

Downtown Steering Committee

Meeting Notes
March 24, 2026

ATTENDEES:

Committee Members Present: Zeke Reister, Mike Bedard, Rob Eaton, Kevin Rieke, Oliver Brulotte, Kirstie Miethe, Laurie Brenan, Lindsay Boyd, and Troy Campbell

Committee Members Absent: none

Staff: Matthew "Selby", Brantley Bain, and Courtney Porter.

Public: none

MEETING:

1. Approve February 24, 2026 meeting notes

Meeting notes were approved.

2. Comments from the public on items not on the agenda

None. Council Member Mike Bedard noted he had met with downtown business constituents and had questions to relay; City Administrator Matthew "Selby" advised those items be raised under agenda item 6.

3. Front Street: Temporary Improvements

City Engineer Brantley Bain presented a plan for near-term temporary repairs to Front Street infrastructure, focusing on trip hazards and surface deterioration identified from 9th Street through the downtown core. Key elements included:

Concrete repairs at the Maifest dance pad, which has significant settling and cracking, are scheduled for May 18–29, immediately following Maifest. The phased repair timeline is required by concrete curing constraints. Smaller sidewalk patching work is expected to extend into June.

Seal coating of the Front Street asphalt surface was discussed as a cost-effective aesthetic improvement. The process can be completed overnight in sections and would restore a uniform, darker appearance while covering worn striping and crack fills. Exact costs were not yet available.

Paver and landscaping repairs in the bulb-out areas were also discussed. Council Member Rob Eaton noted that a previously landscaped and well-maintained streetscape had deteriorated primarily due to a failed underground irrigation system, not a lack of plant selection. The original planting plan used appropriate native and local vegetation. The

committee emphasized that any replanting effort must include a sustainable, ongoing maintenance plan to prevent recurrence of the problem.

Discussion also touched on ground-level planters and business owners' benches. It was noted that the city maintains their hanging flower baskets, while adjacent businesses are responsible for ground planters. Committee members expressed support for the city to continue to lead by example through the maintenance and presentation of its own plantings. The committee also suggested that clearer design standards, along with a voluntary maintenance agreement for business-owned planters, could help support consistency and upkeep. Additionally, the Chamber was encouraged to include community beautification expectations in its new member onboarding materials.

The committee was advised that the full package of Front Street improvements will be brought to City Council at the April 14 City Council meeting, where a motion may be made to authorize a not-to-exceed expenditure. Funding is available through the lodging tax fund.

4. Downtown Parking Garage Update

Brantley Bain provided an update on the downtown parking garage project. The site has been selected as the Blewett/Asgard parking lot area near Starbucks, with the parking garage footprint primarily occupying the Blewett lot and extending slightly into the Asgard lot.

The current conceptual cost estimate is approximately \$40–45 million for construction. The city is actively negotiating scope and fee with ARC, the project architect, and a preliminary schedule is forthcoming. Design costs are anticipated to exceed \$1 million in the current year. The project is intended to be financed through a councilmanic revenue bond, supported by demonstrated parking revenue, which does not require voter approval.

Quarterly coordination meetings have been established between ARC (garage) and PSOMAS (downtown pedestrian plaza design) to ensure the two projects are developed in alignment, particularly regarding ADA access, pedestrian pathways, and materials.

The committee discussed the potential inclusion of commercial space (e.g., a restaurant or office space) in the garage structure, particularly on the Starbucks-facing elevation, to provide an active facade rather than exposed parking decks. Opinions were mixed; several members supported limiting the city's role to parking, public restrooms, and operational office space, reserving commercial development for private developers. The incorporation of public restrooms and mechanical infrastructure for heated sidewalks were broadly supported.

The committee also noted the need for robust public engagement given the project's scale, with at least one dedicated public forum planned in addition to community engagement nights.

5. 9th Street Traffic Diverted to 10th Determination

Brantley Bain reported on research conducted regarding the feasibility of extending 10th Street through to Highway 2 as an alternative vehicle access route to replace 9th Street. The proposal was determined to be infeasible at this time due to several compounding obstacles: the required 60-foot right-of-way would encroach into the existing Starbucks building; a critical electrical transformer serving multiple commercial buildings would require relocation at a cost of several million dollars; and WSDOT indicated it would require the removal of the existing 9th Street access to Highway 2 as a condition of any new 10th Street intersection, which would severely disrupt deliveries to Front Street businesses.

While a full street extension was deemed too costly and logistically complex, the committee identified the 9th Street and Front Street intersection as a significant pedestrian safety concern, particularly in anticipation of increased foot traffic from the future parking garage. Brantley Bain indicated interim improvements are being explored, including elevated crosswalk treatments to concentrate and clarify pedestrian crossing points, flashing pedestrian warning signs, and possible traffic signals. These measures are intended to improve safety in the near term while longer-term infrastructure projects advance.

The committee also discussed the appearance of the 9th Street closure during festivals, expressing concern that the current configuration—featuring sheriff's vehicles and metal barriers—presents an unwelcoming, fortress-like appearance at the primary pedestrian entry to downtown. Selby noted he will meet with the Sheriff in August to begin planning for Village of Lights and will raise the request for a more aesthetically welcoming security arrangement at that time. Automatic retractable bollards were discussed; Brantley Bain noted ongoing research, Mike Bedard flagged concerns about maintenance reliability and the preference of first responders for simpler, manual solutions.

6. Other / Future Agenda Items

Other topics were raised:

Front Street Closure History: Committee Member Mike Bedard relayed questions from downtown business owners about the possibility of reintroducing limited parking on Front Street during off-peak periods. Chair Selby clarified that the street was formally and permanently closed to vehicular traffic by council resolution in December 2022, following extensive community surveying and public comment. Director Troy Campbell confirmed that the Chamber's survey showed approximately 90% support for the closure among both business owners and residents, with the primary community condition being that lost parking be replaced—which the parking garage project addresses.

Special Use Permit (SUP) Plan: A committee member recommended that the group prioritize developing a comprehensive SUP plan for the use of public space in the downtown core, particularly given the advancing pedestrian plaza design. It was noted that this topic is expected to be addressed as part of the 30% design phase with PSOMAS.

Funding Strategy Education: The committee discussed the importance of becoming better informed about the range of funding mechanisms available for the downtown master plan

project, including Local Improvement Districts (LIDs), state and federal grants, bonding against lodging tax revenues, and regional sources such as the Chelan Douglas Regional Port Authority and Chelan County. It was noted that a reliable cost estimate will not be available until the 30% design phase is complete, at which point outreach to legislators and grant programs becomes more viable. Members expressed interest in inviting guest speakers—potentially including Port representatives or staff from comparable completed projects—to help educate the committee and, by extension, the broader community.

New Business Association: The committee acknowledged the formation of a new informal business group in the community. Members noted that some participants were not Chamber of Commerce members and may lack access to existing city and chamber communications. The committee encouraged a proactive, relational outreach approach rather than a defensive posture, and reinforced the value of one-on-one engagement with business owners to build trust and share accurate information about ongoing city initiatives.

April Agenda: Members agreed that the April meeting should include an update on the temporary Front Street maintenance improvements and any other near-term actionable items.

7. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 11:54 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Courtney Porter, Executive Assistant