas model provides local supply and demand data. Inputting this information into the University of Wisconsin model (<http://www.wisc.edu/urpl/people/marcouiller/projects/clearinghouse/Tourism%20Resources.htm>) will correlate it with population demographics.

Accomplishing this analysis may take some resources, but the result – an in-depth demographic and economic profile of your community -- can be extremely helpful to your further efforts. Teri Cameron¹, Neighborhood Project Manager for the Spokane Neighborhood Business Centers organization, can provide more information on her recent experience with using these models. She also recommends a step-by-step method outlined in a book titled “Step-by-Step Market Analysis: A Workbook for Commercial District Business Development.”

The town of Concrete can prepare for this analytical work by starting to identify its own resources and opportunities. The development of a new subdivision or a conference center are projects that could become new resources and are worth studying in depth. Questions to ask include: What types of services and infrastructure will the new residents need? What retail services (hotels, restaurants, bars, spas, bookstores) typically co-exist with conference centers?

¹ Teresa 'Teri' Cameron, Neighborhood Project Manager, Neighborhood Business Centers (NBC) Program, City of Spokane, Economic Development Division (509)625-6597
www.SpokaneNBC.org tcameron@spokanecity.org

2. Retain a grant writer/researcher on contract to obtain funds for an economic analysis, signage, and re-development.

The community (either the town or a local organization, such as a Chamber of Commerce) may consider retaining a grant writer on contract to research private nonprofit grant sources. The volunteer or paid services of an economic development consultant may be another option, including faculty or graduate students at any nearby educational institutions such as Western Washington University, Skagit Valley College, or Everett Community College. Other nearby towns or Chambers of Commerce may also be sources for good ideas.

3. Develop an economic strategy, based on Steps 1 and 2 (analysis and identification).

With a combination of good analysis and local resources, Concrete can develop an economic strategy. At the April 21 CPAT event, the team members and the town identified several specific strategies to pursue. These include:

- *Storefront improvements.*

Resources for further investigation to accomplish these improvements include CTED's Main Streets program, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation at <http://www.dahp.wa.gov>.

- *Signage, Directional Improvements, Gateway* -- Participants from Concrete identified better signage and a gateway sign as priorities. WSDOT's Scenic Byways program has funding for signage and other features. See <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TA/ProgMgt/Byways/>. Concrete is also planning to consult with local tribal organizations to identify a grant source to compensate for a Master Carver to create a gateway sign to downtown.

- *Establish land use development standards and design guidelines for Downtown Concrete.* Downtown Concrete, north of Highway 20, appears to be ready for new development. Including infill residential and potentially larger scale retail development. Development standards should be established to ensure that new development meets Concrete's goals for the area in terms of use, scale (height and bulk) -- commercial square foot maximum size, consistency with neighborhood context and historic character, and integration with recent "Main Street" improvements. Work with regional agencies to establish regulations for regional retail that will be consistent with the community's objectives.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

The Town of Concrete should be aware of potential funding sources to help implement economic development programs. Reference has been made elsewhere in this report to some of these resources. The following list is provided as a starting point for further research and investigation. Please note that the contact information provided here should be used as a starting point in researching and determining an appropriate funding strategy.

- CTED provides loans through the "Rural Washington Loan Fund" for projects creating new jobs. (http://www.cted.wa.gov/portal/alias__CTED/lang__en/tabID__87/DesktopDefault.aspx).
- Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) (<http://www.dahp.wa.gov>) for the Certified Local Government Program, providing information about this process and its benefits. For example, listed properties may be eligible for various tax incentives.
- Funding may also be available from Heritage Capital Projects Funds through the Washington State Heritage Resource Center (www.wshs.org/wshs/hrc/grants.htm).

Other local resources are existing organizations. Examples include the Chamber of Commerce and the Parent Teachers and Students Association. Members of these organizations have great ideas, and can be motivated to help with new projects. In addition, because granting agencies often require a local match in terms of volunteer hours, the volunteer help from local organizations can help make up that match. For example, the Main Street program values local hours at \$18.00 an hour – and this can add up quickly to your required match. Other in-kind donations of labor or materials can also be counted.

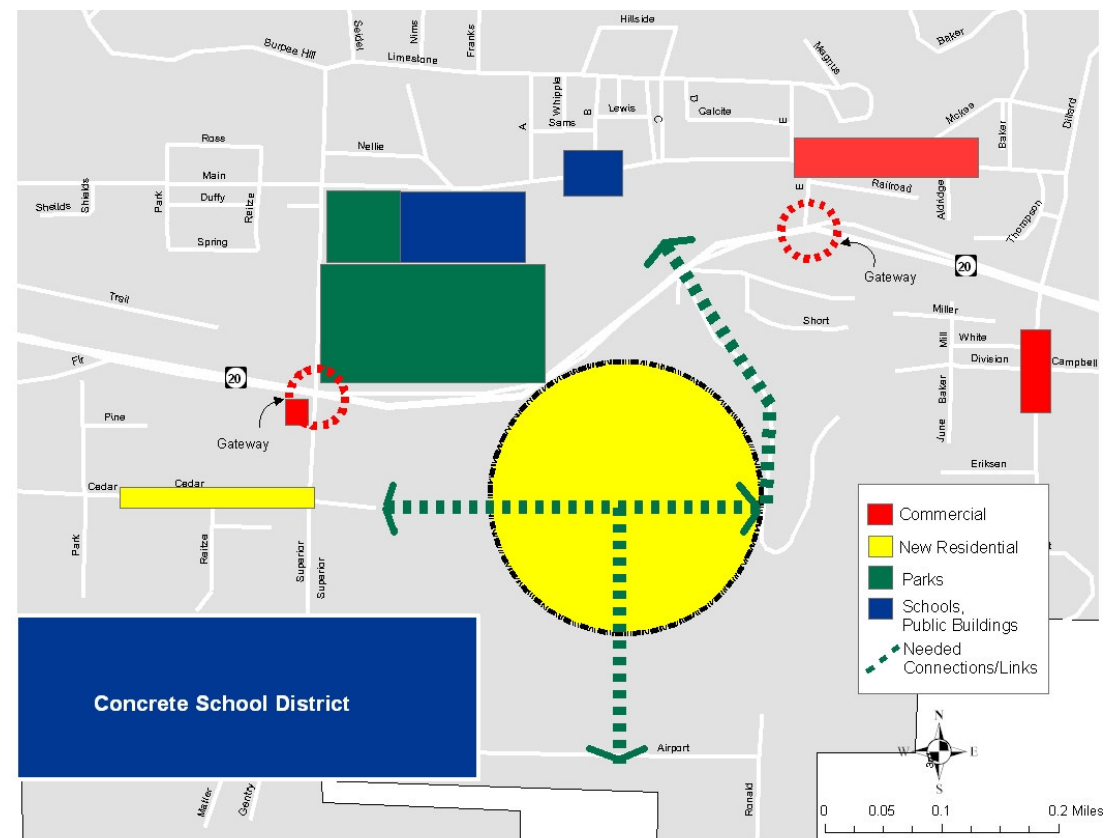
LAND USE AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

