



IMPROVING OUR COMMUNITY

**COLUMBIA GATEWAY URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY**  
**CITY OF THE DALLES**

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**AGENDA**  
**COLUMBIA GATEWAY**  
**URBAN RENEWAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Conducted in a Handicap Accessible Meeting Room

**Meeting**

**Tuesday, July 15, 2014**

**5:30 pm**

**City Hall Council Chambers**

**313 Court Street**

**The Dalles, Oregon**

- I. CALL TO ORDER
- II. ROLL CALL
- III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
- IV. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 17, 2014
- VI. PUBLIC COMMENT (for items not on the agenda)
- VII. ACTION ITEM – Business/Development Proposal for Downtown
- VIII. ONGOING URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS UPDATE
  - A. Granada Block Redevelopment Project
  - B. Non-Profit Property Owner Rehabilitation Grants
  - C. Other
- IX. FUTURE MEETING – August 19, 2014
- X. ADJOURNMENT

**Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Agency Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes**

**Tuesday, June 17, 2014**

**5:30 PM**

City Hall Council Chambers

313 Court Street

The Dalles, OR 97058

*Conducted in a handicap accessible room.*

**CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Chair Grossman called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

**ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Gary Grossman, Jennifer Botts, Steve Kramer, Robin Miles, John Nelson, Greg Weast

Members Absent: Chris Zukin, Linda Miller

Staff Present: City Manager Nolan Young, City Attorney Gene Parker, Administrative Secretary Carole Trautman

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Grossman led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Acting Chair Grossman indicated it was suggested that item VIII (A), "Mill Creek Greenway," should precede item VII, "Action Item – Northern Wasco County Parks and Recreation District" because information on the Mill Creek Greenway would be helpful in the decision process for the action item.

It was moved by Weast and seconded by Nelson to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously; Zukin and Miller absent.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was moved by Nelson and seconded by Kramer to approve the May 28, 2014 minutes as submitted. The motion carried unanimously; Zukin and Miller absent.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

## ONGOING URBAN RENEWAL PROJECTS UPDATE

A. Mill Creek Greenway – City Manager Young summarized the last meeting's discussion on Mill Creek Greenway where staff proposed considering using part or all of the \$258,000 Opportunity-driven Urban Renewal (UR) funds as matching funds for a grant to be used for a portion of the Mill Creek Greenway. Young stated that, at this time, he recommended postponing applying for the grant for one year for the following reasons: 1) some funds that would be used for the project would not be available until later this year; and 2) it would give staff an opportunity to further define the project and work on engineering.

### ACTION ITEM – Recommendation Concerning a Request from Northern Wasco County Parks and Recreation District for Assistance with the Thompson Park Swimming Pool Project

Presenting the request were Scott Green, Northern Wasco County Parks and Recreation District (NWCPRD) Executive Director, and Mark Seder, project architect. Director Green distributed a handout of recent architect's renderings of the project (Attachment 1). Mr. Green said the project was shovel ready. The completion date was projected for the first weekend of June 2015. Director Green gave some history on the project. He said, that due to the challenge of the soils in the community, the costs of the project had increased considerably. The pool design was reduced, Green reported, and the Parks District has the funds for the 50m pool. However, the Parks District desired to bring in some economic-generating features with I-84 appeal including a slide, climbing wall, shade and other appealing landscaping. He felt the development of this project would play well into the West Gateway project as well. Green said the entire facility would be very visible from the freeway, more so than other Eastern Oregon communities.

Nelson asked what the soil issues were. Director Green indicated the main factor was the basalt drilling. He said there would not be as much drilling as originally thought, but they would need to excavate. Plans currently called for moving the pool site 10 to 15 feet closer to Mill Creek to alleviate some of the soils difficulties.

Green said they were currently approximately \$350,000 short and they were anticipating a potential \$100,000 from the Enterprise Zone Agreement, \$30,000 from an aquatics group, and some possible help from the local Lions Club. In summary, Mr. Green stated NWCPRD was requesting \$220,000 of UR funds.

City Manager Young advised that the UR budget was \$250,000 and was dependent upon a loan being paid back of \$600,000, the flour mill sale of over \$300,000 and the sale of the Granada Block property of approximately \$845,000. Some of those funds would be used for other projects, Young stated, and totaled approximately 1.745 million dollars. Weast clarified by asking if the UR budget was dependent upon those anticipated revenues. Young explained that would partly be the case. The Granada Block project would be a "wash" if the developers did not purchase the property, because the development project would not go forward. The other remaining \$900,000 worth of anticipated revenues would have an impact on the UR budget.

City Manager Young asked Mr. Green and Mr. Seder when they would need the UR “cash in hand.” Director Green said NWCPRD had the funds to construct the pool, and the “I-84 appeal” features were on an alternate list in the bid documents, so there was some time. Mr. Green anticipated the UR funds would be needed by early Spring of 2015. Young said staff would have a better idea of UR funds by August, but if funds did not come in, other projects could be delayed. Or, in the alternative, funds could be borrowed from other funds with the understanding that other funds would be made available at a later time.

The Committee members discussed the project’s potential of adding to the economic viability to The Dalles and that it would aid in removing blight to the downtown area. The general consensus was that it would be a worthwhile project, especially if the UR funds were available. It was moved by Weast and seconded by Miles to recommend approval of funding \$220,000 for the Northern Wasco County Parks and Recreation District Thompson Pool Project alternate features to include a slide, a climbing wall, shade and other enhanced landscaping, pending the receipt of UR budget funds, and to adopt the Thompson Pool Project into the Columbia Gateway Urban Renewal Agency Plan through a minor amendment.

Nelson asked Director Green if the alternate features could be developed in the future if the UR funds were not available. Mr. Green said NWCPRD would then be responsible for funding the projects. Mr. Seder advised the prices would rise over time if not done now.

Acting Chair Grossman called for the vote. Grossman, Miles, Nelson, Kramer, and Weast voted in favor; Botts abstained. The motion carried.

City Manager Young said his intent was to bring the project before the Agency on July 28, 2014. In doing so, it would give more time to identify available UR funds, and to provide time for the first bid packet to be opened. Young said he would apprise the Agency of the URAC’s intent for the pool project and give an explanation for the delay in bringing the project before the Agency.

