

# City of La Grande, Oregon

Comprehensive and Strategic

# Economic Development Plan

2010 – 2013

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# City of La Grande, Oregon

## Comprehensive and Strategic Economic Development Plan 2010-2013

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## Introduction

Economic Development Plans are excellent tools that can serve to guide the community, elected officials and professional staff toward a mutually-desired series of successes. If developed, implemented and executed well, a good plan can help to determine future resource allocation decisions, shape public policy decisions and serve to protect public officials attempting to address counter-cyclical public opinions.

Continual reference should be made to adopted plans when decision-making or budget deliberations present seemingly contradictory goals or multiple directions of potentially equal value. The plan should prioritize broad and specific activities in the context of adopted visions and goals while still retaining ample flexibility to take advantage of economic opportunities as they arise.

First and foremost, the Plan should be used as the primary tool to allocate resources on an annual and a day-to-day basis. The plan will aid officials in the avoidance of whimsy and “shotgun” approaches to economic development by providing a focused “road map” of direction toward achievable results that are able to be measured in terms of an agreed upon degree of success.

It would be challenging, if not impossible, to locate a successful economic development program at any geographic level in the United States that was not based on a strategic plan that was crafted by professionals and adopted by an elected body. Like a business plan in the private sector, virtually any successful effort will have a well-thought-out plan at its core.

This plan follows several events that have caused the La Grande City Council to reflect and begin to build a more cohesive economic development program.

1. The La Grande City Council created a position of “Community and Economic Development Director,” funding the position and associated budget and hiring a professional staff person to carry out the duties of the position. This was realized in October 2008.
2. A county-wide “Economic Development Strategic Plan,” with significant input provided by City of La Grande appointed and elected officials, was developed by the Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC). A consultant was hired by UCEDC to complete this body of work in October 2009.

3. The La Grande City Council determined during its annual goal-setting event in early 2009 that it desired to have in place its own, uniquely created and adopted economic development plan that would work in conjunction with other plans, including the UCEDC plan, but also stand apart as the City's own, unique plan. It was mutually agreed upon that a staff-directed effort would include gathering input from key community stakeholders and report back to the City Council throughout the process and present a draft plan in late 2009.
4. The City of La Grande underwent a revision of the Goal 9: Economic Development element in its Comprehensive Plan.
5. The La Grande City Council adopted a Vision Statement in September 2009, which follows.

# City of La Grande

## Vision Statement

*The City of La Grande is the economic, educational, recreational, and cultural hub for eastern Oregon, with a family oriented, small-town character.*

### Goals to support our Vision

- We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.
- We will take full advantage of the benefits of our thriving educational community, anchored by Eastern Oregon University.
- We will promote the natural beauty and resources of the Grande Ronde Valley, which provide recreational opportunities and quality of life benefits that complement our economic development objectives.
- We will showcase La Grande as a culturally-rich city with a strong sense of identity, pride, and environmental awareness that preserves our heritage.
- We will foster a family-oriented community with high quality amenities, including excellent parks, safe neighborhoods, and outstanding schools.
- We will champion public involvement and civic leadership that values economic, ecological, and social stewardship, while maintaining our small-town character.

## Background

The La Grande City Council on February 9, 2009 held its annual goal-setting retreat session. At the session, an entire segment was devoted to discussions regarding “economic development strategy.” The discussion included the following two major elements:

1. **Physical/ capital assets – this segment included discussions on timing and policy:**
  - A downtown historic building façade grant program
  - Downtown public improvements in general
  - Other Urban Renewal District projects
  - Economic Stimulus projects
  
2. **Policy/ Strategy aspects – this segment included discussions on timing and policy:**
  - The key question was posed: “What is our overall economic development strategy or process?” Alternately, the question was posed: “How do we incorporate economic development into the City?”
  - From these questions, the concept of directing staff to develop a new plan that would address the questions was born.
    - *The Council’s focus is on the development of a City vision for economic development. Under this concept, the City’s Community and Economic Development Director would take the lead in forming an ad hoc committee to assist in the formulation of a plan, with the City Council having decision authority for the final strategy to be adopted. Once adopted, the plan would be executed by the City Staff.*
  - Further, the Council went on to clarify the need for a City of La Grande economic development plan:
    - *The Council’s primary intent and focus was to take a proactive and aggressive approach to economic development with the expectation of a strategic plan approved within six months.*
  - Other issues discussed in this segment would include:
    - An Economic Summit
    - The Oregon Main Street Program
    - Expansion of Urban Growth Boundary; Rezoning from County to City Zones for 20 year growth projection
    - Business Retention & Expansion Program
    - Economic development outside of downtown
    - Role of City in industrial development
    - Roles of UCEDC; City participation; UCEDC functions



## **PURPOSE**

**The purpose of this plan is to:**

- 1) Further define the City of La Grande's role in local economic development,**
- 2) Suggest strategies and tactics to accomplish specific goals,**
- 3) Establish time frames and performance measures related to tasks and**
- 4) Relate tasks and proposed outcomes to the aforementioned Vision Statement and its supporting goals.**

## Methodology/ Summary of Process

In developing this plan for the City of La Grande, the following efforts were undertaken and/or consulted:

1. The La Grande Council in February 2009 directed staff to formulate an economic development plan for the City.
2. Staff assembled a broad-based ad hoc task force of several dozen community stakeholders.
3. Utilizing a third-party facilitator, the ad hoc group met twice – on May 5, 2009 and on June 16, 2009 to provide staff community-based input needed in formulating the plan. This effort provided many key value statements and desires for an improved economic development program by focusing on community visioning, unexploited assets and barriers to success. (A summary of these deliberations is presented in Appendix D.)
4. Throughout the summer of 2009, the Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC) held community forums under the direction of consultant Brian Cole of the Orbis Group/ Building Communities. This effort was overseen by a steering committee comprised of key staff and elected officials representing a variety of stakeholder groups, including the City of La Grande. The planning effort culminated in a series of refinement exercises conducted by Cole with input provided by the steering committee. A final draft was presented in October 2009. (A summary of relevant areas of this plan is presented in Appendix E.)
5. Over the past year, the City, using two professional consultants, developed a new Goal 9: Economic Development element for its Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in October 2009. This document was consulted. (A summary of this document is presented in Appendix F.)
6. The City Council in September 2009 adopted a Vision Statement and supporting goals.
7. The La Grande Main Street program has engaged in a number of planning and visioning exercises related to the development and revitalization of downtown La Grande. These efforts have also included a professional assessment done by the Chicago-based Lakota Group and surveys of local businesses and Eastern Oregon University Students.
8. The La Grande Landmarks Commission has adopted a new set of “design standards” that will govern the methods and outcomes of future historic building renovations within the La Grande Historic District. The Urban Renewal Agency also adopted a building façade renovation grant program with associated policy.
9. Orbis Group recently prepared an economic development strategic plan for Baker County, which was consulted.

10. The document “*Recommendations Following A Review of the VA Clinic Siting Process in La Grande, Oregon*” prepared by Dr. Dick Gardner of Bootstrap Solutions was consulted.
11. Staff prepared its own “Strengths/Weaknesses/Opportunities/Threats (SWOT) analysis. (This exercise is presented in Appendix C.)
12. Staff prepared an independent situational assessment based on one full year of living and working in the community. (This assessment is presented in Appendix A.)
13. Staff has prepared a proposed list of goals/ performance measurements which may govern the first several years of the City’s economic development program efforts. (These goals are presented in Appendix B.)
14. An initial summary presentation was given to the City Council at a work session on January 5, 2010.
15. Subsequent revisions have been made on irregular basis as conditions have changed.
16. Two work sessions were held with the City Council in April 2010, and the Plan was revised fairly significantly based on those sessions. References to long-term strategies and short-term tactics were removed from the Plan to focus the plan on more mid-term strategies. In early 2010 the issue of Workforce (availability) has arisen as a critical issue for existing local and potential new employers and is not fully addressed in this Plan.

## Executive Summary

At the time this Economic Plan was initially drafted, the city, county, state and nation were deep in an economic recession that may or may not be nearing recovery. Regardless of the status of the recovery, it is likely to be known as a “jobless” recovery. Add to this an equally dire outlook for the City of La Grande’s General Fund resources with no long-term solution identified and the City’s questionable ability to continue to meet the community’s needs through the provision of a set of quality services, and the future appears less than bright.

For the most part, this Plan does not take into account measures that address the current local set of crises (economic downturn and City of La Grande budget), but rather offers non-critical strategic measures that take into account known assets, community feedback and reputable statistics and sources as well as experienced professional opinion.

Regardless, the City of La Grande can potentially be in a wonderful position to move forward on enhancing its economic development opportunities. This Economic Development Plan takes into account input from a variety of sources to determine the best short-term course of action for the City to ensure a stable and improving economic future. The primary unique assets (and those which provide a relative competitive advantage) from which the La Grande community has to draw are:

1. **Educational services.** Education has arisen as a major economic theme in the community. La Grande is home to one of the seven primary Oregon University System (OUS) campuses. More recently, La Grande is home to the ODS/OIT dental technician school. The community is also home (or has recently been home) to a cosmetology school and a massage therapy school. In the future, the community should leverage these key assets to create new and additional value-added economic development opportunities. An obvious sub-set is health-related education and associated services.
2. **Natural resources.** The community’s economic origin is tied to natural resources, and timber and agriculture still play a major role. Additionally, outdoor recreation and wild land fire science are major forces in the area economy today and historically. Future measures should be taken to diversify and add value to these predominantly commodity-driven base industries. A new and related sub-set is renewable energy, such as bio-mass, geo-thermal and wind that deserve further exploration for new economic opportunities.

3. **History.** The Grande Ronde Valley is rich in history – from the Oregon Trail to the railroad to “century farms” to Native American influence to the inventory of historic architecture in the downtown commercial district and historic homes in residential areas. While not a base, job-producing industry in and of itself, this primarily quality-of-life set of amenities can serve to create a unique identity for the area to draw in new investments. Targeted future efforts should be taken to ensure historic preservation and leverage of these assets to create new economic opportunities.

An overriding theme in many instances is the desire and/or need to better embrace Eastern Oregon University as a key and unique economic asset and even as a potential economic engine of the city and the region. Using EOU as an anchor of economic stability, the strategy could be broadened to include Education as a strategic economic focus, which would include K-12, the public library, the ODS dental school and other education and training institutions and employers, of which health services education is a logical subset. Growth in this sector will not only create high-quality jobs by the firms that employ them, it will bring in new money from outside the region and due to its inherent nature, will in turn create a better educated and trained local workforce, leading to higher quality jobs and better wages and career pathway opportunities.

A comprehensive strategy would include identifying targeted industry sectors and the provision of the appropriate resources to grow those industries. Strength will come from existing assets. In addition to appropriately positioning itself within the broader competitive market, the community must also look within itself to improve its image and its relevance.

The community recognizes that business and job growth are created through one of three methods listed below. All economic development strategies should address one or more of these broad growth methods:

1. **Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E).** By focusing on the growth and “staying power” of existing local businesses, this strategy, statistically speaking, provides the greatest return on investment. This element must be comprehensive, focused and funded.
2. **Business Recruitment and Attraction.** A well-rounded, BR&E-focused economic development effort will be wise to also include an aggressive and proactive business and attraction element to its program. It also must be very focused and properly funded.

3. **Entrepreneurial and Small Business Development.** Successful efforts require many partners at many levels, but the return on investment can be huge and provide long-term payoffs.

Further, as Adam Smith first articulated, the community also realizes that all successful businesses rely on a key set of elements. All strategies should ultimately aim to better provide businesses with access to one or more of the following:

1. **Land.** Whether it is real estate or a building, owned or leased, every business requires some physical space from which to conduct business. Depending on the type and size of business, this can be a highly critical element.
2. **Labor.** Even the smallest businesses require talent. The deeper and wider the talent pool, the more successful a community will be in growing and attracting businesses.
3. **Capital.** Every business needs funding to operate, especially during early stages and growth stages. Whether it be traditional capital, such as commercial banking institutions or less traditional, such as public programs or angel investors, there needs to be a financial network in place to assist in business development and growth.
4. **Market.** Businesses have to sell whatever they produce, and there needs to be a market willing to purchase their products and services. Companies may require assistance to help them identify and reach their markets.

What follows are 14 specific strategies that La Grande should employ within the short-term scope (through 2013). Many are related to one another and all should attempt to address the three broad growth strategies and four business needs stated above. These strategies are developed largely from the input received from the community stakeholders during two sessions in May and June 2009.

Following this section are recommendations for strategies through 2013. More detail on specific short- and long-term strategies is listed in the section “Broad Strategies Identified” on Page 31.

## City of La Grande 2010-2013 Recommended Actions

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
1	<b>Revitalize downtown</b>	City of La Grande & La Grande Main Street	Provide vision, leadership, resources	Continue involvement with and funding for Main Street program	A vital, thriving, aesthetically pleasing downtown with successful businesses
2	<b>Develop &amp; implement BR&amp;E program</b>	UCEDC, Chamber of Commerce & City of La Grande	Provide technical resources	Assist UCEDC/ Chamber in establishing a program to provide regular outreach to local businesses	Provide ongoing, proactive outreach to local businesses; help firms grow & expand; focus on targeted sectors for growth
3	<b>Market &amp; fill La Grande Business Park</b>	UCEDC & City of La Grande	Provide vision, leadership, resources	1. Develop marketing plan and allocate resources	Lots are sold and developed in the Park to create new jobs & investment
				2. Implement plan	
4	<b>Establish clear roles for economic development entities</b>	UCEDC, Chamber of Commerce, City of La Grande, other partners	Provide vision & leadership, technical resources	Convene entities to discuss and define roles	Union County achieves a more efficient approach to economic development
5	<b>Address workforce availability issues</b>	Workforce and economic development partners	Provide vision & leadership, technical resources	Facilitate discussions to arrive at solutions	Union County is able to provide adequate workforce to existing and new businesses

## City of La Grande 2010-2013 Recommended Actions

Strategy	Lead Agency/ Agencies	City's Role	Action Steps	Outcomes	
6	<b>Increase and improve marketing, including formation of a multi-county cooperative</b>	City of La Grande, UCEDC, Union County, Tourism, Union County Chamber of Commerce, neighboring counties	Participate in providing the resources and vision for a more aggressive marketing campaign	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a marketing plan and fund appropriately</li> <li>2. Develop and integrate targeted industry sectors identified in BR&amp;E strategy</li> <li>3. Develop an appropriate and effective website that is on par w/ competitors or "best in class"</li> </ol>	3-5 new quality business ventures in the La Grande Business Park and/or downtown; development of new website
7	<b>Increase industrial development</b>	City of La Grande & Union County Economic Development Corp.	Provide for appropriately zoned "shovel-ready" parcels, including those larger than 10 acres	Make expediting the process a top political priority	Initially, to provide a range of suitable industrial sites; ultimately, to locate several high-quality job producing businesses
8	<b>Ensure City has a "pro-business" attitude and development process</b>	City of La Grande	Provide staff and processes that are as business-friendly as feasible	Provide appropriate leadership and training	La Grande becomes a preferential location for business development in the region
9	<b>Establish a Blue Mountain Community College campus in La Grande</b>	EOU, Blue Mountain Community College, City of La Grande	Provide vision & leadership	Facilitate and support concept and discussions	Local employers, citizens and workforce have access to a wide-range of workforce development opportunities



## City of La Grande 2010-2013 Recommended Actions

Strategy	Lead Agency/ Agencies	City's Role	Action Steps	Outcomes	
10	<b>Solidify economic relationship with EOU</b>	Eastern Oregon University & City of La Grande	1. Set "vision" for EOU's role in City's future	1. Discuss in work session & ultimately take formal action  2. Set up initial meeting(s) and encourage continued mutually beneficial dialog	Create new economic opportunities for the community that capitalize on EOU's presence
			2. Recognize Education as a key economic development strategy		
			3. Engage EOU leadership		
11	<b>Increase and improve community leadership capacity-building</b>	Not identified	Provide leadership, vision, technical resources	Engage a stakeholder group to assess needs and establish a lead agency, roles & responsibilities	La Grande enjoys an engaged citizenry with a leadership "succession plan"; Ample opportunities exist for leadership development; We have assessed leadership needs and gaps
12	<b>Develop a high-quality brand for the community</b>	City of La Grande, Union County Tourism	Provide leadership, vision, technical resources	1. Discuss in a Council work session the desire when, if and how to move forward on a branding project	The La Grande/ Union County community is identified through a consistent and high-quality brand
				2. Provide appropriate resources to develop a branding strategy	

## City of La Grande 2010-2013 Recommended Actions

Strategy	Lead Agency/ Agencies	City's Role	Action Steps	Outcomes	
13	<b>Consider a retail development strategy</b>	City of La Grande, Union County Chamber of Commerce, City of Island City	Provide leadership, vision, technical resources	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; padding-bottom: 5px;">1. Initiate discussion with Urban Renewal Advisory Commission &amp; Chamber of Commerce Board</div> <div style="padding-top: 5px;">2. Develop appropriate strategy for new retail development</div>	Provide the citizens of La Grande with an acceptable level of retail opportunities; obtain highest & best value of development and property taxes from commercial properties
14	<b>Relate tourism to economic development strategies &amp; values</b>	City of La Grande, Union County Tourism	Match funding and management of TRT funds to outcomes; provide leadership & vision	Assess MOU between City & UCT to determine how to achieve best value and alignment	The City has a stake in a tourism program that supports overall economic development

**TABLE 1.**

The above short-term goals are provided with additional detail, to include timelines, performance measurements, resource allocations, specific roles and responsibilities and more additional particular strategic details. (See the Section “Broad Strategies Identified for more detail.)

## **Economic Profile**

*Information in this section is based on narrative from the 2009 Benkendorf/ Reid Goal 9 report, current Oregon Employment Department data, Portland State University population data, information from the UCEDC website and the Union County Chamber of Commerce website.*

La Grande (2009 population 13,085 – a 1.2% growth rate from 2008, faster than the statewide growth rate of 0.9%) is located in Union County (2009 population 25,470) in Northeast Oregon in the famed and picturesque Grande Ronde River Valley. Like many Oregon counties, Union County's historical economic base has been tied to natural resources – wood products and agriculture in this case. La Grande holds an additional unique distinction of being the only community in Oregon east of the cascades to house a four-year public liberal arts university, with the campus of Eastern Oregon University residing wholly within the La Grande city limits, serving as a symbol of higher education in the region since 1929.

### **1. DEMOGRAPHICS**

The City of La Grande is the predominant demographic and economic hub within Union County, comprising close to 51% of the county population. Union County, the second most populous county in the Northeast Oregon Region, consists of approximately 20% of the region's population after Umatilla County's 60% share.

Despite the recent year's growth rate, since the 2000 census, population growth in Union County and the City of La Grande has been sluggish; growing at 0.41% (810 persons) and 0.59% (595 persons), respectively. Union County's other seven incorporated cities as well as its unincorporated areas are also growing at rates of less than one percent. At a regional level, population growth has been stagnant at 0.20%—growth in Umatilla County has been 0.27% while Baker and Wallowa Counties have declined by 0.23%.

In 2007, regional population was distributed 46% among a younger population age 35 and less. This younger distribution is roughly consistent with the State average of 46.7% but is disparate among the counties within the region. Union and Umatilla counties average about a 46.3% share of persons age 35 and less while Baker and Wallowa average a 36.6% share. The disparity increases when considering persons aged 45 and less. Union and Umatilla counties average a 59% share in this age group while Baker and Wallowa average a 47% share. On the other hand, Baker and Wallowa counties have a larger share of persons age 65 and older.

Since 2002 the region and Union County have been shedding population from the age groups less than 19 and 25 to 44, while gaining persons 45 and older with persons age 55 to 64 being the fastest growing segment. The loss of early and middle career individuals may indicate a difficulty finding family-wage employment in the area. Additionally, as the current composition is predominately driven by individuals under 19 years of age (27%), an emphasis on education, entry-level employment and training resources is needed. Failure to provide opportunities locally for a younger demographic base typically results in a “brain drain” condition, where a region’s best and brightest seek advancement opportunities elsewhere.

An area’s level of educational attainment is often used as a proxy for the skill level of the population base. From an Economic Development perspective, Union County is at an advantage regionally, with a greater distribution of higher educated persons—21.8% compared to 17.5% regionally. The County’s educational attainment level is driven by the City of La Grande’s 25.6% share of higher educated persons.

Presumably reflecting the County’s relatively younger demographic, since 2000 Union County has had the highest rate of positive natural increase in population in the region. However, net in-migration appears to be the larger contributor to demographic growth in Union County during the current decade—roughly 61% according to data from the Portland State University Population Research Center (PRC). Evaluating sources of in-migration is useful in understanding the interconnectedness of Union County to other regions in Oregon or elsewhere. According the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) migration trends, Union County is most closely associated with Idaho counties in the Boise area, Umatilla County, and Baker County. This follows anticipated logic given the geographical proximity of these areas. However, in aggregate Union County has net out-migration both within the Northeastern Oregon Region and all of Oregon. In other words, more Oregonian’s are moving from Union County to other Oregon counties than vice versa.

## **2. EMPLOYMENT**

Total nonfarm payroll employment in Union County has remained virtually unchanged between 2001 and 2008. The latest data from the Oregon Employment Department show that 2009 employment is over 400 jobs down from 2008. Unemployment in the region has remained generally higher than the broader State economy. The same can generally be applied to conditions locally in La Grande, although La Grande’s economic diversification has led lower levels of volatility over time and local unemployment has more closely followed State trends.

Over the past five years regional employment growth has been moderate with Union County posting job growth of 1.93%. Since January of 2002, Union County has added about 200 jobs with 35 growth months and 43 contraction months.

