

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Renton's downtown development continues

"Our efforts are paying off and our vision for downtown revitalization is being realized."

Renton, WA –The city presented an update and successes on the downtown revitalization strategy to the City Council Committee of the Whole on Monday afternoon. Staff also provided an update on the city's ongoing efforts for downtown revitalization, including a recommendation by the selection committee on the consultant for the project.

"Downtown revitalization has been a priority for the city for many years and during the past couple of years, we have approached redevelopment opportunities in a comprehensive way," said Mayor Denis Law. "We are making tremendous progress. We engaged every city department to participate in our commitment to create a safe, pedestrian-oriented and vibrant downtown that will attract new businesses, shopping, dining, entertainment and activities. Our efforts are paying off and our vision for downtown revitalization is being realized."

The Mayor's proposal to relocate the downtown transit center's operations to Rainier Avenue South and South Grady Way continues to move forward. Bus routes (non-commuter) that provide direct access to the Downtown Business District and Civic Core will remain downtown.

King County has committed to work with the city to confirm a date to make this transition while continuing efforts to get the new transit center built. In a message to Mayor Law, King County Executive Dow Constantine said:

"I support the City of Renton's plans for revitalizing its downtown, including relocating its transit center, while maintaining bus service to the downtown core. I am committed to improving transit service to Renton, and will work with city staff to transition the bus transfer activity from the downtown center to the Grady Way Park and Ride facility, consistent with Metro Connects. I will also continue to work with the King County Council and the Sound Transit Board on developing the new proposed transit center and parking garage at Rainier and Grady Way."

"Moving the transit center is a key component of our downtown revitalization plan and critical to get better overall transit services to Renton," said Law. "It is our intention to close the downtown transit center by the end of next year and I look forward to working with King County to make this a reality."

Some of the current accomplishments include:

Business Recruitment and New Development

The city's strategy focuses on attracting new businesses, encouraging development, investment and employment; and supporting business district marketing efforts.

- The Lofts at Second and Main, a new multi-story, mixed-use building is moving closer to completion by the first week of January 2017. The 101-unit residential project, with 4,000 square feet of ground level commercial space and 117 parking spaces, started construction in August 2015. Cosmos Development has started pre-leasing the units and expects initial residents to move into the building in December.
- The Cortona Building, which was the former Renton Western Wear, has undergone a major renovation and is the recipient of the city's first facade improvement loan, through a program that utilizes Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding to improve downtown buildings. Urban Sprouts, a retailer focused on providing supplies and education for urban living crafts, is one of the tenants of the building. The Cortona building, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places last December, has also been announced as the winner of the 2016 King County Executive's John D. Spellman Award for Exemplary Achievement in Historic Preservation.
- Intermountain Lock and Security Supply opened at the former downtown McLendon Hardware site with 30 employees.
- Four Generals Brewing, a new micro-brewery and tasting room opened this summer in the "Old City Hall" building on Wells Avenue South. It features specialty northwest beers and includes a sidewalk café.
- Vigor Ground Fitness and Performance has purchased the building at 332 Burnett Avenue South. They are planning a major renovation with over \$325,000 in exterior improvements that will modernize the building's appearance. When completed the facility will include workout areas, locker rooms, rehab facility, massage therapy and potentially a smoothie/coffee bar.
- The city is currently reviewing proposals from two finalists for possible development options for the former City Hall building and parking area at 200 Mill Avenue South, which will be reviewed by the City Council.
- Renton Commons will provide additional downtown housing in its new building on Whitworth Avenue South. The six-story project is being developed by the Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) of Seattle and will have 48 affordable housing units. Construction is expected to start by September 1, 2017.
- The famous Delancy building, known for its landmark "slanting" roof has a new owner, and is being improved.
- The site of the former Salvation Army thrift store, at South 3rd and Morris, has been purchased and there are plans to develop a multi-story residential project on the site in the future.
- Several downtown businesses are in the process of relocating or expanding. Smoking Monkey Pizza on South 3rd is expanding into the adjacent space. Adjacent to the enlarged pizza restaurant, local restaurateur Gene Sens plans to open a kombucha brewery and bar later this year.

Strategic Public Investments

The city's strategy is to maximize use of public assets and make investments to spur private investment.

- The city's plan to convert traffic flow along Main Avenue South/Bronson Way between Mill Avenue South and South 3rd Street is moving forward. The project is the first phase to convert some of downtown's one-way streets to two-way traffic with a raised table design, new sidewalks, landscaping and a public plaza at the northwest corner that features a significant piece of artwork. Construction is expected to begin soon and be completed next spring.
- Downtown Streetscape Design Standards are under review to ensure consistent, attractive sidewalk and street furniture designs for the downtown business district.
- The city is also planning the possible redevelopment and expansion of the Piazza Park. The City Council has authorized a study to produce a Master Plan that will help to define how this area can be improved to encourage more public use and community activities.
- The city has received funds from the Port of Seattle as part of their new Economic Development Partnership Program to support local community economic development activities. The city will match these funds and will dedicate a total of \$97,500 to downtown revitalization.

Public Safety

The city's strategy is to improve overall public safety and provide a coordinated crime prevention program to address both perceived crime and actual criminal activity in downtown and other parts of the city.

The city's program has increased police presence by adding bike patrols, additional patrols within the downtown parking garage, and engaged downtown businesses to address their concerns. The city has also been very proactive with code enforcement and property maintenance and has worked with property owners to review and remedy any issues. Downtown is also thriving with several new and ongoing events collectively organized by the city, businesses and partners. The city has implemented a multi-pronged approach to stimulate positive change and fulfil its vision for downtown vitalization. *More information can be found at rentonwa.gov.*

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