

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

City of Monroe Downtown Master Plan and Design
Guidelines

April 15, 2008

Fact Sheet

Project Title

This is the Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Downtown Master Plan and Design Guidelines for the City of Monroe, Washington. The Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed action was issued on January 22, 2008. The Determination of Significance and scoping notice for the proposed action was issued on September 18, 2007.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to adopt a City of Monroe Downtown Master Plan that will be incorporated into the City's Comprehensive Plan, Municipal Code, and City of Monroe Official Zoning Map. The plan proposes overall land use patterns, uses and supporting infrastructure, with the intent of enhancing the economic vitality of the community by promoting a pedestrian oriented downtown area offering a variety of uses and activities. In addition, a set of design guidelines to implement the plan will also be adopted.

Location of Proposal

The study area boundary for the downtown plan includes approximately 91 acres south of US 2, north of McDougall St., east of N. Madison St. and west of Al Borlin Park. This area encompasses Monroe's historic business district along Main St., as well as adjacent residential, professional office, public, commercial, and industrial areas.

Land Use Alternatives and Environmental Elements

As described in the proposed Downtown Master Plan, the planning area was divided into four neighborhoods: Rails & Roads Neighborhood, Downtown Neighborhood, Historic Main Street Area, and Al Borlin Park Neighborhood. Two land use alternatives were evaluated for the overall planning area:

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (**Scenario A**)

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (**Scenario B**)

This environmental review evaluates these two land use alternatives and compares them to the existing plan (No Action Alternative) for the environmental elements of 1) Land Use, 2) Historic Preservation, 3) Transportation and Parking, 4) Public Services and Utilities, and 5) Aesthetics as described in the SEPA threshold determination and Scoping Notice that was issued September 18, 2007.

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

This alternative would amend several of the comprehensive plan land use designations and associated zoning districts by establishing a new mixed use designation that allows for a combination of residential, professional office, public, and commercial uses. In addition, more multifamily residential would be planned primarily east of Charles St. with opportunities for live-work configurations and additional public/civic facilities. This alternative assumes that development and redevelopment in the downtown area is primarily market based, without incentives and/or public/private partnerships, and with voluntary use of the adopted design guidelines. Some minor traffic, street, and parking improvements would be planned to implement this alternative.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

This alternative is similar to the moderate rate Buildout alternative with the proposed creation of a new mixed use comprehensive plan designation and zoning district that allows for a mix of land uses. The difference between the two alternatives is the intensity of infill, with Scenario A being less intense than Scenario B. This alternative also includes a larger civic facility south of Fremont St. and two Mixed Use Infill/Parking Facilities. This alternative assumes that development and redevelopment in the downtown area is facilitated by incentives and public/private partnerships, and that the design guidelines are adopted as required development standards in the Monroe Municipal Code. In addition, specific public works projects are identified for inclusion within the appropriate six-year capital improvement plan, including, but not limited to streets and parking facilities, water, sanitary sewer, and/or stormwater system improvements.

No Action Alternative

This alternative allows future development and redevelopment of the downtown area based on the existing comprehensive plan designations, current zoning and development regulations specified in the City of Monroe Municipal Code.

Existing Environmental Documents

This non-project environmental review is prepared pursuant to WAC 197-11-442 and supplements several environmental documents previously issued by the City of Monroe. The following documents are available for review at the City of Monroe and are incorporated by reference for land use, historic preservation, transportation and parking, aesthetics, and public services and utilities:

- City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan Draft and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, August and November 1994.
- City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Draft and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, August and October 2005.
- North Kelsey Subarea Plan Planned Action Draft and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Sept. 2003 and March 2004.
- City of Monroe Comprehensive Transportation Plan and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, December 2006.
- City of Monroe Shoreline Master Program, SEPA Environmental Checklist, August 2007.

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Date of Issuance

This Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement is issued on April 15, 2008. Questions about the proposed action and this environmental review should be directed to the attention of Kate Galloway, City of Monroe Senior Planner, Community Development Department, (360) 863-4535.

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Description of Overall Vision for Downtown

The City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan 2005-2025 and the recently adopted 2007 Comprehensive Transportation Plan describe the overall vision for growth and development of the City including the downtown area. The currently adopted comprehensive plan states that the higher visibility of the US 2 commercial corridor with ample off-street parking has taken away business from the traditional downtown retailers. The comprehensive plan proposes to re-establish the identity of downtown Monroe to create a pedestrian-friendly downtown environment with diverse specialty retail and service businesses, as well as residential opportunities. Mechanisms to achieve this vision include street and sidewalk improvements, beautification, and a funding source for continuing improvements, maintenance, and marketing for downtown businesses and events.

The proposed Downtown Master Plan and Design Guidelines carry this overall vision forward by providing urban design concepts and land use strategies to expand downtown Monroe as a regional center. The proposed Plan envisions the downtown core as the ultimate mixed use area of the city. The accompanying proposed development regulations and design guidelines are intended to achieve high quality design, a dense and pedestrian-oriented land use pattern, and mitigate potential impacts on adjacent land uses.

Specifically, mixed use development is envisioned as a viable tool for stimulating economic diversity in the downtown. The existing land uses, with the exception of some of the industrial uses, are generally consistent and compatible with the mixed uses proposed for the downtown area. The traditional commercial storefront, with retail at the street level and an apartment or office above, is an example of vertical mixed uses that currently exists in the downtown and is promoted by this Plan.