At its most basic level land use planning is likely to involve coordinated zoning and transportation infrastructure planning. Land use planning and community design are an important part of social policy, ensuring that land is used efficiently for the benefit of residents, neighborhoods, the community and the region's economy and population as well as to protect the natural setting.

Analysis

The City of Concrete is located in the foothills of the North Cascades in eastern Skagit County. Concrete, founded in 1909, sits along the scenic Baker River. Public services, commercial areas, and existing residential areas are all connected and all within about 1 mile. Anticipated residential development will also be located within close proximity of schools, public services, and commercial areas. However, transportation connections needed to link new residential are not currently in place. See Figure 1.

Figure 1. Existing and Planned Land Use – Transportation Connectivity



Recommendations

- **Improve sidewalks and street crossings at key locations in downtown and connecting downtown to nearby neighborhoods.** Connections from downtown to the High School and from residential areas to the elementary school are particularly important.
- **Establish land use development standards and design guidelines for Downtown Concrete.** Development standards should be established to insure that new development meets the City's goals for the area in terms of use, scale (height and bulk), consistency with neighborhood context and historic character, and integration with recent Main Street improvements. Include infill residential and potentially, larger scale retail development. See website: <https://www.newrules.org/retail>
- **Establish policies to ensure that new residential development near the downtown meets Concrete's objectives** with respect to environmental regulations, the urban growth or sub-area boundary, storm water management, PUD ordinances, and community access (especially pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility).
- **Re-use of the Old High School** --The CPAT team and Concrete discussed marketing this opportunity on the town's website. By working with the property owner, there are several initial steps that will enable Concrete to begin to take advantage of marketing opportunities as they arise. If Concrete could develop a concept plan or vision now for the building and site, coupled with a market analysis and marketing plan for the property, then this strategy could be used to direct or even provide incentives for redevelopment. CTED's economic development programs may be available for some technical assistance with this project, and the town may wish to contract with an economic development consultant that has experience with historic properties. The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), <http://www.nationaltrust.org> , is another potential funding source for an adaptive re-use study or plan. Finally, the McMenamin's organization (<http://mcmenamins.com>) may also be a useful contact to make, based on their experience with adaptive re-use of similar properties in Oregon and Washington.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) visit to Concrete focused on the future of the former Superior Portland Cement Company (SPCC) office building, now owned by the Town. As a community, Concrete is rare, if not unique in Washington state, in terms of its association with the early history of cement production in the Northwest. The history of Concrete parallels that of other Washington communities dating to the late 19th and early 20th centuries that were dependent upon the extraction and processing of natural resources. These communities were economically, socially, and politically dominated by a single corporation. For Concrete the dominant company was the SPCC. What sets Concrete apart from the state's other historic "company towns" is the impact that

the business had on the town's built environment. This impact can still be seen today in the number of commercial and civic buildings designed and constructed as examples of the company's product. Although it appears that some of the community's historic buildings have been demolished or altered, significant examples survive. There is the simulated-rock concrete embankment along Superior Avenue and on the High School grounds. Note should also be made that the Concrete Theater is listed in the Washington Heritage Register (WHR) while the Baker River Bridge and the Lower Baker River Hydroelectric Power Plant are listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).



Baker River Bridge (NRHP)

Other preservation issues touched upon during the workshop included:

- Downtown Concrete design issues.
- The role of historic preservation in Concrete's overall economic development strategy (i.e. heritage tourism and downtown revitalization).
- Longer term historic preservation initiatives the community should investigate.
- Potential funding sources for historic preservation efforts.

Analysis

The town is to be commended for recognizing the historic and architectural significance of the Superior Portland Cement Company office building. Constructed in 1920, the building is one of the best tangible reminders of the town's link to its industrial heritage. Acquisition by the town, along with the plan to rehabilitate the building for use as the "city hall", was the first and a key step toward its eventual preservation and reuse.

Another key event occurred in 2006, when architecture/historic preservation students from the University of Oregon visited Concrete and conducted research into the history of the town and the SPCC. This report also included a thorough analysis of the SPCC office building plus recommendations for its stabilization and adaptive reuse. As such, this work is a valuable tool for the community to use in charting a course for the building's preservation.