Nikki Lesich, 1814 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, The Dalles, Oregon, former Mayor and current NWCPRD Board member, advised that Thompson Pool had always been on the Urban Renewal project list. She said the Parks District now had the funds to construct, they had the direction of the community, and to have the I-84 appeal features would be a positive economic impact to the community.

#### PROJECT UPDATES

B. Granada Block Redevelopment Project – Michael Leash, Rapoza Development Representative gave the following project update highlights:

- Developers have signed a letter of intent with Venture Hospitalities (formerly Concept Entertainment) for the restaurant services.
- John Lee of VIP Hospitality has stepped aside at this time, because he was waiting for a restaurant operator to be involved and he was looking for more of a Hampton Inn Suites type brand hotel.

- Discussions continue with a couple of people in the Columbia Gorge area and also a Portland operator/developer regarding equity funds.
- Continuing work with private Portland capital partners and with a real estate bank in Washington.
- Continuing work with a Portland attorney that has a regional EB5 center.
- Working to identify a timeline, job creations and incremental job creations within the community with American Dream Funds, a leading EB5 center in Portland.
- Met with Venture Hospitality and another investor who offered some additional ideas for improving configurations for the restaurant and meeting facility.
- Continuing communications with Hilton on submitting the formal application within the next few months.
- Signed a letter of intent with a hospitality group for hotel operations.
- No new information on archaeological or environmental issues pertaining to the redevelopment.

Mr. Leash explained that the developers were heading towards a Hilton Garden brand hotel, and restaurant operations needed to be integrated with the conference facilities. He said the developers want a separate operator for the restaurant space, yet integrated with the hotel.

#### C. Non-Profit Property Owner Rehabilitation Grants

City Manager Young reported there were three outstanding grants:

- 1) Wonderworks - still pending; working on securing the necessary grant match.
- 2) Independent Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF) - applied for three match grants, two of the three were declined. They received a Diamonds in the Rough Grant for \$6,700.
- 3) The Civic Auditorium - architectural and engineering work was progressing. Half of their grant funds and work remain.

#### D. Other

No other on-going projects at this time.

FUTURE MEETING – June 17, 2014

#### ADJOURNMENT

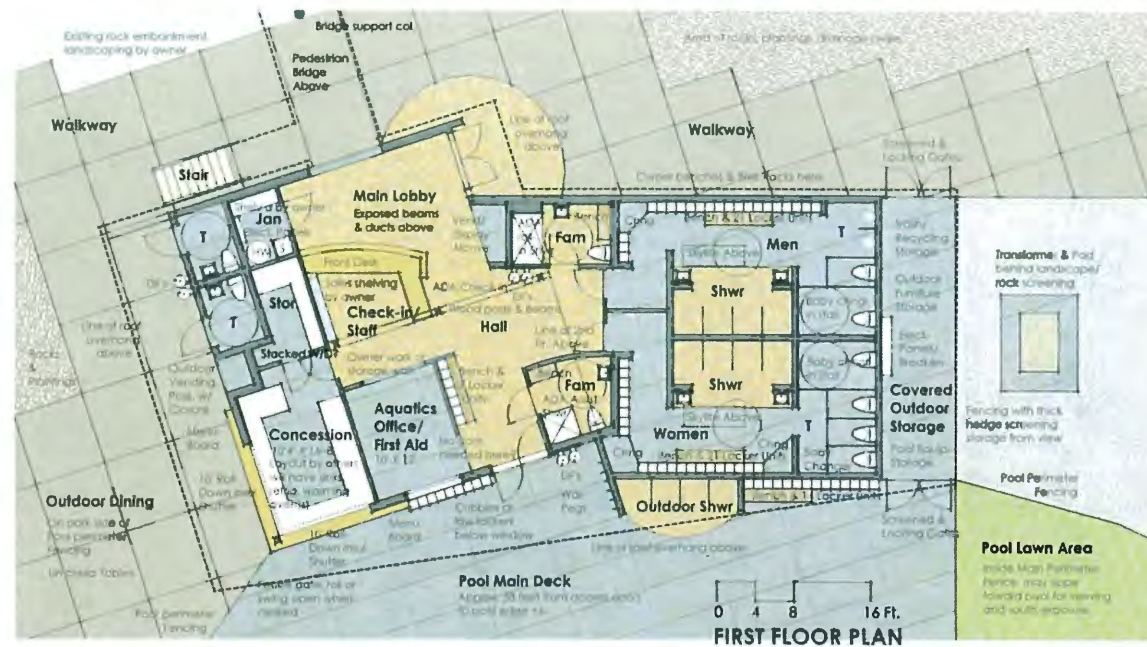
Acting Chair Grossman adjourned the meeting at 6:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Administrative Secretary Carole Trautman

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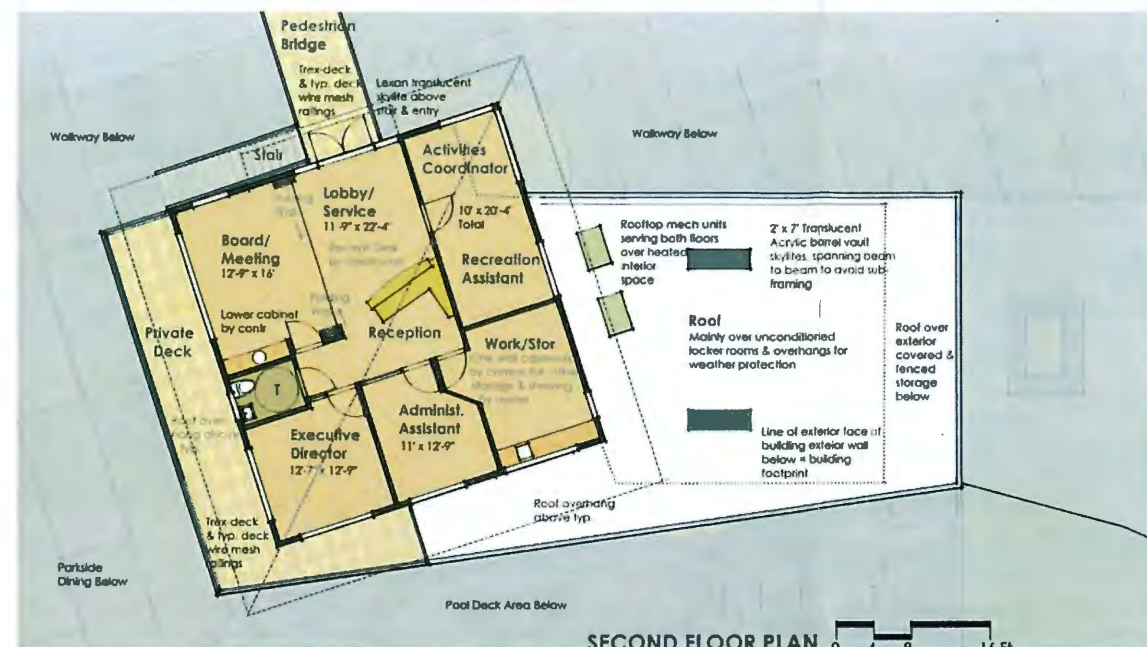
Gary Grossman, Vice Chairman





