

KENT DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

# IMPACT REPORT

# 2025



DECEMBER  
2025



# MESSAGE FROM KENT DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

The KDP is proud to celebrate another year filled with energy, resilience, and community connection. From lively festivals and art activations to small business support and lighting improvements, every effort reflected our shared vision for a thriving, welcoming downtown. None of this would be possible without the dedication of the volunteers, partners and local businesses who continue to make downtown Kent a place where people come together to live, work, and celebrate.

**Building Community Connections:** Our vision for downtown Kent is to foster a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive atmosphere. Over the past year, we brought people together through free community gatherings, volunteer and stakeholder meetups, and expanded holiday festivities. These events attracted thousands of residents and visitors, boosted local businesses, and strengthened the sense of unity that defines our downtown.

**Empowering Local Businesses:** Downtown Kent thrives because of its small businesses. We remain committed to their success by offering resources and growth opportunities like micro- and facade improvement grants, assisting new business openings, and helping established ones adapt, innovate, and expand.

**Beautification and Infrastructure:** We continue to broaden the “Illuminate Downtown” program —a transformative effort focused on enhancing the beauty, safety, and walkability of downtown Kent. Thanks to the generous support of donors, the project continues to expand as additional funding becomes available. With the help of passionate volunteers and community partners, initiatives like art murals, flower baskets, and cleanup days ensure downtown remains inviting and full of life.

**Looking Forward:** In 2026 we'll continue to collaborate with the city, produce community events, increase support for small businesses and continue infrastructure improvements. We're also excited to build and strengthen partnerships that help bring cultural experiences to life through arts and community groups.

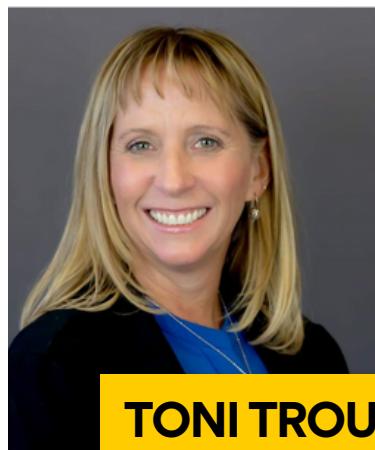
## Thank you!

Together, we're shaping a downtown that embodies our community's spirit and embraces everyone. We're grateful for your support and we're excited to continue making downtown Kent a welcoming place for all.

Sincerely,



**GAILA HAAS**  
Executive Director



**TONI TROUTNER**  
Board President



**147**

Supported small businesses & entrepreneurs

**1249**

volunteer hours

**6**

New businesses

**4**

Micro grants awarded by KDP to Small businesses

# OVERVIEW

## VISION

To be the heart of our community offering opportunities, creativity and innovation. To foster strong partnerships and be a vibrant and thriving community while preserving our historic character and charm.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### Officers:

- Toni Troutner, President
- Suzanne Cameron, President Elect
- Doug Scharnhorst, Treasurer

### Legal Counsel:

- Erik Olsen, Hanis, Irvine, Prothero

### Ex Officio Members

- Zenovia Harris, Kent Chamber of Commerce
- Kelly Spreitzer, Assesso ShoWare Center
- Director, Greater Kent Historical Museum
- Shamso Isaak, Living Well Kent

## MISSION

To strengthen commerce and promote growth in historic downtown Kent through programs and events that celebrate our unique and diverse community and culture.

