



## DOWNTOWN SKETCHBOOK

Since 2004, the City of Rainier has sought to “develop and adopt a pedestrian-oriented theme for Rainier that is appropriate for the community and that assists in attracting the types of economic activities which best meet community needs and desires” (Rainier Comprehensive Plan, Goal I-2).

This Downtown Sketchbook attempts to illustrate the concepts from recent planning efforts that seek to move the community toward this desired type of pedestrian-oriented community economic development.

Four key focus areas are identified within the document:

- Constructing road improvements that aid in moving people through Rainier, while also contributing to the sense of place in the downtown.
- Creating a better walking/biking environment, including for people who park their cars and visit local shops.
- Adding beauty.
- Having more activities in the area.

Balancing each of these factors is essential.

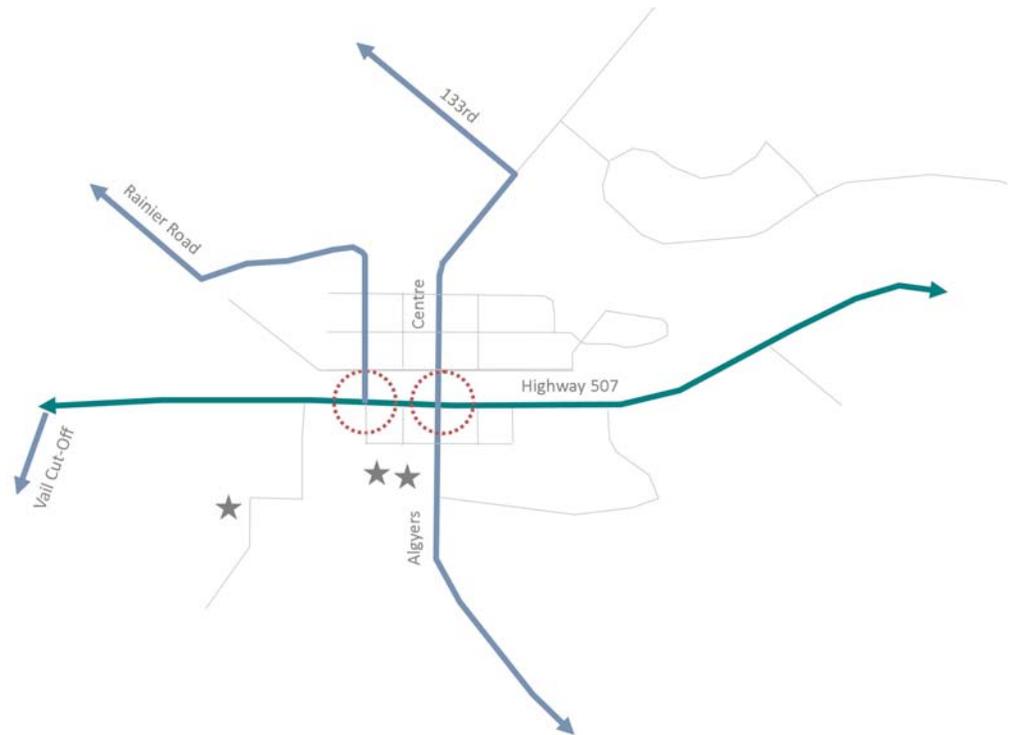
This sketchbook presents existing conditions for each of these focus areas, and articulates a set of enhancement strategies to foster a more vibrant downtown.





## Traffic

**Existing Conditions** – A significant amount of vehicles (including regional pass-through trips) travel through Rainier on Binghampton Street (SR 507) and the two primary north-south streets (Minnesota and Centre streets). No traffic control is present on Binghampton Street, and travelers on the north-south streets are required to find a gap in traffic to turn onto, or cross, the increasingly traveled State Route. Cues are common on Minnesota and Centre streets, especially at peak periods of the day, and crash history at the intersections demonstrates that individuals are having an increasingly difficult time crossing or turning onto SR 507.



