



Reimagining Weston

A Community Vision
and
Downtown Revitalization
Plan for
Weston, Oregon

Project Background

The *Reimagining Weston* planning process fulfilled the capstone workshop project requirement for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program at Portland State University (PSU). Mountains to Main (M2M) is a group of five graduate students from the MURP program. M2M chose to partner with the city of Weston to create a Community Vision and Downtown Revitalization Plan during the five-month timeframe from January to May, 2011.

Acknowledgements

In Memory

M2M would like to specially acknowledge Barbara Wilcox who passed away during the community planning process. Barbara was a positive, engaged voice in the community. Her participation was appreciated and her energy will be missed.

Weston Advisory Committee (WAC)

Becky Buckles, Main Street business owner

Bernice Charleton, Main Street business owner

Tim Crampton, Weston Community Development Committee (WCDC) and Memorial Hall Manager

Lyn Delph, Weston City Council

Sheldon Delph, Weston Historic Landmarks Commission

Sgt. Josh Henningsen, Weston Police Department

Don Jackson, East Umatilla County R.F.P.D.

Vicki Jackson, Weston Planning Commission

Greg Phillips, citizen at large

Denise Sampson, Recorder, City of Weston

Kathleen Schmidtgall, Weston Public Library

Scott Spendlove, Weston Public Works Department

Duane Thul, Mayor, City of Weston

Barbara Wilcox, Water Street business employee and Weston Community Garden organizer

Portland State University Advisors

Dr. Sumner Sharpe, FAICP

Dr. Ellen Bassett

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

Timothy Bishop, Main Street and Tourism Consultant

Mary Bosch, Principal, Marketek

Kuri Gill, Oregon State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)

Don Hollis, USDA OR Rural Development - Pendleton Office

Cheryl Jarvis-Smith, ODOT, Region 5

Bill Kelley, Eastern Washington University

Sheila Martin, Portland State University

Brent Steel, Oregon State University

Joanne Steele, Rural Tourism Marketing Group

Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street

Alice Trindle, Eastern Oregon Visitors

Association (EOVA)

Allison Wildman, SERA Architects

Bob Wise, Cogan Owens Cogan

Doug Zenn, Zenn Associates

Regional Sources

Dyan Swanson, Recorder, City of Athena, OR

Steve Lear, Mayor, City of Enterprise, OR

Shelly Stuart, Former Mayor, City of Joseph, OR

OR

Lower cover photo courtesy of SERA Architects and Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC supported by Oregon TGM Program

Mountains to Main is:

Nathan Emerson, Zach Gustafson, Holly

Howell, Carrie Pipinich, Matthew Rohrbach



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	5
Introduction	8
What is in this plan?	9
Community Profile	10
Geography	10
History	10
Demographics	11
Economy	11
Regional Assets	13
Government and Other Public Services	13
Main Street	15
Political Structure	16
Local Organizations	17
What is Weston already doing well?	18
Planning Context	20
Planning Process Overview	22
General Communication	22
Outreach	24
Best Practices	25
Weston Advisory Committee	26
Public Workshops	27
Weston 2030 – A Portrait of Weston’s Future	28
Crafting the Vision	28
Weston: Yesterday’s Stories, Tomorrow’s Town	30
Revitalization	33
What is Revitalization?	33
What would Revitalization Look Like?	33
Weston’s Revitalization Strategies	34
Implementation Actions	38
A Roadmap to Revitalization	38
How were actions chosen?	38



Actions	39
Implementation Actions	41
1. Short Term Actions	43
Action 1.A: Create a city website	43
Action 1.B: Install banners and flower baskets on the Main Street lamp posts	45
Action 1.C: Replace street trees on Main Street	48
Action 1.D: Start a farmers market	50
Action 1.E: Bi-monthly live music and dance events in Downtown Weston	53
Action 1.F: Provide historic information signage Downtown	55
Additional Short Term Implementation Actions	58
2. Medium Term Actions	60
Action 2.A: Continue with Oregon Main Street	60
Action 2.B: Regional collaboration & tourism marketing	62
Action 2.C: Host one additional large annual event	65
Action 2.D: Increase the lighting around town	67
Additional Medium Term Implementation Actions	68
3. Long Term Actions	69
Action 3.A: Historic building preservation	69
Action 3.B: Weston Historic Museum	71
Action 3.C: Sidewalk improvements on Water Street	74
Action 3.D: Off-Street path connecting Weston and Athena	76
Action 3.E: Overnight Accommodations	78
Additional Long Term Implementation Actions	81
Conclusion	83



REIMAGINING WESTON: A Community Vision and Revitalization Plan Executive Summary

Weston was once a prosperous city, home to pioneers, farmers, and an active downtown. Today however, Weston faces many challenges common to communities throughout rural Oregon. **The key question for this small city is: How can Weston capitalize on homegrown and regional assets in order to revitalize downtown and maximize the wellbeing of the community as a whole?**

Reimagining Weston provides a blueprint for the community to answer this question. **This plan is a proactive effort by Weston residents to shape the livability and prosperity of their community over the next 20 years.** *Reimagining Weston* consists of three primary parts.

Weston 2030

Weston 2030 is a snapshot of the city of Weston 20 years from today. It is the city's first vision statement. The values and aspirations of the community are embodied within the vision, which will continue to serve as a guide for Weston's present and future revitalization efforts.

"In the year 2030...Downtown Weston is the commercial heart of a small, friendly, thriving community. Weston serves the daily needs of the local residents, while providing an intriguing destination for visitors. Downtown combines historic charm with the vitality of local tradition and community pride."

1. Downtown Weston is small, but prosperous.
2. Downtown Weston feels friendly, comfortable, and safe.
3. Weston's school system continues to provide a quality education for K-12 students.
4. Weston shares its rich pioneer and agricultural history and heritage.
5. Weston has a mix of eclectic buildings and spaces.
6. Downtown is home to frequent community gatherings and events.
7. Weston enjoys a strong connection to regional assets.
8. Downtown Weston is welcoming to visitors.
9. Transportation options are available for all Weston residents.
10. Weston offers a variety of job opportunities for residents.





Revitalization Strategies

To translate the vision statement into action, the community was asked to identify a set of revitalization strategies. These are **focus areas that provide direction for energy, investments, programs, and projects** that will be carried out to revitalize the community. The community created and prioritized strategies during a series of public events, and the final set of strategies were chosen and vetted through each of the vision principles.

1. **Provide high quality infrastructure and local government services**
2. **Make the appearance of the city a priority and a source of community pride**
3. **Attract visitors to town**
4. **Preserve and promote Weston's heritage**
5. **Regional collaboration**

Implementation Actions

The implementation actions are the **specific steps to support one or more of the revitalization strategies** chosen by the community to achieve the vision described in Weston 2030. Each action is designed to make Weston a better place to live and do business, bring more visitors to town, or celebrate the town's heritage. Investing in and capitalizing on Weston's assets will lead to a more active, welcoming downtown in the future.

The projects are divided into three time frames: short, medium and long. They are designed to be implemented concurrently, with the easiest projects to be finished first. By concentrating on the easier "low hanging fruit," the community will be able to have tangible, early successes that can build enthusiasm and organizational experience.

Each action includes an explanation of how each project or program supports revitalizing downtown Weston and a step-by-step process for moving forward. Importantly, each project description identifies actors in the community to assume a lead role in its implementation.



Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Create a city website	Continue with Oregon Main Street Program	Historic building preservation
Start a farmers market	Increase lighting around town	Weston Historic Museum
Replace street trees on Main Street	Host an additional large annual event	Overnight accommodations
Install banners and flower baskets on Main Street lamp posts	Regional collaboration & tourism marketing	Sidewalks improvements on Water Street
Bi-monthly live music and dance events in Downtown Weston		Off-street path connecting Weston and Athena
Provide historic information signage		

To achieve the community’s vision as a lasting legacy that will benefit and inspire future generations in Weston, work must begin now to implement the actions contained in this plan. Without committed individuals and steadfast support from the city, Weston will not reach its goal of building an active, vibrant downtown filled with activities and services to meet the needs of residents and visitors. **If community members work together to achieve their shared goals, there is no limit to what can be accomplished.** In spite of the many challenges Weston faces, the dedication, resilience, and collaboration demonstrated by the community throughout this planning process shows that **there is much for the community to be proud of, and much to be hopeful for in the future.**

Introduction

Weston was once a prosperous city, home to pioneers, farmers, and an active downtown. Today however, Weston faces many challenges common to communities throughout rural Oregon. Population decline, deteriorating historic building stock, vacant store fronts, limited employment opportunities, and a lack of essential services are challenges that the community

will need to address to restore the quality of life once enjoyed by Weston residents.

Despite these challenges, Weston also has many assets, both within city boundaries and not far beyond the backdoor. Historic buildings on Main Street, a rich pioneer history, and the city's friendly atmosphere all contribute to an idyllic



SERA Architects and Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC supported by Oregon TGM Program

rural setting that residents are proud of. Weston is also within 20 minutes of a number of regional attractions including Walla Walla wine country, Wildhorse Resort & Casino, the Blue Mountains, and Pendleton – home of the annual Pendleton Round-Up.

The key question for this small city is: How can Weston capitalize on these homegrown and regional assets in order to revitalize downtown and maximize the wellbeing of the community as a whole? While there is no silver bullet, *Reimagining Weston* outlines a path for the community to answer this very question.

Reimagining Weston is a community blueprint for future action. This plan is a proactive effort by Weston residents to shape the livability and prosperity of their community over the next 20 years. The community as a whole must work together to implement this plan. Without a truly collaborative effort, this plan runs the risk of collecting dust on a shelf in City Hall.

How can Weston capitalize on homegrown and regional assets in order to revitalize downtown and maximize the wellbeing of the community as a whole?



What is in this plan?

Section 1: Community Profile

The Community Profile provides an overview of Weston as it exists today. It is important for Weston to start with an understanding of where it is today in order to measure the success of the recommended revitalization strategies over time.

Section 2: Weston 2030

Before taking the necessary steps toward revitalization, the Weston community needed a clear, shared vision for the future. Weston 2030 fulfills this need by incorporating the values and aspirations of residents in an overarching vision statement and a series of ten supporting vision principles. Beyond helping the community articulate its future goals, Weston 2030 unites the ideas, energy, and efforts of government and engaged citizens.

Section 3: Revitalization Strategies

The revitalization strategies were developed through an extensive community engagement process which was guided by Weston 2030. A strategy is a specific area within revitalization that will set priorities and direction for specific investments and actions to be taken toward the community vision.

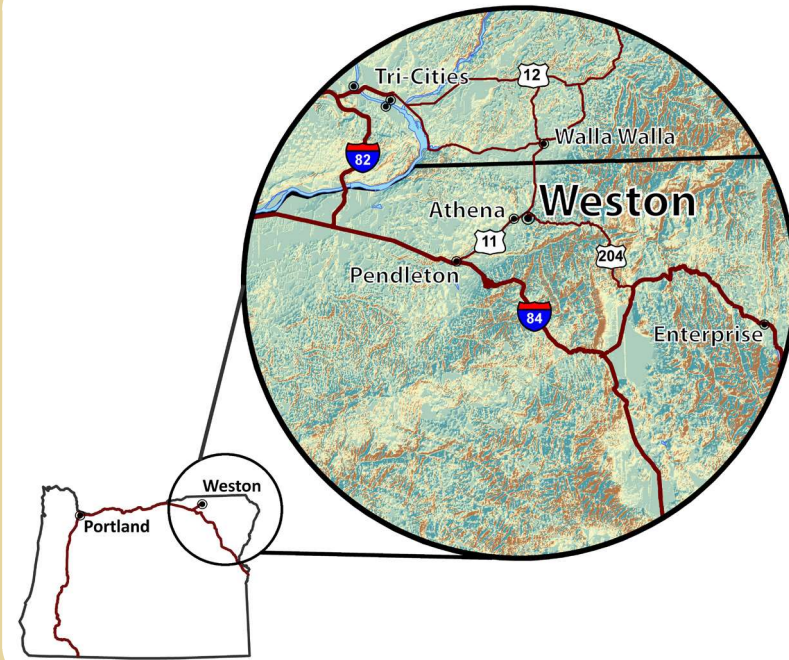
Section 4: Implementation Actions

The above strategies provide a frame for identifying specific action items that will move the community towards fulfilling Weston 2030. The recommended implementation actions are broken out into short, medium, and long term projects. The intent of *Reimagining Weston* is to focus on projects that the community can begin immediately. Successfully completed short term projects will act as catalysts for the sustained effort necessary to implement more complex medium and long term projects.



Community Profile

Geography



Weston is located in Umatilla County in the Northeastern corner of Oregon. The city lies in a small canyon along the meandering Pine Creek, at the foot of the Blue Mountains. The land surrounding Weston consists of gently rolling hills with farms and fields, in which wheat and peas are grown in abundance. Weston is located just south of the intersection of Oregon State Highways 11 and 204, approximately

20 miles northeast of Pendleton, 10 miles south of Milton-Freewater, and 20 miles south of Walla Walla, Washington. The city of Athena, with whom Weston shares a school district, is located just three miles to the west. Other cities in the region include Adams, Echo, Helix, Hermiston, Pilot Rock, Stanfield, Ukiah, and Umatilla. Pendleton is the county seat, and one of only two cities in Umatilla County with a population greater than 10,000.

The weather in and around Weston is generally mild. In the summer, few days will exceed 90 degrees. Winter has its fair share of nights below freezing. Nearby Pendleton averages 20 inches of snow and 100 days of measurable rainfall per year.

