



DOWNTOWN REDMOND URBAN RENEWAL PLAN UPDATE



PREPARED FOR
Redmond Urban Renewal Agency
City of Redmond
Downtown Urban Renewal
Advisory Committee

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

As part of the Downtown Redmond Urban Renewal Plan Update process, the consultant team interviewed key downtown stakeholders. The purpose of the interviews is to engage stakeholders in an open and candid discussion to better understand existing visions, barriers to implementation, and opportunities for the future so that the emerging Urban Renewal Plan Update is realistic, achievable, and does not inadvertently solve the wrong problem.

On June 14, 2010, the consultant team met with approximately 10 downtown property owners, residents, business owners, and community leaders in a round table discussion. This memorandum summarizes the key themes and comments heard during that process. The memorandum focuses on identifying patterns among the comments and does not attribute any comments to specific individuals.

Separate from this stakeholder interview process, the consultants also met confidentially with several downtown property owners, developers, and real estate experts. The comments from those interviews are not summarized here, but have been incorporated into the Market Reconnaissance and Development Opportunity reports.

The memorandum is organized into categories that reflect the key themes that were expressed during the interview process. Those categories include:

- Downtown needs and challenges
- Redmond's identity and image
- Priority projects
- Other projects
- Key opportunity sites
- Other key themes

Each section begins with a blue box that describes the predominant theme for that category (if there was a predominant theme) and is followed by a list of specific comments. The comments are simply stated as heard by the consultants and are not meant to be statements of fact or indicators of the direction of the emerging strategy.

DOWNTOWN NEEDS AND CHALLENGES

Stakeholders identified many needs for downtown Redmond, including the types of uses, environment, and programming to keep activity moving downtown. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of filling existing vacancies and renovating existing historic buildings as a higher priority than new development.

Core needs to be healthy, “24-hour” environment. Right now there’s not enough mixed-use and housing.

Downtown needs residents, retail, office and a mix of uses.

There’s not enough traffic Downtown – lack of a destination is a major reason for this.

Downtown should be a place for tourists and residents.

Don’t dilute downtown – keep a tight focus.

You need a clear vision in order to determine what priorities should be.

Exit points from Highway 97 are “terrible.”

There are major events at the Fairgrounds. However, not many events downtown.

Centennial Park is an opportunity to draw some events.

The old (current) City Hall is an example of a bad public-private partnership.

Downtown lacks stores targeted to kids and young people.

Focus on filling existing vacancies before looking at building new buildings.

Foster public-private partnerships that leverage private dollars.

REDMOND IDENTITY

Asked about Redmond’s identity, Stakeholders emphasized that Redmond is a family community but that the city lacked a clear, identifiable brand. Stakeholders emphasized a need for downtown to become a destination known within the region.

Redmond is a family community.

There is a definite difference between Bend and Redmond. Redmond is more of a family place.

Redmond is the working town and it has been a bedroom community to Bend, although that is changing.

Historically, a ranching and farming community – potentially capitalize on this history.

The city should emphasize its outdoor recreation brand.

PRIORITY PROJECTS

Stakeholders identified key priority projects that would encourage use of downtown as a retail and entertainment district. They emphasized the need for downtown programming including walks and parades, put great emphasis on a movie theater, and pushed for projects that would introduce more visitors to visit, stay, and shop in the downtown. Stakeholders also emphasized the need to create community facilities that would encourage greater community activity downtown, including more use of Centennial Park and the Evergreen Elementary property.

A movie theater would be great for downtown.

Hotel: Renovation of the old Redmond Hotel would be a good use of urban renewal funds. A boutique hotel could attract visitors who attend events at the Expo Center.

Downtown needs a gateway from the bypass (like Palm Springs and Carmel). When you get off the 97 bypass, there is no clear gateway that welcomes and guides people to downtown. In particular, the northern gateway to downtown needs improvement.

It is important to beautify the bypass and key gateways to downtown.

Spend on projects that are visible and generate activity/entertainment.

Connect the Expo Center and Fairgrounds to downtown. Bring visitors to these venues downtown.

Continue façade improvement program – but set criteria requirements – e.g., building needs to be occupied within a year or the grant must be paid back.

Create a civic anchor that includes Centennial Park, City Hall, the Evergreen Elementary property, the Chamber of Commerce, the County property. Consider building a community center.

OTHER PROJECTS

Stakeholders identified several ancillary projects that would support development of the downtown community, including investment in east/west and north/south connectivity, dry canyon, and other gateways.

East/west connectivity and north/south connectivity both need to be improved (particularly in the northern part of the urban renewal area.)

Redevelop the Bank of America parking lot (currently owned by City.)

Dry Canyon is an asset and projects should enhance linkage between downtown and Dry Canyon.

At Highland, consider moving the boundary west to 15th.

Improve the northern gateway.

Fill existing buildings first

KEY OPPORTUNITY SITES

Stakeholders identified several opportunity sites for redevelopment. Group consensus focused on three in particular: the Redmond Hotel, Evergreen Elementary, and the Parr Lumber site.

Evergreen Elementary could be renovated into new city hall/civic complex.

Parr Lumber and Tualum sites – potential site for a movie theater/entertainment anchor.

Redevelop the old Redmond Hotel and turn it into a nice boutique hotel.

OVERALL KEY THEMES

Stakeholders overwhelmingly supported emphasis on the downtown core in the short term for urban renewal investment and suggested a sense of urgency about beginning with an exciting champion project.

Focus on the core first.

Areas two, three, and four could all be one target area (in reference to the DURAC target area map).

Fill vacancies downtown (come up with creative strategies and incentives to do this).

Land assembly.

Create an activity center (public, private or both).

Do something big! One great project.

All the key players (Mayor, City staff, City Council) are aligned so now is a good time to act.