Based upon the University of Oregon student report and the CPAT visit to Concrete, the following is known about the SPCC building:

- The building is structurally sound and can be rehabilitated for use as a city hall or other similar use.
- The roof has essentially collapsed into the building causing significant damage to the interior and its contents.
- Furnishings, equipment, documents, etc. from the SPCC era remain in the building.
- The building is listed in the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation List of Eleven Most Endangered Properties, given the deterioration that is taking a toll.
- The DAHP has received and reviewed a draft nomination of the building to the NRHP prepared by University of Oregon student Heidi Granke. Based upon this review, the building and adjacent facilities have been determined to be eligible for listing in the NRHP.

Unanswered questions about the building and preservation are:

- How to temporarily secure the building against vandalism and further deterioration from the collapsed roof.
- What steps are needed to begin rehabilitation work (i.e. budget, structural analysis, hazardous wastes, design/construction drawings, etc.)
- Preservation and conservation of significant contents from the interior of the building.
- How to fund needed rehabilitation work.

Recommendations

Within the next six to twelve months, the CPAT recommends the following steps be taken for preservation of the SPCC building:

1. Finalize the draft NRHP nomination of the building and submit to DAHP for review and listing---Contact DAHP's National Register program coordinator Michael Houser at 360-586-3076 or Michael.Houser@dahp.wa.gov to resolve how to complete needed revisions to the draft SPCC building nomination (i.e. what needs to be done and who can complete needed revisions). Work with Houser to bring the nomination through the review process to actually listing it in the Register.
2. Install as soon as possible a temporary membrane over the roof of the building to prevent further moisture penetration and secure building to prevent further vandalism---Contact the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation (WTHP) for information about applying to the Washington Preserves grant program. Contact Chris Moore at the WTHP at 206-624-9449 or cmoore@wa-trust.org for grant and application information.
3. Remove documents and records from the building for conservation---Contact Susan Fahey at Washington State Archives Northwest Region (at Western Washington University in Bellingham) at 360-650-4911. Arrange a site visit with State Archives in order to begin assessing contents and develop a strategy for removing, evaluating, and conserving documents/records.
4. Apply to the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) for a Preservation Services Fund (PSF) grant to begin planning for the SPCC building rehabilitation---Contact the NTHP Western Regional Office at 415-947-0692 or wro@nthp.org for more information about the PSF or other NTHP grant programs that are pertinent to preservation of the SPCC building. PSF funds can go toward planning or architectural drawings for the rehabilitation. Funding may also be obtained for developing a fund-raising plan.
5. Consider hiring a professional grant writer to help the Town identify funding sources and prepare grant applications to fund preservation work of the building.

6. Identify and evaluate any hazardous waste issues that might affect the rehabilitation effort---Contact Sharon Kophs at Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) at 360-725-4032 to assess potential hazardous waste issues and, if necessary, possible remediation funding sources.

All design and rehabilitation work conducted at the SPCC building should be done in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Only qualified historic preservation consultants familiar with the rehabilitation standards should work on this project. DAHP maintains a list of qualified historic preservation consultants. This list can be accessed by visiting the agency website at <https://www.dahp.wa.gov>.

Connections to Other Issues

Conversations and brainstorming about preservation of the SPCC building led to discussion about other related preservation issues and ideas. Recognizing Concrete's rich historical and architectural legacy, discussion at the CPAT workshop encouraged the community to explore opportunities to leverage this legacy in order to attain economic development and other comprehensive planning goals. Therefore, Concrete is encouraged to take advantage of some of the tools found in the historic preservation toolbox. These tools are briefly summarized as follows:

- *Survey/Inventory*

It is recommended that the Town of Concrete undertake a comprehensive inventory of historic and archaeological resources within its jurisdiction. This process should entail documentation of buildings, structures, districts, sites, and objects (historic properties) forty years of age and older. Compilation of data and completion of inventory forms should be done utilizing the services of a qualified cultural resource professional. The resulting information and inventory forms becomes a database upon which the town can make decisions for comprehensive planning purposes and ultimately for preservation of significant historic properties in the community. Contact: Megan Duvall at Megan.Duvall@dahp.wa.gov.

- *Evaluation*

Following a comprehensive survey/inventory of historic properties in Concrete, evaluate identified resources for significance. Typically, resources are evaluated for significance using criteria for listing properties in the National Register of Historic Places. This evaluation provides the community with guidance about which resources are worthy of protection and provides property owners with predictability for project planning and property management purposes. Contact: Michael Houser at Michael.Houser@dahp.wa.gov.

- *Historic Preservation Plan*

Concrete has already identified and adopted growth management goals and objectives supporting preservation of significant historic properties in the community. Development and adoption of a local historic preservation plan as part of the comprehensive plan is the means by which the community clearly states goals and objectives for protection of historic properties. Contact: Greg Griffith at Greg.Griffith@dahp.wa.gov.

- *Local Historic Preservation Program*

Many communities in Washington have implemented local historic preservation programs that serve as a forum for local decision-making that may impact upon its significant cultural resources. Local historic preservation programs typically consist of a historic preservation commission with members appointed by city council and having demonstrated interest and/or expertise in historic preservation matters. The commission is charged with carrying out local historic preservation policies.

The DAHP administers the Certified Local Government (CLG) program that provides a framework for establishing and sustaining a local preservation program. Jurisdictions such as Concrete can adopt the CLG program by ordinance.

Two important advantages of becoming a CLG is access to an annual grant program to assist the town in implementing historic preservation projects including the following: 1) conducting historic property inventories, 2) evaluating properties for significance; 3) historic preservation planning, and 4) public education and outreach efforts. Another advantage of becoming a CLG is being able to offer a property tax incentive program for owners of privately held historic property who rehabilitate their property according to historic preservation standards. Called “Special Valuation for Historic Properties”, this program provides the owner of a historic property with a property tax reduction for a ten-year period following approved rehabilitation work that meets preservation standards. Contact: Megan.Duvall@dahp.wa.gov.