THOMPSON PARK POOL & RELATED FACILITIES

6-16-14



THOMPSON PARK POOL & RELATED FACILITIES

6-16-14





## AGENDA STAFF REPORT


### URBAN RENEWAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**Meeting Date: July 15, 2014**

**DATE:** July 8, 2014

**TO:** Urban Renewal Advisory Committee

**FROM:** Dan Durow, Economic Development Specialist

**THRU:** Nolan Young, Urban Renewal Manager 

**ISSUE:** Business/Development Proposal for the Downtown Area: Icons Museum

#### BACKGROUND:

Mr. David Benko is in the process of considering the acquisition of the former Elks building for a multi-purpose business. The primary activity being a sign, specifically neon sign, museum. Attached to this staff report is a detailed business plan submitted for background purposes. Mr. Benko, along with a consultant, will be at the July 15 meeting to present his credentials and business ideas, and to request some assistance from the Urban Renewal program to help with a marketing study and feasibility analysis.

The former Elks building has been vacant for many years and has not been heated or cooled for all that time. It has suffered some major water damage from a pipe burst several years ago, and portions of the brick façade need to be re-pointed. In addition, the roof currently has a significant leak. There is at least one broken window through which birds have access, and just a few weeks ago a large portion of the cornice came loose and had to have emergency repairs. The building is well into the start of an ever-increasing pace of deterioration.

In 2010, Agency staff identified several areas of concern for evaluating further use of the building. These were: a structural analysis that included a seismic evaluation; an environmental analysis that included asbestos, lead, and mold surveys; a utility and fire systems review; and a roof and ADA access evaluation. None of these were completed because the potential acquisition fell through. A rough estimate for bringing the building back to a usable condition was estimated to be over one million dollars. This will only increase as the building continues to further deteriorate.

**BUDGET IMPLICATIONS:**

The cost for a marketing study is estimated to be about \$10,000. The cost for a feasibility study is about \$25,000. A marketing study could have a useful purpose beyond this proposal. The feasibility study would be more specific to this proposal.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff's recommendation is to consider recommending some or full funding for just the marketing study at this time.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Do not recommend funding for either study
2. Recommend a portion of the funding for both studies
3. Recommend funding for all of the marketing and feasibility studies

# **Business Plan**

## **ICONS MUSEUM**

**July, 2014**

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**David Benko, Executive Director**

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## Executive Summary

In 1976, as part of its American Bicentennial exhibition, the Smithsonian Institution celebrated the unique history of signs in the United States with a major exhibit entitled *Signs of Life*. Exploring both historical and contemporary signs and symbols in the American city, the exhibit emphasized not only the pervasiveness of signs throughout our society, but also the significant role they have played in American life and its cultural history. The exhibit was one of the most successful exhibits ever commissioned at the Smithsonian's Renwick Gallery, and it attracted major attention, on a popular as well as a critical level.

That the prestigious Smithsonian would deem the history of signs worthy of a major exhibit speaks to the enduring historical significance, cultural value, and popular appeal of signs and the substantial role they have played in American life. Yet, since the closing of the *Signs of Life* exhibit no major museum has been established to fully explore and honor this important medium; until now.

With 20,000 square feet of electrifying exhibits and interactive displays, Rocket City's

International Collection of Neon Signs (ICON's) is dedicated to providing a dynamic and entertaining environment to promote an understanding and appreciation of electric signs and the unique role they have played in American history. Founded in 2002, the museum's collection is currently housed in a 3000 square



foot shop in Vancouver, Washington. The museum is currently seeking a much larger, permanent facility to exhibit its growing collections in a tourist friendly and environment.

Along with one of the largest collections of vintage pre-electric and electric storefront signs in the world, the museum's assets include a world-class collection of neon clocks and point of purchase signs, antique gas pumps and jukeboxes, hundreds of vintage trade catalogs and business cards, private written histories, photographs, and a broad spectrum of manufacturers salesman sample giveaways, from ashtrays and lighters to rulers and calendars.

***"Electrical advertising is a picture medium.  
Moreover, it is a color medium; still again,  
electrical advertising is a medium of motion, of  
action, of life, of light, of compulsory  
attraction."***

-from the influential advertising  
trade journal *Signs of the Times*,  
1912



Unlike the stuffy and academic environment found in many museums, Rocket City's ICON's is committed to



creating a very warm, fun, and family-friendly atmosphere that is open to all ages. And like the electrical and neon signs it will be celebrating, the museum's permanent and temporary displays and exhibits will be colorful, dynamic, and visually stimulating. In some

cases, these exhibits and displays will also be interactive and will invite the participation of visitors. To further expand the public's understanding and appreciation of signs and advertising, as well as the historical and sometimes scientific significance, the museum will provide the community with a wide variety of educational programs, training seminars, and special events for both adults and children as part of its education and community outreach programs. A cooperative agreement to create potentially accredited Sign Studies and Museum Studies programs will be pursued with local colleges and high schools. Ideally, these programs could potentially find additional support from various industry representatives, such as The Oregon Electric Sign Association and The International Sign Association. These collaborations and support efforts would be initiated with the help of local educational institutions.

Once its permanent location has been established, the museum will also make itself available as a unique setting for hosting private and corporate parties, special events, and public gatherings. The museum will also open a gift shop that will cater to the interests and needs of the general public, as well as artists, historians and collectors.