Description of Land Use Alternatives

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

This alternative would amend several of the comprehensive plan land use designations and associated zoning by establishing a new mixed use designation that allows for a combination of residential, professional office, civic, and commercial uses. In addition, more multifamily residential would be planned primarily east of Charles Street with opportunities for live-work configurations. This alternative assumes that development and redevelopment of the subarea is primarily market based, without incentives and/or public/private partnerships, and with voluntary use of the design guidelines. Some minor traffic, street, and parking improvements would be planned to implement this alternative.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

This alternative is similar to Scenario A with the proposed creation of a new mixed use comprehensive plan designation and zoning classification that allows for a mix of compatible land uses. The difference between the two alternatives is the intensity of infill, with Scenario A being less intense than Scenario B. This scenario also includes a larger civic facility than proposed in Scenario A south of Fremont Street and two mixed use infill/parking facilities. The alternative assumes that development and redevelopment of the subarea is facilitated by incentives and public/private partnerships, and the design guidelines are adopted as required development standards in the city's municipal code. In addition, specific public works projects are identified for inclusion within the appropriate six-year capital improvement plan, including, but not limited to streets and parking facilities, trail systems, water, sanitary sewer, and/or stormwater system improvements.

No Action Alternative

This alternative allows future development and redevelopment of the downtown area based on the existing comprehensive designations, current zoning and development regulations specified in the City of Monroe Municipal Code. Current zoning in the 91 acre downtown area is approximately 43% Downtown Commercial, 18% Public Open Space (including roads and the railroad right-of-way), 15% General Industrial, 15% General Commercial, 8% Multi-Family Residential, and 1% Professional Office. Consistent with other areas of the city, improvements and maintenance of public infrastructure will be constructed according to adopted public facilities and utilities plans.

Evaluation of Alternatives for Selected Environmental Elements

Land Use

Adoption and implementation of the proposed Downtown Master Plan would lead to several changes to some of the comprehensive plan and zoning classifications and development standards applicable to the downtown area. Anticipated impacts to land uses would likely include modifications or pressure for change by promoting greater densities and a diverse mix of uses through redevelopment of several existing uses. Some of these land uses might relocate in new facilities within the downtown area, but more intensive heavy commercial and industrial uses may need to relocate to other locations in the city or the city's urban growth area. In addition, the new development/redevelopment may contrast in height, bulk and scale with current

structures. Generally, these impacts would occur incrementally, as the downtown plan is implemented over a 20-year period. As future developments are proposed, project-specific environmental reviews would be conducted as part of the development review process.

The effects of implementing the proposed Downtown Master Plan could have both positive and potentially adverse effects on surrounding neighborhoods. In general, development and redevelopment consistent with the master plan would be compatible with the existing commercial and residential neighborhoods that surround the downtown. Redevelopment in the downtown at a greater scale and intensity will contrast with surrounding lower density neighborhoods, but will also create a more pedestrian friendly downtown with convenient stores and services, which would likely benefit all nearby residents and businesses. The design guidelines would also be used in conjunction with the master plan to mitigate the increase in scale and intensities proposed with the master plan. The guidelines include techniques to reduce the scale of new buildings and/or additions by requiring the higher stories be stepped back reducing the appearance of larger buildings adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

In addition, adoption of the Downtown Master Plan and implementing measures, and eventual redevelopment projects, could lead to increased pressure for more extensive land use changes and development in surrounding neighborhoods. Land values may increase with market and economic factors leading to rezoning and the conversion of properties outside of the downtown core area. The population and employment growth that would likely occur in the downtown area is within the range of the city's projections and its buildable lands capacity. It is anticipated that increasing densities in the downtown area would likely result from construction of mixed use projects incorporating residential and commercial uses in the same structure or within the same development.

Downtown Master Plan Consistency with Policies from the Comprehensive Plan

LUP-1.1.9-Downtown Commercial (DC). This designation shall compromise retail and service businesses that cater primarily to pedestrian traffic, including retail shops, personal services, entertainment or restaurants and bars. Downtown commercial users typically do not include (or cater to) automobile-dependant uses.

Analysis – The proposed Downtown Master Plan implementation would extend this designation to include all properties within the planning boundaries, with an additional overlay to further guide development within the specific neighborhoods as outlined in the Plan.

LUP-1.1.6-Residential, Eleven to Twenty Dwelling Units per Acre (R11-20). This designation shall provide for multiple family residential developments at a range of densities between 11 and 20 dwelling units per acre where the full range of public facilities and services to support urban development exists.

Analysis – This designation may be applied as an overlay to guide the residential component of the mixed use developments and the areas identified in the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood.

LUP-5.10-Explore adoption of a mixed use ordinance and a mixed use overlay designation on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan implementation would be facilitated with the adoption of an overlay similar to the overlay adopted in 2003 for North Kelsey. The zoning overlay would encourage the construction of residential units as part of commercial developments in addition to the higher density residential developments recommend in the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood.

LUP-9.3-Work with the downtown property owners to solve the area’s parking problems, downtown amenities, and other improvements.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan identifies parking issues and opportunities and recommends several actions on page 73.

LUP-11.1.2-Recognize existing industrial uses that are on the fringes of downtown Monroe, and maintain “industrial park” type development standards in these light industrial areas, i.e., planned access, landscaping, and design.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan identifies the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood as an area that over time would redevelop into an “urban village” with live-work configurations. The Plan states that some special forms of business that include production of custom-made products and art could also be accommodated. If the proposed Plan were adopted, this comprehensive plan policy would need to be re-evaluated.