- *Historic Rehabilitation Design Guidelines*

Design guidelines help raise design standards in the community, improves community appearance and image, and protects property values. It is recommended that Concrete develop and adopt design guidelines for historic properties and in-fill development. These guidelines should be based upon the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, as well as recognize and be compatible with the town’s historic architectural character. Contact: Stephen Mathison at Stephen.Mathison@dahp.wa.gov or Megan Duvall at Megan.Duvall@dahp.wa.gov.

- *Utilize the Main Street™ Program*

Developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Main Street program provides a comprehensive approach for property owners and the community to revitalize historic commercial districts. Contact Susan Kempf at Susank@cted.wa.gov or Sheri Stuart at SheriS@cted.wa.gov.

Historic Preservation Challenges

- As is often the case, obtaining funding for the town's historic preservation projects and programs is a major challenge. However, a more immediate challenge is identifying personnel and time to do the research that is needed to identify appropriate funding sources and preparing application documents to obtain funds.
- A related challenge is recognition that many grant programs will require a certain level of match; either "hard" match (i.e. cash), "soft" match (i.e. donated labor and materials), or a combination of both. Therefore, it is recommended that the Town obtain the services of a professional grant writer who can identify and target appropriate funding sources and prepare application documents.

It is also recommended that a grant writer have demonstrated familiarity with historic preservation issues and related funding sources, as well as insight into how to organize and manage volunteer efforts. Support can likely be found in the community. Contact should also be initiated and maintained with nearby communities, tribes, government agencies, congressional and legislative representatives, as well as corporations such as Puget Sound Energy and perhaps Lone Star Northwest.

- A third historic preservation related challenge is identifying and obtaining the services of qualified historic preservation professionals. In historic preservation work, utilizing the services of qualified and experienced professionals is very important in realizing successful projects. DAHP provides a list of qualified consultants for work in archaeology, architecture, and historic preservation planning. This list can be obtained from DAHP's website at <https://www.dahp.wa.gov>.

- A fourth challenge discussed at the CPAT workshop is related to the issue of widening the sidewalk along Superior Avenue for safety. During the workshop, much discussion focused on impacts of widening the sidewalk to the simulated-rock concrete embankments along the street and on the school grounds. There appears to be consensus in the community that the features are of historic and popular interest. However, widening the sidewalk will likely have an adverse affect on the character, if not also the structure, of these features. Various alternatives were discussed at the CPAT, although a definite course of action was not decided upon.

To address this sidewalk placement challenge, it is recommended that the town and school district continue working with WSDOT through the environmental review process. This review may involve formal contact with DAHP at some point. If the simulated-rock features are considered to be significant and worthy of protection, effort should be made to identify project alternatives that avoid or minimize adverse impacts. If adverse effects cannot be avoided, mitigating measures should be identified and implemented to help reduce the negative impacts. The community should also be aware of potential impacts to the project budget (positively or negatively) resulting from alternative designs and/or mitigation measures.

- A fifth challenge identified during the CPAT workshop, and discussed elsewhere in this report, pertains to the future of the old school buildings. The empty school buildings, plus the quirky and unfinished “castle” rooftop addition, present a challenge not only to the town’s physical appearance, but also its image to residents and visitors. It also presents an opportunity to become a major attraction for visitors and a visual and economic stimulus to downtown and the entire community. In spite of its deteriorated and altered appearance, the school buildings are clearly historically and architecturally significant. Therefore, the town is encouraged to develop a plan or strategy for its ultimate re-use and preservation. In addition, historic preservation organizations and agencies should also be made a part of any future planning efforts that pertain to these key community landmark buildings. See the “Economic Development” section of the report for recommendations regarding adaptive re-use of the buildings.

Funding Opportunities and Resources

The Town of Concrete should be aware of potential funding sources to help implement historic preservation programs. Reference has been made elsewhere in this report to some of these programs. The following list is provided as a starting point for further research and investigation. Please note that the contact information provided here should be used as a starting point in researching and determining an appropriate funding strategy.

- Capital Grants for Washington's Heritage---Washington State Historical Society---Contact Garry Schalliol at GarryS@wshs.wa.gov.
- Special Valuation for Historic Properties---DAHP---Contact Megan Duvall at Megan.Duvall@dahp.wa.gov.
- Federal Investment Tax Credits---DAHP---Contact Stephen Mathison at Stephen.Mathison@dahp.wa.gov.
- Certified Local Government (CLG) grants---DAHP---Contact Megan Duvall at Megan.Duvall@dahp.wa.gov.
- Washington Preserves---Washington Trust for Historic Preservation---Contact Chris Moore at cmoore@wa-trust.org.
- Preservation Services Fund---National Trust for Historic Preservation---Contact wro@nthp.org.
- Transportation Enhancement/Scenic Byway grants---Washington State Department of Transportation and/or the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Skagit County
- Community Development Programs---Contact the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) at <http://www.cted.wa.gov> .
- Preserve America Communities/Grants---Contact <http://www.preserveamerica.gov>
- Growth Management Programs---Contact CTED Growth Management Services at <http://www.cted.wa.gov>.
- U.S.D.A. Rural Development programs---Contact Sandi Boughton at 360-704-7738 or Sandi.Boughton@wa.usda.gov.
- Municipal Research & Service Center of Washington---Contact <http://www.msrc.org> .

