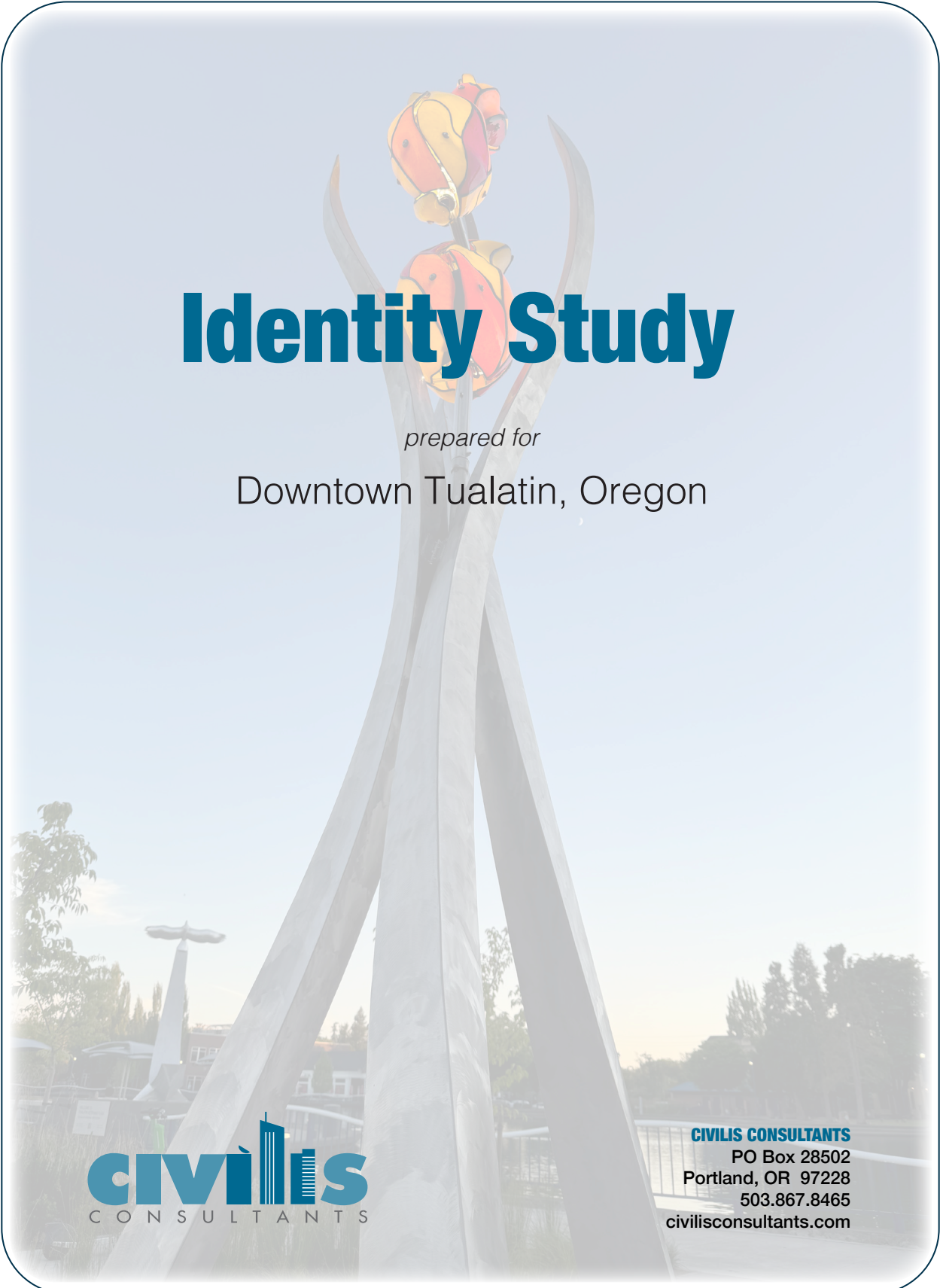




Identity Study

prepared for

Downtown Tualatin, Oregon



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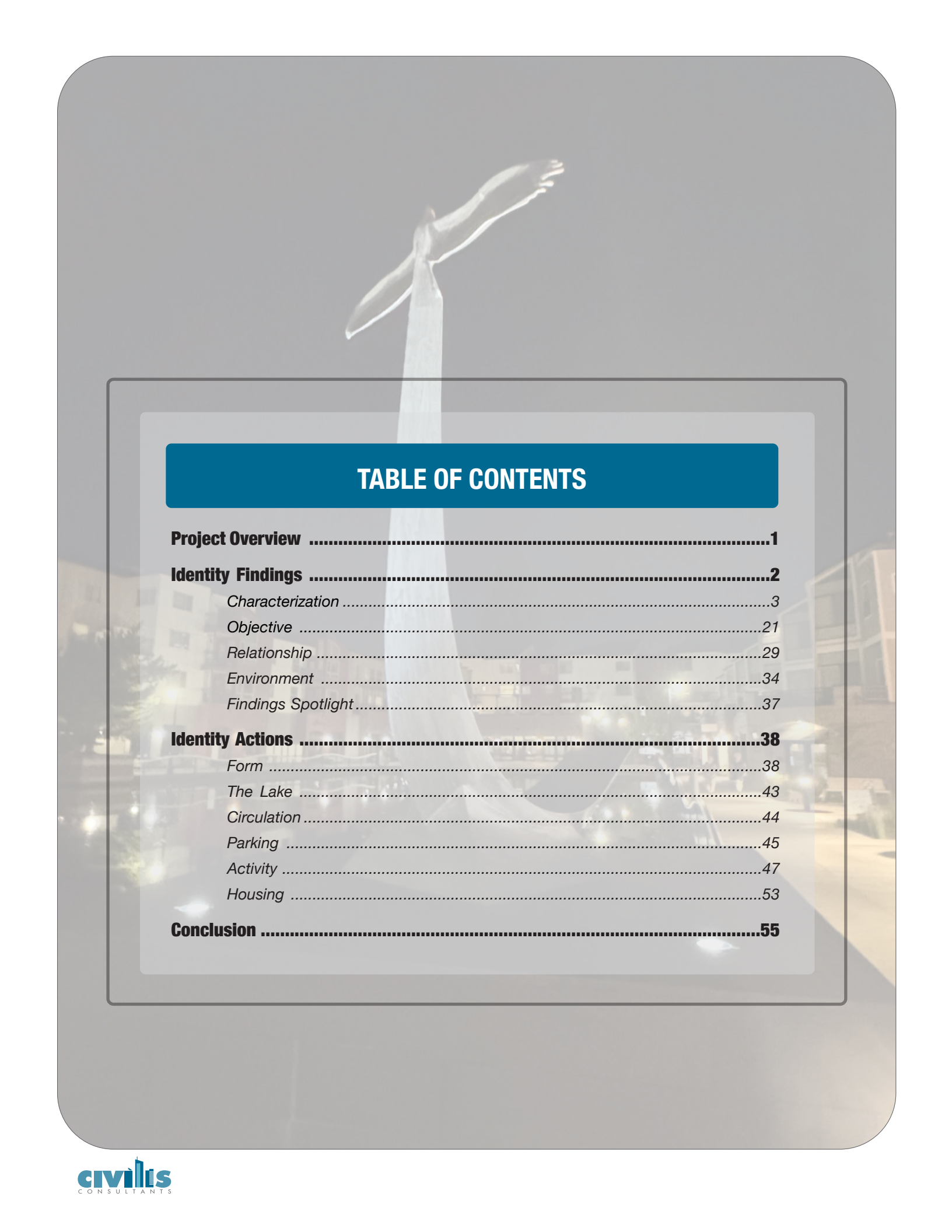


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- » The City of Tualatin
- » Downtown Tualatin Community Advisory Committee
- » Tualatin Development Commission
- » Juanita Pohl Center
- » Chamber of Commerce

www.tualatinoregon.gov/economicdevelopment/tualatin-downtown-revitalization

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In early 2025, the City of Tualatin contacted Civilis Consultants about applying the Civic Identity approach to quantifying downtown Tualatin. The City has a new Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district that has been active for a few years and the City is launching a three phase project to 1) quantify Tualatin's identity; 2) visualize scenarios; and, 3) create a planning and code framework for the future. This multi-stage visioning, planning, and code development process will ultimately provide the scaffolding for future investments. (TIF is the funding mechanism that successfully created the Lake of the Commons out of an area with a dog food factory that everyone remembered as odoriferous.)

Civilis Consultants was asked to assist Tualatin with phase 1, garnering a better understanding of what story the downtown is telling today, quantify how it is operating as a mixed-use town center, and determine how the community might want downtown's story to change in the future. The intention of this work is to deduce both the intangible and tangible elements of the downtown story and marry those to the wishes of the community, resulting in a plain English document that can be used to create and test development scenarios and initiate TIF-funded programs and projects to realize the next iteration of downtown Tualatin.



A Workshop at the Juanita Pohl Center

Broadly, the civic identity approach shared in this report involved a) engaging property owners and business owners regarding downtown commerce; b) measuring resident sentiment through surveys, interviews, and community open booth events; and, c) quantifying and analyzing downtown's characteristics and business environment. This work included the steps shown to the right.

OUTREACH AND ANALYSIS

- ✓ 9 small focus groups representing
 - Hospitality
 - Service
 - Office
 - Retail
 - Restaurant
 - Property owners
 - Affordable housing
 - Residents
 - Latino businesses
 - Youth
- ✓ One-on-one interviews
- ✓ Info booths at 5 community events.
- ✓ CAC/Staff/Elected workshops
- ✓ District documentation
 - Daytime
 - Weekend
 - Holiday
 - After Dark
- ✓ Community survey
- ✓ Community identity workshop
- ✓ Walking tour
- ✓ Business technical assistance
- ✓ Property owner technical assistance

The culmination of this project is a two-step deliverable. The first is a presentation, heavy on images, sharing these Identity Findings and Identity Actions. The second is this Identity Study, which acts as a reference narrative for the presentation.

IDENTITY FINDINGS

Places are telling stories 24 hours a day, seven days a week, whether they mean to or not. If a commercial district is not intentionally considering and actively telling its own story, one is emerging anyway, and it's often not a good one. In all aspects of marketing, economic development, real estate development, and public policy, story should inform how cities and towns answer these sorts of questions:

- Why would a business locate to downtown?
- What visitors are attracted to your district?
- How do you become a local hangout?
- Would a lender be willing to risk investment in a project located in your downtown?
- Does your city provide opportunity for a wide cross section of its residents?
- How are you adding more housing to your community?



Parks Are a Huge Part of Tualatin's Identity

To build a sustainable, resilient downtown district, stakeholders should have a shared understanding of its identity—which means they should understand *all* of the elements of the story that are communicated through buildings, roads, signs, traffic, businesses, events, priorities, budgets, relationships, and a place's context.

One of the most effective ways to quantify the wide array of identity attributes in a place is to use the CORE Story Framework—the same building blocks that improvisation artists and screenwriters use to create compelling stories. This framework is a helpful way to understand both the tangible and intangible elements of a place, so it can be improved in new and interesting ways.

CORE STORY FRAMEWORK

The CORE Story Framework is made up of four components: Characterization, Objective, Relationship, and Environment. These are the essential ingredients to developing a complete story,

STORY FRAMEWORK

Characterization

Objective

Relationship

Environment

whether you are doing an improv show or branding a commercial district. This section of the Identity Dossier will break down the four elements of the story framework for downtown Tualatin.

Characterization

In fiction, characterization refers to the part of a story that is told through the physical presence of a character, such as voice, attitude, energy, race, haircut, clothing, walk, etc. In animation, there is a saying that if you nail the walk, you nail the character, because a character's walk communicates so much about them. When we first encounter a character in life, or through a story, we go through our address book of stereotypes and pull out the stereotype that most closely matches this new character. If the character matches our stereotype, we are satisfied and then no longer need to engage. But, if there is some aspect of the character that is unexpected, that is where we engage, that's where story happens, the tension between the expected and the reality that is in front of us.

For a city, characterization is everything that your city presents to the world physically, such as streets, buildings, signage, lighting, homes, yards, parks, and natural environment. Physical communications also contribute to this element of story through brochures, websites, billboards, print ads, and TV advertising. All of these things play a role in how a district represents itself. Characterization can tell us whether a city is dense, rural, blue-collar, wealthy, suburban, elite, safe, economically successful, or financially stressed.

Consider the borders of the Lake at the Commons, which is essentially regarded as the downtown area. Do these edges show drivers that they are next to a downtown?

CHARACTERIZATION: DOWNTOWN BORDERS



Because the physical portion of a place's story is always broadcasting itself and cannot really be "turned off"—it's the most important part of story for a place. Given its importance, it's fitting that the CORE framework starts with characterization! This will also be the longest section of the report.

In the workshop and in the survey, we asked people what words they would use to describe downtown Tualatin right now, and this is what they said:

WHAT WORDS DESCRIBE DOWNTOWN TUALATIN TODAY?



The lake, unsurprisingly, is mentioned often since it is the focal point of the downtown. In general, there is a split opinion on the lake. Some love it, and others feel it is under-used, filled with waterfowl guano, and a long walk if someone is looking to dash to the other side on an errand.

Word Cloud Reminder!

The bigger the word, the more frequently it was said, the smaller the word, the less often it was mentioned.

