

“BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES”

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT AND ASSET MAPPING PROJECT FOR WILBUR, WASHINGTON

JANUARY 2014



January 1, 2014

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RESOURCE TEAM MEMBERS

In alphabetical order:

Ted Anderson – **USDA Rural Development** Business Services Specialist for Lincoln County

Kyle Desautel – **Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation** Planning Department

Becca Gollehon – **Wilbur High School** Senior and ASB Officer.

Becca conducted the youth outreach for the assessment as part of her Senior Project on Leadership.

Margie Hall – **Lincoln County Economic Development Council**, Executive Director

Ted Olson – **Department of Ecology** Flood Plain Management Specialist for Eastern Washington

Bridget Rohner – **WSU Extension** County Director and Human Development Educator

Rob Willford – **Tri County Economic Development District** Executive Director

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PROJECT SUMMARY

USDA Rural Development and the Lincoln County Economic Development Council (EDC) partnered to conduct a community assessment for the Wilbur Town Council on October 2, 2013. A community assessment is the process of identifying a community's assets, opportunities and issues and developing the information necessary to address them. The USDA-RD *Building Stronger Communities* series of guidebooks was utilized to prepare for the assessment.

Wilbur is a community of 884 (2010 Census) located in the Northwest quarter of Lincoln County. The median age of Wilbur's citizens is 50; 20% are under age 18; and there are slightly more females than males. The annual median household income is \$35,463. It is considered by the locals to be an agricultural town and rightly so. Lincoln County is regularly the #2 wheat producing county in the state. So it is interesting to note that we heard very little from citizens regarding agriculture and thus this report contains no ag-specific recommendations. You will find far more recommendations related to Wilbur's location on Highway 2, its proximity to Grand Coulee Dam, and its relationship to the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area.

Probably the most enlightening part of the assessment for the resource team was learning of the impact Grand Coulee Dam has on Wilbur and, more importantly, the impact *it could be having* if fully tapped by the community. The dam affects Wilbur's school, housing, traffic, businesses, and employment opportunities and affects all three of the themes to rise from the assessment. The community will find several project suggestions that pertain to the dam and to the Bureau of Reclamation.

The goal of the assessment was to open the eyes of the community to the possibilities for development that exist within their town. To accomplish this, USDA-RD and the EDC brought a team of resource providers, most from outside of Lincoln County, to Wilbur for a day that included an asset mapping tour of the town and surrounding area; a series of listening sessions at Wilbur Community Hall in the afternoon; and a wrap-up presentation in the evening. The resulting observations of the resource team, along with suggestions for moving forward, are contained within this report. Use it as the basis for future community development planning and reference it when making related funding requests.

OUTREACH

Citizen participation is key to any planning project. If the recommendations within this report don't meet the needs of Wilbur's citizens it will not be supported by them. Effort was made to assure that citizens were aware of the assessment in advance. The project was presented to the Chamber of Commerce, who pledged their support. It was featured in the weekly newspaper, The Wilbur Register. Flyers were displayed in business windows, at the post office, delivered to the senior center and inserted into grocery bags at Sandy's Family Foods. Lastly, local businesses were visited and invited to participate. A copy of the flyer can be found at the end of this report.

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PROCESS

The resource team began the assessment with a windshield survey of the town and its surrounding sites of interest. To avoid any appearance of bias, a county level official from Wilbur was asked to lead the team's tour. Team members were provided with maps and a check list of assets to identify. Most were unfamiliar with the community, bringing fresh eyes to the project. The afternoon was spent in listening sessions. In between the morning tour and the afternoon listening sessions, lunch was enjoyed with close to 50 senior citizens at the Wilbur Senior Center.

While the tour gave the team the opportunity to map the town's visible assets, it is the listening sessions that brought the most value to the project. Citizens were asked to contemplate these three questions in advance of the assessment:

1. What are the major problems/challenges in your community?
2. What are the major strengths/assets of your community?
3. What projects would you like to see implemented in the next 2,5 or 10?

There were listening sessions scheduled for all sectors of the community. People were encouraged to have conversations with their associates to bring in broader feedback. If unable to attend a listening session, people were encouraged to email their answers to the EDC. Earlier in the week, ninety students at Wilbur High School had answered the questions. We estimate we heard from close to two hundred citizens. A full list of resident's responses can be found at the end of this report.

RESOURCE TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

Upon analyzing the responses and their frequency, and pairing that feedback with what was learned on the driving tour, the following three themes surfaced:

- Business & Employment
- Tourism
- Infrastructure

The following pages include recommendations that address the most promising strengths and opportunities as well as the most damaging challenges and issues as determined by the resource team.

BUSINESS: SUSTAINING EXISTING COMMERCE

Opportunity: Diversify, communicate and smile.