Employment growth in the region diverges from overall State growth which experienced a 9.23% increase in all sectors between 2002 and 2007 with only two sectors showing little or no growth (Information -0.14% and Natural Resources 0%). Over the past five years five sectors in Union County have declined as measured by employment. Public Administration has experienced steep decline in Union County but has demonstrated strong growth regionally (+324 jobs), driven entirely by Umatilla County which added 774 jobs. The other four sectors showed only minor decline and are declining at the regional level as well with the exception of Professional & Business Services which added 450 jobs regionally, also driven almost entirely by Umatilla County. Manufacturing is growing in Union County but regionally is the steepest declining sector (-294 jobs). Transportation, warehousing and utilities is an important growth sector for Union County and Baker County (+50 jobs) but is experiencing decline in Umatilla County (-177 jobs). Education & Health Services and Retail Trade continue to be growth sectors for Union County and are demonstrating growth regionally as well with the region adding 259 jobs in the Education & Health Services sector and 123 jobs in the Retail Trade sector.

Union County enjoys a relatively diverse economy in terms of industrial mix, especially related to other rural counties in Oregon. No one sector dominates; in fact no single industry sector represents more than 20% of the county's total employment. Trade, transportation & utilities (which includes retail) is the largest sector at 19.2%, followed by education & health services (13.7%), manufacturing (13.6%), local government (10.8%), state government (9.6%) and leisure & hospitality.

### **3. WAGES & INCOME**

Union County's average wage levels by sector are significantly below wage levels statewide. Across all industries, Union County wages averaged \$29,939, 24.3% below the Oregon average of \$39,566. Since 2001, wage levels in Union County have averaged 3.2% annual growth, exceeding slightly the 3.0% annual growth at the State level. Likewise, at a regional level Union County is slightly outpacing growth in neighboring counties: Umatilla posted annual growth of 3.0% since 2001, followed by Baker County at 2.5% and Wallowa County at 2.0%. In terms of overall payroll, Manufacturing leads the way, followed by Trade, transportation & utilities, Education & health services and State government. Interestingly, Natural resources (which includes agriculture and logging) and Federal government share nearly identical total payrolls.

In Union County, the highest paid industry sector is Federal government (\$53,267), followed by State government (\$39,806), Manufacturing (\$38,641), Construction (\$33,633), and Financial activities (\$33,217). The lowest paid industries are Leisure & Hospitality and Other Services. Union County has the highest paying wages in the Manufacturing sector—27% higher than Umatilla, 22% higher than Baker County and 56% higher than Wallowa County. Wages in Education & Health Services, Construction, Natural Resources, Information, Wholesale Trade and Retail Trade are also higher than the regional average. Conversely, Union County wages are 15-20% less than the regional average in Professional & Business Services and Other Services.

The per capital income gap between Union County and the U.S. continues to widen each year and was nearly \$9,800 in 2007, the most recent data available. At \$28,833, Union County's per capita income in 2007 was 82% of Oregon's per capita income and under 75% of the U.S. figure. The average annual covered wage in Union County in 2008 was over \$10,000 less than Oregon's average.

Gross farm sales have continued to increase each year since 2004, reaching over \$80 million in 2008, increasing at a rate that has eclipsed the growth rate of covered payroll. The 2007 Census of Agriculture listed Union County as having 880 farms. Union County farms averaged 554 acres (the smallest of any Eastern Oregon county) and are predominantly small family farms.

## **Relationship of the La Grande Economic Development Plan strategies to other plans and bodies of work.**

Concerted attempts were made to relate this plan to other plans and bodies of work wherever possible. As this plan was being drafted, many changes in the community, economy and the development of other plans were occurring simultaneously, requiring several edits and revisions to the plan. This Broad Strategies of this plan for the most part all relate to the City of La Grande adopted Vision & Goals adopted by the City Council in 2009. The matrix below indicates how each strategy relates to other plans and bodies of work, with the following explanation of each reference:

1. **Ad Hoc:** Refers the input and feedback provided by a group of community stakeholders invited and assembled by City staff in May and June 2009. (Appendix D. contains notes from the meetings and other relevant information.)
2. **UCEDC:** Refers to the 2009 Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC) Economic Development Strategic Plan of September 2009 developed by Orbis Group. (Appendix E. contains a summary of relevant information taken from this Plan.)
3. **Goal 9:** Refers to the Goal 9: Economic Development; Final report of August 2009 by The Benkendorf Associates Corp. & Johnson Reid, LLC. (Appendix F. contains a summary of this report.)
4. **UR Plan:** Refers to the City of La Grande Urban Renewal Plan of 1999.
5. **Work underway:** Refers to any current or recent bodies of work underway in the community that relates to the specific strategy.
6. **Fundamental:** Refers to strategies that are commonly regarded as fundamental economic development strategies that would be found in most any community or Plan.

Following the matrix [Table 2.], references are specifically made to relationships with the UCEDC 2009 Plan.

Strategy No.	Strategy Name	References					
		Ad Hoc	UCEDC	Goal 9	UR Plan	Work Underway	Fundamental
1	Downtown	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
2	BRE	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
3	Biz Park	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N
4	ED Roles	Y	N	Y	N	N	N
5	Workforce	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y
6	Marketing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
7	Ind. Land	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
8	Pro Biz	Y	N	N	N	N	N
9	BMCC	N	Y	N	N	N	N
10	EOU	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N
11	Leadership	Y	N	N	N	Y	N
12	Branding	N	N	N	N	N	N
13	Retail	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
14	Tourism	N	Y	N	N	Y	N

**TABLE 2.**

### Relationship to UCEDC 2009 Economic Development Strategic Plan:

The 2009 UCEDC Economic Development Plan contains 16 selected strategies. The City of La Grande Plan includes relevant strategies of the UCEDC Plan and attempts to coordinate these activities and suggestions where appropriate.

UCEDC Rank	UCEDC Plan Strategy	Referenced in La Grande Plan?	Notes
1	Education Development	YES	In LG Plan, specifically targeted to fully realizing economic opportunities with EOU and expanding workforce development opportunities; references to Blue Mountain Community College also are found in this strategy



<b>UCEDC Rank</b>	<b>UCEDC Plan Strategy</b>	<b>Referenced in La Grande Plan?</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2	Pass-Through Visitor Services	YES	LG Plan focuses on efforts to tie tourism in better with overall economic development strategy, namely through increased retail sales
3	Health Care	YES	LG Plan suggests looking at expanding additional value-added, non-location-specific health care industries
4	Energy Development	NO	While there may be potential energy industry supply chain and service sector opportunities in Union County, the majority of this industry's impact will be outside the City
5	Attracting Government Funding	NO	Not identified at this time in the LG Plan
6	Downtown Development	YES	Remains a core component of the City's Urban Renewal Plan and current economic development efforts related to the Main Street program
7	Value-Added Agriculture	YES	While the resources will continue to exist outside of the City, there may be additional opportunities for value-added processing facilities inside the City

<b>UCEDC Rank</b>	<b>UCEDC Plan Strategy</b>	<b>Referenced in La Grande Plan?</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Local/ Regional Tourism</b>	YES	As with the Pass-Through Tourism strategy, focuses tourism as a means to an end to enhance business recruitment and expand the retail sales market
<b>9</b>	<b>Value-Added Forest Products</b>	YES	Like Value-Added Agriculture, manufacturing facilities can locate within the City
<b>10</b>	<b>Environmental Restoration</b>	NO	Not identified at this time in the LG Plan
<b>11</b>	<b>Business Retention &amp; Expansion</b>	YES	This should be a core element of any economic development plan; it remains to be realized who will be the lead agency and the ultimate geographic scope of the program
<b>12</b>	<b>Business Cultivation</b>	YES	Considered a sub-component of BR&E and Business Recruitment in the LG Plan
<b>13</b>	<b>Attracting Government Jobs</b>	NO	Not identified at this time in the LG Plan
<b>14</b>	<b>Entrepreneurial Development</b>	YES	As with BR&E, this strategy should be core in any economic development plan; this function is lead by several other agencies with the City's role still being defined, namely with respect to downtown businesses

<b>UCEDC Rank</b>	<b>UCEDC Plan Strategy</b>	<b>Referenced in La Grande Plan?</b>	<b>Notes</b>
15	<b>Infrastructure Development</b>	NO	Not identified at this time in the LG Plan; considered to be a core component of the City's Planning and Public Works plans; may need to be specifically called out in future revisions of this Plan as newly urbanized areas are identified for larger-scale industrial development
16	<b>Business Recruitment</b>	YES	As with BR&E & Entrepreneurial Development, should be a core component of any Economic Development Plan; at this time UCEDC has assumed the role of lead agency with the City's role less than defined

**TABLE 3.**

## Applied Economic Development Theory

Economic development theory, as it applies to this plan, implies the following two core set of principles: That business and job growth can only occur through a focused and finite set of strategies; and businesses at all levels require a focused and fairly finite set of inputs to be successful.

The community recognizes that business and job growth are created through one of three methods:

1. **Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E)**. By focusing on the growth and “staying power” of existing local businesses, this strategy, statistically speaking, provides the greatest return on investment. Historically, the vast majority of new jobs in a community will come from the businesses that are already present. These businesses have already invested in the community and are much more likely to remain and invest again in the future. However, complacency can lead to business exodus; other communities are interested in attracting our successful firms.

Further, a strong BR&E program can improve business attraction efforts; one of the first steps prospective businesses will take is to candidly speak with existing employers to determine the “health” of the community from a business perspective. For all of these reasons and more, a strong and well-funded BR&E program should be in place at the county-level (ideally run through the Chamber of Commerce). Lastly, this effort should set the stage for identification of targeted industry sectors that will also be utilized in other business development activities.

A successful program will proactively call on local businesses in an effort to understand these companies – what they do, what challenges they have faced in the past and what obstacles may stand in their paths to future success. The next step in this process is the critical element of follow-up on identified issues and seeking methods to address the issues either customized to an individual business or more holistically to a group of businesses, as appropriate. This broad strategy can also serve as a reactive “early warning system” to first open up lines of communication between the business community and the local/ regional resource providers and then put into place the appropriate “red flag response” teams to respond to urgent issues that businesses may raise which could either endanger their retention in the community or prevent them from solidifying needed expansion projects.

2. **Business Recruitment and Attraction.** Business recruitment is often seen as the only element of economic development. However, it is the most expensive and risky of all strategies. A well-rounded, BR&E-focused economic development effort will be wise to also include an aggressive and proactive business and attraction element to its program. New businesses relocating to the area are important to the creation of high-quality jobs and economic diversification. This effort needs to be well-funded and very focused. It should use the same industry target list developed for the BR&E program. It also must fit the scale of the community. For a recruitment strategy to be effective, the community must have land, buildings and sites to locate new companies. A friendly, pro-business attitude and processes must be in place, along with appropriate business incentives, in order to be competitive.

Like BR&E recruitment & attraction can be both proactive and reactive, and is often both. To be proactive, targeted resources must be in place to allow for aggressive outreach marketing of the community/ region and specific sites and buildings within the community. Depending on the budget and the goals and visions of the community, recruitment and marketing campaigns can be very elaborate, from attending various regional, national, international and industry-specific trade shows to direct meetings with prospects and site selectors to hosted visits and tours of site selectors and commercial realtors to a complex professional multi-media campaign that involves web-based, print and/ or broadcast media. A more affordable campaign could involve earned media, public relations and direct mail. A reactive program (also the follow-up phase to a proactive campaign) would be responsive to lead inquires with timely information, professional fulfillment pieces and diligent follow-through. Either method assumes the community actually has an adequate product to market accurately – namely targeted sites and buildings within the community.

Increasingly business recruitment projects begin, and sometimes end, online. It is critical for the marketing agency and/ or the community to have an accurate and useful website in which site selectors and others considering the community for a major project investment will find of value. If a site selector is not able to locate the information needed online, or if the information is out-of-date, the community will likely not be considered for the project. Most often, if a community is eliminated at this stage in the selection process, it will never learn it was even considered.

3. **Entrepreneurial and Small Business Development.** Often overlooked, this element can return long-term dividends. By focusing efforts, programs and resources on locating and developing entrepreneurs from within the community, a robust strategy of providing tools needed by early-stage businesses can be identified and implemented. To be effective, this effort requires a variety of partners to include K-12 education, the University, banks and many others.

Many individuals are “wired” to be successful entrepreneurs and ultimately businesspeople. For this strategy to be successful a supportive community environment, a range of services and a resource network must exist to provide potential future business leaders and current small business operators and other early stage ventures to succeed in the local community. These services can range from financial assistance to business mentors to business incubators to cooperative marketing to counseling to a wide range of business support and technical services.

Like the other two core strategies presented here, the complexity and cost of entrepreneurial development can range from simple to complex, depending on the vision of the community and the resources allocated. Existing organizations, such as the Small Business Development Center, USDA Rural Development, OSU Extension, Union County Chamber of Commerce and Northeast Oregon Economic Development District all have small business development as part of their core mission. More elaborate strategies, such as business incubators, venture funds and talent recruitment can be explored. Less costly measures, such as supporting and encouraging the development of future entrepreneurs in the K-12 system and EOU should be explored.

## Broad Strategies Identified

The following set of broad short-term economic development strategies are largely derived from the two sessions held with the Ad Hoc Stakeholder group in May and June 2009 and subsequent input provided by the La Grande City Council in April 2010. There are immediate needs with respect to economic development in Union County, largely due to the current national economic situation and how it has impacted the local area, coupled with the budget crisis the City of La Grande finds itself in. There are also short-term economic development needs in the community that are not necessarily due to the current economic crisis. For the most part, this plan addresses the short and longer-term issues from a strategic perspective, and largely does not regard the current economic situation, with some notable exceptions, such as strategy #5. Workforce Availability.

The following strategies are given a priority from 1-14; however, they are all important and to a large degree it matters little the order in which they are accomplished. The listed priority is offered as a guideline when resource allocations are considered.

### Mid-term (2010-2013) Recommended Actions:

PRIORITY	STRATEGY
1	Continue proactive approach to downtown development and revitalization.
2	Develop and implement a proactive Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program with UCEDC.
3	Develop and implement an aggressive marketing plan for the La Grande Business Park with the goal of filling the Park.
4	Establish clear roles and responsibilities for Union County/ La Grande economic development entities, respective plans, etc.
5	Address workforce availability issues
6	Develop strategies to aggressively and proactively market the community to attract new business opportunities to the area, including a multi-county marketing concept.
7	Open up new opportunities for industrial land development. Certify and aggressively market new industrial land
8	The City of La Grande creates an across-the-board pro-business environment.
9	Establish a Blue Mountain Community College Campus in Union County.
10	Partner with Eastern Oregon University to create new economic opportunities for the community.
11	Implement methods to increase and improve community leadership capacity-building.
12	Develop and implement a cohesive community branding and marketing strategy that includes tourism's role.
13	Assess new opportunities for retail/ commercial projects within and outside of downtown, including a retail development strategy with Island City.
14	Shift tourism marketing strategy to focus on attracting population growth, retail spending and business investments.

**TABLE 4.**

<b>Priority</b>	1				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Continue proactive approach to downtown development and revitalization.</b>				
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<p><i>“We will showcase La Grande as a culturally-rich city with a strong sense of identity, pride, and environmental awareness that preserves our heritage.”</i> and</p> <p><i>“We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.”</i></p> <p>It further supports the <i>“small-town character”</i> statement in the Vision statement.</p>				
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Continue to fund and stay active in the Oregon Main Street program with a focus on identifiable accomplishments.				
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	A range of new streetscape elements are installed in downtown La Grande. Several historic buildings are renovated.				
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u>. Downtown is comprised of small businesses. A successful downtown will require a healthy mix of businesses.</p> <p>#6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u>. There will be a need to attract new businesses to enhance the business mix downtown and fill vacant retail storefronts.</p> <p>#8. <u>City’s pro-business environment</u>. Many downtown businesses and building owners will require substantial assistance and incentives to reinvest in the downtown. A positive, pro-business attitude is critical.</p> <p>#10. <u>Eastern Oregon University</u>. Enhancing the image downtown will in part rely on establishing an EOU presence and to the degree feasible, creating downtown La Grande to look and feel like a “college town.”</p> <p>#12. <u>Branding</u>. Downtown La Grande should be integral and key to the community’s overall image. The central business district will come to symbolize the health of the entire city.</p> <p>#13. <u>Retail development</u>. Ground-floor downtown business development should be predominantly retail in nature. Enhancing and creating a healthy environment for retail is paramount. Downtown needs to maintain “its share” of community retail.</p> <p>#14. <u>Tourism</u>. It is very likely that in order to achieve an acceptable level of retail occupancy in the downtown, the retail market will need to be expanded. One way to expand the market is through tourism efforts targeted at downtown retail spending.</p>				
	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City’s Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
3	<b>Revitalize downtown</b>	City of La Grande & La Grande Main Street	Provide vision, leadership, resources	Continue involvement with and funding for Main Street program	A vital, thriving, aesthetically pleasing downtown with successful businesses



**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

**Upsides:**

**Challenges:**

- **The strategy is already underway with some success.**
- **Downtown represents La Grande’s identity.**

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- **Investments will pay long-term dividends.**
- **As structured through the Main Street program, the effort has the ability to rally the community.**

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- **Strategy does not address the community’s needed base employment and base industry.**
- **Many storefronts are vacant; several key buildings are vacant and deteriorating.**
- **Spending public funds at this time may send conflicting messages to the public.**

**SUMMARY**

With the continuation of a volunteer-based Main Street program, dedicated professional staff and committed Urban Renewal funds in place, the stage is set for a successful downtown revitalization effort. It will remain critical to maintain the balance of achieving incremental short-term and highly visible successful efforts to maintain the program’s momentum and the interest and enthusiasm of the community and the program volunteers with the need for sound long-range planning.

Much has been accomplished since La Grande was officially designated an Oregon Main Street community by the Governor in September 2008. All four Main Street committees are active and engaged in developing projects. The City has brought targeted resources to the program through the Urban Renewal Agency. A new board of directors with new bylaws has replaced the former La Grande Downtown Development Association, paving the way for a viable non-profit entity to ultimately assume on-going management of the Main Street program.

Downtown development and revitalization has become a common community development strategy in America in recent years. Historic preservation is critical for a community to maintain its identity and stay true to its unique history, which is important to locals and visitors alike. Using public funds to leverage local private funding as well as outside grants and loans is a sound formula for long-term community investment.

It has been said that downtowns are part park, part shopping mall, part living history museum, part highway and part neighborhood. They are the community’s living room. To be successful they must be carefully managed comprehensively with attention given to all elements equally. This is the key benefit of the Main Street program – it is a proven comprehensive approach to downtown revitalization.

With a National Historic District, Urban Renewal District and a Main Street program, downtown La Grande has all of the right ingredients to make downtown La Grande a very special place that will remain a core element of La Grande’s economic future.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

### Steps in the short-term should include:

1. Continue City support of the Main Street program with dedicated funding and staff resources.  
TIMELINE: ongoing through planning horizon.
2. Continue to fund, aggressively market and implement the Façade Grant Program.  
TIMELINE: ongoing through planning horizon or until project interest wanes.
3. Continue to augment staff with RARE or similar program.  
TIMELINE: Through at least 2012, then evaluate.
4. Complete and implement downtown streetscape improvements.  
TIMELINE: Complete plan in 2010; begin implementation 2010 or 2011; complete plan implementation by 2015.
5. Undertake one or more major redevelopment projects.  
TIMELINE: Begin one in 2010; complete one or more projects by 2014.
6. Complete steps toward implementation of a long-term sustainable Main Street program.  
TIMELINE: ongoing through planning horizon; have long-term plan in place by 2013 or 2014.
7. Develop coordinated annual downtown event calendar.  
TIMELINE: Complete 2010, then ongoing.

## RESOURCES

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### Resources required:

1. Staff time.
    - a. 2010 – 2012 – Approximately half of CEDD, up to half support staff, plus RARE participant; Public Works support.
  2. Urban Renewal funding:
    - a. \$250,000 - \$350,000/ year, plus additional major capital projects.
- 

### This strategy supports the following:

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- Successful work currently underway
- Major recurring theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
- The 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategy of “Downtown Development” (see also Appendix E.)
- Goal 9 Report (see also Appendix F.)
- La Grande Urban Renewal Plan

<b>Priority</b>	2
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop and implement a proactive Business Retention &amp; Expansion (BR&amp;E) program with UCEDC (or Union County Chamber of Commerce).</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>“We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.”</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Form a leadership team or task force within the UCEDC/ Chamber and begin active, ongoing outreach to local businesses.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	Outreach efforts to businesses result in a critical “save” and/or create the opportunity to aid in a major business expansion project.
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#1. <u>Downtown revitalization</u>. Many of La Grande’s most important businesses are in the downtown area, and a few have already left or have gone out of business. It will be important for the health of downtown to retain &amp; expand businesses in the downtown as a component of the Main Street program.</p> <p>#4. <u>ED Agency coordination</u>. Effective delivery and performance of BR&amp;E will require coordinated and efficient multi-agency operations and partnerships.</p> <p>#5. <u>Workforce development</u>. Often, one of the major key findings through a business outreach effort is the need for the community to provide enhanced workforce development for existing businesses.</p> <p>#6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u>. In order to have a successful business recruitment and attraction program, there must first be in place a successful BR&amp;E program to ensure a healthy and successful local business climate.</p> <p>#7. <u>Industrial land</u>. Having an adequate supply of land is not only for new businesses coming into the community; expanding local businesses may also require additional land.</p> <p>#8. <u>City’s pro-business environment</u>. It will be critical for the City of La Grande to do all that it can to aid in the expansion &amp; retention of existing businesses and removing applicable hurdles to success.</p> <p>#11. <u>Community leadership</u>. In order to achieve a successful community volunteer-based BR&amp;E effort, a solid and identifiable local community leadership base must be established.</p> <p>#13. <u>Retail development</u>. La Grande’s retail base appears to be dwindling, especially in the downtown, and it will be important to determine how best to provide assistance to these businesses.</p>

Strategy	Lead Agency/ Agencies	City's Role	Action Steps	Outcomes
2 <b>Develop &amp; implement BR&amp;E program</b>	UCEDC, Union County Chamber of Commerce & City of La Grande	Provide technical resources	Assist UCEDC/ Chamber in establishing a program to provide regular outreach to local businesses	Provide ongoing, proactive outreach to local businesses; help firms grow & expand; focus on targeted sectors for growth

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

**Upsides:**

**Challenges:**

- **The strategy is relatively low-cost with huge potential dividends.**
- **Most jobs and investment come from existing businesses.**
- **There are many good models that can easily be adapted for use in Union County.**
- **This is a fundamental element of community economic development.**
- **If done on a county-level, requires a high degree of multi-partner coordination and high-level county-wide leadership.**
- **As currently structured, relies on UCEDC/ Chamber.**
- **Requires continual community-wide dedication.**

**SUMMARY**

The key to the success of this effort is for the community to embrace it as an ongoing approach to economic development, not another “survey” project. Where BR&E efforts tend to fail is in work that occurs after visitations and data collections. Follow-up with businesses, working with them directly and individually to help resolve issues, is a critical step that is often omitted or not performed in a timely fashion.