**Enhancement Strategies** – To help traffic flow better through the area, this project evaluated nine different alternatives. Among these alternatives included the construction of two roundabouts (either at Minnesota and Centre or outside of the area); the construction of two one-way streets in the downtown; the inclusion of traffic lights; and, the implementation of no improvements. Using evaluation criteria (such as enhancing beauty, improving traffic and pedestrian mobility and safety, and minimizing potential project costs), a Technical Group for the project evaluated each of these alternatives. Through this evaluation and the public outreach associated with the project, the Focus Group and the Planning Commission determined that a single roundabout at Centre was the best option at this time. Further evaluation of needed improvements will be conducted after the roundabout is installed. Potential further improvements could include constructing a second roundabout at Minnesota and Binghampton (see Potential Option A at right); making Minnesota a right-turn only (Option B); and constructing a second roundabout at Alaska Street (Option C).



**Selected Alternative:  
Roundabout at Centre**



**Future Option A:  
Second Roundabout at Minnesota**

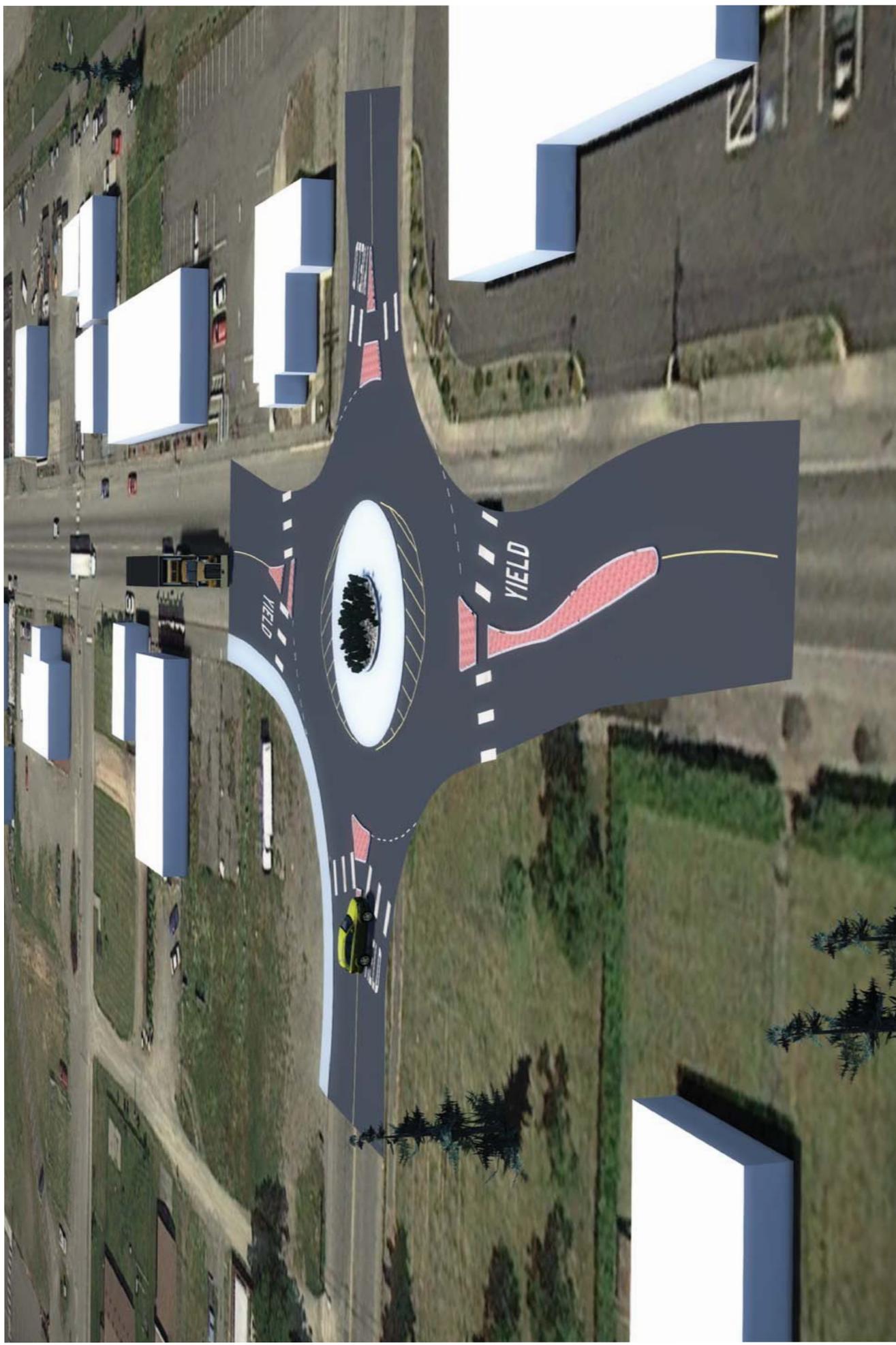


**Future Option B:  
Right-Turn at Minnesota**



**Future Option C:  
Second Roundabout at Alaska**

# Roundabout at Centre



# Pedestrian Environment

**Existing Conditions** – Pedestrian space in downtown Rainier is currently limited. Sidewalks range from 5 to 8 feet in width, and some have features (such as power poles) that make it difficult to walk easily along the route.