History

Weston has a long and proud history. Incorporated in 1878, it is the second oldest city in the county and for a time duelled with the city of Pendleton for the county seat. The city first served as a stage coach stop for travelers between Walla Walla and Baker City. A gold rush brought more settlers in the 1860s, who were later followed by farmers and ranchers. The



growing community continued as a service center for farmers in the region. Weston boasted many businesses to meet the needs of residents and the surrounding farm community, including banks, brothels, brick makers, and grocers. Clay is ubiquitous in the surrounding hills, and the historic buildings in downtown Weston were constructed from locally-produced bricks. The Eastern Oregon Normal School was located within Weston's city limits at one time, but has since relocated to La Grande where it became Eastern Oregon University. These shops and community gathering spaces made Weston's downtown a vibrant place to visit, shop, and conduct business.



Demographics

Weston's current population is 677, down from 717 in 2000, which is a 7 % decline. Since the 1950s, the city has alternated between periods of population gains and losses, but the current number of residents is not far from the 1950 population of 679. Weston is predominately white, though Hispanic and Native American populations comprise roughly 8% and 6% of the city's population, respectively. The Hispanic population used to represent a larger share of the population, but has declined in the last decade. One in eight residents is over the age of 65, which is consistent with the state of Oregon and the county. About 6% of Weston residents had a bachelor's degree in 2000.

Economy

The regional economy has historically been based on the natural resources available. To this day, agriculture forms a large part of the county's economy. In 2010, sales of



agricultural products equaled almost \$400 million. The largest crop, totaling one quarter of overall crop value, was wheat. Peas are also a significant crop in the region. In addition to agriculture, governmental services, manufacturing, tourism, and tribal and local services all play a significant role in the local economy.

Weston's economic history is similar to that of Umatilla County. The city of Weston is still surrounded by farms, although the downtown is no longer oriented toward the needs of the agricultural community. Today Weston faces many of the same pressures as other small towns in America. Long-time residents feel the loss of the highway that used to run through downtown. After it was moved, the city lost both a steady stream of traffic and access to significant transportation funding opportunities from the state. The empty buildings and vacant lots lining Main Street are stark reminders of the economic challenges facing the city.



Two large companies are located in Weston. Smith Frozen Foods has been a longtime resident of the city. ConAgra (formerly Lamb Weston) frozen food plant occupies an adjoining facility. The companies are the two largest of the few employers in the city of Weston. According to the state, Smith has between 250-499 employees, while ConAgra has between 100-249. Both companies rely on a largely Hispanic workforce that commutes from outside of town. Very few residents from Weston work at the plants. Management level staff members live outside of the city as well. The firms' success has continued in spite of the decades-long regional decline of the frozen food industry. In the past, pea harvests would bring hundreds of workers into town annually.



Consolidation and mechanization have eliminated many of those jobs and the cash they brought with them.

Regional Assets

The population of the greater region continues to grow due to employment and housing opportunities for new residents. The scenic beauty of the region and ample recreation opportunities of the Blue Mountains offer an attractive quality of life for long-time residents, newcomers, and visitors alike. There are many nearby cultural amenities, such as the Pendleton Round-Up and Pendleton Woolen Mills, the Wildhorse Resort & Casino, the Tamastlikt Museum of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the famed Walla Walla wine country.

Weston has good access to higher education. Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton, Walla Walla University, Walla Walla Community College, and Whitman College in Walla Walla all serve the greater Columbia Plateau Region. Several of these institutions stress their responsiveness to local business needs when it comes to workforce readiness training and business education.

Government and Other Public Services

Headquartered in Weston, the all-volunteer East Umatilla County Rural Fire Protection District (R.F.P.D.) covers an estimated 270 square mile area. Weston has its own Police Department located in City Hall on Main Street, with two full-time officers. The Police Department works closely with Athena to ensure the safety of local citizens.

The cities of Weston and Athena share a highly-regarded school district. Weston Middle School is located in Weston, while Athena Elementary School and Weston McEwen High School are located in Athena. All three schools received an “outstanding” grade from the state in the most recent assessment.

The Weston Public Library, located on Main Street, has a





number of reading programs geared towards young children along with a weekly story time. It also has public computers available for use and a GPS unit that can be checked out. At the library, adults can gain computer skills and enjoy a book club in the winter months. The library houses an impressive collection of carefully archived photographs and other historic documents.

Public transportation is limited in the region, but the residents of Weston do have access to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's transit system through the "Walla Walla Whistler" route. This bus runs through the city several times a day and connects to Pendleton, Walla Walla and other cities in the region. There is also a regional airport and an inland port in the city of Umatilla.

The city generally has good access to utilities. The municipalities of the region depend on basalt aquifers for their water usage. These aquifers sufficiently recharge on a yearly basis, and thus it appears present levels of water demand will remain sustainable. However, local jurisdictions have rights to greater amounts of water than the aquifers are ultimately capable of recharging, which will necessitate future coordinated management to ensure collective usage remains sustainable on a regional scale. Cities in Umatilla County rely on cheap hydroelectric power to meet energy needs. This region is also a leader in state-wide wind power generation. A recent proposal to site wind turbines near Weston revealed that the matter is a subject of great controversy among residents.

Access to quality and reliable internet service is a challenge for Weston. Service providers have yet to provide adequate solutions to address reported unsatisfactory internet speeds,



a situation which imposes a substantial challenge for existing and potential businesses. This is not uncommon for rural communities who lack the infrastructure for the fast internet services available in larger cities.

Main Street

“Downtown” to most residents is the city core, comprised of one and two story commercial buildings along Main and Water Streets. Pine Creek runs through the downtown area and under Main Street, although there is no formal public access to



this natural resource. Other downtown amenities include a small rose garden and the community’s Heritage Wall. An inactive water fountain which once stood in the middle of Main Street is now located at the west end of downtown.

Most of the city’s businesses are located on one of these two streets. Suzi’s Market, a credit union, an automotive repair shop, and an antiques store are located along Water Street. Main Street has City Hall, the post office, the public library, two restaurants, Public Affairs Research Consultants (PARC) Resources, the Police and Fire Departments, and Memorial Hall. Memorial Hall serves as an event and meeting space for people and organizations throughout the region. Many Weston residents must leave town for access to employment opportunities basic services including groceries, banking, and health care.

The few opportunities available for residents and tourists to buy goods and services in town limit the effectiveness of additional local spending. If there were more businesses in town, money spent at one store could then in turn be spent as wages and purchases from other local businesses. The greater the ability to buy things locally, the more chance the money has to spread and multiply through the community. In Weston today, a dollar gained is mostly spent on goods and services outside of the community and is unlikely to return.

Many of the buildings in Weston’s charming downtown core date back to the 1880s. Approximately 3.23 acres

The greater the ability to buy things locally, the more chance the money has to spread and multiply through the community.



and 13 structures in downtown Weston are designated as a “Commercial Historic District” in the National Historic Register. Many of the commercial buildings are two story, Italianate brick masonry buildings built with Weston’s local, wood fired brick. Storefronts dominate the street level, with storage or residences above. The lone stick built cottage is the city’s library, but dates from the same period as the surrounding brick buildings.



Unfortunately, the downtown building stock is in varying levels of deterioration from decades of underinvestment.

A few of the buildings facades are noticeably sagging. Some vacant storefronts along Main Street would take substantial renovation to make them appropriate for use. The Saling House, a historic building on Water Street, is in dire need of repair. The City has already initiated phased efforts to complete important repairs to City Hall. The considerable investment necessary to rehabilitate the buildings is a significant barrier to starting a business in downtown Weston.

A streetscape project completed along two blocks of Main Street between 2004 and 2008 provided new sidewalks, lamp posts, trees, trashcans, benches, as well as decorative fencing along the creek. Water Street remains in need of infrastructure improvements. It lacks sidewalks and lighting, despite being at the heart of a small, walkable community. This is especially significant because it is the connection between Main Street’s businesses and the city park a few blocks up Water Street.

Political Structure

Weston’s mayor and four city councilors are elected to four year terms. The political landscape in the city has been turbulent for nearly two decades. Due to the small population and Oregon state law , recalls of city officials can be initiated



by just a handful of citizens. In the early 2000s, a petition with only 29 signatures was sufficient to start the process. As such, there has been one successful recall of a mayor and multiple attempts to recall other mayors and council members. The continuing political turmoil and repeated recall efforts have contributed to a high turnover rate among city officials, with multiple resignations of council members and mayors.

There are few incentives for volunteers to engage in community processes when outcomes are so uncertain. As a result, it has become difficult to lay out a program, finish a project, or secure funding. This uncertainty may also deter qualified individuals interested in civic engagement from ever participating. The members of the community who are willing to take on initiatives are stretched very thin and are unable to take on additional tasks. Organizations are likewise limited by lack of time, coordinated direction from the community, and restricted resources.

Local Organizations

The city has a number of organizations that work to improve the quality of life in Weston:

- The **Weston Community Development Committee** (WCDC) works to improve downtown and the fabric of the city. WCDC implemented the Heritage Wall, successfully secured grant funding for the Main Street streetscape improvement project, and is working to build new “pocket park” amenities behind City Hall, among other projects.
- The **Historic Landmarks Commission** works to protect the historic nature of the city of Weston. It acts as a liaison between state agencies and the city of Weston on historic preservation issues. In 2011 the city of Weston adopted city ordinance language and became a Certified Local Government under the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
- The **Weston Historical Society** is currently recording the oral history of the city and continues to work with the library to digitize and archive historic photographs and documents.
- The **Saling House Committee** was formed to raise money for this local historic landmark. It aims to restore the building and eventually find a new use for



it. This Committee operates under the Umatilla County Pioneers Association.

- The **Local Community Revitalization Committee (LCRC)** serves Athena and Weston families who encounter a crisis or extraordinary hardship. They offer assistance to those in need in a variety of capacities.
- The **Umatilla County Pioneers Association** plans the annual Pioneer Picnic celebration. Established in 1892, the picnic is Weston's most well-known event.



SERA Architects and Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC supported by Oregon TGM Program

- The **Weston Chamber of Commerce** supports local businesses and runs community functions, including the annual Chamber Dinner to acknowledge the citizen and educator of the year, among others.
- The local churches are very organized and active in the community. They provide programs for youth, support for families in need, and are

active in the city and surrounding community in many ways.

What is Weston already doing well?

Weston has demonstrated creativity, cooperation, and leadership in several recent projects. It is important that the community recognize and celebrate these achievements. Small steps toward building community assets and collaborative working relationships are critical to the developing capacity and momentum within the community. The following are recent successes worth highlighting.

- **Community Garden:** Weston residents and downtown employees are collaborating to begin a community garden in the vacant lot immediately north of Suzi's Market on Water Street. The community has reportedly received donations of gardening materials from Home Depot. To support this effort, the City has provided a water meter at no cost for a trial period of one season. This is an exciting project in the heart of Weston. Community gardens provide opportunities for collaboration, education, recreation, and a fresh source of healthy, locally-grown food for residents.



- **Code Enforcement:** Weston’s City Council is currently working with a consulting company to revise the City Code so that ordinances are legally-enforceable. Residents have expressed much frustration about private property owners who do not maintain their property. Stronger code language will allow Weston’s Police Department to enforce the code when necessary, specifically for immobile vehicles and debris. The long term goal of this effort is to improve the overall appearance of the city, which will in turn improve community pride and reputation.



- **City Hall Restoration:** Weston’s City Council has contracted engineering studies and structural reinforcement of the historic City Hall building. The City Council chose to invest in this effort after the public indicated that preservation of this structure was a priority. Once completed, the project may serve as an example and learning opportunity for other property owners considering historic reinforcement or restoration for their historic buildings.
- **League of Oregon Cities (LOC):** The City of Weston participates as a member of Region 7, an organization of small Eastern Oregon jurisdictions that meet to discuss issues of regional significance. Leaders swap information and collectively voice concerns to the Oregon State Legislature. It is critical that Weston maintain communication and relationships with other rural jurisdictions throughout the region.



This plan elaborates on concepts, values, and ideas embedded in previous planning efforts.

Planning Context

Like many rural communities, planning efforts in Weston have been either state mandated or ad hoc as funding opportunities arose. It is important to note that this plan is intended to closely align with existing plan documents, while guiding community discussion and investment toward an enhanced quality of life. *Reimagining Weston* is not intended to replace any previous planning efforts in the city of Weston. This plan elaborates on concepts, values, and ideas embedded in previous planning efforts. The following bullet points provide brief descriptions of each of the major planning documents on the shelf in Weston's City Hall. These are all public documents and are available upon request.

- **Weston Comprehensive Plan (2005):** The Comprehensive Plan is the guiding document for the city's development over the next 20 years. All Oregon cities and counties are legally required to have comprehensive plans which are acknowledged by the state to be consistent with the 19 goals of Oregon's statewide land use program. The Comprehensive Plan provides goals, objectives, and policies to guide decision-making in Weston. The plan addresses citizen participation, economic development, housing, and farmland, among other topics. All plans and policies adopted by the City of Weston must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Weston Transportation System Plan (TSP) (2001):** The TSP is the transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan, designed to guide transportation infrastructure maintenance and development over the next 20 years. The TSP addresses all facilities and projects within the city of Weston Urban Growth Boundary (UGB). This document also includes a list of projects the City will work toward accomplishing over the 20 year timeframe.
- **Weston Zoning Ordinance (2001):** Weston's Zoning Ordinance provides guidelines for development within the city. Land within the city of Weston is zoned to provide an appropriate balance of residential, commercial, and industrial development.
- **Resource Team Report for Weston, Oregon (2006):** This document is a technical assistance report prepared by the Oregon Downtown Development Association



(ODDA). It addresses town center planning through a business mix analysis, with community and economic development recommendations. To date, it has not been adopted by City Council.