Housing Strategies: Encourage mixed use developments in all commercial zoning districts. Encourage the conversion and/or reuse of buildings such as schools and commercial buildings for residential uses. HO-P4.2.5- Allow and encourage residential developments in commercial zoning districts.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan implementation would be facilitated with the adoption of an overlay similar to the overlay adopted in 2003 for North Kelsey. The zoning overlay would encourage the construction of residential units within the planning boundary.

City of Monroe Shoreline Master Program: High intensity and urban conservancy shoreline environment designations are located on the eastern boundary of the subarea adjacent to Al Borlin Park.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan identifies the need for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle opportunities in this area that would be consistent with the shoreline master program. Implementation of the Master Plan may require a revision to the shoreline designation for the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood since the Plan proposes high density residential development mixed with commercial uses and the City's shoreline master program designation is High Intensity. The purpose of the High Intensity shoreline environment designation is to accommodate high intensity water-oriented commercial, transportation and industrial uses while protecting existing ecological functions.

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

The proposed Downtown Master Plan estimates in the Market Overview Chapter that approximately 12.5 percent of the local area housing market is likely to prefer downtown living. It is estimated that approximately new 150 units could be accommodated in the downtown area by the year 2012; however, actual construction is dependent on the housing market and other economic influences. The recommendation to encourage residential development in the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood will also help the city reduce the residential land capacity deficit identified in the 2007 Snohomish County Buildable Lands Report. Increased demand for retail space in the downtown is estimated to be approximately 100,000 square feet by 2012. In addition, other employment opportunities in the downtown would result in the renovation or construction of approximately 52,000 square feet for non-retail uses.

Figure 1: Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout



The Mixed Use Moderate Rate of Buildout alternative would facilitate implementation of the proposed land use concept for the downtown area by providing three gateway entrances and four additional enhanced intersections to facilitate circulation through downtown. Smaller scale, mixed use infill development is proposed for both ends of the Main Street segment within the study area. A public plaza for outdoor events is proposed on the south side of Fremont Street at the existing school administration yard framed by new civic facilities. In addition, green entry features are proposed for surface parking connections to downtown located east of this area. Landscaping and streetscape improvements along most of the roadways in the downtown study area are also reflected in the land use concept map (Figure 1).

Adoption and implementation of this land use alternative would direct development/redevelopment patterns and the overall intensity of uses. The timing of redevelopment of privately owned lands could be significantly influenced by public investment in infrastructure improvements and development of the opportunity sites described in Chapter 8 of the Plan. Overall, implementation of the proposed alternative would occur at a moderate rate based on non-mandatory

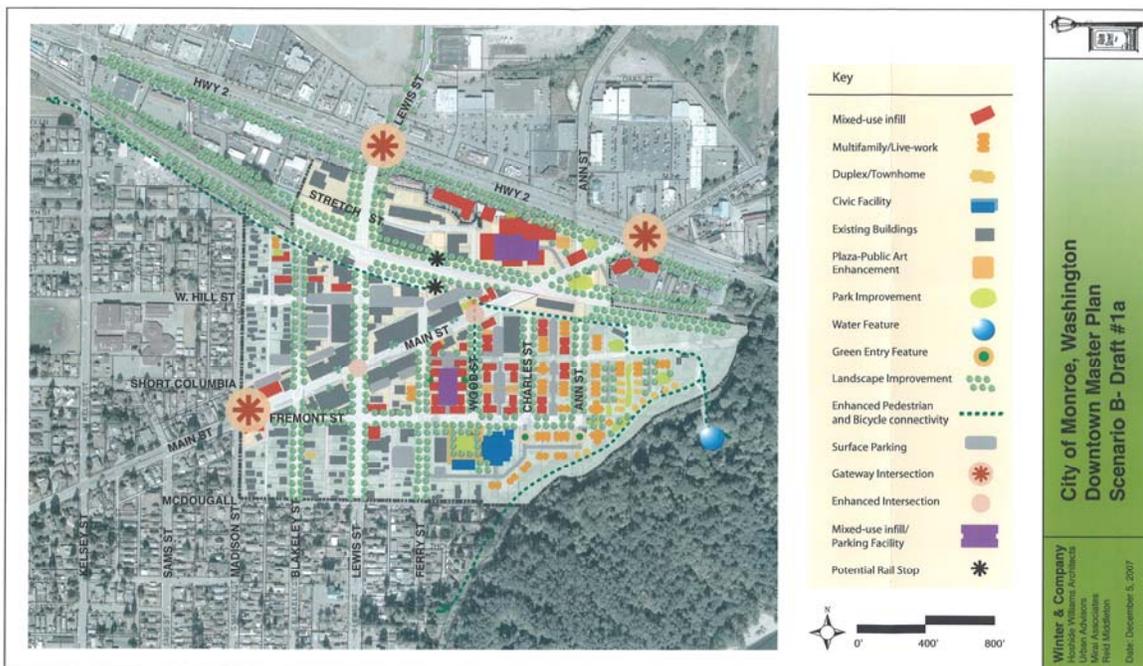
design guidelines and lack of catalyst projects (i.e., public parking structure). Use of the design guidelines will not impact land uses, but may have an impact on aesthetics as described later in this document.