Pedestrian Safety/Transportation Connectivity

The town of Concrete has some important opportunities to improve pedestrian safety and overall transportation connectivity, particularly with the anticipated community growth. The CPAT's workshop focused on three of these potential areas for improvement including:

- improving the safety of children walking and bicycling to school
- ensuring a parallel route to Superior and connection to schools/air field
- Addressing speed on Cedar Street and SR 20 thru design and other measures

Analysis

- *Safe Routes to School*

Improving pedestrian safety for children traveling between housing areas on the north side of town (north of State Route 20) and the school campus (south of State Route 20) is important to the community. The historic high school is built over Superior Avenue and limits the width of the roadway. Currently, there is space for pedestrians right next to the building but the students must walk into the travel lane or climb over the concrete/rock structure to enter the school grounds. On the west side of Superior there is a sidewalk from SR 20 to Cedar Street and a gravel path from Superior Avenue to the campus along the northwest side of the high school. On the east side of Superior Avenue there is a sidewalk from SR20 to the point where the high school crosses over the road.



Base of historic school limits width of Superior Ave.

- *Campus Circulation*

In order for pedestrians to get across the campus to the elementary school, they must travel across driveways and parking places, creating a conflict between students walking and motorists on the campus. The middle school is on the east side of the campus and the main entrance to the high school and the elementary school are on the west side of the campus.

- *Cedar Street Speeding*

During the team's discussions, community members voiced concerns about vehicle speeds on Cedar Street between Concrete Sauk Valley Road and Superior Avenue. There are no sidewalk facilities along Cedar Street between Park Avenue and Superior Avenue. Cedar Street between Concrete Sauk Valley Road and Park Avenue was recently widened and now has a sidewalk on the south side with a rolled curb.

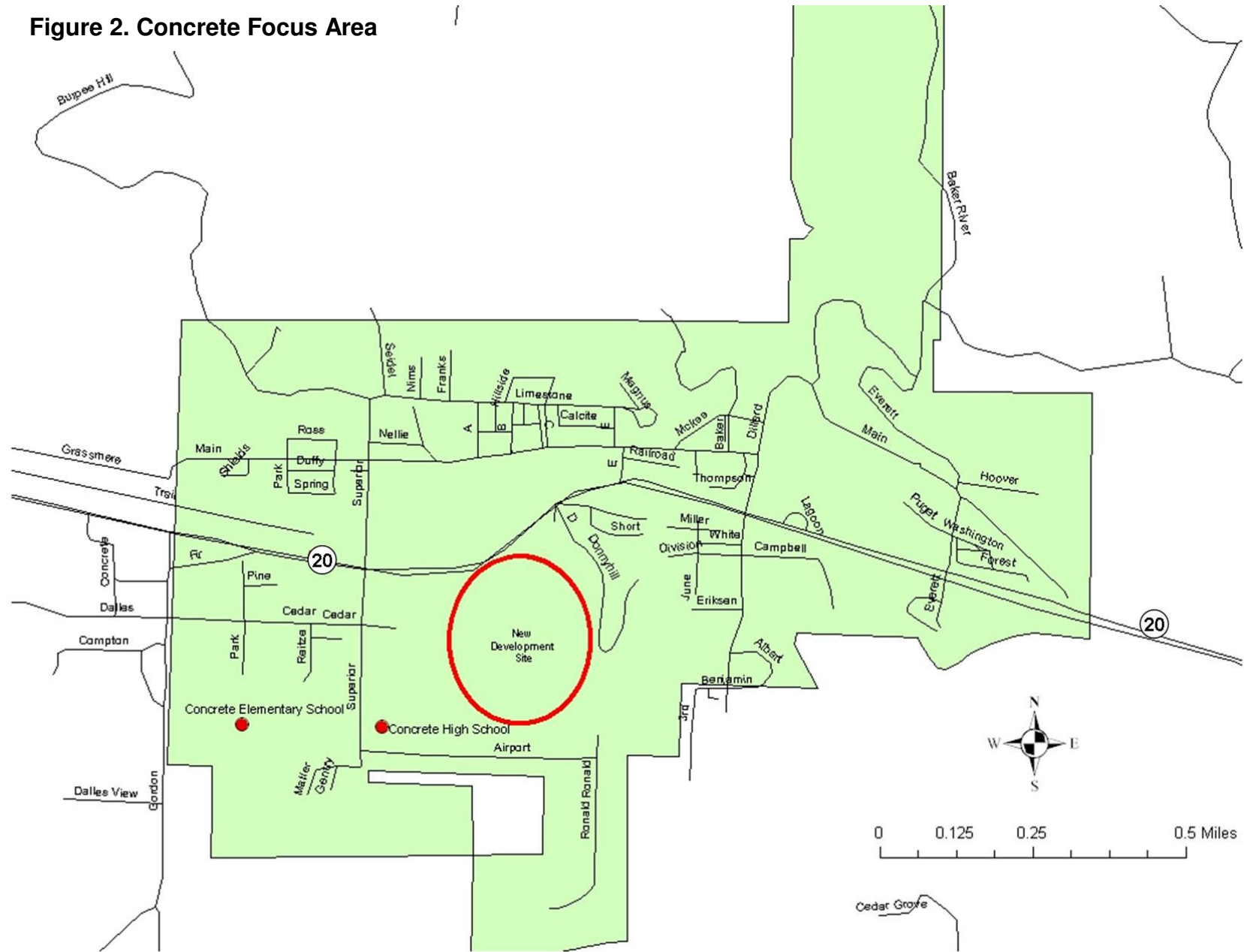
- *New Development:*

There is new development planned to the east of Concrete School District property. This area is currently served by Airport Way and a gravel road. Airport Way does not currently have sidewalks. There is an opportunity to create a limited transportation grid system in this area to improve connectivity. See Figure 2. Concrete Focus Area.