### Members:

- Joy Cortado, Harborstone Credit Union
- Kevin Grossman, Green River College
- Greg Haffner, Retired
- Daniel Abrego, WaFd Bank
- Kaki Kesterson, Maggie's on Meeker
- Randall Smith, All Pro Building Maintenance
- Diane Whitely, Kent Lions
- Michelle Wilmot, City of Kent
- Bill Ellis City of Kent
- Judy Woods, Retired
- Elizabeth Scharnhorst, Retired

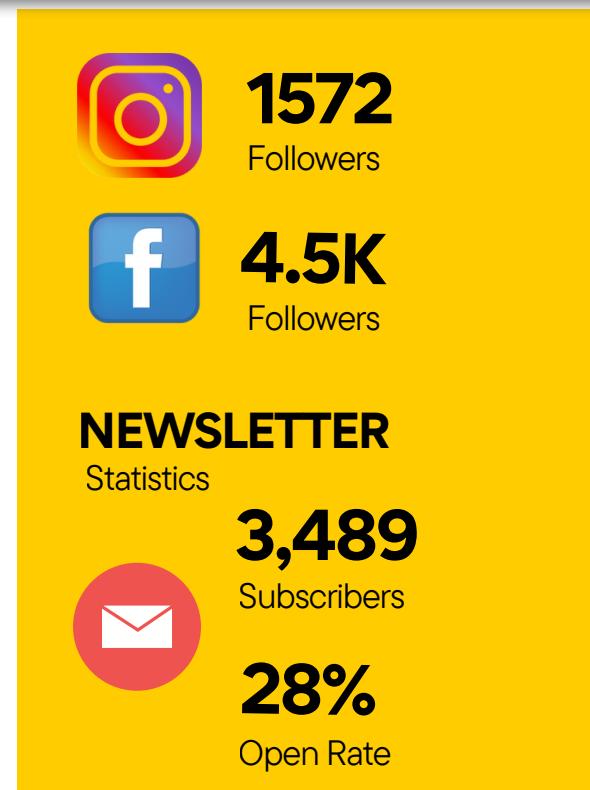
# ENGAGEMENT

KDP is committed to sustaining the vibrancy of our downtown by creating an inviting environment, supporting and promoting special events, showcasing local businesses, and encouraging inclusivity and collaboration among the downtown community and its stakeholders.

In 2025, the KDP welcomed community members to participate in programs that promote connection and involvement:

- **Shop Local & Small:** KDP highlights and supports downtown businesses year-round through events, social media, newsletters, and grand openings. These efforts create excitement within the small business community and provide a meaningful economic boost.
- **Community Connection:** Whether through participation on our board or committees, attending events, or volunteering, the community comes together, bringing fresh ideas and energy that strengthens our workplan and amplifies our impact.
- **Events:** KDP organized celebrations throughout our businesses, parks and streets, featuring live music, vendors, artists/makers, food and drink. Here's a glimpse at the number of visitors who enjoyed downtown Kent during KDP's events:

- Cajun & Creole Fest: 8000+
- Kent Nerd Party: 2000
- Street of Treats: 600
- Tasting events: 700
- Clean up events: 150
- Volunteer mixers: 125



**22**

Main Street Tax Credit Contributors

**28**

Sponsorships/grants received

**13**

Community Events Produced

**7**

Volunteer/Community Connection meet ups

**16**

Performing artists

**25**

Hanging flower baskets

# SUCCESS STORIES



## CAJUN & CREOLE FEST

In just four short years, the **Kent Cajun & Creole Festival** has grown from a small community event into a signature celebration drawing **more than 8000** people to historic downtown Kent this year. This free, family-friendly festival fills the Burlington Green Park and surrounding streets with the sounds and flavors of the vibrant Cajun and Creole culture. The event features local performers along with special guests joining us all the way from Louisiana this year.

The festival's remarkable growth reflects the strength of community partnerships and KDP's commitment to creating inclusive, vibrant and culturally rich experiences. Beyond the fun and flavor, it drives local business activity, boasts downtown visibility and showcases what makes Kent such a welcoming and dynamic place to visit.

## LIGHTING UP HISTORIC KENT

KDP continued to transform our historic downtown through the **Illuminate Downtown** lighting program. This initiative goes beyond safety by enhancing the beauty and character of our streets, parks and public spaces.

Thoughtfully designed lighting highlights architectural details, creates inviting pathways, and casts a warm glow that brings our downtown to life after dark. By combining functionality with artistry, the program not only makes our streets safer but also significantly elevates the overall aesthetics of the area—turning historic Kent into a visually appealing destination for residents, visitors, and businesses alike. This year we added more lighting to business awnings, installed interior window lights in businesses, and enhanced our streetscape displays for the holiday and winter season.