A common economic development fact in North America is the best return on investment in virtually any program is to focus resources on BR&E. When resources are scarce, the most cost-effective approach to successful BR&E has proven to be a volunteer-based model, where community leaders provide business outreach and visitation assistance. Still, a budget and dedicated professional staff are needed.

This method of BR&E was attempted in 2009 with the Union County Chamber of Commerce as the lead agency, but was ultimately postponed for a variety of reasons. Since then, the 2009 UCEDC Economic Development Strategic Plan has identified BR&E as one of 16 selected strategies. UCEDC has indicated that it will serve as the lead agency for this initiative. It is hoped a program may launch in 2010.

**Steps in the short-term should include (these steps align with those stated in the 2009 UCEDC Plan for the BR&E strategy):**

1. Develop an outreach team of local government and economic development officials and key business resource providers.  
 TIMELINE: Team has largely already been assembled; needs to be reconvened in 2010.
2. Identify a targeted list of businesses and industries and respective contact information.  
 TIMELINE: Much of this work has already been completed; needs to be revisited in 2010.
3. Develop an instrument to guide conversations with and solicit information from visited businesses. Determine how best to integrate “Business Cultivation” strategy into the BR&E strategy.  
 TIMELINE: 2010.
4. Systematically reach out to targeted local (Union County) businesses to assess the current situation and outlook for the future.  
 TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
5. Develop a process and a follow-up list of activities designed to meet needs of businesses raised in the visitation process.  
 TIMELINE: 2011 – 2012.
6. Produce a summary report of findings based on thematic results for wide and targeted distribution.  
 TIMELINE: 2011.
7. Determine county-wide strategies based on holistic findings.  
 TIMELINE: 2011 – 2012.

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**Resources required:**

1. Staff time.
  - a. 2010 – preparation & implementation; extensive amount of staff time potentially needed to assist UCEDC/ Chamber in coordinating and performing visitations, data collection
  - b. 2010 & 2011 – follow-up and strategy development; extensive staff time may be required in this phase as well
2. Other resources may be required to host forums or print materials:
  - a. Ongoing staff time
  - b. Urban Renewal resources
  - c. General fund resources

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
  - Major recurring theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
  - The 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategies of “Business Retention & Expansion” and “Business Cultivation” (see also Appendix E.)
  - References made to this strategy in Goal 9 Report (see also Appendix F.)
  - Work already discussed and underway through the Union County Chamber of Commerce (may transition to UCEDC)
  - A fundamental approach to community economic development
- 

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<b>Priority</b>	3				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop and implement an aggressive marketing plan for the La Grande Business Park with the goal of filling the Park.</b>				
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>“We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.”</i>				
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Develop a marketing plan with UCEDC.				
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	An aggressive marketing plan is developed, funded and implemented. New job-producing businesses locate at the Business Park.				
<b>EXAMPLES</b>					
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#4. <u>ED Agency Roles</u>. For this strategy to be successful, effective coordination between the City, County, UCEDC and other state and regional economic development partner agencies is critical.</p> <p>#5. <u>Workforce</u>. The availability and skill level of our workforce will in large part help determine the quantity, quality and type of businesses that we attract and grow.</p> <p>#6. <u>Recruitment &amp; Marketing</u>. This strategy effectively becomes a subset of a larger marketing strategy; this one is focused solely on one particular piece of real estate.</p> <p>#7. <u>Industrial lands</u>. This strategy works in tandem with the need to open up additional, larger parcels for other types of industry.</p> <p>#8. <u>City’s pro-business environment</u>. To effectively, efficiently and with some expediency place businesses in the Park will require a degree of flexibility and creativity on behalf of the City staff and elected officials.</p> <p>#12. <u>Branding</u>. A component of our branding strategy should include asset-based components, with the Business Park being an asset; similarly, an effective branding strategy will aid in our business attraction efforts.</p> <p>#14. <u>Tourism</u>. With a refocused strategy on business investment, our tourism efforts, in conjunction with the branding strategy and more traditional industrial marketing will better support our economic goals.</p>				
	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City’s Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
3	<b>Market &amp; fill La Grande Business Park</b>	UCEDC & City of La Grande	Provide vision, leadership, resources	1.Develop marketing plan and allocate resources 2.Implement plan	Lots are sold and developed in the Park to create new jobs & investment

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- **The complex and expensive components of developing the Park are completed.**
- **The next steps in the investment need to be realized.**

**Upsides:**

- **New businesses will create new jobs and generate new tax revenue.**
- **Achieving momentum will restore stakeholders' faith in our economic development efforts.**

**Challenges:**

- **The current economic climate can delay progress.**
- **Attracting small business can be more expensive, complex and take longer than attracting larger ones, although siting them is easier.**
- **Some UCEDC board members have expressed concerns about focused efforts to market the Park at the expense of other sites in the county.**

**SUMMARY**

The City of La Grande has a real economic development asset in the La Grande Business & Technology Park. However, due to a variety of circumstances, this Park has yet to live up to its potential. The Park represents a significant investment on behalf of the City of La Grande, its Urban Renewal Agency and the State of Oregon through its financial partnership in the Special Public Works Fund. However, the Park has some challenges in that it has been designed and developed with a bias toward smaller lot sizes, limiting the economic opportunities that can locate in the Park. It is not apparent that serious, aggressive and focused efforts to market the Park for new industrial development have occurred.

Due to the size of the lots within the park and the underlying zoning, a fairly limited business profile exists for new business attraction. To date, the Park has attracted mainly interest from local businesses expanding or remodeling within Union County. In order to attract new businesses into the Park, a rather expensive and complex marketing strategy must be employed in order to locate the types of businesses that will fit best within the Park and convince them to relocate and/or expand into the Park. This business type profile will require attendance at trade shows, direct mail campaigns and other more proactive and aggressive tacticts in order to locate and then convince these types of businesses to relocate. This strategy will demand dedicated resources, and the return on investment could take months or years to materialize. The upside of this approach is that while the marketing of the site and the “match-making” with potential new business prospects can be more complex, costly and time-consuming than with larger clients, the actual location process can be much simiper and the volume of active projects can be much higher.

The City and UCEDC must work together to develop and implement a focused marketing plan, provide appropriate funding and stay dedicated to the plan for an appropriate amount of time.



**SHORT-TERM STEPS****Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. Meet with UCEDC board, staff and marketing committee to discuss the development of a marketing plan for the Park.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
  2. Mutually develop an appropriate marketing plan with a horizon of at least three years.  
TIMELINE: 2010-2011.
  3. Mutually develop and adopt an appropriate budget for marketing.  
TIMELINE: 2010-2011.
  4. Begin plan implementation.  
TIMELINE: 2011-2014
- 

**RESOURCES****Resources required:**

1. Staff time.
    - a. A portion of CEDD to assist in plan development and implementation.
  2. Urban Renewal funding:
    - a. Potentially \$10,000 to \$25,000 annually through planning horizon
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- Some level of work is currently underway, though marginal
- Recurring theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
- La Grande Urban Renewal Plan

<b>Priority</b>	4
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Establish clear roles and responsibilities for Union County/ La Grande economic development entities, respective plans, etc.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>"We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities."</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Convene respective agencies to discuss the issue.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	All agencies have a clear understanding of respective roles and responsibilities. Union County enjoys a more effective and efficient economic development program.
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u>. Since our BR&amp;E model relies on multi-agency partnerships &amp; cooperation, successful BR&amp;E efforts are contingent upon this strategy being carried out.</p> <p>#3. <u>Business Park marketing</u>. Effective marketing of the Business Park will require multiple agencies' cooperation.</p> <p>#6. <u>Marketing &amp; attraction</u>. As above with the Park, county-wide marketing efforts will require clearly defined roles &amp; responsibilities.</p> <p>#8. <u>Pro-business environment</u>. For the City to be a successful participant with respect to business development, it is imperative that the government agency is an asset and not a liability.</p>

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
4	<b>Establish clear roles for economic development entities</b>	UCEDC, Chamber of Commerce, City of La Grande, other partners	Provide vision & leadership, technical resources	Convene entities to discuss and define roles	Union County achieves a more efficient approach to economic development

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- **There is a very apparent need for this to be accomplished.**
- **With dwindling resources, success here will make our efforts more efficient and cost-effective.**

**Upsides:**

- **Our economic development success rate will be improved.**
- **Each agency can work more effectively and have a better understanding of their partners' roles and needs.**

**Challenges:**

- **This strategy will take work and time and much cooperation and will stress comfort zones.**
- **An analysis may show that some or parts of some agencies are unnecessary or redundant.**

## SUMMARY

There is evidence that, for a county of its size, Union County has what may be considered to be an over-abundance of agencies participating in economic development. On the one hand, if the work being carried out by the multiple agencies was measurably having a positive impact on Union County's economic health, this phenomenon may not be a bad thing. However, the opposite appears to be true, as despite the volume of agencies, measured success has been very limited. At a time of drastically reduced financial resources, the result of which is having a negative impact with a number of the partner agencies and with the City of La Grande, now may be a perfect time to step back and reassess who is actually doing what, what overlap or redundancy exists or address potentially low-value or unnecessary agencies or bodies of work.

At the very least, the City of La Grande has the potential to exercise some community-wide leadership to begin demanding this assessment and convening the players to bring about change, which in the end will result in a more effective and efficient economic development effort. Other counties of comparable size and situation may be consulted to explore models of efficiency. There should be a mapping of resources and assets and a determination made as to what role the City and others should be playing with respect to economic development.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

### Steps in the short-term should include:

1. Convene partners to discuss issue.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
2. Hold a series of sessions with stakeholders and agency representatives to map assets & resources, conduct research and explore scenarios of change.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
3. Begin implementing recommendations from the working group.  
TIMELINE: 2011 – 2013.

## RESOURCES

### Resources required:

1. Staff and Council time.
  - a. Considerable time will be required to strategize and conduct and participate in working discussions on this strategy.
  - b. Staff time to analyze and research.
  - c. Staff time to assist in implementation.
2. There may be a financial need to hire a consultant or facilitator to aid in improving the process and to maintain relationships.

### This strategy supports the following:

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- Theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
- References are made to this strategy in the Goal 9 report (see also Appendix F.)

<b>Priority</b>	5				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Address workforce availability issues.</b>				
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<p><i>"We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities,"</i> and (to a lesser degree)</p> <p><i>"We will take full advantage of the benefits of our thriving educational community, anchored by Eastern Oregon University."</i></p>				
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	A comprehensive evaluation is undertaken to assess workforce issues in Union County.				
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	Union County has a full understanding of its workforce issues. Existing and new employers will find it easier to fill challenging positions.				
<b>EXAMPLES</b>					
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u>. Many issues raised by local businesses will likely be related to workforce. In order for local businesses to expand and grow, they will need access to quality labor.</p> <p>#3. <u>Business Park Marketing</u>, #6. <u>Recruitment &amp; Marketing</u>, #7. <u>Industrial Land</u>. A strong and stable workforce, coupled with the systems in place to provide custom and rapid training, will allow La Grande to be competitive in landing business relocation projects.</p> <p>#9. <u>BMCC Campus</u>. Union County currently lacks the ability to provide a full-range of needed short-term and customized training opportunities.</p> <p>#10. <u>EOU</u>. Any workforce development strategy in Union County should involve EOU. There is a logical place for EOU in providing the leadership and technical resources related to this strategy.</p>				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	
5	Address workforce availability issues	Workforce and economic development partners	Provide vision & leadership, technical resources	Facilitate discussions to arrive at solutions	Union County is able to provide adequate workforce to existing and new businesses

<b>Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A strong, available workforce is critical to success.</b></li> <li>• <b>Current reports from employers reflect this as a priority issue that requires resolution.</b></li> <li>• <b>This strategy represents a logical, fundamental economic development need.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Upsides:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>La Grande already has a good workforce.</b></li> <li>• <b>EOU is already here, as are other key workforce development partners.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Challenges:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The City is a minor player in this strategy.</b></li> <li>• <b>Success involves many partners and players agreeing to a common end goal.</b></li> </ul>

## SUMMARY

This strategy, in its current form was added to this Plan only in the Plan's current and final revision largely due to issues that were made apparent through visits with major Union County employers in early 2010. Workforce availability is being stated as a critical issue, despite the fact that Union County still has a historically high unemployment rate that remains in double-digits as of April 2010. It may be concluded that the workforce availability issues and apparent shortage will only continue and potentially worsen as the economy improves. If employers are scrambling to find good employees in the economy of early 2010, it is reasonable to assume the problem will become more acute into the future.

These apparent workforce issues will hamper our ability to grow existing firms and attract new industry to our area. In addition to the stated issues by local employers, it has been stated that workforce also remains a top issue for new businesses looking to relocate to an area. Even though this strategy was not listed as the #1 strategy in this Plan, it may in fact be the most critical. What makes it especially challenging for the City of La Grande is that the City is not nor will likely ever be a major player in workforce development issues. This is an area of expertise that seldom lies with local government agencies. Therefore, the City can only provide leadership and vision, political influence if needed and some technical resources and encourage others to begin working diligently to improve the situation.

The solutions to the problem are not immediately apparent and the causes are myriad. Drug use, social welfare programs, apathy and lack of skills and ethics are all cited by employers as issues contributing to the shortage. Long-term, community-wide solutions may be slow in coming, and as a result, economic growth and recovery may be delayed. Staying engaged with local businesses through the efforts of the BR&E program and networking with State agency staff, conferences and site selectors will allow us to remain engaged and informed on current workforce issues affecting existing and new employers. Staff should remain involved with the regional Workforce Investment Board.

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### **Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. Staff meets with workforce development representatives to determine best tactics to move strategy forward.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
2. City provides continued support as needed  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2013.
3. Staff continues to stay engaged with the needs of local employers, follow trends related to business attraction and involved with the local WIB.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2013.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. 2010 – Meet with workforce development partners and move initiative forward as appropriate.
    - b. 2010 – 2013 – Staying engaged and informed on relevant workforce issues.
    - c. 2010 and beyond – Varies depending on leadership role with respective to moving initiatives forward.
  2. City financial resources
    - a. Minimal or unknown.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- This strategy is not adequately referenced or supported in the various plans and bodies of work cited in this Plan, which may be an oversight
  - City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
  - Some work underway currently
  - References made by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
  - References made in the 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategy of “Education Development” (see also Appendix E.)
  - A fundamental approach to economic development
- 

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<b>Priority</b>	6
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop strategies to more aggressively and proactively market the community to attract new business opportunities to the area, including a multi-county marketing concept.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>"We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities."</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	The City should, in cooperation with other appropriate partners, develop a short-term, focused marketing program.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	A multi-county economic development marketing cooperative is formed. A major new job-producing business attraction project locates in La Grande. La Grande website is on par with competitors' websites.
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#1. <u>Downtown Revitalization</u>. The CBZ is a core asset to market for new investment. With many vacancies to fill downtown, this area becomes a target for new investment.</p> <p>#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u>. A successful BR&amp;E program will fuel a successful marketing program. The needs of existing businesses can drive marketing.</p> <p>#3. <u>Business Park marketing</u>. The Park becomes a subset of this initiative, as a focused approach to a specific area.</p> <p>#4. <u>ED Agency Roles</u>. A high level of coordination, trust and cooperation is required for this strategy to be effective, especially if a multi-county initiative is undertaken.</p> <p>#5. <u>Workforce</u>. Like land, labor is a critical need for new businesses. Attraction efforts will not be successful if new businesses cannot find the quality labor they require.</p> <p>#7. <u>Industrial land</u>. Most new prospects will require new "green fields" upon which to site new projects. Land and its availability become central product marketing themes.</p> <p>#8. <u>City's pro-business environment</u>. To attract new investment, the City must be prepared to partner with investors and existing businesses.</p> <p>#12. <u>Community Branding</u>. A successful business attraction and marketing campaign should align with the community's branding strategy.</p> <p>#13. <u>Retail development</u>. At least a portion of the community's business attraction strategy will ultimately include retail development.</p> <p>#14. <u>Tourism</u>. With a focus on business investment, our tourism &amp; branding efforts, in conjunction with more traditional industrial marketing, will better support our goals.</p>

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
6	<b>Increase and improve marketing, including formation of a multi-county cooperative</b>	City of La Grande, UCEDC, Union County, Tourism, Chamber of Commerce, neighboring counties	Participate in providing the resources and vision for a more aggressive marketing campaign	1. Develop a marketing plan and fund 2. Explore multi-county concepts 3. Develop website that is on par w/ competitors	3-5 new quality business ventures in the La Grande Business Park and/or downtown; development of new website

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- **La Grande desperately needs additional businesses and investments to grow the tax base and to add quality jobs.**

**Upsides:**

- **Investments will pay long-term dividends.**
- **This is a fundamental element of community economic development.**
- **There may be opportunities to cooperatively market, regionally or with the private sector.**

**Challenges:**

- **Marketing is not without risk and considerable resource investment.**
- **Competition is fierce.**
- **The marketing effort and product are not clearly defined or planned.**
- **This is a long-term proposition, which will require ongoing focus and diligence.**

**SUMMARY**

La Grande and Union County currently have in place virtually no proactive professional marketing occurring, outside of tourism initiatives. To effectively compete for new business opportunities, the community will need to dramatically “step up” its marketing efforts. Ideally, the community branding effort must be developed prior to launching a marketing effort. For the marketing effort to be fully successful, the community (product) must be appropriately branded. A “mini-branding” exercise could take place as a part of a short-term marketing plan. Some degree of community marketing must be agreed upon and developed if the community is to compete effectively for new business investment opportunities.

Initial steps should include the development of a marketing plan, appropriating funding for the plan and then executing the plan. The plan should incorporate targeted industry sectors that build upon and support the strengths of existing businesses in the community. It should also take into account a “business cultivation” strategy as outlined in the 2009 UCEDC plan that involves efforts to strengthen existing firms as well as attract new business opportunities. The plan should also focus on efforts identified in the “Business Recruitment” section of the UCEDC plan. The community should consider using tourism marketing as a tool to achieve business recruitment marketing, as utilized in other areas of the state.

An initial first step for the City of La Grande should be to upgrade its website (widely considered to be a critical element of community marketing for new business investment opportunities in 21<sup>st</sup> century America). The website should incorporate as many “best in class” and peer comparable economic development marketing elements as possible. La Grande and Union County must also consider a cooperative marketing campaign with neighboring counties and/ or likely private sector partners. A relatively low-cost campaign, such as a targeted direct mail/ email campaign that includes a web-based element with a limited number of trade show attendances should be considered in 2010 or 2011.



**SHORT-TERM STEPS****Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. Update and upgrade City of La Grande website to match peer communities' websites in terms of economic development functionality.  
TIMELINE: 2010 - 2011.
2. Coordinate a marketing plan with UCEDC and fund appropriately, to include aggressive marketing of City industrial sites.  
TIMELINE: 2010 - 2011.
3. Consider launching a direct mail/ email and/or trade show campaign.  
TIMELINE: 2010 - 2013.
4. Begin discussing a multi-county economic development marketing effort.  
TIMELINE: 2010.

**RESOURCES****Resources required:**

1. Staff time and City funding.
    - a. 2010 - 2012 - Develop new website and assist with marketing plan.
    - b. \$25,000 - website development
    - c. \$10,000 - \$25,000- marketing efforts/ annually
  2. Staff & Council time
    - a. Planning future multi-partner campaigns.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
  - Efforts underway to explore a multi-county partnership and integrate plans with UCEDC
  - Theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
  - The 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategies of "Business Recruitment" and "Business Cultivation" (see Appendix E.)
  - References are made to this strategy in the Goal 9 report (see also Appendix F.)
  - La Grande Urban Renewal Plan
  - A fundamental approach to economic development
-

<b>Priority</b>	7
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Open up new opportunities for industrial land development. Certify and aggressively market new industrial land.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>“We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.”</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	The City Council should make the effort to allow new industrial development a top priority and seek appropriate political pressure to expedite the process and consider infrastructure financing.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	A range of sizes and types of new industrial acreage is ready for development and marketed appropriately.
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u> . Many expanding local businesses may require additional land for new or expanded operations. #3. <u>Business Park marketing</u> . Currently, the Business Park represents virtually all that the City has market; the Park should also be effectively marketing and be coordinated with new properties as they become available. #5. <u>Workforce</u> . Prospects will need to be ensured they will have the workforce they need prior to making investment decisions. #6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u> . Newly located industrial businesses will almost certainly require larger parcels with urban services.

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City’s Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
7	<b>Increase industrial development</b>	City of La Grande & Union County Economic Development Corp.	Provide for appropriately zoned “shovel-ready” parcels, including those larger than 10 acres	Make expediting the process a top political priority	Initially, to provide a range of suitable industrial sites; ultimately, to locate high-quality jobs & businesses

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- **La Grande desperately needs additional industrial land if it hopes to grow its tax base and attract new businesses and quality jobs.**

**Upsides:**

- **Investments will pay long-term dividends.**
- **Additional land base and aggressive marketing is likely the only way to dramatically change La Grande’s economic future.**

**Challenges:**

- **It will take many months, if not several years to get several large industrial sites ready for market.**
- **Infrastructure needs, costs and financing methods are yet unknown.**
- **This is a long-term proposition, which will require ongoing focus and diligence.**

## SUMMARY

Much effort has taken place in the past year to expand the City's Urban Growth Boundary and update the Goal 9: Economic Development section of the Comprehensive Plan. Now efforts must continue to allow a range of industrial sites to become "project-ready" for industrial development and job creation. (See also Appendix F.)