Access to a pharmacy is an ongoing concern since Wilbur Drug closed a couple years ago. The hospital district is researching a vending option that would be located at the Wilbur Clinic.

Possible Funding: USDA-RD; Dept. of Commerce

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We heard that big box stores continue to hurt local businesses. Owners compete with an “everything is cheaper elsewhere” mindset and big box shopping is only an hour away. This is a difficult reality faced by thousands of communities across the nation. If the business community wants to be the driver of a shop local campaign, the EDC will support them. One Washington model that seems to be seeing success comes out of Bellingham and could produce some good ideas for moving forward.

<http://sustainableconnections.org/thinklocal>

Another way to compete with big box stores is to learn from their strategies. A good book to get you thinking is “What I Learned from Sam Walton: How to Compete and Thrive in a Wal-Mart World.” If it is not available at the library, ask them to bring in a couple copies.

Businesses also need to develop an effective eCommerce presence on the World Wide Web. They recognize that, in addition to out-of-towners being able to find them online, there are potential customers in Wilbur who prefer to shop online and they want to serve that customer base. The EDC is currently helping the Chamber of Commerce build a new web site and local businesses can add a web page to promote their business. In early January, the EDC hosted a WordPress website design class and several Wilbur business owners attended. As these opportunities come up we will be sure to inform the Chamber and the Wilbur Register.

It was suggested that the communities along Hwy. 2 form a united Chamber. This is an idea that has been talked about for years. Chambers representing several communities such as the West Plains Chamber (<http://westplainschamber.org/>) or Chambers merging with Economic Development Councils such as Greater Spokane Inc. (<http://www.greaterspokane.org/>) are becoming common. The EDC is happy to help our Hwy. 2 communities explore the pros and cons if there is interest.

Town Hall should treat itself like a business when it comes to providing excellent customer service. Make sure policies and processes are citizen friendly. Make sure newcomers are warmly welcomed and residents are appreciated.

Moving from a large urban area like Spokane or Seattle to a rural community of 900 is culture shock. Large organizations in rural areas often identify spouse unhappiness as an issue that makes it difficult to retain permanent hires. Understandably, they miss the urban amenities they are accustomed to. If Wilbur wants new families to stay in Wilbur once they move here, they need to roll out the welcome mat *and* provide some of the amenities they are missing. Some ideas that came out of the assessment include:

Welcome Baskets – One thing that is working now are the Welcome Baskets created and distributed by the Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber should be commended for providing this service to their community. Unfortunately, they don’t hear about all newcomers. The best place to reach the most newcomers is Town Hall because they go there to hook up their utilities. Since that customer information is not public, could Town Hall partner with the Chamber to get Chamber baskets distributed to all newcomers? Be sure to include info on local businesses as well as the following:

The Wilbur Register – Wilbur’s newspaper is a great resource for getting to know the community, for promoting the community, and for organizations and local government to communicate news to the community. Does Wilbur have a civic organization that could partner with the Register to include a 6-week introductory subscription in the Welcome Baskets?

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Invite them to the Library – Include something from the Library in the Welcome Baskets. Promote a Book Club or a class or a presentation. Be sure there are no unnecessary barriers to getting and using a library card. Help them find something that will bring them back.

Wilbur Golf Course – The golf course is a fabulous asset and should be promoted. Include an invitation to join a Men’s or Women’s Golf League in the basket. Maybe there could be a Grand Coulee Dam Spouse’s team so that they get to know each other while they get to know the rest of the lady golfers in the community.

Fitness Opportunities – What are the fitness opportunities already being offered? Is there group training for the Goose Day Run? Do parents know about the dance lessons offered at memorial hall? What asset might newcomers bring to Wilbur? Maybe one of the newcomers is a yoga instructor or a bird watcher or a marathon runner that wants to start Lincoln County’s first marathon.

***Project:** The team learned that the school used to be available for adult sports in the evening and that the activity is missed by the community. There are schools that allow this type of use. Those who want to use the school after hours could reach out to those schools; find out what their policies are and how they maintain a fair relationship with the school. Then ask for an opportunity to meet with Wilbur’s Superintendent and make a proposal, complete with a voluntary probation period.*

BUSINESS: ENCOURAGING NEW COMMERCE

Attendees of a Rural Pathways to Prosperity Entrepreneurship Conference in Odessa learned that if you want new businesses in the community you must lower the barriers to entry so more new ideas can be tried. For those businesses to survive they need three things: Infrastructure options that fit their needs; a receptive community climate; and support that ranges from business assistance to networking opportunities. Attendees from across the county identified the top barriers to business start-ups in Lincoln County as:

- 1. Infrastructure barriers:** lack of high-speed broadband; absentee property owners; and vacant commercial properties.