Positive attributes about downtown in the surveys and workshop included having potential, being walkable, nice, quiet and clean. But also, folks thought it was boring, had a lot of parking, was empty and hot. It was also a first to encounter “ducks” and “poop” in a place-based downtown word cloud!

Speaking of poop, it’s time to dive into the lake a bit more [pun intended]. There are many origin stories about the Lake at the Commons, and it seems that the one where it was created to raise property values enough to be able to make the mixed use project on the lake qualify for financing is the correct story.

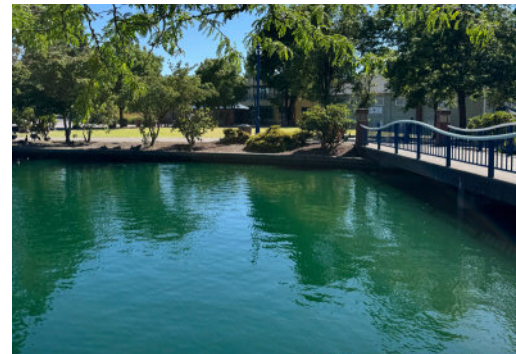


Why Isn't Anyone Stepping Into the Lake?

The lake is a really complicated part of the physical story of downtown. It can be very peaceful, but it also is a strange thing to have as the focal point of a downtown, and it is one of the reasons many find the area doesn’t feel like a town center.

There are a few key ways where the story of the lake is incongruous with a downtown experience or a park experience:

- *No Sound.* It is essentially a large water feature, which you might see in the center of a city, but you never hear the sound of water around the lake.
- *Artificial.* There is a river, park and greenway nearby, which are all very natural, but also well curated. By contrast, the lake is surrounded by hard-scape, with a sprinkling of businesses. It is treated like a natural lake, but is obviously not a natural lake. This tension creates an environment that is not a successful park, nor is it a successful downtown. Tension is bad for visitation! Additionally, during periods in summer it turns a decidedly not natural shade of blue/green.
- *Not Usable.* The design of the Lake of the Commons is subconsciously telling visitors that it should be a place to wade, dip your toe in the water, etc. But, it is not clean enough to be able to safely swim or wade, so the design creates tension because it feels like it should be teeming with people on a nice summer day, and is instead, empty. In the past, it appears activation of the lake with small rental boats was tried, but was unsuccessful.



Not a Natural Water Color

In describing the downtown in general in the workshop and surveys, many people began by describing downtown through the lens of what it lacked, such as more restaurants, shops, and ice cream! It was typical to observe that the Commons is not an area they would describe as a downtown. Over half the responses unique words and phrases that expressed these sentiments, but they were one-offs, so they didn't arise to the top of the word cloud. Collectively though, single mentions were over half the responses. Examples of one-time mentions in the word cloud lists taken from the surveys and the workshop are shown below:

EXAMPLES OF SINGLE-MENTION EXPRESSIONS

UNINTERESTING	SEA OF PARKING	GOOD BONES
ATTEMPTING	UNFORTUNATELY	NO PEOPLE
GAIN	GIVEN	NORTH
NOT WELL DESIGNED	NO CONGREGATING	NEEDS FACELIFTS
LIMITED ATTRACTIONS	FEW SHOPS	NEEDS NUDGE
NO SPACE	FEW BUSINESSES	REINVENT
NOTHING TO DO	FEW ATTRACTIONS	THEMSELVES
ANYONE	LACKS FOOT TRAFFIC	MORE PLANTS
COME	SOMEWHERE	NICER
LACKS CHARM	EXPLORE	VEGETATION
LACKS PERSONALITY	MOVED	MATURES
GOOD WEATHER	CIRCLE	FRESHER
PARTS	SUBURBAN SHOPPING	MORE CONTEMPORARY
RUIN-DOWN		MORE CREATIVE

It was a common observation that downtown does not look or act like a downtown in terms of circulation and/or offerings. People wanted more activity, more buildings, more shops, more restaurants, and more attractions. They also hoped it would become more charming, better looking and offer a more contemporary experience. It was also mentioned that it was more enjoyable in good weather.



Is this in a downtown or on a corridor?

In the surveys and the workshop, participants were eager to share solutions for downtown and were passionate about Tualatin improving downtown.

WHAT WORDS DO YOU WANT TO HEAR
DESCRIBE DOWNTOWN TUALATIN IN THE FUTURE?



civildis
CONSULTANTS

asked the question, “I wish downtown had...?” answered with: “a food cart pod!” The second most common answer to this question, at 22%, was a farmer’s market. (These were also prominent suggestions in the survey/workshop.) Many people we spoke to missed the old farmer’s market and weren’t aware of the new market happening at the Grange.

It’s interesting that people spoke a lot about how they wanted downtown to feel: vibrant, friendly, accessible, and fun versus spending a whole lot of time and words trying to explain how it should look.

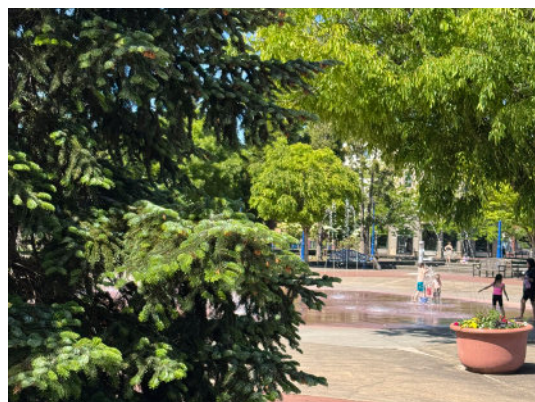
Another observation about downtown’s future destiny is how focused answers were on creating opportunities for community, hanging out, and rubbing shoulders with one another. Ultimately, a downtown is a place for people, a place that should feel welcoming to everyone in your community, and a place that naturally fosters activity by people.

VISUAL EXAMPLES OF WHAT DOES & DOESN’T FEEL LIKE DOWNTOWN

Feels Like a Downtown Activity



Feels Like a Downtown Activity



Doesn't Feel Like a Downtown Sidewalk



Not a Downtown Type of Building



Bottom line, people want downtown to be a nice place physically, they want it to host a lot of economic and social activity, and they also want to feel connection while there. A downtown is a distillation of everything you are as a community, expressed collaboratively in the built environment! A place to dip your toe into all that Tualatin is.

There are many areas of physical story that have an impact on economic performance in districts, and in this report we will touch on the following: roads/sidewalks, parking/empty lots, the railroad, trails/river, businesses, buildings, signs, and art. Let's look at those in more detail.

Roads /Sidewalks

Roads and sidewalks are the fundamental circulatory system for a district and they have a large influence over commerce in several ways. Let's start with roads. They impact the primary experience of being in the downtown as follows:

- *Speed/Volume.* Faster traffic and high volume roads are detrimental to small businesses, downtowns, and Main Street environments because they do not allow drivers to interact with the commercial offerings or the district. Additionally, they are noisy, unsafe for pedestrians, and discourage outdoor activities and circulation making them uninviting to future downtown real estate development.
- *Connectivity.* The physical story of a downtown, regardless of scale, is expected to be a collection of interconnecting streets, often on a grid. Many people mentioned that they find the downtown confusing for two key reasons: 1) Nyberg and Seneca both dead end on either side of the lake; and, 2) on the east side of the downtown, there is almost no internal street circulation. Instead, visitors drive between private parking lots, which is confusing and unwelcoming. A road highlight for Tualatinites are the little streets on the west side of the Commons that are small town scaled, have light posts and flower baskets, and parallel on-street parking. Pedestrians also expect connectivity, and if they need to hop between two things on foot downtown, they can get annoyed that they have to walk all the way around the lake.
- *Appearance.* The experience of being in a downtown happens long before anyone walks in an individual business. The district itself is a primary experience, which sidewalks and roads either contribute to, or detract from. If the road is unappealing, unsafe, or confusing, then it makes the entire district less appealing, which then colors people's perceptions of the business offerings. Currently, none of the roads that rim the downtown have on-street parking, which is a visual cue that the district is not a downtown.

SW Boones Ferry Road to the north of the Commons is the best "downtownesque" road and also the best connection to Tualatin Community

Park, as pictured below. SW Tualatin Sherwood Road to the south of the lake is an Interstate 5 exit, it is wide, and it is a very high volume road that conjures up grocery anchored centers, not a downtown. The N/S streets of Martinazzi and SW Boones Ferry give off a “suburban light” feel. The best of these two N/S stretches is the northern portion of Martinazzi near the library.

THE BEST ROAD! SW BOONES FERRY ROAD



As to sidewalks, these are our most humble of spaces. They are not fancy, they are open to everyone, and this is where the magic happens in a mixed use district. They are the places where we can see, and be seen, the places we run into our neighbors, the places we walk to and from work, the places we window shop. Every person, every building, and every business downtown is a citizen of the sidewalk and should act accordingly!

There are simple rules for how to drive commerce, create a sense of place, and develop a perception of safety in a downtown, and they all have to do with the sidewalk.

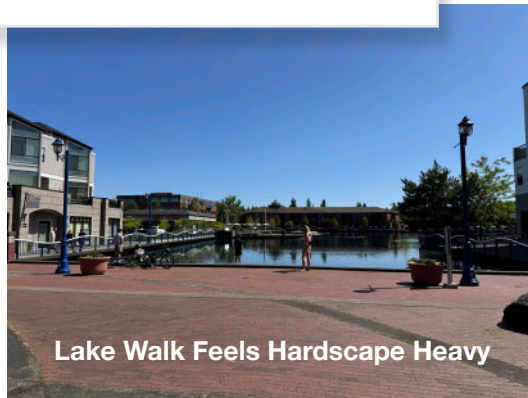
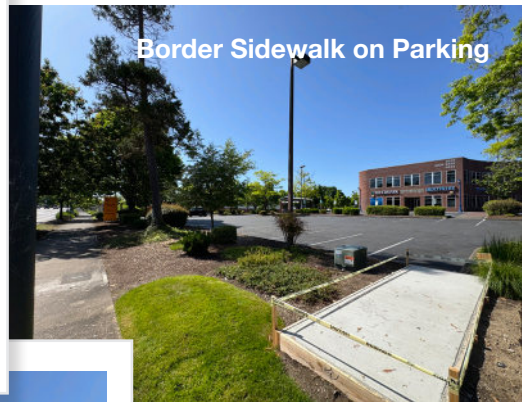
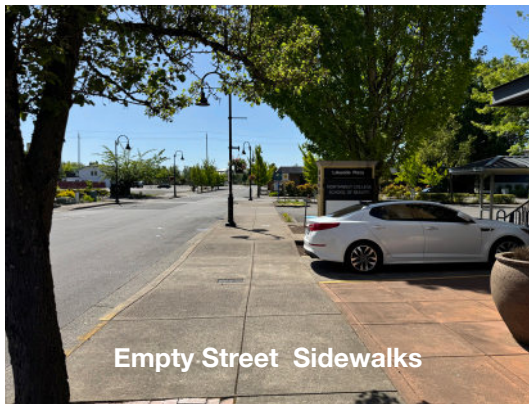
- Collection of buildings built right next to each other, right up to the sidewalk.
- Active uses on the ground floor with great windows open over 18 hours.
- Use of the sidewalk by businesses to SHOW what they sell, which essentially is what sidewalk seating is! But all businesses can do this.
- Good district fixtures, such as flower baskets, lampposts and benches.
- Shade and landscaping.



Not Many Buildings Front Directly on Sidewalks

In other words, the sidewalk itself is not the important thing, it's what is on the sidewalk's edges. Empty sidewalk edges are one of the biggest areas of weakness in Downtown Tualatin, and why it doesn't feel like a downtown to so many people. The vast majority of sidewalks are big areas of hardscape with nothing active nearby. This is true on streets, it is true on sidewalks going through parking lots, and it is true around the lake.

