

**Downtown Revitalization
Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Meeting Summary for 7/2/25
DRAFT**

CAC Attendance: Beth Dittman, Susan Noack, Janet Steiger Carr, Cosi Slider, Cathy Holland, Janine Wilson, Juian Saurage Felton, Chris Brune

Guests: Michele Reeves (Civilis Consulting), Patrick Wilde (Cobalt Development)

City Staff: Aquilla Hurd-Ravich, Sid Sin, Cody Field

Quick recap

The meeting focused on discussing mixed-use development plans for Tualatin's downtown Commons area, with participants sharing their ideas and visions for improving the space through various exercises and discussions. The group explored economic development stages for downtown districts and strategies for creating vibrant, pedestrian-friendly areas, including discussions about retail concentration, parking, and the importance of visual appeal and functionality in urban design. The conversation concluded with specific improvement suggestions for the Commons area, including the need for better connectivity, green spaces, and community gathering places, with plans for further public engagement and future meetings to continue developing these concepts.

Summary

Tualatin Commons Development Visioning

Michele Reeves introduces a discussion on mixed-use development in Tualatin's downtown area, focusing on the Commons. She begins by expressing gratitude for the City's efforts in organizing the meetings and introduces an exercise where participants share what they like, wish for, and imagine for the Tualatin Commons area. The group is asked to write down their thoughts on these topics, which will be collected and transcribed. Michele emphasizes the importance of focusing on the Commons area, as it is likely to be the starting point for development in the next 15-20 years. She encourages participants to think creatively and without limitations when considering potential changes or improvements to the area.

Downtown Economic Vibrancy Focus Groups

The City is conducting focus groups to understand the economic dynamics of a downtown mixed-use district, aiming to improve its vibrancy and brand. These small group meetings cover various stakeholders, including businesses, property owners, and community members, to gain insights into different aspects of the area. The discussions have revealed several key points, such as the lack of a coordinated district-wide organization focused on economic health, the significant role of parks in the community's identity, and mixed

opinions about the local lake. Additionally, the focus groups have shared information about business trends, customer behavior, and housing affordability challenges in the region.

Economic Development Stages of Downtown

Michele discusses the stages of economic development for downtown districts, categorizing them as emerging, transitioning, and mature. Emerging districts are characterized by low foot traffic, vacant upper floors, and inactive ground-floor uses. Transitioning districts show signs of improvement, with redeveloped buildings and growing retail traffic, primarily featuring local businesses. Mature districts are bustling with people, support market-rate construction, and have steady foot traffic with a mix of local and national brands. Michele emphasizes that if a district wants to achieve a sense of vibrancy and be economically self-sustaining, then the characteristics of a mature district are good goals for planning and economic development efforts. The framework for these districts recommends a critical mass of buildings close to the sidewalk, right next to each other, to create a sense of place and to house activity on the ground floor. The latter should be tenanted with a mix of outward facing, open to the public uses for 18 hours of activity. This is what creates a visually inviting pedestrian environment. She notes that these principles apply to both large cities and small towns, with the main difference being scale.

Urban Development and District Stages

The discussion focuses on urban development strategies, particularly the balance between residential and commercial spaces in downtown areas. Michele shared that there are different examples of how density and residential/commerce can be laid out, sharing the "High Street" model, that is typical in UK cities and towns, where retail is concentrated in specific areas surrounded by high-quality, dense housing. She compares this approach to Portland's Northwest neighborhood and discusses examples from London. The conversation then shifts to the economic stages of district development, emphasizing that while stages can be accelerated through various means, including tax increment financing (TIF), there are usually costs associated with speeding up the process. Michele stresses the importance of creating a great district experience, where the atmosphere of the area itself attracts visitors before they enter any specific business. Finally, she explains how construction efforts should match the district's development stage, with emerging districts focusing on simple adaptive reuse, transitional districts undertaking slightly larger redevelopment projects, and mature districts engaging in bigger and more ambitious new construction projects.

People-Driven Thriving Districts

Michele emphasizes the importance of people in assessing and creating successful districts, noting that seeing people on the streets, engaged in various activities, is a key indicator of a thriving area. The discussion highlights the need for showcasing people both inside and outside of businesses, with transparent windows and outdoor seating being crucial elements. Michele also points out that pedestrian traffic is essential for cross-pollination between businesses, which leads to higher sales per square foot. She notes that blank spaces and lack of engagement can deter pedestrians, using examples from various locations to illustrate successful and unsuccessful approaches. Michele concludes by identifying opportunities for improvement in the Commons area, particularly in connecting the park and Greenway users with the businesses.