*"When I was in the 4th grade (1950) my class came to tour my dad's sign shop. The neon tube bender was working in the fires and as we all eagerly watched he crafted the glass into swans and various designs. I will never forget that."*

-Bruce Hagenson, former mayor of Vancouver, Washington



The museum's Executive Director David Benko brings significant experience to his position, including 26 years as a successful business owner in the sign industry, as well as experience as a museum curator for a nationally recognized sign museum. The museum is seeking initial funding through cooperative City grants, support of local and national sign companies, service organizations, local

businesses, admissions/membership and donations. Thereafter, funding will derive from continued fundraising, grant writing, membership and admittance fees. The primary goal of the museum's fundraising campaign is to raise the capital necessary for the construction or rehab of a permanent Museum site.

## Company Description

### Mission Statement

Rocket City's ICONS is dedicated to providing a dynamic, entertaining and educational environment to promote and encourage an understanding and appreciation of electric and non-electric signs, and the important role they have played in American history. Through its permanent and temporary exhibits, interactive displays, educational programs, and historical presentations, the museum will explore and illuminate the vast changes in American life and culture that have taken place since the first electric signs were designed and manufactured in the late 1890's. The museum will also seek to serve its diverse public as an innovative and welcoming center for learning and exploration through the visual arts and the unique artistry and artisanship that comprises sign design and manufacturing.

### Products and Services

The foundation of the museum's exhibits and displays will be the private collection of its founder and executive director, David Benko. This private collection, valued at well over \$1,000,000, will be on permanent loan to the museum, and will be augmented by the additional and ongoing acquisitions the museum makes as it works to expand the breadth of its exhibits and displays.

Focusing on the evolution of the electric sign from pre-electric and gold leaf signage (1880's) to the invention and widespread use of plastic (1960's), the museum's current assets represent one of the largest collections of artistic storefront signs in the world. The collection is filled with an expansive range of signage and artifacts related to the sign industry, including many one-of-a-kind signs, significant pieces of fabrication equipment and displays that cannot be seen on public display anywhere else in the world. The collection is filled with an expansive range of signage and artifacts related to the sign industry, including many one-of-a-kind signs and displays that cannot be seen on public display anywhere else in the world. Along with the animated and figural 'Dog n' Suds' sign and the Howard Johnson's 'Simple Simon', the collection also includes one of the rarest groupings of West Coast petro signs ever assembled, including Richfield-'Eagle', Seaside, Associated, Polly, and Buffalo signs.

Among the many noteworthy pieces in this singular collection are the following:

Along with its unique collection of storefront signs, as stated the museum will also display a wide range of colorful neon clocks and eye-catching point of

purchase signs, antique gas pumps and jukeboxes, and thousands of vintage photographs.





The museum will make itself available for corporate or private party entertaining. Three different floors will each offer a unique size and flavor, from the fun and lively 'Main Street' display (2400'), to the more casual "Diner" (1500'), to the elegant 'Grand Gorge Ballroom', (5000'). With an array of neon and electric signs as a backdrop, along with its collection of full-sized storefronts on display, the museum will provide a unique and dramatic setting for special events, public gatherings, and private parties. Catering and conference facilities will be provided to attract and accommodate private and public functions and gatherings.

*Business  
activities*

As part of its education and community outreach programs, Rocket City's ICON's will seek to offer a wide variety of educational programs, training seminars, and special events for both adults and children, ranging from fully accredited college courses for adults in advertising and museum studies to hands-on, activity-based classes for young children and teens. The Museum will actively work to create a very warm, welcoming environment that is family-friendly. The museum staff will help with both formal and informal learning activities and provide support for classroom work at all stages. The staff will be available year-round, during business hours, to assist students with course work, as well as providing support and guidance. ICONS outreach and potential accredited programs are listed below.



### College and Adult Education Programs

- **City Lights** - These weekend seminars for adults will consist of small study groups, and will focus primarily on the history of the sign and advertising industry.
- **Neon Techniques and Handling** - A three month course geared towards both sign enthusiasts and artists. Students will learn the basics of neon tube bending, pattern making, bombarding and sign installation, as well as running an efficient neon shop. This course is a prerequisite to the Signs of Life Course.

- 1900-1910 Regal Boot - 7' tall three dimensional sculptural boot covered with incandescent light bulbs. Featured prominently in a sign design book published in 1920, this is one of only two signs known to exist; currently valued at over \$25,000.
- 1930's Polly Gas - two-sided porcelain figural pole mount sign; this extremely rare sign is one of only a handful in existence; currently valued at over \$200,000.
- 1930's Chas Eisler electrode making machine - following the expiration of Georges Claude's patent, major manufacturers' shops made their own electrodes. Most of these machines were destroyed by EGL in the late 30's through the 50's, and are extremely rare.
- Town Pride - 24' porcelain wrap-around diner storefront from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The pinnacle of postwar neon exuberance, this striking sign is covered in neon and features 6' tall marching trumpet players, cartoon dogs and pigs (Hot Dogs -n- Hot Ham); currently valued at \$45,000.



In addition, the museum also maintains and will display a very rare collection of Claude Neon patent, production and promotional items. The Claude Neon collection includes numerous signs from various Claude franchises in the 1920's-1950's, along with original stock certificates, catalogs, newsletters, sales slips and many giveaways. Along with some early patent models, the collection also includes a vintage hand lettered storefront window from Claude Neon Displays of Rochester, NY., as well as the only known original outdoor storefront sign.

The museum will operate a gift shop during regular business hours, giving regular visitors, tourists, and collectors an opportunity to purchase industry-related gifts, both vintage and modern. The shop will feature an inviting and wide-ranging selection of historical items and nostalgia, along with custom-made neon and metal art, novelty keepsakes and vintage Americana. The Museum's gift shop will feature books from the nationally recognized ST



(Sign of the Times) Publications, as well as various other authoritative sources. The gift shop will also feature exclusive items for sale from nationally recognized neon artists, including Larry Albright, Bill Concannon, Michael Flechtner and Meryl Pataky. The museum will be a source of higher end collectibles and neon art for both beginning and advanced collectors.

- **Signs of Life** - A 9-24 month certification program. Students will learn all aspects of the sign industry from welding, metal fabrication, painting, electrical wiring/troubleshooting and neon. This course is part of an ongoing cooperative program between ICONS and the local community college and/or high schools. This program would seek to find financial, guest personnel and gifts in kind (supplies) support with national industry leaders such as The Oregon Electric Sign Association and The International Sign Association. In addition to hands-on training and instruction, students will also hear from guest lecturers from the region, as well as nationally with expertise in these specialized fields.