In order to grow La Grande's tax base and provide the community with viable opportunities for new business growth and quality job development, additional land (especially large-scale industrially-zoned land) must urgently be brought into the City's inventory. La Grande currently is unable to compete with other communities for new business relocation projects due to its lack of available land for such projects. The largest industrial parcel currently within the corporate boundaries of La Grande is eight acres. Most new industrial projects start with a 10 acre minimum criteria; many seek 20 acres or more.

It will be challenging for La Grande to grow its tax base significantly or to add larger quantities of new jobs without additional new industrial land. Although the appropriate steps have recently been taken to urbanize new large industrial parcels, unfortunately the community is still some time away from actually being in a position to market the sites for development, much less realize the economic benefits of new business and job creation.

The City Council and staff will need to take appropriate actions to expedite the process to allow the new sites to become appropriately zoned and served with the infrastructure needed to be certified by the State and aggressively marketed to attract new industrial development to allow La Grande to compete favorably for new projects. There will likely be significant up-front costs associated with the development of the infrastructure needed to serve the sites. These needs must be identified as well as the sources of funding required to develop the infrastructure.

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### **Steps in the short-term should include:**

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

1. Ensure process to convert newly urbanized land to appropriate City industrial zoning is expedited appropriately.  
TIMELINE: Immediate until completion.
2. Consider and explore infrastructure needs to serve new industrial sites.  
TIMELINE: Immediate until completion.
3. Determine infrastructure costs.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
4. Aggressively market remaining city industrial sites, including those at the Business Park.  
TIMELINE: Immediate until completion.
5. Identify funding sources for infrastructure needs.  
TIMELINE: 2011-2012.

**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. 2010 – 2012 – Appropriate time required to convert zoning process, assess infrastructure needs and costs, negotiate and market additional sites.
  2. Unknown sources of funding.
    - a. Unknown quantity to provide infrastructure to serve new industrial sites.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
  - Elements currently underway
  - Major recurring theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
  - The 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategies of “Business Recruitment” and “Infrastructure Development” (see Appendix E.)
  - Goal 9 report (see also Appendix F.)
  - La Grande Urban Renewal Plan
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<b>Priority</b>	8				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>The City of La Grande creates an across-the-board pro-business environment.</b>				
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	Does not directly support any one element of the vision or goal, but relates to the following goal:  <i>"We will champion public involvement and civic leadership that values economic, ecological, and social stewardship, while maintaining our small-town character."</i>				
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	A customer-service and economic development training program for all relevant staff is developed and implemented.				
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	La Grande becomes known throughout the region as a "business-friendly" community.				
<b>EXAMPLES</b>					
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#1. <u>Downtown revitalization</u>. The City will remain a key player, using professional and financial resources to revitalize downtown.</p> <p>#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u>. A key component of a successful existing business retention &amp; expansion program is the City's overt willingness to proactively assist business development.</p> <p>#3. <u>Business Park marketing</u>. To effectively, efficiently and with some expediency place businesses in the Park will require a degree of flexibility and creativity on behalf of the City staff and elected officials.</p> <p>#4. <u>ED Agency roles</u>. For the City to be a successful participant with respect to business development, it is imperative that the government agency is an asset and not a liability.</p> <p>#6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u>. In order to successfully lure new business opportunities to La Grande, the City must be willing to act as a full partner to negotiate deals and influence decisions.</p> <p>#11. <u>Community leadership</u>. In order to create a true across the board City government pro-business environment, the City Council and others will be required to exhibit effective leadership to demonstrate that such a philosophy is in the best interest of the citizens of La Grande.</p> <p>#13. <u>Retail development</u>. As with other business development strategies, successful retail development relies on the City facilitating and influencing business expansion and relation decisions. The "Island City factor" complicates this issue, but also drives the need.</p>				
	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
8	Ensure City has a "pro-business" attitude and development process	City of La Grande	Provide staff and processes that are as business-friendly as feasible	Provide appropriate leadership and training	La Grande becomes a preferential location for business development in the region

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- **La Grande already has a positive environment that is conducive to business development.**
- **This strategy represents a logical starting point for La Grande’s economic development plan.**

**Upsides:**

- **There is very little cost associated with this strategy.**
- **Successful implementation can give La Grande a competitive edge.**
- **This strategy has many far-reaching impacts which can affect the outcomes of other strategies noted in this plan.**

**Challenges:**

- **Successful implementation requires a “top-down” philosophy that is realized by every City department, every employee.**
- **La Grande’s biggest competitor in this regard may be right next door, and it will be a challenge to foster an environment without lowering standards.**

**SUMMARY**

For virtually any effort to be successful, the City must ensure that its “own house is in order.” Economic development efforts will be undermined, some more seriously than others, if the reality or the perception is that it is difficult to do business with the City of La Grande.

For the most part, La Grande already enjoys a favorable pro-business climate. The challenge as the community moves forward and assuming there is the desire to get very serious about economic development and the relocation and expansion of businesses, is likely twofold:

1. For right or wrong, good or bad, La Grande will continue to be compared with Island City and the ease and costs of doing business in each community will be weighed by existing and new businesses alike. This ultimately sets up a competitive environment between the two jurisdictions. This scenario is very unfortunate as it is largely an unfair comparison. La Grande will have to continually deal with this comparison. The comparison can be mitigated through stressing the relative value of La Grande while providing the best customer service.
2. To be effective, there will need to be a conscious effort of active and applied leadership philosophy beginning with the City Council and filtering down to every City department and every City employee. For this strategy to be successful, total buy-in will be required. Ultimately, this will translate into a culture and an environment that is not only supportive of business development in the community, but that each and every employee sees the role they play in economic development.

Beyond the buy-in and support of the philosophy, some ongoing training of staff will be required – the only real expense associated with this strategy.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

### Steps in the short-term should include:

1. City Council deliberates the validity of this philosophy and considers organizational adoption.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
  2. Staff integrates Council's vision and philosophy.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
  3. Staff develops and implements appropriate organizational training.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011 and ongoing.
  4. Staff and Council begin to analyze all elements of City impact on business to determine which may need modification.  
TIMELINE: 2010 and ongoing.
- 

## RESOURCES

### Resources required:

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. 2010 – Develop and implement policy/ vision/ philosophy for a pro-business environment.
    - b. 2010 and beyond – Analyze City practices for business impact
  2. City financial resources
    - a. Annually beginning FY2011 - \$5,000 annually for training.
- 

### This strategy supports the following:

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- Theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)

<b>Priority</b>	9
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Establish a Blue Mountain Community College campus in Union County.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<p><i>"We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities,"</i> and (to a lesser degree)</p> <p><i>"We will take full advantage of the benefits of our thriving educational community, anchored by Eastern Oregon University."</i></p>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Coalesce local efforts to improve access to vocational and short-term customized training opportunities in Union County.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	Initial steps are taken to provide Union County-based community college access. An appropriate workforce/ skills needs assessment is undertaken. Work begins to site a community college campus in Union County.
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#5. <u>Workforce</u>. This strategy directly compliments the workforce strategy by ultimately providing a viable and sustainable training institution.</p> <p>#10. <u>EOU</u>. Any workforce development strategy in Union County should involve EOU. There is a logical place for EOU in providing the leadership and technical resources related to this strategy.</p>

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
9	<b>Establish a Blue Mountain Community College campus in La Grande</b>	EOU, Blue Mountain Community College, City of La Grande, workforce development partners	Provide vision & leadership	Facilitate and support concept and discussions	Local employers, citizens and workforce have access to a wide-range of workforce development opportunities

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

**Upsides:**

**Challenges:**

- **La Grande needs to have the best workforce and training system to remain competitive.**
- **Compared to neighbors and competitors, we are at a strategic disadvantage.**
- **EOU is already here, as are other key workforce development partners.**
- **Indications are that BMCC would be a good partner, if this situation was equitable.**
- **The City is a minor player in this strategy.**
- **It will likely take considerable time, money and political will to get Union County on comparable footing with other communities who have community college/ vocational training access.**



## SUMMARY

While La Grande is extremely fortunate to host one of a select few of Oregon’s public universities, it still lacks community college services. It will be increasingly challenging for La Grande and Union County to remain competitive without good access to short-term and customizable training opportunities. Steps should be taken immediately to assess the skills needed by area employers and employers of the future and identify gaps in skills needs not currently addressed by incumbent training providers. Once skills gaps are identified, these can serve as a launching platform to rally the community around seeking potential solutions, which ideally would lead to an initiative to place a community college campus in La Grande.

Eastern Oregon University is without a doubt a key asset that has yet to fully live up to its potential. Regardless of all that EOU is and can be there will be functions that will fall outside of its core mission. Among these at present are the range of services a community college can provide to citizens, employees and businesses. These services and programs include, but are not limited to: customized training that new or existing businesses may require in order to “skill up” their current employees or as related to new hires; short-term vocational training that incumbent employees or citizens looking for a better job may need to advance their careers; professional & technical short-term certificate training as required by the existing workforce that they are now likely required to travel a distance to obtain.

While most communities of our size lack a university campus, most do have immediate access to a community college. By their nature, community colleges are excellent economic development partners, because they can be very nimble and flexible and able to meet employer needs at a relatively short notice. It is doubtful that Union County will be able to effectively compete with comparable counties as long as it lacks a community college. Efforts need to be undertaken immediately to either seek a Blue Mountain Community College annex campus and a suitable range of offerings here or explore other solutions that would lead the same end result. As with other workforce development initiatives, the City can at best play a peripheral role or partnering role.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

---

### Steps in the short-term should include:

1. Staff meets with EOU, UCEDC and workforce development representatives to determine best tactics to move strategy forward.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
2. Consider conducting a skills gap analysis.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
3. City Council considers position on Community College campus.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
4. Begin taking appropriate steps to place a BMCC campus here (or other appropriate measure to address skills needs)  
TIMELINE: 2011 – 2012.

**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. 2010 – Meet with workforce development partners and move initiative forward as appropriate.
    - b. 2010 and beyond – Varies depending on leadership role with respective to moving initiatives forward.
  2. City financial resources
    - a. Minimal.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- As mentioned elsewhere in this Plan, workforce development strategies are not adequately referenced or supported in the various plans and bodies of work cited in this Plan, which may be an oversight
  - City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals (marginal)
  - References made in the 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategy of “Education Development” (see also Appendix E.)
- 

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<b>Priority</b>	10
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Partner with Eastern Oregon University to create new economic opportunities for the community.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>"We will take full advantage of the benefits of our thriving educational community, anchored by Eastern Oregon University."</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Begin the active process of engaging leadership.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	Establishment of an EOU presence downtown (i.e. bookstore, merchandise store, ticket outlet, performing arts center, student work center, business incubator, etc.).
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#1. <u>Downtown revitalization</u>. A strong physical and business link between the EOU campus and downtown La Grande is critical.</p> <p>#5. <u>Workforce</u>. As a key local and regional player in workforce development programs and strategies, EOU's role will be pivotal in the success of the workforce development strategy.</p> <p>#9. <u>BMCC campus</u>. EOU can provide the leadership and technical resources needed to accomplish the task of realizing a BMCC campus in La Grande.</p> <p>#11. <u>Community leadership</u>. As a regional economic engine housing highly educated staff, faculty and students, EOU represents a potential key player in providing current and future community leaders.</p> <p>#12. <u>Community branding</u>. It is very likely that the solid, quality brand that the City seeks may very well directly relate to being the "Home of Eastern Oregon University."</p>

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
10	<b>Solidify economic relationship with EOU</b>	Eastern Oregon University & City of La Grande	1. Set "vision" for EOU's role in City's future 2. Recognize Education as a key economic development strategy 3. Engage EOU leadership	1. Discuss in work session & ultimately take formal action 2. Set up initial meeting(s) and encourage continued mutually beneficial dialog	Create new economic opportunities for the community that capitalize on EOU's presence

Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:

- **EOU is an easily identified key asset in the local economy. Success can lead to good jobs, benefits and a better-educated workforce.**

Upsides:

- **There is much support for this initiative, and it has been a recurring theme in many broad areas of interest.**

Challenges:

- **Maintaining focus on the initiative by EOU & the City.**
- **Resource needs are largely unknown.**
- **The two entities have co-existed for many years, yet the opportunities still remain unrealized.**

## SUMMARY

This strategy represents a wide, almost limitless, range of opportunities that may exist to create stronger ties between the existence of EOU in the community and a purposeful outcome of increased local economic opportunities. The presence of a four-year university presents one of the strongest assets La Grande can leverage for economic success. When looking at comparable communities, the presence of EOU in La Grande is a clear stand-out asset that many or most competitors lack and should be exploited fully. Immediate direct benefits include jobs with good wages and benefits and a well-educated workforce. A well-executed relationship with mutually-agreed upon strategic outcomes may result in increased community economic opportunities, including the attraction, engagement and retention of young professionals.

Since the City of La Grande obviously does not control or manage the University, it is incumbent upon the City leadership to appropriately engage EOU leadership to support the concept of leveraging the university as a community economic asset. Given that both the City and the University are facing uncertain economic futures of their own, it may be challenging to get or maintain the full attention of either entity and realize the degree of focus that success will require. It is important for the City to understand turning the university into a community economic engine is not the goal or mission of the University. It is up to the City to “sell” the university on the strategy’s value.

For the strategy to be fully effective there needs to be a strong sense of place, that La Grande is truly a “college town.” This should be conveyed at key community entry points, especially in the downtown. The University should be an economic engine beyond the jobs that it directly creates; EOU should serve to spin off small businesses and provide support to other businesses and agencies in the community. Its staff and faculty should be involved and engaged in the community, professionally and civically. The campus should be a focal point for festivals, events, athletics, culture, music, etc.

**Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. City Council fully embraces the concept of a more integral approach with EOU, interlinking our respective economic development strategies.  
TIMELINE: Complete 2010
2. A series of focused meetings begin with joint City/ EOU leadership to explore opportunities.  
TIMELINE: 2010
3. A preliminary jointly developed plan outlining 1-3 year goals/ action steps.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
4. Begin implementation of 3-5 specific actions.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
5. Begin to measure effects and impacts of strategy.  
TIMELINE: 2011 – 2012.
6. Begin developing longer-term goals, objectives and tasks based on the successes of the short-term tactics.  
TIMELINE: 2012

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**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. 2010 – preparation; 1+ Council meetings; 2-3 exploration meetings with EOU; 1-2 months drafting plan; 1+ plan implementation meetings with EOU
    - b. 2011 – implementation and evaluation; 2-3 evaluation meetings with EOU; activities focused on plan implementation
  2. Other resources are dependent on what specific actions are agreed upon, but could include any or all of the following:
    - a. Ongoing staff & Council time
    - b. Urban Renewal resources
    - c. Public Works resources
- 

**Strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- Major recurring theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
- The 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan top-ranked strategy of “Education Development” (see also Appendix E.)
- Goal 9 report (see also Appendix F.)
- La Grande Urban Renewal Plan

<b>Priority</b>	11				
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Implement methods to increase and improve community leadership capacity-building.</b>				
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>"We will champion public involvement and civic leadership that values economic, ecological, and social stewardship, while maintaining our small-town character."</i>				
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Initial steps need to be taken to determine the City's best role in this broad initiative.				
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	A Young Professionals' Network is formed. A local lead agency is identified to develop this initiative.				
<b>EXAMPLES</b>					
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#2. <u>BR&amp;E</u>. An effective community/ volunteer-based BR&amp;E strategy will rely upon and build community leadership capacity.</p> <p>#10. <u>EOU</u>. The University is an excellent and logical source for building and providing future community leaders.</p> <p>#8. <u>City's pro-business environment</u>. The City Council and others will be required to exhibit effective leadership to demonstrate that such a philosophy is in the best interest of the citizens of La Grande.</p>				
	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
11	<b>Increase and improve community leadership capacity-building</b>	Not identified	Provide leadership, vision, technical resources	Engage a stakeholder group to assess needs and establish a lead agency, roles & responsibilities	La Grande enjoys an engaged citizenry with a leadership "succession plan"; Ample opportunities exist for leadership development; We have assessed leadership needs and gaps

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- There is an apparent need and concern for the community’s ability to grow and develop future leaders.
- Success will ensure sustainability.

**Upsides:**

- A planned approach and implementation can make the community more attractive.
- Efficiencies will be realized.

**Challenges:**

- No lead agency has been identified.
- Strategy may seem too nebulous or intangible for some to fully support.
- Plan has not been even partially formulated.

**SUMMARY**

The community is blessed an abundance of talent. It is likely some of this talent goes untapped or unknown. Further, the community can do more to attract, engage and retain talent. Any community would be wise to create its own “succession plan” of leadership. It is better to have a written plan of action developed than to rely on this occurring “by accident” as is often the case. As this issue surfaced during the stakeholder sessions of May and June 2009, two issues surfaced: one is the community’s ability to fully utilize the talent and human resources it has available to it now and into the future; the second related more closely to leadership and capacity.

An effort is underway in early 2010 to form a Young Professionals Network, with the goal to attract, engage and retain young professionals in the community. Initially, this is being coordinated in concept with partners from the Chamber of Commerce, City of La Grande, Eastern Oregon University and possibly the Workforce Investment Board. The initiative is patterned after successful efforts in other communities around the country.

Other resources, such as the Ford Family Foundation, may be able to fulfill the need of leadership capacity-building in La Grande and Union County. What is critical initially is for a community-wide lead agency to be identified and for the City’s role in the imitative to be clearly defined.

**SHORT-TERM STEPS**

**Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. Determine and identify clearly the need, relevant issues and lead agency.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
2. City Council & staff determine City’s role in the initiative.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
3. Provide support to a Young Professionals initiative.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011

**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. Meetings with community stakeholders to determine scope of issue and identify lead agency and City's roles.
    - b. Staff time to potentially assist in appropriate plan implementation.
    - c. Staff support to Young Professionals initiative.
  2. No known financial resources identified at this time.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
  - Some work underway as it relates to the formation of a Young Professionals Network
  - Theme offered by ad hoc stakeholder task force (see also Appendix D.)
- 

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<b>Priority</b>	12
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Develop and implement a cohesive community branding and marketing strategy that includes tourism’s role.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<i>“We will promote the natural beauty and resources of the Grande Ronde Valley, which provide recreational opportunities and quality of life benefits that complement our economic development objectives.”</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	Facilitate an honest assessment of weaknesses and opportunities related to a strong community brand.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome</b>	The City Council acknowledges that branding is critical to advancing the economic future of the community. La Grande decides to move ahead on a branding process and agrees to hire a professional branding expert to guide the process.
<b>EXAMPLES</b>	
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	#1. <u>Downtown revitalization</u> . Downtown represents the “heart & soul” of the community, representing its past, present & future, including unique commercial architecture. #3. <u>Business Park marketing</u> , #6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u> . A critical end use of a branding platform will be for the attraction of new investment to the community. #9. <u>Tourism</u> . The attraction of visitors and new investment to the community is a key use of a branding message. #10. <u>EOU</u> . As a central community asset, EOU can be a central theme in the La Grande brand.

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City’s Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
12	<b>Develop a high-quality brand for the community</b>	City of La Grande, Union County Tourism	Provide leadership, vision, technical resources	1. Determine the desire when, if and how to move forward with branding 2. Provide resources to develop branding strategy	The La Grande/ Union County community is identified through a consistent and high-quality brand

<b>Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The community appears to be at a place to consider taking on a branding strategy.</b></li> <li>• <b>Branding can help improve and support many of the other strategies in this Plan.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Upsides:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Successful branding can lead to a more healthy economic future for the community.</b></li> <li>• <b>Branding adds value to the products and services offered by the community.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Challenges:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Branding can be expensive.</b></li> <li>• <b>Community branding is a progressive concept that may not be embraced or fully understood by all.</b></li> </ul>

Community branding is much more than the development of a new logo and tagline. While those elements are included and can become the more visible parts of a community branding strategy, the goal of the branding strategy should be to identify and reinforce the brand.

As stated on Oregon-based Bill Baker’s “Total Destination Management” website: *“Successful city and regional brands are built around the customer’s total destination experience – before, during, and after their encounter with the place. Decades of practical experience enables us to bring a strong strategic edge to your destination to bring greater effectiveness to your tourism marketing and economic development performance. We provide the tools for greater efficiency in seizing competitive advantage and creating breakthrough communications, bold designs, innovative product development and brand experiences that will delight your customers.”*

This example draws mainly from a strategy geared toward tourism, but it really matters little whether the brand is primarily used for tourism, business attraction, or improving constituent confidence; the product is essentially the same and only the message may be altered to better align with particular audiences. Branding and “selling” a community is not entirely unlike selling any other product or service, and it is evident in Baker’s text how easily the pitch could be describing virtually any product or service. And that’s the point – to be effective, the community must begin to think of itself in the context of a product-consumer scenario. Competition is fierce; the goal is to differentiate our community from the masses and fulfill a promise based on the values that we promote.

But branding is not for the faint of heart; Baker himself professes, “Branding is one of today’s hottest and most misunderstood destination management and marketing concepts.” While a successful branding campaign could certainly transform the way La Grande looks at itself and projects the community to the outside world, the key unanswered question remains whether or not the community is ready for such a bold strategy, which is why this strategy is listed last.

