

Lafayette Downtown Association: Next Steps & Community Meeting Results

February 2023



Prepared by Cayla Catino, Rural Development Initiatives



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Description of RDI

Rural Development Initiatives is a place-based organization working hand-in-hand with communities to strengthen rural people, places, and economies in the Pacific Northwest. RDI was established as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization in 1991 and has worked in over 300 rural communities in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Northern California. We have supported over 8,000 rural leaders working for community and economic vitality, engaged over 700 rural Latinx people in financial literacy and business trainings, helped create and implement economic development strategies in hundreds of rural communities, and convened over 4,000 people at our biennial Regards to Rural conferences.

RDI holds the uncompromising belief that answers and priorities, driven by a diversity of local people and built from a community’s assets, are key to achieving rural community prosperity. RDI works alongside rural communities to build networks of rural leaders, revitalize rural economies, and elevate rural voices to create community vitality.

Overview

On Monday, January 23rd, Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) hosted a community workshop at the community center in Lafayette. The purpose of this meeting was to build a vision for Downtown Lafayette by identifying assets and opportunities and inspiring action. Over 40 people were attendance at this meeting where participants met new community members, assessed how the community was doing according to 16 rural vital signs, and discussed assets and opportunities. Overall, the workshop was energizing and people shared they would, “like to see more community meetings like this.” One participant shared they had lived there for 17 years and hadn’t seen so much participation and engagement at a community meeting. They feel the community is ready to heal past divisions and move forward together.



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In assessing the community through a 16 rural vital signs activity (see addendum), the following came up the most in the small groups.

- 1) Built to Last – This came up as an asset and something that is going well. People are noticing the street and infrastructure improvements coming from the city and state.
- 2) Growing Knowledge – This came up as a high and low ranking. The fact that there is a school in Lafayette is an asset and there is an opportunity to increase knowledge in job training and aligning skills with local demand.
- 3) Diverse Economy Building – This was one of the lowest scores and people want to see more diverse businesses.

Following this community meeting, RDI hosted a virtual meeting on Monday, February 6th, to prioritize opportunities that were brainstormed. The priorities are listed under the opportunities section of this report.

Recommended Next Steps for the Lafayette Downtown Association

1) Increase Community Engagement:

In the short term, there are ways that the Downtown Association can build off of the excitement at the meeting to conduct outreach, engage more community members, and make progress on community priorities.

- a. Develop working groups around topics that came up at the community meeting and recruit members from the meeting attendees. Define a convener and facilitator for each working group. RDI can provide support to the Conveners and Facilitators for these groups.
 - i. Diversify Businesses- Recruit for Pubhouse, and/or implement imagine your business here campaign
 - ii. Beautification – working group to clean up streets/parks, banners etc.
 - iii. Terry Park – brainstorm how to use Terry Park, engage community in conversations

2) Develop Organization Structure and Capacity

The Downtown Association can also be looking at ways to develop organizationally. One way is to consider the formal pathway of a Main Street program, since this program provides structure and resources to support downtown-focused organizations as they grow. Next steps would include the following:

- a. Apply to become part of the Oregon Main Street program at the affiliated level
- b. Go through Board Institute Training by Oregon Main Street
- c. Form Main Street Committees to focus on community priorities (Economic Vitality, Design, Organization, and Promotion)

3) Community Visioning:

Another recommendation for the City and/or Downtown Association to consider is to undertake a Community Visioning process to focus on articulating a shared identity and priorities for Lafayette

