

# Latino Small Businesses and Downtown Development



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# Latino Small Businesses and Downtown Development

## INTRODUCTION

In January 2010, the City of Woodburn updated its Downtown Development Plan, the document that guides development in downtown Woodburn. This report builds upon some of the strategies and action items in the Woodburn Downtown Development Plan, however, this report provides focuses upon the Latino businesses downtown and how the entire community can better support them. For example, both reports discuss the need for the developing a marketing plan to promote businesses downtown, facilitating retail workshops for business owners to assist in improving storefronts and facades, and improving safety downtown, but this report discusses the specific needs of Latino business owners and how these issues affect their businesses.

The Latino population in Oregon increased significantly over the past two decades—from just 4% of the state’s population in 1990 to 12% in 2010 (US Census).

This change is impacting the social, economic, and cultural landscape of many Oregon communities. For example, Woodburn’s Latino population nearly double between 1990 and 2010 (33% in 1990 to 60% in 2010).

As long-time Oregon residents watch new shops that cater to Latinos open in their downtowns, as well as more Latino individuals and families at area parks, plazas, and stores, they must confront change that is unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable. However, in many struggling communities, the increase in Latino businesses offers the potential to revitalize downtowns and provide jobs.

Despite the rapid increase of Oregon’s Latino population, and the growing contribution of Latino small businesses, there is little documentation or measurement of this impact on Oregon communities. Many Oregon agencies and organizations are interested in the contributions and challenges facing Latino business owners and the communities where they live so that they can better understand how to support Latino entrepreneurs.



Figure 1. A woman outside a “tiendita,” a small grocery store, in downtown Woodburn. To the right is a pallet of corn husks used to make tamales.

Photo: Kai Bates

### Project Purpose and Methods

The University of Oregon's Economic Development Administration University Center (through the Community Planning Workshop, or CPW) is implementing a multi-year project investigating how communities can support a growing Latino business population in Oregon, given the challenges of integrating Anglo and Latino business practices, culture, and language. The purpose of this report is to explore the contributions that Latino business owners make to downtown Woodburn and the challenges they face. Through our research we developed six opportunities to support Latino small businesses and their revitalization efforts in the downtown. This report is not a strategic plan for the City of Woodburn; rather it is a compilation of ideas that the City, business owners, organizations, and other agencies might choose from to better serve the Latino population.

While this project was specific to the City of Woodburn, the findings may be applicable to other communities across Oregon. Woodburn was chosen as a case study because of its majority Latino population and its historic downtown. CPW used the following methods to analyze this case study:

- Interviewed 40 individuals, including business owners (Latino and non-Latino), national and statewide small business and nonprofit organizations, Woodburn City Staff, political officials, community members, and downtown business owners
- Conducted a quantitative analysis of U.S. census and economic data, and
- Conducted site visits. Team members spent extensive time in downtown Woodburn documenting observations and experiences.

### CONTRIBUTIONS OF LATINO RESIDENTS AND BUSINESS OWNERS TO DOWNTOWN

Latinos have long been active in Oregon communities, contributing to the state's economy, identity, and community placemaking efforts. As the Latino population in Oregon grows, more and more cities will experience an increasing Latino influence in the social and business sectors. Although Latino businesses are contributing to the local and state economy, the economic impact is not easily quantifiable due to lack of financial documentation and the prevalence of informal business practices. Despite this lack of economic data, it is clear that Latino businesses are contributing to communities throughout Oregon economically, socially, and culturally.

#### Economic Contributions to Downtown

Latino small businesses are contributing to the economic activity and vitality of downtowns through entrepreneurship, reinvestment in disinvested space, and drawing a regional customer base. One City Council member in Woodburn acknowledged the transformation and contributions being made by Latino entrepreneurs in the downtown stating,

"If Latino business hadn't moved in, the downtown would be vacant."

**Entrepreneurship:** Not only do Latino business owners fill vacancies downtown – thus promoting a stable economic base and property values – some actually prevent vacancies by persisting despite negative economic returns. As the national and state economy struggles, few small business owners are considering investment and expansion of their business. This is not the case for many of Woodburn's downtown Latino business owners. Some business owners are taking advantage of the current market by offering competitive pricing with the hope that an expanded customer base will allow for future expansion. Others are investing in their businesses by expanding product lines *in unique and creative ways*, such as taking advantage of social media as a revenue channel.

