

**AWC Municipal Excellence Award, Community Engagement  
City of Sequim, WA (pop. 7,280) Neighborhood Revitalization Program**

Project Statement

Through the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, Sequim continues to engage the community, improve service delivery, enhance community networks and inform policymaking. Sequim's national partners include Habitat for Humanity, the Kettering Foundation, and Rotary International. The Neighborhood Revitalization Program and the partnerships allow residents to have a new voice in city services and options for working with neighbors to build a stronger community.

Project Summary

The Sequim City Council adopted a goal in 2015 to revitalize downtown neighborhoods. This led to a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, the City of Sequim, the Sequim Sunrise Rotary Club, and Rotary International. Rotary International provided a \$7,000 grant to engage in neighborhood revitalization. Soon thereafter, USDA Rural Development, concerned residents, First Federal Bank, and Olympic Community Action Program joined the newly formed Neighborhood Revitalization Coalition.

In September 2015, the Coalition conducted an exterior property survey of Downtown Neighborhoods, finding issues including deficient roofing, siding, windows, and piles of trash. After attempts to engage residents with an opportunity to have a crew of Habitat workers assist them with these issues, the Coalition settled on a short-term strategy of neighborhood trash cleanup. During this time, one homeowner did step forward and the Coalition removed an old fence and built new fence, provided a new garage door, painted her house and replaced her roof, all while conducting general yard debris cleanup.

The Rally in the Alley Program began in February 2016. Coalition members tested a concept by getting a donated dumpster and focusing on one quadrant of the Downtown. After deploying door hangers in the targeted area, volunteers wandered the neighborhood on the day of the event, transporting items for disposal back to the dumpster. The event was a tremendous success and was over in less than one hour. In the process, Coalition members witnessed neighbors helping neighbors. In the two years since this event, this neighborhood remains cleaner than before. Rally one collected 4.8-tons of trash. Rally in the Alley "Two" got bigger with its next installment, focusing on another quadrant of the Downtown and collecting 8.28-tons of trash. In 2017, the City Council expanded the Neighborhood Revitalization Program to include the entire City and conducted three Rally in the Alley events. In 2018, the City is targeting four Rallies in the Alley. Total tonnage collected through the program to date is 47.99, and have involved a total of 400 volunteers and 15 organizations. In late 2017, the City of Port Angeles adopted Sequim's approach with the help of Habitat for Humanity of Clallam County.

With citywide expansion of Neighborhood Revitalization and the Rally in the Alley Program in 2017, Sequim began the more formal process of defining its seven different neighborhoods.

New partners joined the Neighborhood Revitalization Program in 2017. Habitat for Humanity selected Sequim and Habitat for Humanity of Clallam County as one of 25 communities nationally to test their Quality of Life Framework, along with cities like Los Angeles (CA), Milwaukee (WI), Muncie (IN), and Charlottesville (VA). Through the program, Sequim is receiving assistance in surveying neighborhoods over time to see if the impacts from the Coalition's efforts can be measured. The Kettering Foundation, in Dayton, OH, also took note of Sequim's efforts, inviting the City to be a part of its twice a year City Managers' Forums on civic engagement. There, Sequim staff is sharing their experiences with neighborhood revitalization with cities like Boulder (CO), Sanford (FL), and Decatur (GA), and Arlington County (VA), leading academics in civic engagement, and leadership from the National Civic League. Kettering Foundation staff members are now assisting Sequim staff with further engagement strategies.

In September 2017, Sequim engaged with 170 community members representing every neighborhood area. Using its internal team of trained facilitators, augmented with two-dozen volunteers and neighborhood ambassadors, Sequim engaged in a neighborhood naming process and a community and city project brainstorming process. The meeting was co-sponsored by Habitat for Humanity of Clallam County and First Federal Bank, who sponsored a dinner for all participants.

Neighborhoods met again with facilitators in December 2017 and some neighborhoods met a third time in the first quarter of 2018. Conversations continued to focus on projects, how neighbors can feel more connected, and other issues of importance to the neighborhoods.

Sequim is partnering with Habitat for Humanity to collect community-wide survey and neighborhood survey data throughout this process to help improve future service delivery.

Much of this effort leads to Service Fest, a first-of-its-kind event two years in the making. For the first time in Habitat for Humanity's national history, Habitat Care-A-Vanners, in partnership with the City of Sequim, will focus on Neighborhood Revitalization instead of building homes. In early June, 20 RVs will arrive in Sequim, set-up a temporary camping area in Sequim's Carrie Blake Park, and prepare to stay and work for the next two weeks. Care-A-Vanners will partner with community volunteers, service organizations, business service days, and City staff to complete dozens of projects on public and private property. The City has planned two Service Fest concerts, also located at Carrie Blake Park, to help create a festive atmosphere for the volunteers. The goal is to complete projects that benefit the community and its neighborhoods, to alleviate code violations through the use of volunteers, to help homeowners be more resilient in staying in their homes through home maintenance

projects, and overall to enhance the community's connections, rate of volunteerism, and sense of community pride. It will be a "Sequim Makeover" including a Day of Color, where we will paint our Downtown with a chosen color palette, construct neighborhood kiosks, develop nature paths in semi-rural areas currently not served by sidewalks, conduct trash removal, building demolition, fence repair, roofing work, and other beautification and construction projects. National Civic Engagement Expert Peter Kageyama, sponsored by First Federal Bank, will kick off Service Fest with a public presentation on June 4. A long list of local, regional, statewide, and national partners is forming to be a part of the event. If it goes well, it may become something that we do annually.

In January 2018, the Sequim City Council adopted a new budget process that builds in neighborhood input and ideas through early focus groups, especially in capital planning and priorities of government. This process will begin in the fall of 2018 and input will inform the 2020 budget.

City staff is also supporting the City Council on "wicked" policy issues involving values, clashes in the community that build in neighborhood engagement and dialog as steps in the process before recommendations emerge. Community members wrestle with these wicked problems and work together to develop solutions. This approach is partly of result of the latest research in civic engagement by cities and counties, funded by the Kettering Foundation. A conversation on housing policy will occur in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2018 using this approach.

Finally, Sequim is developing a citizen academy that will launch in 2019. The academy will focus upon the city's and communities services, but will also feature a component on neighborhood organizing and advocacy.

Following Service Fest, Sequim has plans to reinvigorate the Neighborhood Ambassador Program, implemented in 2017, into a set of quarterly ambassador meetings that support City service delivery, the Rally in the Alley Program, the citizen academy, community engagement on issues and our budget, and future Service Fests.