EXAMPLES OF ORPHANED SIDEWALKS



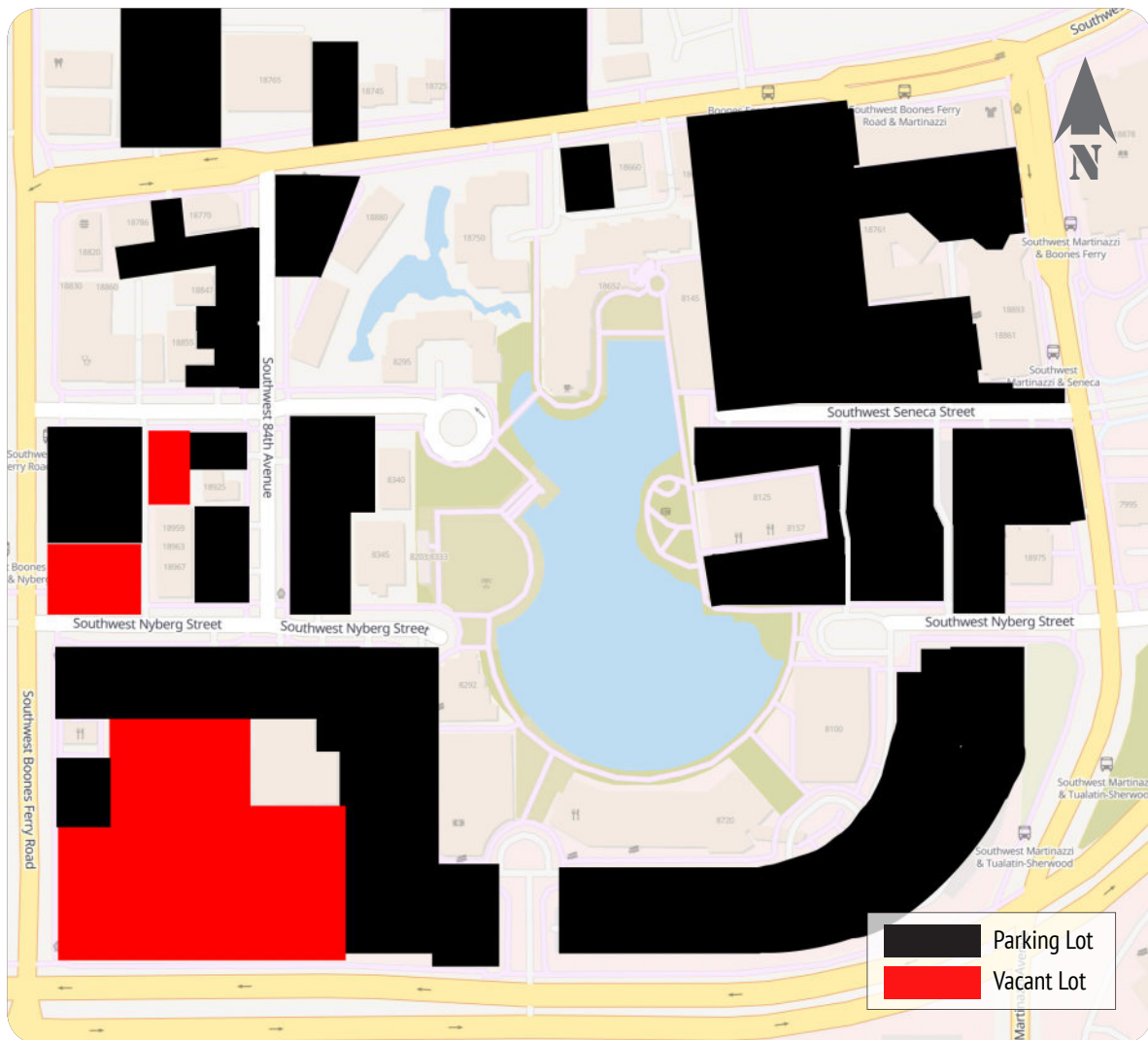
Parking Lots/Empty Lots

All downtowns aspire to be a park-once district, where pedestrians park once and circulate. This is not how customers treat downtown. Most visitors want to park directly in front of the business they are going to. Visitors don't understand where public parking is and will get frustrated, not knowing where to park and how to find businesses in the confusing layout. Customers sometimes drive between different locations in the downtown. Additionally, the parking lots that rim the downtown are completely hiding it. Between parking lots and empty lots, shown on the next page

in black and red respectively, the downtown is over-parked and disconnected. As a reference, Portland's downtown has approximately 11% of downtown land area devoted to parking, and Seattle has approximately 9% of downtown land area devoted to parking, according to the Parking Reform Network.

Below, you can see there is roughly 50% of land area devoted to parking (both public and private), and a few significant empty lots. This graphic does not account for on-street parking or garage parking with housing over the top, so the amount of square footage devoted to parking overall is actually larger than what is shown here.

PARKING AND EMPTY LOTS DOWNTOWN



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Railroads

Rail tracks run N/S along the west border of downtown, adjacent to the Hedges Greene shopping center. This track serves as a commuter rail stop on the The Westside Express Service (WES) provided by Trimet that runs from Wilsonville to Beaverton during commuter hours. Currently, the rail service is not viewed as useful for regional access other than going to/from work because of its restricted hours of operation. The station is on an elevated platform with weather protection and features an interactive art piece of movable heads. Trimet controls a parking lot to the south of the station along the east edge of Hedges Greene. Having more robust rail service here would help contribute to the area being a car-light option for residents. The area around the tracks also hosts the historic and beautiful Sweek house and grounds.

WES STATION, ART INSTALLATION & SWEET HOUSE

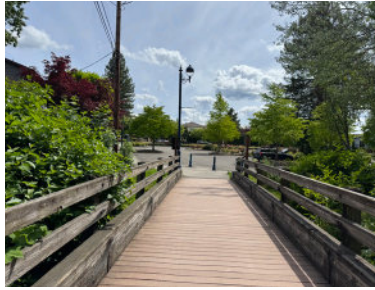


Trails/Rivers

Downtown is incredibly fortunate to claim a water trail (the river) and a gorgeous shared-use bike path that connects to a larger regional trail system. The proximity of the Greenway, Tualatin Community Park to the north, and a meandering river great for paddle boarding and family fun are precious amenities to the community and something found in almost no downtown anywhere. However, most felt there was not a robust connection between these trails and the amenities and services offered by downtown.

Generally, users of the park and Greenway do not interact with even natural adjacencies, such as light food and snack opportunities. In fact, many wondered how many people using the parks and trails really know what is available downtown.

BIKE, PED AND WATER TRAILS RUN THROUGH/BY DOWNTOWN



Businesses

A downtown takes its identity from ground-floor businesses, which are essentially the products in downtown's store. What types of businesses contribute to identity? Generally, those that are local, active, and visually engaging are the key to building economic success.

As a shortcut, we are going to call these businesses "active." Ideally, active uses are businesses that are a) open to the public; b) have dynamic and interesting windows; c) create multi-sensory experiences; d) are something a pedestrian might frequent; e) use the sidewalk as an extension of their business; f) collaborate and cross-pollinate with other businesses; and, g) are ever-evolving. An economically successful downtown or Main Street district is one that always gives customers a new experience!

Active means that I can look at the business from the street, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and get a sense of what the business sells, who its target market is, and what sort of experience it will offer a consumer on the interior. I should get this impression in a few seconds.

There are four key characteristics that are impacting identity and economics in downtown Tualatin, listed below. These are the four main reasons people described Tualatin as needing more activity.

1. The preponderance of inactive businesses in ground-floor spaces.
2. Blocked or dark windows on the ground floor.
3. A general lack of people visible in large areas of the downtown.
4. A lack of concentrated activity at the sidewalk, except for the restaurant seating along restaurant row on the south portion of the lake.

Visitors want to see in your windows, Tualatin!! For the most part, during the day, it was impossible to see in most of the businesses in Tualatin. If there is no window activation, the space interacts with the district in exactly the same manner as a vacancy because it is essentially acts as a blank.

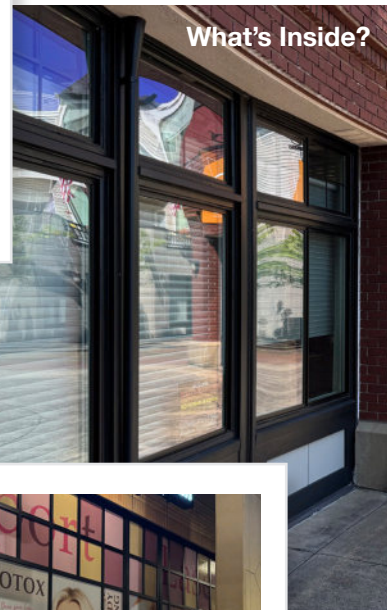
The hardest thing a local business has to accomplish is to get people to cross their threshold. If there isn't something in storefront windows or on the sidewalks that reflects target customer interests, and if visitors can't see into a business, they will be much less likely to walk through a door.

VISITORS WANT TO SEE IN YOUR WINDOWS, TUALATIN!

What's Inside?



What's Inside?



What's Inside?



What's Inside?



In downtown, it is difficult to tell which businesses are open, which are closed, and which are vacant. A lack of window transparency and visual interest means that a)

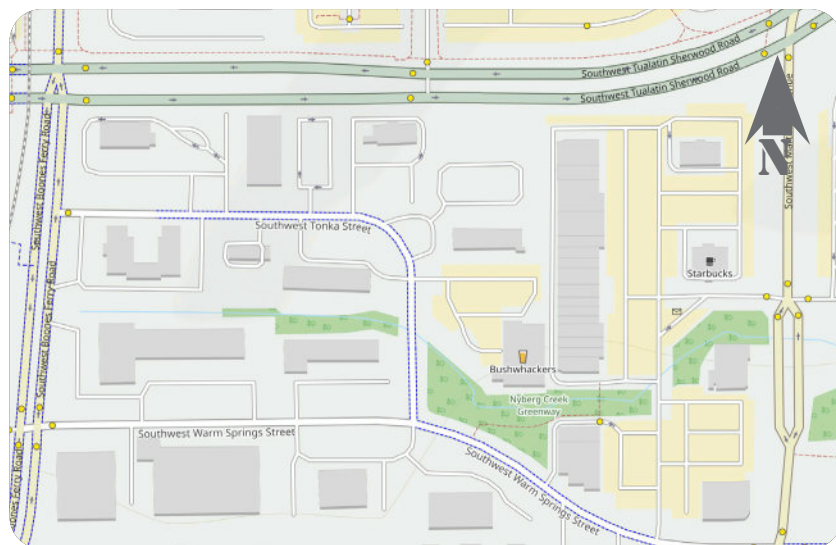
customers are not reminded to enter a business; and, b) visitors are less likely to circulate between businesses. Consumers should be able to tell you are open in one second by taking a look at your ground floor storefront and immediately know what your business is, what experience is on offer, and why they might want to connect with your establishment. Bottom line, if a business is on the ground-floor, it has an obligation, no matter its use, to engage the sidewalk and create dynamic windows.

In interviews, surveys and the workshop it was pretty consistent that in the core downtown there was a lack of retail and shops, so it's not telling a physical story on the ground floor of a mixed-use, active retail/restaurant downtown.

The good news is that downtown is within a very walkable distance to a wide mix of businesses that would allow most people to meet their shopping needs without a car. It is already the most walkable area of the City as a whole because downtown denizens can easily access multiple grocery stores, a post office, office supplies, pet supplies, pet hospital, home goods, medical services, a mix of restaurants and fast food, outdoors stores, craft supplies, etc.

Additionally, the area directly to the south of the core downtown ((SW Tonka Street and Warm Springs Street) has a mix of food businesses that were frequented by a wide demographic in the community, which is the area shown below. In considering places to expand the downtown within the Urban Renewal Area, this slice of small-lot development to the south of downtown and the small triangle of land to the west of this might present interesting opportunities for redevelopment before larger mall sites would consider large changes.

SOUTH OF DOWNTOWN STRIP MALLS WITH RESTAURANTS



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Buildings

In a store, products are what a store sells, and fixtures are the equipment that cradle, display, house, and show off the products. These display devices can be utilitarian, or they can actually help create ambience and mood, showcasing merchandise in a compelling and meaningful fashion, which also drive sales.

In the picture to the right, you can see the importance of fixtures. These pears feel very “farm fresh” because they are sitting on a country-inspired fixture. If these were sitting on a plastic table surrounded by Styrofoam, the produce would not appear to be nearly as fresh.

In a store, the interplay between products and fixtures is essential for driving sales and creating brand connection. And if you do it right, the fixtures are a part of the experience of being in the store.

In a downtown, the same is true. Only this time, the fixtures are the buildings and the products are the businesses! In a downtown, one of the primary experiences is first just being there, on the sidewalk absorbing street life, people, sidewalk seating, open windows, storefront interesting architecture, and good building lighting. The buildings act like walls to create the feeling of a room at the street or plaza level.

And when it comes to a building’s role in telling a story for a successful downtown or Main Street, it’s about both quality and quantity.

- **Quantity.** Is there a sufficient concentration of buildings built right up to the sidewalk, right next to each other, without parking lot interruption?

Density of offerings are important in both a store or a downtown. Shoppers in a store do not want to see big blank spots with no fixtures or merchandise. Similarly, walkers in a downtown do not want to see blanks in the physical environment, such as inward-facing buildings, ugly buildings, or vacant lots. A store with a lot of blanks makes shoppers leave, and so does a downtown with a lot of blanks.

A critical mass of interconnected buildings tells a physical story of vibrancy and excitement, a story that can be broadcast by the district 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It’s a story that is enticing to pedestrians, which is important



Fixture Makes Pears “Farm Fresh”

because it is the cross-pollination between businesses that happens by people on foot that drives economic success in a downtown.

Lack of building density, and lack of buildings adjacent to the sidewalk are key reasons why it doesn't "feel like a downtown" for folks—instead of sidewalks being an avenue to access building storefronts, in most of downtown, they are an avenue fronting on parking lots.