- **Weston Infill Plan and Buildable Lands Inventory (BLI) (2007):** The Infill Plan identifies opportunities for development on public and private, vacant, and underutilized land within Weston’s residential and commercial zones.
- **Athena-Weston School District Safe Routes to School and City of Weston Historic Main Street Revitalization (2011):** This document was funded through Oregon’s Transportation Growth Management (TGM) Program to identify opportunities to improve the safety of children’s routes to schools within the district. A second component of this project provides initial revitalization recommendations for historic downtown Weston.
- **Historic Landmarks Code (2011):** The Weston City Council adopted a Landmarks Ordinance to outline protections for designated historic properties in town and form the Historic Landmarks Commission. They also took additional steps to qualify to become a Certified Local Government under Oregon’s Historic Landmarks Program. Certified Local Governments have jurisdiction over historic property listing and design review. They also qualify for technical and funding assistance from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
- **Weston City Hall Feasibility Study (2011):** PARC Resources was commissioned by the City to undertake this study after Weston residents showed support for the restoration of the historic City Hall building during a community meeting in the fall of 2010. PARC’s Feasibility Study identifies the most appropriate uses for the vacant portions of the building, including the rear ground floor “Gizmo” space and the entire second story.



Planning Process Overview

The planning process behind *Reimagining Weston* sought to engage a broad cross-section of community stakeholders. This was essential to build trust among participants and increase the likelihood that the final plan would be useful and reflect the interests of Weston residents. Over the five month duration of this planning process, 11 separate events or meetings were held in Weston. Weekly communication with the client by phone provided an important means of information sharing and ongoing coordination. The following sections will further explain the nature of the planning process and public outreach undertaken for the purposes of developing this plan.

General Communication

An effective, multi-faceted communication strategy was deemed essential to overcoming the challenges created by the distance of the team from the community. Multiple means of communicating with stakeholders, advertising upcoming events, and soliciting and responding to feedback were devised for the planning process.



Internet. The official website for the project is www.planweston.com. A website was purchased, developed, and maintained to establish an online presence as a means of informing interested parties about the planning process, providing updates, advertising upcoming events, and receiving feedback. A page for the project was also created on the social media website Facebook as an alternate method of outreach.

Email Address. An email address, planweston@gmail.com, was created for this project. It was used for communication with advisory committees and stakeholders, and as a means of receiving and responding to input and questions. The email address was publicized on all fliers, business cards, and websites.



Phone Number. The team created a new phone number to provide an additional method of receiving feedback or responding to questions from residents, stakeholders, or other interested parties who were unable to attend public outreach events, did not have internet access, or simply preferred using this method of contact. The phone number was advertised on fliers, business cards, and project websites.

Newspaper Articles. The Eastern Oregonian and Union Bulletin newspapers publicized information about public workshops in Weston. Two separate articles covering the planning process appeared in the Eastern Oregonian in March and April.

City and Police Newsletters. Information regarding the planning process, including project updates and information about upcoming events and workshops, were regularly presented in monthly editions of the newsletters prepared by the City and

Police Department. These newsletters are one of the chief means of communication between City officials and Weston residents. They are made available to the public in a variety of locations including community bulletin boards, City Hall, and the post office.

Fliers. Fliers were created and posted throughout downtown Weston to advertise each public outreach event or workshop, and included the project phone number, email address, and website. Posting locations included Central Station, Long Branch Café and Saloon, City Hall, and the Post Office.

Business Cards. Business cards were designed and printed to hand out to interested individuals to raise awareness of the planning process and publicize upcoming events. The cards were available at several locations in downtown Weston, and passed out during public outreach and engagement efforts.

City's vision gaining clarity

Story Comments Share Print

Tweet 0 Share Recommend Be the first of your friends to recommend

Posted: Sunday, April 3, 2011 12:08 am
By SAMANTHA TIPLER
East Oregonian | 0 comments

In 20 years, Weston wants to be a thriving community. It will be a place that meets the daily needs of its residents and visitors...

Those are words from a draft of students from Portland State University and the City of Weston team have developed w

It also describes the future Weston, combining "historic charm with tradition and community pride."

The students have been working with residents, city council, the local commission, the library, the historical society and citizens to develop this vision. The combination of 20 interviews and a workshop meeting held on March 20th...

"It was really asking people to r

Photo contributed by Portland State University students



Outreach

Initial public outreach efforts focused on two central questions: Where have we been? Where are we now? Members of the public were engaged to learn the community's perspective on the political, historical, social, cultural, and economic forces which shaped Weston's past, and provide the present-day context for this planning process. Initial outreach and communication presented an important opportunity for local knowledge and trust-building, identifying formal and informal networks, and ensuring that outreach strategies remained sensitive to community needs. Outreach conducted later in the planning process built on the past and present by asking the community: Where do we want to go? How do we get there? The following sections will describe in detail the outreach efforts undertaken throughout the planning process.



Interviews. More than 25 in-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with local business owners, community leaders, City officials, and other key stakeholders during the initial phases of the planning process. The questions varied with the interviewee's affiliation and expertise, but common categories included:

- Weston Community
- Government
- Infrastructure
- History
- Education
- Employment
- County and Region
- Business
- Planning
- Development
- Downtown
- Environment
- Tourism
- Arts and Music
- Recreation

The interviews provided critical insight into many aspects of Weston, such as local government policies and procedures, communication between individuals and organizations, barriers to economic development and business recruitment, sources of community pride, and helpful suggestions for engaging the community at large.



Coffee Talks. Two separate events were held to elicit input from the community in an informal setting. The design of these events, dubbed ‘Coffee Talks,’ was drawn from suggestions made by community leaders and stakeholders who advised that large, formal events would result in neither the desired turnout nor candid feedback. Instead, the owners of Central Station and the Long Branch Café and Saloon graciously agreed to host weekend Coffee Talks within their establishments. This created a comfortable atmosphere which allowed members of the public to share their perspectives in an informal, one-on-one setting. It also guaranteed that feedback from members of the public who might avoid large public meetings could be included. Community members were asked to share their thoughts on the following questions:



1. Do you live/work in Weston? What brings you downtown today?
2. What do you like most about the region? Downtown?
3. How important are the historic brick buildings to downtown Weston?
4. What type of business or activity would you like to see downtown?
5. What is your vision for downtown Weston?

All participant responses were kept anonymous, but recorded and used to inform the rest of the process.

Best Practices

A unique aspect of this plan is the variety of disciplines encompassed within the revitalization strategies. To ensure the strategies reflect current and sound theory and practice, extensive research was conducted during all phases of the planning process in disciplines relevant to the development of the final plan document. This included:

- Public Involvement and Citizen Participation
- Facilitation and Visioning
- Historic Preservation
- Rural Planning, Governance, and Policy



- Economic Development
- Main Street Revitalization
- Tourism Planning and Development
- Small Business Development

Research. Scholarly journals, publications, white papers, plans, and reports detailing best practices in the above fields as they pertain to rural communities were researched and used to inform many facets of the planning process. Specific individuals such as mayors or planning staff members from other small cities throughout the region were also approached for short interviews about their city, area of expertise, and experience with revitalization efforts.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). An ad hoc committee of experts in the above disciplines was formed for the purpose of providing advice and critical feedback throughout the planning process. Various members of the TAC were consulted as the need for their expertise arose.

Weston Advisory Committee



The Weston Advisory Committee (WAC) was convened to ensure that the strategies included in this plan reflect the perspectives and interests of the community. To achieve this goal, a diverse group of key stakeholders were invited to serve on the WAC, including representatives from:

- City Council
- Planning Commission
- Weston Community Development Committee
- Local Business
- Public Works
- Public Safety
- Public Library
- Historic Landmarks Commission



- Weston-Athena School District
- General Public

The WAC met three times to provide input on the Community Vision, Revitalization Strategies, and Implementation Actions. All WAC meetings were open to the public.

Public Workshops



Visioning. The public was invited to create a vision for Weston’s future in the first public workshop. The first WAC meeting was subsequently held to provide additional feedback on a draft vision crafted from the information obtained in the first workshop.

Revitalization Strategies and Implementation Actions. The public was invited to a second workshop to comment on the draft vision and to assist with identifying revitalization strategies that support Weston’s community vision (Weston 2030). Two subsequent WAC meeting were designed to refine and prioritize revitalization strategies and identify specific implementation actions.



Weston 2030 – A Portrait of Weston’s Future

Weston 2030 is a snapshot of the city of Weston 20 years from today. It is the first vision statement in the city’s history. By reflecting on Weston’s past and present, Weston 2030 is an ideal portrait of the community in the future. The values and aspirations of the community are embodied within the vision, which will continue to serve as a guide for Weston’s present and future revitalization efforts.



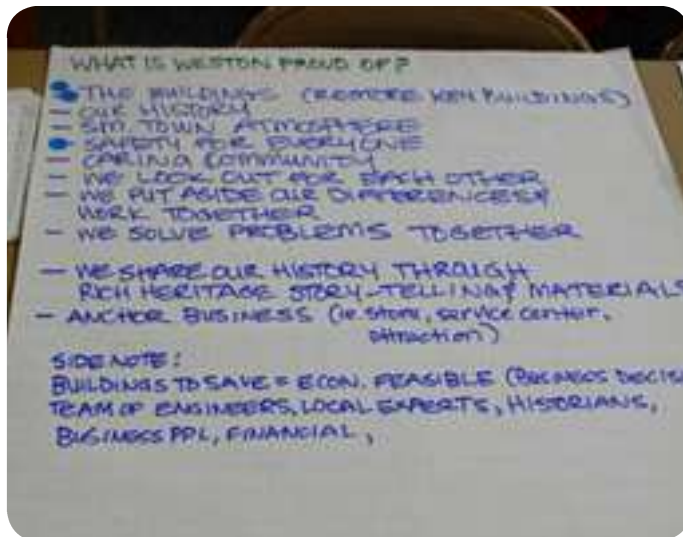
Crafting the Vision

Weston 2030 was developed from a wide range of community input. As previously described, a variety of options were available for the public to contribute, including interviews, Coffee Talks, Public Workshops, WAC meetings, and feedback by phone, email, or project website.

The information obtained from the interviews and Coffee Talks first served to illuminate Weston’s rich history. It was crucial to understand how the past shaped the community in order to appropriately frame discussion of Weston’s future. Residents’ in-depth knowledge of their community provided a realistic and comprehensive foundation upon which to imagine their ideal future.

The first public workshop and first WAC meeting were the principle venues where the community outlined and documented their vision. It was crafted from extensive community feedback, documented in its entirety in Appendix B. To aid in articulating their vision, community members





were asked a series of targeted questions that challenged them to imagine different aspects of their city in the year 2030. Questions were organized around the following seven topic areas:

1. What is Weston proud of?
2. What does downtown look like?
3. Who does downtown serve?
4. What events do you see downtown?
5. What are Weston's important natural features?
6. What are people doing for recreation?
7. Are visitors coming to Weston?

The following overarching vision statement provides a broad description and summary of the community's ideas for the future.



Weston: Yesterday's Stories, Tomorrow's Town

"In the year 2030...Downtown Weston is the commercial heart of a small, friendly, thriving community. Weston serves the daily needs of the local residents, while providing an intriguing destination for visitors. Downtown combines historic charm with the vitality of local tradition and community pride."

The following ten principles focus on the values and priorities identified by the Weston community. Each statement provides direction for Weston as the city moves forward in developing and implementing revitalization strategies.

Downtown Weston is small, but prosperous.

The storefronts along Main and Water Streets are occupied by **diverse, successful businesses** and services that meet the **daily needs** of residents.

Downtown Weston feels friendly, comfortable, and safe.

Familiar faces add vitality to Main Street. Weston's downtown **serves an inclusive, intergenerational population**. There are activities for youth and services available for the elderly. The Weston community **comes together** to solve problems, support each other, and promote the city's well being and health. **Community pride** is demonstrated through the care and maintenance of public and private property.

Weston's school system continues to provide a quality education for K-12 students.

The Weston-Athena School District provides a robust curriculum that **enables students to achieve** their aspirations upon graduating from high school. Young



families are attracted to live in Weston due to the high caliber education offered by the school district.

Weston shares its rich pioneer and agricultural history and heritage.

A museum and informational materials provide a glimpse into Weston's past. The city has **preserved and restored key historic buildings** through a collaborative process and wise business decisions. The community **celebrates its past** through archived photos and documents, the celebrated fountain, heritage wall, and public art.

Weston has a mix of eclectic buildings and spaces.

Newer buildings in downtown Weston are constructed of similar height, style, and materials to the existing historic buildings. Multiple city **parks serve as safe community play spaces** for people of all ages. Sidewalks tie the downtown core to nearby neighborhoods, specifically along Water Street.

Downtown is home to frequent community gatherings and events.

Downtown Weston is **active** with farmers markets, flea markets, and street parties. The **community comes together** for holiday celebrations and annual festivals. Beloved events such as Pioneer Days and the Potato Show continue to thrive, while new creative holiday events and traditions are introduced.

Weston enjoys a strong connection to regional assets.

Weston takes advantage of its proximity to nearby regional attractions including, the **scenic beauty of the Blue Mountains**, the bounty of the surrounding croplands, and the abundant wildlife. It also draws on **regional economies and events**, including the Pendleton Round-Up and Walla Walla wine country.



Downtown Weston is welcoming to visitors.

Weston takes advantage of its location in the greater Northeast Oregon region, as both a **pass-through and destination** location for travelers. Weston draws visitors with abundant regional recreation opportunities, unique festivals, and **small town atmosphere**. Visitors are supported by overnight accommodations, restaurants, and shops. The community promotes itself on the internet and collaborates with regional tourism initiatives.

Transportation options are available for all Weston residents.

Residents can safely travel to regional services through a variety of transportation options. These options include car, regularly scheduled buses, on-demand services, and bicycle. Sufficient traveler information is available for Weston residents to schedule their daily transportation needs.

Weston offers a variety of job opportunities for residents.

The city has implemented plans and policies that attract employers and enable them to locate in the city. **Living wage jobs** are available so that young people are able stay and others may return to once again **find work in the community**.



Revitalization

Weston 2030 lays out the broad vision for where the community will be in 20 years. To translate this vision statement into action, the community was asked to identify a set of revitalization strategies. These are focus areas that provide direction for energy, investments, programs, and projects that will be carried out to revitalize the community.