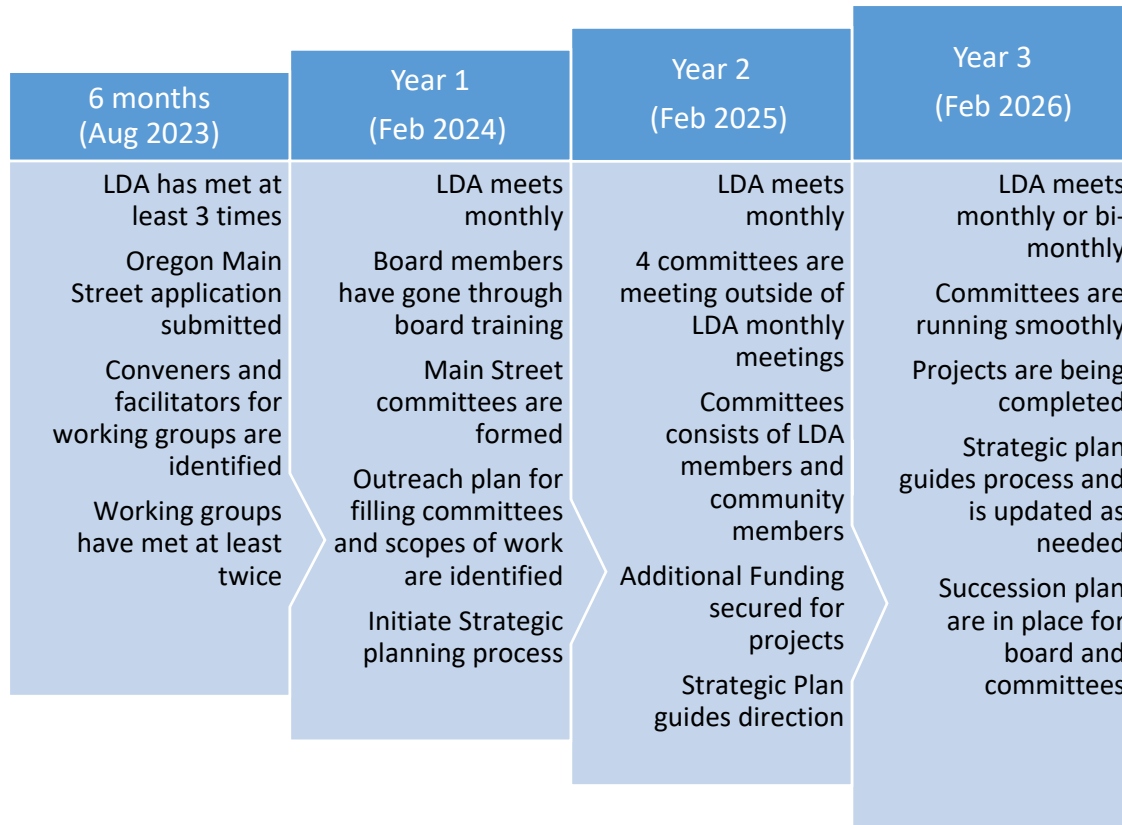


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Sample Timeline

The following timeline lays out a possible sequence of activities and milestones. The goal is not to stick with this timeline, but to define a direction with concrete steps, and to make tangible progress.



Funding Opportunities

Some of the above activities will come with costs. Possible funding sources to support this work include the following:

- 1) Oregon Main Street
 - a. [Revitalization Grant](#)
- 2) The Ford Family Foundation
 - a. Large Good neighbor grant – Focus on Community visioning, Beautification & Terry Park (the specific project should be flushed out more by the working groups)
- 3) Oregon Community Foundation
- 4) Reser Family Foundation
- 5) [AARP Community challenge](#)
- 6) [USDA Rural Business Development Grant](#)
- 7) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)