THE VIEW FROM MOST SIDEWALKS IS PARKING NOT BUILDINGS

A Dominant Sidewalk Experience is Parking



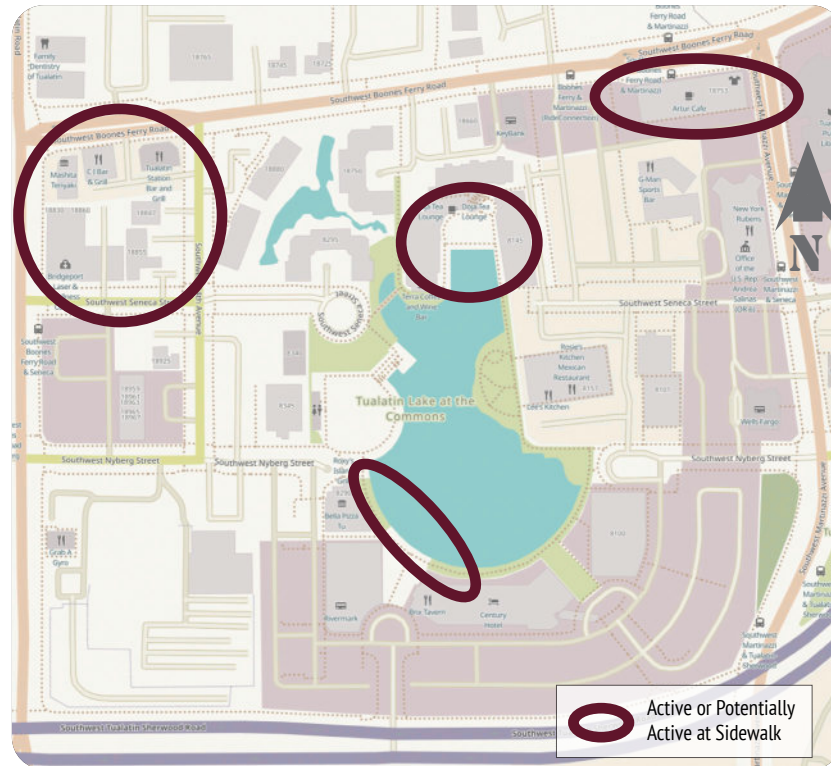
Parking Viewed from a Walkway



- **Quality.** Does each building contribute to or detract from downtown's brand? Commercial districts should be asking themselves: is every individual building contributing to the overall brand of a place, and are those buildings creating a framework for tenant success? Great buildings can make a downtown district, and ugly buildings can break a downtown district. If each building isn't doing its level best to showcase an active business on the ground floor, create a positive district experience, and get customer attention, then the primary experience of being in the downtown is compromised.

There are a few concentrations of buildings in downtown that either do, or could offer an experience at the sidewalk that might be consistent with a smaller town downtown, which are shown on the map on the next page. On balance though, there are just not enough buildings built next to each other, up to the sidewalk with active uses currently.

AREAS WITH BUILDING CLUSTERS OR ACTIVITY NEAR SIDEWALKS



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Signs

Signs are one of the most misunderstood pieces of the retail puzzle in all commercial real estate settings. And, they are especially a challenge when we have a downtown setting in suburban surroundings because there is an instinct to mirror suburban retail practices in the downtown, which doesn't work. Additionally, both pedestrians and drivers tend to not read anything in the built environment unless they are looking for a specific business, but after decades of retail research, I can tell you that even then, they often don't read signs. They look for colors, or pretty umbrellas, or a landmark nearby.

In mixed-use places, the best advertisements are a combination of a great building, a great storefront, both of which must have great lighting, that SHOW me what they sell or why I might want to connect with them, or how I



Not Many Active Sidewalk Places in Downtown

might find them. So my advice is generally to pretend that words don't exist, figure out how to show people what you do and how to get their attention, and then add a sign to all of that at the very end!

A good example of an attention-getting building happened during district secret shopper assessments. The Dave's Hot Chicken has very successfully leveraged a brightly painted and interesting building, incorporating their brand on the signage but not changing the building. It was one of the few buildings in the entire urban renewal area that caught driver attention while in a moving vehicle.

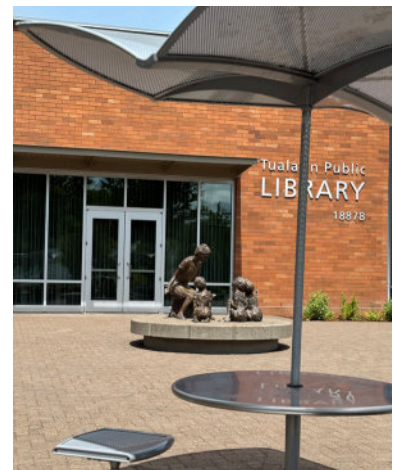
MONUMENT SIGNS ON GIANT PARKING LOTS = NOT A DOWNTOWN



Signs are also one of the more subconscious reasons that downtown doesn't feel like a downtown: almost all of the signage is suburban and not helpful in navigating people to public lots or orienting them to businesses that face the lake. There is definitely feedback from businesses that customers get frustrated trying to locate them for the first time. (Identity actions will have ideas for tackling this challenge!)

Art

The Tualatin Arts Advisory Committee's presence is definitely being felt in big and small ways in the downtown. It was fun to walk around and see large new installations and surprising Easter eggs, like small stamps in sidewalks. The plaza in front of the library has a lovely piece with a rushing water feature, but it was mentioned by many survey takers as something no one ever uses and is a waste of space. It suffers from the too much hardscape problem, as it has parking and/or road on 3 sides and hard, bland surfaces everywhere in the little courtyard itself.



Library Hardscape Plaza

Objective

The “C” in the CORE Story Framework was the longest section of the framework because the physical story of a commercial district is fundamentally important to its performance. In some ways, the C is also the easiest to understand because it is tangible. The remaining elements of the framework (the “ORE”) are equally important, but they are sometimes harder to grasp. They are the hidden parts of story that still have a big impact. But, they are less tangible, and therefore harder to quantify. So let’s take a closer look at the “ORE”... beginning with Objective.

The “O” in the CORE Story Framework is Objective, and speaks to what a character’s motivation is.

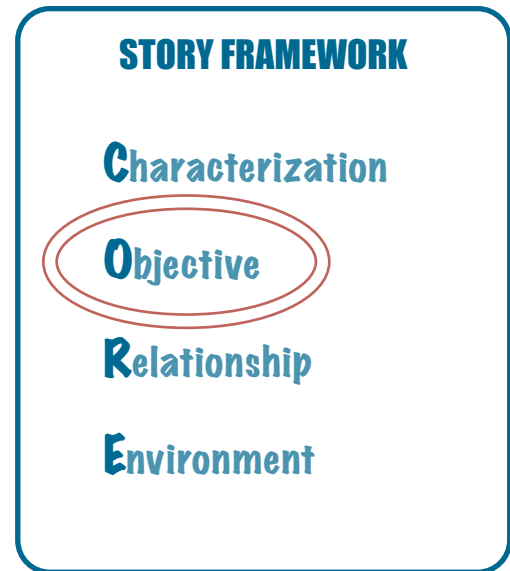
Even though we don’t do it consciously, human beings are always making assumptions about what everyone else’s objectives are, and what is motivating them. We must have an idea of what someone’s objective is if we want to engage with them in a story because we need to know what boundaries define their interactions.

In real life, the absence of having a clear understanding of someone’s objective makes us uncomfortable. Human beings feel most at ease with someone whose objective is clear, whether or not we would describe their motivations as good or bad. On the other hand, we do not like interactions where we don’t know, or don’t understand, the objective of the other parties.

This is true of places, as well. We want to know what motivates a place and what experience we are supposed to have and how we are supposed to feel.

For a downtown or a Main Street, objective refers to understanding the experience that it intends to provide and the role that the district plays in the city as a whole. As consumers, as residents, as visitors we want to grasp what downtown stands for, what it is about, what motivates it. In other words, why should I connect with it?

In order to get a handle on Objective for Tualatin, we started by asking workshop-goers and survey takers some interesting questions, which we will dive into in further detail in the following pages. Our first question was about passion; namely, what are people in Tualatin passionate about?



WHAT ARE PEOPLE IN TUALATIN MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT?



There was some tension in the responses as it relates to feedback about being a bedroom community, or a suburban community on Interstate 5. This is expressed in words such as being passionate about traffic or cars. And while there were references to Tualatin being car-centric, the flip side of that coin is that there was real interest in developing a more authentic downtown, mixed-use, walkable experience.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN THAT PROVIDES AN EXPERIENCE YOU WANT DOWNTOWN TUALATIN TO OFFER, AND WHY?



Clearly everyone wants more shops, more people, more shopping, more walkability, more restaurants, more food cart pods, etc. They really want to see some super charged activity.

Below is a list of most of the places mentioned, as you can see, everyone was thinking big!

PLACES MENTIONED

- * Bend, Oregon
- * Beaverton, Oregon
- * Spokane, Washington
- * West Linn, Oregon
- * Portland, Oregon
- * Lake Oswego, Oregon
- * San Antonio, Texas
- * Omaha, Nebraska
- * Jerome, Arizona
- * Tigard, Oregon
- * Oregon City, Oregon
- * Happy Valley, Oregon
- * Sherwood, Oregon
- * Newberg, Oregon
- * Barcelona, Spain
- * Tempe, Arizona
- * Sandy, Oregon
- * Sellwood-Moreland
- * Wilsonville, Oregon
- * Hillsboro, Oregon
- * Copenhagen, Denmark
- * Yokohama, Japan
- * Tucson, Arizona
- * Tigard, Oregon
- * Milwaukie, Oregon
- * Corvallis, Oregon
- * Eugene, Oregon
- * Santa Barbara, CA
- * San Diego, California
- * San Francisco, CA
- * Scottsdale, Arizona
- * Kyoto, Japan
- * Sonoma, California
- * Santa Fe, New Mexico
- * Miami, Florida
- * Astoria, Oregon
- * London, England
- * Salem, Oregon
- * Vancouver, Washington
- * McMinnville, Oregon

PLACES MENTIONED

- * Cannon Beach, Oregon
- * Ashland, Oregon
- * Greenwich Village
- * Bellevue, Washington
- * St. George, Utah
- * Paris, France
- * Baños, Ecuador
- * Singapore
- * Lisbon, Portugal
- * Leavenworth, WA
- * Carmel, Indiana
- * Florence, Italy
- * Frankfurt, Germany
- * Bern, Switzerland
- * Seaside, Oregon
- * Bellingham, WA
- * Lawrence, Kansas
- * Sisters, Oregon
- * Hood River, Oregon
- * Jackson Hole, Wyoming
- * Palm Springs, CA
- * Silverton, Oregon
- * St. Louis, Missouri
- * Sienna, Italy
- * Bruges, Belgium
- * Hudson, Ohio
- * Chicago, Illinois
- * Montreal, Canada
- * Denver, Colorado
- * Wallace, Idaho
- * Tokyo, Japan
- * Manzanita, Oregon
- * Rome, Italy
- * Iowa City, Iowa
- * Houston, Texas
- * Pasadena, California
- * Camas, Washington
- * Matosinhos, Portugal
- * Oran Park, New South Wales (NSW), Australia

PLACES MENTIONED

- * Novoshakhtinsk, Russia
- * Fuzhou, China
- * Mumbai, India
- * Nanjing, China
- * Budapest, Hungary
- * Cairo, Egypt
- * Athens, Greece
- * Portland, Maine
- * Austin, Texas
- * South Bay, California
- * Campbell, California
- * Sunnyvale, California
- * The Round
- * Orenco Station
- * Spokane Riverfront
- * Millennium Plaza
- * The Garage (West Linn)
- * Gene Leahy Mall (Omaha)
- * Mill District (Bend)
- * Cuidesac (Tempe)
- * Universal Plaza
- * Bridgeport Village
- * Hidden Creek West Park
- * Old Town Sherwood
- * Waikiki Beach (Hawaii)
- * Director Park (Portland)
- * Progress Ridge
- * The Oregon Gardens
- * Liberty Station (SD)
- * Old Pasadena (CA)
- * Hawthorne St
- * Alberta Street
- * Multnomah Village
- * Cannon Beach
- * Little Tokyo (LA CA)
- * Sellwood-Moreland
- * Yachats
- * Fairhaven Neighborhood

One of the key characteristics of the mixed-use examples are that they have “naturally occurring activity.” No one has to program or secure these places. The mix of businesses, people living in the district, visitors, and/or shoppers make it a vibrant, ever-evolving place all on its own. Events are gravity in places with 18 hours of commercial activity on the street. Additionally, these are all great places for people.

Indoor/Outdoor Display Plus Great Lighting



Product on the Sidewalk



Paper & Printing Outdoor Typing Station



People Spilling Out Onto Sidewalk



The final question in the framework for objective was the most difficult. If downtown were a person, how does that person feel? And we encourage folks to describe the person to make it easier. We don't ask this question to be annoying, although a few surveygoers were wondering. We ask this question because the answers are actually the way that the district often makes visitors feel. It gives us insight into the experience being provided and the subconscious reactions customers and diners might be having.

IF DOWNTOWN WERE A PERSON, BASED ON EVERYTHING IT IS PRESENTING TO THE WORLD TODAY, WHAT IS THAT PERSON FEELING?



Most of the largest words speak to the challenges facing downtown Tualatin, but people were very open about they thought downtown needed, and that it was trying!

On the next page are some specific pull quotes from this question that give you a little bit of an overview of the kinds of ways people perceived of downtown in both the survey and the workshop.

The Lake at the Commons feels like someone in their thirties, who dresses nicely, is always tidy, but does not really engage with strangers.

The lake is a dad whose children have grown up. He is sloppy and although he tries to dress nice, his clothing is always stained and a little disheveled. He is kind, but not always the most informed. He does his best.

Areas around the lake are like an old woman who has an inner beauty that cannot really be seen, so she's ignored. Once she's dressed up and smiles/laughs, others see she's beautiful and fun.

