

Sustainable (re)Growth:



Suisun City, CA and Leavenworth, WA

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Common Themes

- ❑ Towns founded by pioneers of westward expansion
 - ❑ Railroad routed through brought commerce and wealth
 - ❑ Railroad moved, crippling the economies of both cities
 - ❑ Concerned citizen with a vision sparks regrowth plans
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Suisun City History

- ❑ River port on the Suisun Slough brought commerce
- ❑ Transcontinental Railroad made the city a transit hub
- ❑ 1960's, bypassed by highway I-80¹



Suisun City before redevelopment, an industrial polluted waterfront²

Issues to confront:

- No new commerce
 - Main Street lined with boarded up buildings
 - Waterfront polluted by oil refinery
 - No public access
 - Crime-ridden Crescent neighborhood
 - Sprawling car-dependent suburbs
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Leavenworth History

- Great Northern Railroad hub
 - Lamb-David Lumber Company
 - These two businesses brought a booming economy to Leavenworth
 - In 1922 the Railroad moved its hub, Lumber mill forced to close⁴
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Issues to Confront:

- Dead economy
 - Town survived on subsistence farming and goods trading between neighbors⁴
- Dilapidated downtown
- Ever-dwindling population



Dilapidated buildings in pre-Bavarian Leavenworth⁷

Suisun City's Redevelopment

- 1986, New mayor: James Spering¹
 - Built a new City Hall building
 - New building's proximity to Crescent neighborhood pushed out crime¹
 - "Downtown Specific Plan" ¹
 - Help by citizen committee
 - Pressured oil refinery to move¹
 - cleaned up the waterfront
 - New marina and promenade
 - New Town Plaza
 - Hosts many festivals
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Leavenworth's Redevelopment

- Aid from a consultant from the UW Bureau of Community Development⁴
 - Project LIFE⁴
 - Invested in tourism: went Bavarian
 - Project Alpine⁵
 - Local business owners direct Bavarianization of the town
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Similarities

- Rebuilt on existing development
 - Renovating dilapidated buildings
 - New businesses and homes on old Main Street
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Sustainability in Suisun City

□ New life to old city

- Inviting waterfront promenade in front of the new city hall building²



- Repopulated main street with new businesses
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Sustainability in Leavenworth

- Renovated dilapidated buildings
 - Completely privately funded by local business owners⁵
 - Renovated old buildings in the Bavarian theme



der Markt Platz Gift Shop, before and after⁵

Similarities

- Unique sense of place
 - Local businesses
 - Festivals
 - Fostered by local decision making
 - Suisun City citizen committee
 - Project LIFE, Project Alpine
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Sustainability in Suisun City

- “Letting Suisun be Suisun”¹
 - Citizen committee
 - Small, local businesses
 - Façade Improvement Plan¹



One of downtown's renovated buildings, houses locally owned Babs Delta Diner²

Sustainability in Leavenworth

- “America’s top holiday town”⁴
 - Authentic bakeries, toy shops etc.
 - Tight community feel
 - Tradition surrounding festivals



Maifest in Leavenworth⁵

Similarities

- Preserved open, green spaces
 - Suisun City: mixed use of waterfront, marina and promenade
 - Used silt dredged from newly built marina to rebuild marshlands¹
 - Leavenworth waterfront park



Leavenworth waterfront park,
nestled in the Alpines⁵

Differences

different scales of walkability

- Suisun City
 - City surrounded by suburbs
 - Must allow huge suburban population transit to and from downtown
 - Common for residents to work in nearby cities
 - Busses and trains to other Bay Area cities offer commute options¹
 - Leavenworth
 - Tiny downtown surrounded by rural farmland
 - Walkable downtown area
 - Few to no residents commute outside of town⁹
 - Busses and trains to next town, bike and pedestrian friendly roads within town⁶
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Differences

community objectives

- Suisun City
 - Redevelopment focused on curtailing suburban sprawl
 - Focus on infill development and more concentrated use of downtown
 - Self-dependence on local businesses, arguably more authentic sense of place, more self-sustaining
 - Leavenworth
 - Redevelopment focused on rekindling dying economy, dwindling population
 - No population base to draw from, must look to outward business from tourism
 - Less authentic sense of place, may require conscious upkeep effort: Projekt Bayern in 1996³
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Conclusion

- ❑ Suisun City now a model for smart growth and sustainable development
 - ❑ Leavenworth now a gem of the Pacific Northwest, with a steady population and healthy economy
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Works Cited

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