Access to high-speed broadband is important to the future and is covered under Telecommunication Infrastructure (follows.)

Another barrier to opening a business in Wilbur is the flood plain and the potential for flood insurance requirements. (See the Flood Plain Insurance section under Infrastructure that follows.)

Wilbur does have absentee property owners and a number of vacant commercial buildings. Some of the unoccupied storefronts downtown still have signs up and some still have product in the windows, making downtown confusing for new residents and tourists.

***Project:** A Town Council member recently inventoried the vacant commercial properties in Wilbur. He counted 12 vacant spaces. Given what we learned about the importance of a community’s commercial infrastructure to the success of a new business, those properties provide both a barrier and an opportunity for Wilbur. Identify the best ways that the community can see properties ready and available for occupants, either through sale or better yet, lease. How can you expedite their revitalization? Include*

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your local real estate agents, banks, contractors and a resident affiliated with representative from the Bureau in the discussion.

Project: *Lincoln County has no realtor that specializes in commercial properties! This is a regional opportunity for a local agent. If there is no agent interested in representing commercial properties we need to find an outside agency with an interest in representing Lincoln County. Whomever it is they will have a partner in the EDC which already maintains and promotes a list of available commercial and industrial properties.*

Project: *Windows provide a great opportunity to attract potential tenants to a commercial space. Case in point: The Downtown Spokane Partnership has been providing owners of empty businesses access to affordable custom window artwork for years because they know it is an effective way to draw prospective tenants to a vacant space. Window artwork also adds color and vibrancy. It has also been proven to deter vandalism, implementing the "Broken Window Theory" that if a city doesn't fix its broken windows and graffiti, the environment will continue to decline. Look into window art alternatives and products, gather some photos and estimates and success stories and spread the word. Find one property owner that will support the program and act as a model for others.*

- 2. Barriers to a receptive community climate:** general negativity and pessimism; lack of communication within the community; and not welcoming newcomers.

While "general negativity and pessimism" was a highly ranked barrier at the conference in Odessa, we did not hear this at the listening sessions in Wilbur. We *did* hear "not welcoming of newcomers" however and that can also be damaging, especially when it comes to welcoming the families drawn to the area by Grand Coulee Dam or welcoming the thousands of tourists that pass through on Hwy. 2 each year. If you don't recognize someone that you are helping, smile and ask them if they are visiting. If they are, welcome them to Wilbur and tell them something that's going on or something worth seeing or doing. If they say "I just moved here," smile and welcome them to Wilbur, thank them for visiting your store, give them a magnet with your phone, email and website and encourage them to come back!

- 3. Support system barriers:** the lack of post K-12 education and skills training; the lack of a qualified and willing workforce; and a reduction in volunteerism.

Both the lack of post K-12 educational opportunities and workforce limitations are included in the County's Economic Development Strategy and are being addressed on a countywide basis. If you have input or questions, we encourage you to contact the EDC.

We learned that a reduction in volunteerism is straining the Chamber of Commerce; the Senior Center and its thrift store; and community event planning and execution. Bridget Rohner, Director of WSU Extension for Lincoln County, specializes in volunteerism and generational differences and can provide valuable suggestions for recruiting volunteers.

We heard (and we knew) that small business loans continue to be difficult to obtain. Some sources to consider if a bank loan isn't an option are:

Tri County Economic Development Council (TEDD) – The Rural Opportunities Loan Fund helps finance business expansion and retention, working capital, and business start-ups for borrowers who do not

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qualify for traditional loans. Contact Rob Willford at (509) 684-4571 ext. 105 or rwillford@teddonline.com

Craft3 Fund – Part of the Washington Small Business Credit Initiative, the Craft3 program helps small businesses in underserved communities with financing needs of \$1 -5 million. It partners with Community Development Financial Institutions to target smaller loans. Contact through the Dept. of Commerce at WSBCI@commerce.wa.gov

EMPLOYMENT

Strength: Wilbur’s citizens have job opportunities.

Several people expressed the need for new jobs in the community and by the end of the day we learned that just 20 miles away the Bureau plans to add 156 more employees by 2015. The new jobs are permanent and positions include mechanics, electricians, planners, maintenance management technicians, trades and crafts supervisors, operators, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, draftsmen, engineering technicians, project managers, technical managers, procurement staff and a variety of administrative staff (trainers, Human Resource assistance, clerks, etc.) The positions will be advertised online at www.usajobs.gov.

We learned that there are opportunities for Lincoln County engineering students to land summer internships at the dam. A summer internship at the Bureau of Reclamation could turn into a permanent job that would allow them to stay in Lincoln County and have a great career. The Bureau also offers summer jobs for high school students that include job training.