Coupled with this, only four pedestrian crossings exist along Binghampton Street (SR 507) in Rainier. These crossings are highly used by individuals visiting the downtown and students accessing the schools (since Rainier has a policy that all children within a mile of the school will not be bused to school). Of these crosswalks, none feels particularly comfortable or safe for pedestrians, and two are deficient with regard to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility.



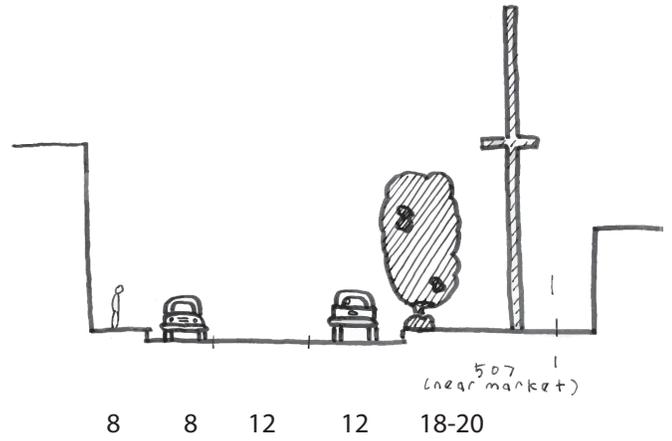
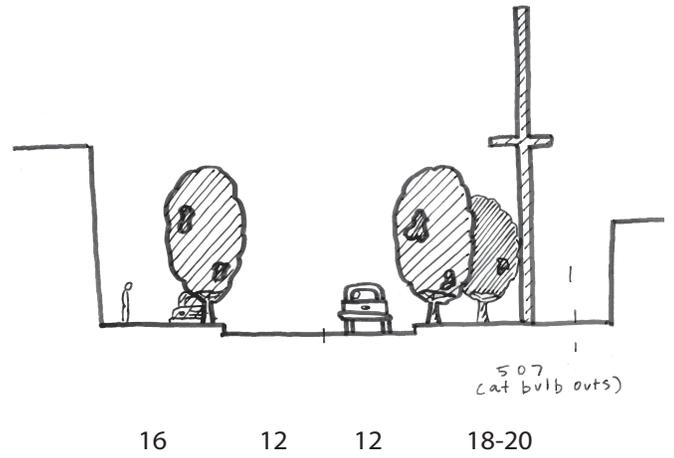
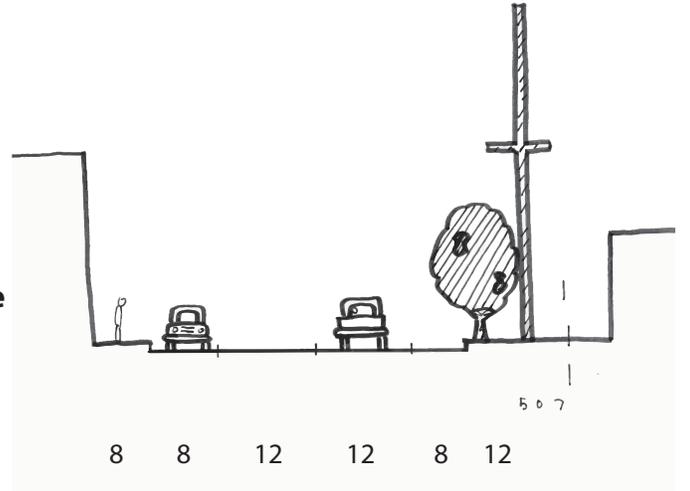
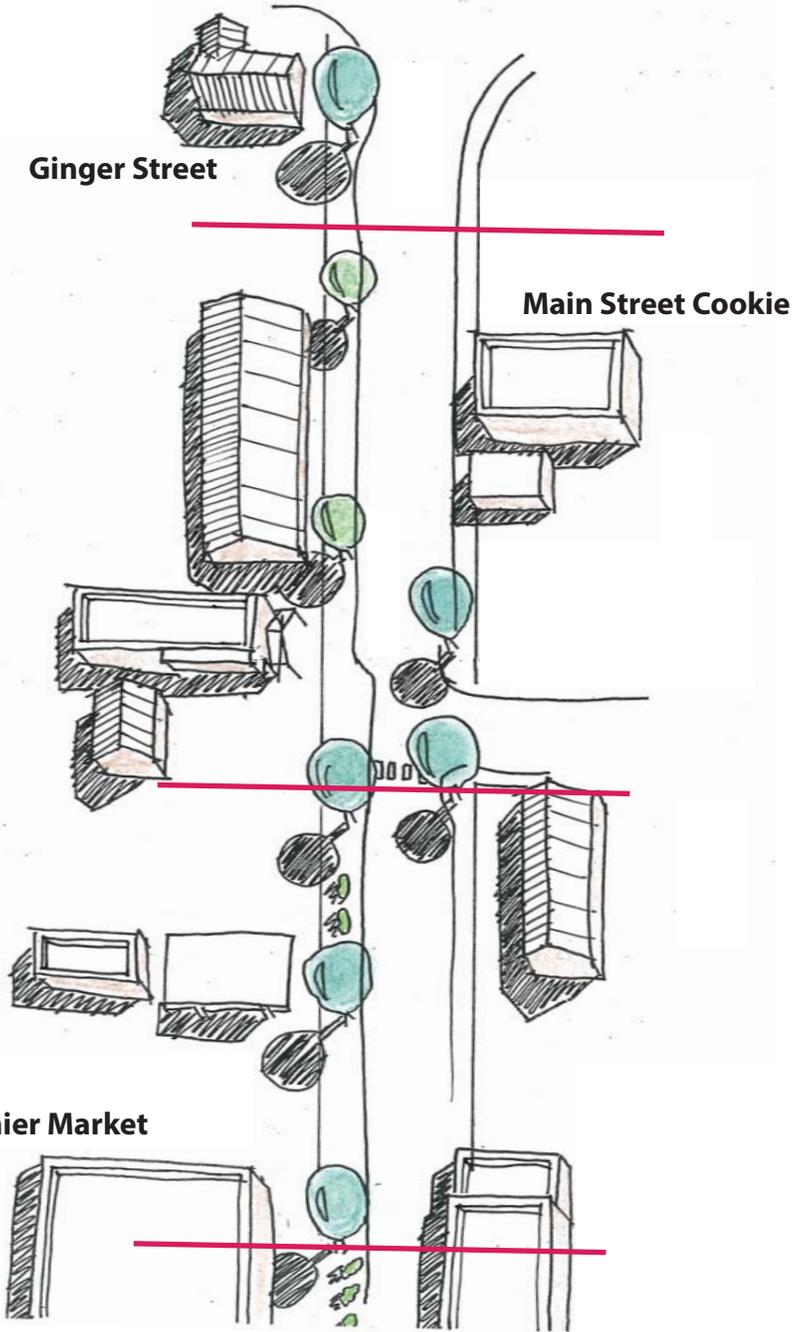
**Enhancement Strategies** – Moving forward, the Rainier Planning Commission and Focus Group for this project recommend that the City construct a wider sidewalk on the north side of Binghampton, with a series of bulb-outs (or expanded sidewalks) at the pedestrian crossings (see the Rainier downtown streetscape diagrams on the next page). These expanded sidewalks would help to narrow the crossing width across Binghampton at Minnesota and Dakota, and at new crossings (to be constructed with future development) at Montana, Idaho, and Myers streets.

Additionally, the proposed roundabout at Centre would also provide drastically improved crossing opportunities. Currently, Centre has one crosswalk (on the western leg of the intersection), and with construction of a roundabout, improved crossing opportunities would be offered on each of the legs (see the depiction of the roundabout at Centre at left).

The roundabout would also improve a key source of discomfort in the downtown – traffic speeds on SR 507. Traffic speeds would slow in the roundabout and would likely travel slower after leaving the facility, making it more comfortable and safer for pedestrians in the area.



