

# COOS COUNTY

# SDAT





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# Introduction

In November 2009, officials in Coos County, Oregon submitted a proposal to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) to assist the county and its citizens in addressing key issues facing the community. The issues included planning and land use, transportation, economic development, water resources, and regional collaboration. The AIA accepted the proposal and, after a preliminary visit by a small group in February 2010, recruited a multi-disciplinary team of volunteers to serve on the SDAT Team. In June 2010, the SDAT Team members returned to Coos County for an intensive community charrette process. They worked closely with local officials, community leaders, technical experts, students and citizens to study the community and its concerns. The team used its expertise to frame a wide range of recommendations, which were presented to the community in a public meeting at the conclusion of the 3-day process. This report provides a narrative summary of the team's findings and recommendations.

## The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT)

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program focuses on the importance of developing sustainable communities through design. The mission of the SDAT program is to provide technical assistance and process expertise to help communities develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future. The SDAT program brings together multidisciplinary teams of professionals to work with community stakeholders and decision-makers in an intensive planning process. Teams are composed of volunteer professionals representing a range of disciplines, including architects, urban design professionals, economic development experts, land use attorneys, and others.

Today, communities face a host of challenges to long-term planning for sustainability, including limited resources and technical capacity, ineffective public processes and poor participation. The SDAT approach is designed to address many of the common challenges communities face by producing long-term sustainability plans that are realistic and reflect each community's unique context. Key features of the SDAT approach include the following:

- Customized Design Assistance. The SDAT is designed as a customized approach to community assistance which incorporates local realities and the unique challenges and assets of each community.
- A Systems Approach to Sustainability. The SDAT applies a systems-based approach to community sustainability, examining cross-cutting issues and relationships between issues. In order to accomplish this task, the SDAT forms multi-disciplinary teams that combine a range of disciplines and professions in an integrated assessment and design process.

- **Inclusive and Participatory Processes.** Public participation is the foundation of good community design. The SDAT involves a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints and utilizes short feedback loops, resulting in sustainable decision-making that has broad public support and ownership.
- **Objective Technical Expertise.** The SDAT Team is assembled to include a range of technical experts (planners, architects, economists and others) from across the country. Team Members do not accept payment for services in an SDAT. They serve in a volunteer capacity on behalf of the AIA and the partner community. As a result, the SDAT Team has enhanced credibility with local stakeholders and can provide unencumbered technical advice.
- **Cost Effectiveness.** By employing the SDAT approach, communities are able to take advantage of leveraged resources for their planning efforts. The AIA contributes up to \$15,000 in financial assistance for each project. In 2008, each SDAT project is estimated to cost between \$20,000-\$30,000 total. The SDAT team members volunteer their labor and expertise, allowing communities to gain immediate access to the combined technical knowledge of top-notch professionals from varied fields. Finally, the SDAT process employs a compressed schedule and the application of innovative public participation techniques to leverage resources effectively and produce timely results.
- **Results.** Many communities want to become more sustainable but are immobilized by conflicting agendas, politics, personalities, or even the overabundance of opportunity. Further, many communities have not yet taken stock of their current practices and policies within a sustainability framework; others have identified issues of concern but desire assistance in laying out a plan of action to increase sustainability. The intense SDAT process and compressed schedule allows a community to capitalize on SDAT information quickly and build momentum for implementation of its plan. The SDAT includes the delivery of a formal report and recommendations as well as a follow up assessment.





## What Is the SDAT Program?

Communities that have participated in the SDAT program include the following:

Alexandria Township, NJ	Syracuse, NY	Windsor, CA	Virginia Beach, VA
Oklahoma City, OK	Northeast Michigan	Tampa, FL	SE TN Valley, TN
Northampton, MA	Lawrence, KS	Detroit, MI	Port Angeles, WA
Pittsfield, MA	Hagerstown, MD	Fort Worth, TX	Los Angeles, CA
Forest City, NC	Tucson, AZ	Leon Valley, TX	Orange, MA
Cache Valley, UT	Englishtown, NJ	Morristown, NJ	Indianapolis, IN
Reno-Tahoe-Carson Region, NV	Dubuque, IA	Parma, OH	Hilo, HI
New Orleans, LA	Culver City, CA	Kauai, Hawaii	Eagle River Valley, CO
Longview, WA	Central City, LA	Fellsmere, FL	Beatrice, NE
Guemes Island, WA	Albany, NY		

The SDAT program is modeled on the Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program, one of AIA's longest-running success stories. While the R/UDAT program was developed to provide communities with specific design solutions, the SDAT program provides broad assessments to help frame future policies or design solutions in the context of sustainability and help communities plan the first steps of implementation. Through the Design Assistance Team (DAT) program, over 500 professionals from 30 disciplines have provided millions of dollars in professional pro bono services to more than 180 communities across the country. The SDAT program leverages the pivotal role of the architectural community in the creation and support of sustainable livable communities.

The following report includes a narrative account of the Coos County SDAT project recommendations, with summary information concerning several principle areas of investigation. The recommendations are made within the broad framework of sustainability, and are designed to form an integrated approach to future sustainability efforts in the county.





# SUMMARY: THE BIG PICTURE

The following report captures the SDAT Team's key recommendations across several important issues facing Coos County:

- Environment
- Economic Development
- Cooperation and Planning
- Downtown Centers
- Transportation

While each team member authored a specific section of the report, the reader will find remarkable consistency across the team's recommendations regarding the 'big picture'. The following summary captures the cross-cutting issues that face the County, and the team's assessment and core recommendations regarding them.

## The Local Context

Today, Coos County represents an economically struggling region with an identity crisis. As the application states, "Long before the current national economic recession, Coos County found itself on the ropes economically and socially. The dramatic decline in the timber, commercial fishing and waterway shipping industries has changed the very fabric of this region, from a vibrant, entrepreneur filled bay area to a struggling, decaying area." In short, the region is in need of fundamental reinvention to ensure its long-term vitality, and it would benefit from a sustained community-building effort to serve as a platform for the creation of a cohesive identity that fits its 21st century role and function.

The Coos County application identified several core questions that framed the team's inquiry:

- What is our responsibility toward energy and environmental issues, in the face of need for new industries and jobs? Can these interests be served in harmony?
- How do we balance equitable growth, economic development and increasing land and housing costs with the need to maintain a healthy community fabric with a diversified age/wage/cultural demographic ratio?
- How do we provide ample, quality jobs in the face of environmental issues, in order to stop both high drop-out rates in our schools and the "brain drain" of our youth leaving the area post-graduation and continuing education?
- Would our county and its communities benefit from an overall, regional approach to future development and problem-solving?

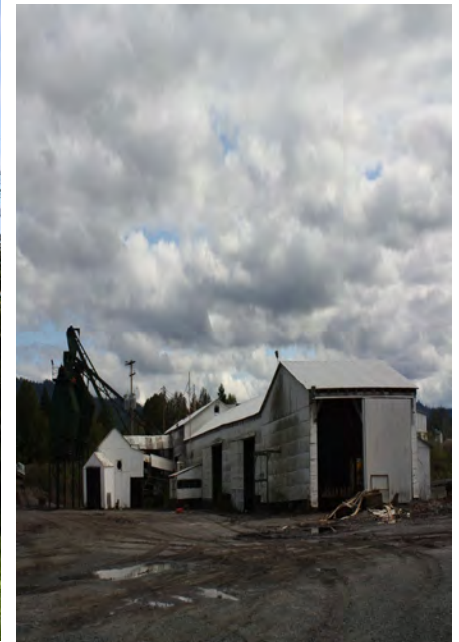
Through the SDAT process, the team confirmed the essential validity of these core questions, and has framed its suggestions accordingly.

## The Central Challenge

The Coos County application to the AIA SDAT program cited a desire to find “ways that economic development and environmental interests can co-exist in harmony.” After a review of existing information, plans and regulations in the County, and following the 3-day charrette process with the community, the SDAT team believes that this is the central perceived issue facing the county today.

It was clear to the team that the existing foundations of the local economy have ceased to function as drivers for future growth. Much of the dialogue during the SDAT process centered around local nostalgia for the former glory days of the economy. As Hannah Twaddell writes in the chapter on Transportation, “Coos County’s traditional economic base that revolved around timber, commercial fishing, and shipping operations has become a ghost of its former self. National and global changes in industrial technologies and environmental regulations make it very unlikely large-scale operations of these types will ever return to Coos County.” Given this reality, the region must seek to build new models of economic vitality that enhance the existing community fabric, build on its historic resources, and leverage new opportunities strategically.

The main challenge facing the region today regards its ability to reinvent itself, develop a sustainable economic base, and renew its sense of community identity. In Nancy Steele’s chapter on the Environment, she writes that, “The challenge for Coos County is how to make a successful transition from extractive, non-sustainable industries to a sustainable use economy, in which decisions made today do not result in passing on a damaged environment and economy to future generations.”





The changing economic dynamics have also led to profound demographic and social alterations to the local landscape. Hannah Twaddell captures the evolution:

“The County’s human capital has also changed. When the traditional industries began to fail, younger people started leaving the community in search of sustainable-wage jobs and careers. Meanwhile, the County has become home to an increasing number of active, healthy, and financially secure older adults and retirees who value the region’s small-town amenities, natural beauty, recreational activities, affordable real estate, and excellent health care services.”

In fact, the team found the region to be home to both great challenges, and great opportunities. As Wayne Feiden writes in his chapter on Planning and Cooperation, “Coos County is undergoing significant stress from long term economic, financial, and cultural challenges to its historically natural-resource based economy and from its significant demographic changes. At the same time, unprecedented new economic development and quality of life opportunities are becoming available.” As Feiden writes, “All levels of government need to use every trick they can to be responsive to these needs and make a successful transition.”

## Coos County Sustainability

The dialogue around economic reinvention and environmental conservation leads one to the inevitable assessment of what sustainability means for Coos County. The team found that some local groups have attempted to hijack the mantle of sustainability in order to pursue narrower agendas, interpreting it as a zero-sum choice between environmental health and economic growth, or an economic imperative bearable at any cost. The team identified a valid community perspective that was quite different. As Nancy Steele states, "It is not surprising that the people of Coos County question how they can reconcile environmental protection with the need for jobs, as environmental protection has caused jobs loss in the past. But this is the wrong question; the issue is not jobs versus environment, but rather how Coos County can become a sustainable economy, reaping the benefits of the jobs that will come with such a change."



Team member Wayne Feiden echoed this sentiment: "Some residents see a divide between sustainability and maintaining and expanding the traditional natural resource based economy of Coos County. This is a false choice and the community leaders and media needs to show it for what it is. The laissez-faire approach to natural resource extraction from forty years ago, which was so damaging to the environment, is gone and never coming back, but a sustainable approach to natural resource extraction, with a focus on keeping some pristine resources pristine, is completely compatible with sustainability, and certainly a better model than importing resources from third world economies with few environmental regulations. The Coos County region needs to do more to help build this understanding." In summary, the choice is not between economic growth and sustainability – it is the challenge of integrating these mutual needs in a cohesive strategy for future community strength and vitality that lies at the center of the county's future health.

The predominant definition of sustainability in the field today was established by the United Nation's Brundtland Commission in 1987, which defined it as an integrated system that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." The SDAT Team believes that this broader, more inclusive approach to sustainability will result in more effective outcomes and avoid conflicts between narrow agendas as the County addresses its core issues.



## Trust Issues and Public Dialogue

The team felt that community participation in the SDAT process represented an important initial step for the region. The participation level in the process was quite good, and reflected a broad variety of interests and perspectives. In fact, the process represented a first for many residents. As Joan Herron writes in her chapter on Economic Development, "Feedback given to our team by participants who attended the economic development focus groups, town hall meetings and final SDAT presentation has been extremely positive. Many indicated they had never been invited to sit around a table to talk with such a diverse mix of people with such wide-ranging interests, some which they supported and some which they did not."

The success of the SDAT process indicates several important things for the region:

- Coos County is home to a range of non-governmental organizations and civic institutions, such as the South Coast Development Council and the Southwestern Oregon Community College, which have the ability to partner effectively and convene the broader community for important dialogues about its future;
- The region also has shown its collective civic capacity to engage in a broader dialogue about issues affecting the region, not just individual issues or jurisdictions within the County;
- Most importantly, the SDAT process demonstrated unequivocally that Coos County residents want to have a voice in the process and hold a strong desire to control their collective destiny.

These are all positive signs that Coos County has the capacity to convene its residents and stakeholders in a process designed to address its future. However, the SDAT team was also struck by the tone and quality of the dialogue in Coos County. The collective tenor and quality of the dialogue was inconsistent, and sometimes participants represented their positions in absolutes, leaving little room for agreement or collaboration. The team found that there is also a tendency toward “unproductive finger pointing” on important issues that require collaborative dialogue. Furthermore, the team noticed signs that institutions, organizations, and residents of the region have not established significant levels of trust between each other, an important prerequisite for collaborative work. Therefore, building relationships across the region was identified as a significant issue for Coos County’s immediate and long-term future. As Nancy Steele writes, “there is a perception expressed that important decisions are not being made in a transparent manner. A call for trusted scientific data on which to base decisions indicates that collaborative, transparent planning has been missing.” The team concluded that the present trust issues were the result of the region’s relative inexperience with community-wide public processes and collaboration, as well as a few bad experiences with decision-making in its past. By developing its civic infrastructure - nurturing partnerships across jurisdictions and between civic institutions, and engaging the wider public of the County in a sustained dialogue – Coos County can take control of its future and build a platform for the innovative partnerships that will be necessary for long-term sustainability.





## Build a Shared Regional Vision

The SDAT team was unanimous in its recommendation that Coos County engage in an intensive, countywide visioning process as its priority action moving forward. While each team member focused on a particular component of the county's sustainability, all of us recognized the imperative for the region to engage in a visioning process that will define a framework for success moving forward. Similarly, the team identified several efforts that the region can build upon as it begins this work, including the SDAT process itself. As Nancy Steele writes, "The Sustainable Design Assessment Team recognized early on, based on feedback from participants, that the community lacks a coherent, shared vision of the future. Nevertheless, when we asked participants to write down three "headlines" from a future ten years hence, there were many commonalities, suggesting that a community visioning process would be very productive." Wayne Feiden echoed this sentiment, writing that "any planning effort needs to start with the Vision. The Vision can build on the visions in existing comprehensive plans and the succinct vision in the application for AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team assistance, Building Bridges to a Sustainable Future. The vision may differ in different communities and with different constituents, but there are some common elements that should be included in any vision." A successful visioning process will allow the region's residents to engage in, and become invested in, a collective expression of the future they want to work toward. As Joan Herron writes, "The vision will create an image of how the Coos County Region is viewed by outsiders as well as by those living and working locally. The vision must describe and define very distinctly the type of region it is and wants to become in terms of economic development, sustainable development, vitality, investment and jobs." The team felt strongly that a visioning process should become Coos County's top priority as it begins implementation of the SDAT recommendations. As Nancy Steele states, "Developing new city and regional plans will take time and should not be rushed; nevertheless, visioning should begin right away to continue the momentum gained by the SDAT visit."



## Engage in Proactive (Regional) Planning

The first place to begin collaborative work should be a visioning process. However, beyond that process, there are significant opportunities to partner regionally and plan together, and there are several benefits to doing so. By planning proactively together, the team believes that the county can minimize tension and competition over development projects in the future. As Wayne Feiden writes, “Some of the battles over proposed development projects are a result of a failure to plan proactively.” By engaging the broader community more proactively in comprehensive planning, local governments can leverage significant resident support for future policy development and implementation. As Feiden states:

“Comprehensive planning is the time to decide what kind of development the community wants and does not want. Updating or revising the County and each municipal comprehensive plan independently, however, will only waste resources and miss the shared opportunities. We recommend a single multi-jurisdiction effort to create a new comprehensive plan. Ideally, this would be a single plan for all communities. If this is not possible, there should still be a single comprehensive planning effort even if the result is multiple plans emerging from that consolidated process.”

Furthermore, as the county begins to look at more detailed area plans, there are significant opportunities for partnership and collaboration, and an additional chance to engage the public in the process. In her transportation analysis, Hannah Twaddell points out that transportation corridor planning represents one opportunity. As she writes, “Regional coordination for planning and investments along these key corridors will be critical to success.” The SDAT team is also aware that a shared regional vision and collaborative planning are only the first steps in a long process. Success will not be realized overnight in Coos County – it will not be easy. Success will result from sustained collaborative work that occurs years into the future. However, that work must begin now. As Todd Scott concludes, “Do the simple things first, and celebrate every single success, regardless of how simple they are.” By building momentum and partnerships to accomplish the simple tasks, the County will build its capacity to make the tougher decisions more effectively.