Project: *Communicate these opportunities to your Superintendent, Principal and Teachers. Make sure that when they learn a student is going on to pursue a career in engineering, that student is aware of the opportunities available to them at Grand Coulee Dam.*

Project: *Make the library the go-to hub for all things job related. Make sure the Librarian knows how to apply for Bureau of Reclamation jobs on USAJobs.gov so that she can assist job seekers. Track who is awarded construction contracts for the dam and what employment opportunities are open and communicate this information to the Wilbur Register so it can be included in the paper. Set up an entrepreneurship center in the library where a resident interested in starting a business can find resources.*

The Wilbur Library is one of six regional libraries partnering on a grant application to the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation. The Washington State Library is leading the effort which would provide funding to update the libraries physical resources and their technology. Stay tuned. If they are awarded funding, your Librarian will be looking to the public for input.

In addition to the Bureau jobs, the efforts that Wilbur’s businesses put into growing their businesses or starting new businesses will also produce job opportunities.

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TOURISM

Strength: Hwy. 2 runs right through Wilbur.

State Highway 2, a major east-west corridor across the state, runs straight through downtown Wilbur. In 2012, the most recent figures from WSDOT, the section of Hwy 2 that cuts through Wilbur saw an average daily traffic volume of 3,300. Wilbur is also just 1/8-mile from the intersection with Hwy. 21 where thousands of tourists access Grand Coulee Dam and the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area every year. These highways bring opportunity to town.

We heard from citizens that Wilbur needs “a reason for people to stop.” Public restrooms can be exactly that – a reason to stop - and are a proven driver of tourism revenue. If public restrooms are convenient to shopping, tourists will often linger. If the restrooms are clean, tourists will stop again the next time they go through town and are even more likely to shop in the now “familiar” town.

Project: *It is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II, which applies to the operations of State and local governments, that public and common use bathrooms be ADA accessible. Generally one stall must be accessible (standard 5'x5'.) The restrooms in Wilbur's city park are the only public restrooms in the vicinity of community wide recreational programs and events and they are not ADA accessible, nor can they be modified to be accessible. Based on a recent restroom upgrade in Harrington, the cost will likely be between \$50,000-\$60,000. The town is encouraged to consider constructing new ADA accessible restrooms on Hwy. 2 in a location central to the park, the pool, the Visitor's Center and shopping.*

Some funding resources for restroom projects include:

Lodging Tax – Lodging tax revenues may be used for construction and/or maintenance of public restrooms that would be used by tourists. Wilbur has two motels and two RV parks in town that generate lodging tax dollars. (The relevant statute regarding the purposes for which lodging tax revenues may be spent is RCW 67.28.1815.)

Lincoln County Rural Development Fund – If an economic development case can be made for a project, it may be eligible for partial funding through the County's Rural Development Fund grant program. The Economic Development Council is the administrator for the RDF program. **Contact:** Margie Hall, Executive Director (509) 725-1170 / edcmargie@centurylink.net

WSDOT – WSDOT contributed \$5,000 to the Harrington restroom project. **Contact:** Keith Metcalf Regional Administrator, Eastern Region (509) 324-6010 / metcalk@wsdot.wa.gov

Wilbur has a great Visitor Center that was built with Lodging Tax dollars and is maintained by the Chamber of Commerce. However, none of the resource team noticed it, even after several drive-bys.

Project: *Move the visitor center to a spot easily seen from the road. If you locate it where there is room for RV parking and access to WiFi and the drivers can walk to a grocery store, a post office and auto parts store the entire business district will benefit.*

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Strength: Lake Roosevelt & the Keller Marina and Campground

The Keller Marina and campground are located on Lake Roosevelt, the largest lake in Washington. They are accessed at the intersection of Hwy. 2 and Hwy. 21, 1/8-mile west of Wilbur. Wilbur is the “last chance” for tourists heading to Keller to stock up on supplies. Recently, the National Park Service committed to a 15-year contract with Dakota Columbia Rentals, LLC to operate the Keller Marina, to provide houseboat vacations from the marina, and to take over the operation of the campground. The security of a 15-year contract and the investment guarantees within that contract should greatly increase activity at the lake and tourism revenue for the town’s businesses.

The Lincoln County Visitor & Convention Bureau, the National Park Service, and the concessionaire all advertise the area and its recreational opportunities. It is anticipated that the increase in services, especially the addition of houseboat rentals, will increase traffic and will bring new opportunities for local businesses.

INFRASTRUCTURE**Strength: Wilbur is experiencing a housing opportunity.**

Since a large 20-year turbine project started three years ago, there has been an influx of dam-related home sales in Wilbur. In addition to the temporary jobs that project contractors bring, we learned that the Bureau of Reclamation, which currently employs 440 people, has plans to hire 156 more permanent employees by 2015. The Bureau believes housing will be the biggest issue those new hires will face.