What is Revitalization?

Revitalization is about improving the lives of local citizens and creating opportunity. Revitalization brings together concepts from economic development, community development, and historic preservation.



There are two basic approaches to revitalization. One focuses on making the current citizens more productive and the city a better place to live. This can include job training, assisting entrepreneurs with creating business plans, investing in city beautification, or undertaking street improvements and other infrastructure projects. The underlying concept is to build upon the assets of the community to create a livable, attractive place. The second method concentrates on bringing new businesses and activities into a town from outside. This plan mainly focuses on the first strategy: ways to empower Weston to enhance its own unique characteristics by building on what it has today.

What would Revitalization Look Like?

Successful revitalization means not just restored buildings that are home to new businesses, but a better standard of living for the citizens of Weston. It could mean more computers in the library and a place for the youth and elders to gather. It could mean medical care for the elderly, or a bank, grocery store, and other services that would save residents a trip to Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, or Walla Walla. It could also mean events that enrich a community and attracts new and young families. When businesses are added, travelers can



Revitalization is about improving the lives of local citizens...



*A better place to live
is a better place for
business.*

spend their money in local shops. Those shops in turn can invest more money locally, which will generate more income throughout the community. A better place to live is a better place for business.

Most productive revitalization programs are long term efforts that build on incremental improvements. Many small scale projects may not appear to be helping business development initially, but in the long run they will make a difference. After a while, these efforts gain momentum and create a self-sustaining cycle of improvement which creates a place where businesses will be successful. There is no singular fix that will create these conditions overnight, as the citizens of Weston know, but reaching success is possible. Revitalization, ultimately, is multifaceted and requires a long-term commitment, organization, and a common image of the future.



Weston's Revitalization Strategies

A strategy is a specific area within revitalization that will set priorities and direction for specific investments and actions to be taken toward the vision described in Weston 2030.

Input was drawn from community events and interviews to identify the strategies most appropriate for Weston. Two events specifically focused on finding and narrowing these strategies. First, the second public workshop included an exercise that gave participants an opportunity to prioritize strategies the community had suggested during previous outreach. Second, participants at the second WAC meeting



were asked to narrow the list of strategies to five areas. The final set of strategies were chosen and vetted through each of the vision principles.

The five strategies chosen by the community are:

1. **Provide high quality infrastructure and local government services.** The community highlighted infrastructure as necessary to revitalizing Weston. This was defined by the community to include sewer, water, roads, and utilities. It also includes public safety, good government, a healthy school system, a successful library, and many other services. This strategy should be interpreted broadly to include necessary conditions to creating a good place to live and a good place to do business.



2. **Make the appearance of the city a priority and a source of community pride.**

This strategy was chosen to promote a clean, attractive, lively atmosphere in Weston. Since a visitors' first impression and residents' daily experience is the care and condition of public and private properties, this visual manifestation of the pride that the community feels in their hometown is an important consideration. Beyond pride, an inviting atmosphere promotes public health by encouraging people to walk through town. Additionally, the work already done along Main Street with decorative lampposts, sidewalks, and street trees was identified as an example of the community taking pride in its appearance. These and other efforts supporting this strategy will convey to potential business owners, residents, and visitors the commitment the people of Weston have to their town.

3. **Attract visitors to town.** Visitors already come to Weston for many reasons. They travel by car, motorcycle, or bicycle. Some pass through town on the way to the recreation opportunities in the Blue Mountains. Others come to Weston for Pioneer Days, the Potato Show, or other fun events happening in town. People visit from nearby towns for great places to eat, a welcoming public library, and shops to visit. Many are interested to hear Weston's story



told through its historic buildings and other efforts that reveal Weston's pioneer and agricultural history. These are all groups that Weston wants to attract with their friendly, small town atmosphere and local businesses. These visitors will bring resources into town, which will stay in Weston and multiply as local people can invest in creating small businesses and in turn spend money locally. This strategy is important because it will bring resources into Weston and allow the economy to grow.



- 4. Preserve and Promote Weston's Heritage.** Downtown Weston was placed on the National Historic Register as a Historic Commercial District in 1982. Today, this commitment to preserving and protecting the town's heritage still remains strong. These buildings and their stories will be a valuable resource for attracting visitors to town both because of their charm and the historical legacy they preserve. The agricultural and pioneer history of the community and many of the families that remain in town are an important source of community pride and identity. Beyond the buildings, Weston's heritage is also preserved through oral history, historic photos, documents, and artifacts maintained in private collections throughout the region. These ties to the past can help build a future for current residents if they are shared and celebrated.
- 5. Regional Collaboration.** Working with neighboring communities and will provide many benefits for Weston and its future partners. This strategy is seen as a way to link together efforts to attract visitors to the region, increase Weston's regional visibility, and spread its reputation as an interesting, inviting town. Partnering with other regional organizations and cities will make better use of tourism





and marketing resources to further these efforts. Building relationships with other jurisdictions will give Weston a chance to learn about how successful programs were implemented and how challenges were overcome. These ties can improve the daily lives of residents by bringing new ideas into town for local government and share the welcoming, small-town atmosphere Weston has to offer with potential visitors.

These broad strategies should guide Weston’s revitalization efforts. They support each of the Weston 2030 vision principles, and highlight priorities identified by the community. With these strategies as a framework, the next section of this report will identify actions that the City of Weston, community organizations, and residents should take to help revitalize downtown Weston. In the end, these are really just stepping stones to move Weston toward its vision of a friendly, thriving downtown that showcases the community’s pride to visitors and serves the needs of its residents.

SERA Architects and Cogan Owens Cogan, LLC supported by Oregon TGM Program

These broad strategies should guide Weston’s revitalization efforts.



Implementation Actions

A Roadmap to Revitalization

The implementation actions are the specific steps to support one or more of the revitalization strategies chosen by the community to achieve the vision described in Weston 2030.

Each action taken will make Weston a better place to live, bring more visitors to town, or celebrate the town's heritage. Some actions will seem more or less strongly associated with attracting investment into downtown, but each is tied to creating a livable place. Places that people want to spend time and settle down are places where businesses thrive. Investing in and capitalizing on Weston's assets will lead to a more active, welcoming downtown in the future.

The clear foundation the strategies and vision principles provide should enable the implementing parties to persuasively communicate the reasoning for specific projects and priorities to the community, volunteers, and prospective funders. The intent of identifying specific projects, programs, and partners in this section of the plan is to allow community members and organizations to easily evaluate the available projects and programs, and select one to get involved with and work to enhance their community.

How were actions chosen?

Each of the following implementation actions was evaluated with participants at the final WAC meeting based on specific criteria. The criteria used were derived from accepted planning practices and tailored to meet Weston's needs. The high rate of turnover in political office, the committed but small pool of volunteers, and the limited availability of resources were issues which surfaced during earlier conversations, and were incorporated into the application of the criteria. The criteria included:

1. Will the people of Weston support this? Is the project politically feasible?
2. Do we have the financial resources to complete this? What are possible funding sources?
3. Do we have people or organizational capacity to get



this done? Who will get this done?

4. Will this preserve or enhance the natural environment and community health?
5. What is the likely timeframe: 1-2 year? 2-5 years? 5-20 years?

These questions were asked about each project, and several actions were identified as feasible. How effective the actions would be in revitalizing downtown Weston was also an important consideration. Would each one support one of the strategies? Would it support at least one of the Weston 2030 vision principles? After these questions were answered, several implementation actions were identified for Weston.

Actions

The projects and programs identified were divided into short, medium, and long term actions to highlight the continuous nature of a revitalization process. Short term actions, one to two years, are within reach of the community given its current capacity and the financial climate. Medium term actions, two to five year projects, will require a sustained commitment from the community, greater resources, and organization. Lastly, large projects that require more funding and planning are placed in the long term category in order to allow the community to gain capacity before tackling them.

The projects within each of these time frames should happen concurrently. The processes for each of these categories should start as implementing actors organize, recruit other interested and vital participants, and begin to identify potential funding streams. The longer time frames are included to indicate those projects which will require more human capital, a sustained effort over a longer period of time, and larger sources of revenue to complete. For example, in order for the community to see new sidewalks on Water Street in five years, work should begin now to complete them.

In addition to time frames, each action includes a description

Investing in and capitalizing on Weston's assets will lead to a more active, welcoming downtown in the future.



The community should refer back to this document, and continue working together to find the next steps toward revitalizing downtown and achieving their vision for the community.

of the project or program. The descriptions are intended to give a clear picture of how the action can be implemented. They include an explanation of how each project supports revitalizing downtown Weston, a step-by-step process for moving forward with each project, and potential funding sources. Importantly, each project description identifies actors in the community to can assume a lead role in its implementation. Without committed individuals and organizations and steadfast support from the city to carry this plan forward, Weston will not reach its goal of an active, vibrant downtown filled with activities and services to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

As these actions are taken on by the actors identified and crossed off the list, the community should refer back to this document, and continue working together to find the next steps toward revitalizing downtown and achieving their vision for the community. This is not easy work – the community should celebrate each and every success along the way!



Implementation Actions			
Projects and Programs	Time Frame		
	Short (1-2 years)	Med. (2-5 years)	Long (5-20 years)
Strategy 1: Provide high quality infrastructure and local government services			
Provide a city webpage, newsletter, community calendar	X		
Institute an Oregon Main Street Program		X	
Construct phased sidewalk improvements along Water Street			X
Provide training for elected and volunteer leadership positions	X		
Structure a business incubator model in Weston			X
Institute Local Improvement Districts (LIDs) to pay for infrastructure			X
Strategy 2: Make the appearance of the city a priority and source of community pride			
Install flower baskets and banners on the downtown lamp posts	X		
Replace street trees along Main Street	X		
Increase lighting in the community		X	
Strategy 3: Attract visitors to town			
Host street dances	X		
Organize a farmers market	X		
Institute a new large annual event		X	
Provide accommodations for out of town visitors (RV park, B&B, motel, etc)			X
Organize a flea market	X		
Strategy 4: Preserve and Promote Weston's Heritage			
Provide informational boards and walking maps of historic landmark buildings	X		
Restore historic buildings (matching grants, code language)			X
Initiate a Weston Historic Museum			X



Install historic designation plaques on landmark buildings	X		
Design and commission a historic themed mural		X	
Restore the Saling House			X
Strategy 5: Regional Collaboration			
Collaborate on regional tourism marketing		X	
Connect Weston and Athena with a walking and biking trail paralleling the road			X
Build regional relationships	X		
Foster relationship with regional universities and colleges; host retreats and workshops			X
Collaborate with cities on a regional trail of interest for travelers (auto, motorcycle, cycling)			X

Please note that this is not a comprehensive list of actions. In trying to match projects to current resources, priorities had to be chosen. Projects identified as priorities are listed below with suggestions for how to move them forward. At the end of each section other projects and programs are listed with short descriptions. Although these were not selected as priority actions, they are included as a source of additional ideas to draw from as the community makes progress and completes the prioritized actions.



1. Short Term Actions (1 to 2 years)

These actions are meant to take place in a 1 to 2 year time frame. They require some organization and collaboration, but they should be within the current capacity of the community. Completion of these actions will demonstrate that local organizations and the city are taking clear, positive steps toward revitalizing downtown.

Action 1.A: Create a city website

Strategies: Attract visitors to town, provide high quality infrastructure and local government services, regional collaboration.

Purpose: Currently, the city government lacks a website of its own. A website would serve local residents, potential visitors, and partnering community and regional organizations.

The website would make government departments, committees, and services more accessible to Weston residents by providing information about how they function. In doing so, the website could supplement the monthly paper newsletter distributed by the City as a means of improving communication between the City and Weston's residents. The City could distribute information about new projects, post links to city zoning codes and statutes, allow citizens to print out common forms at home, and provide access to the city's planning documents. This would also be an opportunity to educate citizens about the leaders, decision-makers, and committees who represent the community, and how they personally might get involved in bettering their community through civic engagement.

The website would also provide information about Weston's history, attractions, and events. Trip planning research is often conducted on the internet. When a potential visitor searches for the town or for local amenities, the difficulty they experience finding useful information may deter them from leaving the highway to visit Weston. An informative, user-friendly, and frequently updated city website could remedy this situation and help establish a presence for internet users.

Lastly, the website will provide easy links to existing websites of partnering community organizations, including

A website would serve local residents, potential visitors, and partnering community and regional organizations.



the Weston Public Library, the East Umatilla R.F.P.D., the Weston Chamber of Commerce, the Pioneer Association, the Athena-Weston School District, nearby cities, and Umatilla County, among others. The webpage could also link to larger chambers of commerce and visitor associations in the region, including Pendleton, Walla Walla, and the Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA). The online links reinforce critical communication and strengthened relationships on community-wide and regional scales. In the future, the website may also host a regional community calendar to integrate the calendars for community meetings, school events, regional festivals, fundraisers, and events.

How To:

1. In order to establish a website, there are important steps to take prior to contacting a web designer/developer. The City should determine who the website is supposed to serve and what services should be offered. What exactly is the website supposed to do? Should it be easily accessible to city staff to maintain, or will the City contract with someone to do regular updates? Once the initial site is built, how will it be integrated into the region?
2. Establish a budget. Depending on how complex the website needs to be and the development expertise required to create it, costs can vary widely. Prices may range from under \$20 to several hundred dollars, depending upon the city's needs.
3. Determine content. Possible content may include city department and committee pages, easy links to partner organizations, public notices, important forms and documents, an "about Weston" section, and a community calendar, among other features.
4. After determining the content desired for the city website, the City should begin to search for appropriate technical assistance.

Funding: Since the website should be a function of the city government, it is recommended that the City provide funding from the general budget.

Additional Information: There are numerous municipal websites that offer good examples for Weston. Locally, the City of Joseph, Oregon offers a good example of a website with a straightforward design that provides basic information.