Grandpa

They listen to "wide open spaces" by the Chicks and dream about bigger things!

IF DOWNTOWN TUALATIN WERE A PERSON...

A boring dude, late 40s, project engineer, shops at New Seasons, mountain bikes, struggles with identity, about to go through midlife crisis or an amazing redevelopment!"

Adam Sandler

Taking some meds to try to feel younger.

It seems to be a 50ish white male who wears white shirts, a pocket protector and is a licensed mechanical engineer who collects phonograph records of Peggy Lee.

They are a calm and relaxing person who used to get out to all these activities before the pandemic, but afterwards has kinda stepped back and become less social.

A 60 something year old man who still goes to work for the same job he's had for 40 years comes home and sits in his recliner and watches tv every day. But gets really excited and goes all out for the pumpkin regatta every year, when he has the whole family and neighborhood over for a party.

I think there are more than one person... [from] the big popular person who has a bunch of friends [to those who] hope to get more neighbors one day, spruce up their neighborhood with lots of flowers and trees and develop connections and friendships.

Aunt Marge who is in an assisted living home that you rarely go visit because you forget about her.

Beige

IF DOWNTOWN TUALATIN WERE A PERSON...

A person that wakes up everyday at the same time, goes to his boring office job, wearing his beige boring clothes, goes home and watches family feud for two hours while eating a bowl of rice and grilled chicken before going to bed and doing the same thing the next day.

Eeyore

Waiting for surgery, but hopeful.

Clean, stylish, casual business dress - "a sharp dresser." Works hard and plays hard. Enjoys life and the amenities of the NW - natural resources. Easy to talk to, outgoing, but reserved at times.

This question, “*If Tualatin were a person...*” is one of the most powerful because it’s an honest reflection of how the downtown is serving its own citizens. The clear message is that for some, it’s pretty good, for others, it’s mid, but for the majority, it’s a sad, lonely, and slightly lost place. The silver lining though is that almost everyone passionately believes it can be improved and is excited about the prospect!

Additionally, I must give a shout out to workshopers and survey takers for being so descriptive, The wonderfully evocative and thoughtful answers to the final objective question could have filled pages in this report!

Relationship

The third item in the CORE Story Framework is Relationship. In traditional storytelling, we use relationships to tell readers something about a character. You can tell a lot about a person by the relationships they maintain, and the same can be said for towns.

What are your most popular events? The most beloved businesses? Who in the community connects with downtown? Who doesn’t? Who is moving into the community? Who is moving away? How are the public and private sectors working together?

Relationship is usually the most overlooked element of the framework, but it’s vitally important because at the end of the day, a downtown or Main Street is all about people.

Creating economically sustainable communities requires active collaboration between the private sector, the public sector, and non-profit agencies.

To make good decisions about new development, adaptive reuse, business finishes and tenanting, property owners must work together.

To generate sales per square foot, businesses must work together, share information, and create brand relationships with a wide cross section of the community.

And to be successful in a small-city environment, downtown has to create strong relationships with the residents of its city. Smaller cities are smaller markets, and no district can afford a lack of relationship with its own residents.

So what is the state of relationship in downtown Tualatin?

STORY FRAMEWORK

Characterization

Objective

Relationship

Environment

The first question we asked as it pertains to relationship was: “Who relates to downtown Tualatin?” As you can see below, many people respond by talking about who relates, and what they are relating to.

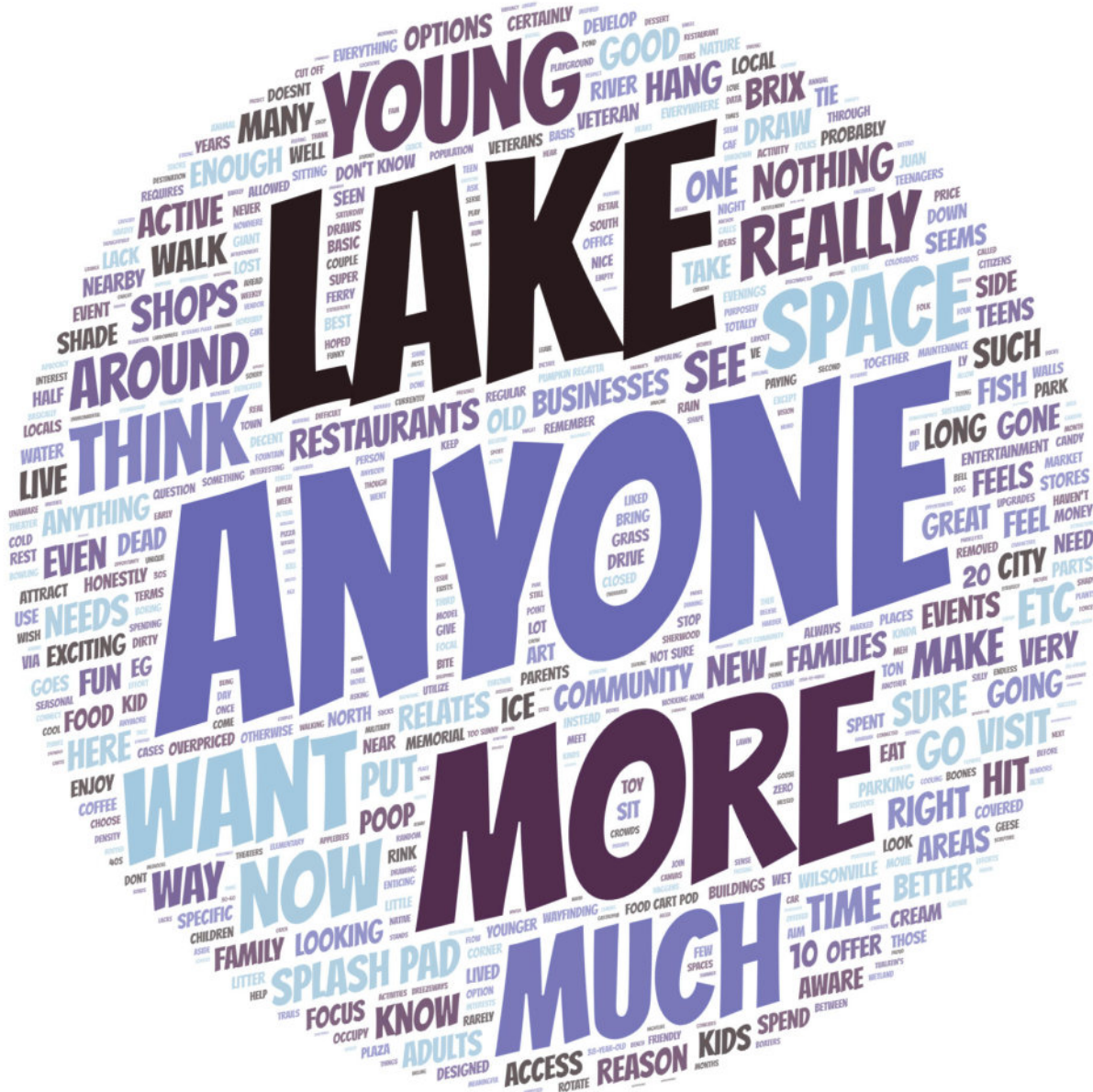
WHO RELATES TO DOWNTOWN TUALATIN?



The biggest themes were family, kids, people walk around and/or love the lake, diners, and folks going to the fountain/splash pad.

The next question we asked is who did not relate to downtown Tualatin.

WHO DOES NOT RELATE TO DOWNTOWN TUALATIN?



A lot of respondents said that anyone might not relate. There is clear frustration with downtown because people want to relate, but feel there is not enough of an experience to relate to. In this question, the lake was mentioned a lot, but in many cases it was all of the ways that people were not relating to the lake. And again, a lot of mentions of how much more the downtown needs in terms of activity, offerings, and excitement.

Also, we asked for responses across the entire City, not just downtown.

[illegible]

WHAT ARE TUALATIN CITY'S LEADING BUSINESSES?



The characteristics of what people respond to in terms of beloved businesses are often places that are busy because they are great places for people. The library is beloved, and we should think about how to tie that more closely to downtown. Additionally, the characteristics of most of the businesses cited as beloved are that they are local and food related. These are both areas that are great for targeted tenanting when investing in downtown improvements.

Leading businesses are usually office/manufacturing, or sometimes national chains, and that is the case here where Fred Meyer got bigger and Lam Research was mentioned. Fred Meyer is an interesting community hub, many people mentioned it, even in focus groups and interviews, as a place where you often see and rub shoulders with neighbors.

A few more relationship observations:

- The Latino business leaders we spoke with said their community doesn't generally see the downtown as an amenity for gathering. Rather, they might go to specific food-related business, but other than that, it's not a draw.
- We asked if there were places people avoided in the downtown. The good news is that no one actively avoids anything downtown. The bad news is that people said it was more the case that there is nothing on offer downtown, so they just forget about it and actively choose not to go.

Environment

Last up in the story framework is Environment.

We all know the expression that context is everything. Well, it's true. Context is everything. If you told a first date story that took place at a baseball game, you would make one set of assumptions about the characters. If you changed just the context of that first date story, from a baseball game to say... a church, well, perceptions of these characters would change a lot.

Some elements of environment can be changed for a place, and some can't. You can change whether your downtown is green and park-like, so the context for the downtown experience changes. But, you cannot change where a town or a city is located, and the seasonality and market forces that go with that location. Since you can't change most of a place's "where," understanding it and leveraging it are paramount for planning and economic success.

So, how did Tualatin's residents describe their city's context, and the perception of Tualatin within the region and State of Oregon? See the following word clouds.

STORY FRAMEWORK

Characterization

Objective

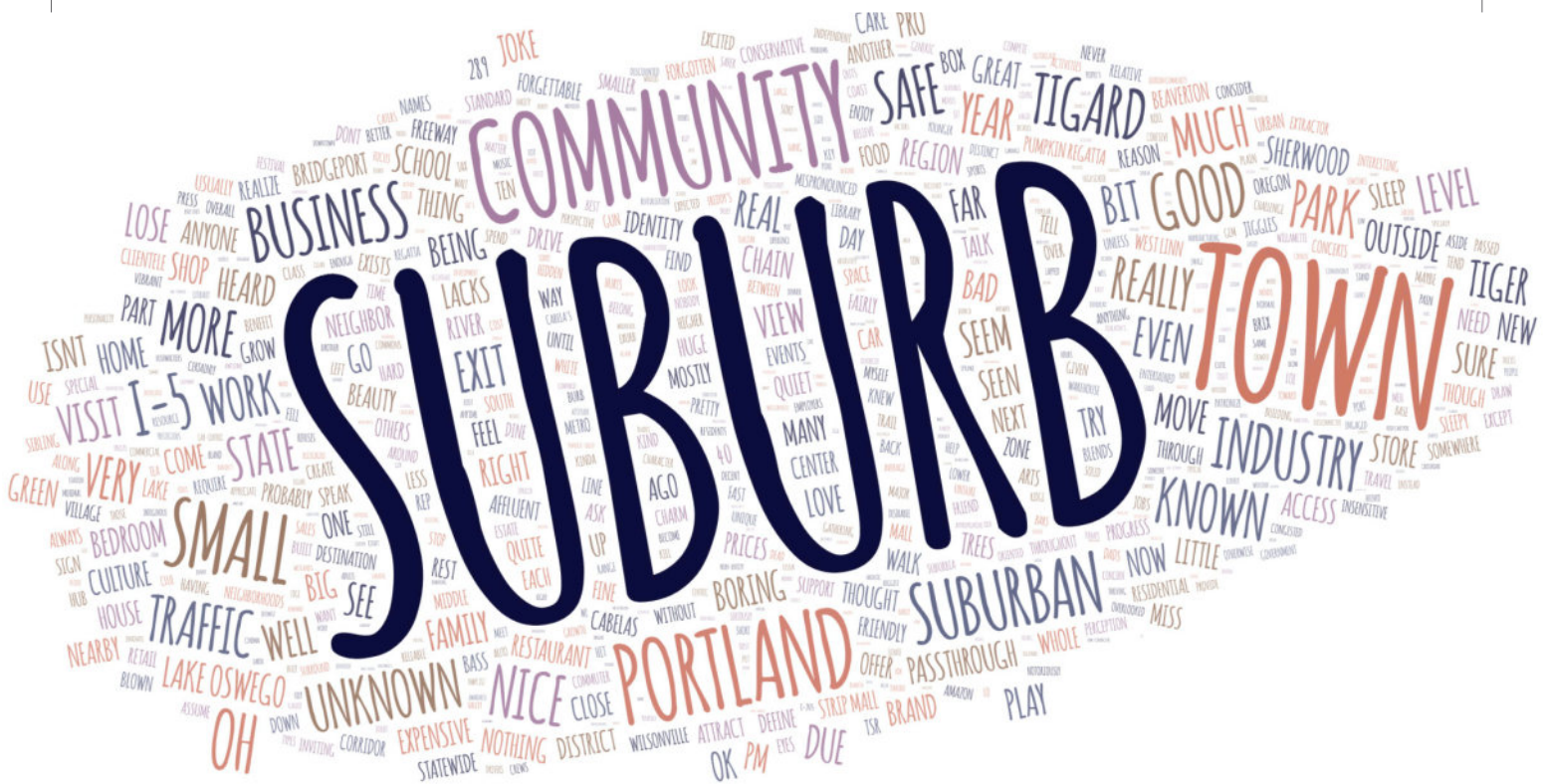
Relationship

Environment

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE REGION AROUND TUALATIN?