The land use patterns proposed in the Mixed use Moderate Buildout Alternative continues the historic land use patterns established when the city was incorporated in 1920. The central business district has the highest intensity land uses with the largest building and lot coverage standards that gradually transitions into single-family residential neighborhoods. Historically the downtown also included civic facilities including gathering places, government seat, and post office.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

This alternative is similar to the moderate rate alternative, but with a greater intensity of infill, a larger civic facility south of Fremont Street, a passenger rail stop and two mixed use infill/parking facilities as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 2: Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout



The accelerated rate that is a distinguishing characteristic of this alternative is dependent upon development of at least one of the opportunity sites or a catalyst project such as a civic center. The assumption is that construction of a signature project, presumably as a public/private venture, would result in other developments being initiated sooner than they might otherwise. This incubator effect is one of the benefits of master planned development bringing a greater certainty to the development process. This alternative, like the Mixed use Moderate Rate Development Alternative will bring some of the non-conforming residential and mixed use businesses into compliance with current regulations.

Another characteristic of the accelerated rate alternative is that the proposed design guidelines would also be adopted as required development standards for the Historic Main Street Area instead of applied as voluntary guidelines as proposed in the moderate rate alternative.

No Action Alternative

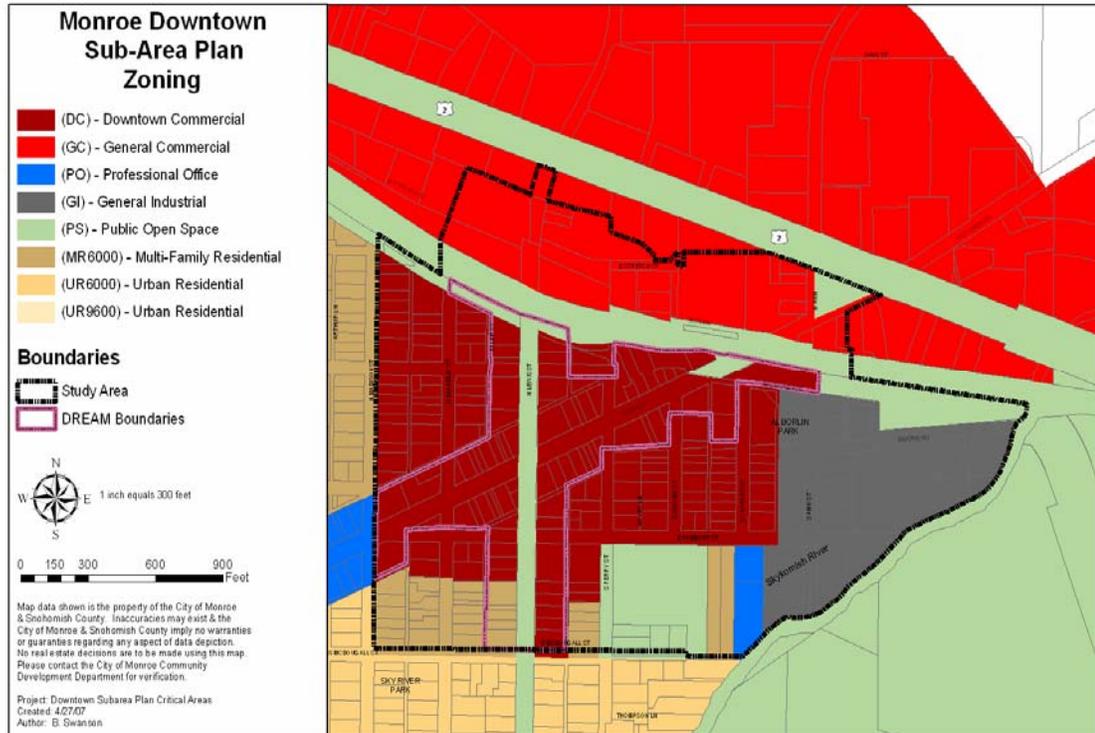
The existing conditions of the downtown sub-area are centered on the original crossroads of the city—Main Street and Lewis Street. This is the old downtown central business district with commercial and industrial development on the north along the railroad and east in the vicinity of Charles and Ann Streets. Residential neighborhoods in the downtown area generally consist of older homes on smaller lots and newer multi-family units. Some older homes are now being converted to offices and commercial uses. Overall, the comprehensive plan envisions that this area will retain some of the highest density housing in the city with an emphasis on multi-family developments with 8-11 dwelling units per acre. As seen in Figure 3 on the next page, the majority of the study area is zoned Downtown Commercial. This zoning classification includes retail and service businesses that cater primarily to pedestrian traffic, including retail shops, personal services, entertainment or restaurants and bars. Downtown commercial users typically do not cater to automobile-dependent uses although time limits on on-street parking are enforced.

Since the year 2000, the city has created new development regulations to promote residential development within commercially zoned areas of the city. Specifically, in 2001 the city established incentives to encourage the development of residential units above commercial developments in the Downtown Commercial zoning district.

The Al Borlin Neighborhood, which is designated Industrial and zoned General Industrial, has a mix of non-conforming residential uses, recycling centers, a wholesale fuel facility, vehicle tow yard, automotive repair shops, and vacant land. The largest parcel within this area, east of Charles Street, was once a shake and shingle mill, which later became a junkyard in the 1940s. The property has been relatively vacant since 2002. Based on the existing development regulations and current trends for the minimum lot area requirements for industrial/commercial requirements, these types of existing uses will continue, although the Comprehensive Plan envisioned and industrial

park being developed in the area. The largest parcel within this area currently zoned General Industrial is 6.5 acres.