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**Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. City Council discusses merits and timing of a brand development strategy.  
TIMELINE: 2010 - 2011.
  2. If deemed appropriate, Council begins to discuss resource allocations and timing for the development of a branding strategy.  
TIMELINE: 2010 - 2011.
-

**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time to organize and facilitate meetings.
  2. Financial needs are unknown at this time and will be based on the timing and level of development the City desires. It should be assumed that the initial investment in such a campaign could be around \$25,000. Some funding could be derived from outside granting sources as well as transient lodging taxes internally.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- 

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<b>Priority</b>	13
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Assess new opportunities retail/ commercial projects within and outside of downtown, including a retail development strategy with Island City.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	This item does not directly support the Council’s Vision or its supporting Goals, but indirectly supports the Goal of :  <i>“We will enhance and grow our diverse economy through innovation, partnerships, and relationships, to capitalize on our existing strengths while seeking new opportunities.”</i>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	The City Council should determine whether or not it desires to make retail development a key part of its economic development strategy.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	An accord is reached between La Grande and Island City with regard to retail development. A retail market analysis is developed and implemented.
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	#1. <u>Downtown revitalization</u> . Many of La Grande’s current and future retail opportunities will exist downtown. #2. <u>BR&amp;E</u> . A community-wide initiative should include all industry sectors. To grow the retail sector, expansion and retention efforts will be critical. Also, expanded job opportunities with local businesses will lead to additional disposable income and increased retail spending. #6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u> . Many real or perceived product gaps and opportunities exist in the La Grande retail market, leading to needs to attract new types of businesses. Additionally, to grow the retail sector, the base employment sector must also grow. #8. <u>City’s pro-business environment</u> . In order to foster retail business growth and to be competitive with neighboring jurisdictions when competing for projects, the City of La Grande must portray a positive, pro-business process. #14. <u>Tourism</u> . One of the ways to grow the retail business market is to expand that market through converting more visitor dollars into local retail spending.

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City’s Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
13	<b>Consider a retail development strategy</b>	City of La Grande, Union County Chamber of Commerce, City of Island City	Provide leadership, vision, technical resources	1. Initiate discussion with Urban Renewal Advisory Commission & Chamber of Commerce Board 2. Develop appropriate strategy for new retail development	Provide the citizens of La Grande with an acceptable level of retail opportunities; obtain highest & best value of development and property taxes from commercial properties

**Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:**

- **La Grande is in need of additional retail opportunities.**
- **The local tax base needs to be expanded and there are vacancies downtown.**

**Upsides:**

- **Vacant buildings downtown can be filled and other sites appropriately zoned for retail can be developed.**
- **The provision of a wide variety of retail will help prevent the leakage of retail spending.**

**Challenges:**

- **We are losing retail opportunities to Island City, and a solution is not readily apparent.**
- **Job losses in the primary sector will exacerbate a lack of retail spending.**
- **La Grande may have more retail space downtown than the market can absorb.**

**SUMMARY**

The combination of several factors, including: slow population growth, an abundance of downtown retail spaces, loss of base industry jobs and new retail development occurring in neighboring Island City – indicate there is an apparent need for La Grande to create a focused retail development plan to protect and grow its retail base and address retail leakage.

It is recommended the following tactics be employed to improve the development of new and expanded retail opportunities in La Grande:

1. Initiate dialog with Island City regarding cooperative retail development.
2. Conduct a community-wide and downtown specific retail market analysis.
3. Re-focus tourism efforts, focus and performance measurement to expand retail market by increasing retail spending by visitors.
4. Create additional primary sector and other high-wage jobs to improve retail spending.
5. Assess existing retailer needs through BR&E efforts to provide needed technical assistance and other programs to assist and improve current retail base.
6. Calculate and qualify downtown and non-downtown available square footage and buildable sites for future retail business opportunities.

While retail is not and will never be a primary jobs sector in La Grande, it is an important economic development component to address the following aspects of community development:

- Downtown revitalization
- Prevention of retail leakage
- Improve tourism product mix
- Provide new business opportunities and jobs
- Improve tax base

**SHORT-TERM STEPS**

**Steps in the short-term should include:**

1. Initiate dialog with Island City regarding cooperative retail development.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
  2. Conduct retail market analyses.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
  3. Consider re-focusing tourism efforts on increased retail spending.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
  4. Quantify retail space, building and development opportunities.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
  5. Use retail BR&E data to drive solutions specific to the sector and individual business needs  
TIMELINE: 2010 and ongoing.
- 

**RESOURCES**

**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. Meetings with Island City, tourism partners, realtors, property owners and others to develop a strategy.
    - b. Staff or consultant time for space analysis.
    - c. Unknown resources to translate BR&E data and apply actions.
  2. City financial resources
    - a. \$5,000 to \$10,000 for market analysis – could be grant funded.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
- References are made to this strategy in the Goal 9 report (see also Appendix F.)
- La Grande Urban Renewal Plan

<b>Priority</b>	14
<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Shift tourism marketing strategy to focus on attracting population growth, retail spending and business investments.</b>
<b>Supports Vision/Goal</b>	<p><i>"We will promote the natural beauty and resources of the Grande Ronde Valley, which provide recreational opportunities and quality of life benefits that complement our economic development objectives."</i></p> <p>Also addresses a number of the goals in the respect that tourism is one of the vehicles by which we "tell the world" of our assets.</p>
<b>KEY Short-term step</b>	The City should annually "audit" the effectiveness of its program, ensuring alignment with goals. Consider tightening alignment with stated economic development goals.
<b>KEY Short-term outcome EXAMPLES</b>	<p>Room tax revenues increase.</p> <p>Retail business openings downtown increase.</p> <p>Tourism is used as an effective business recruitment tool.</p>
<b>Relationship to other strategies</b>	<p>#1. <u>Downtown revitalization</u>. Downtown is a key tourism asset and offers many elements which will be attractive to visitors.</p> <p>#3. <u>Business Park marketing</u>, #6. <u>Recruitment &amp; marketing</u>. Tourism can serve as a tool for business marketing and recruitment; the two should work hand-in-hand.</p> <p>#12. <u>Community Branding</u>. It is important to effectively brand the product that is the place so that messages can be focused and professional.</p> <p>#13. <u>Retail development</u>. Retail growth in La Grande is stagnant at best; tourism can serve to expand the market for local retailers and bring in new money.</p>

	<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Agency/ Agencies</b>	<b>City's Role</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
14	<b>Relate tourism to economic development strategies &amp; values</b>	City of La Grande, Union County Tourism	Match funding and management of TRT funds to outcomes; provide leadership & vision	Assess tourism strategy to determine how to achieve best value and alignment	The City has a stake in a tourism program that supports overall economic development

<b>Why the strategy makes sense for La Grande:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>La Grande has much to offer visitors.</b></li> <li>• <b>Alignment with economic development is cost-effective.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Upsides:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>A great opportunity to better leverage resources.</b></li> <li>• <b>Alignment will provide a more cohesive set of strategies.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Challenges:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The relationship between the City and the tourism program has been tenuous at times.</b></li> <li>• <b>Strategy may require additional resources, which are scarce and non-evident.</b></li> </ul>

## SUMMARY

It is critical that the City continues to ensure the local tourism program is returning appropriate value and is being responsive. The proposal of this strategy does not necessarily imply that the tourism program is not currently providing value to the City, but it does suggest that with better focus and alignment the program could provide additional value and different value to the City than it does now or has done historically.

In addition to continuing doing the “normal” and “traditional” functions that the tourism program performs on an annual basis, there are two specific areas of focus, which if applied and executed well, would add new value to our economic development efforts:

1. **Provide strategic focus on increasing retail sales in La Grande, especially among downtown retailers.** With little or no local population growth and increasing retail competition from nearby Island City, one way for La Grande (especially downtown) retailers to increase their market share is consider a retail sales base beyond Union County. Tourism can function to bring more customers to local retailers and can be evaluated directly as a result of the success of this strategy.
2. **Use tourism as the primary “soft sell” business recruitment strategy.** Other areas of the state have realized the wisdom of using modified traditional tourism marketing tactics to attract new businesses to the area. Some number of businesses which have relocated to the area or may consider relocating, choose the area first based on recreation-related and quality of life aspects. Whether for business or visiting, the product (place) being marketed is largely the same. Better coordinated tourism-economic development marketing will lead to greater efficiencies, leveraging of resources and more focused strategies. Tourism can be viewed not as an end unto itself, but rather a means to an end that is a focused marketing tool to attract new investment into the community by showcasing the values of the community to potential new investors.

## SHORT-TERM STEPS

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### Steps in the short-term should include:

1. Staff and Council discusses concept with tourism provider.  
TIMELINE: 2010.
2. City Council adopts a new work plan with tourism provider to reflect a re-focused tourism strategy that supports economic development goals.  
TIMELINE: 2010 – 2011.
3. Staff assists tourism provider to develop and implement a new tourism marketing plan to support the MOU.  
TIMELINE: 2011 – 2012.



**Resources required:**

1. Staff and Council time.
    - a. Meetings with tourism provider to develop concept, work plan & strategy.
    - b. Staff time for plan implementation.
  2. Unknown source of resources – City, tourism provider or other.
    - a. Unknown amount of resources to implement plan – could be grant funded.
- 

**This strategy supports the following:**

- City Council 2009 Vision & Supporting Goals
  - Some work underway through joint signage projects, as an example
  - References made in the 2009 UCEDC economic development strategic plan strategy of “Local/ Regional Tourism” (see also Appendix E.)
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## La Grande Economic Development Assessment

By Charlie Mitchell, CEcD; October/ November 2009

As one of a half-dozen Certified Economic Developers in Oregon, Charlie Mitchell is qualified to offer a professional assessment of the economic development conditions in La Grande based on one full year of inside observation and working and living in the community. What follows is his personal and professional assessment of the current situation with recommendations of what steps could be made to improve each observation. The La Grande City Council is encouraged to treat this assessment as it would one offered by a professional consultant secured by the City to perform similar work.

Items listed are not sorted, ranked or provided in any particular order or priority. This assessment is intended to be professional, candid, unbiased and honest. It is often easier for an outside consultant to make bold and potentially controversial assessments than for a locally-hired staff member who has developed relationships and may be seen as inherently biased. However, the author has made every effort to develop this section as if he were hired by the community solely for this purpose.

In addition to an independent analysis based on personal immersion and observation, it is worth noting several recurring themes and statements experienced over the past 12 months:

1. *"We're planned to death."* Members of the community have grown weary of planning efforts without perceived adequate follow-through, action and implementation.
2. *"There is too much fragmentation."* There is a real or perceived sentiment that there are too many different organizations involved with economic development leading to potential redundancy, overlap and a fractured process.
3. *"All of the new retail development is going to Island City."* There appears to be a degree of unhealthy competition between La Grande and Island City for new retail development projects; some believe that La Grande is less business-friendly than Island City; others believe that Island City has more relaxed standards creating an "unlevel playing field."

This section focuses solely on issues that need to be improved and is not intended to be a comprehensive analysis of strengths and weaknesses (i.e. SWOT, which is included elsewhere in this Plan), so this section may appear to some to be overly "negative" in its nature. The intent of this section is to critically and professionally assess perceived shortcomings and offer potential solutions. This assessment is somewhat subjective, but is based on comparing La Grande to other communities or observed best practices in place elsewhere. Many of the items

listed below will also be referenced in more detail in other parts of this Plan. Not all of these observations are solely within the scope of the City of La Grande to affect and realize successful outcomes; however, there is a role for the City to play within each of them.

1. **Retail development in La Grande may be hindered.** La Grande is fortunate to have a considerable inventory of prospective retail opportunities in its downtown. There is an abundance of street-level/ ground-floor locations in a variety of square-footages and layouts to accommodate a wide assortment of potential retail uses. Likewise, there are opportunities for additional retail opportunities along Island Avenue and on East Adams. Limited opportunities are also available along Cove Avenue. However, there is adequate real and perceived concern that many new and larger retail opportunities are occurring in the adjacent municipality of Island City that the issue deserves discussion. The situation is exacerbated by several factors:
  1. The area's population is not growing significantly, meaning that the retail market is not growing. For every new square foot of retail that is added in Island City, there is the potential that a square foot of retail in downtown La Grande is at risk. This can be mitigated by several factors:
    - a. Grow the retail base by marketing the area for population growth.
    - b. Grow the retail base by improving tourism spending.
    - c. Enhance niche markets.
  2. Tax rates and development standards differ between the two jurisdictions.

**The recommendation associated with this observation is three-fold:**

1. Increase and improve the retail base in downtown La Grande that does not directly compete with what is being offered in Island City or elsewhere in Union County.
2. Improve relations between La Grande and Island City in an effort to create a team approach to regional retail development.
3. Develop a unified, county-wide approach to retail development that focuses on stemming retail leakage and enhancing retail surplus.

### **Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Begin dialog with Island City.**
  2. **Through the Main Street program, begin an aggressive retention, expansion, attraction retail program.**
2. **There is obvious fragmentation in local/ regional economic development efforts.** In a county of only 25,360 and a three-county region of only 48,930, there are approximately 13 different organizations performing some function of economic development in Union County alone, as referenced by Richard Gardner/ Bootstrap Solutions in his recent economic development assessment of the area. These findings were part of an undated report titled, *“Recommendations Following A Review of the VA Clinic Siting Process in La Grande, Oregon.”* At the very least, additional consideration should be given to the consolidation of economic development in Union County between the Union County Chamber of Commerce, the Union County Economic Development Corporation, Union County Tourism, Blue Mountain Conference Center and possibly La Grande Main Street. The first four of these are county-wide programs. Additional consideration should be given to forming or strengthening a regional two or three-county initiative with respect to economic development marketing and project coordination.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Fold as many county-wide economic development initiatives as possible under the Union County Chamber of Commerce. Separate boards, committees and staff specialists will be required.
2. Develop a Union-Wallowa-Baker or Union-Wallowa economic development program to solidify a regional approach to marketing. A strong regional cooperative will benefit all of the respective partners and allow for new and more aggressive opportunities that would not be available to individual partners.

### **Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Begin discussions with Chamber on feasibility of integration.**
2. **Begin discussions with Wallowa & Baker representatives on a three-county initiative.**

3. **Additional opportunities exist to leverage EOU as a key community asset.** Eastern Oregon University is clearly the key unique asset that belongs to the region, county and specifically to La Grande. In at least three planning exercises during 2009, strengthening ties to the University was stated as a high priority to aid in economic development. Opportunities and strategies in this area appear to be almost limitless. This element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendations:**

1. Incorporate EOU in all applicable economic development and community planning efforts and constantly seek to improve the relationship between the University and the City for mutually beneficial outcomes.
2. Incorporate EOU as part of the City's identity.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Engage City and EOU leadership immediately to explore options.**

4. **There is room to improve the leverage of local health care organizations.** Health care and associated services are together one of the very few currently growing industries, and are expected to see continued growth well into the future. Similar to the EOU issue related above, appropriate regard should be given to Grande Ronde Hospital and ODS in developing strategies to improve economic opportunities in the community. There may be many additional opportunities to add value to the existence of these successful members of the business community. Opportunities may also exist to combine education with health care as a niche industry. This element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendation:**

1. Actively seek ways to partner with and leverage the success of GRH and ODS community economic development opportunities.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Engage City, GRH & ODS leadership soon to explore options.**

5. **There is a need to provide more focus and attention to community beautification.** First impressions are a key factor to decision-making by potential community investors, whether they are tourists, potential business relocations, new residents or retirees. It appears that over time resources have been diverted from efforts to address the “curb appeal” of the community. Prime examples are the lack of landscaping along the west side of Island Avenue immediately contiguous to the Island City corporate limit and the public parking lot at Elm and Washington downtown. As the City Council and the community evaluate its identity, purpose and assets, it should give additional consideration to the impact beautification has upon economic development potential, especially in light of an adjacent municipality that has been gaining recent new commercial development.

**Recommendations:**

1. Provide for adequate and meaningful dialog on this topic and budget resources appropriately or develop new resources to address the problem; consider an outside audit to quantify the situation.
2. Improvement in this area is both a private and a public effort and will take time. The City will need to take the lead on areas that it controls and promote private sector compliance and community pride through its leadership and incentives, not primarily through regulatory efforts.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Begin assessing the situation; identify needs, priorities and resources needed.**
6. **La Grande’s proximity to natural resources can be further leveraged as key assets.** La Grande finds itself in the enviable position of being located within very close proximity to a myriad of world-class natural resources. In addition to EOU, a historic downtown and flourishing health care organizations, La Grande’s adjacency to the bounties of the Grande Ronde Valley, to include forest, agriculture and associate scenery, recreation and economic natural resources, should be viewed as a key economic development asset. In particular, assets such as the Mount Emily Recreation Area (MERA) and Ladd Marsh should be heavily promoted.

**Recommendation:**

1. Fully explore the potential multitude of ways to appropriately exploit and add value to the city's proximity to the natural resources of the Grande Ronde Valley.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Host a "Natural Resources Summit" to openly discuss the topic and identify players and issues.**
7. **Fill the La Grande Business & Technology Park.** The City's signature location for new quality job-creating businesses remains virtually empty. Enhanced efforts need to be put in place immediately to provide substantially more focused and aggressive strategies aimed at increasing occupancy with the "right" types of businesses.

**Recommendations:**

1. Provide adequate funding to develop a leading-edge marketing campaign.
2. Develop realistic, yet aggressive goals and timelines for performance.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Develop a new budget for aggressive marketing with timelines and performance measurements.**
  2. **Secure funds and begin implementing the new campaign.**
8. **Expand industrial land base.** Efforts are being taken to accomplish this task, but lengthy delays will cost the community job-producing opportunities. City Council and staff will need to make this a top priority in the coming months and provide appropriate political pressure and resources to ensure a timely resolution.

**Recommendation:**

1. Instigate appropriate measures to expedite expansion of industrial land base within the La Grande city limits.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Make this a top local political priority.**
9. **Provide more aggressive community marketing and business attraction/ recruitment efforts.** Other regions of Oregon are having greater success in attracting new economic

opportunities in large part because of their more aggressive marketing tactics. If resources cannot be realized among a single-county stakeholder group, then a two- or three-county consortium should be considered.

**Recommendation:**

1. Round up the resources necessary from a one-, two- or three-county effort to develop and implement a more aggressive economic development marketing strategy that would include print and electronic media, direct mail, trade shows and site selector interaction.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Develop a plan and identify resources needed.**

10. **Specifically improve internet marketing presence.** The City of La Grande needs to have an internet presence that matches up favorably with its prospect competition. This item relates to items 7. and 9. above. Here, it speaks specifically to the City's internet presence and that of the county and region. Each need to have top-notch internet exposure if the communities in the region desire to compete favorably for new economic development prospects. As a related issue, the City needs to more effectively make the world aware that it has an economic development program. Key reference points, such as the City's website and building directory make little or no mention of economic development as a key City program. The fact that the City has dedicated resources to economic development should be touted, not kept a secret.

**Recommendations:**

1. City of La Grande website needs major overhaul to specifically include inherent or linked best practices economic development information that is updated and easily accessed.
2. Whichever agency (ies) is/are representing Union County need to also provide the same degree of internet presence.
3. Whichever agency (ies) is/are representing the region need to also provide the same degree of internet presence.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Develop a plan and identify resources needed.**

11. **Focus economic development efforts toward adding value to existing base of economic assets.** There is an adequate base of assets from which to build a focused, value-added



economic development strategy through business growth (attraction of new & expansion of existing) in several key targeted sectors. Some of this element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendation:**

Focus BR&E and business attraction toward adding value in the following already established and successful sectors, which have the potential for high-growth and/ or high-wage job opportunities:

1. Agriculture
2. Wood products
3. Health care
4. Fire sciences
5. Aviation
6. Recreational vehicle supply chain
7. Educational services
8. Renewable energy supply chain, service & repair

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Develop a plan and identify resources needed.**

12. **Invest in a focused Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program.** By far the most cost-effective economic development program in existence is an active BR&E program that proactively reaches out to businesses to determine their issues and puts into play thematic as well as customized and individualized services to aid in business retention & expansion. There needs to be a dedicated, funded and on-going county-wide BR&E program, ideally carried out through the Union County Chamber of Commerce. This element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendation:**

1. Support Chamber of Commerce's efforts in establishing a systemic, on-going BR&E program that involved regular business outreach, data collection and follow-up to local businesses.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Work with Chamber of Commerce to implement a program.**

13. **Carry out key elements of the Urban Renewal Plan.** Very few elements of the City’s Urban Renewal Plan have been started or completed. It is a good, comprehensive plan that provides a balance between specific projects and more general tactics to be accomplished within the District. Additional investments within the District will encourage new development, economic opportunities and boost tax increment.

**Recommendation:**

1. With full engagement of the Urban Renewal Advisory Commission and appropriate City staff, the Urban Renewal Agency should begin a more aggressive approach with timelines and performance measurements to accomplish as much of the Plan in the near term as feasible.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Recommend to URAC priorities and encourage adoption of a short-term priority strategy.**

14. **Consider focus on “corridor” plans.** All of the key entry points into La Grande are in need of additional development to demonstrate “community pride.” Related to item 5. above, the Island Avenue, west Adams Avenue and east Adams Avenue corridors currently lack sufficient welcoming improvements and ties to the Historic Downtown. Improvements in these corridors will enhance the aesthetic appeal of the community and draw visitors and others into the downtown core.

**Recommendation:**

1. Areas that relate easily and closely to the Urban Renewal Plan should be considered to be tackled first; others may require a more “creative” funding solution. All will need the appropriate measure of ongoing maintenance and repair. The Urban Renewal Agency should take the lead on this series of projects.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Develop a plan and identify resources needed.**

15. **Improve condition of streets and sidewalks.** Related to items 5. and 14. above, many of the streets and sidewalks throughout the community are in a state of repair that is less than desirable. In addition to previously stated reasons related to community appeal, pride and aesthetics, these improvements go beyond beautification and add to improvements in community safety, vehicular commerce and pedestrian-friendliness.