***Project:** A Town Council member recently inventoried the unoccupied residential properties in Wilbur. He counted 32 vacant homes and only 12 had For Sale signs on them. Given what we learned about the Bureau hiring 156 new employees, those remaining 20 properties provide a housing opportunity for Wilbur. A few are in foreclosure, half are in need of repair, and a couple could be taken down to make good building lots available. Identify the best ways that the community can expedite their revitalization. Include your local real estate agents, banks, contractors and a resident affiliated with representative from the Bureau in the discussion.*

***Project:** Make sure this report gets into the hands of property owners with land suitable for residential development outside of the 100-year flood plain. We are not suggesting that they build a development and they will come, but a mid-priced spec house could lead to more. Make sure the Town’s permitting process is not a barrier to entry in case someone decides to test the water.*

Challenge: Wilbur is located in a 100-year Flood Plain

A majority of the Town of Wilbur lies within a 100-year floodplain. Development along State Highway 2, which runs through downtown Wilbur, is restricted due to Federal regulations regarding development within a 100-year flood plain. This limits the Town’s ability to grow, to secure bank loans, to attract new businesses, and to create jobs. US Highway 2 brings an average of 3,300 vehicle trips per day through town, but businesses cannot expand outside their footprint or significantly improve their structure or property to take advantage of that exposure. The local government would like to remove the entire

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Commercial District along Highway 2 and a majority of the residential district from the 100-year flood plain. They worked with the Dept. of Ecology (DOE) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to conduct a floodplain study that provided Wilbur with six options to control flooding (2009). The study was paid for with \$92,000 in grant funding from USACE and DOE. The Town of Wilbur then obtained a \$24,000 Community Development Block Grant to perform a feasibility study of the options. The following is a summary of those options; the estimated cost in 2009; and the amount of flood plain the option mitigates:

Alternative 1 – No Action. The do-nothing option is included as a valid alternative when weighing options for a project. Percent of flood plain removed: Zero Cost: \$0

Alternative 2 – Upstream Reservoir. Construct a 350 acre-foot storage reservoir with a dam upstream of Highway 2. This is the most expensive option and the most difficult to permit. It is also the only option that removes 100% of the flood plain. Cost: \$12.1 million

The Engineer's report states that this option was actually developed in the 1970s by the Natural Resources Conservation Service as a water supply for agriculture. Wilbur might consider meeting with the Lincoln County Conservation District to learn what advancements they have seen in flood mitigation and reservoirs since the 1970s and what projects they have seen be successful. They could potentially be a partner when seeking funding for environmental permitting or construction. Contact: District Manager David Lundgren (509) 725-4181 ext. 116 dlundgren@wadistrict.net

Alternative 3 – US Highway 2 Bridge Removal & Widening. This is an option that requires the support of WSDOT. It does not remove any of the Business District from the flood plain. Percent of flood plain removed: 4% Cost: \$2.4 million

Alternative 4 – Railroad Basalt Constriction Removal. Removal of basalt outcrop downstream of West Street that causes a flow restriction and possibly backwater effects in the Town. Percent of flood plain removed: 5% Cost: \$600,000

Alternative 5 – Non-Structural Mitigation. This option looks at flood control measures such as improving channel maintenance of Goose Creek, flood proofing or raising buildings within the floodway, and relocation of buildings outside of the flood zone. The engineering firm did not evaluate this option, presumably because it does not reduce the size of the flood plain, but the viability of improving channel maintenance; elevating and flood proofing existing buildings; and mitigation reconstruction (the demolition of an existing structure and rebuilding a new structure on the same site) are tools that need to be in the box. Percent of flood plain removed: 0% Cost: Unavailable

Alternative 6 – Goose Creek Floodwall. A 10-foot floodwall would be installed along the north bank of Goose Creek, beginning at the Highway 2 bridge and extending approximately 2,500 feet downstream. TD&H found this option to be the least expensive per square foot and it removes the commercial district from the floodplain. Percent of flood plain removed: 60% Cost: \$4.1 million

The Goose Creek Floodwall looks to be a good value. If the goal of flood mitigation is to remove the commercial district from the flood plain, this option accomplishes that for a third of the cost of the upstream dam.

Project: *Have the Council take a closer look at Alternative 6. Where would the 2,500 feet end? What are today's best practices for concrete walls in communities? Are their similar projects that have been*

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successful? Where exactly is the 10-acres of residential development that would be added to the flood plain and what does that mean to the property owners? What is the first floor elevation of those structures? How difficult would it be to acquire the access and construction easements needed? The Lincoln County Conservation District might be able to help with this evaluation.