Figure 3: No Action Alternative



Historic Preservation

The Downtown Master Plan recommends that the City establish a historic preservation program based on a determination of historic significance, historic integrity and historic context. Once a property has been evaluated as significant, a property owner may voluntarily request the site or structure be designated as a national resource, state resource, or local landmark. A local historic preservation ordinance would: 1) establish criteria and a process to designate historic resources, 2) possibly include creation of a historic district, and 3) require the creation of an appointed review board or administrative regulations enforceable by city staff.

Downtown Master Plan Consistency with Policies from the Comprehensive Plan

LUPG-12-Protect and promote the city's historic, cultural, and archaeological resources.

Analysis – The proposed Downtown Master Plan implementation includes the adoption of a historic preservation program that includes the identification of the city's historic resources and would include the adoption of development regulations to protect such resources. The Downtown Master Plan also includes design guidelines that would be used to ensure new development is compatible with the city's historic structures.

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

This alternative would involve the voluntary application of design guidelines to reflect basic approaches that would help preserve the historic integrity of the downtown area. Maintaining the historic identity of the Main Street area by preserving the architectural features of historically significant buildings is promoted by the proposed Downtown Master Plan. Visual compatibility results when the design variables in a new building are arranged to be similar to historic patterns in the area. The primary impacts associated with the proposed Plan and Design Standards would be establishing a new administrative process in the review of certain development proposals. In addition, education would be an important component of any historic preservation program.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

The anticipated impacts on historic preservation are generally the same as described for the moderate rate Buildout alternative with the addition of requiring mandatory design standards and procedures specifically targeted at the Historic Main Street area. Mandatory design standards ensure consistent implementation of the city's vision for the downtown core creating a cohesive appearance.

A historic preservation program will not only protect Monroe's historic resources it can also provide economic benefits for property owners and the city in general. There are federal and state tax incentive programs to help property owners rehabilitate historic structures. According to the WA State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation 2006 Economic Development Study, approximately 8.7 million people came to WA State in 2004 for historic/heritage tourism. It is estimated that each tourist spends an average of \$72.42 dollars a day. The report also states that between 2000 and 2004

\$8.3 million dollars were spent annually on restoring historic buildings. This resulted in \$220 million dollars in sales revenue and the creation of 2,320 jobs.

No Action Alternative

The current city code mentions historic preservation in only three places. The first is within the footnotes for the land use setback matrix (MMC 18.10.140), which requires the exterior architecture of new or remodeled buildings along Main Street and Lewis to substantially reflect turn of the century architecture in Monroe as illustrated by the former city hall and Doloff Key buildings. In the description of the purpose of a planned residential community (18.84.010 MMC), the intent of preserving historic buildings and places is listed. City policies in section 20.04.200 of the City of Monroe municipal code state: “preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage”.

Currently a formal historic preservation program in Monroe does not exist and there is a lack of information available to property owners about the merits of historic preservation. Preservation of historic structures is informal and depends on the preferences of the property owner. There is a Monroe Historical Society that formed in 1976. The society operates a museum located on Main Street in the original city hall and houses a wide-ranging collection of local historical items including an extensive collection of historical photographs.

Transportation and Parking

Adoption of the proposed Downtown Master Plan would not directly result in adverse impacts to transportation, parking or circulation. Construction impacts and mitigation measures would be identified with project-specific reviews of proposed developments. The proposed Plan changes are aimed at providing safe and efficient pedestrian connections between downtown neighborhoods, public amenities and public parking facilities. In addition, an overall reduction of on-street parking is envisioned by encouraging the use of alternative transportation modes to downtown (i.e., designating bike routes). Streetscape, landscape and sidewalk improvements are also proposed throughout the downtown area to improve the pedestrian-friendly nature of the downtown. Design and development standards are proposed for parking structures, encouraging retail uses on the street frontage and special treatments such as artwork, grillwork or other architectural features to obscure the view of vehicles.

Consistency with Policies from Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Transportation Plan

TP1.2 – Land use patterns that facilitate multi-purpose trips and reduce the quantity and length of trips by single-occupancy vehicles shall be encouraged.

Analysis – The proposed Downtown Master Plan recommends mixed use development with an increase in residences in the downtown area. By encouraging development that includes residential and services, restaurant, and entertainment opportunities, the city is reducing the need of vehicle trips in this part of the community. Additionally, various research has proven that downtown commercial benefit from the residential development by providing a built-in cliental.

TP 1.9 – Where appropriate, landscaping measures should be implemented to enhance the appearance of street corridors. Without impairing street capacity, safety, or structural integrity, existing trees along street right-of-way should be conserved.

Analysis – All proposed street layouts associated with the two land use alternatives include landscaping strips, consistent with this policy statement.

Goal TG 4 - Create commercial areas that are pedestrian, bicycle, and transit oriented.

Analysis – One of the primary goals of the proposed Downtown Master Plan is to improve the pedestrian connections throughout the downtown core. This plan also suggests various alternatives to include bicycle routes, which in some cases may be negatively impacted by some of the proposed pedestrian safety improvements. Streetscape improvements, including landscaping in the public right-of-way, will be coordinated with transit bus stop facilities in order to not diminish safety of passengers waiting for transit, and the safe operation of transit vehicles in and out of the bus stop zones.