**Recommendation:**

1. With the Urban Renewal Agency as lead, consider short-term plans to improve the highest-traffic, worst-condition streets and sidewalks.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Assess needs and resources needed.**

16. **Improve tourism impact, especially pass-through.** Initial appearances are that additional proactive efforts could be taken to take advantage of I-84 travelers and those heading to other nearby attractions such as Joseph, Wallowa Lake, Baker City and other regional outdoor recreation destinations, such as hunting, fishing, boating and bird-watching. This element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendation:**

1. Working with UCT, the City should explore any and all ways in which additional tourism impact could be realized from pass-through travelers who have not necessarily made La Grande their destination.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Encourage UCT to analyze potentials.**

17. **Improve directional and informational signage.** Initial impressions are that many directional signs, including street name signs in high-traffic commercial areas, are undersized and/or in poorly visible locations. Additionally, there are no signs directing visitors to or identifying La Grande's Historic District.

**Recommendations:**

1. A community-wide sign audit should be undertaken to determine how informational and directional signage can be improved from the visitor's perspective.
2. A signage plan to direct visitors to, identify and promote the La Grande Historic District should be implemented, to include unique street signs within the District.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Work with UCT, Chamber and other community stakeholders to assess current situation and present recommendations for improvement to ODOT, City Public Works and County Public Works.**

18. **A number of improvements are needed downtown.** La Grande’s central business district and Historic District are the community’s heart and soul. The downtown has a wonderful inventory of historic buildings, dynamic businesses and functions at the social, cultural and economic hub of the community. However, the downtown is in need of many improvements to make it more viable and engaging and truly representative of the pride and values that exist in La Grande.

**Recommendations:**

1. **Downtown “nodes”.** As has been identified in prior downtown planning efforts, there is the need for one or more downtown entry nodes, especially one near Elm & Washington that link to EOU.
2. **Additional green space.** Also identified in past plans, there is the need for one or more plazas or parks centrally located within the downtown.
3. **Maintenance and cleanliness.** The public parking lot at Elm & Washington, downtown trash cans, street trees, potted flowers, street sweeping, sidewalk sweeping and snow removal are areas in which a higher standard should be considered. A standard should be set along with a corresponding budget, and then funding should be sought and secured.
4. **Gain a better understanding of retail mix and how to improve it.** An updated, professional retail market analysis should be undertaken.
5. **Improve appearance of historic buildings.** Grants and/or low-interest loans and additional resources should be provided to owners of historic downtown buildings to facilitate needed façade restoration projects and needed upgrades to enable high-value occupancies.
6. **Improved parking management.** As identified in the Urban Renewal Plan, a thorough analysis should be undertaken of how downtown is being used and how its management could be improved for downtown visitors, shoppers, employees and business owners.
7. **Coordinated promotions and events.** The events and promotions in downtown La Grande are many, varied and important to the quality of life in the community.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Continue to address through the Main Street program.**

19. **Develop Adams/ 2<sup>nd</sup> property.** The City of La Grande owns a parcel at the intersection of Adams Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. This property could be a strategic location of public or private investment that could add to the westerly entry corridor in downtown. As this property is already in the City's control, the City can be more proactive, aggressive and visionary for its use.

**Recommendation:**

1. The City and/ or Urban Renewal Agency should consider making the redevelopment of this property a priority and as a part of: the Urban Renewal Plan, Corridor Plan, or downtown/ Main Street plans.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Conduct a feasibility study for highest and best use of the property and begin to pursue appropriate actions that would lead to redevelopment.**

20. **Workforce development efforts need to be better coordinated and aligned with economic development efforts.** Other parts of the state have demonstrated excellent examples of integrated regional economic development and workforce development programs. Coordinated efforts can enhance the impacts of each respective agency by better targeting resources and matching workforce development programs more accurately with business needs. Proper alignment can also bring about greater efficiency in the workforce development system by anticipating future changes and needs from employers. At its best, an integrated approach also reaches into the K-12 system and seeks to better prepare future works and improves the relevance and impact of local employers among students and faculty. This assessment recognizes this element as one of the comparative weaknesses of this region related to others in the state.

**Recommendation:**

1. Continue to explore enhanced integration between workforce development and economic development, using models currently in place in other areas of Oregon or the U.S.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **With EOU as lead, gather stakeholders and assess current situation and methods to improve.**

21. **Workforce development needs a greater focus on improved access to customized, vocational training that meets employers' needs.** Somewhat related to the above, the lack of a community college or other multi-faceted public accessible vocational training facility put this area at a disadvantage. La Grande and Union County are deficient in the ability for workers and prospective workers to “skill up” to meet modern employment demands. Similarly, employers and prospective employers lack the ability to access short-term, customized training for the incumbent and future workers. This element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendation:**

1. Steps should be taken to create an ongoing, sustainably-funded campus in Union County; most logical options appear to be to have Blue Mountain Community College annex into Union County through the creation of a new Community College District.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **With EOU as lead, begin appropriate discussions with BMCC and other stakeholders on steps to be taken to begin providing regular access to a range of programs in Union County.**

22. **Economic development efforts should be more focused and proactive with either a fixed time frame or until there is momentum or results/ success.** It is suggested that the City identify a small number of very focused initiatives with set time frames, budgets and performance criteria and immediately begin working on them.

**Recommendation:**

1. Identify a short list of near-term economic development projects that can provide clear focus, dedicated funding, identifiable measurements and results and put them into place.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Develop the short list and identify resources needed.**

23. **Enhance entrepreneurial/ small business development opportunities.** Efforts around small business and entrepreneurial development seem scattered and fragmented and not regularly connected to other economic development efforts. As in item 20. above, there is a less-than-optimal comparative relationship between economic development efforts at large and small/ start-up business development activities. This element has been addressed in the new draft UCEDC economic development plan, so it stands to improve.

**Recommendation:**

1. Implement strategies outlined in the new UCEDC plan on this element.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. As above.

24. **Provide adequate and stable funding for Parks and Urban Forestry and Cook Memorial Library.** Some of the community's key unique assets are its parks and urban forest and new modern public library. Like other identified community assets, this one stands to degrade over time if not provide adequate resources. Like other items referenced above relative to community aesthetics and quality of life, this element is critical to attract new businesses, visitors and professionals to the community.

**Recommendation:**

1. Continue to provide stable and adequate funding to these programs with appropriate provisions to expand over time as needed; protect the assets.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. Council and budget committee takes necessary steps to protect the assets.

**25. Develop a strong, relevant and cohesive community identity, to include logo and tagline.**

La Grande suffers from an identity crisis as a community and as a government entity. A strong visual identity should be created that relates well to community values and clearly identified assets. Assets should definitely include only one or two of the following: Eastern Oregon University, natural resources/ scenic beauty or downtown historic commercial buildings. EOU has the strongest identity of the three. In addition to the visual identity, an associated textual identity should also reference values and assets and be complimentary. A well-done branding exercise is more than the development of a logo; it is building consensus around meaningful community values and translating these into a valuable marketing message. A strong brand can go a long way to secure a stronger economic future by positioning the community as solid, professional, progressive and of good value.

**Recommendation:**

1. A professional branding consultant should be secured to help guide the City through this process to develop a singular visual and textual identity (logo & tagline) for use by the City of La Grande.

**Short-Term Strategy:**

1. **Budget appropriate amount of funding to allow for a professional community branding exercise.**



## Suggested City of La Grande 1-4 year Economic Development

### Program Goals/ Performance Measurements 2009-2013

Updated June 1, 2010

#### Downtown Development

- **Façade Grant Program:**
  1. Policy, budget & implementation (**DONE**)
  2. 5-6 projects complete or underway (**DONE**)
- **Streetscape improvements**
  3. Plan complete (**in progress**)
  4. All or part lighting project complete (**started**)
  5. Bike racks (**in progress**)
  6. Pole banners (**DONE**)
  7. Trash cans & benches (**in progress**)
  8. One or more major projects complete/ underway (**in progress**)  
*Examples:*
    - Max Square/ Elm lot/ other public project
    - Justice Center
    - Bohnenkamp
    - 4<sup>th</sup> & Adams (Town Square)
    - Verizon/ Frontier
    - IOOF building
    - Liberty Theatre
    - UP Depot
- **Main Street**
  9. Structure in place (**DONE**)
  10. Plan for sustainability (**in progress**)
  11. LGDDA/ Promotions relationship (**DONE**)
- **Historic Preservation/ Landmarks**
  12. Design standards (**DONE**)
  13. One-stop resource accessibility program in place (**in progress**)
- **Downtown maintenance solution**
  14. Solution identified (**started**)
  15. Implementation

## Economic Development

- **Urban Renewal Plan**
  - 16. Timeline identified
  - 17. Implementation (*started*)
  - 18. URAC engagement (*DONE*)
- **ED Plan**
  - 19. Development (*DONE*)
  - 20. Implementation
- **BR&E program**
  - 21. Develop structure (*in progress*)
  - 22. Complete at least one survey cycle
- **Workforce Development**
  - 23. Better integration w/ ED (*started*)
  - 24. Vo-tech expansion plans underway (*started*)
- **Tourism/ Chamber**
  - 25. Streamlined, efficient

## Community Development

- **Community Development Dept.**
  - 26. Fully-staffed Building Division (*in progress*)
  - 27. Stability (*in progress*)
  - 28. Integrated, business-oriented philosophy (*in progress*)
- **Industrial development**
  - 29. Land base expansion (*in progress*)
  - 30. One or more new projects at Business Park (*started*)

**DONE:** 8/30

**In Progress:** 11/30

**Started:** 6/30

**Not yet started:** 5/30

## SWOT Analysis, City of La Grande

November, 2009

The following Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis is presented from staff's perspective after living and working for one year in La Grande.

### Strengths

La Grande, the Grande Ronde Valley and Union County enjoy many assets related to economic health. These include the following "Top 10" list:

1. **Eastern Oregon University campus.** The fact that the EOU campus is located in La Grande is arguably the single greatest unique economic asset in the community.
2. **Interstate 84.** Unlike some rural communities in Eastern Oregon, La Grande is fortunate to be adjacent to I-84 and its vital east-west transportation link.
3. **Political stability.** Many communities in Oregon are currently and regularly plagued with a high degree of local political unrest that serves to disrupt business.
4. **Cook Memorial Library.** La Grande is truly blessed and unique among peers to have a new modern library facility centrally located within the community.
5. **Community parks and urban forest.** La Grande has a key asset in its wonderful and abundant parks and urban forest. These assets can be a draw for attracting professionals, tourists and businesses to the community. This includes the aquatic center and associated programs.
6. **Adjacency to natural resources; scenic beauty.** The Grande Ronde Valley is one of most scenic and resource-abundant areas in Oregon. There are many ways in which the community has and can continue to capitalize upon these resources.
7. **Health care services & resources.** The community is very fortunate to have facilities such as Grande Ronde Hospital and associated clinics and businesses such as ODS. These amenities are the building blocks of economic health.

8. **Historic preservation and building inventory.** La Grande has a wonderful inventory of historic commercial and residential structures. These are a key asset to promote quality of life, community identity and charm.
9. **Urban renewal.** Tax Increment Financing (TIF) through the Urban Renewal Agency is an important tool to realize major economic change and reinvestment.
10. **La Grande Business Park.** The community is fortunate to have a “shovel-ready” business park. Although it has limitations, it is a key asset to business and job growth.

## Weaknesses

No community is perfect, and each has its respective set of weaknesses from which it learns to confront and ultimately eradicate or transform into strengths. Only items that can feasibly be changed, altered or modified are listed here. Therefore, issues such as climate, weather or geographic location are not taken into consideration, as there is not the ability to change these aspects of the community. Of noted weaknesses, the following “Top 10” list is offered:

1. **Lack of coordinated economic development.** In a county of around 25,000 there is a seemingly oversized array of organizations doing similar things. An overabundance of organizations in such a small market creates inefficiencies and divides up critical resources. Further, roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined, nor are protocols and processes.
2. **Lack of aggressive & proactive business development strategies & programs.** Related to the above, the community lacks what other, more successful regions in the state – well-funded, organized and professionally staffed efforts and programs focused on local business retention & expansion and new business recruitment and attraction.
3. **Lack of industrial land.** The tragic reality for La Grande is that even if the two items above are improved, economic development efforts will still face some serious limitations due to a lack of appropriately zoned and served industrial land, especially of larger sizes.

4. **City general funds.** The City of La Grande's General Fund is in dire straits. This will limit its ability to fund many of the initiatives suggested in this plan and could even erode strengths and exacerbate current weaknesses.
5. **Condition of local roads & streets.** Of specific concern related to smooth commerce and quality of life concerns, many of the City's local roads, streets and sidewalks are sub-standard.
6. **Lack of consistent identity.** La Grande has no consistent or easily identified brand identity and its internet presence is weak.
7. **Lack of a community college.** While EOU's presence in the community is a tremendous asset, the university cannot provide the full range of vocational, short-term and customized training options required by the business community.
8. **Absence of integrated workforce & economic development.** Compared to other, more economically successful areas of the state, there is a lack of coordination and integration between agencies and efforts related to economic and workforce development.
9. **Commercial air service.** While not easily remedied, the lack of scheduled commercial air service close to La Grande can put the community at a competitive disadvantage to attracting economic development opportunities.
10. **General lack of maintenance & upkeep.** With respect to both public and private facilities, comparatively, more could be done to showcase community pride, especially at highly visible locations throughout the community.

## Opportunities

Every community has its share of opportunities, which once capitalized upon, can be transformed into strengths. Some opportunities are near-term, others may take longer to realize; likewise, some are internal, others are external. In many respects, the opportunities that exist may be virtually limitless, and there are undoubtedly many more than those discussed here. Included below is a “Top 10” list of opportunities:

1. **Return of Amtrak passenger service.** The additional investments likely from this key transportation service could once again “put La Grande on the map.”
2. **Downtown revitalization & urban renewal.** Continuing and expanding current efforts will address some of the weaknesses identified above.
3. **Expanded Union County airport.** Small, community airports typically offer many untapped and unrealized potentials for economic development.
4. **UGB expansion.** The full integration of new expansion gives the community new land to develop which should lead to economic development and job creation.
5. **OSP Forensics Lab.** If La Grande is chosen for this project, it could be the first of many technology-related facilities that choose to locate here.
6. **Renewable energy.** While elements and projects are not without controversy, there may be obvious economic opportunities for La Grande in this industry sector.
7. **Fame of Hells Canyon Scenic Byway.** The surface may only be scratched to continue to attract high-value visitors and business opportunities to the area based on the existence of this key nationally-recognized Byway.
8. **EOU connections.** As has been stated numerous times in areas of this Plan, the economic potential of the campus is enormous and largely unexplored.
9. **Creation of a strong community brand.** La Grande needs to differentiate from its competition to attract high-value investments.
10. **Diversity.** Unlike other areas of Eastern Oregon, La Grande offers a much high degree of ethnic and cultural diversity which can be leveraged.

## Threats

Communities' economic health and future can be threatened by a number of forces, both internal and external. Some can be predicted, but most cannot or are of such a global nature that there is little that a local community can do to affect. A suggested "Top 10" list of some threats is included below:

1. **Island City retail development.** Unless the population begins a steeper growth curve, retail development in an immediately adjacent city competes directly.
2. **Local government budgets.** If services begin to diminish or degrade the quality of life we have come to enjoy will erode and we will lose competitive advantages.
3. **Restricted access to natural resources.** Whether for tourism, recreation or manufacturing, limited access to resources can have adverse economic impacts.
4. **Reliance on a narrow manufacturing base.** As we've recently seen, the reliance on only two key sectors can have negative impacts; we need more manufacturing diversity.
5. **State budgets.** Notably the impacts on EOU can be severe, but other aspects of the community's economic health can suffer through reduced state spending.
6. **Industrial and commercial development in Umatilla & Morrow counties.** Our neighbors to the immediate west can be fierce competitors for larger projects.
7. **Fragmentation within a small market.** There is only so much human and financial capital to go around.
8. **Resistance to change.** A common muttering on the streets is how little La Grande has changed over the years. While there are positive aspects to this, there are drawbacks as well.
9. **Volatility of major players in finance, automobiles and telecommunications.** While there is little to be done locally, we remain at the mercy of some of these giants of industry.
10. **Wind towers potentially in conflict with scenery and quality of life.** It will be interesting to watch how this intriguing new controversy plays out.

**City of La Grande Economic Development Strategic Plan 2009**

**Summary report from initial stakeholder meeting on May 5, 2009**

There were 22 attendees gathered in the Cook Memorial Library Community Room, with representation including:

Grande Ronde Hospital, Eastern Oregon University, Union County, Boise Cascade, ODS, ODOT, DLCD, OECDD, Union County Tourism, Union County Chamber of Commerce, La Grande Main Street, UCEDC, La Grande School District, La Grande Planning Commission, La Grande Landmarks Commission, NEOEDD and Worksource Oregon.

Attendees participated in several interactive exercises that provided input in the following specific areas:

1. “Best Day in La Grande” visioning exercise
2. Prioritization of La Grande’s most “unexploited assets”
3. Prioritization of La Grande’s greatest “barriers to success”
4. A listing and discussion of significant problems that need to be addressed

For this exercise, problems are defined as something currently outside the control of people in the room. Barriers are defined as things that people in this room have the power to influence or change. Problems were either moved to the Parking Lot or moved to be listed as a Barrier or as an Unexploited Asset.

**Best Day in La Grande – visioning exercise:**

Key outcomes:

- Connections between the community and EOU
- A vital downtown that is warm, inviting and family-friendly
- The availability of family-wage jobs that allow young people to stay in the area or return to the area to start families

**Unexploited Assets exercise:**

Key outcomes:

- EOU is an unexploited asset
- Natural resources of the area and the leverage these can produce in terms of jobs, innovation and outdoor recreation



- Human capital and talent
- Support of existing business
- Other items listed but not prioritized include:
  - Local contractors
  - Land use
  - Business relocation/ Industrial Park land
  - Small town environment, welcoming community
  - Infrastructure
  - Social, economic, cultural hub of region

**Barriers to success exercise:**

Key outcomes:

- The lack of business incentives
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of workforce training opportunities, especially easily accessible, short-term training
- Fear of large growth
- Airport access
- Fear of “The Plan” without the implementation
- Lack of family-wage jobs, which includes active, aggressive business recruitment and availability of shovel-ready industrial land

Some items were placed in the “parking lot” to be discussed at another time. These include:

- Is this plan competing with the UCEDC plan, how do we reconcile the two plans
- With the lack of resources, will the city plan have the flexibility to invest in good, short-term economic opportunities
- How will the city, county & funded partners work together, public conflict has been a factor in the past
- Lack of an identifiable niche or identity in trying to recruit new business; need to identify community support for particular businesses/ industries
- Foster an attitude that development doesn’t necessarily have a negative impact on quality of life
- Public confidence
- Lack of economic development funding, land use planning

- Unwillingness to accept new ideas
- Challenges in relinquishing authority – too many chiefs
- Getting along

**Next steps:**

Staff will reconvene this group on Tuesday, June 16 at 6 p.m. to discuss and refine strategies related to the work that was accomplished at the May 5 gathering.

**CITY OF LA GRANDE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC PLAN  
STAKEHOLDER MEETING**

**MAY 5, 2009**

**Cook Memorial Library Community Room**

**6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

Attendees:

Janie Baker  
Tom Insko  
Ken Bruce  
Darin Larvik  
Mike Buchanan  
Sara Miller  
Kathleen Cathey  
Rick Minster  
Mark Davidson  
Charlie Mitchell  
Bob Davies  
Tim Seydel  
Janet Dodson

Annette Shelton-Tiderman  
Mardi Ford  
Robert Strobe  
Jon Franklin  
Carol Summers  
Larry Glaze  
Grant Young  
Judy Hector  
John Howard  
Kathleen Cathey, Facilitator  
Charlie Mitchell, CEcD, Community &  
Economic Development Director  
Robert Strobe, City Manager

**Welcome & Opening Remarks, City Manager Robert Strobe**

Mr. Strobe welcomed the attendees and began by that the meeting was going to be a time when the participants would be able to state their viewpoints freely without names being identified. With no Councilors present, open meeting laws were not applicable. Strobe continued by saying when he first was hired as City Manager, he asked the City Council what their priority was for the City - the Council's response was economic development. As a result, the Council authorized the hiring of a full-time economic development director, which led to the hiring of Charlie Mitchell.

**Meeting Rules & Agenda Review, Kathleen Cathey**

Ms. Cathey began by explaining that the goal of the gathering was to obtain viable ideas for economic development for La Grande. The "Sandbox" referenced in the meeting, was the area of the La Grande city limits and urban growth boundary. Projects out of that area would not be up for discussion. The "Parking Lot" would be an area to place long-range plans where resources may not be available or the City may not have the flexibility to implement.

The economic plan created needed to ensure that it was not in competition with the Union County economic plan. Of concern, was how city and county partners would work together with economic development.

Ms. Cathey outlined rules for the meeting conduct.

### **Process, Community & Economic Development Director Charlie Mitchell**

Mr. Mitchell greeted the attendees and went over items placed at each seating - meeting instructions, the agenda, as well as an article that was requested to be provided to the attendees. Mitchell drew attention to the two maps on the wall which depicted the geographical area of La Grande, and was the area for the group's discussion.

