

**Port of Douglas County**  
**3306 - 5<sup>th</sup> Street SE**  
**East Wenatchee, WA 98802**  
**Email: [pat@portofdouglas.org](mailto:pat@portofdouglas.org)**

*Email version available upon request*

## **Port of Douglas awarded USDA grant for Mansfield Feasibility Study**

*Port to examine the possibility of a multi-tenant commercial facility in downtown Mansfield to replace buildings lost in the restaurant fire of December 2000.*

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When a fire occurred at the Golden Wheat Café in Mansfield during the winter of 2000, it not only destroyed a business dating back to the early 1920's, but it also eliminated one of the central gathering points for this historic upper Douglas county community. "Loosing the restaurant was like loosing a family heirloom," said Linda Bayless, Mansfield businessperson and previous owner of the Café. "This was a primary eating place for residents and tourist alike. And when a town like ours loses a restaurant it affects all of the other retail businesses."

To determine whether the community can sustain the construction of a new facility, the Port of Douglas was awarded a \$20,000 grant by the Rural Development division of the USDA to determine the feasibility of a multi-tenant commercial building. The study will evaluate the buying patterns of Mansfield community members and other upper county residents to examine whether several retail and commercial businesses can be located in the same facility to share the cost of a new building. The restaurant fire destroyed two other adjacent buildings and none of them had property insurance. The buildings had

For details contact:  
Patrick Haley  
Director  
Phone  
509/884-4700

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to be demolished, which left a large hole in the center block of downtown Mansfield.

Elesco, Ltd. of Sunriver, Oregon was selected to conduct the feasibility study and will begin the project in June. Elesco has over 15 years of experience providing real estate consulting services to municipalities and other public/private clients. Its core business is to develop strategies to generate revenues from surplus or underutilized real estate assets. Elesco's report will evaluate whether the project should proceed, the types of businesses that could be located in the facility, how large the building should be and the amount of revenue that can be generated with multiple tenants.

"We selected Elesco because they are involved in a lot of these types of projects in smaller communities of both Washington and Oregon," said Pat Haley, Director for the Port of Douglas. "We want to be practical about this project, and evaluate whether enough people will buy locally to sustain this type of facility. There's just too much risk involved to construct a new building and hope *they will come*. Yet, at the same time a multi-tenant facility may be just the thing to revitalize this upper county community."

If the report is supportive of the project, the Port will investigate possible funding sources for the new building, which could include additional grant money, low-interest loans, or even private development money. Several private property owners have indicated a willingness to donate their land to the city, so the Port could build a public facility. "Our goal is to provide some economic stimulus in this community and an opportunity for new employment," said Haley. "Mansfield is a strong community, and this feasibility study is the first step in evaluating whether we can make this project happen."



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