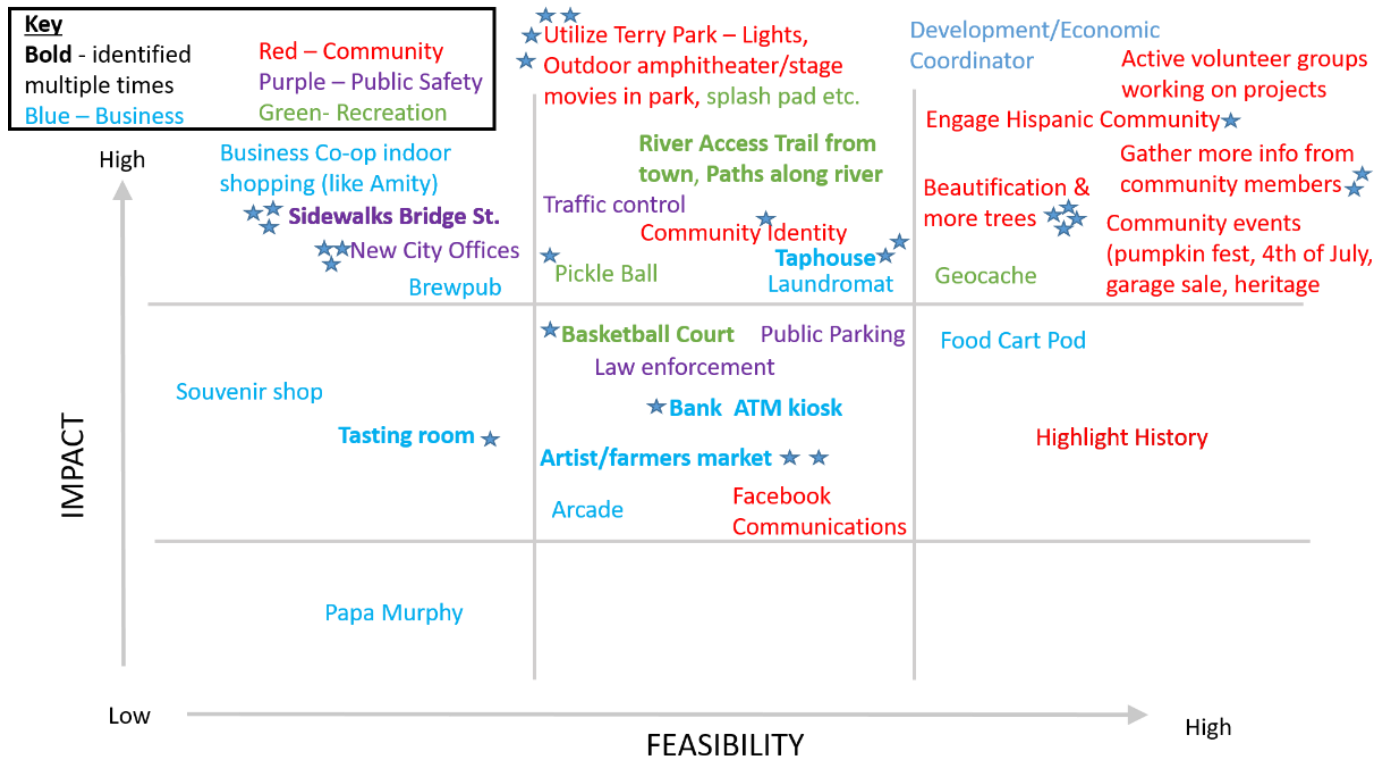


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Opportunities

At the second community gathering, participants ranked opportunities on this impact feasibility chart and then voted for their top 3 priorities (stars). Small groups were formed to discuss next steps based on the opportunity that received the most star votes. The results from these small group discussions are outlined in the Areas of Focus Section, and can provide an initial starting point for working groups focused on these priorities.



Areas of Focus:

1) Pub/Tap house

What does success look like?

- Places where families can go, but at the same time provide an adult environment
- Location that brings people together, where we can go and get to know each other and have conversations.
- People spending money in Lafayette not in other towns including when we are bringing family and friends.
- A full city block with multi-businesses with outside dining and food trucks from Alex and or Martha's tacos.
- Outside nonresidents to spend money... when once, the actual businesses are making money.
- Make Lafayette a more desirable place.



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What steps should be taken next?

- Finding sites as real estate or rentals issuing permit and licenses.
- Seeking our local brewers who are interested in a satellite business, food services by Alex and Martha, passionate business owners.
- Work with Businesses that need to be remodel or upgrade, to be more desirable.
- Community engagement for all of these conversations.
- Meeting with the state for licensing.

People that need to be involved: The city administrator, city lawyer, state, and community members.

2) Beautification

What does success look like?

- Banners along 3rd street,
- Murals, planers, benches, trees, interpreter kiosk with information and pictures, recognition of local businesses in the communities,
- City recognize beautiful downtown,
- Articles, feedback, small awards
- Highlight Tree City USA designation

What steps should be taken next?

- Put together a committee and a plan
- Define how to apply for grants
- Work with RDI
- Create a downtown historical group

People that need to be involved: Residents, city government, LDA, Lafayette active community's team.

Resources needed: Money, grants, ideas, and engagement from community and resources

3) Terry Park Development

What does success look like?

- Engaging the community and seeing what they want for this vision and making a plan, then help them to find resources.
- Park is underutilized; Idea is to work together to make it utilized no matter what age.
- Have activities, amenities for older and people with families and kids.

What steps should be taken next?

- Engage the entire community in planning and visioning

People that need to be involved: community members, families, City



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Assets

(# how many times it was shared)

- People (3)
- Schoolhouse Mall (2)
- Acceptance & Diversity (2)
- River & Park
- Church
- Vineyards
- Facebook Communications
- Drive through coffee
- Abastos market
- History – indigenous trading place, used to be county seat
- Youth
- Hispanic Community
- Pumpkin Fest
- Walkable

Who needs to be involved at future conversations?

- Parents
- Business owners
- More community members
- Law enforcement/public safety
- School
- Hispanic Community

Addendum

1. Community Presentation PowerPoint from January 23rd, 2023
2. 16 Rural Vital Signs Assessment