# Rainier Downtown Streetscape Concept



— Locations that Cross-Sections Depict (at Right)



## Beauty

**Existing Conditions** – Downtown Rainier contains little beauty at present, especially along Binghampton Street. Small details such as potted landscaping offer nice touches, but the combined mixture of overhead power lines and building blocks divided by long stretches of surface parking contributes to a setting that very few individuals can embrace and enjoy.



**Enhancement Strategies** – As part of this plan, new landscaping would be included throughout the downtown. Key features of this landscaping would include: trees along the trail corridor to act as a gateway for the downtown; street trees in the business district; and a mix of trees and shrubs at Minnesota Street and the roundabout at Centre (see Rainier Downtown Streetscape Concept).

Additionally, existing and future parks would be emphasized in the future concept for the area.



## Activities Present

**Existing Conditions** – Downtown Rainier currently contains few activities that attract and retain residents or visitors for an extended period of time.

To evaluate the likelihood of a place captivating and continuing to attract people over time, the Project for Public Spaces utilizes the Power of Ten concept. According to the Project for Public Spaces, “At the core of the Power of Ten is the idea that any great place itself needs to offer at least ten things to do or ten reasons to be there. These could include a place to sit, playgrounds to enjoy, art to touch, music to hear, food to eat, history to experience, and people to meet.” Currently downtown Rainier contains a limited amount of these activities.



**Enhancement Strategies** – While not directly associated with the Main Street 507 Project, the Rainier Parks Plan project identified several features that could be added to downtown to help create a total of ten things to do. Concepts included in the plan include a spray pad, a bandstand for concerts, soccer fields and a playground. These concepts will drastically increase the number of activities in downtown, and help support some of the existing businesses within the community.



Additionally, including new places to sit, as proposed in some of the pedestrian enhancements in the Main Street 507 project, and better tying existing assets such as the historic school house into the downtown will help Rainier to better become a community that people want to visit, recreate and shop in.

# Major Actions

To complete this vision will take significant sustained effort, but clear paths forward exist, and the City should start work on these efforts as soon as possible. Major efforts and small projects to initiate include:

<b>Main Street 507 - Large Projects</b>	<b>Key Parties</b>	<b>Grant Due Date</b>
Determine cost estimates for the entire project with potential smaller projects broken out - Potential smaller projects include: a sidewalk and bike lanes along Centre Street; the roundabout on Centre; and the sidewalk expansion, with bulb-outs, on the north side of Binghampton	City Engineer/City Planner	
Begin setting aside the necessary match and apply for a Transportation Improvement Board grant to construct the roundabout	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator	August 2015
Determine a project for the CDBG application (sewer, parks, or streetscape enhancements) and take initial steps to develop the proposal (determining feasibility, income requirements, cost, etc.)	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator/City Staff	April 2016
Determine if the City wants to pursue design standards for downtown or commercial properties	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator/City Planner	
Conduct an economic analysis to determine potential methods to capture more business activity in Rainier	STEDI/Thurston EDC/City Administrator/City Staff	
<b>Rainier Parks Plan - Large Projects</b>		
Determine a project for the CDBG application (sewer, parks, or streetscape enhancements) and take initial steps to develop the proposal (determining feasibility, income requirements, cost, etc.)	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator/City Staff	April 2016
Apply for Recreation and Conservation Office grant (if desired - 50 percent match required and likely could only be completed with CDBG funding or park bond)	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator/City Staff	May 2016
Determine feasibility of pursuing a bond for the Rainier Parks Plan	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator/City Planner	
Pursue a park bond (if desired)	City Council/Mayor/City Administrator/City Planner	
<b>Small Projects</b>		
Paint pedestrian space on Alaska	Rainier Public Works/Thurston County	
Plant trees along 507 (in trail ROW and other locations)	Volunteers/High School Students/Rainier Public Works	
Finish clearing bushes in Holiday Park	Rainier Public Works/Fairpoint Communications	
Plant trees in Holiday Park	Volunteers/High School Students/Rainier Public Works	
Work to get pedestrian connection (other than existing sidewalks) between trail and downtown	City Administrator/City Planner	
Attempt to see if pro-bono architectural design work could be completed for the bandstand/town square	City Planner/Together	
Stripe additional soccer fields	Rainier Public Works	
Work on an agreement with Rainier Chapel over the use of their parking lot for a park and ride/soccer field parking	City Planner	

Staff will work to take further steps on each of these items, and work with Council on key focus areas.