HOW IS TUALATIN PERCEIVED THROUGHOUT REGION/STATE?



Tualatin's immediate context has suburban and suburbs as the primary context for the City. Parks, industry, being green and beautiful, being family friendly, and being a pass through to Tigard or Sherwood were also all mentioned.

In terms of how Tualatin is perceived in the region and the State, being a suburb/suburban loomed large. Having traffic, being safe, being a pass through/exit for I5, and being mistaken as Lake Oswego or Tigard were mentioned. From a State perspective, many feel that Tualatin is pretty unknown and essentially lumped in with Portland.

The downtown and the City is very fortunate to have such an interesting tension between a well-used river, amazing parks, greenway/bike trails, and an Interstate freeway with a rap for being the 'burbs! It's something that could be playfully fun in marketing. But, definitely smart to lean into the parks, environment, and biking for downtown's future.

Also, there were loads of comments about the fact that no one knows how to spell the City's name!

FINDINGS SPOTLIGHT

Tualatin values its parks, river access, family-friendly life in a small close-knit community with easy access to Portland. They also recognize that the balance of retail, employment and office in the community contributes to having a strong job base and solid economy. Really, the one thing missing from the City is a great downtown, and there is demand for it.

The Lake at the Commons area has elements cherished by the community, but overall, it fails to deliver the mixed-use, bustling hub they desire. The biggest areas to work on include:

- ***Make It Look Like a Downtown!*** Right now the downtown feels a little like a mid-century arterial with smaller buildings that have dedicated parking spaces was magically wrapped around an artificial lake. The city is going to have to figure out how to add more concentrated building form and a robust circulation pattern to help the district look and feel like a downtown.
- ***Explore Lake Options.*** There are varying degrees of attachment to the Lake, and there is an appetite to have a discussion about what else it could be. Many wondered if the area could retain a water feature but also serve as a flood mitigation area and eco-park, and others wondered if there was some way to retain water elements but have more activity and/or circulation over the lake.
- ***Where Do I Go?*** Everyone is confused! People don't know where the public lots are, new visitors don't know how to find business on the lake, people don't want to be forced to walk across around the lake when they want to go across, and it's very strange to walk/drive on the east side of downtown because there aren't real roads, only paths through private parking lots. In terms of the trail circulatory system, creating a more fun and interesting path from the Greenway, by or through downtown, and then over to the park would be good for cross pollination.
- ***Passionate about Parking.*** The dominant visual feature of downtown is parking lots, another reason it doesn't look like a downtown. Implementing a downtown parking toolkit to manage parking demand while building more density will be critical.
- ***Show Me the People.*** The long list of what people want in downtown is essentially activity. They want multi-age, 18-hours of people downtown having fun.
- ***Live and Ped.*** Because there are so many walkable amenities immediately in the urban renewal area, this is an ideal place to add more housing in Tualatin because it is truly a location that someone could meet most of their daily needs without ever needing a vehicle.

IDENTITY ACTIONS

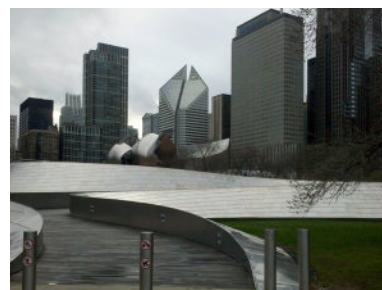
The purpose of this report is to give the community, the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), the Tualatin Development Commission, and the City of Tualatin a sense of what the community wants in their downtown, and provide actionable ideas that incorporate community feedback. These ideas are meant to spark discussion and provide a framework for the visioning work in Phase 2 of downtown revitalization planning. These identity actions will be organized as follows:

- *Form*
- *The Lake*
- *Circulation*
- *Parking*
- *Activity*
- *Housing*

Form

It was widely observed that downtown Tualatin does not meet expectations for the appearance of a downtown. There is a basic formula for what people expect visually in a downtown, and that is buildings built right up to the sidewalk, right next to each other, with no interruption. This is true in small downtowns, and this is true in medium sized cities, and this is true in large cities. The only real difference between the three kinds of mixed use districts is scale of building footprint and building height.

SMALL, MEDIUM, AND LARGE CITY DENSITY



A reminder that a continuous run of buildings is not just a place to showcase a lot of activity at the sidewalk. Buildings located right up to the sidewalk, right next to each other on opposite sides of a road essentially serve as walls for the street and sidewalk, which makes them feel like a cozy room.

There are many form-based issues to consider to as the community works together to envision a new downtown, including the following:.



Third Street Is a Cozy Room in Downtown McMinnville

1. **Adaptive Reuse.** Adaptive reuse of existing small buildings to make them more active and engaging at or near the sidewalk can have a big impact. Any kind of building can be transformed with paint and the right storefronts. My favorite are ugly boxes! In Portland, this was an auto body shop to small restaurant hub conversion.

AUTO BODY SHOP TO RESTAURANT HUB



2. **Site intensification.** Create incentive programs and design zoning and code to facilitate building owners reusing their existing structures and building new on their adjacent parking lots. Small footprint buildings create fine grained visual interest at the sidewalk, and a mix of building sizes is a typical characteristic of dense cities. You can build fabulous buildings in a small footprint, such as the mixed-use building constructed on just a 2,500 SF lot on Alberta St in Portland. Site intensification can be a great way to incrementally add density because an owner can collect cash flow from their existing building while building new next door.



Plumbbean Bldg, 2,500 SF Footprint

Site intensification can also work on larger sites. The following example below is a larger site in Portland that was once home to a long-vacant mid-century car dealership, which became the Vanport project. It used TIF and New Market Tax Credits to develop for-sale retail and office spaces offered to local small business with low interest rates and down payments. The project redeveloped the existing warehouse building, and built a new mixed use building and housing on the adjacent parking.

VANPORT PROJECT, THREE DIFFERENT USES ON THE SAME LOT:
RETAIL, OFFICE, AND BACK-OF-LOT ROW HOUSES



Site Intensification

Phase 1:
Existing Building
Renovation

**Phase 2: New
3-Story Mixed-
Use Office/Retail
Building**

**Phase 3: Row
Houses Built
Near Existing
Residential, Away
from Busy Road**

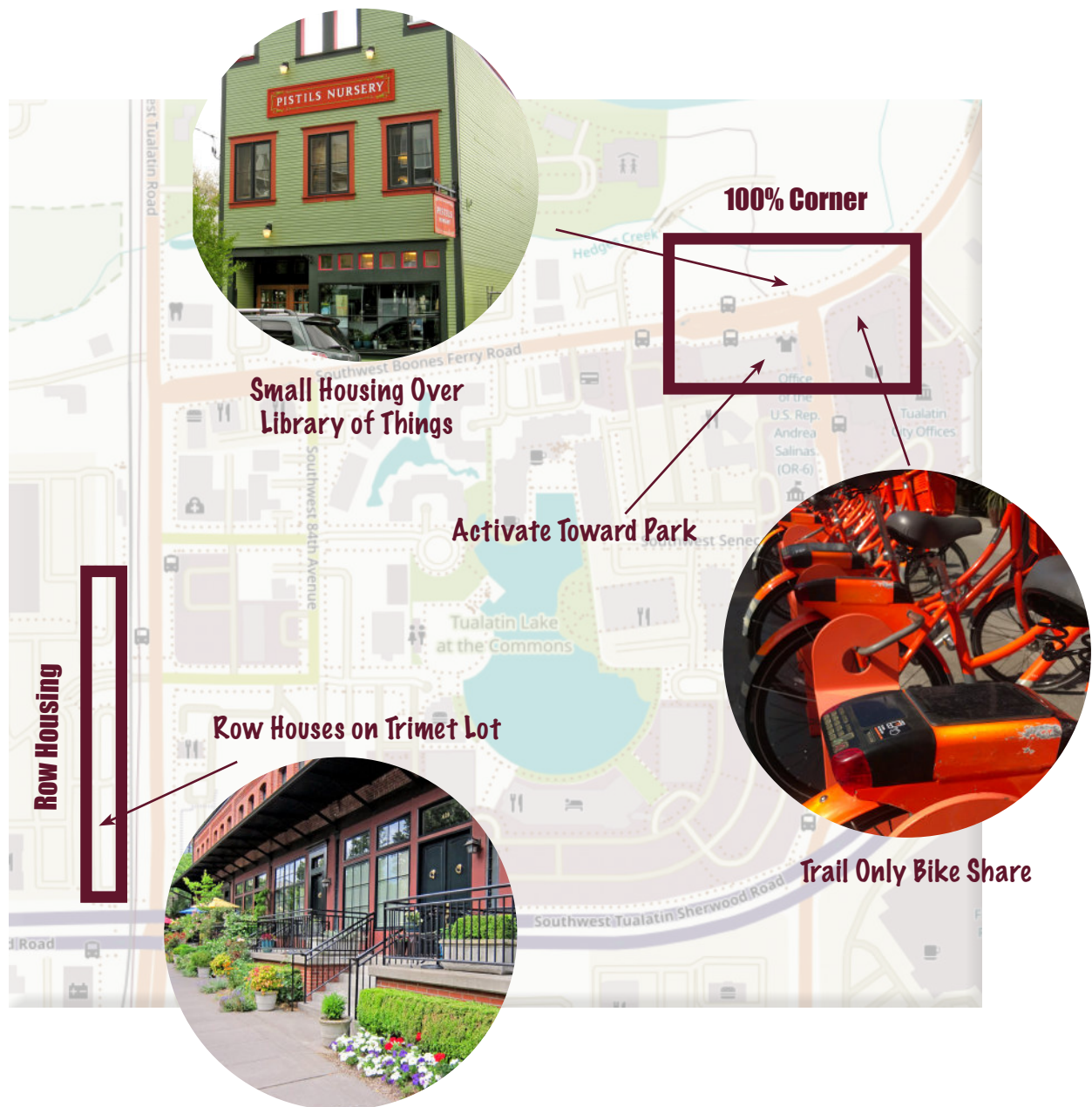
3. ***Focal Point Project.*** The empty lot at the corner of SW Boones Ferry and SW Tualatin-Sherwood Roads could be a great place for a taller building than might be allowed on the rest of the Commons. The SW Corner is on a busy road with a lot of traffic, and having something tall and dense to remind people a downtown is there could visually anchor the idea of it being a downtown. Astoria, OR (population ~10,000) is a great example. They have a mostly one- and two-story downtown, but it is anchored by a gorgeous 8 story building and it fits right in and lends a bit of drama to the lower rise downtown.



Height in Astoria's Low Rise Downtown

4. **Double-Sided Border Density.** Buildings at the sidewalk on *both* sides of a street, which create a sort of frame for the street and sidewalk, are a common physical hallmark of a downtown. There are two areas that might lend themselves to additional double-sided density on the roads that form the border around the Lake at the Commons. These are shown on the map below, along with examples of activation ideas. (Oakland and Minneapolis have E-cargo Bike Libraries, for inspiration.)

BEST CANDIDATES FOR CROSS-STREET BORDER DENSITY



5. **Floodplain.** Downtown Tualatin is located in a floodplain, which informs how buildings must be built, and may also inform whether the lake could play a role (see the next section). If the first floor is going to need to be elevated, there are ways to engage the sidewalk. Generally, it's easiest to take inspiration from former industrial spaces that had dock high loading or elevated floors.

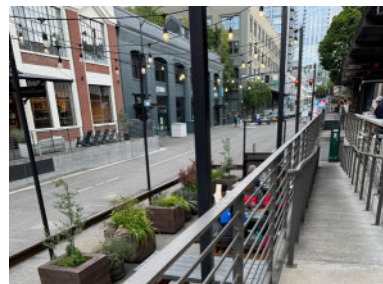
- Build straight up to the sidewalk, use roll up doors or large storefronts immediately at the sidewalk to garner attention and draw customers. These are typically stair accessed into each space in the front, and ADA access is in the rear or side entry ramped hallways into the building. See storefront examples below of elevated space.

ELEVATED, RECESSED WITH GRADE SEATING, AND INTERIOR EXAMPLE



- Mimic old industrial buildings that are recessed from the sidewalk and have dock high grade first floors, with large dock style balcony areas in front. It's very important to activate the balconies to create the street life everyone wants and to lure people up the ramps/stairs to the store/restaurant. In the example below right, the restaurant has grade outdoor seating, but the entry and the restaurant are above on the former dock.

ELEVATED COMMERCIAL SPACE WITH ATTACHED BALCONY/DOCK



- Create “galleria” style spaces with one entry that are multi-tenanted on the inside but without separate entries. These kinds of spaces are often found in below and above grade space that is difficult to divide with individual street entries. These require very advanced tenanting and are usually put together around a theme, such as beauty, health, retail, food, or maker focused. A food hall is a common and easy to execute example. It is helpful if the building is very interesting on the outside to mitigate the lack of outward-fronting businesses. The picture to the right is in the basement of an historic post office adaptive reuse project in Reno, NV that has a food hall and maker spaces.