### **Introductions & Best Day in La Grande, Kathleen leads, Charlie records**

Ms. Cathey explained the secret ballot procedure and then asked the participants to introduce themselves and also state what their "best day" was in La Grande' - it could take place in the past, present or future. The following are thoughts expressed:

- Future – a visit to the farmers market, children playing soccer, family getting something to drink, a warm, nice day, people happy, comfortable
- Future - kids could come home and make a living here
- Future – Seeing the community take the data obtained and opportunities and put them to use; to get away from “it’s always been done this way”
- Future - watch grandchildren graduate from EOU and live in La Grande
- Future – a beautiful day, attending a football game at EOU, seeing Mt. Emily, having a stable thriving community
- Past – was living in Ontario and graduated from EOU, currently her daughter is at EOU, younger daughter wants to go to EOU, a feeling of home
- Future – both she and her husband going to work and making a good wage
- Past - 1996 graduation from EOU, currently her daughter is at EOU being a, non-traditional student at EOU
- Future - Visiting family in Portland and that people have recognition around state of La Grande
- Future - with the family walking downtown, eating out, attending sports at EOU, enjoying family time, sees opportunities in La Grande
- Present – happy with current Mt. Emily preservation that’s been enacted, sees more great days in La Grande than non-great days, doesn’t want La Grande to be another Bend, likes small community
- Past - when got a job, married, and had a baby in La Grande, wants to see livable wage jobs,
- Past and Future – La Grande was a hub in the 1940’s and ‘50’s, a charming destination for tourists, would like to see hiking trails developed in the future

- Present - roots are deep in La Grande, would echo much of what's been said, when people come from metropolitan and large cities they love La Grande, it's a perfect small town, has concern for daughters trying to strive economically, Future - see La Grande more business friendly, there is a need an economy that's sustained and some growth,
- Past - it's hard to raise a family here, when reflecting back 20 years, when La Grande came out of the 80's recession which was far worse than the economic problems now, that situation sparked a united front, passed the airport bond, a La Grande school bond, the extension service budget, a systems service group, there was a "can do" attitude
- Past - centered around work and when the great race when was here, as the cars came in downtown, everyone was excited, Future - thinking optimistically that La Grande will pull out of this difficult time and have an attractive, vital downtown,
- Present - having a small 4 year university is an asset, the area looks like home, most of the focus has been on the economy, people at the employment department need training here, intensity of training and adaptability, there is a need for short term focus training to re-tune skills,
- Past - found professors at EOU willing to do distance education, the college was able to participate in a broad spectrum of areas, the employees of EOU formulated a strategic plan, Future - coming for someone's graduation, going to the EOU library, spending time in an interesting downtown, buzz happening with new businesses, job opportunities, people being supported and encouraged, dancing occurring downtown, live fiddle music,
- Present - the city taking control of its own future, recognizing the location and people are finally having recognizable results, Future - La Grande continually involved in planning for the future because of the present need
- Future - La Grande being the social-cultural hub of the area
- Present - the passion of the place

**There was a meeting break in order to finish secret ballots and get them posted.**

**Gather & discuss/group secret ballot comments & best day scenarios:**

**What is La Grande's single most important unexploited asset?**

- EOU
- People, energy, creativeness
- Local contractors
- Human potential
- Grande Ronde Hospital
- Natural environment, outdoor recreation
- Land use
- Business relocation/ Industrial Park land

- Small town environment, welcoming community
- Infrastructure
- Social, economic, cultural hub of region
- Support off existing businesses

**What is the single biggest economic barrier to success in this city?**

- Lack of funding, \$\$\$\$\$
- Training and workforce development/training
- Recruiting jobs, family-wage jobs
- Cooperation between corporations, communities/municipalities
- In order to create the kind of environment where you can tap assets , people need to be working together, which relates back to the frustration of planning and lack of communication, feedback is not communicated back out to same level as original input, need to improve feedback
- Everyone affected in the area needs communication
- Understand the mission, vision and values of how employees see how the city interacts, feedback, i.e. regarding what economic development feedback concluded.
- Economic opportunity
- Business incentive
- People all on the same page, you must have buy-in before you can cooperate, the need for communication
- Airport access

**What is the most significant problem we need to address in the city? Outside of our immediate influence:**

- togetherness, getting along
- the mind set of “we’ve always done it this way”
- challenges relinquishing authority
- negativity
- public confidence
- airport access/federal policy
- how to bring businesses into La Grande
- it is difficult for businesses to locate in La Grande – available land required, etc.
- in the past, the city tried to produce economic development, when industry approached we only wanted “pretty” industries, the need to focus on this is what we want and focus where the money is spent, there are only so much

funds to spend on economic development, try to attract specific businesses and reduce scattered types of businesses

- a lack of public confidence
- need processes to enhance communication and working together with accountability built in
- unemployment replaced with sustainable employment
- the economy
- too many chiefs

Mr. Strobe said that the focus will be on identifying barriers that the city has immediate ability to influence. At the end of the day, the city will be able to refer back to “The Plan” to allocate resources and provide some accountability.

### **Dot Exercise: Issues that should be tackled in the city plan**

Participants were asked to place 3-5 dots on the items that they felt had the most importance.

### **Summary:**

#### **Priorities resulting from the dot exercise**

- EOU is an unexploited asset
- Natural resources of the area
- Human capital and talent
- Support of existing business

#### **Barriers:**

- The lack of business incentives
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of training
- Fear of large growth
- Airport access
- “The Plan”
- Lack of family-wage jobs

#### **Best day in La Grande:**

- EOU connections
- Driving/walking downtown
- Kids returning to La Grande and having jobs available

Dr. Bob Davies, President of EOU was please to see EOU listed as an asset, and stated that EOU will be here, to be a part of this economic development plan process. He will make the plan a part of systematic way of thinking and working at EOU and will meet with the city and county.

Grant Young, Eastern Oregon representative for Oregon Department of Land Conservation & Development, stated that La Grande is in the process of making the “Sandbox” bigger with a Goal 9 grant that has identified acreage to be added to the urban growth boundary and establishing an urban reserve area.

#### **“Parking Lot” Issues:**

- Is this plan in competition with the county plan, how do we reconcile/deal with the two plans
- With the lack of resources, will the city plan have the flexibility to invest in good, short-term economic opportunities
- How will the city, county & funded partners work together, public conflict has been a factor in the past
- Need to either create a niche or industry, not seek all industries
- Foster an attitude that development doesn’t necessarily have a negative impact on quality of life
- Public confidence
- Lack of economic development funding, land use planning
- Unwillingness to accept new ideas
- Challenges in relinquishing authority – too many chiefs
- Getting along

In summary, Mitchell will prepare a summary to present to the City Council at their May 18<sup>th</sup> Work Session.

#### **Is another meeting needed this spring to talk about data & performance measures?**

The majority of the participants agreed to attend a meeting in meeting to discuss the Economic Development Plan again. Mitchell will send a summary of this meeting’s discussion topics to everyone in about a week. Mitchell will come back to the June meeting with the broad goals which have been narrowed down to specific strategies.

**Meeting ended 8:08 pm**



CITY OF LA GRANDE  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY SESSION  
JUNE 16, 2009  
6:00 P.M.

COOK MEMORIAL LIBRARY, COLLEEN F. JOHNSON COMMUNITY ROOM

**PARTICIPANTS:**

JANIE BAKER  
KATHLEEN CATHEY  
MARK DAVIDSON  
JANET DODSON  
JUDY HECTOR  
JOHN HOWARD

LISA DAWSON  
RICK MINSTER  
CHARLIE MITCHELL  
TIM SEYDEL  
ROBERT STROPE  
CAROL SUMMERS

AGENDA

- **INTRODUCTIONS, REVIEW OF AGENDA AND PAST WORK, AS WELL AS GROUND RULES – KATHLEEN**
  - *Please note that you will be asked to do some significant strategies work in the brainstorm session. Feel free to work ahead and start making notes for yourself. The items to be worked on will be refined as the group goes along. If participants don't see an item moving forward that they feel is important, please comment. Focus on the plan.*
- **“SETTING THE FRAMEWORK” – CHARLIE**
- **A SUMMARY OF THE MAY 5<sup>TH</sup> ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AD HOC COMMITTEE MEETING WAS PRESENTED TO THE CITY COUNCIL, WHICH THEN GROUPED THE STRATEGIES DISCUSSED.**
- **THE REASON THE GROUP IS MEETING IS TO HELP THE CITY OF LA GRANDE DEVELOP A STRATEGIC PLAN, WHICH WILL HELP FIND RESOURCES AND PRIORITIZE NEEDS WHICH ASSISTS IN ACCOUNTABILITY**
- **THE ECONOMIC PLAN SHOULD ADDRESS 3 BROAD AREAS:**
  1. **FOCUS ON FOLKS ALREADY THERE: BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION**
  2. **GROW FROM THE DIRT: ENTREPRENEUR DEVELOPMENT (AN IDEA BUT NO BUSINESS YET)**
  3. **BUSINESS RELOCATION, ATTRACTION, RECRUITMENT**
- **THERE ARE 3 THINGS BUSINESSES NEED IN ORDER TO PROSPER: WEALTH, LABOR (TALENT) AND REAL ESTATE (COMMUNICATION). IF THE CITY GOING TO HELP BUSINESSES, ALL 3 THINGS ARE NEEDED.**
- **THERE IS A NEED TO GET BUSINESSES GOING AND MOVING, AND THEN DEAL WITH EXPANSION. THE STRATEGIC PLAN NEEDS TO DEVELOP THESE ELEMENTS.**

- **THE CITY OF LA GRANDE’S RESOURCE CAPACITY: SHORT AND LONG-TERM RESOURCES AND CAPABILITIES – ROBERT**
  - **THERE ARE TWO RESOURCES: ACTUAL DOLLARS (REAL DOLLARS ARE LIMITED TO THE URBAN RENEWAL DISTRICT), THE CITY CAN PROVIDE STAFF AND FUNDING MECHANISMS; SECONDLY THERE ARE OUTSIDE GRANTS.**
  - **STRATEGIES TO FIND RESOURCES NEED TO BE DEVELOPED.**
  - **SHORT TERM STAFF TIME COULD BE USED FOR GRANTS/GRANT WRITING**
  - **THERE IS A LOT OF DISCUSSION IN OTHER STATES TO IMPLEMENT TAX INCREMENT FINANCING THAT IS A HUGE TOOL FOR RETENTION, EXPANSION, DEVELOPMENT, RELOCATION**
  - **THE URBAN RENEWAL PLAN PROJECT IS BASED ON \$3 MILLION TO \$5 MILLION. USING THAT MONEY AVAILABLE, A PROJECT COULD BE DONE TOMORROW.**
  
- **STRATEGIES IN WHICH THE CITY STAFF SEE LA GRANDE HAVING A LEAD ROLE – KATHLEEN**
  - 1. Define and enhance role of downtown revitalization**
    - The City sees downtown revitalization as one of their big charges through the Main Street program, which provides resources for projects.
  
  - 2. Maintain small town atmosphere, quality of life, manage growth (using the “Best Day” vision)**
    - It is the City’s role to do this. The City Council has adopted a vision plan.
    - Question regarding the vision plan: if there is a component as one of the vision criteria, would that mean the City would actively work in opposition if that was not a business decision?
    - The motivation for businesses would be in incentive packages.
    - Would the City discourage a business that doesn’t provide family-wage jobs? A business type could be discouraged, i.e. selling Elvis memorabilia out of a van. There could be a way to legally prohibit this activity since it is not in character of what we want the City to be.
    - In response to the statement that was made concern with not seeing, in the last 3-4 years, a transition of the younger generation getting involved in service organizations or even within the community replacing the older generation, it was said that reaching out to the younger generation would be part of a community succession plan.
      - a. Community and EOU connections
      - b. Vital downtown – Main Street program, LGDDA, Chamber
      - c. Family-wage jobs – Charlie’s job is to deal with this aspect.
  
  - 3. Communicate effectively with the community, establish leadership and organization and build confidence**

- a. Integrate with the City’s Urban Renewal Plan
  - b. Integrate with the County’s Economic Development Plan
  - c. Implement plans
  - Trust that city and county’s plans are in effect. Charlie will assist with implementing the plans.
4. **Adopting and improving business-friendly, team-oriented approach by City staff, including integrated community development—organization, process and attitude.**
- The City processes are not always completely transparent. It was discussed that the City would like to adopt a business friendly team approach, to project an attitude of helping businesses get what they need.

- **STRATEGIES BRAINSTORM – KATHLEEN**

For each broad strategy developed in our May 5 meeting, consider:

- Specific tasks associated with that strategy
- Reality checks for the strategy
- Who is the lead agency for the strategy/tasks?
- What is the City of La Grande’s role in the strategy/task?
- Is this a short-term or long-term strategy/task?

**May 5 Strategies:** Not necessarily the City’s job but it may have a role in assisting)

- **Define, strengthen and enhance the role of EOU**

Tasks:

- Establishing a bookstore downtown (short term task)
- On campus enrollment has declined, a task would be to generate increased enrollment. (long term task)
- Identify for the business community unmet educational needs that EOU can help with
- Do the skills match what is needed? Identify specific educational needs for our businesses that can EOU can meet, i.e. associates degree in one area, bachelors degree in another area. A pilot program could be accomplished in one year (short term task), otherwise that would be a long term task.
- Sports – Instill pride in the sports program to build more attendance at sports events (short term)
- Partnership with research programs from other universities or entities, i.e. the former partnership with OSHU research program and the nursing

program. OSHU has pulled the financing for research, the nursing program continues.

- EOU's Rangeland program is larger than the one at Corvallis
- Bring grade level schools in EOU, Tim Seydel says that they already do that with the 7<sup>th</sup> graders and some earlier grade levels, through the Girls in Science program, Day Camps, Basketball Camp, FBLA, etc. When asked if EOU could have a 6<sup>th</sup> Grade week, where 6<sup>th</sup> grade students from all the elementary schools would be on campus, Seydel said that the stumbling block to that idea is that EOU doesn't have the funding to do that and neither do the schools.
- Establishing a link between EOU and the City in a leadership role and entrepreneurship downtown using existing EOU students and vacant downtown businesses as a location (long term)
- EOU taking a pro-active approach to placing interns in La Grande businesses (long term)
- Oregon Innovation Council – Draw on their expertise to create a link between EOU and the City. (long term)
- Assume that EOU is the lead agency for these strategies; Tim Seydel will come up with reality checks and provide those to Charlie.

#### The City's Role:

- The City needs to actively support EOU efforts, in spirit and by provide the resource capacity, (Businesses using interns)
- Routes to campus identified
- Promote weekend courses – short term
- Build attendance at sporting events
- By providing a physical connection between the campus and the City – wayfinding an actual connection., EOU – short term, has added signage for locating the EOU campus
- Cooperative communications
- Connection between the City and EOU in strategic planning. EOU needs to say we need city staff representation on our committees – integrated planning
- Finding money to promote partnerships, do internships downtown, coordinate as part of job, collaboration of efforts (long term, potentially short term)

**Community leadership capacity building (human capital as an unexploited asset)**

- There are a lot of talented people in La Grande who are not engaged. Those people could be potential civic group leaders, core volunteers, and potential City Council and Commission candidates. Intelligent people who are willing to put their energies to use, not necessarily in a leadership capacity
  - There is a need to get the community engaged
  - High quality contributors, engaging talent needed for economic development - having a collective brain trust mobilized
  - Two groups who could step up and lead this are the Chamber of Commerce and Service Clubs
  - Through the Chamber, there could be a business mentoring program. A communication plan for businesses to say we need help and what we need help with.
  - Recruiting people could be done at their place of business
  - There needs to be a directory or inventory of available skills
  - Develop skill identification strategy.
  - Outreach is driven by need; looking for people already involved with businesses and economic development.
  - Volunteers could be involved with survey work, traffic counting, etc. involved with the Main Street Program
  - Don't just look at youth; look at retirees for their hidden talents.
  - Judy Hector, Chamber Director will work on this project.
  - The City's role is to be a partner and look for other models, strategies , how other cities accomplish this
- (The above tasks are all long term)
- **Enhance workforce development opportunities**
    - The potential for short term specialized training is not available
    - There needs to be a small core group of four agencies in partnership to take the lead; a steering group needs to be created to deal with this
    - How to fit workforce development opportunities with the City's economic development plan: funding strategies; partnership with BMCC; Urban Renewal could build an incubator building in the Business Park
    - In Southern Oregon, there was an university but no community college, it was realized that the university couldn't do it all so citizens voted to create a taxing district
    - The City will convene a group to project the demand for career development opportunities in La Grande - life-long learning, look at trades and training,
    - If people are trained, that does not necessarily mean that they will stay here. You can have a surplus of talent, but if the process is handled right, in the end word will get out and businesses will grow as a result.

- **Family wage job development**
  - Access to education.
  - People are out there with skills that are not being used
  - Considering businesses, do you get a business out of the air, or relocate businesses to get more family wage jobs.
  - If a change in the dynamics of the economy is wanted, who will take the risks to make that shift? The public sector has to take the risk of building skilled people; then business will come for the talent available, i.e. the wind turbine industry that has become involved in this area.
  - If you're going to recruit businesses with family wage jobs, you need to develop a skills list.
  - Do you want more jobs or better jobs; what kind of jobs?
  - It is significant to identify businesses that are paying family wage jobs
  - The healthcare field can be more resilient
  - How do you get the word out – outreach – to get people here?
  - Assistance needs to be done in helping businesses access capital
  - The City is involved with obtaining industrial large land lots, in order to provide the land area that some businesses are seeking. Is it worth it to have the land available?
  - Does the area want large employers? What happens if a company goes out of business? An optimal business mix needs to be determined for La Grande
  - Who's in charge of recruiting businesses – UCEDC, along with the City, County and Chamber. If UCEDC gets money from the City, it's reasonable to expect UCEDC to take that role.
  - The role of the City is to be a collaborator./partner by giving funds to UCEDC

Tasks: Financing business resources - capital, funding, investment, expansion, - it all goes back to real estate

- **Business incentives**
  - This is not in the City's basket, it takes away the enterprise zone and means the City is not the lead agency
  - Who is the lead agency – it depends upon what incentives are available that would determine who would be the lead agency. The county could take a leadership role with other entities helping.
  - Business incentives need to be redefined
  - Utility companies- producing renewal energy – the City is also a utility provider
  - Business incentives need to be identified and marketed

- What would attract businesses to La Grande – quality of life, healthcare, schools, university, and public services. How do you market that outside of the community in relation to a business?
- Businesses need to be able to run and operate to maintain long term.
- Who are we comparing ourselves to, what is the competition? What are the tools – it depends upon your competition, you need a different set of tools if you’re competing with Baker County or Kootenai County in Idaho
  
- **Define role of natural resource development**
  - As industrial development, manufacturing, agriculture
  - As recreation and tourism
  - Innovation leadership
- There are not a lot of resources within the corporate boundaries of the City
- Potential research facility/medical facility through EOU,
- Marketing resources - develop wood products
- What can we do, what are the opportunities?
- Identify emerging business development
- Industrial development is a pivot point with product development/value added opportunities
  
- **OTHER QUESTIONS AND ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ANSWERED – CHARLIE AND KATHLEEN**
  - **What is the role of tourism in our economic development plan?**
    - Tourism should be left as a component of the City’s plan
    - Helping the downtown results in helping tourism
  
  - **Should community branding be included in this phase our plan?**

- Values statement(s)	- Vision
- Logo	- Connection with EOU?
- Tagline	- Marketing plan?

    - Do we do branding as part of coming up with part of the plan, or branding what we are and what we do?
    - Does branding result in any benefit? There is confusion between tag line and branding - coming up with core values, identifying who you are,
    - The City Council visioning process and the “Best Day” exercise should take care of branding, then the results can be refined,
    - Oregon Main Street has a branding element to that program
    - The City needs to find out what do people/outside world think when they think of La Grande

- A brand is not needed for external folks. There is a need to determine what the customer base is and if the value of identifying a brand gives consistency to the message and if it makes branding more valuable.
  
- **TIMELINE FOR ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION – CHARLIE**
  - The next step will be working on discussion items over the summer. The Ad Hoc Committee will be called back sometime in the fall.
  - The City Council will meet in August for the visioning process
  - Input will be obtained from Brian Cole
  - A plan will be drafted to share with the large Ad Hoc Committee, then the plan will go to City Council, after that the plan will go to the public.
  - The Council’s vision is more community-wide, i.e. safe streets, etc. that wouldn’t necessarily appear in the economic development plan.
  
- **OUTCOMES AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT – KATHLEEN**
  - **CHARLIE WILL COME BACK WITH THE DRAFT, WHICH WILL HAVE A LEAD IN BY BRIAN COLE, AND SHOW UCEDC’S WORK**
  - **THE JOB OF THE STAKEHOLDER GROUP IS TO DETERMINE IF THE DRAFT PLAN IS ON THE MARK AND IF THERE ARE AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT. PAY A LOT OF ATTENTION AND FOCUS ON PRIORITIES, BE BOISTEROUS WITH FEEDBACK. PEOPLE NEED TO BE ENGAGED. HOW CAN IT BE MEANINGFULLY SAID “LOOK AT THIS”.**
  - **AT SOME POINT IN THE PLAN, THERE NEEDS TO BE A LOOK AT MEASURING WHETHER THIS IS MOVING THE WAY PEOPLE WANT IT TO MOVE – HOW DO WE KNOW?**
  - **IT NEEDS TO BE AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE IN THE DRAFT DOCUMENT THAT THE CITY IS MOVING FORWARD.**
  - **CHARLIE WILL EMAIL THE DRAFT PLAN AND GIVE THE GROUP AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOOK AT AND GO OVER THE PLAN PRIOR TO GETTING TOGETHER AS A GROUP.**
  - **THINK ABOUT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT – HOW AT THE END OF THE DAY DID THE JOB GET DONE. MEASUREMENT SHOULD BE IN PLACE AS PART OF THE PLAN.**
  - **MAKE SURE THAT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT IS A CLEARLY IDENTIFIED GOAL AND THE PLAN IS MEASURE OF SUCCESS. MEETING ON A QUARTERLY BASIS SHOWS SUCCESS; AS DOES EASTERN WORK FORCE DEVELOPMENT, AND ESTABLISHING GROUPS WHO CONTINUE TO MEET, I.E., MAIN STREET GROUPS (RESULTS SHOWN IN PLACEMENT OF PARK BENCHES)**
  - **IT IS POSSIBLE TO GET INTO BEAN COUNTING, BUT THERE WILL ALSO BE LITTLE VICTORIES. CELEBRATE THOSE SMALL VICTORIES.**
  - **THE CREATION OF A PROGRAM WILL ADD TO THE LIST OF MEASUREMENT**



- **THE CHALLENGE IS FINDING QUALITATIVE MEASUREMENTS**
- **THE CITY IS GETTING MORE OUT OF THE MAIN STREET PROGRAM, NOT ONLY LOCALLY BUT BEYOND AS WELL. THERE IS A NEED FOR MORE PUBLIC RELATIONS.**
- **MEASURABLE SUCCESSES WOULD BE SHOWN BY AVERAGE WAGE INCREASES AND DOWNTOWN BUILDING VACANCIES BEING DOWN.**
- **IT WOULD BE GOOD TO RECOGNIZE VOLUNTEERS, AND RAISE AWARENESS OF THE TALENT AVAILABLE, IN A MORE PUBLIC ARENA SUCH AS CELEBRATE LA GRANDE. MOST AWARDS ARE HELD IN SMALL ARENAS, I.E. CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS, ETC.**

**THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8:22 P.M.**

**A COMMENT WAS RECEIVED AFTER THE MEETING AND IS BEING INCLUDED BELOW:**

- Celebrate La Grande should have booths with speakers from Rotary, churches, etc. to reach out to people with talent. Then have those speakers go to the meetings of various groups so that people can see their enthusiasm.
- There needs to be a PR image/connection with the proper people so the message of recruiting can get out.