## Focus on Community Centers

The team identified several unique assets to the region, including its incredible natural beauty and its access to the Pacific Ocean via a deep water port. However, the most important asset to the county's future health is less well-recognized: its downtowns. Coos County has suffered a crippling economic downturn, but one ironic result is that it has not been subject to the dramatic growth-driven sprawl of jurisdictions elsewhere in the country. As a result, its downtowns remain largely intact as community centers. As Hannah Twaddell writes, "The economic decline suffered by the County in the latter half of the 20th century had an unintended beneficial side effect: virtually no urban sprawl has descended upon this community. Although some residents complain about the lack of shopping malls and high-speed highways, others are beginning to realize the tremendous value of the region's small-town scale and locally-owned businesses." This reality presents Coos County with a unique strategic advantage, and the SDAT team believes it is a critical asset to future sustainability – both in terms of economic growth and environmental stewardship. As Todd Scott writes, "these downtowns continue to define this community to the rest of the world. When someone speaks of Coos County, or comes to visit, they cannot experience the county without experiencing at least one of the county's downtowns." As a result, the County's downtown cores are an essential element in the regional reinvention process, and the team felt that the community should focus its future investments in their vitality. As Wayne Feiden writes, "No community can be sustainable or economically strong if it neglects its downtown and village centers. Unfortunately, the Coos County region is not paying enough attention to these areas." The downtowns not only provide centers for commerce, they also play an important role in the establishment and maintenance of a clear community identity. "Downtowns and village centers provide a focal point to a community and a sense of identity. When community members say, as the SDAT heard many times, that people avoid some of the downtowns, the community lacks an identity and a focal point. No community can thrive if it turns its back on its core," writes Feiden. While the team was able to identify a number of individual projects and plans in specific downtowns, it concluded that "these efforts are not enough." As Wayne Feiden concludes, "Downtowns can only be successful when residents and policy makers understand their importance and they are part of every conversation about economic development and sustainability."





## Working Together: Regionalism and Multi-Jurisdictional Collaboration

As Coos County proceeds with implementation of the SDAT recommendations, regionalism should be an absolute imperative. One of the starkest obstacles the SDAT team identified to countywide success was the systemic fragmentation that currently exists. As Wayne Feiden writes, “regional sharing and coordination is not as effective as it could be.” The team found that much of this fragmentation is artificial. As Todd Scott points out, “Many of the issues that apply to Coos Bay or North Bend will also apply to Coquille or Charleston.” The county simply cannot succeed with a fragmented approach in which each municipality goes it alone. There aren’t enough resources available for any one jurisdiction to be successful on its own. As Todd Scott writes, “In a county this small, it is extremely important to pool all available resources to promote the county effectively to the rest of the world.” Therefore, every municipality should have an incentive to engage in regional collaboration that leverages resources for common purpose, and every jurisdiction will benefit from enhanced cooperation. As Wayne Feiden summarizes, there are “clear opportunities to make governments more effective by increased cooperation, focusing on common needs and regional needs, and updating planning and implementation tools and techniques.” The team was also careful to point out that collaboration should not be limited to government. They found that civic fragmentation was often as widespread as governmental fragmentation. “For instance, SDAT participants reported three different efforts currently underway to develop a Coos Bay walking map,” writes Hannah Twaddell. “It has also become clear that there is not a lot of good communication between the different communities,” writes Todd Scott. In the future, local governments, civic institutions and non-governmental organizations should all seek to partner at the regional level to broaden their impact to the appropriate scale. Currently, significant local investments are being wasted because they aren’t linked to broader regional efforts, and lose efficacy beyond the municipal border.





## Applying Regionalism to Every Issue

As implementation proceeds, the jurisdictions within Coos County should set a goal to work regionally on every issue to take advantage of shared resources and economies of scale, reinforce their shared community identity, and build important relationships that can be leveraged for additional partnerships in the future. By regionalizing the dialogue about sustainability, and integrating discussions about economic development strategies, environmental conservation, downtown revitalization and community building, the County can succeed in realizing a heightened public awareness and far greater investment in its future.





# THE ENVIRONMENT

## Background

*What is our responsibility toward energy and environmental issues, in the face of need for new industries and jobs? Can these interests be served in harmony?*

From the time of settlement, the region that became Coos County has relied on its natural resources for prosperity: logging, fishing, mining and agriculture dominated, along with the ancillary benefits of its deep water port in Coos Bay, estuaries, and rivers. The people of Coos County have long taken their identity from the natural environment.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, regulations and the national economy combined to cause some companies to shift from traditional logging practices, which tended to be more sustainable, to an extractive philosophy in which forests were clear cut on an accelerated time scale. As forests were over-logged, the federal government became convinced that species dependent on old growth forests were being driven to extinction, and the listing of the Northern Spotted Owl as an endangered species in 1990 brought an abrupt halt to logging on federal lands, damaging local economies. Other traditional businesses, such as small-scale agriculture, have declined throughout the US, contributing to unemployment and poverty in rural Coos County.

It is not surprising that the people of Coos County question how they can reconcile environmental protection with the need for jobs, as environmental protection has caused jobs loss in the past. But this is the wrong question; the issue is not jobs versus environment, but rather how Coos County can become a sustainable economy, reaping the benefits of the jobs that will come with such a change.



## Assessment

A strengths/weaknesses/opportunities/threats analysis was conducted with participants who attended daytime small group roundtable sessions on Monday and Tuesday and a community town hall meeting Monday night.

While the landscape of rural Coos County looks lush and beautiful to the casual eye, there was debate among participants as to whether the ecosystems in southern coastal Oregon are “intact” or “compromised;” and as to whether proposals for further resource extractive industries, such as mining black sands, will help the region recover through added jobs or push the environment past its tipping point. Participants felt they do not have enough information – trusted, scientific data – to make the correct decisions. Some suggested that the processes used to make decisions were flawed.



## Strengths

***Coos County, Oregon, is a richly blessed geographic area with an abundance of natural resources and recreational opportunities.***

### **Abundant natural resources**

The natural resources of Coos County – timber, minerals, seafood, the estuaries and wetlands, Coos Bay, rivers and streams, the beaches and offshore rocks, and wildlife – have long allowed people to live off the land and to make a living from the land through a resources-based economy.

### **Recreational opportunities and scenic beauty**

Lakes, dunes, beaches, Face Rock, Shore Acres, Bandon Marsh, North Spit, South Slough, Elliot State Forest, birds, Cape Arago: the list goes on. This region is rich in natural beauty. In 2007, Sunset Magazine singled out North Spit as one of the top ten beach strolls in the West.

### **Hardworking, self-sufficient, outdoors-oriented people**

Residents of Coos County have a strong work ethic and aren't afraid of hard work; they are outdoors oriented and connected to the land; and they volunteer at high rates. "The people are wonderful" was a comment in a roundtable session.

### **Interlinked organizations committed to maintaining quality of life**

For such a small community, there are an impressive number of organizations working for the betterment of the region. Indeed, the Coos Bay area, Coquille Valley, and Bandon are all Ford Leadership Institute communities which have been selected to develop "knowledgeable, skilled, and motivated leaders, a diversity of effective organizations, and productive collaborations among organizations."



## Weaknesses

*The area lacks a cohesive, inclusive vision for its future. Plans to address its economically and socially depressed “feel,” are lacking. Deteriorated community gateways along Highway 101 inhibit tourism and development.*

### **Lack of trust around environmental issues**

Participants cited difficulty in getting people to talk about environmental issues; there is a perception expressed that important decisions are not being made in a transparent manner. A call for trusted scientific data on which to base decisions indicates that collaborative, transparent planning has been missing.

### **Unproductive finger pointing**

Participants complained about the impacts of laws and regulations.

### **Lack of integrated resource planning/current plans**

Plans are outdated or nonexistent; integrated resource planning is a process that involves stakeholders in developing and evaluating demand and supply options to address agreed upon goals and objectives.





## Opportunities

*Our area has significant economic assets on which to form the foundation of a new future.*

### **Value added agriculture, forestry, and marine products**

Coos County has organic dairies and cranberry operations; shrimp have received Marine Stewardship Council certification as sustainable and, as of the SDAT, Dungeness crab was soon to be certified.

### **Ecosystem restoration**

The three watershed councils, Tenmile Lakes Basin Partnership, Coos Watershed Association, and Coquille Watershed Association, are organized to improve water quality and restore ecosystem services. Watershed associations exist to bring together all stakeholders, including landowners, government, businesses, and communities.

### **Outdoor recreation**

The coast, dunes, lakes, forests, trails all combine to provide the opportunity for expanded emphasis on outdoor recreation and ecotourism. The Southwest Oregon Regional Airport means that Coos County can attract people from outside the immediate region and provides an advantage over other coastal communities without an airport.

### **Renewable energy development**

Participants discussed both wind and wave energy projects in development in Coos County; these projects provide opportunities to increase the value of the land while still keeping working lands working. Oregon has established Rural Renewable Energy Development zones to encourage energy companies to develop renewable capacity.





## Threats

*The dramatic decline in the timber, commercial fishing and waterway shipping industries has changed the very fabric of this region, from a vibrant, entrepreneur filled bay area to a struggling, decaying area.*

### **Continued over-reliance on extractive uses of natural resources**

Numerous studies have shown a link between abundant natural resources accompanied by lower economic growth. Companies that extract natural resources for export, rather than developing a sustainable local economy do not provide the kind of jobs growth needed by the region.

### **Other cute towns in Oregon and northern California**

Other than Bandon, the cities in Coos County are behind the curve in developing their downtowns as tourist-worthy destinations. The County is lacking in high end destination resorts, other than Bandon Dunes Golf Resort.

### **Pollution from farming, urbanization, and industries**

Polluted runoff resulting from agricultural activity and cities have resulted in water pollution, especially in the Ten mile Lakes basin. Pollution in Coos Bay and other estuaries threatens the marine economy (fishing, crabbing, clamming, oysters, etc.)

### **Climate change and rising sea levels**

Coastal areas and estuaries are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change – increased weather variability and severity along with sea level rise. Planning must include adaptive responses to climate change.

### **Current economic conditions**

The Coos County region had not rebounded from the loss of jobs and taxes from the cutbacks in logging when the Great Recession hit. Approximately thirty years of stagnation resulted in a lack of living wage jobs and aging, outdated, and non-compliant infrastructure.

## Vision

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team recognized early on, based on feedback from participants, that the community lacks a coherent, shared vision of the future. Nevertheless, when we asked participants to write down three “headlines” from a future ten years hence, there were many commonalities, suggesting that a community visioning process would be very productive.

Visioning headlines offered up centered around a future Coos County that is economically vibrant, environmentally whole, and socially connected. People imagined a future in which youth settle at a high rate in the communities to which they were born, special places were protected, and there is a balance between jobs and environmental restoration and protection.

Coos County would have low unemployment with living wage jobs; public works would not only be on track for replacement and/or upgrade but would comply with regulations; trusted scientific data would be available for decision-making, and planning would be integrated and not just on a project by project basis.

The caution is that one should not assume the economy will rebound and make plans around that assumption. Start with the assumption that this economy will be around for a long time, as much as a decade, and project abundance arising from a sustainable economy.



## Recommendations

The challenge for Coos County is how to make a successful transition from extractive, non-sustainable industries to a sustainable use economy, in which decisions made today do not result in passing on a damaged environment and economy to future generations.

Coos County needs to take advantage of the new green economy to work towards a vision of abundance while moving away from an economy based on extraction of natural resources. Sustainability has become a megatrend; and cities (and businesses) that thrive will be those that figure out how to change processes and products to reduce their impacts on the environment. We are increasingly concerned about resource depletion, climate change, industrial pollution, and food safety, and consumers want what they perceive to be sustainable products and services.

These are three recommended goals around which to organize change . Strategies for implementing these goals follow.



- Create a viable economy that supports working lands and conserves natural lands and their associated ecosystem services.
- Develop integrated plans that value, preserve, and enhance places that the community cherishes.
- Build vibrant communities, businesses, and organizations and create a strong sense of place such that residents, especially youth, who already don't want to leave can afford to stay and live here.

Following are some specific recommended strategies with respect to the environment of Coos County.

### **Establish roadmaps for development and protection.**

Developing new city and regional plans will take time and should not be rushed; nevertheless, visioning should begin right away to continue the momentum gained by the SDAT visit.

Participate fully in the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds ; although this planning effort is focused on the South Slough watershed and several small watersheds that drain to the Pacific Ocean between Cape Arago and Bullards Beach, this could be the initial effort in a larger planning process to help the community anticipate and respond to the local effects of climate and land use changes.

Begin the update of the Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan in order to assist the community in making decisions regarding development that will affect the Estuary, on which so many jobs depend.

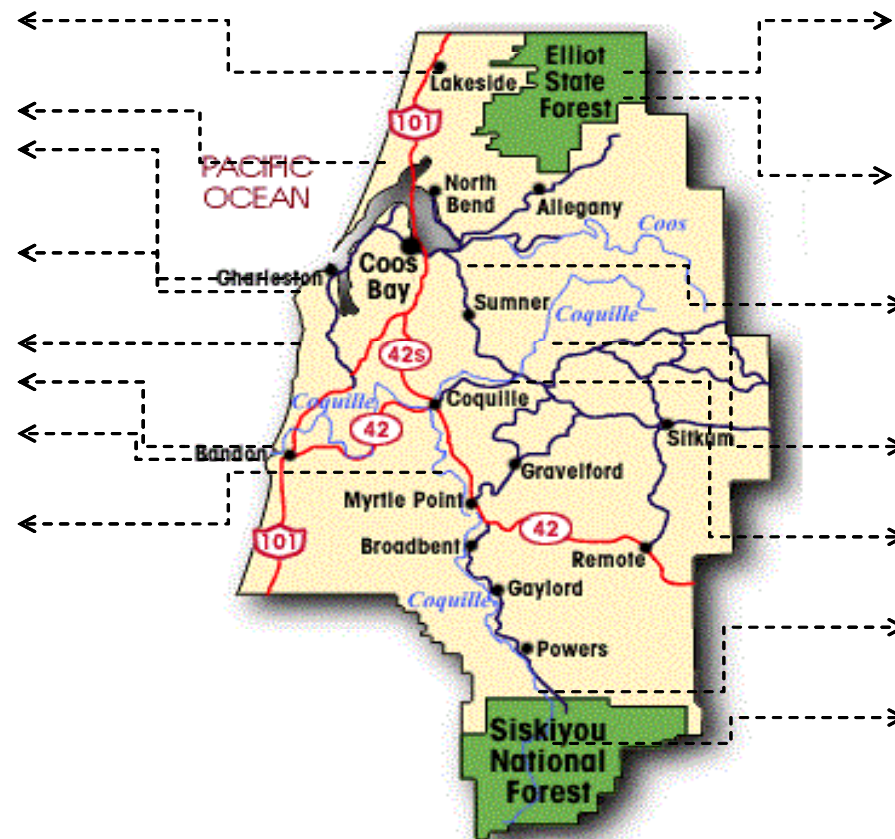
Develop and update comprehensive plans, including elements for water, open space, recreation, energy, and conservation, and integrated resources plans, that project supply and demand out 20-30 years.