# KDP FUNDING PROGRAMS

**Facade & Micro Grants:** Through generous support of our grant program, organizations like **WaFd Bank** and **4 Culture** help us empower small businesses to grow, innovate, and enhance the vitality of historic downtown Kent. Their investment in community enables us to offer meaningful assistance to businesses who keep our downtown thriving.

**Main Street Tax Credit Incentive Program:** This program enables businesses to directly invest in their local community. By redirecting a portion of their state B&O or public utility tax liability to KDPs Main Street organization—the program fuels projects that strengthen our historic district, while keeping tax dollars local.

## Thank you to our 2025 Contributors:

City of Kent, accesso ShoWare, Seattle Thunderbirds, Infrasource/Potlatch, Bowen/Scarff Ford, All Pro Building Maintenance, Allegro Performing Arts Academy, Around the Clock Property Management, Dicks Drive In, Ditco Inc, Gellner Law Group, Hanis Irvine Prothero, Heritage Bank, McMonigle Veterinary/BRP, MedoSweet, Meridian Dental, Lake Meridian Water District, Puget Sound Energy, Transmission Remanufacturing, Lake Meridian Water District, Industry Graphics/Auburn Sign Company



## SPONSORSHIPS/GRANTS

We were thrilled to welcome an incredible 28 new sponsorships and grantors this year, a true testament to the strong community support for downtown Kent.

These partnerships not only strengthen our connections with local businesses and organizations but also expand the resources available to bring exciting events, innovative programs, and meaningful initiatives to life throughout the year.

Thanks to their generous commitment, we are able to continue our mission of making downtown Kent a vibrant, welcoming, and thriving destination for residents, visitors, and businesses alike. Each sponsorship and grant represents more than funding—it's an investment in our community's spirit, growth, and shared success.

# KDP GOALS & OBJECTIVES

**Economic Development:** We utilize established partnerships to strengthen a diverse downtown economy, supporting both existing and new businesses.

**Clean & Safe:** In partnership with the City's Conservation Office and Kent Police, we collaborate to promote and advocate for a safe environment by hosting monthly safety meetings and clean-up events throughout the year.

**Historic Preservation:** Focus on preserving the unique character of our community. We aim to balance development with the protection of our heritage, ensuring that future generations can appreciate the architectural and cultural significance that defines our local history.



## VALUES

**Community & Collaboration:** Cultivate strong connections among residents, businesses, and visitors, working together to strengthen the heart of downtown Kent.

**Innovation & Improvement:** Embrace new ideas and adapt to changing needs, improving our programs and partnerships to better serve the community.

**Equity & Inclusion:** Engage and champion opportunities for all voices to be heard and represented in our programs and initiatives to support community involvement.

**Integrity & Accountability:** Act transparently, responsibly, and with integrity, building trust with our community through every initiative.

# KDP STAFF



## **GAILA HAAS**

Executive Director

Joined KDP **2019**



Gaila works to build strong connections and partnerships within Kent's Main Street program while also fostering strong relationships with statewide Main Street communities.

Through leadership, development training and participation in state conferences, she has strengthened ties with state and federal programs that support Main Streets and community development. Her ongoing work with local organizations has amplified the impact on the historic district, reinforcing a shared vision for a vibrant, inclusive downtown community.



## **ABBY PIERSON**

Events & Admin Coordinator

Joined KDP: **2025**



Abby is an energetic force turning event ideas into unforgettable experiences. They manage every aspect of event logistics—from choosing the perfect venues to coordinating vendors—ensuring everything runs seamlessly on the big day.

With a keen eye for detail, Abby is committed to upholding our high standards, and making sure each event flows effortlessly.

Their dedication, planning expertise, and thoughtful approach consistently creates meaningful, high-quality experiences for all to enjoy.

# CONTACT US



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# THANK YOU SUPPORTERS!



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