## **Youth Programs**

- **The Toy Store** - Designed for primary and elementary aged children, these short classes will promote hands-on exploration and discovery. Students will learn about the basics of advertising and what goes into making a sign; design and construct their own small-scale signs and displays.
- **The Soda Shop** - Targeted for young teens, this program will promote constructive group interaction and cooperation. Students will prepare exhibits and presentations for public display on a quarterly basis (includes Light Exhibition, Metal Form Design, Neon Art Glass Design, and Thoroughfare Art Tiles).
- **The Sock Hop** - A program designed for high school through college-age students. This program will explore technology, history, art, science and culture. The impact of individual contribution to society will be emphasized. Guest instructors and lecturers from local businesses and organizations will be featured.
- **The Drive-In** - This family-based program will be open to all ages and will explore how business and industry impacts families and family life. The program will be focused on activities that encourage the participation of all family members.

Future plans call for the creation of an online, interactive website, which will feature virtual tours of the museum and its displays, image galleries, and slide shows. The Museum's website will work to bring together industry historians and students, buyers and sellers, and amateur enthusiasts around the world through real-time chat rooms and on-line forums. The creation of an on-line research library that presents the museum's collection of sign history documentation and paperwork will also be added for subscribers.

## **Management**

### **Executive Director – David Benko**

With over 35 years of experience as a collector of electric signs and antique advertising, David Benko is uniquely qualified for this position. He has been building his private collection since childhood--beginning with his earliest experiences traveling across the United States as a child in the 1970's--and has long understood the significance of the disappearing landscape he has been privileged to observe and explore. By focusing not only

on the unique beauty of these industrial works of art, but also on the artists' and craftsman that have produced them, he has assembled one of the most expansive collections of neon and electric signs to be found anywhere. This world-class collection will provide the foundation for the ICONS exhibits and displays.

To the role of Executive Director David Benko also brings 26 years of experience as a successful business owner in the sign industry, as well as experience as a museum curator for a nationally recognized sign museum. Beginning his career in the sign industry in 1987 after more than a decade of collecting antique advertising, he founded Rocket City Neon a year later to serve a growing list of customers from Seattle to Los Angeles. He quickly earned a reputation as an accomplished and highly regarded neon 'tube bender', and has since designed, manufactured, and restored a wide range of neon signs and neon displays that now grace store fronts and street corners across the western United States and Canada. As one of a small but dedicated group of craftsmen who continue to work with neon, his work has helped to keep this unique and dynamic art form alive on the busy streets of contemporary American cities.



Beginning with the La Conner History Museum in 1979, David Benko has a long history of working collaboratively with a number of nationally recognized museums in the United States, including the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Museum (San Francisco), The Unknown Museum of Mill Valley (California), The Museum of History and Industry (Seattle), The Coonrod Motorcycle Museum (Vancouver), The American Advertising Museum (Portland, OR), and the Eisner Museum of Design (Milwaukee, WI). In 1999, he accepted a position as curator of the American Sign Museum of Cincinnati, where he was responsible for acquisitions, restoration, cataloging, scheduling, and fundraising, as well as designing and managing the production of major exhibitions. (The American Sign Museum currently resides in Cincinnati. The pet project of 'ST Publications', this project has built a small collection of signs donated from the bone yards of the sign industry, and also includes a large collection of print items). He left this position in the summer of 2002 to return with his wife and children to their roots in the Great North West, with future plans for the creation of ICONS once their young family became more independent.

### **Board of Directors**

Establishing a vision and laying the groundwork has been the foundational role of the Board of Directors to date. With extensive ties to the Vancouver and Portland business communities, as well as the local arts and cultural scene, the museum's Board of Directors brings a strong blend of complementary skills and a wealth of experience in the management of new and growing businesses. The board also brings a wide range of individual and collective expertise in museum operations, finance, community development, and non-profit management to the museum's management team. Referred to as "...a who's who of Southwest Washington Business leaders," by *The Columbian*, the museum's Board of Directors consists of:

**Steve Burdick** – Former Manager of Economic Development Services for the City of Vancouver, Executive Director of the Vancouver Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Executive Director of the Vancouver Public Facilities District, and Assistant Director and Economic Development Planner for the Mid-Columbia Economic Development Council in 1975-76.

**Rob Bearden** - Director of Operations, Portland Art Museum.

**John White** – Retired Founder and President of The JD White Company, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in land use, natural resource and public involvement issues.

### **National Council of Advisors**

Future plans call for the development of a National Council of Advisors (NCA), which will include leaders in the sign industry from around the country. While this project may be viewed by some as a regional project, its mission is national in scope. Focusing on national signs and trends within the American sign industry, the NCA will create a national council of regional leaders. As well as bringing their own clout to the table, these leaders will help the museum in its fundraising campaigns (particularly the Founders 100) through contact with business and civic leaders in their respective regions. These important roles will be filled by sign association presidents, past ISA and WSA chairmen and local sign company owners, suppliers and executives.

## **Opportunity**

By opening its doors in a prime and historic location in The Dalles, ICONS will be in an ideal position to both capitalize on and add to the extensive revitalization and economic development that is projected for The Dalles downtown area. Investment from the city's 14,000 residents and community leaders will be necessary to implement the successful transformation of its quiet downtown area into a bustling, pedestrian-friendly destination that is full of charm and vitality, and more importantly, opportunity.<sup>1</sup> With over \$75 million worth of essential community services/economic development and revitalization projects that are scheduled or have begun construction, along with increased awareness of the community to retain visitors for longer stays, as well as increase the lagging traditional business and services market; the enormous business potential created by this expansive development effort cannot be overstated.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Oregon Office of Economic Analysis, The Dalles is considerably more stable than other areas throughout the state. John Lehner reported in his 2012 post recession statistics that The Dalles only faltered several percentage points in unemployment as compared to the rest of the state at 8.5%. The area continues to not only focus on and draw tourists, but demonstrate commitment to expanding viable, solid and diverse industry such

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<sup>1</sup> "Columbia River Gorge." *Oregon Office of Economic Analysis*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 June 2014. <<http://oregoneconomicanalysis.com/2012/04/03/columbia-river-gorge/>>.

