



## **Executive Summary**

### **Urban Design Brand Elements for the Rebranding of the Woodland District Guidebook**

The City of Lacey is a city of over 50,100 people located at the southern reach of Puget Sound approximately 60 miles south of Seattle. Largely developed after World War II, Lacey has always lacked a “downtown” in the traditional sense; however, Lacey’s core area, known as the Woodland District, has provided a consistent regional retail and employment center for over 50 years. Planning for the Woodland District began in the mid-1990s as the City of Lacey grappled with giving the area a sense of identity. The planning effort culminated in the adoption of the Downtown 2000 Plan, which established design guidelines and development standards for the area. The Downtown 2000 Plan sought to provide the Woodland District as a vibrant and prosperous place that created a strong identity, encouraged density and mix of uses, supported transit and provided for a diverse population. The vision set forth in the Downtown 2000 Plan has been implemented in a variety of private development projects as well as various city projects.

In 2008, as a result of a downturn in the financial markets and a downsizing and relocation of State office complexes, private investment in the Woodland District ceased and 240,000 square feet of office space became vacant. With the assistance of an appointed steering committee, the City began the 2011 “Downtown Refresh” to re-examine the goals of the Downtown 2000 plan. The committee validated the vision but understood that the area needed a jumpstart. Upon completion of the Downtown Refresh, the City received a grant through the federal department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to establish the Woodland District Strategic Plan, an action-based strategic plan for the area to guide future revitalization and development of private investment, public places, and transportation infrastructure.

The Woodland District Strategic Plan identified twenty-five key actions designed to provide the necessary framework and incentives to catalyze investment and development. Included among the actions is the development of a district brand identity program to attract new investments and produce a cohesive district characterized by great places.

Since the adoption of the Woodland District Strategic Plan, several strategic actions have been implemented resulting in an increase of activity within the District. Public investment within the district has been made by several key City partners such as the South Puget Sound Community College, Thurston Economic Development Council, The Business & Innovation Center, the Veterans Service HUB, Saint Martin’s University, Lacey South Sound Chamber of Commerce, Lacey Timberland Library, and the development of Lacey MakerSpace. In addition, private investment within the District has been led by MJR Development. Significant activity has occurred in the redevelopment of existing office space, and the proposed construction of urban residential units all marketed as the Hub at Lacey.

To build on the activity, in 2017, the City of Lacey, with the assistance of the consulting team of Julia Walton of 3 Square Blocks, and Marcy McInnelly of Urbsworks, began the process of developing a brand identity program for the District. The City enlisted the help of several key district stakeholders to be part of a steering committee that would provide guidance on the following three project goals:

- Endorse a list of physical improvements to implement the brand;
- Identify a new name for the district; and
- Identify a logo.

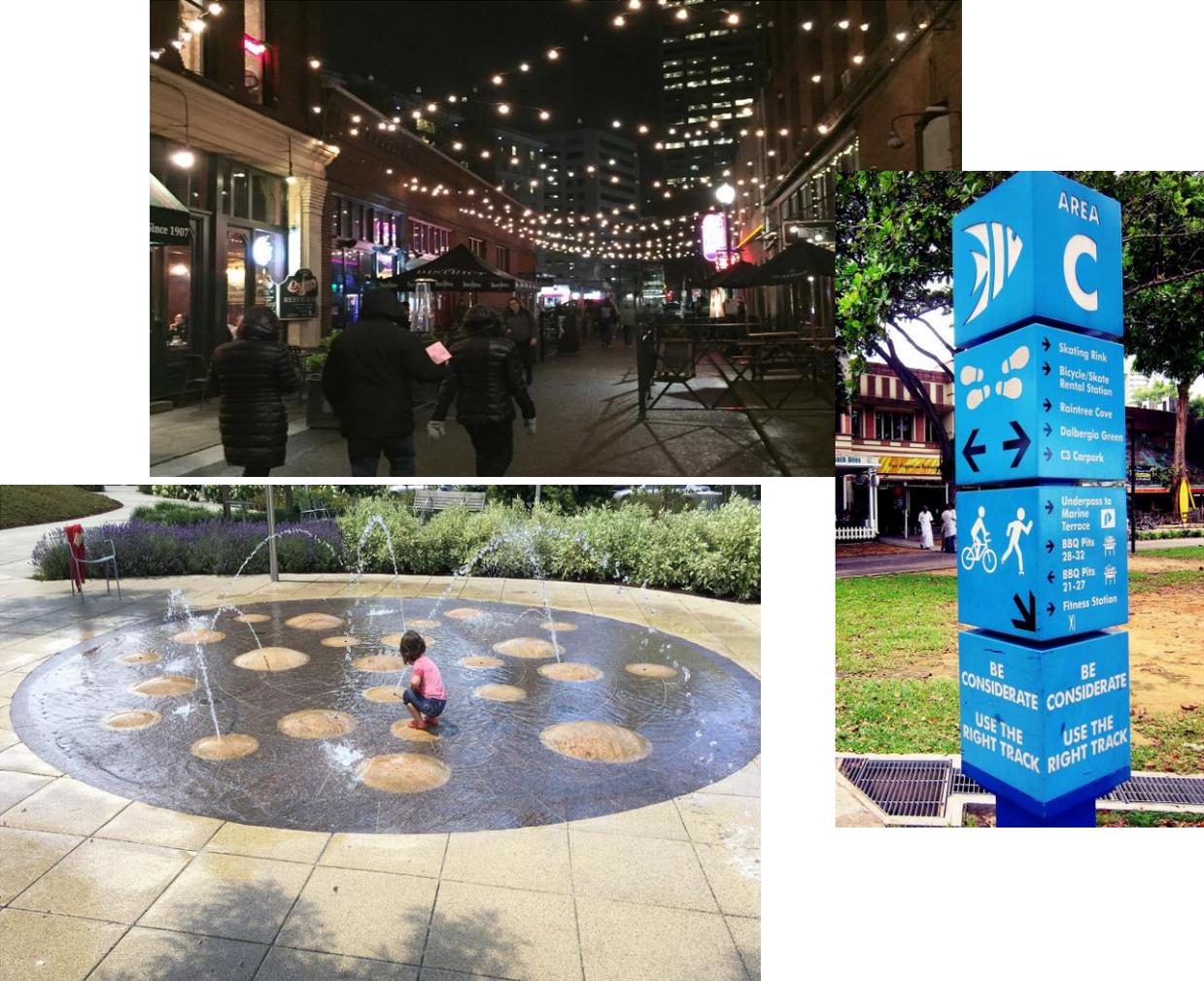
During the course of one-year the committee met five times, and focused on the following items:

## Steering Committee work...

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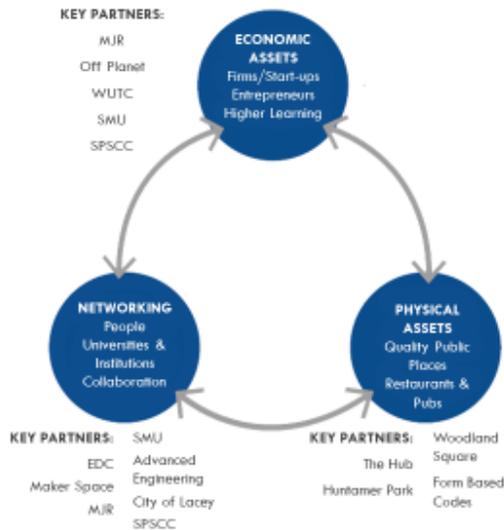
- » Introduced branding project and brand basics
- » Identified the district strengths
  - » Huntamer Park, St. Martins, SPSCC, EDC, Chamber, The Hub and new private investment
- » Preliminary name discussion
  - » HUB
  - » Innovation district
  - » Something else?
- » Talked about brand components and the brand framework
- » Introduced placemaking to the discussion – and how the brand can help to influence place and the establishment of an innovation district.
- » Completed a neighborhood brand and identity elements exercise – addressing things that will make the greatest impact and are most important to come out of the branding exercise;
  - » Signage, walkability, retail and restaurants, safety
- » Reviewed final brand, name and directed steering committee to review tag line options

The committee also endorsed a list of physical improvements that the City can undertake in order to implement the selected brand. Items included, among other things, overhead lighting, wayfinding signage, and park amenities.



Several names for the district were discussed and the steering committee recommended to the City Council that the district be identified as the Lacey Innovation District; a name that would capture the unique assets of the district. An innovation district is defined as a geographic area where institutions and companies cluster and connect with start-ups, business incubators and accelerators.

# Innovation Ecosystem



## Sustaining Partnerships

- » Innovation Ecosystem
- » Key Partners
- » Exponential Benefits
- » Interdependent Relationships and Benefits

The steering committee agreed that the district has the elements of an innovation district and moved the name forward to Council as a recommendation. Though Council generally agreed that the district meets the definition of an innovation district, they also felt the name lacked warmth and did not represent all that the area has to offer in terms of family and community activities. Based on an alternative suggestion, the idea for “Lacey Midtown: An Innovation District” was born and adopted by the City Council at a work session on September 19, 2019. The new name builds off key investments in the area by SMU, SPSCC, MJR Development (The Hub at Lacey), and the addition of the Lacey MakerSpace. It will also help develop an identity for the area, encourage business development, and provide Lacey residents a place to learn, earn, live, and create.

With the name approved, the Urban Design Brand Elements – for the Rebranding of the Woodland District – Guidebook was endorsed by the City Council and will guide public and private improvements in Lacey Midtown.