**Lakeside  
(Ten Mile  
Lake)  
Sand Dunes  
Shore Acres**

**Cape Arago**

**Whiskey Run  
Bandon  
Face Rock**

**Pastoral  
Sloughs**



**Elliot State  
Forest**

**Golden & Silver  
Falls**

**Sloughs**

**Laverne Park**

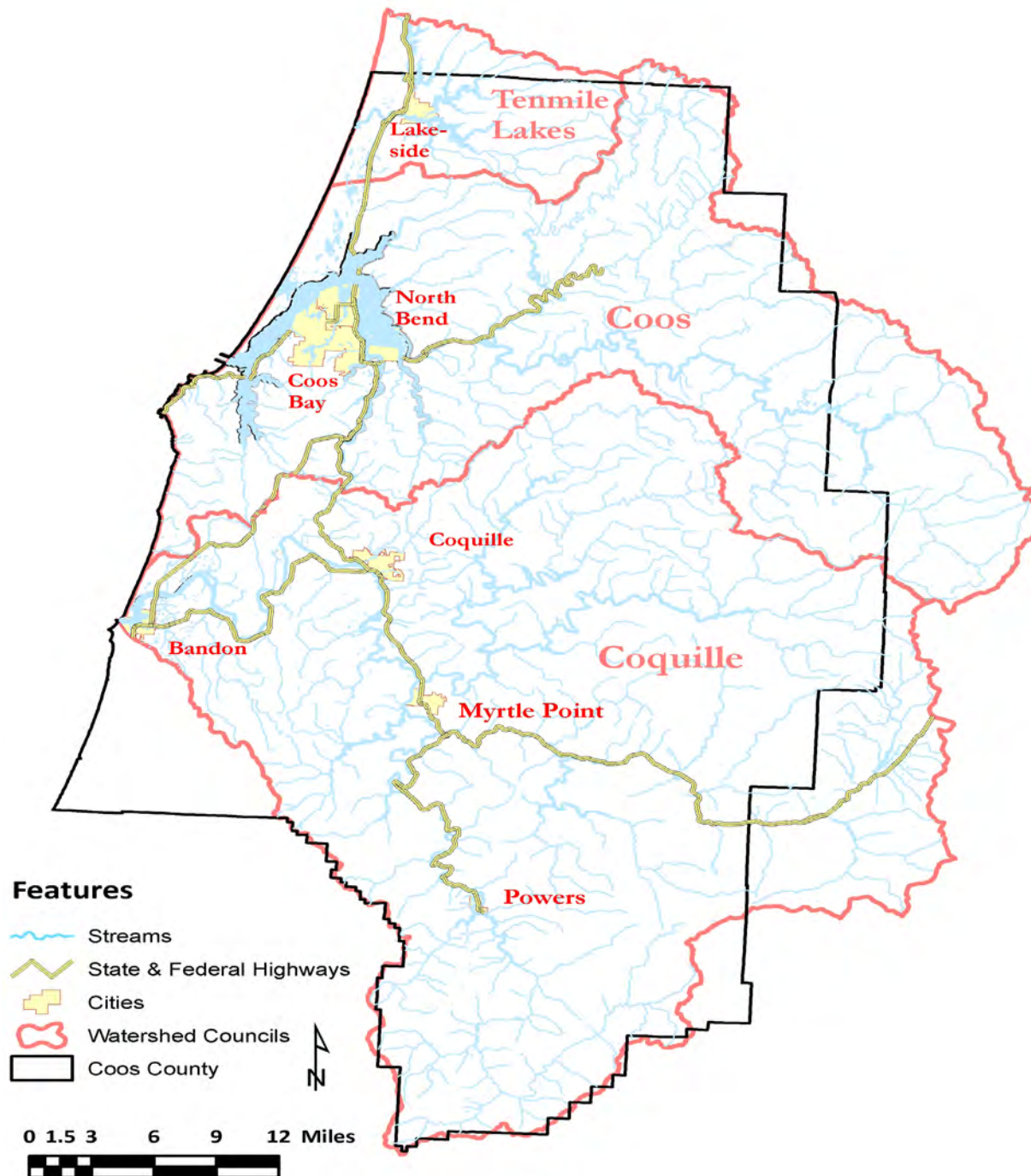
**Fairview**

**Coquille Falls**

**Rainforest**

**COOS COUNTY**

Places of the Heart in Coos County



Watershed Map of Coos County

**Obtain the data you need to make good decisions, but don't make waiting for research results a reason not to act.** Determine what scientific data are lacking that may be preventing good decision-making; work with local watershed associations and the South Slough National Estuarine Reserve to ensure research is conducted that answers the important questions.

**Develop a strong sense of place that will attract and keep people coming back.** Develop a unique brand for Coos County, emphasizing local products, history, and places, that distinguishes it from other similar towns and regions on the coast. "Certified Sustainable Coos" would be a great brand if the region continues to get its local products certified as sustainably produced.

**Market birding as a destination activity.** Consider turning what many would think of as a threat to Coos County, the endangered Western snowy plover, your signature bird – all three of the identified recovery areas for the WSP are occupied with nesting pairs, unlike any other region on the Oregon coast.

**Encourage landowners to obtain added value from their lands by participating in ecosystem services credit trading.** The landscape provides valuable ecosystem services, such as filtering and storing clean water, maintaining biodiversity, sequestering carbon, and mitigating natural disturbances, such as fire and flood. Ecosystem services markets allow a landowner to sell credits to a "bank" which in turn sells the credits to a buyer that needs those credits to develop. This allows landowners to capture the value those lands provide to the public. Oregon has a developing market in water quality credits .

**Promote your rural products to ensure economic vitality.** Promote local agricultural products in restaurants and stores. As consumers look for products and services that are sustainable, the presence of organic dairies and cranberries in Coos County provides an opportunity to distinguish the region from traditional agricultural areas. Increase profits by direct marketing of products to consumers through establishing farmer's markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs. These programs will be more successful after the region establishes its brand.

**Attract the "right kind" of tourists that appreciate what makes Coos County unique.** Encourage private sector development of ecotourism and agritourism enterprises. Tourists will be attracted to Coos County to experience intact ecosystems (ecotourism) and working landscapes (agritourism) when the region has developed a meaningful sense of place.





**Protect and restore rivers, streams, and estuaries for economic vitality through ecosystem health.** Update policies and ordinances to encourage compact and contiguous development and discourage sprawl (smart growth).

**Adopt policies that protect special places to ensure they are destinations and gateways.** Adopt and implement low impact / green infrastructure ordinances to reduce or eliminate urban runoff into the rivers and bays as downtowns and main streets are developed. Complete a process of cleaning up discharges to Coos Bay by source reduction and moving the discharge points out of the Bay. The livelihood of many people depends on filter feeders – clams, oysters, shrimp, and crabs. Keep them safe by ensuring the bay is clean.

**Ensure new jobs are high quality and sustainable.** Focus on bringing green and clean tech jobs into the region, taking advantage of programs that offer grant funds and incentives, while marketing Coos County as a desirable place to live and work. De-emphasize industries that are extractive – now is not the time to shut the door on extractive industries with the difficult economy, but plan for a future that focuses on industries that bring long-term jobs. A successful transition will take time, but work toward generation of more sustainable industries should begin now.

**Build bridges through sustainable watershed management.** Oregon is first in the nation in watershed planning and management. It is tremendously productive to get government, business, landowners, communities, and researchers all working together to solve common problems using a systems approach. The model of watershed management is directly applicable to planning in Coos County. Recognize that everything is connected – water, land, air, people, wildlife - and plan together for that sustainable future.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development is a very important component of sustainability in Coos County. Economic development is defined as the retention, internal expansion and attraction of jobs and investment appropriate for Coos County currently and in the future. This section of the report summarizes the Economic Development recommendations that result from the SDAT's work in Coos County in June 2010.

## Assessment

Historically, Coos County has had a prosperous economy whose growth was driven by its timber industry and forest products, mining, commercial fishing, shipping, and agriculture. Products were exported to US and foreign markets, primarily through its deep-water port, rivers and railroad. The area benefited from population and employment gains and enjoyed its abundant natural resources and recreational opportunities.

Over the past 30 years, however, Coos County has suffered economic decline and rising unemployment. This is largely due to decreases in the number of businesses and employees in those industry sectors that were the historic mainstay of the local economy (e.g., commercial fishing, forestry and logging, wood product manufacturing, construction, durable goods wholesalers, warehousing and storage, and water and truck transportation.) This has been exacerbated by government regulations and environmental restrictions; demographic change (i.e., loss of young adults who leave the area to find jobs and start families in Medford, Portland and other attractive areas and the "aging" of Coos County's residents); and the introduction of technology and innovation into the operating processes of nearly all industries. This last factor has rendered a number of Coos County's facilities obsolete and left some of the County's workforce without the advanced manufacturing and other technology knowledge and skills required by companies and industries today and in the future.

Despite this decline, our Team found a number of assets and amenities in Coos County which the area can use as the foundation for diversifying its economy and building a stronger economic base in the future. These include its:

- Deep-water port, the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay, the largest deep draft coastal harbor between San Francisco and the Puget Sound; has a Federally-authorized navigation channel designed and maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers and six marine terminals, seven deep-draft berths, and barge facilities
- Railroad (Purchased by the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay in 2009; a transportation asset once a short-line rail operator is on-board, necessary improvements are made, and a schedule established)
- Highway access, provided by US Highway 101 which passes through Coos County, connecting the area to Tacoma (WA) to the north and California to the south; Interstate 5, which travels between the Canadian and Mexican borders, is 40+ miles to the east of Coos County's Pacific coast
- Hard-working, industrious workforce, which was described by participants in the Economic Development Focus Groups and other Focus Groups conducted by our SDAT Team
- Attractiveness to new industrial employers (i.e., renewable energy, mining) that have or are potentially interested in locating in Coos County

- Southwest Oregon Regional Airport, which has a new terminal and regional air service via United Air Express to Portland and San Francisco.
- Medical facilities, including Bay Area Hospital, an established regional medical center with state-of-the art facilities and 130 physicians on its staff; offers a wide range of medical, diagnostic and therapeutic services in a variety of specialties
- Southwestern Oregon Community College, which offers a wide range of post-education and community outreach programming and designs vocational programs to meet employer and resident needs
- Growing, vibrant tourism industry
  - Has resulted in gains in employment and establishments in lodging, food services and drinking places between 2001 and 2009
  - Contributors are the recently-developed Bandon Dunes Golf Course and Coquille Tribes Mill Casino, RV Park and Hotel
- History and heritage, historic places and downtowns
- Natural resources, including the naturally beautiful Pacific coast, Elliot State Forest and Siskiyou National Forest, rivers and waterfalls, estuaries, sloughs, valleys, mountain forests, and sand dunes





- Sports and recreational opportunities, which include golf at Bandon Dunes Golf Course, fishing, hunting, hiking, walking, biking
- “Outdoor” quality of life
- Supportive partners, stakeholders, employers, and residents interested in economic development in Coos County. This includes the South Coast Development Council (the economic development alliance serving Coos County which completed the SDAT application, was the prime contact for our Team, and was responsible for successfully producing the SDAT Focus Groups, Town Hall Meetings and other related events); Homebuilders Association of Southwest Oregon (interested in developing a convention/expo center in Coos County), the Confederated and Coquille Tribes (the Coquille Tribe has a well-located property available for economic development purposes), and the utility companies that serve the area
- Committed partners, stakeholders, employers and residents interested in developing a sustainable future in Coos County, as evidenced by the number and diversity of people who attended the Focus Groups and Town Hall Meetings, and the letters of support submitted with the Coos County SDAT application in November 2009.

## Vision and Region

In order to move forward to build a strong economy that is competitive locally, regionally and internationally, we strongly believe Coos County must adopt an economic development vision for the Region in the future. The vision will create an image of how the Coos County Region is viewed by outsiders as well as by those living and working locally. The vision must describe and define very distinctly the type of Region it is and wants to become in terms of economic development, sustainable development, vitality, investment and jobs.

Like many locations, Coos County is already a part of different regions. It is located in the Pacific Northwest region in the US and the South Coast region of Oregon. It is critically important that Coos County define the geographic boundary of its economic development region which its vision relates to and describes. Factors to consider when defining the region are the laborsheds and driving distances of local employers; the service area of the South Coast Development Council; and the regional definitions of the area used by the State of Oregon.

The economic development vision for the Coos County Region is a critical component of Economic Development Strategy described more fully in the short, medium and long-term, recommendations described below.

## Short and Mid-Term Recommendations

The public outreach undertaken in regards to the SDAT process, from completion of the Coos County SDAT application by the South Coast Development Council in November 2009 to the Focus Groups, Town Hall Meetings, and Final Presentation by our Consultant Team on June 23, 2010, has been extremely successful. Residents, employers, government representatives, and other stakeholders from the far reaches of the county were all invited to participate, provide input and attend, and, a very diverse mix of people did.

Feedback given to our SDAT Team by participants who attended the economic development Focus Groups, Town Hall Meetings and Final SDAT Presentation was extremely positive. Many indicated they had never been invited to sit around a table to talk with such a diverse mix of people with such wide-ranging interests, some which they supported and some which they did not.

As a result, we recommend that the South Coast Development Council continue the public outreach process by sponsoring and conducting focus groups, specifically related to economic development. In this way, local residents, employers, government representatives and other stakeholders can continue their conversation about economic development in the Coos County Region, including existing and proposed projects, needs, interests, and concerns.

We also recommend that the South Coast Development Council take the leadership role on economic development initiatives in the Coos County Region. This includes the development and implementation of the Economic Development Strategy for the Coos County Region and fund-raising.

Sources for financial, technical, and in-kind assistance from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors must be identified, and on-going funding/assistance requests must be made by appropriate parties as soon as feasible so that financial and other support is obtained in a very timely manner.

Once adequate funding, technical, and in-kind assistance is obtained for implementation, an Economic Development Strategy for the Coos County Region needs to be developed in the short to mid-term by an experienced, qualified economic development/site selection consultant who preferably works with both domestic and international companies/clients.



The rationale for recommending the Region develop and implement an Economic Development Strategy is that it is competing regionally, nationally and internationally for jobs and investment by existing and new businesses as well as prospects. For business owners, consultants and other corporate-decision makers, choosing a location for a business facility is one of the most critical choices they make. Competition among countries, states, counties, regions and cities to attract their investment is intense as companies are no longer limited by local or national geography when choosing a location. Due to technology, the Internet, and growing worldwide supply chain efficiencies, they can now select from a wide range of domestic and global locations that have identified target industries and adopted economic development strategies and tools that promote and facilitate investment.

This is the competitive environment in which the Coos County Region finds itself. It is also the reason why our Team recommends the Region expeditiously develop and implement an economic development strategy in the short to mid-term.



## Economic Development Strategy

The recommended components of the Economic Development Strategy for the Coos County Region follow. A critical input into the completion of this strategy will be confidential employer and stakeholder interviews.

- Description of the Coos County Region



- **Demographic and Economic Analysis of the Coos County Region**
  - o Population, households, age, income, educational attainment
  - o Labor force and % unemployed
  - o Employment by industries and occupations: Residents
  - o Employment by industries and occupations: Employer-based
  - o Small business statistics
- **Competitive Advantages/ Disadvantages Assessment of the Coos County Region**
  - o Transportation accessibility; workforce; wages; land suitable for development; taxes and incentives; education/training; quality of life, etc.
- **Target Industry Cluster and Sector Recommendations (see following pages)**
- **Inventory of Marketable Sites (see following pages)**
- **Marketing Plan: Internal/External (see following pages)**

## Target Industry Cluster and Sector Recommendations

The recommendations which follow are based on review of the SDAT application and other data, documents and reports identified in the application; other research conducted prior to the SDAT Team's work in Coos County; the tour of Coos County and the SDAT Focus Groups and Town Hall Meetings from June 20-23, 2010; and the site selection, economic development and other experience of the Team. These recommendations must be researched and confirmed in much more detail and specific industry sectors by NAICS codes must be identified before the target industries become the central focus of the economic development marketing plan.

o **Value-added agriculture and commercial fishing:** A "natural" selection, given agriculture and commercial fishing are already important industries in Coos County. Potential industry sectors to target are:

- Organic farm products; Natural foods

- Potential: Increasing commercial demand for crab and other fish due to the catastrophic economic and environmental damages caused in the Gulf Coast and beyond by the collapse of British Petroleum's oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico

o **Shipping/Warehouse and Distribution:** A "natural" selection, given these are already important industries in Coos County; the county's location on the Pacific coast; and the facilities and amenities offered by the Port of Coos Bay and the Southwest Oregon Regional Airport. Potential industry sectors to target are:

- Port-related industries/opportunities

- General/refrigerated warehouses/storage

- Logistics consultants and 3rd party logistics providers

o **Wood products:** A "natural" selection, given forestry, logging and wood product manufacturing are already important industries in Coos County. Forestry and Wood Products is one of the five target industries of the State of Oregon. A potential industry sector to target is:

- Furniture

o **Tourism:** A "natural" selection, given tourism is currently a growing industry in Coos County. Potential industry sectors to target are:

- Eco-tourism

- Corporate, academic and retirement retreats

o **Advanced manufacturing (incorporates technology, innovation, use of computers and the Internet, etc., into the manufacturing process):** An industry sector which can build upon the manufacturing heritage of the Region in the past. The potential industry sectors to target are those that are or were likely found in Coos County in the past, meaning local residents may have some transferrable skills. Moreover, these recommended industry sectors are those that produce products that are or will be needed by companies already located in the Region or those that that will choose to locate there in the future. Advanced Manufacturing is one of five target industries of the State of Oregon.