Urban Design and Business Appeal

Michele discusses the importance of visual appeal and functionality in urban design, particularly for businesses and public spaces. She highlights a creative office in Amsterdam and a dentist's office in Mexico as examples of how building design can communicate more than a sign ever could. Michele emphasizes that every business must contribute to making the area look good at all times, as the value of upper floors is tied to the ground floor's appeal. She also addresses parking issues, suggesting that the district has an oversupply of parking and should consider park-sharing agreements to encourage more foot traffic between businesses. Michele concludes by comparing a retail strip center to a mixed-use district, noting that downtowns have diverse functions beyond just shopping.

Enhancing Commons Area Identity

The group discusses the positive aspects of the Commons area, including its walkability, water features, family-friendly spaces, and overall pleasant atmosphere. They express a desire for better awareness and identification of the area, as many people are unsure of its location or how to refer to it. The participants suggest the need for a stronger physical and cultural identity, possibly drawing inspiration from the surrounding wine country. They also mention the desire for a larger variety of businesses, particularly active ground floor retail spaces, to enhance the downtown experience.

Waterfront Development and Connectivity Plan

The discussion focuses on potential water-based activities and improvements for the downtown area, particularly around the lake and river. Ideas include kayaking, canoeing, and paddle boats, though previous attempts at water activities have been unsuccessful.

due to the short season. The group explores ways to better connect the park, downtown, and waterfront areas to create a more cohesive and active community space. They also discuss the need to improve walkability and connectivity between different parts of the city, including the Commons area and nearby shopping centers. The conversation highlights the community's strong identification with its parks and active lifestyle, suggesting that future developments should emphasize these aspects.

Downtown Revitalization and Green Spaces

The group discusses ideas for improving the downtown area and creating more gathering spaces. They suggest increasing diversity, adding signage, and organizing events to attract people, while acknowledging the need to balance these with the interests of local businesses. The conversation then shifts to the importance of creating a park-like atmosphere with green spaces, walkways, and amenities that encourage people to spend time outdoors. Participants emphasize the value of connectivity, suggesting ways to reduce walking distances around the lake and improve the overall experience of the area. They also highlight the need for public art, natural landscapes, and places of discovery to make the space more inviting and engaging for visitors.

Tualatin Commons Revitalization Plan

The discussion focuses on improving the Commons area in Tualatin to create a more cohesive and inviting district. Participants express concerns about accessibility, parking, and the overall visitor experience. They emphasize the need for a variety of affordable shopping options, better signage for public parking, and the creation of a more walkable environment. The current layout is described as disjointed and confusing, with participants suggesting the development of a "park once district" to encourage visitors to explore the area on foot. Cleaning up the lake and adding more community events are also mentioned as potential improvements to attract more people to the Commons.

Vets Plaza Art and Parking

A Community Advisory Committee member that also serve on the City's Tualatin Arts Advisory Committee discusses plans to celebrate the artwork in Vets Plaza, created by internationally known artist, Douwe Blumberg. The group explores parking issues in the area, with suggestions to conduct a comprehensive study of both public and private spaces to potentially reduce parking requirements and encourage more active spaces. The discussion touches on state regulations that may exempt certain areas near transit from parking requirements. Participants also consider ways to make the Commons more appealing and accessible to diverse groups.

Enhancing Commons Area Development

The group discusses various ideas for improving the Commons area, including creating a sculpture garden, organizing local business events, and developing a mixed-use district with open spaces and walkable streets. They consider the possibility of taller buildings, with a focus on creating a sense of place and providing walls for plaza areas. The conversation touches on the need for improved local transportation, particularly for cyclists, and the idea of a gridded pattern through the Commons to improve navigation. Other suggestions include a bridge over the lake, removing traffic from Boones Ferry Road, and adding housing at the edge of the Commons. Michele provides an overview of recent changes in Oregon's building codes that allow for much higher building efficiency and interesting residential development called “single stair development”.

Tualatin Downtown Revitalization Plans

The group discusses the need for a 150-250-seat events center in Tualatin, as well as shade improvements to Veterans Plaza and the Splash Pad. They explore ideas for making the downtown area more attractive and pedestrian-friendly, including a bike path bridge to connect different sections. The conversation emphasizes the importance of creating spaces where people can gather and interact, while acknowledging the challenge of translating these desires into concrete plans. The group also discusses the need for more green spaces and trees in the area. Michele announces that the next steps involve a public survey and an in-person workshop to gather more input, with a focus on involving property owners and businesses in the decision-making process. The workshop is scheduled for July 30th at the Juanita Pohl Center. Sid Sin announced that the next CAC meeting will be held on September 3 and will include an urban renewal 101 and the current Core Opportunity and Reinvestment Area (CORA) Plan presentations