The City of Winthrop, Washington offers a good example of a small town website showing off its tourism potential.

City of Joseph: <http://www.josephoregon.org/index.php>

City of Winthrop: <http://www.winthropwashington.com/>

Action 1.B: Install banners and flower baskets on the Main Street lamp posts

Strategy: Make the appearance of the city a priority and a source of community pride.

Purpose: The purpose of this type of streetscape amenity is to strengthen the identity of a unique place through vibrant colors, logos, and messaging. Downtown banners and flower baskets on Main Street between Water and Broad Streets would bolster a sense of community pride for residents and contribute to the friendly, small town charm for visitors passing through town. These lamp posts amenities also provide an opportunity for Weston to implement a branding campaign as a means of beginning to market the community identity.

The downtown historic style street lamps were installed as a component of a streetscape improvement project that included sidewalks, trees, lamps, benches, decorative fencing, and trash cans. This project was undertaken in partnership by the WDCD and the City of Weston, with grant funding contributions from the AWERE and the Wildhorse Foundation. The existing lamp posts have arms that extend from either side of the pole. The City of Weston could install a flower basket and a banner on each of the 24 historic street lamps along Main Street.

- **Pole Banners:** The community should identify a logo, message, and color scheme that represents the city well. One image to consider would be the iconic pioneer wagon which is used consistently in Weston city signs. Many cities, including La Grande, Oregon, use pole banners to identify and celebrate the historic district of town. In the future, the city may wish to pursue additional sets of banners, including seasonal

Many cities, including La Grande, Oregon, use pole banners to identify and celebrate the historic district of town.





themes, event advertisement, or perhaps TigerScot colors and logos to show community support for the local school district (Go TigerScots!).

- **Flower Baskets:** Flower baskets can hang from the historic lamp posts 24 hours a day during the warmer months when the threat of frost has passed. Hearty, low-maintenance, vibrant species should be selected for the planters. Common selections for Main Street plantings in other communities include: begonia, lobelia, pansy, fuchsia, impatiens, geranium, verbena, and petunia, among others.

The flower baskets will require an initial planting and minimal maintenance throughout the season. Experienced communities recommend watering the baskets in the morning, fertilizing them once a week, and deadheading old blossoms.

How To:

1. Identify Partners. WCDC and the City should work together to enable access to different sources of funding, donations and volunteers.
2. Planning. The partners should collaborate to design a desirable street light amenity program, to include both banners and flower baskets. Both parties will need to agree upon a plan such that all supplies and expenses are carefully estimated up front and responsibilities are delegated.
3. Maintenance. In other Oregon examples of downtown hanging flower basket programs, a Public Works Department, a Main Street Organization, or a Downtown Business Association takes ownership of the maintenance tasks, occasionally contracting out for these services. The City should collaborate with WCDC and downtown businesses to identify a creative solution for sharing flower basket maintenance tasks. Should the City implement an Oregon Main Street program with a paid staff position, this task may fall under that staff purview. This task would potentially provide the community visibility, relationship building, and visitor assistance that a Main Street Manager would otherwise strive to achieve on a daily basis.



Funding: There are several alternatives to consider for funding this project. First, WCDC should submit a grant proposal for the acquisition of the initial funding to purchase the street banners, hanging planters, and plant materials. Possible grant sources include the Wildhorse Foundation and the AWERE fund. Second, some Oregon cities experiencing budget cuts have asked local businesses and community organizations to sponsor a flower basket or a block of flower baskets for the entire duration of a season (a single sponsorship fee covers the full season of maintenance or the organization donates the time to do so themselves). There are a couple of larger employers in Weston that may have the capacity to sponsor these amenities. Lastly, it may also be possible to have plant materials donated by a local business. Representatives from the City and WCDC should coordinate to speak with possible supporting companies. Potential donors to consider are local nurseries and garden centers. It is very important that all donation requests and grant applications across the committees and groups working within the city of Weston are coordinated.

Additional Considerations:

- If the recommendation for an amenity on every lamp post proves to be cost-prohibitive, the city should consider installing banners and planters on alternating lamp posts, symmetrically, along the two blocks of Main Street, or phasing the improvements in over the period of one or two years.
- If Weston pursues phased streetscape improvements on sections of Water Street, these sections should also be considered for the installation of historic street lamps with banners and hanging flower baskets.
- Hanging flower baskets were chosen over sidewalk planters because the community was concerned about the risk of vandalism to planter boxes along Main Street. Planter boxes along Main Street should not be ruled out, however. Many communities encourage downtown shop owners to maintain vibrant flower planters on a rolling base so that they can be moved indoors after business hours.



Main Street used to be defined by its mature, stately street trees

Action 1.C: Replace street trees on Main Street

Strategy: Make the appearance of the city a priority and a source of community pride.

Purpose: Older residents of the city of Weston remember how Main Street used to be defined by its mature, stately street trees, which most residents have only seen in historic photographs. The current street trees are fairly young, and are not well-suited to thrive under the local climate and conditions. As a result, most of the street trees along Main Street are dead or dying, display evidence of pest infestations or other afflictions, and do little to add to a vibrant, inviting downtown streetscape.



Removing the current street trees and replacing them with healthy specimens appropriate for the planter size and local climate will help Weston achieve its community vision in several ways. Healthy street trees will beautify and soften the downtown streetscape, contributing to a public space which is attractive and inviting to residents and visitors. Street trees also provide a number of important environmental services and aesthetic benefits to the surrounding community. Shading of buildings and calming of wind minimizes temperature extremes, which reduces heating and cooling expenditures by building owners. Removal of carbon dioxide and other air pollutants enhances ambient air quality. Tree canopies and root systems intercept stormwater, easing the burden on city stormwater infrastructure. Street trees also contribute to increased resale property values by enhancing the



attractiveness of properties to prospective property buyers, renters, and visitors. Finally, thriving street trees will provide a noticeable improvement to the streetscape, and provide an attainable first success upon which to build.

How To:

1. Identify Partners. Street trees are currently under the direction of the City. However, a non-profit in town such as WCDC could partner with the City to apply for donations and grant funding that is available to non-profits.
2. Tree selection. The first step is to identify a species of trees which might be appropriate for the available planter spaces and local conditions. Websites for organizations such as the Arbor Day Foundation or the Urban Tree Foundation provide lists of potential street trees, including suggestions for planter spaces with constraints such as a small size, or overhead wires. Examining recommended street tree lists from nearby towns, such as Walla Walla, Washington, or Pendleton, Oregon, is another method of determining potential street tree replacements.
3. Consult a professional. It is essential that a qualified professional, such as a certified arborist, be consulted prior to committing to a selection of replacement trees, to provide final approval. A representative from the Oregon Department of Forestry has already been contacted by the city to visit Weston to offer feedback on the existing street trees, and suggestions for proper replacements.
4. Purchase and plant. The final step is to purchase and plant the trees. Consider engaging volunteers to assist with planting, including youth from the local schools, members from churches, or community organizations.

Funding: City funds are one potential source of revenue. Large suppliers such as Home Depot and Lowe’s may offer discounts for bulk purchases, and Home Depot is willing to donate one tree for such projects. Grants are available from Home Depot and Lowe’s for funding such projects. As with all projects, donation requests and grant applications should be done in a consolidated effort.



Additional Information:

- Home Depot Foundation. Grants, up to \$5,000, are available to registered 501(c) (3) nonprofit organizations, public schools or tax-exempt public service agencies in the U.S. that are using volunteers to improve the physical health of their community. Grants are given in the form of The Home Depot gift cards for the purchase of tools, materials, or services.

<http://homedepotfoundation.org/how-we-help/grants.html>

- Lowes Charitable and Education Foundation. The Foundation provides funding only to 501(c) (3) tax-exempt nonprofit organizations and public agencies in communities where Lowe's operates stores and distribution centers.

http://www.lowes.com/cd_The+Lowes+Charitable+and+Educational+Foundation_474741445_



Action 1.D: Start a farmers market

Strategy: Attract visitors to town.

Purpose: Farmers markets consist of individual vendors selling vegetables, fruits, meat products, prepared foods, and/or craft goods in an outdoor space. In most communities across the U.S., farmers markets occur one day a week during the growing season – April to November. A farmers market can add value to Weston by attracting people downtown, allowing residents to buy healthy farm-direct produce, and by creating opportunities for consumers to spend money in locally owned businesses.



How To:

1. Identify partners and create an organizing committee. Transitioning a farmers market from an idea to a reality requires organizing the individuals who are essential to starting a market, including, growers, vendors, civic leaders, city and/or county staff, consumers, and potential sponsors. While there may not currently be one committee or organization in Weston that will serve the function of organizing a farmers market, the WCDC or the Chamber of Commerce are well suited to start the conversation. Weston should begin by hosting representatives from the cities of Weston and Athena, Athena's market organizers, the farming community, and local businesses to discuss the possibility of starting the market and identify individuals to begin forming a market organizing committee. Depending on the level of commitment from the community, a feasible time frame for bringing a farmers market to Weston is one year – summer 2012.
2. Establish interest. Consumer interest has been documented; the community would like a farmers market. The next step is contacting local farmers to gauge their interest. Again, looking to Athena's market for guidance will prove helpful in this search. If interest does exist, organizers should begin laying out a timeline and setting goals for the market, such as the number of potential vendors and the types of products that will be available. Depending on the level of interest, Weston may want to consider joining forces with Athena's farmers market and have each community host alternating Saturday markets. This would increase buying opportunities for consumers and consolidate market management activities for both communities.
3. Define market size. This step involves setting the number of booth spaces for known and potential vendors. Organizers should strive to match the supply of vendors with the amount of anticipated consumer demand to the greatest extent possible.
4. Find a location. Since the location will set the tone and atmosphere for the market, organizers will need to carefully select a site that promotes business and creates a welcoming environment for shoppers.



Location considerations include, but are not limited to, parking, public accessibility, public restrooms, zoning, weather protection, and room for expansion. Two possibilities in Weston are utilizing the vacant lot across from City Hall or temporarily closing down Main Street or a side street to automobiles. However, further research is needed to see if these are viable options.

5. Outline organizational structure. The first step in developing an organizational structure is designating a market manager - someone who will oversee market operations and deal with issues as they arise. With a manager identified, organizers need to then draft a set of market bylaws which will lay out rules for vendors, and establish other essential policies and procedures. Bylaws do not have to be as rigid as the name implies, but should at the very least provide clarity for market operations. During this time organizers should begin to consider the logistical and financial aspects of the market, including permitting, insurance, signage, marketing, etc. It should be noted that a well thought out marketing strategy is key to a successful farmers market. Weston will want to attract people from Pendleton and Walla Walla as well as people passing through. To save money, time, and effort Weston and Athena should collaborate on marketing efforts.

Additional Information:

- Oregon farmers market Association. A directory of all farmers markets in Oregon as well as information on organizing and operating a farmers market.

<http://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/index.html>

- Why farmers markets close. An OSU study describing risks associated with farmers markets and recommendations for ensuring success.

<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/sr/sr1073-e.pdf>

- USDA agricultural marketing service. A federal resource containing national farmers market data as well as information on starting and funding farmers markets.

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/farmersmarkets>

- Starting a farmers market. A Purdue University article that



outlines the process for planning, starting, and operating a farmers market.

<http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/EC/EC-739.pdf>

- Find Interested Farmers. Guidance on managing a farmers market including a list of sources for identifying interested farmers in Oregon.

http://www.oregonfarmersmarkets.org/mktnmgr/manager_allinfo.html

Action 1.E: Bi-monthly live music and dance events in Downtown Weston

Strategy: Attract visitors to town.

Purpose: A regular event during the summer could do much to improve the livability of downtown. Such an event would bring visitors to the city who would likely spend money on food, beverages and other goods and services. Showing off the fun side of the community could be a very effective advertising campaign. It would also create a new venue to showcase local talent, recruit talent from around the region, dance the night away, and enjoy the company of other community members. It would also bring life and activity to otherwise unused spaces. Additionally, this event could help to address one of the longstanding issues in Weston: the lack of activities for the younger generation. It would be a safe, fun environment for Weston's youth.



How To:

1. Identify an organizer. The first and most important thing is to commit to the event and find an individual who is willing to take charge. One person should not do all the work, but they can serve as the driving force behind the process. That person can organize a committee to assist in running the event. A few members of the Chamber of Commerce expressed interest in the event as a community fundraiser. Alternatively, the primary driver could come from the private sector, including local business owners.
2. Identify partners. A mix of implementers would



be necessary for the project to reach success. By making the event a chance to sell food, drinks or other services, the event could be a moneymaker and self-sustaining event for the community. The local restaurants or others in the community interested in food service would appear to be a natural choice for partners. Involving someone with ties to the local and regional music scene would be necessary to attract musical acts. Additionally, sound equipment will have to be furnished, and an experienced individual will be needed to manage sound during performances. The implementer could approach the school or the churches to find someone with this type of experience. Equipment may be rented, or perhaps donated for the event from local businesses or the schools. Youth should also be engaged to bring their ideas and support into the planning of these events.



3. Find and secure an appropriate venue. Much planning will be necessary, including ensuring adequate power for the sound system equipment, sufficient seating, and a dance floor. Main Street is a potential venue, which could be closed to vehicular traffic for the event. Alternatively, the

vacant lot next to the 7th Day Adventist building, across from City Hall, could be used. Residents may be willing to volunteer seating or donate hay bales. With the open lot, hay bales, and local musicians, the community could have an easily organized and low cost event.

4. Developing the mix of activities. There are many ways to make such events interesting and crowd-pleasing. They could incorporate face painting and other children's activities. Blues and jazz music are very popular in other events across the region and could draw in regional visitors. Additionally, local restaurants could be approached about acting as vendors. By providing food and drink, the event will be that much more enticing. Given the downtown's compact area,



it may not even be necessary to set up extra booths or spaces. If alcohol is to be served in an outdoor setting, event organizers typically need to secure the proper licenses through the Oregon Liquor Control Commission (OLCC). These are typically sponsored by a local business already in possession of a license to serve alcohol on their property.