Fabricated metal products

Machine shops

Electric and electronic equipment and components

Measuring and control devices

Commercial and industrial machinery repair

o **Renewable energy:** An industry sector already beginning to grow in the Coos County Region, and one that is supportive of the Clean Technology and Renewable Energy target industry of the State of Oregon. Potential industry sectors to target are:

Wood chip biomass

Biodigesters



## Inventory of Marketable Sites

One of the most valued competitive advantages a region like Coos County can have is an inventory of appropriate marketable sites to accommodate future development. Business owners, site selection consultants and other corporate decision-makers will quickly eliminate a location if it does not have a site available for development, and can easily tell the difference between a “farm field and an industrial site.” Representative site criteria include the following:

- o Zoned
- o Assembled; Single ownership
- o Price or rental rate
- o Surrounding uses; Image
- o Developable area outside FEMA 100Yr Floodplain
- o Wetlands delineated; other site constraints known
- o Phase I environmental



## Marketing Plan for the Coos County Region

Successful economic development marketing depends upon long-term relationship-building, internally within the Region and externally. It is important to remain on course and focused. Success is not instantaneous. The recommended components of the Marketing Plan for the Coos County Region should include the following.

### o Situational Assessment/Value Proposition

- What is the economic development Vision for the Region?
- What makes the Region a unique location for businesses?

### o Goals, Objectives and Short, Medium and Long-Term Strategies

- Business retention
- Industry attraction
- Internal expansion
- Small business development
- Entrepreneurial growth

### o Implementation Plan: Who Will Do What

### o Organization and Staffing

### o Timeframe: 5 - 10 yr. + updates as needed

### o Marketing Budget: \$1 - \$3 per capita in the Region

### o Performance Measures: Qualitative and Quantitative

## Long Term Recommendation

The primary long-term recommendation is that Economic Development Strategy be revisited and updated after five to ten years so that it is reflective of and responsive to the Coos County regional economy at that time, global economic trends, and innovation and technology advances. In the meantime, changes can be made in the strategy if the South Coast Development Council and Region finds something is not working (i.e., direct mail campaign) or marketing emphasis must be changed to a different target industry.



# COOPERATION AND PLANNING

## Background

Coos County and its municipalities have extremely dedicated staffers, board members, volunteers and actively engaged citizens. Non-government organizations (non-profits), civic groups, regional entities, and state and federal partners generally complement local government activities. In short, governments and civic partners at all levels are working to address regional and local problems. There are, however, clear opportunities to make governments more effective by increased cooperation, focusing on common needs and regional needs, and updating planning and implementation tools and techniques. Governments in Coos County need to be more effective and efficient to cope with 21st century challenges, economic stress, and decreasing budgets. Coos County is undergoing significant stress from long term economic, financial, and cultural challenges to its historically natural-resource based economy and from its significant demographic changes. At the same time, unprecedented new economic development and quality of life opportunities are becoming available. All levels of government need to use every trick they can to be responsive to these needs and make a successful transition. Any planning effort needs to start with the Vision. The Vision can build on existing comprehensive plans and the succinct vision in the application for AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team Assistance, "Building Bridges to a Sustainable Future." The vision may differ in different communities and with different constituents, but there are some common elements that should be included in any vision.

## Assessment: Planning for Downtowns and Village Centers

No community can be sustainable or economically strong if it neglects its downtown and village centers. Unfortunately, the Coos County region is not paying enough attention to these areas.

Downtowns and village centers are critical for several reasons:

- Downtowns and village centers provide a focal point to a community and a sense of identity. When community members say, as the SDAT team heard many times, that people avoid some of the downtowns, the community lacks an identity and a focal point. NO community can thrive if it turns its back on its core.
- Downtowns and village centers are economic engines, and should be acknowledged as such. These engines provide jobs and economic activities in the most sustainable way with the lowest vehicle miles generated per dollar generated.
- Downtowns and village centers are absolutely critical if the region is to retain and attract young people. The team heard numerous times of the importance of retaining young people, but the reality is that young people are footloose and tend to migrate to communities with intact and healthy centers.



There are numerous efforts in the region to focus on downtowns and village centers:

- Bandon has a healthy and vibrant Old Town and a Main Street program that are the envy of many other communities.
- Coos Bay has the most economically vibrant downtown in the County and is aggressively and successfully working to revitalize it with investment in the waterfront, new LEED certified public buildings, and façade improvements.
- North Bend is addressing its town center, with help from its Urban Redevelopment Authority and investment in its waterfront.



These efforts are not enough, however. A visitor arriving in North Bend on Route 101 is confronted with a sign (see picture of sign on this page) that directs them above from North Bend. What kind of message does that send about how we value our downtowns?

- Few Coos County SDAT participants were passionate about these places or acknowledged that they were of critical importance to their future. Downtowns can only be successful when residents and policy makers understand their importance and they are part of every conversation about economic development and sustainability.
- Few communities embrace a regional approach to downtowns. Coos County is only as strong as the sum of its parts. Until residents throughout the county care about and identify with downtowns and village centers throughout county, their revitalization and role as a community center will be limited, and with it their role to stimulate the economy and retail that attracts young people.



## Assessment: Planning for the Port of Coos Bay

The Port of Coos Bay is currently undergoing some of the most dramatic and exciting changes in decades. The Port is one of the most important economic engines in Coos County. As a generator of the export-based economy, which brings in new dollars into the local economy, it has a value above businesses which simply recycle existing dollars. The Port is also the single most important resource for high wage blue collar jobs. These are the jobs which Coos County has otherwise been losing for the past couple of decades. The Coos County region needs to do more to plan for these changes.



The Port and its private sector partners are expanding their investments in Lower Coos Bay (below the railroad bridge and the McCullough U.S. 101 Highway Bridge). This will significantly expand economic activity in Lower Coos Bay and make it the most important maritime and industrial hub in Coos County. The success of these projects will drive major parts of the economy for many years. Although there may be disagreements about specific projects, all Coos County residents should value the importance of these projects in building a strong local economy.

At the same time, businesses relying on deep draft vessels are generally no longer investing in new facilities in Upper Coos Bay. The area is difficult for such businesses because the land base is very constrained and the access is difficult for both deep draft vessels and trucks or potential train service. As such, eventually, deep draft vessels will all but disappear and it will no longer make economic sense for the Port to dredge most of this area to its current depths. Shallow draft ships (e.g., barges, pleasure craft, fishing boats) will continue to thrive in this area.

The Oregon International Port of Coos Bay often describes this as the “gentrification” of the Upper Coos Bay. This is an inaccurate choice of words since gentrification implies that new investments are displacing older activities, in this case marine activities. In Upper Coos Bay, however, it is the disinvestment that is leading the way. As deep draft maritime uses age to the point that they require reinvestment, most users seek to relocate to areas with larger sites, a shorter channel, and less site constraints. Upper Coos Bay is changing not because of displacement by new uses but because private investors are not reinvesting in the historic uses. The result is empty and underutilized waterfront areas and lost opportunities.



Fortunately, the changes in Upper Coos Bay provide enormous opportunities for community building.

- The waterfront, already so much improved in downtown Coos Bay and in downtown North Bend, can continue to be improved to serve residents and visitors and provide a focal point to the community.
- Shallow draft water dependent uses can continue to be accommodated and some, especially pleasure boating, can be expanded significantly.
- The dead spot in the urban fabric between downtown Coos Bay and downtown North Bend can be mended. This requires a commitment to the entire strip between the two cities on both sides of Route 101.
- While more non-water dependent uses along the Upper Bay can be developed, the communities should commit that only non-water dependent uses that provide public access to the water and rely on water assets should be developed (e.g. hotels). There should never be another project which does not build on water access along the waterfront. Projects such as the Safeway and Fred Meyers in Lower Coos Bay, and potentially new big boxes, waste the Coos County's single most valuable resources, access to the water. These uses can better be accommodated elsewhere.

## Assessment: Planning for a Natural Resource Based Economy and Sustainability

Some residents see a divide between sustainability and maintaining and expanding the traditional natural resource based economy of Coos County. This is a false choice and the community leaders and media needs to show it for what it is. The laissez-faire approach to natural resource extraction from forty years ago, which was so damaging to the environment, is gone and never coming back, but a sustainable approach to natural resource extraction, with a focus on keeping some pristine resources pristine, is completely compatible with sustainability, and certainly a better model than importing resources from third world economies with few environmental regulations. The Coos County region needs to do more to help build this understanding.

There will always be areas for reasonable people to disagree about what areas should be preserved in a pristine state and what areas should be used for sustainable economic benefit and what public policy should be. But these should not be seen as two different directions for the economy.



Sustainability is a holistic system that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Sustainability involves meeting three equally important goals (the three Es): Environment; Equity (social equity and community); and Economy. Leave out any of these three goals, and it is not sustainability.

Sustainability includes, but is far more than, appropriate resource conservation and preservation, green buildings, recycling, water conservation, natural forest systems, land use patterns that reduce the need to drive, healthy downtowns, and healthy communities.

Preserving our environment is critical, but preserving our environment without providing jobs and addressing poverty and addressing environmental justice is not sustainable. Economic development is critical, but economic activity that consumes our environment and the very things we all embrace is not sustainable. Social equity is critical, but meeting social needs without creating more wealth to build a healthy society is not sustainable.

Don't let the sustainability debate be hijacked into its component parts. More than anything else, sustainability is a holistic conversation.



## Vision

The Coos County region, County government, municipal government, non-government organizations, and its citizens need to demand and create better civic structures and arrangements that:

- Conserve the environment and restore its sustainable natural systems;
- Create an economy that creates wealth for the Coos County population and children.
- Create a community that embraces the needs of all, including children and young adults.

This means rethinking how the Coos County region plans and operates its governments and non-government organizations. Because government is doing a good job, citizens are not demanding that it do a better job. Doing a better job, however, is what is necessary to build a community where everyone can live, work, play, and plan and conserve together.

## Recommendations (Medium Term): Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan

The Coos Bay Estuary Management Plans are out of date and do not reflect the current needs, especially of the Lower Coos Bay and the decline of water dependent uses. The Coos County and the Coos Bay/North Bend management plans need to be revised and merged into a single relevant plan.

Creating a new single estuary management plan provides several benefits:

- It provides a regional view that allows the three relevant entities (Coos County, Coos Bay, and North Bend) and their partners (watershed associations, the Port, and the South Coast Development Council, chambers of commerce, and citizen groups) to work together to define current needs and solutions.
- The regional approach is the only way to meet all state mandates (enough area for water-dependent use and untouched areas) rationally and in a way that can address needs.
- It allows rational planning that can acknowledge that conversion of water dependent uses to non-water dependent uses is a huge and almost irreversible step that requires full community dialogue, but a step that is critical to maximize the resource. At the same time, full participation will hopefully avoid the conversion of valuable waterfront to those uses that do not need to be on the water.
- It can allow the region to begin to adapt to inevitable climate change which will certainly raise the average sea level and storm surge levels.

## Recommendations (Medium Term): Comprehensive Planning and a Shared Vision

Most of the comprehensive plans in Coos County, at both the County and the municipal levels, are out-of-date to woefully out-of-date. Although communities comply with Oregon law and pass regular amendments, these efforts do not address the real needs. Since the comprehensive plan should be creating a clear blueprint for all government actions related to development, these defects create a mismatch in resources.

Some of the battles over proposed development projects are a result of a failure to plan proactively. The time to engage the community in deciding its future is during the planning phase, when all ideas are on the table and the community creates its vision. A plan should clearly tell landowners and investors what the community wants and will support, and what it does not.

New comprehensive plans are needed to:

- Address the changes that should come out of a new Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan.
- Reflect on what should be a new and unified vision for each community and the region.
- Address the needs for new regulatory structures that create a clearer blueprint for how each region should grow.
- Minimize the need for constant plan amendments and supplemental plans that comes from out-of-date plans.
- As with a new Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan, allow the region to adapt to inevitable climate change which will certainly raise the average sea level and storm surge levels and possibly lead to other climate changes.



### Required Reading

Some wonderful planning efforts are going on in Coos County. Some recent plans that the region should be proud of and can help the region advance include the City of Coos Bay Economic Opportunity Analysis (2009), Downtown Resource Team Report for North Bend (2006), and Assessment & Recommended Actions for Downtown Coos Bay (2007). These plans should be required reading for all decision makers and community activists.

These individual plans, however, also highlight that lack of regional planning and coordination. Any downtown plan looking at Coos Bay or North Bend or their waterfront and any plan looking at a Coos Bay-North Bend walkway should also be examining the strip between those two areas. The Coos Bay Economic Opportunities Analysis is a great report in part because it looks at the entire urban growth boundary including North Bend. This begs the question of why this was not a joint effort of the twin cities in the first place.

Updating or revising the County and each municipal comprehensive plan independently, however, will only waste resources and miss the shared opportunities. We recommend a single multi-jurisdiction effort to create a new comprehensive plan. Ideally, this would be a single plan for all communities. If this is not possible, there should still be a single comprehensive planning effort even if the result is multiple plans emerging from that consolidated process.

## Recommendations (Short Term) Regulatory Techniques

Comprehensive planning is the time to decide what kind of development the community wants and does not want. The regulatory system should build on the plan and minimize case-by-case battles.

An out-of-date comprehensive plan, however, should not be an excuse for an unclear regulatory framework. Today, however, well before a new comprehensive plan is complete, there are clear opportunities to embrace and adopt tools and techniques for a clearer framework (see sidebar).



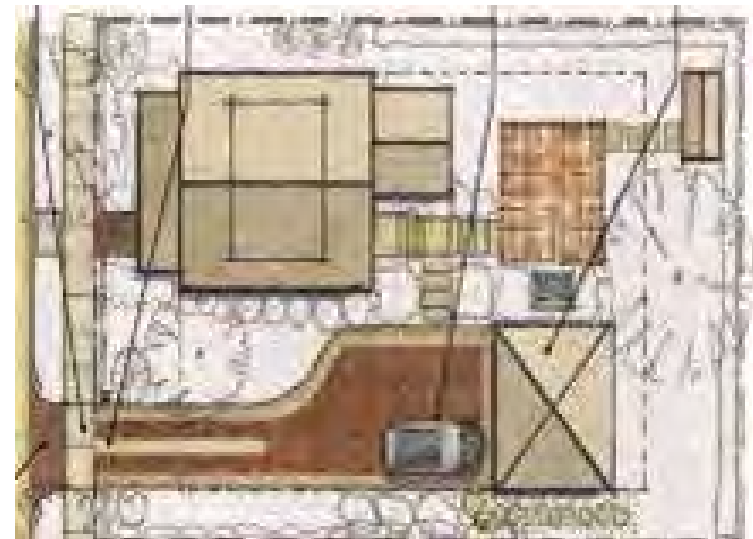
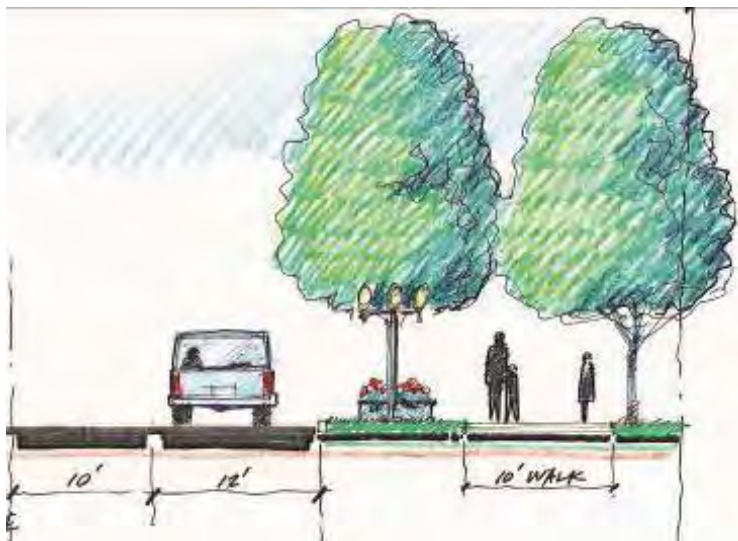
### Tools and Techniques for a Clearer Regulatory Framework

A community has a regulatory framework problem when variances are being issued, plan amendments are required to address permit requests, standards are unclear and at the discretion of a board, and conditional use permits are required for projects which the community wants.

Generally, the clearer the standards are, the better the framework. The trend is to merge use categories and allow a greater range of use while more tightly regulating the performance of those uses.