Basement Food Hall in Reno Adaptive Reuse

The Lake

Some would say the lake should 100% stay, some believe it should 100% go, and others feel like it should change in some unknown way. It is definitely worth exploring all of these options further in the second phase of studying the downtown. Based on the feedback in the community, a few areas to consider are below.

1. **Eco Park/Flood Mitigation.** Wetland parks are being built around the world in various sizes and forms. Because Tualatin's downtown is located in a floodplain, it might be interesting to study whether the lake could be turned into a natural water feature that also helps to reduce flood damage. As inspiration, a few people mentioned the Wild Mile project where they are improving Chicago River water quality by placing floating gardens on the river.
2. **Bridges.** The lake creates circulation discontinuity that pedestrians resented if they weren't in town just for a leisure stroll around the lake. Some suggested adding pedestrian bridges between SW Nyberg and SW Seneca Streets to connect over the lake for peds. (In York England, they had a small sandwich shop on a former bridge tender house located on a bridge, pictured to the right.) There was also a minority amount of feedback



Small Retail Space on Historic Bridge

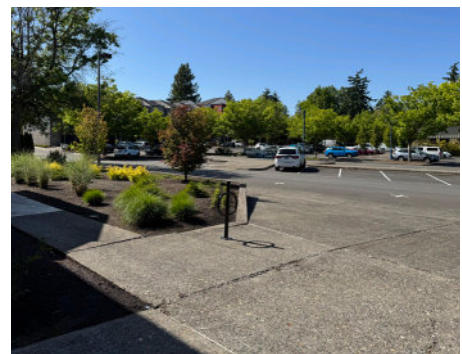
wishing to explore removing the lake and restoring the east-west roads that current dead end at the Lake.

3. **Water Feature.** Some residents would like to reduce the lake to a water feature with a show, or a grand fountain showcasing the sound and visual of water, and reclaiming some of the lake for other purposes. As a thought exercise, it might be interesting to see what could be designed in reclaimed lake space.

Circulation

A downtown is first and foremost a place where circulation is easy, with many routes possible to get between destinations. This is in contrast to suburban infrastructure, which is usually off a corridor, has a front and back and one way in and out. The areas that came up regarding circulation that could use further thought include:

1. **Lake.** People want more options to cross the lake, which is covered in the previous section.
2. **Parking.** It is very unclear how to find businesses if a visitor has not been to the area, and businesses complain that customers cannot find parking spaces, or figure out how to navigate from parking areas to lake-fronting businesses. Ideas for tackling this are covered in more detail in the next section: “parking.”
3. **Greenway Connection.** The design phase of this project should explore a better Greenway connection between the Nyberg Rivers mall exit and the downtown. Ideally, it would take cyclists into downtown by crossing Martinazzi Ave, and then they could access the park on a trail that heads north and connects up with the existing bridge or new park. When a well-traveled shared-use path connects through a small downtown, it creates a lot of community, supports small businesses, provides a place for cyclists to rest and grab food, and showcases people. It could also pass by a future food cart pod (see Activity section in the following pages).
4. **Eastside Lack of N/S Streets.** The east side of the downtown has interconnected parking lots acting as N/S streets. For the most part, it all just feels like one big interconnected private parking lot. How to encourage adaptive active reuse while facilitating downtown-style circulation could be a useful area of consideration during visualization exercises.



South to North View Through Parking

Parking

In the short-term, figuring out how to make public lots more visible, and interconnecting them to the lake in a way that is recognizable, while not requiring people to read would be very valuable. Beyond that, the City will have to start thinking about how it is going to use the downtown parking toolkit to better manage and share parking downtown.



Logo for the Commons

1. **Current Parking.** The human brain is wired to find short cuts wherever possible, which is why we often give directions by saying things like, “you go down to the corner there, and at the purple building you turn right” rather than describe a coordinate based set of directions with street signs and compass points. One of the biggest challenges with traditional map/text wayfinding is that people want to understand where to go using visual cues as much as possible, and would prefer not to read. Implementing a visual cue + reading backstop public parking and lake business wayfinding system could be very valuable to the district in the short term. Something along the lines of the following:

- There is an existing logo in the district that is integrated into the very fabric of its infrastructure, shown above right. This logo could be used to create a vibrant vertical structure using bright versions of the blue/green in the color versions of this logo. Then it's easy to direct people to look for the bright squiggly art for public parking. And if it is sufficiently noticeable, the community will file away public lot locations every time they notice some of this art when driving around the district. Each sculpture could vary from place to place, but should clearly be part of a family. To the right is an example of a colorful abstract work of art used to denote and brand a Max station that was designed by the community in the Rockwood neighborhood of Gresham. This work is much larger than what you would be needed in Tualatin, but gives a sense of how much more effective this is than a sign. Additionally, these sculptures could be designed to be moved, so as public parking locations change, they can be implemented elsewhere.



Abstract Art as Station Brand

- Create a stylized “P” incorporating logo/art colors and use these on a sign near the parking sculptures to denote public parking.

- Use sidewalk paint to create unique walking paths to the lake from various parking areas. These walkways can include sidewalk public games, or dance steps, etc..

2. ***Becoming a Park Once District.*** A successful downtown or Main Street cannot compete with suburban infrastructure in terms of parking ratios. (If a town center has a suburban-style parking ratio, it means that downtown needs more buildings.) As a result, a downtown or Main Street that tries to compete with the high parking ratios and minimums of suburban form will typically be less successful than one that embraces the strengths of being a downtown.



Create Paths with Paint

Too much parking in a downtown or Main St means it does not deliver on the fundamental economic building block of downtown commerce: great experiences for walkers.

To manage parking in a place that is, by design, parking constrained means you have to manage this resource with a downtown parking toolkit that responds to the realities of downtown economics. And, you want to ensure you are making decisions about parking from a position of knowledge, not myth! So regular data tracking is critical, quantifying your on-street and off-street capacity, your public and private capacity, how capacity is being used, and what turnover is.

Generally, downtowns want to center customers and encourage commerce by prioritizing their on-street parking spaces (where everyone wants to park first) and best public lots for customers. Collectively, districts then work together to have owners and employees park in more out-of-the-way spots that are less valuable for customers.

There is opportunity in the downtown to extend existing shared parking infrastructure, such as private lots that are publicly managed and/or private lots making space available to public, possibly for a fee. (There are apps that make it easy to set up paid parking.) Additionally, future new construction projects can include a public sector injection of funds to ensure public parking is made available. The City can codify these arrangements in a variety of ways, including development agreements and with a downtown parking pledge, perhaps something like the Gresham Customer First plan, which has its own logo, shown above right.



A good rule of thumb for these discussions is to let the 85% rule govern your thinking. The accepted metric in parking is if 85% of your parking is full most of the time, then you are ready to take the next step in your parking plan... timed parking, or seasonal permit parking, or parking meters, or permit parking, or the development of a garage. It depends where you are on the continuum! But you must have the data to make the right decision as you continue to develop the downtown and its needs change over time.

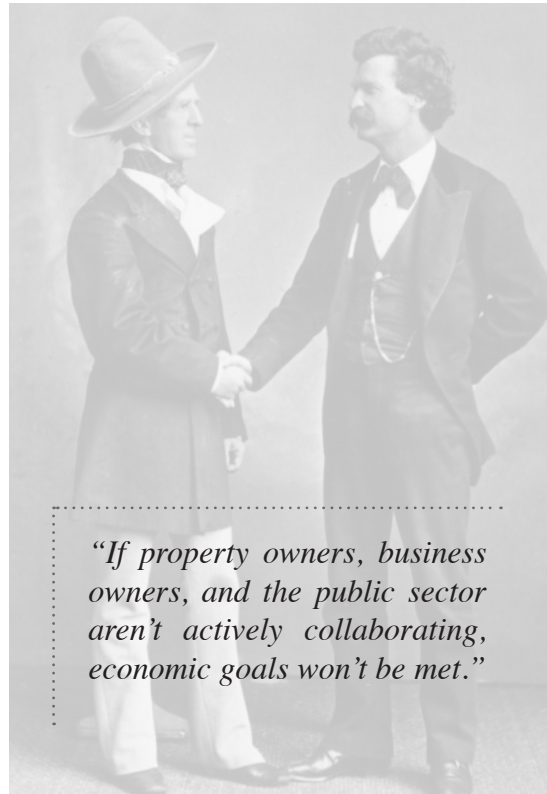
CUSTOMER PREFERENCE

- 1) Street parking*
- 2) Nearby surface lot*
- 3) Garage structure*

Activity

Every property owner, business owner, and public sector employee has to “think like a retailer” when it comes to their work downtown. That’s because experience and identity are the keystones that drive value, safety, brand, and sales in a mixed-use district. Encouraging activity is everyone’s job, and it’s never too early. TIF funds can be deployed right away, for smaller amounts of money, to move the dial before any big projects break ground. Some activity to-dos to consider throughout the life cycle of the downtown are shown below.

1. ***Downtown Association.*** A smaller downtown is a place that operates kind of like a single store, with lots of different departments and products to explore. This store is not owned and controlled by a single owner though, so downtowns thrive when they have an organization tasked with helping property owners, business owners, and the City communicate about the business of being a downtown. They might help manage parking, for example. Or, track types of tenants and work with owners to have a good mix of businesses are on the ground floor. They can hold events that draw customers and improve sales. In Tigard, they resurrected their downtown association by starting with a committee at the Chamber, which was located on their Main Street.



“If property owners, business owners, and the public sector aren’t actively collaborating, economic goals won’t be met.”

2. **Commercial Model.** There are two ways to organize commercial space in a mixed-use district. Active ground floor commercial can be required, or mostly required on every block. This is more of a business district downtown model. Or, you could look at a “high street” model, which is more common throughout much of the UK. In the high street model, the downtown would have areas where the ground floor and retail/office mixed-use commercial is more concentrated on a few streets, perhaps with taller buildings. Then, the surrounding area would host a mix of very dense, small lot housing that also engages the street and has little, to no off-street surface parking lots. A good example of this is in Portland in the alphabet district, where most commercial is concentrated on NW 21st and NW 23rd Avenues, and the surrounding area has everything from single family homes, to an elementary school, to rowhouses and triple deckers, to bigger apartment buildings, such as the one shown above. Critically though, everything is engaging with the sidewalk.



Great Sidewalk Experience Apartments

3. **Shared Use Public Event Space.** The community wants to see more events again in downtown, and they would like a space suitable for that. The trick is to not introduce more hardscape that is a dead eyesore when it is not being used. During the phase 2 visioning, finding a location for an at grade festival street (one that can be closed for events) and performance space is a big community want. There is an area that might work really well for that, which is SW Nyberg where it terminates at the splash pad. Portions of the public parking, the street, and the splash pad could all be used. And, if some, or all of the lake is repurposed, that too could be incorporated on the west side of that property. Below is a festival street in Kirkland, Washington’s downtown that closes every night and is lined with restaurants and retail.

FESTIVAL STREET IN KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON

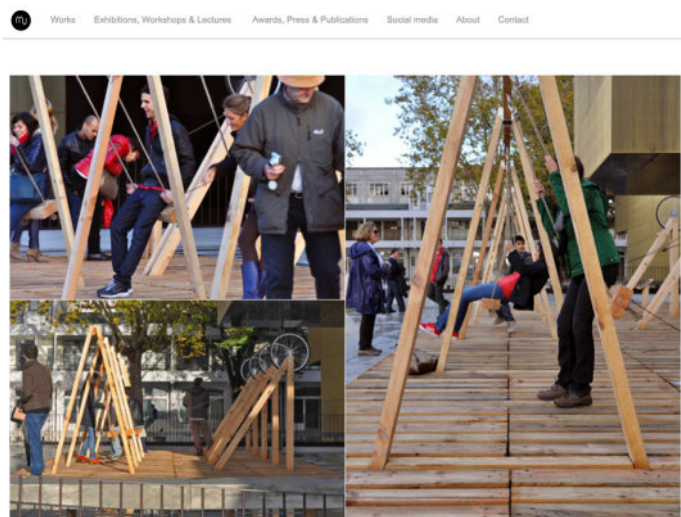


4. **Food Cart Pod.** People mentioned loving Beaverton's and West Linn's food cart pod spaces and would like something like that of their own in downtown Tualatin. There is a place right now that would be very natural for a food cart pod: it is the pedestrian walkway, pictured to the right, leading from the park that passes southward through a public parking lot. You could station food carts on either side of this walkway, fronting on the walkway, and then establish a seating area in a few public spots so it would be visible from the park and the road! That would be showcasing people, food, and activity in a way that is not present on the borders of the downtown currently. Additionally, an effort like this could involve economic development opportunities for the City. Taking a page from the Portland Mercado toolkit, which downtown Tigard took with their new park, buy a few food carts and rent them out as space to foster restaurant entrepreneurship.



Food Carts on Either Side of This Walkway Would Draw from Park

5. **All Ages Friendly.** It's important to design space and activity to appeal to all ages. It was mentioned that Community Park and the splash pad provide active recreation for younger Tualatinites, but not so much for teenagers. The latter likes places to hang out, window shopping/browsing, places to buy very affordable small food (and hang out), selfie opportunities, and adult interactive art/furniture. Seniors enjoy a lot of these same features, and it's also important to make sure text is readable in wayfinding and marketing literature, that walking surfaces are even and not cambered, and that there is good lighting on all pedestrian right of ways. A good example of a pop up interactive art installation is The SWING by Moradavaga, pictured to the right, it generates power and light through the action of adult-sized swings being used.