<sup>2</sup> "Crates Point Development in The Dalles, Oregon, Columbia River Gorge." *Crates Point Development in The Dalles, Oregon, Columbia River Gorge*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 June 2014. <<http://www.cratespoint.com/thedalles.htm>>.

as its continued investment in sectors such as energy, agriculture, drones and technology.<sup>3</sup> This community-backed effort to sustain the region could result in greater potential to achieve revitalization of the downtown core commerce area.

- The successful revitalization of the central business district may be initiated by the establishment of the widely recognized Rocket City ICONS Museum in the downtown area. Subsequently cultivating an environment which fosters innovation for public gatherings, including outdoor community & family friendly events, festivals, concerts, and many other activities in an inviting outdoor location.
- A growing community of colorful retail shops, café's, art galleries and restaurants could inhabit buildings that were once vacant, and mix seamlessly with attractive new and spruced office spaces. A truly vibrant urban environment can emerged downtown, along with a burgeoning art and cultural scene that is enthusiastically supported by the community.
- Outdoor walking tour of vintage signs and advertising is a suggested collaboration of ICONS and the city of The Dalles. The walking tour of historical signs would coincide with the 100 year anniversary of neon to highlight the significant changes in science and the industry.

## Current Position

Rocket City currently is operating out of a 3000 square foot shop in Vancouver, Washington on property owned by its founder and Executive Director. With space for office facilities, showroom restoration and storage needs, the facility has provided enough room to store ICONS vast and growing collection as the project prepares to enter an aggressive fund-raising period. This site has large 12' x 12' warehouse doors, can be accessed by large and small shipping trucks and is only 20 minutes from the Portland International Airport. Once a site has been selected for the permanent location, the museum will transition from this space to the much larger complex.

With interest in the museum growing, and prospect of ICONS establishing in the Northwest; a very favorable article appeared in the Columbian newspaper. Calling the museum project "an excellent example of what a creative economy... calls for", the article points out that "it's hard not to like neon" and refers to Mr. Benko's private collection "an exceptional collection of something that is interesting and fun". This highlights that truly the appropriate setting and community is needed to foster its realization.

As part of its planned education outreach program, the museum had previously discussed implementing programs in collaboration with the local community college in Vancouver. The suggested educational programs were intending to focus specifically on museum and

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid 1.

sign studies, once ICONS was established. These programs could also be implemented in a location such as The Dalles. Local community colleges would be invited to partner with ICONS in the development and creation of a neon apprentice training program, as well as advertising history and appreciation courses for the community. These educational programs will be marketed and made available to the residents of The Dalles, as well as greater Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

The museum is seeking initial funding through grants, support of local and national sign companies, service organizations, local businesses, admissions/membership and donations. Thereafter, funding will derive from continued fundraising, grant writing, membership and admittance fees. The primary goal of the museum's fundraising campaign is to raise the capital necessary for the construction or rehab of a permanent Museum site.

## **The Appeal**

Communities often attempt to emulate or copy what has been done successfully in another city. For example recreating the artistic flare of Northwest 23<sup>rd</sup> in Portland, OR, or the nostalgic feel of small town life in Troutdale, OR. The beauty and appeal of The Dalles is its ability to evolve, but not lose its character and genuine ambiance through unauthentic endeavors. Multiple small and mid-sized towns have abandoned their roots; torn down classic structures and replaced them with modern mundane designs. They then are left with the dilemma of how to distinguish their community from the next.

A golden partnership exists for The Dalles to be set apart, and provide a backdrop for the ICONS collection of more than 200 storefront signs. The ability to extend well outside the inner walls of a building and onto the streets, presents the City with leverage to capture even a broader spectrum of tourists. Secondary to the physical museum location, a selection of signs would temporarily be displayed on the city streets as commercial artwork in an original environment, emulating the feel of a time gone by.

## **Operating Plans**

Operational plans call for the development of a 20,000 square foot space in a central location in The Dalles, OR to house the museum's collections, exhibits, and displays.

How will The Dalles economic redevelopment impact Rocket City's ICONS? Like most other museums, ICONS will be at least partially funded by walk-in customers who will pay an admission price to view the museum's displays and interactive exhibits. By positioning itself to attract new businesses, restaurants, services and retail spaces, ICONS will be able to leverage much of the investment that the City of The Dalles and its citizenry make to its significant advantage. The Columbia River Gorge already attracts a high percentage of visitors annually, upon which, a nationally recognized museum would only augment and draw those visitors east to extend their economic influence. According to a study by Erin White and Darren Gooding of OSU:

The average trip spending of visitors ranges from about \$40 per party per trip for local residents on day trips to nearly \$226 per party per trip for non-local residents on overnight trips away from home. On average, most local

area expenses are for gasoline, groceries, and purchases in restaurants/bars. The reported 3.5 million visits annually to Oregon State Parks properties in the Columbia River Gorge Management Unit yield about \$50 million in visitor spending in local communities. Non-local residents account for about \$33 million of that spending.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the highlights of the revitalization effort listed above, The Dalles possesses a number of other qualities that make it a perfect location for the opening of ICONS, including:

- Less than 30 minutes from The Dalles, **WAAAM**, Hood River's own museum featuring the largest collection of operational antique aircraft is a precursory draw for the nostalgic and historian.
- The **Columbia Gorge Discover Center** bolsters an impressive tourist attraction for the novice and expert, presenting an overview of the historical and geological natural life of the Gorge.
- The city center is adjacent to **Interstate 84**; a heavily trafficked corridor between the densely populated cities of Portland and Pendleton<sup>5</sup>. In addition, according to the *Transportation Systems Monitoring Unit*, more than 20,000 automobiles pass by The Dalles eastbound exits daily, 7 million annually.<sup>6</sup> As noted above, half of those are visiting Columbia River Gorge attractions.
- Just ten minutes from downtown, **The Dalles Dam** is one of the United States largest hydroelectric power plants open to visitors daily.
- **Sunshine Mill Winery, St. Peters Cathedral and Fort Dalles Museum** all offer an eclectic variety of family friendly attractions and activities locally.
- **The Portland Spirit** offers scenic cruises from Cascade Locks to The Dalles daily during the summer months; docking walking distance to downtown.