Tools to improve predictability include:

- Clear, measurable performance standards.
- Specific standards on traffic, landscaping, public improvements, the public realm, non-vehicular transportation modes, transportation demand management, aesthetic and design standards, and regulations as to the form of a site development can replace many use restrictions and discretionary permits.
- Specific standards on traffic, encouraging non-vehicular transportation modes (sidewalks and multi-use trails, and transportation demand management).
- Aesthetic and design standards, with regulations as to the form of a site development.
- Fewer use restrictions and discretionary permits.
- Clear graphics to replace words and clarify requirements.



## Recommendations (Medium Term) Regulatory Techniques

Once the visioning and planning is done, the regulatory framework, public policy for infrastructure expansion, and annexation plans, can be totally rewritten as needed. The regulatory structure should make it clearer to the development community what is expected. In such a process, it is reasonable to expect it will be far clearer regarding what kinds of projects are allowed where. There should be fewer conditional use permits and no variances required. Standards should still require detailed permitting as to HOW a project gets developed, but NOT whether or not a project gets approved.

## Recommendations (Short and Medium Term) Cooperative Sharing

Coos County and its municipalities do a great job of sharing services and working together. A very partial list of shared services and municipal agreements includes:

- Shared water service between Coos Bay and North Bend (Coos Bay Water Board).
- Joint membership of Coos Bay, North Bend, Coos County, and the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay in the Coos County Urban Redevelopment Agency.
- Emergency services Mutual Aid Agreements.
- Coos County emergency dispatch for several of the smaller municipalities.
- Joint Coos Bay/North Bend Coos Bay Estuary Management Plan.



In spite of these efforts, however, regional sharing and coordination is not as effective as it could be. (See sidebar for some of the most successful experiences from around the country.)

The easiest opportunities for sharing (short to medium term) are increased joint efforts for the ministerial and enterprise functions of government (e.g. general government, geographic and other information systems, cadastral or assessors' data, maintenance of drainage systems and other public works). These opportunities are especially clear between North Bend and Coos Bay and between smaller municipalities and Coos County government. The benefits in this area are primarily to increase cost efficiencies and allow greater specialization and expertise.

Sharing of comprehensive/estuary management planning, discussed above, represents an area where sharing is critical to create a better product, whether or not such sharing saves money or costs money.

Shared skilled and professional staffing has the potential to save money if it avoids duplication. More importantly, it has the potential to allow greater specialization and a better response to the challenges of governance.

Governments can share many functions while still retaining their own character, independence, and governance. Some of the best examples in the country are decades old and do not threaten the character of independent government.

Besides staffing and services, there are other areas where expanded Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) would be extremely useful. There are already some IGAs on pre-annexation issues, but clearer and stronger agreements would be useful:

- Agreement on ultimate annexation boundaries, especially in the entire Urban Growth Area and the North Spit, are especially critical;
- Agreement on who provides urban services and consideration of possible shared property tax revenue sharing (again, especially for the North Spit) are useful tools that can help solve what can be contentious issues.
- Agreement on shared regulatory approaches in areas that will someday be annexed or even areas that will never be annexed. Zoning boundaries and regulatory approaches should have a rational basis in planning and not exist merely because there is a political boundary.



### Intergovernmental Agreements and Regional Cooperation

Local governments have a long precedent of sharing. Emergency services mutual aid has been commonplace since the end of World War II. Many communities have agreements to share dispatch services, agree on annexation plans, share staff, and share planning.

Some states have specific statutes authorizing mutual aid and various intergovernmental agreements, but regardless of the specific authorization some form of mutual aid and other intergovernmental agreements is common in almost every local government, including in Coos County.

Some local governments around the country have gone much further in identifying and signing intergovernmental agreements that reshape government, but are far short of merging different government units. Some of the most notable of these are:

- Racine Area Intergovernmental Sanitary Sewer Service, Revenue Sharing, Cooperation and Settlement Agreement (2002): An agreement between Racine Wisconsin and its suburbs to fund shared wastewater treatment facilities and other regional improvements with a regional sharing of new property tax revenue. The agreement is projected to generate \$74 million in new intergovernmental transfers. This effort won awards from the Environmental Business Journal and the National Civic League.
- Boulder County Countywide Coordinated Comprehensive Development Plan Intergovernmental Agreement, "Super IGA" (2003): An binding agreement to share comprehensive planning and annexation throughout Boulder County, Colorado (population 300,000). This effort won awards from both the National Association of Counties and the Denver Regional Council of Governments.
- An Annexation and Revenue Sharing Agreement between the County of Albemarle and the City of Charlottesville (1982): This Agreement, the largest locally negotiated revenue sharing agreement in the country when it was signed, addressed revenue sharing and annexation. The Agreement is controversial today because it has no expiration date and voluntarily froze Charlottesville's size, but it accomplished every goal in the Agreement.
- Intergovernmental Agreement Between The Village Of Old Mill Creek, The Village Of Wadsworth And The County Of Lake Regarding The Illinois Route 173/I-94 Interchange Lake County, Illinois Rt. 173 / I-94 Interchange Intergovernmental Agreement (2006). This Agreement created coordinated planning, regulatory structures and consistent permitting for a critical area of interest to all signatory jurisdictions. The effort won awards from DePaul University Chaddick Institute and National Association of Counties.

Some are forced into such agreements because of unforeseen circumstances. For example, even while the SDAT was proceeding, the City of Maywood, California (population 28,000) announced that because of an inability to obtain liability insurance it was going to disband its 60 person police department (which also policed neighboring Cudahy) and contract out for all police and municipal services.

## Recommendations (Medium Term) Cooperative Sharing

A possible merger of Coos Bay and North Bend is especially controversial, but should be reconsidered from time to time. This has come to the voters six times and been voted down by various margins each time. Such an idea threatens the independence of each community and may never be an idea that will win support, but the benefits are so clear to an outsider, both financial benefits and the synergy of a shared vision, that it will inevitably come up again.

Like any good corporate merger, it is important to rise above personalities and identify all the potential benefits and figure out how to mitigate any potential losses to sense of community and staffing. A merger of government does not have to threaten the independence of different areas of community, force centralization of services when such centralization cannot be justified, or result in layoffs (although reductions on force through attrition or reassignment to necessary tasks would clearly be one of the benefits).

### Government Mergers and Reduction in Governmental Units

Merger of local government units is politically and culturally difficult. In many cases, there are financial savings from combined staffing, equipment, and facilities. Far more importantly, however, a unified government, when the combined cultures allow, may often be better equipped to implement a shared community vision.

It should not always be assumed that merging different units of government increases financial efficiencies. In many cases, for example, services should remain decentralized to serve the population (police substations, branch libraries, etc), but consolidation can still lead to better mission effectiveness.

Mergers, however, can be highly effective and consolidated governments can provide both economies of scale and specializations that improve services. Many large cities in the United States resulted from such mergers, but small local government mergers are more numerous and often offer greater benefits.

Some notable examples:

- Massachusetts, which is very different from Oregon in that there are no unincorporated areas, recently dissolved all county government (1998-2000), leaving no government between municipalities and state governments, but encouraging councils of government and regional planning agencies to provide some of the same functions.
- New York, with more local government units per capita than most states has been especially aggressive at encouraging local governments to merge.
- Wisconsin, which also has more local government units per capita than most states, has gone so far as to discuss dual tax rates within the same municipality to avoid the shock of property tax increases that come from a lower service/lower tax municipality that merges into a higher service/higher tax municipality.





# THE CENTRAL PLACE OF DOWNTOWN

## Background

The team was asked to look specifically at the issues in Coos County related to the several downtown districts and at issues regarding the potential for historic preservation activities. In order to effectively address these we first need to ascertain why these downtowns are important. They serve as the centers of our collective culture, at least a concentration of that culture since European-Americans first settled in the county in the mid-19th century. And because of the dense commercial and residential development here over the last century and a half, these downtowns continue to define this community to the rest of the world. When someone speaks of Coos County, or comes to visit, they cannot experience the county without experiencing at least one of the county's downtowns. The history is even more evident by simply looking at the number of buildings within several of the downtowns that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

This recognition is simply an honorific, it doesn't preclude demolition or alteration of these historic buildings - it simply implies that the buildings recognized are worthy of celebration, preservation and rehabilitation. But this is not enough. There are many more buildings in each of these and other downtowns in Coos County that are worthy of this recognition. And each of these downtowns will define Coos County for more decades to come.

Bandon – 3 buildings listed;

Coos Bay – 19;

Coquille – 6;

Myrtle Point – 2;

North Bend – 1



## Assessment

After listening to a number of participants during our visit, it has become clear that there are a tremendous number of resources and opportunities throughout the county. It has also become clear that there is not a lot of good communication between the different communities. In a county this small, it is extremely important to pool all available resources to promote the county effectively to the rest of the world. This doesn't mean that every community has to share financial resources, it simply means they have to communicate with one another and coordinate activities and information. Many individual towns/cities participate in a program or access resources that could benefit the remaining towns in the county. And the other towns are often unaware these resources even exist. For example, Bandon has an officially designated Main Street organization; North Bend is an officially designated Certified Local Government; and Empire has developed a set of good architectural design guidelines. The others need to learn what aspects of these programs could benefit their communities. There are also a number of well developed and comprehensive plans that have already been completed in several of the communities.

There are commercial core assessment plans for North Bend, Coos Bay, and Empire. There are also existing plans for waterfront development in Coos Bay, North Bend, Coquille, Charleston and Bandon. The team found that these plans have merit for every community in the region and can serve as important guiding documents for implementation. Due to the shared issues and similarities in waterfront jurisdictions across the County, the team recommends that each community examine the existing waterfront plans of its neighbors for potential models. For instance, many of the issues that apply to Coos Bay or North Bend will also apply to Coquille or Charleston. Therefore, each community should make an effort to get copies of these plans and to commit to studying them for strategies that can be applied locally.

Finally, there is a need to develop a business crisis team. Often, a long standing business in a community needs assistance making a transition to a new owner, or focusing in a new direction. When this business owner decides to close up shop, or suffers some uncertain future, having a team together to help find a new owner, or a new location that serves the community better, is often key to keeping this resource intact. This program doesn't necessarily apply to every business. It serves primarily to assist those businesses who really define a community, or a critical service that isn't provided by anyone else. The team is composed of volunteers who are knowledgeable in business loans, value-added products, commercial real estate, and marketing. The most logical organization to assist this team is the South Coast Development Council (SCDC), but it could be housed elsewhere.



## Vision

This is the easy part. Communication and collaboration are key. Learn what resources every community has and how to use them. Follow through with existing plans. Celebrate success.

## Short-Term Recommendations

1. Define historic resources. Each community can do this individually, or it can get a group together (preferred option) to coordinate a comprehensive survey and inventory.
  - Obtain technical assistance from the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office ([www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/RESRCH/index.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/OPRD/HCD/RESRCH/index.shtml)) and the Historic Preservation League of Oregon ([www.historicpreservationleague.org](http://www.historicpreservationleague.org)).
  - Identify potential grants that could pay for a professional to do the work.
  - Utilize a local government or non-profit (such as Coos Historical & Maritime Museum) to serve as the grantee.
  - Identify each potential historic district first. This will provide the community with the largest return on its investment. Following the identification of historic districts, if resources are available, identify significant individual historic buildings that aren't in a district.
2. Identify available plans. This includes both assessment and development plans that have been completed.
  - SCDC or another organization can serve as a repository for these.
  - Make them available on the internet.
  - Provide a list of plans and major topics within each plan to each community.



3. Identify outside assistance. This can be done individually in each community or (better yet) through a coordinated central person or organization.

- Contact Oregon agencies (DLCD, OHCS, Business Oregon, et.al.) and ask what services or grants are available. (SCDC may already have this information).
- Get a regional representative from several of these agencies to visit each community.
- Conduct an internet search of available community grants or other community non-profits that provide information and technical assistance. This can include international organizations like the Project for Public Spaces ([www.pps.org](http://www.pps.org)) or regional ones like Enterprise Cascadia ([www.sbpac.com](http://www.sbpac.com)). Even Wal-Mart provides some local assistance.

4. Celebrate and share information. Once more, ideally, there is a central organization or individual that would coordinate this.

- Provide regular press releases and photo ops for visits by agency representatives, or for grants obtained (or applied for).
- Commit to a regular newsletter or newspaper article (or even a public service announcement) on a local historic building or story. Do this in print and on the internet.
- Develop a simple recognition program for local cultural events. This is most easily accomplished with a "Best Of" photo contest for all local festivals. A prize is awarded for the best photo submitted by someone who attended a local event.



## Mid-Term Recommendations

1. Begin/continue work on existing plans. For both assessment and current development plans.
  - Identify the organization that will tackle the appropriate pieces of the plans for their community.
  - Form project management teams as identified in assessment plans.
  - Verify that development plans are still valid in the current economy.
  - Verify that development plans are appropriate for the location. (e.g., big box retail should not be placed next to the waterfront; there is a mix of uses in each development; there is some public access to the waterfront in each development.)
2. Develop a business crisis team. The SCDC is likely the best location to house this team.
  - Identify volunteer members to serve on the team.
  - Commit to not “stealing” businesses from other communities in the county, unless there are no other options.
  - Meet only as needed, but at least quarterly to identify businesses that are endangered or ripe for improvement.
3. Designate historic districts. This will open up opportunities for additional incentives.
  - If the town has a local landmark ordinance, the district should be designated locally and nationally. Otherwise, it should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
  - Utilize the same resources used in identifying districts to get them designated.
  - Provide information to potential developers (local and regional) about the cash and tax incentives available if buildings in these districts are rehabilitated.
4. Celebrate and share information.
  - Provide regular press releases for goals achieved in existing plans, successful business retention projects, and local landmark designations.
  - Provide regular newsletter or newspaper articles about a significant historic rehabilitation, including the value of the project and the amount of incentive provided.
  - Develop a simple recognition program for those business or property owners who make small or modest improvements to their buildings. This can, again, be a simple prize for the “Façade of the Month” program, “Storefront Window Winner” during festivals, or “Sidewalk Beautification” award.

## Long-Term Recommendations

1. Develop local assistance for business and property owners. This will likely happen initially in the larger cities.
  - Use Coos Bay's Virtual Business Incubator as a model.
  - If urban renewal funds are unavailable for the project, identify a small set of funds from another source. This could be a grant, small fee for a service, or bequest from an individual.
  - Tailor the program to each community, although it may be coordinated at the county level. One community may need to focus on building improvements, while another may need to develop business plans.
2. Provide strong design review. This should be for currently planned or new developments and will help each community maintain their unique character.
  - Identify a volunteer review panel for those communities that don't have a formal design review process.
  - Staff the panel with regional professionals, particularly contractors, designers, and businesspeople. Strive to have some on the panel that come from outside the county.
  - If this type of design review is too cumbersome, at least get feedback from OHCS and DLCD officials prior to final local approval.
  - This can start out as an advisory review, but would ultimately be codified within each community. There are towns of 200 people or less in other states that do this regularly.
  - Remember the critical pieces for waterfront development – appropriate scale, orientation, and uses. Nothing too tall, too wide, or too big. And plenty of visual and physical access.
  - Remember the critical pieces for downtown development - build to the street, get a second opinion before demolition, and get adequate historic preservation training. Keep parking on the street or discreetly tucked in back and utilize those upper floors.



3. Look at the communities through a visitor's eyes. This is not to say the community should create a place for visitors– the focus should always be on local residents first. If the community works to create a place where people want to live and work, visitors will always find it.

- Create an online survey for visitors to Coos County. And share that information with everyone.
- Provide a free weekend vacation package occasionally for those participating in the online survey. If they get the package, they have to use all the incentives provided in the package (dinners at several locations, shopping in several towns, excursions in several locations) then provide feedback, and serve as a kind of “mystery shopper” for the whole county. This initiative can be narrow or countywide.
- Ask out-of-town guests what positives and negatives they experienced while in the county.
- Have Coos County citizens find good examples of businesses, projects, and ideas when they travel, and bring these ideas home. Again, local print or electronic media can start a regular feature entitled, “Best Idea from the Rest of the World.”
- Be cautious with strategies to attract tourism. “Tourism is like fire, you can cook your dinner with it, but it can also burn your house down.”

4. Continued collaboration and celebration. The team can't stress this enough. Previous assessments in the community also identified communication and collaboration as a key asset for future improvement.