**Reinvestment in disinvested space:** Latino business owners also contribute to the economic viability of place through the work they do to create an inviting and welcoming storefront. Latino business owners paint and renovate the interiors (i.e., heaters, flooring, fixing toilets, painting, etc.) and exteriors (i.e., painting) of their buildings and take over the maintenance of street fronts and alleyways. As part of the City of Woodburn's Front Street investment, benches and planters were added along the sidewalks. Some Latino business owners have adopted the planters and now handle all upkeep.

Latino community members are also contributing to the regeneration of downtown, not through traditional means of civic engagement, but through their presence. Due to the draw the Latino businesses provide, the Latino community is frequenting these once vacant stores and bringing a vibrancy to a formerly disinvested place. As a result of the Latino business presence in downtown, the level of safety has increased.

**Drawing a regional customer base:** Latino businesses contribute to the economic vitality by not only catering to the local population, but also by attracting customers from outside the area. According to most business owners interviewed, customers from outside of Woodburn make up nearly half of the downtown's customer base. While all those interviewed said Latinos account for between 80% and 90% of their clientele, many of the business owners spoke of non-Latino customers from outside the community interested in traditional, authentic Latino food and other products.

### Social and Cultural Contributions to Downtown

Many Latino businesses act as social hubs, a role that "main streets" have played historically. Many Latino business owners are the gatekeepers of information. They serve networking and advising roles in the community, and their businesses become familiar places for Latinos to gather and stay connected to their community of origin.



Photo: Casey Hagerman

Figure 2. Some of the Latino owned businesses sell cultural and religious products in addition to traditional food.

**Networking:** Latino entrepreneurs, like many minority and non-minority owned businesses, often fill a social need through sponsorship and mentorship. Latino business owners sponsor youth leagues, help with advertising local events, and assist fellow business owners through networking. Latino business owners also act as informal sources of information to the Latino community. Nearly all business owners interviewed spoke of people approaching them for help with employment. According to one business owner,

"I'll have people ask me where they can find a job or questions about employment conditions. That's probably the most common question (employment) because most of these people are new to the area."

**Advising:** In addition, business owners fill the role of advisor to the community. Several business owners discussed how they assist community members with financial and legal issues.



Photo: Roanel Herrera

Figure 3. Latino business owners organized a “Dia de las Madres,” Mother’s Day, event at the plaza in downtown Woodburn.

Sometimes this advisory role is simply help with locating specific services at the best price. Other business owners help with far more complex issues. One business owner discussed how he often assists new immigrants navigating the U.S. passport or immigration process. While normally this assistance is simply in the form of printing the proper passport application, occasionally the owner helps by contacting the Mexican Consulate on behalf of a customer.

**Familiar Space:** Finally, Latino business owners contribute to the social capital of downtown by creating a welcoming space for the Latino community. The most tangible aspect of this is by creating a space where Latinos can stay connected to their origin community. In Woodburn, businesses that wire-money internationally also sell bus tickets for visits to Mexico and phone cards so that Latinos can keep in touch with family members back home. In addition, by providing services in Spanish and traditional products that chain stores do not usually carry, the Latino businesses create a place where Latinos feel they belong and are comfortable.

## OPPORTUNITIES AND POTENTIAL ACTIONS

Latino small businesses face many challenges, some that are unique to Latino business owners, as well as some challenges that are typical for any small business. For Latino businesses to be successful and continue to revitalize the downtown, both the business owners and the community at large will have to continue to work together. We identified six opportunity areas, which will be discussed in the following chapters:

1. Increase Latino business owner’s opportunities for training and capital
2. Create a marketing plan for downtown
3. Balance planning processes with short-term actions
4. Facilitate improvements to the built environment
5. Increase actual and perceived safety for all community members
6. Create a shared vision for downtown.