## Union County Economic Development Corporation Economic Development Strategic Plan September 2009:

### Summary of relevant elements

#### Background:

The 2009 UCEDC Economic Development Plan contains 16 selected strategies. The City of La Grande Plan includes relevant strategies of the UCEDC Plan and attempts to coordinate these activities and suggestions where appropriate.

Of 25 ranked strategies, 16 were ultimately selected into the UCEDC Plan; 11 of these correlate to the City’s Plan and are listed below. The five not selected are: Energy Development; Attracting Government Funding; Environmental Restoration; Attracting Government Jobs; Infrastructure Development (this last strategy may need to be added in future revisions of this Plan.)

UCEDC Rank	1
Strategy	Education Development
Lead Agency	EOU
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate with all education interests to determine interest in strategy.</li> <li>2. Examine existing missions, vision and budget for relevant educational institutions.</li> <li>3. Examine short-term and long-term budget projections for relevant educational institutions.</li> <li>4. Determine the interests, if any, by other relevant communities in a similar strategy.</li> <li>5. Develop a plan to expand and/or create one or more educational institutions. Implement plan for the education development strategy.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to the strategies identified in this Plan of #1 “Solidify appropriate relationships with Eastern Oregon University (EOU) with the aim of creating new economic opportunities for the community.” And #7 “Institute appropriate measures to enhance workforce development opportunities and integration.”

UCEDC Rank	2
Strategy	Pass-Through Visitor Services
Lead Agency	UCT
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Determine the extent of visitor expenditures by transient travelers.</li> <li>2. Consider the availability of land and appropriate zoning for expanded business activity.</li> <li>3. Meet with businesses benefiting from such transient travel about their business activity, trends and needs.</li> <li>4. Foster the expansion of existing businesses benefitting from such visitor expenditures.</li> <li>5. Consider promotional measures designed to capture an increased percentage of the transient visitor expenditure market.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to this Plan's strategy #9 "Ensure tourism is providing the best value possible."

UCEDC Rank	3
Strategy	Health Care
Lead Agency	Not yet identified, assumed Grande Ronde Hospital
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Coordinate with hospital and health care leaders to determine interest in strategy.</li> <li>2. Inventory current status and comparative strengths of local health care services.</li> <li>3. Determine needed investments in facilities and/or equipment to expand market.</li> <li>4. Assess potential to increase existing market and expand market service territory.</li> <li>5. Develop and implement marketing plan designed to capture increasing market.</li> <li>6. Consider physician recruitment effort.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Does not directly relate to a specific strategy in this Plan, but references are made throughout of identifying Health Care as a targeted industry.

UCEDC Rank	6
Strategy	Downtown Development
Lead Agency	City of La Grande Main Street Program
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and/ or support an organization dedicated to downtown development.</li> <li>2. Establish a long-term dedicated funding source for the downtown organization.</li> <li>3. Consider implementation of the Main Street Approach developed by the National Main Street Center of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.</li> <li>4. Create a downtown development strategic plan as either a stand-alone document or a subset of a broader economic development strategic plan.</li> <li>5. Consider establishing a building façade improvement program/ fund.</li> <li>6. Explore and promote the availability of historic preservation incentives.</li> <li>7. Identify gaps between local demand for downtown business activity and existing business activity.</li> <li>8. Foster the expansion of existing businesses – or recruitment of new businesses – that can fulfill unmet demands for downtown services in the community.</li> <li>9. Develop an annual calendar of promotional events designed to promote and celebrate the downtown.</li> <li>10. Conduct a systematic outreach to all of Union County’s communities to explore the interest and capacity to implement downtown improvements.</li> <li>11. Determine the role that downtown development will play in Union County’s overall economic development planning efforts.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to this Plan’s strategy #3 “Continue proactive approach to downtown development and revitalization.”

UCEDC Rank	8
Strategy	Value-Added Agriculture
Lead Agency	UCEDC
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convene producers to determine existing and projected volumes of one or more commodities.</li> <li>2. Determine level of community support for this strategy.</li> <li>3. Consult government and industry experts to determine availability of one or more agricultural commodities.</li> <li>4. Determine relevant region for availability of one or more commodity.</li> <li>5. Determine if commodity (ies) is encumbered with existing production contracts with existing buyers.</li> <li>6. For each of the commodities, determine existing national and/or regional value-added processors.</li> <li>7. Determine the infrastructure and labor force needs of such companies.</li> <li>8. Consider industry trends and effects of globalization.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Indirectly relates to this Plan's strategy #13 "Consider best role for the City to play with regard to leveraging the area's natural resource assets." Other references are made in the plan to identify value-added agriculture as a potential targeted industry.

UCEDC Rank	9
Strategy	Local/Regional Tourism
Lead Agency	Union County Tourism
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop/ support local tourism advocacy organization (visitor and convention bureau).</li> <li>2. Coordinate between local government and local tourism industry advocates.</li> <li>3. Inventory local/ regional visitor attractions.</li> <li>4. Determine if existing visitor expenditure patterns are above or below average per capita.</li> <li>5. Determine the regional market to be captured in terms of tourism promotion.</li> <li>6. Develop a regional tourism marketing plan.</li> <li>7. Consider investments in tourism product development.</li> <li>8. Establish, fund and implement a tourism marketing/ promotion plan.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to this Plan's strategy #9 "Ensure tourism is providing the best value possible."

UCEDC Rank	10
Strategy	Value-Added Forest Products
Lead Agency	Union County
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convene government and industry experts to determine availability of one or more forest commodity (ies).</li> <li>2. Determine level of community support for this strategy. Determine relevant region for availability of one or more commodity (ies).</li> <li>3. Determine long-term availability of commodities.</li> <li>4. For each of the commodities, determine existing national and/ or regional value-added processors.</li> <li>5. Determine the infrastructure and labor force needs of such companies.</li> <li>6. Consider industry trends and effects of globalization.</li> <li>7. Develop and/ or market the available infrastructure, labor force, and business development incentives for such companies.</li> <li>8. Explore capability of existing businesses or entrepreneurs to enter market.</li> <li>9. Inventory available land, buildings and infrastructure.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Indirectly relates to this Plan’s strategy #13 “Consider best role for the City to play with regard to leveraging the area’s natural resource assets.” Other references are made in the plan to identify value-added wood products as a potential targeted industry.

UCEDC Rank	12
Strategy	Business Retention & Expansion
Lead Agency	Union County Chamber of Commerce (may transition to UCEDC)
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop a business outreach team comprised of local government and economic development professionals.</li> <li>2. Systematically identify existing businesses and industries, and the respective contact persons within each business/ industry.</li> <li>3. Develop a survey or “conversation template” to guide discussions with existing businesses.</li> <li>4. Systematically reach out to targeted businesses to identify their current situation and their strengths/ weaknesses/ opportunities/ threats.</li> <li>5. Develop a follow-up list of activities designed to meet the needs and expectations of existing businesses.</li> <li>6. Coordinate a business resources forum inclusive of business financing and workforce training resources.</li> <li>7. Periodically follow-up with all businesses (perhaps at least one connection per year).</li> <li>8. Foster a pro-business climate.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to this Plan’s strategy #2 “Develop and implement a proactive Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program with the Union County Chamber of Commerce.” It is likely that UCEDC may become the lead agency for this strategy with the Chamber in a supporting role.

UCEDC Rank	13
Strategy	Business Cultivation
Lead Agency	UCEDC w/ Union County Chamber of Commerce support
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Import Substitution (IS): Scan existing businesses to determine if a business case can be made for the local provision of such materials/ services.</li> <li>2. (IS): Determine if sufficient demand exists for the recruitment of a new business to meet local needs.</li> <li>3. (IS): Interview local businesses, primarily manufacturers, to determine the respective quantities of materials and services being “imported” into the county/ region for production.</li> <li>4. (IS): Aggregate each respective material/ service to determine respective volume levels.</li> <li>5. (IS): Utilize information to recruit existing or new companies to produce goods and services that are currently imported into the region.</li> <li>6. Industrial Clusters (IC): Identify business sectors/ industries that are sufficiently robust within the community.</li> <li>7. (IC): Convene representatives of businesses within the sector(s)/ industry (ies).</li> <li>8. (IC): Invite out-of-region industry experts to share industry trends and possibilities.</li> <li>9. (IC): Be responsive to emerging opportunities resulting from new relationships and partnerships</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to and supports this Plan’s strategies of #2 “Develop and implement a proactive Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program with the Union County Chamber of Commerce,” and #5 “Develop strategies to more aggressively and proactively market the community to attract new business opportunities to the area,” and #12 “Consider the appropriate mix of business incentives needed to influence new business investments.”



UCEDC Rank	16
Strategy	Entrepreneurial Development
Lead Agency	NEOEDD
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a communication network linking entrepreneurial development service providers.</li> <li>2. Inventory local resources for start-up business finance, workforce training and business planning.</li> <li>3. Explore the establishment of a business incubator.</li> <li>4. Establish a part-time or full-time position dedicated to business coaching.</li> <li>5. Introduce entrepreneurship as a career path option in local schools.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Not specifically referenced in this Plan, but elements of this strategy will be reflected in several of this Plan’s strategies, to include #2 “Develop and implement a proactive Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) program with the Union County Chamber of Commerce,” and “#3 “Continue proactive approach to downtown development and revitalization.”

UCEDC Rank	20
Strategy	Business Recruitment
Lead Agency	UCEDC
Action Steps	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support or create an organization and position focused upon business recruitment objectives.</li> <li>2. Determine collective desire for growth in community.</li> <li>3. Inventory business development assets in community (land, buildings, labor force, job training programs, incentives, etc.)</li> <li>4. Consider targeted industries that build from – and contribute to – the local economy.</li> <li>5. Consider geographic-based, industry-based and relationship-based business recruitment strategies.</li> <li>6. Identify business recruitment or outreach approaches (web-based, attendance at trade shows, other marketing strategies).</li> <li>7. Develop a business recruitment plan based upon above considerations.</li> <li>8. Implement business recruitment plan.</li> <li>9. Read and implement the Business Development Capacity Community Organizer.</li> </ol>
Relationship to City of LG Plan	Relates to this Plan’s strategy of #5 “Develop strategies to more aggressively and proactively market the community to attract new business opportunities to the area.”

**Goal 9: Economic Development; Final report summary; August 2009  
The Benkendorf Associates Corp. & Johnson Reid, LLC**

**I. Goal and Policies**

The following goals, objectives, policies and recommendations have been formulated by the City to direct the community's economic development program during the next five to ten years.

**A. Goals**

**Goal 1 – To Create High Quality Family Wage Jobs**

To promote industrial and commercial development that generates high quality family wage jobs and income for the community and creates sustainable and environmentally sound economic vitality.

**Goal 2 – To Foster the Growth and Expansion of Eastern Oregon University**

To support the university in its efforts to grow and target educational programs to the region and the state. Provide sites and other infrastructure to businesses seeking to partner with the university.

**Goal 3 –To Promote Retail Development**

To promote the development of the City as a Regional Shopping Center by providing a greater range of retail services for residents and visitors. As a Regional Center, allow residents to satisfy their shopping needs within the Community and provide a greater range of services for travelers on I-84.

**Goal 4 – To Revitalize the Downtown**

To revitalize the Central Business District by building on its historic character, expanding the mix of goods and services offered and creating public spaces and amenities.

## **Goal 5 – To Establish Sufficient Capacity for Commercial and Industrial Development**

To amend the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and consider an Urban Reserve Area (URA) to provide for sufficient land to meet the City’s long-term commercial and industrial economic development goals.

### **B. Objectives**

1. To provide public improvements and infrastructure to support job-creating development. Provide planning and funding for public improvements including streets, utilities, telecommunications and other facilities in support of development that will create a range of types of family wage jobs for residents of La Grande.
2. To provide appropriate sites for businesses creating family wage jobs. Assist in land assembly and infrastructure development for quality industrial districts and business parks to attract businesses that create family wage jobs. To manage the locations of the allowable uses to ensure that the land is properly utilized.
3. To coordinate the City’s economic development program with the citizens of La Grande, community-based organizations, Union County, Union County Economic Development Corporation, the Chamber of Commerce, the Oregon Community and Economic Development Department (OCEDD), Northeast Oregon Economic Development District and other local, regional, state and federal agencies.
4. To continue and enhance the City’s economic development program with EOU as a means of attracting and retaining businesses.
5. To provide public improvements to sites for retail development. To plan and develop infrastructure and public facilities to encourage retail and mixed-use projects.
6. To diversify and strengthen the mix of economic activity in City of La Grande and the surrounding region without diminishing the livability of the area.
7. To support and utilize regional and local partnerships for greater economic development opportunities.

## C. Policies

### General

**Policy 1.** The City shall undertake specific activities to encourage the growth of existing businesses, to encourage a diversity of businesses, and to attract new businesses to the community in industries that will provide local employment opportunities that are consistent with community needs and not detrimental to the quality of life in the community.

**Policy 2.** The City shall evaluate the suitability of a proposed industrial development according, but not limited, to the following factors: availability of labor force and materials, market locations, transportation and service needs, relationship to present economic base and similar considerations.

**Policy 3.** The City shall provide for adequate and convenient vehicle, public transit (via Community Connection of Oregon) and bicycle access and parking to accommodate customers and employees in commercial areas.

**Policy 4.** The City shall require that business development occurs only after sufficient right-of-way, improvements, and special control of access points have been obtained to accommodate the added traffic generated.

**Policy 5.** The City shall ensure that public services will be planned for and made available to those areas designated and zoned for industrial and commercial uses.

**Policy 6.** The City shall promote and encourage investment in communications infrastructure to provide opportunities for remote offices, home-based employment, and other communications-dependent employment.

**Policy 7.** The City shall focus economic development efforts on the following existing industry clusters: Wood Products, Education, General Manufacturing, Health Care; the following emerging/targeted clusters: Regional Retail, Truck and Rail Transportation & Warehousing; and the following non-cluster opportunities: medical research and development, other medical services, suppliers, private firefighting, and tourism.

**Policy 8.** The City shall take social, aesthetic, and environmental values into consideration when planning for commercial and industrial development.

**Policy 9.** The City shall work with regional organizations (e.g., Northeast Oregon Economic Development District (NEOEDD), the Union County Economic Development Corporation (UCEDC), the Northeast Oregon Alliance, the Northeast Oregon Business Development and the Greater Eastern Oregon Development Corporation (GEODC), and local organizations (e.g., Union Commercial Club and Union United) to enhance its economic planning efforts.

### **Location of Uses**

**Policy 10.** The City shall encourage highway-oriented businesses to be located near intersections of major arterials.

**Policy 11.** The City shall encourage the grouping of commercial uses in such a manner as will facilitate customer involvement from one store to another.

**Policy 12.** The City shall locate commercial areas so as to provide good access between them and the trade area served.

**Policy 13.** In order that residential areas may be free from industrial traffic, the City shall locate industrial areas with access provided primarily to and from major transportation routes which include arterial truck routes, highways, and railroad lines.

**Policy 14.** The City shall require certain industrial uses generating heavy traffic, noise, smoke, or other nuisances to be located where it is feasible to provide a transition, with light industrial areas, commercial areas, or open space to adjoining land uses.

### **Commercial and Industrial Sites**

**Policy 15.** The City shall market the availability of commercial, industrial, and business park sites to potential employers who provide family wage jobs. Such marketing should include a description and timeline for the required land use approvals.

**Policy 16.** The City or its urban renewal agency shall seek to aggregate and redevelop commercial parcels in the area bounded by Cove Avenue, North Albany Street, East R Avenue, and the Grande Ronde Ditch for commercial uses.

**Policy 17.** Where areas have been planned for large industrial sites, zoning regulations shall be developed and maintained to keep those sites intact. Such sites shall not be further divided except to create planned industrial parks that support a specific industry.

**Policy 18.** The City shall protect lots with existing areas of two and one half (2½) acres or more in commercial and industrial zones by requiring approval of a Master Plan to govern proposed uses, development patterns, and parcel sizes, along with subdivisions, partitions, and property line adjustments. The Master Plan shall be used to maximize the long-term potential for commercial and industrial employment in accordance this Goal 9 chapter.

**Policy 19.** The City shall identify areas where large lot lands are to be located. The City shall develop specific criteria to protect large sites from any partitioning or development activity that would inhibit the availability of these lands for large industrial users in the future.

### **Planning for Future Growth**

**Policy 20.** The City shall identify land that will provide for expansion of existing businesses and/or attract new businesses and shall reserve that land for future industrial development that is consistent with community needs and goals and not detrimental to the quality of life in the area.

**Policy 21.** The City shall ensure that space for industries is reasonably scaled to the anticipated demand and need.

**Policy 22.** The City shall maintain at least a ten (10) year supply of vacant serviceable land in a range of parcel sizes within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) to accommodate new employers and the growth of existing employers.

**Policy 23.** The City should consider establishing Urban Reserve Areas (URAs) adjacent to the UGB to identify the location of future Commercial and Industrial lands that the City will likely include in future UGB expansions. The establishment of URAs would promote the long range planning of public utilities and services. The City of La Grande shall coordinate with Union County regarding the designation of URAs adjacent to the UGB for Heavy and Medium Industrial uses.

**Policy 24.** The land areas to be added to the UGB and/or designated as Urban Reserve Areas (URAs) in the future (see Exhibit 2) shall be reserved for businesses which demonstrate an actual need for medium to large sites of approximately 25 to 100 acres or larger per business. The objective of this policy shall be to maximize the long term potential for commercial and industrial employment in accordance with this Goal 9 chapter and shall provide for the maximum use of the parcels yet be consistent with all other applicable requirements of the law.

## **Downtown**

**Policy 25.** The City shall encourage Central Business District retail and service uses to remain concentrated and consolidated rather than geographically expanded.

**Policy 26.** In order to encourage residents to live within close proximity to their place of work, the City shall support and promote mixed-use development in the Central Business, General Commercial and Residential-Professional zones.

**Policy 27.** Residential development; i.e., residential units, shall be supported and encouraged on the second and higher floors in the Central Business Zone. Residential uses shall also be permitted on the main and higher floors as identified in the “Residential Overlay Zone Map”, in an area of the GC General Commercial Zone, provided that the store front is used for retail or other commercial purposes.

**Policy 28.** The City shall support new commercial development along alleys in the downtown.

**Policy 29.** The City shall support enhancement of the existing Historic District in the downtown in order to help restore and protect historic buildings and create a sense of pride among property owners.

## **D. Recommendations**

The City shall consider the following development standards:

A. Separate noise sensitive and noise-producing land uses; minimize noise impacts on surrounding properties and protect and maintain the quiet character of those areas of the community unaffected by major noise sources, and locate, design and buffer noise producing land uses to protect noise sensitive land uses.

B. Regulate the type and intensity of land uses within areas subject to natural disasters and hazards.

C. Require that all development along arterials and major collectors be preceded by and consistent with an approved Master Plan.

D. A detailed traffic analysis may be required by the City to accompany a Master Plan, when a Master Plan is required, which finds that existing streets and intersections both on and off-site will accommodate the projected traffic increases, or; necessary improvements can be constructed which are in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Map.

E. Commercial and industrial parking shall not intrude into adjacent residential neighborhoods.

F. When a Master Plan is required, incorporate into the Master Plan the following:

- 1) Provide the full range of required public facilities and services and pay commensurate system development charges;
- 2) Mitigate adverse impacts such as noise, traffic and visual aesthetics, on adjacent land uses through methods such as buffering, screening, parking controls, height, bulk and scale limits;
- 3) Participate in the development of a street system which provides efficient connection to higher order streets and to other activity centers;
- 4) Develop transit opportunities appropriate to the scale and character of the project;
- 5) Provide for a safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle circulation system to and within the development;
- 6) Provide adequate, but not excessive parking for customers and employees; and,
- 7) Preserve natural resources and provide required open space.

G. When a Master Plan is required, require that the Master Plan show:

- 1) Projects at full development including identification of all phases;
- 2) The locational, design and transportation relationships of proposed development with the rest of the business district and with surrounding land uses;
- 3) Measures necessary to mitigate adverse impacts on the transportation system and on adjacent land uses; and,
- 4) Design compatibility with surrounding land uses in regard to elements such as scale, bulk, materials, colors and landscaping.

H. Support redevelopment of existing vacant and underutilized industrial and commercial lands rather than designating additional lands for these purposes.

I. Require all commercial and manufacturing operations, except those approved as a temporary use, including warehousing and storage, to be conducted either within enclosed buildings or screened from public view.

J. Allow mixed use development to provide opportunities for commercial, entertainment, professional, cultural, public, and residential activities.

K. Maximize the number of jobs per acre by utilizing the land resource in an efficient and functional manner.



L. Industrial and commercial development adjacent to rail lines shall be designed and constructed in a way that does not preclude the future use of the rail facility.

M. Given the community's intention to prevent decline in existing commercial areas, the City shall explore opportunities to facilitate and assist in the redevelopment of existing commercial areas, in a manner that meets current standards.

N. The City shall develop standards in the Land Development Code to encourage or require with development or redevelopment, the consolidation of vehicle accesses on arterial streets and major collectors, where appropriate and practical.