5. Ensure close coordination with the Public Works and the Police Department. The implementer will have to work with the city to make sure that permits are handled correctly and that the city is in support. Any street closures will need to be well planned and traffic safely rerouted. Event organizers could seek to have power for the sound system equipment covered by the city, from the downtown streetlights outlets. If the event occurs on city property, the city would cover the liability. If the event is organized by a non-profit organization, however, the group would have liability coverage through their own insurance policy.

Funding: Resources for the event could come primarily in the form of volunteer hours. The implementer could also search for sponsors from the business community of Weston and the surrounding communities, such as breweries, restaurants, radio stations, or locally oriented enterprises.

Action 1.F: Provide historic information signage Downtown

Strategies: Preserve and promote Weston’s heritage, attract visitors to town.

Purpose: Creating prominent signage downtown to promote the community’s historic assets would be both feasible and supportive of the long term goal of telling Weston’s story. Currently, visitors who stop to grab a bite to eat in town might walk down Main Street to see the old brick and stick built buildings, but there is little information available about the stories behind the facades. Nothing explains the importance of the Weston brick and how its fabrication process makes it unique. There is no way to learn the story of the bank robbery in the City Hall building. There is no indication of the multiple fires that swept Main Street in the late 1800s. These and other stories will inform visitors about Weston in a way that connects them to downtown.

Currently, there is little information available about the stories behind the facades



Signs are an opportunity to build appreciation for important downtown buildings using historic photographs and explanations. This project could take the form of an information kiosk or a large interpretive sign placed in a prominent location in the downtown district. Multiple signs could tie into each other to tell the full account of the city's past. Additionally, a walking tour of downtown can be created



with simple, tri-fold brochures made for people to take along to read as they stroll.

How To:

1. Identify partners. Weston's Historic Landmarks Commission, the Weston Historical Society, the City, and the Weston Public Library should work together on this project in order to gather community knowledge and resources. Perhaps there is an opportunity to engage local youth in the project.
2. Select a site. The signage should be situated a prominent location in the downtown area. Locations should take into account significant historic sites, land availability, and ease of access to visitors passing through town. Possible sign locations might include the historic fountain and Heritage Wall, the Public Library, or Saling House. This process should bring the property owner on board as a partner if they are not already participating. Also, ensuring that city regulations are met when the display is sited is an important consideration.
3. Decide on sign content. Which stories will it tell? How



much detail? How does Weston's story balance with the individual building information (i.e. plaques)? The potential partners mentioned above should collaborate to draft this information and identify important buildings. If these decisions prove difficult, developing a list of criteria will help narrow decisions. These could include the buildings' historic significance to the community's story, its materials and their challenges to repair, colorful tales of mischief, or other criteria identified by partners.

4. Designing the board and walking maps. If the community lacks individuals with design experience willing to volunteer time, it may be necessary to hire a consultant to complete the layout and presentation of the board. The final design should incorporate any city branding efforts (e.g. logos) undertaken by the community.
5. Build and place the board. Finding a contractor, company, or community member willing to build the sign kiosk and place the sign.

Funding: Partnering organizations should use fundraisers, grant applications, or donations to cover the costs if the labor and fabrication of the signage. It may be possible to find companies and/or individuals willing to donate the tools, labor, or materials. This project could also be eligible for several grants through SHPO, based on its own merits and because the city is a Certified Local Government. This should be considered along with other historic preservation efforts when deciding which grants to seek. An example in the region is the Friends of Sumpter Valley Dredge. In 2009, they received a \$7,000 Oregon Heritage Grant that covered two awareness signs, a trail guide map, and an update to the website. Something like this might be a way for this effort to coordinate with some of the other first steps toward an historic resources page on a city website, and other historic preservation efforts.

Additional Information:

Port Townsend Historic Building Plaque Project. This is a slightly larger scale, but an interesting way to collect information on various properties and display it. The board could include information like that in the booklet for several properties.



<http://www.ptmainstreet.org/uploads/PDF/BuildingPlaquesBooklet.pdf>

Additional Short Term Implementation Actions

Flea Market:

Flea Markets provide an opportunity for a fun community event to showcase local products, antique collections, second-hand goods, and artistic talents. Communities such as Packwood, Washington have successfully supported Flea Markets that build in popularity through time as a multi-day annual event. Memorial Hall offers prime event space in the heart of the community. Retail “booth” spaces could be purchased to cover the overall \$300 cost of the facility rental. Event organizers should consider piggy-backing off of other events by scheduling and advertising the Weston Flea Market to occur just before or after a separate regional festival that regularly draws visitors to the area.

Elected Trainings:

As an initiative to provide high quality government service, the city should pursue training opportunities for elected officials and volunteer committee members. The city has already taken proactive steps to collaborate with nearby towns on recent budget trainings and police department coverage. Possible sources of assistance include: Planning Commissioner trainings from the Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association, leadership training from the Ford Family Foundation’s Institute for Community Building, Main Street Program and branding training from the Oregon Main Street Program, and historic preservation design trainings from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Many related trainings are low cost or free of charge to qualifying communities.

Building Plaques:

In an effort to celebrate Weston’s heritage and to build appreciation for the buildings within Weston’s National Register Historic Commercial District, building plaques would tell the story of each individual building to passers-by. The plaques could be integrated into historic information provided on interpretive signage, archived Public Library resources, potential Museum exhibits, and self-guided walking tour brochures. Official plaques can be purchased through the



State Historic Preservation Office.

Increased, Unique Signage Entering Town:

The addition of roadside signage would call attention to town and welcome visitors to Weston. The placement of new signage would align closely with many of the revitalization strategies including improving the appearance of town and attracting visitors to town. Signage could be as prominent as Athena’s Caledonian Games sign or as creative as using a locally hand crafted pioneer wagon passing between boulders to support the signage. Ideal locations for signage would be along Oregon State Highways 11 and 204. The existing signage on the north and south ends of Water Street work well as an “entryway” to town. Outdoor advertising (i.e. billboards) and roadside signage are strictly regulated for the safety of roadway users, so the Oregon Department of Transportation should be consulted.



2. Medium Term Actions (2 to 5 years)

These actions are meant to take place in a two to five year time frame. Medium term actions might not be attainable given the present capacity of the community, but they are within close reach with some additional organization and resources. They require collaboration, and will build on the relationships that have started to form through the short term actions.

Action 2.A: Continue with Oregon Main Street



Where Place and Time meet

Strategies: Attract visitors to town, preserve and promote Weston's heritage.

Purpose: The National Main Street program is one of the best known and most widely respected revitalization programs in the country. The Oregon chapter operates upon the same principles as the national structure. Its philosophy is summed up in Main Street's famous "Four Point Approach": organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring. Main Street's goal is to help preserve and enhance downtowns that were once hubs of commerce and activity but have since fallen on hard times. The strategies it promotes are designed to lead to a long term process that focuses on many

incremental, achievable steps as opposed to fewer, larger projects. Statistics from the National Trust for Historic Preservation show that \$1 spent on Main Street initiatives returns \$27 of reinvestment in the community.

The National Main Street program provides a template and assistance for communities to self-organize, and functions essentially as "a grass roots, self-help program." One of the most important aspects of Main Street is that a member city gains access to excellent technical resources, experienced and knowledgeable staff, and assistance from the state in their mission to revitalize downtown.



How To: The City of Weston has already initiated its involvement with the Oregon Main Street program. The city is currently in the “Exploring” phase, the first of three steps in the program. The Reimagining Weston planning process helps Weston meet some of the requirements for the program, such as creating a vision for downtown.

1. Develop a Main Street organization. In order to continue with the Main Street program, the city must incorporate a 501(c) (3) non-profit Main Street Board dedicated to promoting and improving their business district. The state provides templates for membership, helps with obtaining and completing the appropriate forms, and assists with drafting bylaws for the organization. It also provides guidance on fund raising and creates sample budgets. This board may include current membership from the Chamber of Commerce, WCDC, and representatives from other local organizations.
2. Hire a Main Street Program Manager. The Main Street Board will then be responsible for drafting the job description in preparation to hire the Program Manager (Director) for Weston. The position will need to be funded and can be done on a part time basis. The Program Manager will be on site and responsible for making Main Street’s vitality their primary concern by coordinating with the State, the City, downtown businesses, and other local organizations. They would also be responsible for day to day operations, developing strategies with committee members, conducting public education and awareness campaigns, and acting as an advisor to local businesses.

Funding: The most likely funding would initially come from the City, but Weston’s Main Street program could also combine contributions from other sources such as grants and fundraising events.

Additional Information: Oregon Main Street has an excellent website and offers a guiding handbook and an explanation of their philosophy. There are also examples of budgets, organizational charters, and suggestions for committee membership available for consideration.

Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street Coordinator: 503-986-0679, sheri.stuart@state.or.us <http://www.oregon4biz.com/Grow-Your-Business/Business-services/Main-Street/>



Action 2.B: Regional collaboration & tourism marketing

Strategies: Attract visitors to town, regional collaboration.

Purpose: Advertising and raising awareness of the unique amenities and events Weston has to offer will put the city on the map and attract more visitors to downtown. The expenditures by visitors in local businesses will generate additional profit in the short term, and will build momentum toward an improved local economy and employment opportunities in the long term. Additionally, visitors to Weston who have positive experiences will contribute to the city's marketing efforts with their own personal testimonials through word-of-mouth and internet discussions. Finally, collaboration with other cities and organizations breaks the cycle of competition by promoting the sharing of resources, leveraging of assets unique to each participant, and mutual sharing of benefits from joint ventures.

How To:

1. Identify partners. Establishing, developing, and nurturing relationships with a variety of regional actors will require sustained commitment on behalf of the city of Weston. It is recommended that an existing city employee, a Main Street Manager, or another coordinating body assume this important role. This person should act as an ambassador for the city, eager to advocate on the city's behalf and create enduring, beneficial regional ties. This approach would use existing resources and save the city money by not creating a new paid position. Additionally, it is important that Weston's Chamber of Commerce take an active role in supporting efforts to promote the city and its businesses. The Chamber and the City should work closely together as these initiatives are considered and acted upon. The chamber could act as a convening body to give business owners and other stakeholders a forum to stay involved in key decision-making. The following steps will require participation from many people in the community, and outreach should be done to ensure adequate involvement.
2. Inventory resources, attractions, events. Project partners should develop a list of existing features



unique to Weston that either already attract visitors or have the potential to do so. Such a list could include, but should not be limited to, the following:



- Resources: Examples include activities associated with Weston’s proximity to the Blue Mountains (snowmobiling, skiing, hunting, fishing, hiking), or its scenic views and roads (day trips, motorcycling, bicycling).
 - Attractions: Examples include Pioneer History (Library, Museum, Interpretive walking tour), Downtown Commercial Historic District.
 - Events: Examples include Pioneer Days, and the Potato Show.
3. Develop a brochure for visitors. Create a professional, clean, eye-catching brochure which advertizes what Weston has to offer and illustrates its proximity to regional amenities. Use the items identified in the inventory to develop the brochure content. In addition, the brochure should show off a Weston branding campaign with clear graphics that speak to Weston’s personality. Possible branding themes might include a reference to pioneer history or a claim to be the “Gateway to the Blues.”
 4. Contact and integrate with organizations. Reach out to representatives of chambers of commerce in the region (e.g., Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, Walla Walla), mayors of nearby cities (e.g., Athena, Enterprise, Joseph), and tourism organizations (e.g.,



Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA), Travel Oregon), and set up meetings to establish personal contacts. Make Weston a visible presence through involvement in regularly scheduled meetings, events, and networking opportunities.

5. Initiate a Weston marketing campaign. Showcase visitor brochures in nearby towns' chambers of commerce, and distribute material in other strategic location (restaurants, hotels, other businesses). Increase Weston's internet presence with an information page for visitors on the city's website, links and information on nearby chambers of commerce web pages, and inclusion in EOVA and Travel Oregon's program initiatives.



6. Establish a visitor information center. Plan and establish a physical structure with visitor information available 24 hours a day. This can be sited in highly visible locations either at main entrances to Weston, or along Main Street. Staffing is not necessary, but may be useful to obtain volunteers during major city events or festivals to answer questions and provide assistance. Brochures, pamphlets, and maps should be available during all normal business hours.
7. Develop a collaborative regional attraction. Using the relationships developed with other small towns in the region, identify unique regional assets and collaborate to create a regional attracting. It may center on each town's connection to pioneer history, the Oregon Trail, outdoor recreation, important regional events, wine



country, or some other asset that each town identifies with. The outcome will be a new regional draw which will allow collective sharing of the prosperity it engenders.

Funding: The small shed or kiosk used as a visitor information booth can be purchased at any home and garden supply store. City funds may be used for this purchase. The Chamber of Commerce may also contribute to this project or assist with a fundraising event.

Action 2.C: Host one additional large annual event

Strategy: Attract visitors to town.

Purpose: Adjacent cities on the Columbia Plateau have demonstrated the importance of events and amenities to draw visitor dollars from outside the region. The prime regional example of a large event pull is the famous Pendleton Round-Up. Not only does the Round-Up ensure an annual surge of revenue to the local economy, it shapes the identity of the place. The “let’r buck” thematic imagery and culture has left an indelible mark on the region. Similarly, the city of Weston hosts the Pioneer Days and the Potato Show, Athena hosts Hodaka Days and the Caledonian Games, and Milton-Freewater hosts the Muddy Frogwater Days.