- Create regular panel discussions among all the players (governments, organizations, individuals). This can be in the format of a discussion or town hall meeting during the open house of an important project, or during a countywide event.
- Build on existing programs rather than create new ones. Add a component to an event that involves a new organization or business.
- Combine events that are struggling or that have limited volunteers - a good example of this is conducting the Coquille Reunion at the same time as the Coquille Steak Feed.
- Keep getting the word out about successful projects, building rehabilitations, festivals, and completion of assessment plans. Some of these projects take years to accomplish, so regular marketing efforts about their progress is critical.
- Maintain a countywide community calendar, so that everyone in the county knows what opportunities are available. This can be electronic, but should also be on local cable tv, radio, print, and whatever other media are available. Don't rely on local organizations to provide the information. A single entity or organization can find the information and build a database, then follow up from year to year. This could be a good opportunity for specific information-oriented high school classes or organizations.

Finally, the team encourages you to get started now. There are a multitude of other ideas from the assessment plans done for Coos Bay and North Bend. Make sure that an individual or organization is responsible for each particular task, otherwise they can get pushed off the agenda. Do the simple things first, and celebrate every single success, regardless of how simple they are.



# TRANSPORTATION

## Background

Mother Nature has always shaped not only Coos County's physical environment, but its economy and development patterns as well. The coastal Oregon community has attracted human settlers for centuries because of the natural features that provide an unusual blend of natural resources and accessibility by land, river and ocean. The following natural elements play a critical role in making this small part of Oregon a unique place along the West Coast and, indeed, the world:

- Fertile soils and temperate climates that nourish hardwood forests, cranberry bogs, and green pastures;
- Freshwater rivers, sea waters, wild dunes, and rocky beaches that provide homes for a variety of fish, crustaceans, mammals, and birds; and
- A harbor that provides easy access to the world's oceans. Because of the community's relative isolation from large metropolitan centers, the Coos County port is uniquely free of the dense urban congestion that slows down shipping traffic in the few other ports along the western seaboard.

Because of these natural assets, Indian tribes such as the Confederated and Coquilles were able to establish permanent communities in Coos County hundreds of years ago. Their sustainable agricultural practices allowed them to live off the land year-round for many generations.

Western European settlers of the 19th and early 20th centuries took control of the landscape, nearly extinguishing the native residents in the process. They brought new technologies to harvest the natural resources, particularly timber and fish. They exported the resulting products to a broad spectrum of markets via convenient ocean, river, and rail lines. Many buildings in Western cities such as San Francisco are made from Coos County timber.

For many years, jobs were plentiful throughout a range of industries such as commercial fishing, forestry and logging, wood product manufacturing, construction, durable goods wholesalers, warehousing and storage, and water and truck transportation. Prosperous merchants constructed rail lines, roads, port terminals, and ships. They also invested millions of dollars in buildings, parks, and public services throughout the County's cities and towns.

During the latter half of the 20th century, however, the economic base of the County changed radically. Several key industries were bought by national conglomerates that "sped up" the business of harvesting and exporting wood and other goods. The unsustainable scale of these industrial practices led to the overharvesting of timber and marine life, and threatened the natural ecosystem.

Meanwhile, the nation and the world were experiencing rapid political, economic and environmental changes that directly affected Coos County. Regional enterprises, large and small, were unable to keep pace with the combined challenges of dwindling natural and financial resources, increasingly complex environmental protection regulations, shifting global manufacturing markets and employment practices, and new manufacturing and shipping technologies that required ever-larger rail lines, ports, and roads.

## Assessment

The following assessment, vision and recommendations were developed with input from SDAT focus group participants, SDAT team members, and reviews of local plans and studies including the following:

- 2009 Update of the Coos County Coordinated Transportation Plan
- 2003 White Paper: Economy and Transportation Issues, Coos County Oregon
- 2009 City of Coos Bay Economic Opportunity Analysis
- North Bend Transportation Plan
- Images of America: Coos County, by Lisa Hull, Arcadia Publishing, 2007

Since the 1970s, most of the major industrial and agricultural employers have closed their doors. Coos County's traditional economic base that revolved around timber, commercial fishing, and shipping operations has become a ghost of its former self. National and global changes in industrial technologies and environmental regulations make it very unlikely large-scale operations of these types will ever return to Coos County.

However, the natural resources and regional accessibility that have always characterized this region are still as rich with possibility as always, if not more so. Its now-quiet forests, clean rivers, scenic beaches, diverse marine life, and fertile land are serving as incubators for a new array of locally-based enterprises such as organic cranberry bogs, dairy farms, and fisheries.

The water, land, and air are also cleaner and quieter than they were during age of big industry. This makes the region more attractive to retirees and tourists, as evidenced by the success of businesses such as the Bandon Dunes golf resort and the Mill Casino, and the Wild Dunes recreation area.

The County's human capital has also changed. When the traditional industries began to fail some 50 years ago, younger people started leaving the community in search of sustainable-wage jobs and careers. Meanwhile, the County has become home to an increasing number of active, healthy, and financially secure older adults and retirees who value the region's small-town amenities, natural beauty, recreational activities, affordable real estate, and excellent health care services.

In recent years, enterprising young people have begun to trickle back into the community for the same reasons. The potential for more jobs in health care and the sciences is growing at facilities such as the regional hospital and marine research center.

The types of people who built this community during the 19th and 20th centuries - strong laborers and high-powered industrial merchants - are largely gone. In their place, Coos County has drawn civic-minded older adults willing to invest their time, energy and money in the community's well-being, along with a growing number of enterprising young people who can create 21st century businesses. In addition, the Coquille Indians have regained their strength after more than a century of oppression. They now run some of the most prosperous businesses in the region, and are contributing significantly to the larger community.

## Vision

### New People + New Jobs = New Transportation Priorities

The transportation priorities of the 19th and 20th centuries centered on the need to move increasingly large amounts of timber, wood products and agricultural goods. Primary transportation facilities included rail lines, water ports and shipping lanes, and, to a somewhat lesser degree, roadways and air services. All of these facilities are still available in Coos County, but some of them will need expansions, upgrades or other changes in order to meet the needs of 21st-century people and businesses.

Unfortunately, the nation is facing a transportation funding crisis. While the cost of building and, particularly, maintaining transportation facilities is rising, the supply of national and state transportation investment revenues, principally from gas taxes, is dwindling. At present, the County also has limited local transportation funding resources from public or private sector entities. Therefore, the County must identify clear priorities for cost-effective transportation investments that will provide the maximum return on the “triple bottom line:” economic development, environmental stewardship, and human quality of life.



Shipping and industry are, and will continue to be, an important element of Coos County's economy. Transportation investments, particularly in ports and rail lines, will be necessary to meet the freight needs of targeted 21st industries such as value-added agricultural and wood products, advanced manufacturing, shipping and distribution, and renewable energy. Some of these products can be shipped locally and regionally by truck or short-line rail. Others will head for domestic or international markets via water (barges, short-sea or long-sea ships), rail (short-line and long-haul), highway (local delivery trucks and tractor-trailers), or air.

Some of the fastest-growing new County industries, however, rely less upon freight movement and more upon transportation investments that help to sustain and enhance the natural environment and community quality of life. Many successful emerging enterprises are generating revenues by attracting visitors and new residents, such as eco-tourism and recreational areas, unique local shops, crafts, organic food and restaurants, hotels, and high-quality residential development.

The economic development potential among these types of industries is heavily reliant upon the quality of the natural environment and community livability. Transportation investments that would advance these types of industries include improvements to the safety, scenic value, and character of local streets and highways; bicycle and pedestrian accessibility; public transit services; and accessibility by passenger air, and over the longer-term, rail services.

In sum, the transportation investments of most importance to the County's future will include a balanced array of improvements in two major categories:

- Improvements to the accessibility and quality of multi-modal transportation networks for tourists, visitors, and residents of all ages and abilities, particularly via roadways, bicycle and pedestrian networks, transit systems, passenger air services and, possibly, passenger rail services.
- Strategic freight mobility improvements to serve the needs of targeted industries, principally by water-going vessels, shortline and long-haul freight rail networks, and, possibly, air cargo services; and

Based upon the input from SDAT participants and team members, the following types of projects and programs appear to have the highest potential to help the community reach its goals.



## Recommendations

### Highways

Three key highways connect Coos County to the larger region, and thus play a vital role in developing its tourism industry as well as supporting industries that use trucks to transport their goods. However, the mobility (travel speed) along all of these roadways is limited by Mother Nature. State Routes 42 and 38, which provide direct east-west access to Interstate 5, traverse a hilly rural landscape. Similarly, US Highway 101, the scenic north-south coastal route that winds between forested hillsides and rocky beaches, features narrow lanes and sharp curves. The narrow, twisting configuration of these roadways makes it difficult for any vehicles, particularly freight trucks, to make the trip from major urban centers to Coos County quickly.

In years past, the lack of high-speed access, particularly to the Interstate was considered a great problem that limited the County's chances for economic development. Ideas for shortening the drive time to the interstate and thus to major cities have been explored in many past studies. The consistent finding has been that the drive to Eugene will always take about four hours, no matter how much money is spent to blast through the landscape in order to widen and straight the existing roads or even to build an entirely new connector.

However, now that the County is developing a strong tourism industry, the rural character of these roads could be considered a great asset. All three of these routes serve, in some sections, the function of "Main Street" for the communities they traverse. These corridors thus could serve a valuable function as scenic gateways to the growing number of visitor attractions that feature the County's extensive natural resources and historic, small-town character.

Roadway improvements and enhancements could be focused upon the goal of having all drivers entering Coos County enjoy the process of entering a special place, and feel refreshed and relaxed when they reach their coastal destination. Upon leaving the Interstate, drivers on Routes 42 and 38 can experience the welcome sensations of slowing down, opening their car windows, breathing fresh air, listening to the birds, and gazing at the scenery. Similarly, drivers who approach Coos County along Highway 101 can tell, by visual cues such as landscaping and signage, that they are entering a unique community well worth a visit.

Rather than fruitlessly attempting to speed drivers up along these corridors, it may make more sense to capitalize upon the benefits of driving more slowly through this lovely area. However, improvements will be needed to ensure the safety and comfort of all roadway users. There are, and will continue to be, a number of large vehicles that use these roads, including delivery trucks and tractor-trailer, and a growing number of RV's or "motor homes." At the other end of the mobility spectrum, the roadways may also attract more bicyclists as the region's eco-tourism industry grows.

To make these roadways safe for all users while also enhancing their scenic value, transportation investments would best be made in selected "spot improvements." As suggested in previous studies, some of the most cost-effective projects could include strategically located passing lanes, climbing lanes, wider shoulders, and (if absolutely necessary) realignments to reduce the angle of dangerously sharp curves along sections such as US 101 north from Saunders Lake to Hauser.

Intersection improvements including signal coordination, realignments or entirely new configurations such as roundabouts, can be focused on providing safe, efficient pathways for trucks, cars, and pedestrians in congested areas such as Bunker Hill (US 101 and Coos River Highway). As discussed in a later section, the County could also consider developing a network of multi-use paths for bicyclists and hikers, providing them with viable alternatives to narrow, heavily traveled roadway segments.

The goal is to make these roadways serve as well-functioning, safe gateways to the community - wide enough for all users to navigate safely at a consistently gentle speed, but not wide enough to tempt drivers into trying to go faster than the desired limits. To develop corridor improvement plans that support these goals, rural communities across the country have begun to use an emerging transportation planning approach dubbed "context-sensitive solutions."

The recently completed US 101/ Route 6 corridor improvement in Tillamook is an example of the CSS approach, in which engineers, planners, policy experts, politicians, agencies, and the public all work toward a consensus on strategies to improve mobility and community livability. More information about CSS is available from the USDOT-sponsored website [www.contextsensitivesolutions.org](http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org).

Regional coordination for planning and investments along these key corridors will be critical to success. The Interstate connections to Routes 42 and 38 are in neighboring Douglas County. The section of Highway 101 that encompasses Coos County is bordered by the Douglas County community of Reedsport to the north, and by the Curry County town of Port Orford to the south. Developing a multi-jurisdictional corridor plan would ensure the continuity necessary to make the improvements effective. In addition, the three counties can leverage far more resources (financial and political) together than individually.

## Short-Term Recommendation

- Create a regional alliance with Douglas and Curry Counties to work with ODOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and state and federal legislators to secure funds and develop Context-Sensitive-Solutions (CSS) corridor plans for State Routes 42, 38 and US Highway 101 through Coos County. These plans would generate detailed recommendations for multi-modal transportation mobility and accessibility improvements that support local, regional, and statewide goals for economic development, environmental preservation, and community quality of life.

## Mid-Term Recommendation

- Secure funds and complete recommended CSS projects using creative funding packages that combine the resources of federal, state, and local agencies with other public and private sector entities.



## City, Town and Village Streets and Paths

The small, historic cities, towns and villages of Coos County were all largely developed prior to the age of the automobile. Like all communities developed prior to the mid-20th century, their transportation networks were designed for pedestrians and relatively slow-moving vehicles.

The development patterns of these towns were originally oriented around a train station, a local Main Street, and/or other clearly defined centers served by gridded networks of streets and sidewalks. Short 300- to 600-foot blocks, designed primarily to ensure the maximum number of high-value corner building lots, serve to make these communities quite pedestrian-friendly. The frequency of intersections also keeps vehicle speeds fairly low while lessening traffic pressures on main corridors by providing drivers with multiple travel routes and access points to a variety of destinations.

The economic decline suffered by the County in the latter half of the 20th century had an unintended beneficial side effect: virtually no urban sprawl has descended upon this community. Although some residents complain about the lack of shopping malls and high-speed highways, others are beginning to realize the tremendous value of the region's small-town scale and locally-owned businesses.

Unlike Coos County's communities, the gateway corridors and Main Streets of many more prosperous American towns, especially in once-beautiful rural areas, have been obliterated by high-speed, congested arterial highways lined with faceless shopping malls, fast-food chain restaurants, and ugly big-box stores. City and town residential neighborhoods are checkered with vacant houses and rental properties, having lost their stable base of homeowners to suburban subdivisions.

Coos County's urban centers are also struggling with the loss of population and businesses. However, there is not (yet) a large quantity of suburban housing and shopping areas that could drain existing or new growth away from town centers. As prosperity begins to return to Coos County, its cities, towns and villages would be wise to preserve the true pedestrian scale that is now, unfortunately, found in few towns across the country.

Toward this end, redevelopment and infill projects should incorporate design strategies to avoid elements that undermine the pedestrian experience such as on-street parking lots, wide setbacks, driveways (curb cuts) between intersections, and wider streets. For example, on-street parking could be counted toward minimum parking requirements, while additional off-street parking would be relegated to rear entrances, interior courtyards, and a few strategically located parking garages. Alleyways can be used for deliveries, while mountable curbs and bicycle lanes can be used to provide room for the trucks to navigate intersections without having to widen streets and broaden turning radii.

In addition, the amount, location, and design of land uses, access points, and transportation networks along entrance corridors should be carefully controlled, so that expanded growth is connected to, and enhances, the town center rather than draining its energy. The CSS corridor studies recommended earlier in this chapter can incorporate these types of goals, in coordination with local land use plans and urban design regulations.

Finally, as noted under the highway section, the County could develop a greenway network of pedestrian and bicycle paths that serve to link area villages with one another and with key destinations such as recreational areas and the coast. These networks would combine on-road bicycle lanes and sidewalks with off-road greenways in order to create complete networks both within and between villages, towns and cities.

Toward this end, opportunities abound in Coos County for innovative rail-with-trail pathways, which provide a gently-graded alternative to the naturally hilly landscape. One of the major barriers to these types of projects in other communities has been unwillingness on the part of private rail line owners to allow any pedestrian or bicycle travel within the railroad right-of-way. Since the Coos County rail lines are owned not by a private corporation but by the Port Authority, whose mission is directly linked to the prosperity and quality of life of the community, the process of siting and building these types of greenways could be much easier and faster than would be possible in other places.

The process of developing these plans could provide a very useful opportunity to improve coordination among local bicycle and pedestrian advocacy groups. For instance, SDAT participants reported three different efforts currently underway to develop a Coos Bay walking map.

To augment the greenway plan, the County could develop a “blueway” plan to highlight water-based recreational routes and link them to the greenway network. This could be developed for the County alone, or in partnership with neighboring localities that share important waterways. As noted in the discussion of the regional highway network, regional projects can often leverage more resources than local or county-level projects.

## Short-Term Recommendations

- Work with ODOT and other public and private entities to develop or update implement existing bicycle and pedestrian plans for the County's cities, towns and villages.
- Develop local land use plans, design regulations and incentives that promote pedestrian and bicycle activity in towns, villages and cities.
- Work with ODOT, state and federal agencies responsible for parks, recreation, and open space preservation, and other public and private entities to create a county-wide and/or regional greenway & blueway plan that connects town and village pedestrian & bicycle paths to other communities, parks, recreation areas, schools, and other key destinations. It is particularly important to coordinate local resources in this process.