Interactive Swing Installation Self Generates Power to Base Lights

6. ***Adaptive Reuse.*** This was covered under the “Form” Identity Action, but it is worth noting that taking inward facing vacant and/or office uses and adapting the building to accommodate engaging ground floor businesses is a great way to add activity with smaller investments than large new construction. This has been a huge part of the success of Beaverton’s restaurant renaissance downtown. The City puts together funds to entice property owners to upgrade space for new active tenancies, particularly restaurant use, and then works to recruit restaurants and matchmake with properties and landlords. It has been a very successful program with two key components: money on the table to help with the brick & mortar investments for space upgrading and restaurant outfitting (hood vent and chase, grease trap, increased water service, more HVAC, etc.) and active relationship building by the City between property owners and business owners.
7. ***Showcase What Is Already Active.*** There are already active uses in the Commons, but they are largely hidden behind dark and blocked windows and boring, nondescript buildings. Just getting buildings painted and/or active use windows transparent and properly lit is a great way to showcase salons, cafes, retailers, etc. One of my favorite active businesses in downtown Tualatin is the wedding dress store. It is on a highly visible border corner and that it is absolutely gorgeous inside. This is where “improve what you have” programs can really make a difference. Just by using paint, or in this case, by correcting storefront window lighting, we can make these businesses stand out. Again, it requires collaboration and funds on the part of the city. Below are thoughts on how to use TIF to help small property and business owners right away.



Magic Happens with Window Lighting and Clear Glass

➤ ***TIF-Funded Improve What You Have Programs***

It is common for the public sector and agencies to try to catalyze improvement by placing public funds into one large mega project. Unfortunately, even if you complete one exciting new project somewhere, if the rest of the existing businesses and buildings are not executing on creating a great experience, that large investment won’t have as big an impact.

To make real progress, you have to weave together a tapestry of new visual experiences within the existing fabric of Tualatin. This means incentivizing a

mix of changes. The most proven way to do this is through various types of improvement programs. When creating these programs, consider how to take advantage of volunteer help and affordable/guerilla approaches to improvement that can be completed over time, for smaller amounts of money.

Generally, for smaller communities with limited resources, I like to consider how to develop programs that might appeal to business owners and property owners through modest investments. Examples of three types of programs that could help in Tualatin include:

- **WINDOW IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.** Provide financial resources to businesses just for the development of better window transparency, displays and visibility. Infrastructure covered by such a program might include: installation of track lighting with moveable heads, light bulbs, display platforms up to where the storefront window sits, storefront window ceiling grids, replacement of reflective window film with transparent window film, and display fixtures. Assistance could also include merchandising and display classes as a launch for this program. These grants can be matching or not, and they can be as small as \$500 - \$2,000.
- **PAINT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.** This would provide dollars toward paint supplies and color consulting to create a bright and cheery counterpoint to the lack of color currently dominating downtown Tualatin! The reason why having some design assistance is important is that choosing three colors to go on a building that will highlight building detail is not easy. Without help, people will give up and you will end up with more beige and gray! This can appeal to both property owners and business owners.
- **EXTERIOR SEATING PROGRAM.** As we have discussed previously, downtown should look for more opportunity to showcase people. The fastest and easiest way to encourage folks to congregate downtown is to have fabulous seating areas for all of the restaurants, the one business whose customers are supposed to do nothing but hang out!

Creating more sidewalk seating beyond the south lakefront and/or parklet/street seats in parking spaces could continue to build bridges between the community and downtown. There was some feedback from businesses that setting up outdoor seating is not easy in terms of City compliance and rules, so definitely an area to work on with food service businesses.

Before and after examples of window, paint, and exterior seating programs are shown on the next page.

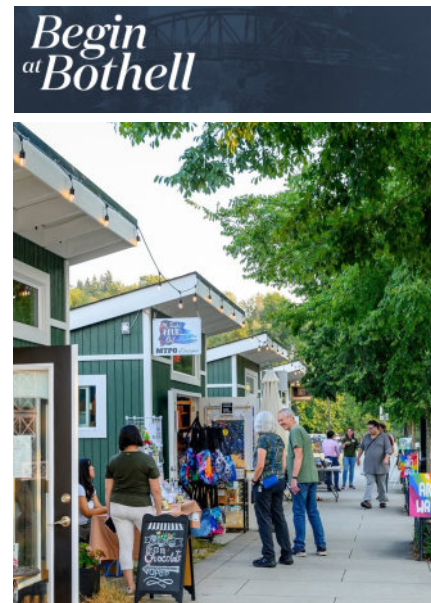
POWER OF PAINT AND SEATING AT THE PORTLAND MERCADO



ANTIQUE STORE WINDOW IMPROVEMENT EXAMPLE



8. **Temporary Retail Space.** The City of Bothell has put up temporary structures for incubator retail on their Main Street in downtown in two different locations, one in 2021 and one in 2024. These spaces are 8 x 10, they come with heat, portable a/c, and electricity. They do not have running water. They use a portable bathroom. The tenants pay 10% of their revenue as rent (this is called a percentage rent lease). This could be a way, especially combined with a food cart pod, to lead people from the park all the way up to the lake and create a lot of vibrancy and place for people to gather in downtown.



Movable Pop Up Retail Space

Housing

Reconfiguring downtown is a great opportunity for Tualatin to pitch themselves as an Oregon pilot project for retrofitting a lot of dense, small-lot, high quality, walkable housing into a compact suburban location. Partnering with non-profits, public sector agencies, and the private sector to test concepts related to alternative ownership models, smaller lot infill, no-parking or park-shared developments (projects could offer resident e-bike share in lieu of a parking space), new single stair code, mass timber construction, etc. More information on Single Stair and Swiss Style cooperatives are below.

1. **Swiss Style Cooperatives.** Non-profit corporations build and run new housing developments that have no profit motive or capital gains. These non-profits sometimes market finance projects, or can be funded or helped by the government with loans and land. The government can even buy shares to units to add to affordable housing inventory to the city. Generally, the way that it works is that new residents in these cooperatives buy shares to get admission to the building. And, they get a single voting share in the entity that controls the building. The co-op uses the purchase of shares to maintain the building, keep rents low, or add amenities, such as child care. (Rents are only calculated on a cost basis, profit margins are not included.) When residents move on, their shares are purchased back at the same price they were originally purchased for. There is no capital gain allowed. In Switzerland.
2. **Single Stair.** In urban locations, our most walkable historic infrastructure is typically our most desirable and expensive real estate. When that housing is in the form of an apartment, it's usually in an old building with a single stair core that offers life on the street, fine grained density, and proximity to amenities without parking lots everywhere.

However, in America, once producing these kinds of units was no longer allowed under fire code and zoning code, we moved to a double-loaded corridor model. There are a lot of advantages to single stair development, and US jurisdictions are starting to change regulations to allow it once again. Single stair units have lighting and windows on two or more sides, they have cross ventilation, they have varied unit sizes, and about 95% efficiency, in other words, more rentable space. They are the secret sauce to being able to develop high quality multi-family units on small lots, with outdoor space. These are buildings that feel authentically downtown. In Fall 2025, Oregon will allow the following, with the hope to increase building height by 2027 to 5 or 6 stories.

- 4 story maximum
- 4,000 SF floor plate maximum
- 4 homes per floor allowed
- 125 foot maximum travel exit distance.
- Manual fire alarms and automatic smoke detection required
- Full sprinkler coverage required.
- No electric sockets in interior stairs allowed.



Mass Timber Apartment In Portland

CONCLUSION

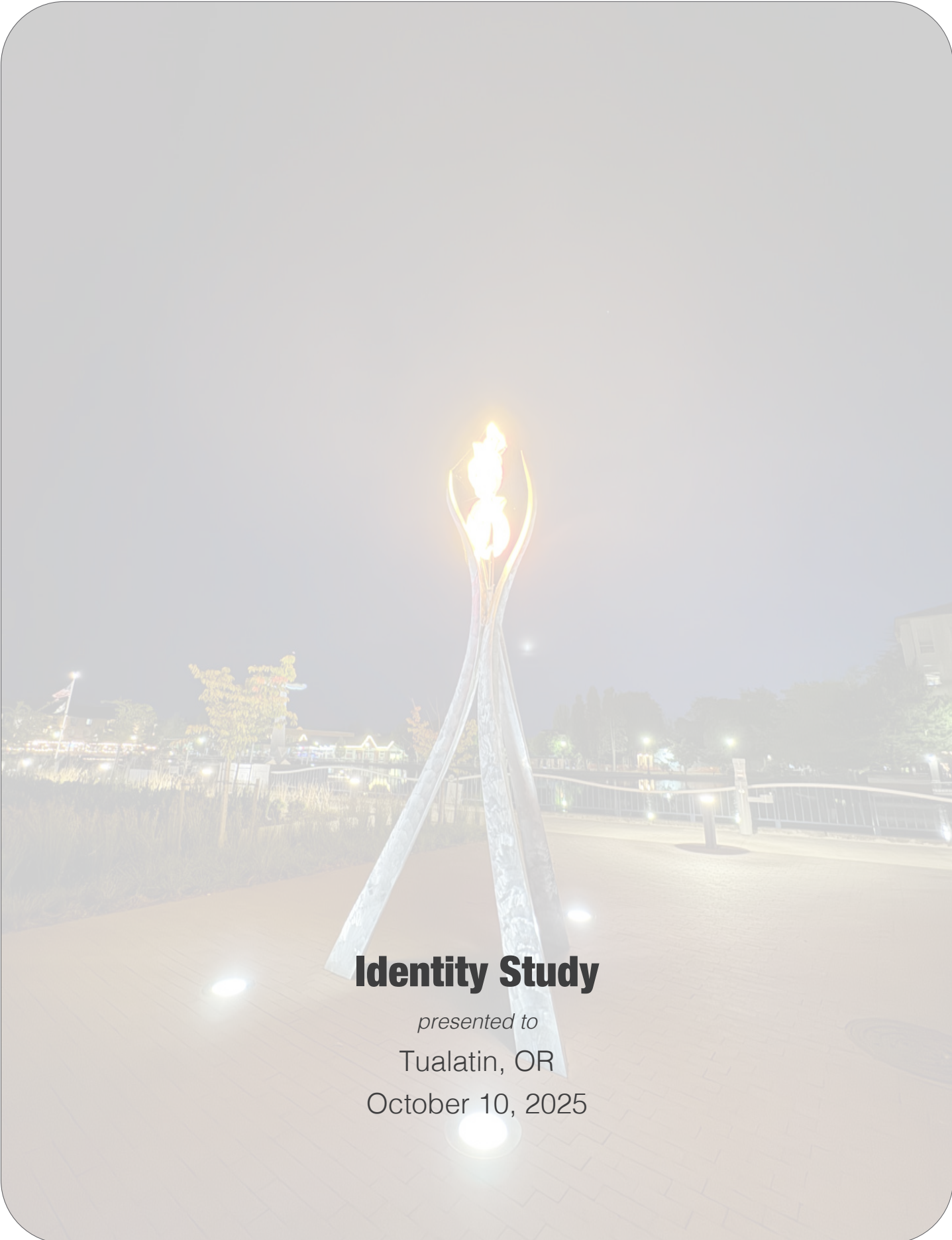
Downtown Tualatin has the opportunity to showcase to the nation how walkability can be retrofitted into a seemingly car-centric suburban environment. One only has to look a bit closer at downtown to see that there are myriad untapped opportunities to densify the Lake at the Commons core and connect that up with the adjacent greenway, parks, regional trail systems, and the desirable services, stores, and amenities available in pedestrian accessible larger box and anchored strip centers nearby.

Areas to tackle downtown:

- *Densify the Core.* The area around the Lake at the Commons should have a large collection of mixed-use buildings that are built close to the sidewalk, next to each other and offer with a mix of office, maker, residential, and retail space. (A district with a balance of uses is a resilient district.) The downtown core can absorb a building mix of eras, designs, and heights so long as there is activity, connectivity and engagement on the ground floor. Densifying can include new construction, site intensification (adaptively reusing an existing building and building new on adjacent land/parking), and temporary active structures.
- *Develop Physical and Emotional Connections Between Downtown, the Tualatin Community Park and the Greenway.* The downtown is directly across the street from the Community Park, and is adjacent to the terminus of the Greenway. Yet, few from either enter the downtown for food, services, or respite. These three amenities need to develop physical and emotional adjacencies. Having a physical trail that leads into the downtown and crosses to the Community Park over a lovely SW Boones Ferry Road crossing is a must. Developing the new park area on the SE corner of the Community Park so it connects with the library and the active businesses such as the coffee shop across the street are critical. Building a food cart pod downtown visible from the park and adjacent to a future Greenway path through downtown would create emotional ties and foot traffic between all three.
- *Focus on Ground Floor Active Uses.* Provide assistance to property owners to encourage tenancing with active uses on the ground-floor in both new construction and adaptive reuse. Also, help your existing active businesses to be more physically present and visible.
- *Housing.* As more housing comes to the district, consider becoming a case study for adding missing middle housing with innovative demonstration projects, such as single stair or mass timber, would be exciting and helpful regionally.



Covered Outdoor Seating in Downtown



Identity Study

presented to

Tualatin, OR

October 10, 2025