Three and a half million individuals visit the Columbia River Gorge annually, with only a fraction stopping in The Dalles, OR. Rocket City's walking tour of ICONS' vintage signs will draw drivers off the freeway, offering a free outdoor tour of no-longer seen artwork from "America's Advertising Hey Day". A modest 20% draw would be nearly 1.5 million additional visitors that would eat, stop for gas or other purchases. Comparatively, projects

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<sup>4</sup> White, Erin M. "Spending and Economic Activity." *Oregon Government*. Oregon State University, n.d. Web. 28 June 2014. <[http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/PLANS/docs/scorp/2013-2018\\_SCORP/Gorge\\_Economic\\_Impact%20Report](http://www.oregon.gov/oprd/PLANS/docs/scorp/2013-2018_SCORP/Gorge_Economic_Impact%20Report)>.

<sup>5</sup> "Interstate 84 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)." *Interstate-Guide: Interstate 84 Annual Average Daily Traffic*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 June 2014. <[http://www.interstate-guide.com/i-084\\_aadt.html#oregon](http://www.interstate-guide.com/i-084_aadt.html#oregon)>.

<sup>6</sup> "ODOT Transportation Systems Monitoring Unit." *Oregon Gov*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 June 2014. <[http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/tsm/docs/TVT\\_2012.pdf](http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TDATA/tsm/docs/TVT_2012.pdf)>.

like 'City Museum', an eclectic experience of art and oversized mayhem began operation in the slums of St. Louis with 300,000 guests the first year, followed by 700,000 the second and today well more than 1 Million annual visitors, which is 25% of the total tourist annually visiting the area. Seattle's Experience Music Project (EMP) reports approximately 1.2 million paid visitors annually.<sup>7</sup>

### **General Operations**

The Museum's standard operating hours will be Monday through Thursday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Friday and Saturday from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM and Sunday from 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The rental of the museum space for catered events and private gatherings will require additional hours of operation. These events will generally be scheduled 3-6 months in advance. A part-time coordinator will handle the scheduling of additional hours, as well as any additional staff requirements.

### **Pricing**

General Admission - The gate ticket price of ICONS will range from \$5-10 for children and seniors, and \$10-15 for adults.

Educational Programs - Prices for individual classes and educational programs offered through the museum, as well as those developed in cooperation with community colleges, will be determined as these programs are established.

Gift Shop - The museum's gift store will feature a wide range of items available for purchase, with prices ranging from the 50-cent postcard, to high-quality art and history books priced between \$25 and \$50, to fully restored vintage gasoline pumps that can cost as much as \$2500-\$10M.

### **Personnel Plan**

Staffing for the Museum will include the museum's executive director who will handle marketing, public relations and oversee basic operations as well as curation. A part-time administrative position will also be filled in the beginning of 2016. Upon the Museum's physical opening, the administrative position will become full-time. A janitorial service will be retained to handle regular cleaning needs. A part-time reception coordinator will be added as is necessary. Personnel needs for the museum at this time would include 3-5 public relations positions in the museum, from gate sales and guide service to retail sales. This need will be filled by students from college Museum Studies Program. Compensation for the Museum Director will begin at \$72,000. The administrative support person will be compensated at an approximate wage of \$15 per hour.

### **Equipment**

The Museum will acquire neon shop and production equipment prior to offering neon and sign production classes through local community colleges. Whenever possible, the museum

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<sup>7</sup> "Annual Fund." *EMP Annual Report*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 June 2014.  
<[http://www.empmuseum.org/media/386129/emp\\_museum\\_annual\\_report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.empmuseum.org/media/386129/emp_museum_annual_report_2013.pdf)>.

will seek to acquire operating equipment and tools through in-kind donations from manufacturers. Below is a listing of the equipment required and their respective costs:

- Manifold, choke and bombarding equipment - \$10,000
- Neon production stations-ribbon, cannon, crossfires and hand torch - \$15,000

### **Professional Consultants**

John Draneus, Draneus & Huglin, PC, previously handled the company's legal matters. A professional accounting firm will be retained.

## **Expenses**

Projected first year expenses of approximately \$500,000 can be accounted for in the following general line items:

### **Salaries**

Executive Director - \$72,000 - includes \$12,000 in administrative assistance costs.

Development Director - \$70,000

Membership Coordinator - \$40,000+

Payroll Burden - first year salaries should total approximately \$200,000 and, depending on the extent of employee benefits, a payroll burden of another \$40,000 should suffice.

### **Contracted Services**

Outsourced labor will total approximately \$56,000 and include:

- -Grant Writer
- -Public Relations
- -Registrar (documentation & recording of collection) Services
- -Information Technology
- -Maintenance
- -Security

### **Printing**

Neon is a visual medium. Printed matter, from signage, letterhead and business cards, to teacher materials, membership benefits brochures and newsletters must reflect the institution's fun, but professional image. Printing expenses for the first year will approach \$50,000.

### **Special Events**

At \$25,000, one event can be planned for a select number of Museum friends.

## Advertising and Promotion

In terms of square feet, the Museum will be small. However, membership and attendance numbers must reflect a larger institution. This will require building a public image that is larger than the actual Museum. At \$50,000, the advertising and promotion strategy will have to rely on media partners, tourism relationships and brilliant promotional strategy to achieve adequate visibility.

## Shop Merchandise



Stocking the gift shop with initial inventory can be accomplished for approximately \$35,000, including commissioned art pieces.

## Utilities

Without an actual property upon which utility costs might be calculated, it is difficult to estimate the cost of power, water, etc. Fluctuating energy costs only make this number more difficult to estimate. A current estimate of \$30,000 is projected.

## Revenue

Revenue and Support recognized in the Museum's first year might be broken out as follows:

### Admissions

Initially gate revenue of more than one million dollars will be derived from two main sources: public ticket sales and school tours. (Estimated on 1% draw of Average Annual Daily Traffic).

### Tuition

Neon certification tuition will account for approximately \$30,000.

### Gift Shop

Based upon standard mark-up, gift shop sales should return \$70,000 on a \$35,000 inventory.

### Rental Income

The Museum should be easily rentable as public event space. Twenty events at \$1,500 each would return \$30,000 annually to the Museum. Catering commissions could account for, at least, another \$5,000.



### **Naming Opportunities**

Every gallery, staircase, bench and special event is a naming opportunity. Although gallery and other spaces will probably be sold for more, approximately \$130,000 in revenue should be recognized the first year.