TP 4.1- Integrate parking facilities in the downtown area with pedestrian, bicycle and transit circulation.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan recommends the construction of multiple-use parking facilities. New or redeveloped public facilities/projects should have enough parking to meet their needs as well as additional opportunities for public parking. The Plan calls for enhanced pedestrian and bicycle connectivity by clearly identifying routes and minimizing the impact that automobile traffic has on the area.

LUP-1.9-Create policies and regulations that promote the development of alternative modes of transportation such as walking and biking paths, transit or other multi-modal types.

Analysis-Pedestrian and bicycle circulation, design and safety are key components of the proposed Downtown Master Plan. Strengthening the functionality of pedestrian and bicycle circulation to link retail and public gathering sites would help to make downtown a fun place to explore for residents and tourists alike.

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

The proposed circulation plan would elevate Fremont Street as a “conveyor street” to provide an alternate through traffic route for east-west traffic through the downtown area. Fremont would remain a local access street, but the need for turn lanes and proposed bicycle facilities would require removal of some on-street parking. Several alternative design configurations for improvements to Main Street, Lewis Street, Fremont Street, Woods Street, South Ferry Street and Ann Street are proposed in the Downtown Master Plan. These proposed projects are generally to alleviate traffic congestion and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety with traffic calming techniques while at the same time providing convenient automobile access to downtown. The Plan states that the existing street system has underutilized roadway segments that if reconfigured could relieve congestion on downtown roadways such as Main Street and Lewis Street. Another mechanism to improve traffic flow proposed in the Plan is to construct a roundabout at Fremont Street and Main Street or Woods Street and Fremont Street.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

This land use alternative has most of the same components of the moderate rate Buildout alternative with the addition of two proposed parking structures. These parking facilities will mitigate any on-street parking removed for vehicle turn lanes, pedestrian bulb-outs, or other facilities requiring the reduction of on-street parking stalls. These structures are described as mixed use infill/parking facilities in the proposed Downtown Master Plan. The Plan calls for an additional in-depth analysis to determine the appropriate sites for a parking structure. This alternative also depicts a potential passenger rail stop along the existing railroad right-of-way. Impacts of both of these proposals would need to be thoroughly evaluated at a project-specific level.

No Action Alternative

Chapter 9 of the City of Monroe Comprehensive Transportation Plan provides a list of street and non-motorized projects that are recommended for implementation by 2025. The recommended street projects total approximately \$30 million with non-motorized projects total approximately \$13 million. The programmatic review of these proposed projects were evaluated in the environmental analysis section of the recently adopted Comprehensive Transportation Plan. Included on this list is \$1,000,000 towards a parking facility in the downtown core.

The Monroe Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Revitalization and Enhancement Association of Monroe (DREAM) conducted interviews of downtown merchants and residents relating to existing downtown parking conditions and potential time limit changes. The results of the interviews indicated that approximately 62 percent of those surveyed indicated the existing parking time limits satisfy the needs of the business or resident. Streets in the downtown area without parking time limits sometimes were occupied all day by downtown employees. The survey in 2006 reported that three businesses were in the process of relocating from historic downtown Monroe primarily due to their parking frustrations.

Public Services and Utilities

One of the key components of the proposed Downtown Master Plan is to ensure that any future development/redevelopment is provided adequate public services and reliable utility service. The level of service for fire protection, emergency medical services (EMS) and law enforcement for the downtown area is relatively high. Future development under the proposed Downtown Master Plan would result in more mixed use development with some residential units located above a third story. The existing fire fighting equipment operated by the City is capable of extending to allow construction of buildings up to six stories tall.

Enhancement of existing parks and recreational trails is a cornerstone of the proposed Downtown Master Plan. In addition, several new areas are planned for park improvements. Details for these areas should be coordinated with the on-going update of the Comprehensive Parks Plan.

Downtown Master Plan Consistency with Policies from the Comprehensive Plan

CFP 3 – Encourage the full use of existing utility systems before allowing expansion, which would promote under-utilization of existing systems, increased cost to present and futures users, and possible “leapfrog” development.

Analysis – The proposed Downtown Master Plan recommends changes in the land use designations and development standards to encourage development and redevelopment at greater densities. This area is within the existing city limits and is served by the city for water and sewer services; however, implementation of this plan may require improvements to the existing system.

CFP 18 – Maintain existing public access to community shorelines, particularly Al Borlin City Park, Skykomish River Park, and the Skykomish River.

Analysis – The proposed Downtown Master Plan recommends improved connections between Al Borlin Park and the properties within the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood, including a multi-modal vantage point at the terminus of Fremont Street.

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

Infrastructure improvements for the downtown area are described in Chapter 10- Infrastructure in the proposed Downtown Master Plan. Chapter 4 describes public amenities and facilities to accommodate different types of activities. The Plan proposes a network of places including a major, formal open space and other more informal ones. Al Borlin Park is recognized as an important asset to the downtown with a park overlook constructed at the east end of Fremont Street and a trail leading to a water feature within the park.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

The proposed higher intensity of development under this alternative would necessitate a greater demand for supporting infrastructure and public services and facilities than either the No Action Alternative or the Mixed Use Moderate Rate Alternative. Construction of a new rail stop would require extension of utilities and a special focus on pedestrian safety.

Both Mixed use Alternatives may require additional services and utilities than currently needed under the No Action Alternative. The increase in residential uses will impact various city services and utilities. This may be offset with the concurrent development of additional commercial, service, and entertainment uses.