Creating an additional large annual event can add to the vitality and intrigue of the community. Weston should build its reputation and momentum around a new, creative, and quirky tradition. There have been a number of suggestions for new events. One creative suggestion involved showcasing local frozen food processing companies and breweries to sponsor a summertime event called “Hot Pockets, Cold Beer.” Another suggestion included expanding upon the annual Halloween celebration to include a tour of the cemetery with live actors role-playing town forefathers to share the stories of local ancestors. A complete list of the ideas generated by the community for new events can be found in Appendix D.

How To:

1. Create a new committee. Community members advised during the planning process that a new community event will require a separate planning committee. No existing organization in Weston has



the capacity to run a new event at this time; fresh perspective, participation, and energy are needed.

2. Select an event. As previously discussed, there are many ideas for new events in Weston. The committee should work together to find one that adequately represents Weston, will draw visitors, and can become an asset to the community.
3. Recruit volunteers. Weston has had a difficult time recruiting new volunteers. Committee organizers will need to utilize personal connections and networks to ask for assistance and to follow-up on those requests.



Local experience has shown that residents are willing to help when given a specific task and sufficient reminders. A new event should be an opportunity to engage individuals that have not historically played large roles in Weston event planning, including youth, young families, and members of the local Hispanic population.

4. Advertise. It is critical that Weston utilize all available regional advertising outlets to build a marketing campaign around a new event. Organizers should look to the regional chambers of commerce, visitor information centers, tourism organizations, magazines, community calendars, flyers, and newspapers to advertise the event.
5. Manage the event. A new event should be large enough that it attracts many visitors from out of town. Efforts should be made to efficiently manage crowds, parking, traffic flow, water, restrooms, seating, shade, and trash.
6. Sustainability. The ultimate goal of a beloved annual event is for the event to be self-sustaining, year to year. The organizing committee will likely draw upon the organizational capacity and financial resources of existing agencies and organizations initially, but will gain independence with time.



Action 2.D: Increase the lighting around town

Strategies: Make the appearance of the city a priority and a source of community pride, provide high quality infrastructure and local government services.

Purpose: There are several reasons behind the community's request for additional lighting throughout town. Most importantly, increased street lighting aims to reduce crime and to improve the experience of walking on Weston's residential streets. Additional lighting will provide a consistent infrastructure standard and a comfortable, pleasant aesthetic throughout town. This project is intended to serve the entire population, specifically by lighting routes for school children, while also reducing trip hazards for the elderly population.

How To:

1. Inventory street lighting. The City should identify areas currently lacking basic street lighting services.
2. Identify partners. City leaders, the Public Works Department, and the Police Department should work with the school district and other community members to identify priority areas for new street lighting infrastructure, based primarily upon public safety concerns. These partners should collaborate with Pacific Power and Light (PPL) to establish a plan for phasing in all missing infrastructure.
3. Choose a style. Two styles are currently used in Weston, depending on location.
 - **Goose-neck:** The existing "goose neck" style street lights throughout most of town are owned and maintained by PPL. The City is charged for this service on a per light basis. New neighborhood lighting will be consistent with the existing "goose neck" style.
 - **Historic:** The green historic-style street lamps along Main Street are owned and powered by



the City. These historic style street lamps are recommended in future phased improvements along Water Street only. The historic style lamps are neither appropriate nor necessary in any part of the city other than the historic commercial core of Water and Main Streets.

Additional Information: Community members recommended that the city should explore the option solar powered street lights. The theory is that the lamps will cost more to acquire up front, but that the lamps will pay for themselves in cost saving over the lifetime of the infrastructure.



Additional Medium Term Implementation Actions

Historic Mural:

A vibrant mural in downtown Weston would be an ideal project to liven up a vacant building and lots, while sharing the city's character with visitors. The project would be an opportunity to engage the community in recommending designs and to collaborate with downtown property owners to designate an ideal location. The mural would likely provide an opportunity to engage local youth in content design and/or project management. One successful public art project could potentially catalyze others, if it is well-received by the community. One possible location available at this time is the vacant lot across from City Hall on Main Street, where the mural could liven up the space until it is developed.



3. Long Term Actions (5 to 20 years)

These actions will take more than a five year time frame. Long term actions may not be within the capacity of the community currently, due to funding shortages, an overstretched volunteer base, or circumstances that are not under Weston's control. As the community builds momentum and collaborative capacity, these projects should be initiated as critical pieces of revitalization in downtown Weston.

Action 3.A: Historic building preservation

Strategy: Preserve and promote Weston's heritage, attract visitors to town.

Purpose: Saving Weston's historic buildings will have several important implications for the city. Successful preservation of the buildings will not only benefit their owners, but will also strengthen the local economy in several ways. First, heritage tourists typically stay longer and spend more money than other types of visitors. Second, preservation is an industry that requires craftsmen and contractors with specific skills and training, which adds value to the local economy and provides quality jobs. Lastly, rehabilitated buildings also tend to be rented and sold for higher prices, so they can generate more tax revenue for the city than if they been demolished and replaced.

However, preservation is also about retaining the community's roots and values. The historic architecture creates a unique sense of place if the buildings are properly maintained. Educational opportunities such as lectures, integration into school curriculums, and other local information sources support the success of preservation programs by sharing history as part of the town's identity and a source of community pride. This connection to the past is an opportunity to share with family, friends, and visitors what has always made Weston a unique, interesting place to live, work, and visit.

How To: There are many tools available for historic preservation, some of which Weston already has access to.

The historic architecture creates a unique sense of place if the buildings are properly maintained



Many of these would require coordination between various city departments, committees, businesses, and building owners. There are many actions that can be taken in the long term to support investment into these buildings. The following list presents a few, but is not exhaustive.



- Certified Local Government (CLG) status, which Weston has, allows for increased access to the State Historic Preservation Office for advice, grants, and access to experts in grant writing as well as building preservation and rehabilitation. Each year the Historic Landmarks Commission can receive between \$5,000 and \$15,000 in matching funds for projects if they apply to the State Historic Preservation Office.
- Create a local matching grant program for rehabilitation. Some local governments support private investment through small, matching grants to work toward preserving and maintaining historic building stock. However, the town would have to consider if a program like this is feasible in Weston. If it is, this is a great way to show businesses interested in locating in the historic buildings that the city is committed to the district's character and success.

• Restoration professional training scholarship program. One way to support the local economy and preservation efforts is to encourage local community members involved in the building trades to acquire additional skill sets related to building restoration. This allows investments in the buildings to remain within the community and increases the wages of community members who learn these new skills. A grant program could be set up to send local professionals to receive this training.

- Publicizing historic preservation and building restoration assistance tools. This is a low cost way for Weston to show its commitment to the preservation of its buildings. It can take the form of information about grant programs, tax credit programs, benefits



available to Certified Local Governments, and links to the website of the State Historic Preservation Office and other technical resources relevant to preservation. In addition to useful information, telling the stories of the existing buildings, or giving examples of successful rehabilitation projects, could support this goal as well by celebrating positive work within the community.

- **Preservation Code Considerations.** There are many ways that the city historic preservation code can encourage building owners to make investments. These can include safety code assistance, waiving or reducing permit fees or expediting the permitting process, reducing the zoning code requirements for recognized historic properties, and applying building code leniency to historic properties as allowed under Oregon law.

Some of these ideas seem big, require a lot of funding, or may not be feasible in Weston at this time. Therefore, it is best to consider these action items as a menu of great options for supporting preservation. Some of these can be taken on earlier in the process as organizations or government bodies gain the capacity.

Additional Information:

Cultural Tourism Success Stories has great stories from across the country about communities that have built on their cultural assets. <http://www.culturalheritagetourism.org/stories.htm>

Oregon State Historic Preservation Office has many resources for historic preservation. They describe many of the programs above in great detail. <http://www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/SHPO/>

City of Albany, Historic Preservation is an example of a city that has promoted preservation in its downtown. Their website has very easily accessible information about their programs and celebrates their successes. <http://www.ci.albany.or.us/comdev/historic/>

Action 3.B: Weston Historic Museum

Strategy: Attract visitors to town, preserve and promote Weston's heritage.



Purpose: A historic museum is an opportunity to share Weston’s history with visitors as well as its younger residents. According to the American Association of Museums, the median number of visitors for an historic site or house is 16,000 per year, and approximately 10,000 for a history museum. This shows the clear interest throughout the country in visiting these places and learning about our shared heritage.

How To: Setting up a successful museum is a complicated task that will require collaboration and the coordination of community resources. Here is an outline of the steps required to move forward with this type of effort.

1. Identify Partners. The community would either need to start a non-profit organization or work within an existing group to create a museum. Often grants that can be awarded, including those from the Oregon Museum Grant program, require that recipients be non-profit organizations. A non-profit designation also demonstrates the community’s clear commitment to the project, which will aid in securing future funding sources.
2. Coordinate around the region. Weston should learn from other local history museums and societies to better understand the requirements for opening such a museum. This could be a valuable resource for advice, collection sharing, and idea swapping as the effort to start a museum in Weston progresses. It could also result in collaborative projects that will avoid duplicating efforts.
3. Create a vision for the museum. A visioning effort should be conducted to determine and spell out goals for the museum. This is an opportunity to clarify the purpose of the museum, discuss what it will showcase, and who it will cater to. Weston should be creative with its ideas and think about different ways to share the stories of the town. The Frazier Farmstead Museum in Milton-Freewater has a barn tour, the Heritage Station Museum in Pendleton has a caboose that visitors can climb into, and Jacksonville, OR has a bank set up the way it historically would have been so visitors can see what it looked like at the height of the gold rush. These are just a few ideas from other towns around the state, but Weston’s museum should find



a unique way to showcase its history and set it apart from other collections.

4. Gather items for the collection from the community. The newly created local museum organization will need to build a collection that fits with the vision created. The Public Library, City Hall, Memorial Hall, and businesses on Main Street all possess artifacts, memorabilia, and information which could contribute to the beginning of a unique historical collection. It will be equally important to conduct community outreach to access the wealth of historical knowledge and potential items which could add to the burgeoning collection.

5. Find space. This is probably one of the largest barriers for creating a museum in Weston. However, there are options out there. Starting with a temporary space might allow the museum to get on its feet and begin raising the funds necessary to find either a permanent space, or renovate donated space to meet its needs.



6. Create exhibits. After items have been gathered and a space identified, creating an interesting, attractive way to display the collection will be important. Key considerations should include creative and interactive ways to engage visitors through the exhibits, and the selection of specific stories that visitors should hear about Weston.

This project is one that will require significant intra-organizational cooperation, outreach to the broader community, long range planning, and management skills. Although this is a long-term project, the community is capable of reaching this goal. When finished, the museum will be a draw for people to come to town, as well as an excuse to spend more time once visitors have arrived.

Funding: Grants, fundraisers, donations, and revenue from museum admission are all possibilities for funding. Ongoing attention and a clear plan to find funding will be necessary. The visioning effort and its results should help support this



effort by creating a clear purpose moving forward.

Additional Information:

American Association of Museums site has information about what a museum is, how to get one started and great ideas for what is already out there.

<http://www.aam-us.org/index.cfm>

Oregon Museums Association has a list of many of the museums in Oregon as well a resource page for grants.

<http://www.oregonmuseums.org/>

Action 3.C: Sidewalk improvements on Water Street



Strategy: Provide high quality infrastructure and local government services.

Purpose: Despite being one of the primary travel routes in Weston, the 0.8 mile section of Water Street between Depot Street and Banister Road is devoid of sidewalks. Water Street provides access to Elliott Memorial Park and serves as the main entrance to Weston from the north and south. Completing sidewalk installation on Water Street would help generate a number of positive impacts for Weston. First, sidewalks would

enhance the visual appearance of Weston at the city’s primary entrances. Substantial safety improvements for pedestrians would occur because they would no longer be forced to walk in close proximity to automobile traffic. Pedestrian access to the park would also be improved. Finally, sidewalks along Water Street would encourage residents to get outside and take a stroll through their community, which on top of being a healthy activity, can have the added benefit of getting residents more engaged in their surroundings.

How To:

1. Identify partners. This is most likely a project the City



of Weston will be responsible for. Many of the steps outlined below will require the City and its committees to take action. However, if community organizations see a role for themselves in supporting this process, they should work with the city as well.

2. List the project in the Transportation System Plan (TSP). This was completed in 2001, and divides the process of completing Water Street sidewalks into six separate projects.
3. Develop a prioritized project list. The second step is to prioritize the six projects in order to allow for a phased installation approach. It is recommended that sidewalks be installed first along the east side of Water Street between Wallace Street and Mill Street. This is the section of Water Street adjacent to Elliot Memorial Park and the public works building. The lack of sidewalks in this section of Water Street contributes to a disconnect between downtown Weston and the park for pedestrians, and creates a safety concern due to passing traffic. Finished sidewalks would address these concerns and remove the perceived barrier to accessing the park on foot, allowing it to be used to its full potential.

Funding: At the time the TSP was adopted in 2001, the total project cost was estimated at \$126,370. While an updated figure is not currently available, it is likely to have risen substantially from the initial ten year old estimate. The biggest challenge will be financing sidewalk construction. There is presently little public funding at any level available for transportation infrastructure projects, and the limited funds that are available are extremely competitive. However, Weston should continue working out the details of the Water Street project so that when funding does become available, the city is able to adequately compete with other similar projects in the area.

Weston may want to explore financing options at the local level. The two options presently available are: issuing a general obligation bond and/or creating a special taxing district to fund sidewalks. Both options will require broad public and political support. If either option is chosen, it is recommended that the City begin a public relations campaign that effectively messages the reason sidewalks are needed on Water Street. In the event that public support does not exist



In addition to increasing safe travel options for children, an off-street path will also serve as a recreational opportunity for residents and visitors alike.



for either option, it is recommended that the city continue to explore other public funding opportunities that do not require additional taxes or municipal debt.