## OPPORTUNITY 1

# INCREASE LATINO BUSINESS OWNERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING AND CAPITAL

### Issues

Many Latino small business owners in Woodburn lack formal means of raising operating capital. Use of banks is limited due to requirements of documentation and identification, business plans, contracts and fees. Instead of going to a bank, many Latinos rely on personal savings, family members, or other Latino business owners for short-term loans. One business owner explained the rationale behind this practice, saying,

“If I need money, I’ll borrow from an individual (with interest). Loans are usually for three or four months. I usually rely on these types of loans because a bank isn’t going to provide me with a three-month loan. A bank wants me to sign a 60-month contract...and you can’t break the contract.”

Several business owners said there was a lack of information available for attaining formal loans to expand or sustain a business. Very few banks in the area will do business with someone without official documents or papers. Additionally, many of the business owners interviewed lacked a business plan and orderly financial records. This is often a preliminary requirement to receive a bank loan. These basic requirements are the reason one must look for alternative sources. One business owner stated that having access to capital such as business loans would be helpful. He primarily gets capital from family members and his personal savings. However, he is fearful in pursuing such loans because he fears that his business will still not do so well. If that happens, he wouldn’t know how to pay back the business loans.

### Ideas for Actions

**Action 1.1.** Increase access to statewide business and financial support systems

**Rationale.** An analysis of Oregon’s current statewide Latino business support system reveals gaps in the infrastructure needed to assist entrepreneurs in non-metropolitan areas (like Woodburn).

**Description.** Organizations with demonstrated success in the Latino business community could develop satellite offices in non-metropolitan areas, such as Woodburn. Community development organizations such as Hacienda, NEDCO, or Adalante Mujeres (located in Portland, Forest Grove, and Springfield) could partner with the City of Woodburn and organizations currently providing services to the Latino and business community in Woodburn to provide needed business and financial support. The City may consider incentives such as low rents in city-owned downtown property and in-kind donation of use of city-owned buildings. In addition, the City may provide an organization with a list of businesses that are interested and ready to receive services and assistance.

**Action 1.2.** Provide accessible business training

**Rationale.** Business courses conducted in Spanish help existing entrepreneurs with limited English and may encourage reluctant Latino entrepreneurs to pursue business as a primary career. Courses focusing on the importance of developing a long-term business plan and basic financial skills would help Latino entrepreneurs expand or stabilize their business.

There are four key issues which make access to business training difficult for Latino business owners:

1. Language barriers
2. Literacy abilities
3. Time and ability to attend a meeting or ability to do so because they are the primary staff person
4. Transportation

## Latino Small Businesses and Downtown Development

Lack of free time on behalf of Latino entrepreneurs creates a barrier to participation in the business community. Most Latino small business owners in Woodburn are sole proprietors with no employees. They often work alone for long hours tending their shop. Many are parents, so any remaining time must go towards family obligations. One business owner said that in the past he participated in meetings with city staff, police officers, and other business owners. However, now he works all the time and therefore doesn't have time to get involved anymore. Also, if he had more time he would consider driving to Chemeketa Community College in Salem to take their business classes.

**Description.** To overcome the challenge of limited availability and free time, it is suggested that the City partner with a community development organization and/or Chemeketa Community College to develop a personalized business education program. This model would allow the educator to visit participating business owners and offer one-on-one business training in the

business owner's store that is tailored to their specific needs. This program can build off of Chemeketa Community College's Web based training, Ed2Go, an online training program that can be accessed from a home or office 24 hours a day 7 days per week. It offers customized training programs that provide expert trainers and consultants to work with local business owners. These already successful programs can be customized to meet Latino business owners' needs and address language barriers.

**Action 1.3.** Create opportunities for Latino business owners to expand their networks

**Rationale.** Structured programs that allow new entrepreneurs to meet current local and regional business owners will enable Latinos to expand their entrepreneurial networks. Such programs can be implemented through existing business organizations such as the Woodburn Downtown Association (WDA), Downtown Woodburn Unidos, or the Woodburn Area Chamber of Commerce.



Figure 4. Women's boutique on Front Street in downtown Woodburn.

