

## West Main Realignment Project Update

The City of Kelso is nearly ready to begin acquiring rights-of-way for the West Main project. The design team includes **Universal Field Services, Inc.** We are a certified real estate acquisition firm and will be your primary contact through much of this process. Since the project uses federal funds, all of our acquisition processes are as defined in the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 and as amended (the Uniform Act), and Washington Department of Transportation.

The steps that Universal Field Services will take for the acquisition of right of way are as follows:

**Notification** – As the first step in the acquisition process, a letter will be sent to all of the affected property owners notifying them of the start of the acquisition process and that members of the consultant team will be contacting them soon. Contacts may be made for any of the following: level one site assessments; occupant interviews for the preparation of a relocation plan; or contact by an appraiser to set up appointments to view the property. Also during this time, surveyors may be on the project properties staking the existing and new right of way

Each letter will have my name as Universal Field Services' project manager and contact information, encouraging you to call if you have any questions.

Washington State DOT published brochures will be included with these letters: **Transportation Property Needs and You, Residential Relocation Assistance Program, and Business Relocation Assistance Program.**

IF YOU DO NOT RECEIVE A NOTICE, NONE OF YOUR PROPERTY WILL BE ACQUIRED.

**Appraisal** – A real estate appraiser will determine the market value of the property being acquired. The appraiser will:

- Contact the property owner for a joint inspection
- Research sales of similar property in the market area
- Value the property that is being acquired
- Determine the level and type of compensation.
- Minor acquisitions will be valued administratively using the appraiser's sales research. Property owners have the right to request an appraisal on this administrative value.

**Appraisal Review** – A review appraiser checks the appraiser's work.

**Agency Approval** – The City will receive copies of the appraisal and appraisal review and will authorize Universal Field Services to present an offer based on the appraisal.

**Acquisition** – Only then will a right of way agent contact the property owner with an offer to purchase. They will be informed whether an appraisal or administrative value was prepared. The agent will:

- Explain the project and its impacts to the property
- Explain the property owners rights under the law

- Listen to owner concerns and, if needed, forward them to the engineers or appraiser.
- Discuss the acquisition with the property owner's (appraiser, real estate professional, attorney, etc. if there is one)
- Provide all the documents necessary to acquire the property for the project.
- Submit the signed documents to the City for payment processing. Payment times will vary depending on the interests that need to be cleared on the title.

**Relocation** - If a residence or a business is acquired by the City, the owner or tenant may also be entitled to relocation benefits. A relocation agent will:

- Explain the available relocation benefits
- Provide relocation advisory services
- Assist in locating replacement housing.
- Assist in moving your personal property.
- Assist a business in re-establishing at a new location
- Assist tenants in locating replacement housing

The Uniform Act requires that comparable replacement housing must be within the financial means of the displaced person. The provisions of the Uniform Act are found in Federal Regulations 49 CFR Part 24. As stated in the law the purpose is to assure fair and equitable treatment of displaced persons so that such persons do not suffer disproportionate injury from projects designed to benefit the public as a whole.

**Notice** - When the relocation agent requires a tenant to move a household, **written notice will be provided at least 90 days prior to the date by which the move is required.** At least one comparable dwelling will be available for residential properties and written notification of its location will be provided. For business properties, the agent will assist in identifying the properties available.

**Move Payment** – Displaced persons or businesses are entitled to a move payment of your personal property. The relocation agent will discuss the options.

**Replacement Housing Payment/Rent Supplement** – Tenants may be entitled to an additional payment to secure comparable replacement housing.

Replacement housing must meet decent safe and sanitary requirements and will be inspected prior to acceptance to assure benefits are paid.

**Business Reestablishment** - If a business is displaced, certain costs to re-establish the business will be reimbursed. The relocation agent will discuss those items that are approved for reimbursement and what types of expenses are not.

*Throughout the acquisition and relocation process, Universal staff members are available to answer questions and work through any issues that may come up.*