Ted Olson provided information for FEMA's flood-related funding programs. Wilbur participates in the Nat'l Flood Insurance Program, which is an eligibility requirement for these grants.

Flood Mitigation Assistance Grants

Funds flood hazard planning; structure acquisition, relocation, elevation, and mitigation reconstruction; and minor flood reduction projects. Funding can also be used to purchase property in a hazard area as a mitigation move. This grant is administered by the State Emergency Management Division.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program

Funds efforts to reduce injuries, loss of life, and damage and destruction of property. Funding can be used for hazard mitigation planning or projects mitigating natural hazards. The list of fundable projects is similar to the Assistance Grants, but adds soil stability and wildfire mitigation. This grant is administered by the State Emergency Management Division.

Hazard Mitigation Grant Program

Funds mitigation planning initiatives and mitigation projects designed to reduce or eliminate the effects and costs of future disaster damage. *These grants are only available following a Presidential declaration of a major disaster.*

Contacts:

WA State Hazard Mitigation Officer
Peter Tassoni, WA Military Dept. - Emergency Management Division
20 Aviation Dr., Bldg. 20, MS: TA-20 Camp Murray, WA 98430-5122
(253) 512-7142 peter.tassoni@mil.wa.gov www.emd.wa.gov

WA State Hazard Mitigation Grants Program Coordinator
Tim Cook, WA Military Dept. - Emergency Management Division
20 Aviation Dr., Bldg. 20, MS: TA-20 Camp Murray, WA 98430-5122
(253) 512-7467 tim.cook@mil.wa.gov www.emd.wa.gov

The following two funding sources were included in the feasibility study conducted by TD&H Engineering:

Flood Control and Assistance Account Program (Dept. of Ecology) Unfunded through June 30, 2015. Ecology believes this is a temporary situation and expects to resume offering grant funding in the next biennium.

Contact: Gordon White, Program Manager (360) 407-6977 gwhi461@ecy.wa.gov

Columbia River Basin Water Management Grant Program (Dept. of Ecology – OCR) Funds competitive grants for local water storage and conservation projects.

Contact: Alvin Josephy, Dept. of Ecology Water resources Program
(360) 407-6456 ajos461@ecy.wa.gov http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wr/cwp/cr_grants.html

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Challenge: Flood Insurance Changes Taking Place at the Federal Level

If you don't own your building and you carry a federally insured bank loan on a structure in a 100-year flood plain you are required to purchase flood insurance. If you have FEMA subsidized flood insurance (those structures built prior to the first Flood Insurance Rate Map) you are seeing a phase out of those subsidies and discounts, part of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012. As of January 1, 2013 (non-primary residences) and October 1, 2013 (pre FIRM business properties) owners saw their subsidized policies switched over to flood risk policies. To replace the subsidies, increased rates will be phased in at 25% each year until premiums reflect full risk rates. Properties purchased after the change was initiated will reflect full-risk rates.

These risk policies will be based on the elevation of a building's first floor. This new method of measuring risk will likely require property owners to have their property surveyed to determine the elevation of the first floor in relation to the base flood elevation, unless they are willing to rely on the elevation being used by their insurer.

Project: *Reach out to a College of Engineering that has a Construction option with courses on surveying. Partner with them on a Capstone or Senior project where students would come to Wilbur and perform preliminary surveying to find first floor elevations of properties. The cost to partner with a college or university on projects like this is typically food, gas, project materials and lodging if required.*

Potential Schools:

EWU Dept. of Engineering & Design; Cheney WA (509) 359-6254 scesadvising@ewu.edu.

WSU Construction Management Program, Pullman WA; (509) 335-5539 soainfo@arch.wsu.edu.

Project: *Bring together Business District property owners and provide information on flood plain issues, impacts and mitigation. Talk about flood insurance and about non-structural improvements they can make to their properties. Share the six mitigation options and the business case for each. Gather the questions that arise from the meeting, get them answered and get them back to the property owners so that they can make educated decisions about their property. Then repeat the process for residential property owners.*

Most insurance questions can be answered by reaching out to someone from the following list:

Contacts:

FEMA Insurance Program Specialist

Deborah Farmer, FEMA Region 10 / Mitigation Bothell, WA

(425) 487-2023 deborah.farmer@fema.dhs.gov

Eastern WA Coordinator for Dept. of Ecology - Nat'l Flood Insurance Program

Ted Olson (509) 329-3413 tols461@ecy.wa.gov

Nat'l Flood Insurance Program Bureau & Statistical Agent

Kristen Minich (360) 658-8188 kminich@ostglobal.com

Study Support Data

FEMA Engineering Library (800) 358-9616

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INFRASTRUCTURE: TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Challenge: Cell phone service is poor and getting worse.