## Long-Term Recommendation

- Secure funds and complete recommended bicycle, pedestrian, greenway and blueway projects using creative funding packages that combine the resources of federal, state, and local agencies with other public and private sector entities.



## Public Transportation

Across America, the number and percentage of older adults (age 65+) is increasing quickly as the Baby Boomers enter their senior years. Coos County is no exception to the rule. In fact, the County has an unusually high percentage of older adults. According to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, an estimated 21% of the County's 2008 population was 65 or older, compared to 13% statewide. Thirty-four percent of households included at least one person aged 65 or older, compared to 23% statewide.

Two factors have likely contributed to the County's higher-than-average ratio of older adults: 1) younger adults have been leaving the community for many years in order to develop sustainable jobs and careers; and 2) older adults and retirees have been moving into Coos County for some time, attracted by its natural beauty, small-town amenities and excellent health care facilities.

One of the major transportation impacts of an aging population, especially in rural communities, is an increased demand for public transportation. Sooner or later, many older adults become uncomfortable, unsafe, and/or unable to handle a car. Sadly, because of the lack of viable mobility options, many continue to drive anyway, putting their own lives and those of others at great risk. An AARP survey revealed that the majority of older Americans are so afraid of losing their independence that they would literally rather die than give up their car keys. Plus, with advances in medical science, Americans are living longer than ever. Without the ability to reach daily destinations, increasing numbers of older adults will face long years of life in a lonely "twilight zone" of isolation, boredom, and decreased physical activity.

Well-functioning rural public transit services, like retirement accounts, benefit from years of incremental investments that grow along with the need for them. Communities that begin investing in public transit services now, when the majority of older adults are still able to drive relatively safely, will reap the benefits in years to come as the demand for services grows.

In addition to older adults, working-age adults and children also benefit from high-quality public transit services and related programs. As gas prices continue to rise and oil becomes an increasingly unsustainable source of fuel, public transportation and ridesharing options will become more important. This is particularly true in rural communities where people commute longer distances.

To support public transit programs, communities also need to invest in pedestrian facilities, since every transit trip begins and ends with a walk. In addition, communities are wise to focus on creating transit-friendly land use patterns, which can take a long time to mature. These include strategies such as promoting residential development and neighborhood services (such as grocery stores and banks) in town centers; locating older-adult communities within close proximity of community activities, senior centers and medical services; and making sure zoning ordinances encourage, rather than prohibit, affordable housing that allows older adults to live near adult children, such as "granny flats" and "pods."

The following recommendations are drawn from the 2009 Coordinated Transportation Plan for Coos County, as well as input from the community and team members during the SDAT process. The Transportation Coordination Working Group, scheduled to get underway as of September 2009, will play a lead role in ensuring the completion of these goals and strategies.

## Short-Term Recommendations (see Coordinated Plan for detailed strategies)

- Preserve and begin to expand existing services provided by Coos County Transit (CCAT)
- Preserve dial-a-ride services and begin to expand paratransit services
- Continue the medical transportation brokerage program
- Develop strategies to improve transportation access to employment sites for lower-income workers
- Establish central information clearinghouse for all public and private transit services throughout the County
- Develop community pedestrian plans to ensure safe pedestrian access to transit stops and locations for paratransit service drop-offs and pickups
- Develop community land use plans, regulations and incentives to encourage transit-friendly development patterns
- Initiate partnerships with tourism-related industries to identify opportunities to improve visitor transit services, such as airport shuttles and free local trolleys.
- Become involved with national organizations that offer information and advocacy for rural transit such as the Community Transportation Association of America

## Long-Term Recommendations

- Expand CCAT and other services for older adults, people with disabilities, and low-income workers
- Implement and expand upon visitor transit services
- Direct new development and redevelopment toward existing and emerging transit-friendly communities that feature a walkable scale, relatively high densities and a mix of activities.

## Port and Marine Facilities

Coos County boasts a multi-modal level of accessibility that is unique within Northwestern American coastal communities. The Oregon International Port of Coos Bay is the largest deep draft coastal harbor between San Francisco and the Puget Sound. It features a federally-authorized navigation channel designed and maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers and six marine terminals, seven deep-draft berths, and barge facilities. Currently the harbor is maintained at a depth of 36 feet.

Anticipating a projected doubling of the market for trans-Pacific cargo between the years 2015-2020, the Port Authority is working hard to plan and develop improvements to the region's harbors, waterways, and rail systems. The current thinking is that the future of the port will be less focused on load centering and more focused on efficient, cost-effective container movement. A key issue in re-inventing the port is the need to move more quickly through the regulatory and permitting process at the state and federal levels. It is very difficult to attract new industries if they must wade through a four-year legal process in order to get up and running.

The port's proximity to the ocean gives the region a distinct advantage. Compared to other Western US ports such as San Francisco and Portland, ships can make the journey from Coos County to Asia several days faster, at a lower overall cost. However, the Port's infrastructure would need some retrofitting and expansion to support modern major shipping technologies. A key question to address, concurrent with an economic development strategy, is how much expansion is needed, and where.

For example, SDAT participants raised the possibility of downscaling the Upper Bay's depth to 28 feet given the probability that future industries will need access for barges rather than large ships. This would allow for more mixed-use development and gentrification of the Upper Bay outside the Bunker Hill industrial area.

In addition, focus group members noted the growing conflict within the community about industrial development on the North Spit, which is currently zoned for this use. As the region seeks to attract more tourists and homeowners, the recreational and scenic value of the North Spit will increase. The Spit is also a federally protected environmental area because of its importance as a migratory stopover for the snowy plover.



Finally, the larger question of waterfront development was raised – how much, where, and what types are right for the waterfront areas of 21st century Coos County?

These sensitive and important topics would best be addressed in a master planning process for the County's waterfront areas, particularly in the North Spit and Upper Bay. A key goal of the process would be to envision, clarify and design an environmentally sustainable and economically viable mix of industrial, commercial and residential development.

The visioning and design elements of this process will be as important as the economic and environmental assessments, because the conflict is not only about the area's economic viability, but how it looks and feels to visitors and residents. The successful master planning process for the Charleston area could serve as a resource for planning and organizing one for the Upper Bay and North Spit areas.



## Short-Term Recommendations

- Secure funds and expert assistance to conduct a master planning process for waterfront areas, particularly around the North Spit and Upper Bay areas. As part of this process, work with the Army Corps to consider reducing the dredged depth to 26 feet in areas where more barge shipping is anticipated.
- Continue the planning process to consider longer-term major investments, including the construction of a new terminal that would replace older, obsolete facilities.
- Move forward with critical repairs and inspections to the North and South Jetties.
- Initiate dialogue with state agencies to identify ways in the regulatory and permitting process, and communications in general, could be improved to the benefit of all concerned. The State Department of Forestry was held up as a model state agency that helps communities to meet their goals instead of making projects more complicated and time-consuming.

## Long-Term Recommendation

- Continue to coordinate local and regional economic development plans and activities with transportation investment plans, particularly for ports and railways. In order to successfully attract new industries, the County must carefully line up all of its resources, investments, and development efforts toward clearly defined goals that address the scale, type and infrastructure requirements of desirable existing and new businesses.



## Railways

The Port has recently purchased the former Central Oregon & Pacific (CORP) rail line between Coquille and Eugene. This strategic acquisition has set the stage for the County to create and expand an impressive intermodal array of interlinked freight services that span sea, river, rail, highway, and air cargo modes.

Some key investments will be needed to bring the rail line up to acceptable Class 2 standards for long-haul and/or short-line rail services to make freight connections between Coos County and Eugene. This includes an array of projects from replacing ties and adding roadbed ballast to rebuilding tunnels, trestles and double-tracking.

The Port Authority estimates that \$260-\$340 million will be needed to allow container-industry freight to move cost-effectively at a consistent speed of 25-50 mph with one crew, as opposed to the current 10-25 mph speed which requires a crew change in Myrtlewood. A key issue with this strategy, in addition to securing the funds, is to coordinate efforts with the state historic preservation office and other related groups in order to modernize the line in ways that do not damage the area's historic, cultural, and natural environment.

There is some debate in the community about the efficacy of improving the southern-most segments of the rail corridor, given the possibility that the few existing industries such as GP and Oregon Resources may be replaced at some point by new industries that do not depend upon rail freight. However, it is wise to think carefully about abandoning an existing rail line, even one that needs improvements. Once this type of asset is lost, it is very difficult to bring back. Although the existing economic model is clearly changing, it is possible that newly emerging industries and re-developed communities could take advantage of rail access for freight and/or passenger services. This decision should be made through a facilitated discussion with assistance from experts who understand economic development and rail transportation issues.

## Air Transportation

The Southwest Oregon Regional Airport has achieved many of the goals of its 2002 Master Plan, most notably the opening of an attractive new terminal and expanded regional passenger air services via United Air Express to Portland and San Francisco.

A new Master Plan will soon be underway. One of the most important long-term questions to be addressed in the updated Master Plan is whether to expand the runway in order to accommodate larger aircraft. This could considerably expand the range of air travel services for passenger and freight. However, this type of major investment takes years to plan and fund.

In the meantime, air travel technologies are changing rapidly, especially in light of the worldwide need to reduce oil consumption. It is possible that new technologies such as VSJs will emerge quickly, allowing faster planes to land in smaller regional airports than is possible today. As the airport director noted during one SDAT discussion, “what is considered science fiction today may well be reality in 20 years.”

By taking a creative approach to the question of airport expansion, the Southwest Oregon Regional Airport can serve as a national leader among its peers in supporting and advancing cost-effective strategies for expanded passenger and cargo air travel options within the airport’s current footprint.

It will also be important to continue coordination between the Southwest Oregon Regional Airport with the Bandon State Airport. Owned by the Oregon Department of Aviation, the public Bandon Airport is primarily associated with the nonprofit Bandon Aero Club, a local recreational group. A few years ago the Port and Airport made a proposal to acquire the airport, but the decision was made to keep it under the management of the ODA.



## Short-Term Recommendations

- Embark upon the update of the Airport Master Plan.
- Continue building productive relationships with related agencies such as the Oregon International Port of Coos Bay and the Bandon State Airport

## Long-Term Recommendation

- Expand airport passenger and cargo services, ideally within the footprint of the existing airport runway and layout.
- Implement other recommendations of the updated Airport Master Plan.





# CONCLUSION

## A Future of Opportunities

The SDAT Team is wholeheartedly positive about Coos County's potential future. The region represents a special place in America. It has a wealth of local resources that form the basis for a unique quality of life, including a beautiful and varied landscape, a common heritage and folklore, and a series of downtown communities that not only provide authentic community centers for future commerce, but can serve as the hub for the community's production of its self-image and identity. The region is also home to a wide variety of civic institutions and organizations that possess the talents and resources necessary for convening and facilitating regional public processes moving forward. Most importantly, Coos County's citizenry has voiced its desire and intent to participate in the regional reinvention process. Therefore, the team believes that all of the elements necessary for success are present in Coos County. It's up to local civic leaders to build upon these early successes and convene the community for collaborative work moving forward.

The team has enjoyed working with the many local jurisdictions, civic institutions, non-profit organizations and citizens of the region during the SDAT process. The process demonstrated the community's ability to convene a broader regional conversation about sustainability – the challenge moving forward will be to sustain that dialogue and expand it to include a regional visioning process, more formal, integrated comprehensive planning, and collaborative work toward implementation of the key priorities identified during this process and previous initiatives. The team is confident that local resources, when combined, will have a transformative impact on the county's strategic initiatives, and should help alter the way the region conducts its public business in the future.

Community success will require *everyone's* contribution in the future. Successful communities have the ability to convene the public for broad conversations about their future and form novel partnerships across sectors – government, the private sector, and the non-profit sector – in order to leverage all of the combined community resources and talents to produce and realize a common vision. By working together across the Coos County region, and forming robust partnerships that maximize the available resources and focus them strategically, we believe Coos County can achieve its dreams for a revitalized economy, strengthened environmental health, and a renewed sense of community.





# VISIONING 'HEADLINES' EXERCISE

## Raw Data

The SDAT process included a town hall style public meeting which included several dozen residents and stakeholders. The meeting was structured around a visioning exercise that asked participants to envision future headlines which capture the County's success. Participants wrote their headlines on index cards and then each had a chance to explain and describe what their vision for the future of Coos County meant. Conversations like these are an important precursor to a formal visioning process for the region, and therefore the team felt it was important to include the raw data from the visioning exercise as an appendix to the report. The graphic on the opposing page captures the main issues and output from the exercise in a 'word cloud' representation. The larger the font, the more participants spoke to that particular topic. What follows below is the raw data from participants' index cards.



Upgrade our transportation: air; rail & shipping; bus. Upgrade road to I-5. "Coos County- A model hub of air, rail, and shipping."

"Coos County Convention and Expo Center celebrates grand opening."

Define what industry or business we are willing to accept and what impacts on the region- what tax incentives or concessions are we willing to offer?

Exploit technology resources from University of Oregon, OSU, SWOCC.

Each school district adds one new school because of increasing enrollment. Coos County wins award for most sustainable county in US.

1) Coos County is recognized as a Mecca for entrepreneurial activity. 2) County unemployment rate is nonexistent. 3) Riley Ranch voted most popular ATV park in US. 4) Rail line extended to service lumber mill in Powers.

"Historic Downtown listed on Federal Registry, promotes history of the area."

Business area in Coquille doubles. Relives river travel, history of boat travel, boat trips between Bandon and Coquille. Fishing abounds in the Coquilles.

Audubon Society nominates Coos Watershed as premier bird watching site on West Coast.

Coos County named premier medical center.

Coos Bay/North Bend merge resources.

Solar shingles installed on 1000th home in Coos County.

Quadruple capacity of communications hits Coos County.

1) Community gardens established 20 years ago are: a) self sufficient & b) Sale of produce. 2) Bart system as a viable practice in Coos County. 3) Reintroduce arts back into public education. Art classes as a regular part of the education program for all grades!

Coos County Eugene shuttle profitable at last.

The 5000th train hits Chicago from Coos County.

LNG successfully completes 15th year.

Finally a decent road to Roseburg.

Expo Center celebrates 20th year of service to community.

Community Co-op bakery sustains locals, makes profit, and inspires the world.

Increased number of art cars in Coos County join an Art parade between Seattle and San Francisco.

Families in Coos County make decent living wages- prosper beyond imagination.

Strong, viable education programs for all children.

Local sisters Naia & Sinead show all how they, with a group of community members, can sustain themselves by working on interdependent farms to trade and sell produce, local meats, eggs, wool, etc.

1) Completion of Pony Creek/salt marsh. Restoration ending 60+ years of Pony village mall. Dikes to be removed this weekend. 2) 2050 goal of zero population growth realized for Coos County. 3) Coos County library demolition will begin this summer in preparation for Mill Creek Salt Marsh restoration.

Extensive Salt Marsh restoration in CB to be completed this summer. "Coos Bay becomes the wildlife and recreation capitol of the Pacific NW after extensive estuary and watershed restoration."

Walmart and big box stores to pull out after county implements local economy capacity building plans.

Healthy, livable environment- protected and appreciated by all- locals and visitors.

Local Farms for local economy- "For the first time since Native occupation, Coos County becomes fully self-sustainable for food production."

Proud of where they live and their community.

CB NB Boardwalk 20 year anniversary.

Northwest world class port in small coastal community. To include railroad functional dock at Hollering Place (Empire) to accommodate tall ships and cruise ships.

Active sustainable management of our federal timberlands providing jobs in forest health.

Fully utilize our industrial areas. The North Spit Cedco property, airport industrial park. COMMUNITY PRIDE.

Headline: Oregon's best kept secret. Basing our business growth on our natural resources - Recreation based on what our communities can support.

Voted most desirable area to bring a business to. City supports excellent education and infrastructure. Police and fire- safe place to love, and a quality life style.

Lowest unemployment in the state. Fully utilizing industrial areas- North spit, airport business park, Cedco property, downtown areas.

Coos Bay's effort to re-establish salt water marshes in estuary shows progress.

Efforts to improve quality of life in Bay Area results in increased immigration of retirees.

Ongoing efforts to attract new industries compatible with Coos Bay estuaries are beginning to show results.

Coos County officially blackberry capital of the world!

Arts are thriving in Coos County.

New marina brings in sailing enthusiasts.

Community that attracts professionals because of good schools and services.

Privileges of natural environment along with living wage jobs.

Community that is able to keep young people here and attract young people to the area because of good jobs.