No Action Alternative

At present, fire and EMS is provided to residents in the City and its urban growth area within a 5-minute response time. Shorter response times are generally provided to the downtown area with the close proximity of the fire station at the City Hall complex. In the currently adopted comprehensive plan, a monopole for wireless communications facilities is planned for the Railroad Ave./Simons Rd. area. Updating of some of the older water, sewer and stormwater conveyance systems through the downtown study area has been identified in City plans to occur over the next six years.

Aesthetics

The aesthetic character of the downtown will change over time as the plan and design guidelines are implemented and influence redevelopment. More buildings will be taller, and infill of vacant and underutilized properties will create a denser pedestrian-oriented urban environment. While in the end it is funding availability and the overall market that will truly determine what, where and when development/redevelopment occurs, the plan provides incentives to attract uses that would result in a lively, diverse downtown. Overall the area would become a more densely developed mixed use community center. The Plan and implementing design standards are designed to ensure that infill and redevelopment would exhibit similar desirable architectural characteristics to result in a varied, but compatible look.

The proposed Downtown Master Plan calls for the establishment of a unifying image by adopting a “greening of downtown” concept that entails additional landscaping including appropriate street trees, planters at curb bulbs, and overhead hanging baskets of flowers. The construction of gateway entrances and the extension of streetscape improvements throughout the downtown would make the area more attractive, pedestrian friendly and increase its overall livability. Providing attractive linkages to nearby green spaces like Al Borlin Park and Woods Creek by constructing bike trails and walkways is a recommendation of the proposed Plan. Construction of a civic facility with an attractive plaza for community events are also proposed to beautify the downtown area.

Consistency with Comprehensive Plan Policy

LUP 8.4- Encourage and enhance the current mixture of businesses and residences on Main Street as it is attractive and contributes to the character of Monroe.

Analysis-The proposed Downtown Master Plan states that the overall vision for downtown Monroe should invite a vibrant mix of uses, which will contribute to a dynamic economy and support a high quality of life for residents.

Alternative 1 Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout (Scenario A)

A streetscape design is proposed in the Downtown Master Plan that includes recommendations for lighting, landscaping, benches and waste receptacles. Wayfinding signage directing people to the downtown is also a feature of the Plan.

The adoption of the Design Guidelines will also provide a template for property owners to consult when developing or redeveloping their property. The Guidelines include recommended façade treatments, landscaping, sign standards for the entire downtown planning area. The Guidelines recommend that the historic character be continued along Main Street and Lewis with alternative, but complimentary design standards in the Al Borlin and Roads and Rails Neighborhoods. The voluntary implementation of the Guidelines will improve the overall appearance of the downtown planning area, but is dependant of property owners seeing a benefit to using the Guidelines.

Alternative 2 Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout (Scenario B)

Mandatory implementation of the Design Guidelines will ensure a cohesive façade for the downtown planning area. As stated above the Guidelines have specific recommendations for each neighborhood including, but not limited to façade treatments, landscaping, street amenities, building mass, sign standards, and suggestions to preserve historic buildings.

The Downtown Plan also recommends for elevated parking structures be “wrapping” multi-story parking structures with retail businesses to reduce visual impacts by incorporating attractive architectural detailing of the storefronts.

No Action Alternative

The City of Monroe currently participates in the national Main Street program through the Downtown Revitalization Enhancement Association of Monroe (DREAM). Beautification of Monroe’s Main St. and alleys has occurred in recent years resulting from landscaping, banners and other streetscape improvements.

Summary of Anticipated Impacts

This environmental review has evaluated the anticipated impacts associated with adoption of the proposed Downtown Master Plan and accompanying Design Guidelines. Consistent with the scoping documents, the environmental elements of Land Use, Historic Preservation, Transportation and Parking, Public Services and Utilities, and Aesthetics have been evaluated at a programmatic level. More detailed evaluation will be conducted as specific projects are brought forward for City review in the future.

This analysis has found that the No Action alternative by continuing current development trends in the downtown study area will not stimulate economic development to the extent possible as proposed by the Downtown Master Plan and Design Guidelines. The No Action Alternative includes various land use designation and zoning classifications that may no longer be appropriate as Monroe grows into an urban center for the Skykomish River Valley.. Some of the positive benefits to the community of a revitalized downtown and preservation of historic structures would still be achieved, but might not be consistent with any overall vision for the area as a whole.

The proposed Downtown Master Plan, by promoting mixed use development, should result in a greater number of downtown residents over the next twenty years. Following the Plan's recommendations, historic structures would be rehabilitated based on a citywide strategy with greater support to individual property owners.

The Mixed Use Moderate Rate Buildout Alternative could be considered the first phase of implementation of the proposed Downtown Master Plan. The Mixed Use Accelerated Rate Buildout Alternative would be the second phase with larger, more expensive projects culminating in a denser urban environment than currently exists.

Critical areas and storm water management were not evaluated in this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement because any development in the City of Monroe is required to comply with the city's critical areas regulations and the Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington, DOE, August 2001 or as updated.