Many residents told us that their cell phone service has declined considerably over the past year. A County Commissioner from the Wilbur area has tried repeatedly to get the attention of providers, but has gotten nowhere. The issue has been brought to the attention of who will attempt to communicate with service providers in that capacity. Hopefully, that will get some answers and/or possible solutions. Wilbur Mayor Robert Wyborney is on the Technology Planning Team and will be able to report back on any progress.

Possible funding:

USDA-RD - Telecommunications Infrastructure Loan Program is for furnishing or improving telecommunications service in rural areas. www.rurdev.usda.gov/utp_infrastructure.html

Strength: High speed broadband fiber runs through Wilbur.

As part of an ARRA funded program to bring affordable high speed broadband to rural communities, NoaNet installed fiber optic cable to Wilbur's library and medical clinic. At this time it remains untapped due to cost. The Lincoln County Local Technology Planning Team, funded through a grant from the Washington State Broadband Office, is working to gain access to NoaNet fiber throughout the county and the Mayor is on that team.

***Project:** Create a Dig Once ordinance that would facilitate opportunities to include telecommunication fiber, conduit, etc. when utility work is already being done. That way the Town is ready to act when the opportunity arises.*

***Project:** When you determine a need for high speed broadband beyond the library and the medical clinic, set up a Tech Team meeting at the 2014 IACC Conference in October. A Tech Team is a panel of funders from various agencies that come together to discuss a specific project. They explore potential funding packages and help develop next steps. www.infracfunding.wa.gov*

Possible funding:

CERB – The State's Community Economic Development Board provides low interest loans for the enhancement of local infrastructure and are considering adopting a model project amendment that would allow an applicant to easily add public conduit to any project that opens a trench in a right of way or add a fiber fed antenna site to any raised public structure suitable for use in wireless service.

www.commerce.wa.gov/commissions/communityeconomicrevitalizationboard/pages/default.aspx

USDA-RD programs that will consider broadband projects include the Community Connect grant program; Community Facility grant program; Distance Learning & Telemedicine program; Rural Community Development Initiative; Rural Business Enterprise grants; Rural Business Opportunity grants; and the.

FirstNet – A grant program administered by the National Telecommunications & Information Administration (NTIA) to support State and local jurisdictions' efforts to plan and work with FirstNet to

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ensure that wireless public safety communications needs are met. www.ntia.doc.gov/category/firstnet E-rate – This program makes telecommunications services more affordable for schools and libraries. This will greatly benefit Wilbur’s library. www.fcc.gov/guides/universal-service-program-schools-and-libraries

INFRASTRUCTURE: TRANSPORTATION

Strength: Wilbur has a healthy transportation system.

There was general agreement among assessment participants that the transportation system in and around Wilbur is considered a strength. While local and county officials find the rising cost of road construction and maintenance a challenge, their citizens had only positive comments.

Challenge: Tax payers need information about airport investments.

There is confusion regarding the value and expense of recent improvements made to the airport, particularly the investment made by the Town. According to the local government, 95% of the improvements have been paid with grants and no airport funding has come from the general account.

The resource team went out to the airport as part of their tour. When we got there we noticed a sign on the fence that gave a breakdown of airport improvement costs by funder. We thought it was a great way to show the community how much the Town spent on the improvements in comparison to the other funders involved. Unfortunately, the sign was out of date and hanging where very few people would ever see it. It ended up being of no value.

***Project:** The town council should take down that sign as it is misleading. Have new signs made. Do the same breakdown of funders, but add a line that tells how much of the money went to local contractors. Look for something less expensive (they will need to be updated again) and get two signs made – one for the airport fence and one to hang at Town Hall where folks who don’t use the airport will be more likely to see it. When you have the new signs in hand, host a public meeting to update citizens on funding to date. Take this opportunity to provide some education about the value of those upgrades. Remind folks that the airport has been annexed by the town and can be a tax generator.*

The resource team noticed that WSDOT has a shop with fuel right next door to the airport. They also host four community-owned airport web cameras on their website. Have you communicated with them recently regarding the Wilbur Airport and its potential uses? They may have suggestions. WSDOT is responsible for managing all air search and rescue operations within the state. Could they utilize the airport for that purpose? If not, why? The NoaNet high speed broadband fiber stopped short of the airport. Is there a chance that WSDOT would partner with the Town to bring fiber out to their shop and the airport? This would be beneficial when marketing use of the airport and the surrounding property.

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INFRASTRUCTURE: WATER & ELECTRICAL UTILITIES

Strength: Water is available.

Wilbur is fortunate that the Odessa aquifer is recharging in their area. However, the team questioned whether the Town's water rates are adequate to sustain their enterprise fund. The same question came up regarding the wastewater. If the Town has not established an enterprise fund for each utility, they should, and each should be self-funding (rates adequate to maintain and replace the system as needed.)