### **Sponsorships**

Sponsorship of special (temporary) exhibitions should total \$150,000, with lectures and other educational programs selling for an additional \$25,000.

### **Membership**

A total of 5,000 new members can be expected to join the Museum within the first 12 months at an average of \$20 per membership. This \$100,000 represents approximately 20% of the operating revenue; a figure that should increase slightly in years two and three.

### **Grants**

Signage and Advertising Museums are not common. For these reasons, grant money may be procured from specialized and niche markets, in addition to traditional art foundations.

## **Competitive Analysis**

With the exception of the Experience Music Project in Seattle, there is no other museum in the northwest that features the kind of dynamic and interactive exhibits that will regularly be on display at ICONS. And while there are a few museums in the United States that include some advertising in their exhibits and displays, there are no major museums that are dedicated to this form of modern commercial advertising and artwork. Below is a list of current museums in the United States that display at least some forms of advertising or electric signage in their exhibits. Of the museums listed below, the American Sign Museum, located 2500 miles away from Vancouver in Cincinnati, Ohio, is the only other museum in the U.S. that focuses exclusively on signs, sign companies and company history. ICONS has working and on-going relationships with most of these museums.

- **Museum of Neon Art (MONA)** – Los Angeles, California. Located 1500 miles to the south of Vancouver, this museum features a small collection of primarily contemporary neon artwork.
- **Neon Museum** - Las Vegas, Nevada - this project features some of Las Vegas' most famous neon signs, in an outdoor 'boneyard' setting.
- **Henry Ford's Museum** - Detroit, Michigan – this eclectic museum features only a small number of signs.
- **Eisner Museum of Design** - Milwaukee, Wisconsin - the main focus of this museum is print advertising and television commercial advertising.

- **American Sign Museum** - Cincinnati, Ohio – featuring a 3500 square-foot display of signs, magazine, paperwork, and books, this museum is owned and operated by *Signs of the Times* magazine. Founded in 1982, the museum has slowly built a collection anchored by S.T.'s academic focus. After working for the project beginning in 1999, and as curator of this project from 2000-2002, ICONS Executive Director David Benko has remained in continual contact with the American Sign Museum, and has helped to secure many of their key pieces.

The museum has strong working relationships with various other museum projects in the northwest and across the nation. These relationships will help the museum to curate traveling shows and changing exhibits, and will help the museum stay in touch with the national museum community. These ongoing and cooperative relationships will also help the museum determine what is and isn't working for both friends and competitors alike, in terms of displays and exhibits, as well as marketing, advertising, and promotions. These contacts and relationships include:

- Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) - Seattle, WA
- LeMay Automobile Museum - Tacoma, WA
- Portland Art Museum - Portland, OR
- Eisner Museum of Design - Milwaukee, WI

## Marketing

### Advertising

The museum's regular budget will have a standing advertising allotment, which will include production and regular distribution of a 4-color brochure, as well as web and social media direct and seasonal advertising. This budget will be augmented by free inclusion in local tourist guides, flyers and periodicals. The museum will work with local periodicals to have feature articles and pieces about the museum included in all appropriate venues both print and electronic. This will be achieved by a steady release of press releases addressing on-going Museum events. Furthermore, the four major news networks in Portland are constantly seeking intriguing public interest stories and the museum will actively work to be included in this broadcast coverage.



## **Fundraising FOUNDERS 100**

The museum's executive director will lead the museum's fundraising effort. He will be responsible for instituting the planned **Founders 100** program, as well as other sponsorship programs. This will require travel, primarily by air, to meet with management from the nation's top sign manufacturers. Following the Museum's opening, the executive director will continue to make periodic fundraising calls and schedule follow-up meetings to keep the level of interest and enthusiasm for the museum high. Additionally, the executive director will oversee the development of the project locally, by meeting with local fundraising sources as well as working with builders and developers during the development of the museum's permanent display space. Additionally, the museum's diverse and well-connected board of directors will be instrumental in generating local support and contributions.

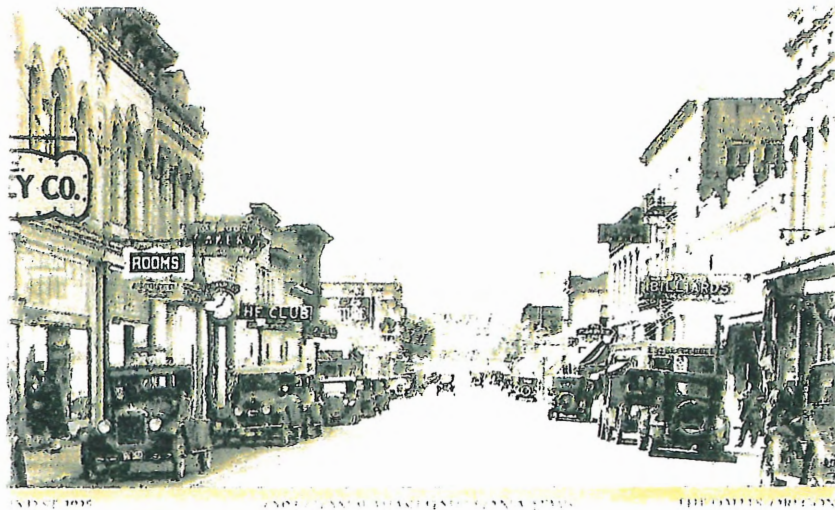
## **BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY**

'Arts as economic development,' - a successful mantra of Tacoma seems equally as fitting to The Dalles re-development. ICONS will provide The Dalles an opportunity to draw on local resources of national significance. Children, families, and community are the back bone of a healthy sustaining community and are the core of the Museum's outreach programs. *"In becoming an art town, you win the day by getting to a critical mass of interesting things to do and see in your community"*. Doug Sessions, for *The Columbian Newspaper* 2005.

### **Community Development**

ICONS will work closely with local schools and community groups. The museum will provide the community with a safe place to allow children to play and develop as individuals, and adults to gain new skills and learn

more about the history of signs and advertising, as well as our evolving society and culture. This will not only include historically relevant information, but discoveries in science and industry and industry that reflect the cultural changes and needs that have transpired over the past 150 years. By bringing individuals and families together, the museum will work to build stronger communities and encourage civic engagement.





**ICONS MUSEUM**  
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Vancouver, WA 98686