Table 1 – Summary of Anticipated Impacts of Alternatives

Environmental Element	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	No Action Alternative
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts include some existing uses in the AL Borlin Neighborhood will become legal non-conforming uses and may be forced to relocate over time as land values increase. ▪ Amendments to the Shoreline Master Program may be needed for implementation in the Al Borlin Park Neighborhood. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be similar to Alternative 1, but could see an accelerated rate of transition with the inclusion of a catalyst project for redevelopment. ▪ Design Guidelines would be required potentially impacting the cost of development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This alternative has the lowest probability of affecting land use patterns. ▪ Development would continue to occur in an uncoordinated fashion with limited opportunities for a catalyst project to fully develop the area to its fullest extent with mixed uses.
Historic Preservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts include the city establishing a historic preservation program, which could impact the cost of development and redevelopment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be similar to Alternative 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be the loss of historically significant buildings and sites.
Transportation and Parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts include additional traffic on adjacent residential neighborhoods, an overall increase in traffic in the downtown core, loss of some on-street parking stalls. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be similar to Alternative 1, with the exception that the loss of on-street parking would be mitigated with the construction on structure parking garages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be the continued deterioration of the level-of-service for the intersection of Main and Lewis.

Public Services and Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The potential impacts on public services and utilities could be mitigated through impact mitigations fees and/or a local improvements district. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be similar to Alternative 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This alternative has the lowest probability of affecting public services and utilities.
Aesthetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be an increase in development costs and uncoordinated design with voluntary compliance with the guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential impacts would be a possible increase in construction costs to comply with adopted design guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aesthetics will continue to be impacted, as no design regulations are required with the exception of development along Main Street and Lewis Street outlined in the Monroe Municipal Code.

Responses to Comments on the Draft SEIS

Comment letter from Community Transit signed by Mr. Brent L. Russell, Transportation System Planner, dated February 7, 2008:

Thank you for your comment. The analysis on page 18 of this Final SEIS includes your request that landscape improvements and streetscape improvements in general should be designed and constructed to accommodate transit stops and bus operations as well as to ensure passenger and pedestrian safety.

Comment e-mail from Mr. John Knettles dated February 22, 2008:

Thank you for your comment. Energy efficiency and green building techniques will be addressed by the City in a coordinated manner as part of a future planning effort that would apply to all parts of the City, not just the downtown area. Because the proposed Downtown Master Plan and Design Guidelines did not specifically address LEED certification and the environmental review was not scoped for this topic, it is beyond the scope of this review at this time.



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Chief Executive Officer

Kate Galloway
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City of Monroe
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CITY OF MONROE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

FEB 07 2008

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

February 7, 2008

Re: DSEIS Comments

Dear Ms. Galloway:

Community Transit appreciates the opportunity to provide comments to proposed developments and city improvement projects throughout Snohomish County. It is our policy to help ensure that construction projects, through the established permit process, are designed to be compatible with public transportation.

In Section 3 of the SDEIS under comprehensive plan policies, Goal TG\$ includes transit as one of the important components for commercial areas. In the analysis response, you may want to note that landscape improvements will need to be coordinated with transit bus stop facilities in order to not diminish safety of passengers waiting for transit, and the safe operation of transit vehicles in and out of the bus stop zones.

It should be noted that any streetscape design chosen should consider impacts to transit stops and bus operations in the planning process. Both alternative build-out scenarios will carry some impacts to transit operations during construction activity that affects sites along Main Street and/or US 2. Notification of perceived transit impacts can be sent to me or:

Dana Osborn, Operations Supervisor, Community Transit
Office 425.348.7191
Mobile 425.359.8371
Fax 425.348.2347

I look forward to working with the City to improve the downtown core of old Monroe and I can attend meetings as you request if transit related materials or information would be helpful. Thank you for including Community Transit in your review process.

Sincerely,

Brent L. Russell
Transportation System Planner
Community Transit
brent.russell@commtrans.org
(425) 348-7189

From: jcknettles@comcast.net [mailto:jcknettles@comcast.net]
Sent: Friday, February 22, 2008 4:15 PM
To: Ben Swanson
Cc: Kate Galloway
Subject: Downtown Design Guidelines

I want to comment briefly on the Downtown Design Guidelines.

No mention was made in any part of this document of energy efficiency. Municipalities around the country are incorporating energy efficiency standards as either stand-alone ordinances or as part of more comprehensive design guidelines like Monroe's. By and large, these standards reflect those established by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System (LEED).

For example, on April 12, 2006, in Seattle, Mayor Nickels signed new downtown zoning legislation updating rules for the central office core and adjoining areas, including Denny Triangle and a portion of Belltown. Changes in the new regulations were made to provide greater heights, greater floor area, or both, for commercial and residential buildings. To gain greater height or density, projects must achieve a LEED Silver rating or higher. (LEED website, <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CategoryID=19>, last visited, February 22, 2008).

In Costa Mesa, California, in September 2007, the City Council approved a resolution that established a green building incentive program for private development. The program encourages green building practices through various incentives, including priority permitting and fee waivers for all green installations and fee reductions to cover the cost of LEED certification. Id.

And in San Rafael, California, new or renovated civic and commercial construction exceeding 5,000 gsf is required to meet the equivalent of LEED Certified. New or renovated commercial construction exceeding 30,000 gsf is required to achieve LEED Silver certification. Id.

As each level of government faces the challenge of climate change, increasing energy costs, and energy security, Monroe's Downtown Design Guidelines initiative is an ideal opportunity for the City of Monroe to meaningfully contribute to the world's efforts in addressing these pressing issues. The absence of any mention of energy efficiency in the Guidelines is a serious oversight that the City should not allow to continue.

John Knettles
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