Entrance to High School from Superior Ave.

Figure 2. Concrete Focus Area



North and South/Transportation Connectivity

There are children that live within one mile of the school on the north side of town that are currently bussed to school. There are sidewalks along Main Street from the town center to Superior Ave and a park between Main Street and SR 20, adjacent to Superior Avenue. There is a school crossing at Superior Avenue and SR 20. There are currently two main crossings for motorists (one of which includes pedestrian crossing improvements) and a mid-block pedestrian crossing along SR 20. The speed limit along SR 20 is posted 20mph near the school and 35mph through the rest of town. However, vehicle operating speeds through the area are much higher.

Recommendations

Improve pedestrian safety along Superior Avenue between State Route 20 and the Concrete School Campus.

- 1) Complete the sidewalk on the west side of Superior from Cedar Street to the trail entrance and install a multi-use path to the school grounds along the southwest side of the building where there is currently a gravel trail. This connection should be a first priority followed by additional improvements at the time new development occurs. This recommendation will address two of the communities concerns, pedestrian access to the campus, and campus circulation. For design guidance (i.e, designing for steep grades), see FHWA's *Designing Sidewalks and Trails for Access Part 2*, available at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sidewalk2/> . Vegetation should be cleared so that path users will be more visible from the street and on campus. Provide a route for the high school students to their entrance and continue the trail skirting the ball field and ending at the elementary school entrance. .



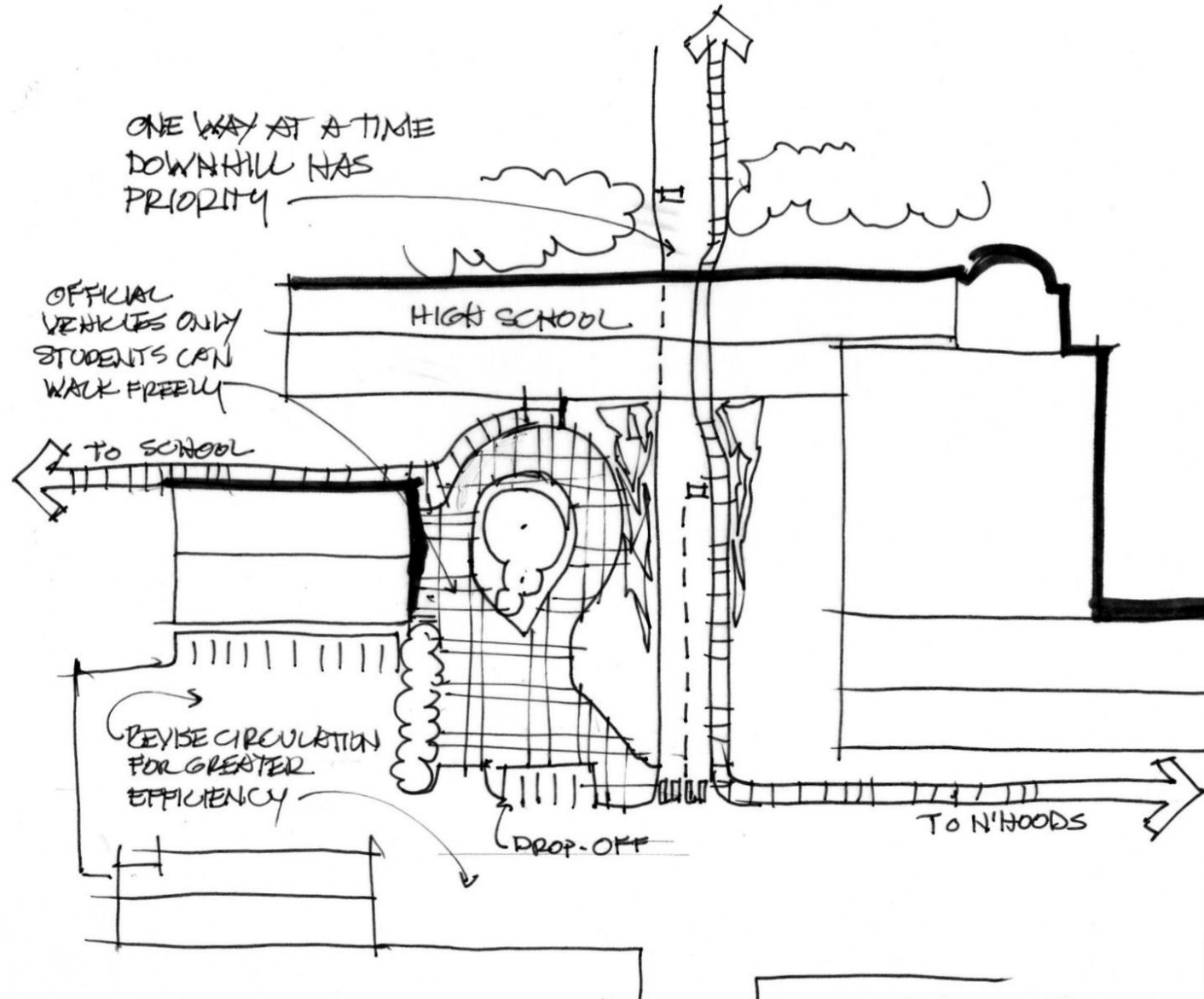
Potential entrance to multi-use trail

- 2) Reduce the width of Superior Avenue to provide space for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible sidewalks. To ensure this recommendation does not negatively impact access to the school (e.g., emergency vehicle access or use of the school for flood evacuation or other emergency), this recommendation should be done in conjunction with transportation connectivity improvements discussed in recommendations for 'New Development – Potential Transportation Grid Connections', later in this Pedestrian Safety/Transportation Connectivity section.