An additional action that could be taken to secure funding is to communicate with the Oregon Department of Transportation's North East Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT). The NEACT deals with long range transportation planning issues for Morrow, Baker, Union, Umatilla, and Wallowa counties. In this role, the commission develops criteria for transportation infrastructure investments and makes recommendations to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) on transportation priorities in northeast Oregon. The NEACT can help Weston advocate at the state level for increased funding for local transportation projects.

Additional Information:

North East Area Commission on Transportation. ODOT's regional transportation commission for northeast Oregon. The NEACT meets bi-monthly on the first Thursday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at the ODOT Region 5 headquarters building in La Grande.

http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/act_neact.shtml.

Action 3.D: Off-Street path connecting Weston and Athena

Strategy: Provide high quality infrastructure and local government services.

Purpose: An off-street path connecting Weston and Athena will provide additional travel options between the two communities – walking, biking, horse, etc. This is especially important for school-aged children in both communities who will have to travel outside of their town of residence to one of the three schools in the district. Currently, if children wish to walk or bike to school they are forced to either share the right-of-way with automobiles or travel in a drainage ditch – neither of which are safe nor appealing options. In addition to increasing safe travel options for children, an off-street path will also serve as a recreational opportunity for residents and visitors alike. This could help attract recreational cyclist traveling on nearby Oregon State Highways 11 and 204.

How To:



1. Convene relevant stakeholders. Since the path would go through Weston, Athena, and Umatilla County, all three jurisdictions would need to sit down and discuss possibilities for the project. Initial discussions with Athena and Umatilla County should begin soon in order to lay the foundation. Weston would need to take the lead on getting the conversation started with Athena and Umatilla County. A first step would be to contact the Athena city recorder and the Umatilla County Planning Department to set up a meeting. However, in terms of actual implementation it is likely that Umatilla County would be the lead agency, with Weston and Athena serving as partnering agencies.
2. Develop a plan for the off-street path. These discussions would need to focus on potential alignments, safety concerns with crossing Oregon State Highway 11, potential barriers, and agency responsibilities.
3. Amend the Transportation System Plans (TSP) of affected jurisdictions. If all jurisdictions are on board with the project, the next step would be to amend each jurisdiction's Transportation System Plan to include the project.
4. Engage with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). To help move forward in installing a Weston-Athena off-street path the City of Weston should also begin discussing the idea with ODOT's North East Area Commission on Transportation (NEACT). The NEACT deals with long range transportation planning issues for Morrow, Baker, Union, Umatilla, and Wallowa counties. In this role the commission develops criteria for transportation infrastructure investments and

http://ayearofbikecommuting.blogspot.com/2008_02_24_archive.html Bikeway.jpg



The lack of overnight accommodations prevents the city from realizing the full potential gains from events



makes recommendations to the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) on transportation priorities in Northeast Oregon. The NEACT can help Weston advocate at the state level for increased funding for local transportation projects. The NEACT meets bi-monthly on the first Thursday of the month at 9:00 a.m. at the ODOT Region 5 headquarters building in LaGrande.

Funding: With an increasing interest in active transportation (biking and walking) at the state and federal level, securing funding for an off-street path between Weston and Athena is definitely feasible. Currently, the federal government is working on the next major transportation funding bill. While the breakdown of funding is yet to be determined, there will likely be an influx of money that filter down to local level projects through ODOT, Umatilla County, and/or federal grant opportunities. Another funding option could be Oregon State Parks as the path would also be serving in a recreational capacity.

Additional Information:

North East Area Commission on Transportation. Information on ODOT’s regional transportation commission for Northeast Oregon.

http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/act_neact.shtml

Action 3.E: Overnight Accommodations

Strategy: Attract visitors to town.

Purpose: Weston residents identified the creation of overnight accommodations as a key strategy to attract more visitors to town. The lack of overnight accommodations prevents the city from realizing the full potential gains from events such as Pioneer Days, Cycle Oregon, and Pendleton Round-Up. Visitors staying overnight in Weston will spend more money locally than those passing through for the day. Overnight accommodations will also aid the city’s efforts to market itself as a destination from which visitors can take advantage of both local attractions in Weston and the proximity to other regional amenities.

How To:

1. Maintain an inviting atmosphere. The first step is to create an attractive and inviting atmosphere that will appeal to visitors. Weston's idyllic location, nestled in the foothills of the Blue Mountains and surrounded by a sweeping vista of rich farmland, already provides a beautiful natural setting. It is important that Weston's built environment provide visitors a similar experience. The City's current efforts to amend its code to allow enforcement of property standards will reduce the presence of abandoned cars and other refuse in yards and create a more appealing environment for residents and visitors alike.

2. Select a preferred type overnight accommodation. The city will then need to determine the desired type of overnight accommodations to pursue. Two options which were discussed by residents include:

- RV Park. This could serve visitors with RVs as stand-alone vehicles or pulled as a trailer, and would require appropriate hookups for electricity, sewer, and water. The site could act as simply a place for visitors to park RVs, or it could additional onsite facilities such as a small store or a bathroom and shower.
- Scattered Hotel. This is an innovative approach to hospitality based on the model developed in Italy in small rural villages, called "albergo diffuso." It bypasses the financial hurdles of building a new hotel or rehabilitating an existing building by converting existing rooms in different houses and buildings throughout town into guest rooms. The rooms are decorated in a consistent authentic local style to create a bed and breakfast village which is managed at a central reception area, typically a shop or café.

3. The next step depends on the type of overnight



<http://www.elwhadamrvpark.com/>



accommodations chosen.

- If an RV park is desired, a suitable location must be identified. If there is land available within the urban growth boundary, this would streamline any permitting and developing process. Alternatively, if a location at the outskirts of the city is preferred, it may take a bit longer to use county land, depending on the process.
 - The scattered hotel would not require land acquisition, but instead the identification of an individual, business, or organization to act as the central manager, and a selection of rooms in participating residences or other buildings.
4. Form an Accommodations Committee. The City should take the lead in convening business owners, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, WCDC, the Planning Commission, and other key stakeholders to form an Accommodations Committee. This group could evaluate the feasibility of each alternative, and identify potential barriers to land acquisition, permitting, and management.
- For the RV Park, the City could operate and manage the facility (Cannon Beach, OR, manages an RV Park), unless an interested party is readily available and willing. If a simple facility is constructed which provides a space for visitors to park their vehicles and access to electric, water, and sewer hookups, the requirements for day-to-day operation may be minimal enough to allow either a new part time employee or Public Works to manage it. Such an arrangement would provide revenue exclusively for the city.
 - For a scattered hotel strategy, it is recommended that an existing café (either the Long Branch, Central Station, or Suzi's Market) act as the central reception area. Here, visitors can access a manager for dealings related to their stay, take meals at the cafes, and receive further information about regional attractions and events. Individuals who are interested in donating a room or rooms to this venture can enter into a business agreement with the central



business or businesses overseeing the scattered hotel. It will be important for the City and Planning Commission to identify and facilitate needed permitting or special exceptions for the participating guest rooms.

Additional Information:

Sextantio. An albergo diffuso in Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Italy.

<http://www.sextantio.it>

Additional Long Term Implementation Actions

Business co-op, Incubator: A co-op space would provide support for small businesses start ups. It reduces the initial capital required and ongoing overhead costs for businesses. The two models differ slightly. In a co-op space, several businesses share utility and rent expenses until they become profitable and outgrow the space. In an incubator, the city or other organization would provide space at a reduced rate lease. As an example of this, the empty “Gizmo” space in the rear of the City Hall building could be turned into a business incubator or business co-op space. The City could partner with the Blue Mountain Community College’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC) to ensure that new enterprises receive the help they need. In return, the city would gain revenue from the business rents in a previously unused portion of the building. Any successful business that expanded and remained in Weston would be a great asset to the city.

Attract University Workshops, Retreats:

Weston’s location at the foot of the Blue Mountains, surrounded by gently rolling farmland, creates an idyllic setting to host workshops and retreats for regional universities, private firms, or non-profit organizations. Retreats would bring new guests to Weston, create a new source of revenue for local businesses, and provide free marketing for the community as visitors share their positive experience with others. Memorial Hall could be used for visiting groups to conduct their workshop or retreats. Certain upgrades would be necessary, including internet access, adequate power



supply, multimedia capability and comfortable seating. The Parks and Recreation tax district could be one source of funding. It may be necessary to have local lodging options available in Weston before this action item can be pursued.

Saling House:



The Saling House is a long-cherished asset to the Weston Community. Restoration of this structure would take significant investment and a sustained effort. A likely reuse for this structure would be a house museum. Successful restoration would require partnerships between the local Saling House Committee, County, and State entities to design a creative funding package.

Regional Trail:

A regional trail would create a thematic route for visitors traveling by car, motorcycle, or bicycle. Implementation of this project would require extensive collaboration with other small cities in the region, as well as with regional chambers of commerce, tourism bureaus, and visitor associations. The Weston Chamber of Commerce and potential Main Street organization would be the likely leads for this collaborative project. The Eastern Oregon Visitors Association (EOVA) would be a strong partner for development and advertising of the route. Possible themes could include the Oregon Trail, off the beaten path pioneer towns, shoes trees, alternative energy pioneers, public art, historic museums, agricultural roots, etc. Visitors would travel all or part of the “circuit.”

Dedicated Taxes:

The concept of dedicated taxes, or local improvement districts (LIDs), is to generate funding for a specific, priority project. Minimal taxes would be approved and allocated to a project such as new sidewalks or neighborhood lighting. Typically, the project is paid for through bonds which are paid off over time using the dedicated tax. To best utilize this type of taxing structure, the city would need an effective communications strategy to explain rationale for the project, to the advantages of this strategy, and the benefits the community will receive.





The proud and independent pioneer spirit is still an important element of Weston's identity. This does not mean that the city, organizations, or individuals should "go it alone."



Conclusion

Reimagining Weston represents the future vision for the city of Weston, the revitalization strategies necessary to reach the vision, and the individual implementation actions to bring each strategy to life. It is the result of five months of hard work, negotiation, and critical decision-making by many committed Weston residents: your friends, family, co-workers, neighbors, and fellow citizens. The completion of this plan is an achievement worthy of recognition and celebration, but it is also important to remember that it is only the beginning. To achieve the community's vision as a lasting legacy that will benefit and inspire future generations in Weston, work must begin now to implement the actions contained in this plan. The following considerations are critical elements in successfully realizing Weston 2030.

Adoption. It is recommended that the Weston City Council formally adopt *Reimagining Weston* as the community's Vision and Revitalization Plan. Adoption of this plan signifies a serious commitment to realizing Weston 2030 and achieving a more prosperous future for the Weston community. Since this plan contains the values and ideas of long time Weston residents and newcomers alike, it has the ability to inform present and future city leaders. Ultimately this plan is one consistent guiding document, designed to outlast many mayor and city council terms.

Communication and Coordination. Many of the implementation actions in this plan will be occurring at the same time. Furthermore, there are many different organizations and individuals who will be leading these efforts. Frequent communication and coordination between implementing actors is essential to ensure the efficient use of time and resources, and

Weston's greatest resource is its people.

prevent duplication or overlap of efforts.

Sustained Effort. Implementing the actions in this plan will take time and a sustained effort. The Weston residents who participated in this planning process cannot do it alone. The community needs your ideas and involvement to see the goals of this plan realized.

Regional Collaboration. The proud and independent pioneer spirit is still an important element of Weston's identity. This does not mean that the city, organizations, or individuals should "go it alone." Many other small towns in the region are facing similar challenges and are actively seeking ways to revitalize their communities. Whether simply sharing ideas over the phone, or collaborating for a regional event, reaching out to other organizations and individuals should be an ongoing effort.

Evaluation. Revitalization requires the community to be on the same page for an extended period of time. It is recommended that once the plan is adopted, members of the Weston Advisory Committee (WAC) meet on an annual basis to evaluate the community's progress toward the short, medium, and long term implementation actions. An annual evaluation meeting will provide an opportunity to engage other residents in coordinating the next steps, identify new partners, and learn from success and challenges.

Revitalization is a process which can take time. There is no silver bullet. But as one workshop participant put it, "Weston's greatest resource is its people." If community members work together to achieve their shared goals, there is no limit to what can be accomplished. In spite of the many challenges Weston faces, the dedication, resilience, and collaboration demonstrated by the community throughout the planning process shows that there is much for the community to be proud of, and much to be hopeful for in the future.



Appendixes

Appendix A: Mountains to Main Biographies

Appendix B: Visioning

Appendix C: Revitalization Strategies

Appendix D: Implementation Actions

Appendix E: Press Coverage



Appendix A: M2M Bios



Zach Gustafson: Originally from rural upstate New York, Zach has lived and worked in New England, the upper Midwest, and the South before moving to Portland, Oregon. His educational background includes geology and education, and before pursuing a planning degree worked in everything from private engineering firms, non-profit education and community outreach, to landing planes at the airport. He is interested in the land use issues facing rural communities.

Holly Howell: Prior to moving to Portland for grad school, Holly worked as a city planner in Redmond, Oregon. Holly has a bachelor's degree in Natural Resource Planning and spent several seasons working in our incredible National and State Parks. Holly is originally from the redwoods of Northern California, but claims deep family tree roots in Portland, La Grande, and even a pioneer homestead cabin in Promise, Oregon!

Nathan Emerson: A native Oregonian, Nathan grew up in Talent, Oregon. He became interested in economic development and planning after watching the boom and bust of the housing market in Southern Oregon. He has lived, worked and studied in Portland since 2008.

Carrie Pipinich: Carrie grew up in Seattle, WA attended Barnard College and came to Portland to study planning because she was interested in the range of issues cities and towns of all



sizes face when they are changing. She has focused on non-profit, community based approaches to dealing with housing and transportation problems in several cities.

Matthew Rohrbach: Originally from Black Diamond, WA, Matthew became interested in planning for rural communities while going to school and working for the Forest Service in Montana. Matthew has worked as a planner in various capacities in Montana, Washington, Massachusetts, and Oregon.