Small acreage (plot) farming versus the required 80 acres.

Sustainable fisheries.

Wind power keeps schools profitable and in the black.

Coos Bay produces more power than it consumes with wind, solar, biofuels, and sustainable recycling programs.

Mini Micro-grids provide energy and profits to Coos Bay Area- a model for the nation.

County rates best in nation for car charging facilities.

Recreation has reached a pinnacle on the Oregon Coast.

The coastal community of NB/CB is 100% sustainable and energy efficient with the use of solar, wind, biofuels, and recycling.

Coos County communities have the premier plan for earthquake proofing buildings and bridges.

1) Thriving and bustling downtowns. 2) Thriving and highly regarded educational system. 3) Balanced Economy- Industry, tourism, service, professional.

1) Highway infrastructure from Coos Bay to Ontario. 2) HW infrastructure (Bay and Ocean). 3) Strong regional medical facility.

The Little Town That Works: Having been spared from sprawl we thoughtfully built a sustainable, livable and prosperous community.

Coos County recognized as #1 County for youth entrepreneurship.

The Music Coast- a smattering of festivals grows into year-round cultural tourism.

Beauty and the beast- where a vacation wonderland overlaps with brawny industry.

Quiet little getaway by the water (for vacationers).

Heritage reclaimed (cherishing and maintaining great old buildings).

Arts magnet- home of an annual event specializing in one genre that we're famous for.

Economics- China has agreed to change the way they control their money! This should help with US exports and imports! Are we in our area capable to take advantage of this economic change? The tragedy of the gulf opens markets in NW. Here in our area limited transportation out to back field that market!!!!

1) Coos Bay survives 9.2 earthquake! 2) Young families continue to enjoy benefits of enhanced connectivity to I5 corridor. 3) Coos County schools recognized nationally for exemplary performance. 4) Coos Bay region takes advantage of China's monetary policy with increased trade. 5) Container vessel docks at Coos Bay's North Spit, the cargo will be in Chicago within 80 hours (record time). 6) Downtown Coos Bay/ North Bend celebrates 25 years of historic preservation and museum opening. 7) Coos County recognized as first energy independent county in Oregon. 8) Coos County's school district (only one district) celebrates 25 years of growth and success.

The international port of Coos County: Wow! What a success!

Coos County heading the way on the west.

Coos County: The jewel of Oregon- Families return to stay and live!

Coos County, the heart of recreation.

Coos County, the heart of tourism and great seafood.

Coos County, great waterfront shopping and activities.

Local green economy provides employment for all who live in this relaxed community.

Area prospers while preserving community of cooperation.

Interconnected cottage industries focus on quality of life in pristine environment

Area prospers while preserving environment.

Oregon forests the envy of other states.

Coos Bay a magnet for oyster lovers.

Photo shows many residents fishing from downtown waterfront.

Apple opens manufacturing design plant in Marshfield to employ 500 skilled workers and engineers.

Railroad from Coquille to downtown Eugene regularly used.

Marshfield CB/NB celebrates 20 years of unified government.

Charleston fishing village attracts thousands of visitors each year.

Graduating Powers student sells business for \$250,000 to finance college education.

SOCC becomes 4-year college, provides skilled workers that are the basis for clean industry.

World newspaper publishes, reaches 100,000 subscribers on the South Coast. This great increase due to increase in prosperity from manufacturing and business in the area.

Native species center at Powers High School celebrates 30th year and awards 5 4-year scholarships to college students in natural resources.

"Charleston town center opens today: small shops, condos replace dying fishing village."- Shantytown trailer parks are replaced with low-cost garden apartments. Green spaces interspersed with shopping, restaurants, marinas.

Beautiful Boardwalk connects North Bend to Coos Bay- Waterfront Development takes off as new businesses open.

Finally- A new City Council that listens to the constituents is voted into office. At the top of their agenda- Attract businesses compatible with our quality of life.

Finally- Bay Area opening of an environmentally safe, sustainable business that pays family wages to 300 local employees.

New local business attracts area youth with opportunities for recreation and entertainment at a reasonable charge.

New medical facility attracts top-notch specialists to serve geriatric population.

Rainforest Research Reserve receives \$2 million grant for year-long study of plants of potential medicinal use.

Rails to Trails Conservancy rehabilitates RR track corridor for recreational use.

Alternative transportation to connect inland/ up and down coast without getting into a car. Or if driving that roads are safe and efficient.

Award winning Senior Gathering Center with diverse activities.

Park/walking trail up and down coast to encourage outdoor recreation.

Graffiti used as art. Living art in and out permitted and allows people to express themselves and not get arrested.

Education system (k-20) that has more from the 1950's. Active and practical, learn by doing.

A living community with all ages with focus on growing food and animals. Lots of possible ways to use the above for economic development. Grandparents to kids working together.

Cool retirement village opens with nightly music at the lounge.

Bandon Dunes opens new course on the North Spit.

Waterhauser Reprod matures just in time to save town.

Fun Festival Regatta to see record number of participants at Coos Bay Waterfront this weekend.

Oregon Coast Musical Festival continues to impress.

Coos County Lodge and Convention Center celebrates ten years.

Music on the Bay to feature a free concert by U2....Bono so impressed by Coos Bay's hip sustainable community that he agrees to perform at Music on the Bay's September concert series.

Mingus Pond Salmon Run expected to be largest ever (Daylight Min Creek).

Local 6th grader lands state-record bass at Empire lakes.

McCullough Bridge to Coquille Bike Trail celebrates 20th Anniversary.

Direct connection between city hall and boardwalk.

Coos County streetscapes comparable to West Palm Beach or Monterey, CA.

Port of Coos Bay is again a major West Coast port.

We are again allowed to log federal forests on a sustained yield basis.

Oregon Coast Music Association has its most successful year.

Housing Remains affordable.

Recreational salmon harvest up 10% again.

Twentieth anniversary of the City of Coos Bend!

Coos County reaches its sustainability goals.

50% or more of the Coos County families have young children.

Work that has value; local economy booms; vibrant community.

Coos County- vibrant educational system.

Resurgence of sustainable nature resources industry.

All organic agriculture in Coos County.

Air now breathable.

Train to Portland.

Record Salmon runs.

Coos County gains 500 jobs.

Federal timber lands given to harvesting.

The SDAT process, which was completed and revisited every year ever since has been a proven success, helping the county and area develop natural resources, human resources, and economic resources to wise use.

Education k-12 ranks in upper % in state as our investment in our infrastructure and children pays the expected dividends.

Coos County adds another 500 family wage jobs.

Coos County ranked #1 in livability and entrepreneurship in Inc Magazine.

1) Coos County ranked most livable region; 2) Coos County unemployment at all time low; 3) School overflowing from now enrollment; 4) Hydrogen fuel stations online.

New Schools improvements; young folks jobs with future; improve rail service; develop hydrogen fuel cars and re-charging stations.



# THE SDAT TEAM



## ***Søren Simonsen, AIA, AICP, LEED AP - Team Leader***

Søren Simonsen is an architect, city planner, and environmental educator. His company, Community Studio, works to create beautiful, meaningful and sustainable places for people throughout the western United States. He has spent the past 25 years in design, construction and development, and has received over 30 awards recognizing his contributions including LEED Platinum Certification for the Swaner EcoCenter (2009), the AIA Young Architect Award (2006), Salt Lake Chamber Small Business Award (2006), the AIA Utah Firm of the Year Award (2000), and three Best of State™ Gold Medals for contributions in community development. Søren is a frequent speaker and lecturer on topics of urban design, business development, community and sustainability, and environment.

Søren is active in professional and community affairs. He was elected to the Salt Lake City Council in November 2005, and serves on the Transportation, Planning, Communication & Outreach, Budget & Finance and Small Business legislative subcommittees. He served in 2008 as chair of the Regional and Urban Design Committee for the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and has also served on the national AIA Advocacy Committee and Sustainability Task Force. He is a former chair of the Salt Lake Historic Landmarks Commission, chair of the Salt Lake Mayor's Environmental Advisory Committee, chair of the Utah Arts Festival Board of Directors, chair of the Parley's Trail Advisory Committee, and Fundraising Committee Chair for the Center for Documentary Arts, a founding partner of The Leonardo at Library Square in Salt Lake City.

He is an active participant and contributor in the American Institute of Architects, American Planning Association, Urban Land Institute, US Green Building Council, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Utah Heritage Foundation, and Local First Utah. Søren is married, with three children, and also enjoys cooking, photography and outdoor recreation.

## **Wayne Feiden , FAICP - Planning & Cooperation**

Mr. Feiden is the planning director for the City of Northampton, Massachusetts. His work helped Northampton become one of the most sustainable communities in Massachusetts, based on the states scoring system for municipal sustainability efforts. Mr. Feiden has also worked sustainability projects in Hungary (Eisenhower Fellowship), South Africa (University of Venda-Fulbright), and as a consultant for other municipal clients. His publications include numerous research papers, monograms, and planning studies. Mr. Feiden is an adjunct faculty at the University of Massachusetts and Westfield State College.

Mr. Feiden is a Fellow with the American Institute of Certified Planners. He has a B.S.N.R. from the University of Michigan and a Masters in Regional Planning from the University of North Carolina and 27 years of planning experience. Mr. Feiden previously served as a leader for the AIA design assessment teams in Staten Island and Tampa. He participated on AIA teams in Lake Havasu, AZ; Longview, WA; Alpena, MI; New Orleans, LA; Central, LA; Culver City, CA; Port Angeles, WA; & Virginia Beach, VA.



## **Hannah Twaddell, AICP - Transportation**

Hannah Twaddell has more than 19 years of experience building consensus and developing plans and studies for local and regional governments. Hannah is skilled at public facilitation, writing and teaching and has led research and training courses on land use and transportation integration for the National Academy of Sciences and FHWA. She served for several years as Assistant Director of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission and for more than a decade as chief staff to the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization in Charlottesville, Virginia. Hannah is a prolific writer and contributes regularly to "Forward Motion," the transportation planning column for the nationally distributed Planning Commissioners Journal, and is past Newsletter Editor for the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association.

### ***Nancy Steele, PhD - Water & Environment***

Nancy Steele is Executive Director of the Los Angeles & San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council. The Watershed Council is a collaborative center for watershed research and analysis in southern California, focusing on the Los Angeles basin. Working with agencies, politicians, community organizations, businesses, and academics, the Council connects the diverse water and land conservation community in order to influence public policy in pursuit of a sustainable future. Prior to joining the Watershed Council, Nancy developed and implemented regulations to reduce emissions from in-use heavy-duty diesel trucks and buses at the California Air Resources Board (ARB). In her environmental career, Nancy has enforced California's hazardous waste control laws; researched environmental lead contamination from lead-acid battery recycling plants, health and environmental costs of recycling and waste management of electric vehicle batteries, potential health and environmental impacts of leaf blowers, and lead hazard levels, focusing on reducing childhood lead poisoning. Dr. Steele served as the ARB's Deputy Ombudsman for southern California from 1997 to 1999.

Nancy is a member of the board of the Marine Conservation Research Institute; Vice-Chair of the Upper Los Angeles River Steering Committee; member of the Leadership Committee of the Greater Los Angeles Integrated Regional Water Management Plan; and member and past vice-president of the Women's Environmental Council. She was an appointee to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Advisory Board, representing unincorporated communities of Altadena and Crescenta Valley, and member of the Altadena Crest Trails Restoration Working Group.

Nancy currently is president and founder of the Arroyos & Foothills Conservancy, a nonprofit land trust. In addition, she and her husband manage about 150 beehives for pollination and honey & beeswax production. Dr. Steele earned her Doctorate of Environmental Science and Engineering from University of California, Los Angeles.





### ***J. Todd Scott, AIA – Downtown Centers***

Todd Scott is a licensed architect who specializes in historic preservation and downtown revitalization. His preservation experience includes stints with Oklahoma City, as historic preservation officer, and with King County, Washington, where he currently provides assistance for historic properties in that county and sixteen suburban and rural communities. He recently completed the intensive level survey of 175 historic barns on the Enumclaw Plateau and 200 historic residential and commercial properties in Kent, both in King County.

He has been involved in the rehabilitation of hundreds of structures in dozens of small downtowns as the state architect for Oklahoma Main Street and for DesignWorks, an arts-based design charrette program. Todd also served as community development director and assistant city manager for the city of Astoria, Oregon. He has presented at numerous state, regional, and national conferences on topics ranging from sustainability in design to mounting grass roots campaigns for endangered structures.

Todd has served on the boards of various non-profit agencies including heritage organizations, community development corporations, urban renewal authorities, and architectural foundations.

### ***Joan Herron - Economic Development***

Joan Herron is the President of Herron Consulting, with extensive experience consulting with private, public and not-for-profit clients throughout the United States and abroad. She has successfully managed hundreds of studies for states and communities, land owners, developers, port authorities, economic development organizations, companies, and community groups. Ms. Herron formerly directed consulting projects at Urban Investment and Development Co. in Chicago, Trkla Pettigrew Allen & Payne/URS and at the Fantus Company. She was a Principal in Lockwood Greene's Global Business Location and Economic Development Consulting Group, and lead the practice in Chicago specializing in community economic development consulting and corporate facility site selection. Site selection projects have included facilities for American Express, Tate & Lyle, Northeast Oklahoma Automotive Coalition, Organics LaGrange and Taco Bell among others.

Following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, she was an invited participant in the Gulf Coast Reinvestment Forum sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the International Economic Development Council, and the Governors Round Table on Gulf Coast Reconstruction. She served as economic development consultant to the Port of Lake Charles, Louisiana, City of New Orleans, and the Port of South Louisiana.

Joan has published numerous articles on economic development, site selection and industrial site certification programs, and retail redevelopment projects. She is a recognized speaker at conferences and seminars. Recent topics include: "Shovel Ready Sites", "Changing Demographics and the Aging Workforce", "Business Retention and Expansion", "Marketing Consulting" and "Community Competitiveness."



## AIA Center for Communities By Design Staff

### ***Joel Mills, Director, Center for Communities by Design***

Joel Mills serves as Director of the Center for Communities by Design at the American Institute of Architects. He provides process expertise, facilitation and support for the Center's Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) and Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) programs. In this capacity, he works with AIA components, members and partner organizations to provide technical assistance to communities across the country on sustainability and urban design. His expertise is in civic health. His experience includes community-based technical assistance, process design, facilitation and training across a number of fields including juvenile justice reform, local government, education, family strengthening, civic media and emergency management. During the 1990s, Mr. Mills spent several years supporting international democratization initiatives by providing technical assistance to parliaments, political parties, local governments, civic and international organizations. His scope of work included constitutional design and governing systems, voter and civic education, election monitoring and administration, political party training and campaign strategy, collaborative governance, human rights and civil society capacity building. He maintains active memberships in the International Association of Facilitators (IAF), the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), and the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation (NCDD). He also serves on several public and private boards. His work has been featured on ABC World News Tonight, Nightline, CNN, The Next American City, Smart City Radio, The Washington Post, and other major media sources.

### ***Erin Simmons, Director, Design Assistance***

Erin Simmons is the Director of Design Assistance at the Center for Communities by Design at the American Institute of Architects in Washington, DC. Her primary role at the AIA is to provide process expertise, facilitation and support for the Center's Sustainable Design Assistance Team (SDAT) and Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) programs. In this capacity, she works with AIA components, members, partner organizations and community members to provide technical design assistance to communities across the country. To date, Erin has served as staff lead on over 30 design assistance teams. Prior to joining the AIA, Erin worked as senior historic preservationist and architectural historian for an environmental and engineering firm in Georgia, where she practiced preservation planning, created historic district design guidelines and zoning ordinances, conducted historic resource surveys, and wrote property nominations for the National Register of Historic Places. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Florida State University and a Master's degree in Historic Preservation from the University of Georgia.

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**Sandra J. Geiser-Messerle**

Executive Director

South Coast Development Council

**Jon Barton, Chairman, FONSI**

(Friends of New and Sustainable Industry)

Chairman of the South Coast Development Council

Commissioner, Southwestern Oregon Regional Airport

Southwestern Oregon Community College Foundation

**Catherine H. McKeown**

Commissioner, International Port of Coos Bay

Board of Directors, Energy Trust of Oregon

**Dr. Patty Scott, President**

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**Michael Graybill, Manager**

South Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve

**Jennifer Groth**

Treasurer, Coos Bay Schools Community Foundation

Chairperson, Coos Waterfront Walkway Partnership

President, Trustee, Coos Historical & Maritime Museum

Member, Southwestern Oregon Medical Alliance