This recommended design will eliminate the need to modify the historic school structure or the concrete walls, and provide a separated walking route for children walking to school. This circulation plan will also allow for the travel lane up the hill to be wide enough to accommodate bicyclists. The improved pedestrian safety and traffic calming may reduce motor vehicle trips to the school campus by encouraging more children to walk to school. Traffic control signals for one-lane, two-way traffic may be required to assign motor vehicle right of way under the school structure (MUTCD Chapter 4G.01). See Figure 3. Recommended Traffic Circulation for Concrete Schools.

- 3) Limit vehicle traffic on the circular drive in front of the high school to official vehicles only and construct a sidewalk from west to east. See Figure 3. Recommended Traffic Circulation for Concrete Schools. This will provide safe travel to students across the school campus. Use railing and sidewalks to direct children across the campus.

Figure 3. Concrete School Campus Traffic Circulation



Reduce motor vehicle operating speeds on Cedar Street.

- 1) Provide a raised intersection at Cedar Street and Park Avenue. This traffic calming measure will help to slow traffic through the area. Another approach that may have similar traffic calming effects would be installing a traffic circle at the intersection of Cedar Street and Park Avenue with a rolled curb. However, this treatment may make it difficult for snowplows to clear the streets in the winter. When the other pedestrian improvements to Superior Avenue have been made, this intersection could be posted as a school crossing speed zone.
- 2) Implement a “Traffic Tamers, Pace Car” program in the community. For more information see <http://www.traffictamers.com/city.htm>. This is a very low cost traffic calming measure that gets parents and students involved in the solution. Make sure that all parents and students get information about the program before it begins to reduce frustration and misunderstandings in the beginning. This action will require some time to get community members to pledge to be “Pace Car” drivers, but it is very inexpensive.



Cedar Street – traffic calming needed

New Development – Potential Transportation Grid Connections

- 1) New development on the east side of the school campus should be required to provide a connection to Airport Way that includes sidewalks. This will ease traffic congestion along Superior Avenue and will provide an additional emergency route for the community and the school. The town should work with the developer to make sure that pedestrian facilities are also provided. A new road to the school may increase the need for an additional crossing at SR 20 where the new street intersects. Crossing at this location could be problematic due to sight distance issues.

- 2) The potential for new development also brings with it the potential for traffic growth. As discussed previously in the report, Concrete's proximity to nearby Sedro Woolley and affordable home and land prices make it a candidate for growth in commuter households. Travel trends based on US Census data show that many people living in Concrete today are commuting over 30 minutes to work. Concrete should pursue commuter services in the near future, such as establishing and marketing a formal park-and-ride lot, providing some basic ride-matching services, and helping organize vanpools.

North and South Connection: Provide improvements to address speed and pedestrian crossing on SR 20.

- 1) As population in and around Concrete increases, there will likely be additional pressure to reduce speeds on SR 20 through design, as well as enforcement. The community should consider adding sidewalks, lighting, and additional signage along SR 20 from Superior to E Street. These pedestrian features, coupled with gateway treatments that represent the character of historic Concrete, will help define the extents of the community for the motoring public, create a greater sense of place, help to market the downtown business area, and improve the transportation connectivity between the north and south sides of town.
- 2) Initiate a walking school bus from Silo Park to the School. This will provide adult supervision for students walking to school, may allow the school to decrease busing expenses on the north side of town and reduce traffic congestion on Superior Avenue. The park is close, already has several parking spaces and playground equipment to keep students occupied before the walking school bus leaves. For more information about starting a walking school bus contact Jennifer Cole, at Feet First, jen@feetfirst.info. This will take time to organize students and find adults to walk with the children. If there are a lot of children, they may need to cross SR20 in smaller groups. This would require additional adult supervision.

- 3) Implement an adult crossing guard program at Superior and SR 20. This will help to increase the safety of the students crossing at this location. It will take time to manage, find, train and keep adult crossing guards. See the *School Zone Safety Kit* for information about starting a crossing guard program at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/SchoolZoneSafetyKit.pdf>. If volunteer crossing guards are not available, funding will be needed to pay for their time.

Funding and Other Resources

- For information about funding the following suggestions, consider the Washington State Safe Routes to School Program and the Washington State Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program, the next call for projects will be released in early 2008. For more information visit the website:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/SafeRoutesResources.htm>

http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/Ped_Bike_Program.htm

- For additional funding sources for addressing the transportation related needs discussed during the work session, please visit the website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/funding.htm>
- The WSDOT Highways & Local Programs (H&LP) staff are available to help you with questions about federal funding. The contact for the City of Concrete is Harry Haslam, (360) 440-4737.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Town of Concrete and the Concrete School District anticipates using federal funding for future projects within their jurisdiction. This section provides information about the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). NEPA includes a series of environmental reviews that must be reported on to release federal funding. It requires that local jurisdictions integrate environmental values into their decision making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions as needed. NEPA should not dictate engineering, although engineering should take into account specific NEPA findings. In some cases where there are no acceptable alternatives, the federal funding source may choose not to fund a project that would otherwise damage or jeopardize a public resource.

Analysis

Some of the NEPA environmental issues identified in Concrete address:

- Noise -- Most construction projects could not raise the noise level to a high enough level to create a disturbance beyond the current background noise of SR 20.
- Cultural resources/historical buildings – Remnants of eligible sites that demonstrate the towns amazing history are prominent throughout the community. Some of the buildings have been surveyed and cataloged. This is one of the town's strongest assets, and NEPA is a great way to document their history. The school also displays some unique design and landscaping that will need to be addressed before federal funds will be released.
- Fish -- Fish and fish habitat should always be considered, and with the new steelhead listing, small tributaries within the town should be surveyed.
- Uncovering hazardous materials -- Hazardous materials are not obvious for this local jurisdiction. Concrete is a prime candidate for lost and forgotten storage tanks. The town is an old industrial complex which fueled a lot of vehicles at some point, and probably more than one small gas station has come and gone through the years.