Mayor Wyborney expressed concern that in the future DOE could relinquish Wilbur's unused municipal water rights, effectively limiting the town's ability to grow in the future. Ted Olson checked with his Water Resources Division and was told that there is no concern and that unused municipal water rights are non-relinquishable. He gave Guy Gregory in the Water Resources program as a contact for further information (509-329-3509.)

Challenge: Electrical utilities are expensive.

Some expressed frustration at being so close to Grant County, yet not being able to take advantage of their affordable power. There may be a lack of information as to why Grant Co. power is less expensive and why it is not available to L.C. communities which are close to the County line. This is a complaint that is often heard throughout Lincoln County. Unfortunately, there is nothing you can do about it. The same applies to natural gas.

Youth & Seniors

Opportunity: Wilbur's youth like their community and its businesses.

As you can see from reading their responses at the end of this report, students from Wilbur High School see their community as tight knit and supportive and they ranked existing businesses as a top strength. Hands down, the thing they find most challenging about living in Wilbur is that there's "not much for teens to do." Their ideas for meeting this challenge show up in their suggested projects on page 6: a theatre, an updated pool, a bowling alley, a youth center, an arcade...

Fortunately, adults in the community are building an ORV/BMX park and working toward a youth center. We also heard that the owner of the property being used for the mini-moto track is willing to donate it for that use if someone will remove the willows along the creek and be responsible for property maintenance. All three projects could use more volunteer support.

Possible funding:

WA Dept. of Commerce – Building Communities Fund

WA Dept. of Commerce – Youth Recreation Facilities program

USDA-RD Community Facilities

Washington State Recreation & Conservation Office, including the Recreational Trails Program

Lincoln County Rural Development Fund

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Challenge: How do you become a “welcoming school?”

The second highest ranked challenge identified by the ninety 9th - 12th grade students? Newcomers don't feel welcome. Considering that the majority of those ninety students are not newcomers, that is quite a statement. It is important to note that the resource team heard that it is Wilbur's school district that is the deciding factor for many of the Bureau employees who moved here.

***Project:** Maybe being welcoming does not come as naturally as we might think it should, especially to a demographic that may not have needed the skill in the past. WSU Extension Director Bridget Rohner specializes in leadership and human development. Seek her assistance in researching and developing a program, appropriate to their generation and situation, on what it means to be a welcoming school.*

Other challenges that ranked high with teens were a lack of privacy, Wilbur's rundown buildings, and a lack of job opportunities for teens.

***Project:** Bring back the Job Fair. Invite businesses from all over the region to participate. Practice being a welcoming school by inviting students from Creston and Almira to attend. The EDC would be happy to partner on this project.*

One project for Wilbur's youth has already resulted from the assessment - a business plan challenge for the senior class. Stacey Nash, Business Instructor at Wilbur High, partnered with the EDC on the project as part of Global Entrepreneurship Week. The students came up with business plans for start-ups that built on strengths or addressed challenges that they themselves identified. It was very successful and we hope to repeat it next year!

Opportunity: Wilbur's seniors want to stay in Wilbur.

The resource team had lunch at the Senior Center the day of the assessment. We introduced ourselves and encouraged everyone to attend the listening session for seniors that directly followed lunch. Several joined us and clearly they enjoy living in Wilbur and want to remain there if services allow. Some of their challenges were expected, the closing of the pharmacy and assisted living facility, for example. Others were not expected, such as lack of volunteers that is making it difficult to operate the senior center and its thrift store.

***Project:** To assure that the services received from the Hospital District remain strong and effective, invite the Hospital Administrator to lunch at the senior center. Make the meeting about looking forward. Ask how you can assist with the challenges currently affecting you – especially local access to medication prescribed by local providers and the future of the shuttered assisted living facility.*

***Project:** We learned that the Hospital District is exploring a new model of senior care that provides, through telecommunications technology, medical, dietary, social and other therapies and daily living support for seniors in their home. They are working with the state to determine whether the new model would meet licensure and reimbursement requirements. Offer to be the pilot community. Help the Hospital District meet your needs.*

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Project: *The senior center is important to the entire community and it is struggling from a shortage of volunteers. Bridget Rohner, WSU Extension Director for Lincoln County, specializes in volunteer recruitment and training for all ages and organization types. Consult with Bridget. Share what is going on and what is needed. She can not only recommend ways to recruit volunteers, but can provide training if needed.*

Special thanks to the Wyoming Rural Development Council for allowing us to borrow from their program curriculum. The Wyoming Rural Development Council is a collaborative public/private partnership that is focused on assisting Wyoming's rural communities with their needs and development efforts by matching the technical and financial resources of federal, state, and local governments with their local development efforts.