- Uncovering hazardous materials (continued) -- The area may have homesteaded some local farms that fueled their own equipment. These rural areas are susceptible to these kinds of scenarios that lead to forgotten fuel storage tanks.
- Recreational -- Silo Park sits within the middle of the town. If the park or other recreational facilities will be impacted by the project, then they must be considered before it can begin.

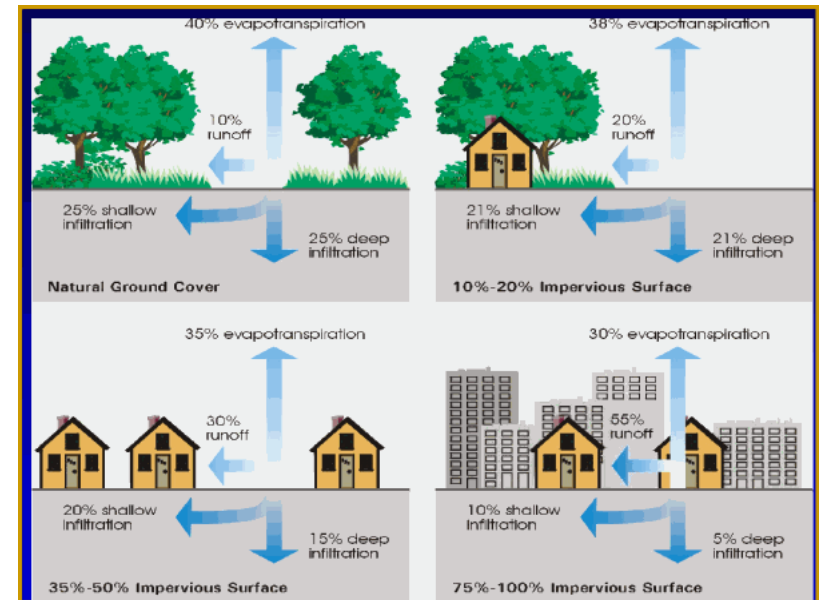
Recommendations

1. Call your Regional Highways & Local Programs (*H&LP*) office Harry Haslam 206-440-4737 before deciding the level of NEPA for FHWA reporting needed (Environmental Impact Statement, Environmental Assessment, or Documented Categorical Exclusion).
2. Follow the NEPA process. In some cases you can use information from previous projects in the vicinity to complete the form. The project specific data is good for three years.
3. Survey and record all eligible buildings with DAHP within a project action area. Once these sites are recorded, you can use them over and over again.
4. Identify historic properties, parks, recreation areas, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and properties funded under Land and Water Conservation Fund Act within the town limits. There are federal laws associated with these locations that will need to be considered.
5. Catalog and research potential hazardous waste sites. Talk to longtime residents and follow up leads in the field to find potential fuel storage or dump sites.
6. Check the species listing for the Endangered Species Act (ESA). It is updated every six months.

Connections to Other Issues

Storm water is a common concern for many communities in Skagit County. With the potential for new development, Concrete has an opportunity to review codes and design standards and incorporate “Low-Impact Development” practices that will help the community introduce low cost options for managing storm water.

New research conducted at both the national and state levels point to opportunities to reduce negative impacts of storm water using a combination of regional and site level techniques to prevent, treat, and store runoff and associated pollutants. Many of these practices use low-impact development methods, such as rain gardens, bio-retention areas, and grass swales. Others go further by changing site-design practices to maximize existing infrastructure by focusing development, reducing parking spaces, narrowing streets, and eliminating cul-de-sacs.



Conventional storm water conveyance systems concentrate water runoff in detention ponds and sewer systems until it is discharged through an outfall back into the natural hydrologic system. Unlike in the pre-development cycle, the discharged water is released far from its point of inception, and is altered in terms of its quantity, speed, and quality. Lack of infiltration causes groundwater depletion, and collected pollutants are not filtered before being released into receiving waters. Water pollution resultant from stormwater outfalls is increasing with development, and is currently one of the major challenges faced in the effort to reclaim the biological integrity of Washington’s waters.

Innovations in stormwater management, such as bio-retention, bio-swales, and rain gardens, allow for new development to have fewer impacts to natural systems than conventional practices. Additionally, existing urban development can be retrofitted using similar practices to dramatically lessen its historic hydrologic disruptiveness.

Funding and Other Resources

The WSDOT Highways & Local Programs (H&LP) staff are available to help you through the NEPA process. The contact for the City of Concrete is Harry Haslam, (360) 440-4737.



Bio-Swale next to neighborhood street

Several documents that provide additional detail related to stormwater and low impact development include:

US EPA, *Protecting Water Resources with Higher Density Development*
http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/protect_water_higher_density.pdf

Low Impact Development Center
<http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/home.htm>

Puget Sound Action Team – Technical Guidance and Grants
<http://www.psat.wa.gov/Programs/LID.htm>

Appendices

Appendix A: Community Participants

Lee Matier	Concrete Schools
Lacy Lahr	Town of Concrete
Jason Miller	Concrete Planning Commission
Robert Alan DiLeo	Sr. Concrete Planning Commission
Tamera Glaser	City Council
Barbara Hawkings	Concrete School District
Alan Wilkins	Town of Concrete
Marla Reed	Town of Concrete