Photo: Casey Hagerman

Business owners can learn from each other and develop a relationship based upon mutual support rather than isolated competition. By attending these networking opportunities, business owners can connect with other local business owners to promote their businesses and services, and benefit from the products and services provided by other members.

**Description.** It is understood that the Woodburn Chamber of Commerce currently has networking events, but has found it difficult to get Latino business owners involved. Some business owners we interviewed expressed that they do not see the value in attending these meetings because they do not receive assistance to promote or improve their business from these organizations. Networking activities would be more successful if Latino business owners provided input regarding the format and content of events. The Southwest Detroit Business Association serves as a model for “Desayunos Economicos,” a business-networking event for Latino business owners to network with financial advisors, small business consultants and city officials. Woodburn may consider coordinating an Economic Breakfasts Series or other informal gatherings for business owners to talk and network. The venue could rotate between different businesses downtown.

As to date, the Latino Business Alliance, which hosts Café y Pan Dulce events in Salem and Woodburn, and the Hispanic Heritage Month, an annual event in Salem, have done extensive outreach in Woodburn to increase participation. What may be helpful is to have these organizations contact the Hillsboro Chamber of Commerce which has been successful in providing networking opportunities to their Latino business owners to identify strategies on how best to recruit and involve Latino business owners from downtown Woodburn.

**Action 1.4.** Partner with the local high school to provide business support

**Rationale.** Woodburn High School has a business track in a school district that is 80% Latino. This provides an opportunity to have individuals that are familiar with the language and culture work with Latino business owners.

Business owners would benefit from student assistance, and students would have the opportunity to apply skills learned in the classroom benefit the community. Additionally, it brings another demographic of individuals to the downtown and can bring in innovative ideas and fresh perspective. Many of the business owners have children that are in middle school or high school that assist their parents in the store after school. These students can be provided with training and resources to help assist their parent’s business.

**Description.** Develop a high school business class project that partners students with business owners to provide assistance with improving signage, facades, and, when appropriate or possible, assist in improving business practices. Identify a willing instructor to sponsor the project and establish a partnership with a select group of businesses. Identify with student and business owners projects that can be implemented.

**Action 1.5.** Create a peer-to-peer mentoring program

**Rationale.** Connecting established business owners to new business owners to provide mentoring services or support has the potential to build community between Woodburn business owners. Furthermore, it can create an opportunity to share best practices and learn from individuals who have an understanding of the needs and challenges of new business owners. Business owners may be more receptive to receiving feedback from their peers rather than the City or other established organizations. Some business owners in Woodburn are already doing this informally. One Latino business owner interview stated that he had his friend who owns a store downtown come to his store and help him with product placement. His friend helped him place his products more effectively, and sales increased.

**Description.** Identify business owners that can serve as mentors and new business owners that may benefit as mentees. Identify the needs of the mentees and match mentors based upon their ability to serve businesses with specified needs. This program can include businesses that are outside of the downtown as well.

**Action 1.6.** Match financial assistance with business training to promote long-term stability

**Rationale.** Many small business assistance programs require formal business plans and financial documentation to be eligible for financial assistance. In addition, many of these financial assistance programs require significant matching funds from the business owner. This creates a particular barrier for Latino entrepreneurs, many of whom do not have formal business plans, or the tools or incentive to create one. Matching financial assistance with business training equips Latino entrepreneurs with the prerequisites to receive financial assistance.

If money is tied to the business training, it is meeting both an immediate need (access to capital) and a long-term goal (improved business practices for longevity of a business and increase of revenue).

**Description.** Pairing financial education programs and business training with access to capital will make these funds more accessible to Latino business owners. For example, all entrepreneurs interested in the loan or grants could be required to attend a monthly “Access to Capital Orientation” in order to receive assistance to develop a business plan. This is a model that the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs’ (OAME) uses. This orientation teaches entrepreneurs of the various types and requirements of capital assistance provided by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and OAME. The orientation is free and open to non-members. Another example of this is Adelante Mujeres’ Individual Development Accounts (IDA) Program which provides selected participants with a 3-to-1 matched savings paired with financial and asset training.

**Action 1.7.** Create business incubation services to help small businesses develop and grow

**Rationale.** Offering a variety of business incubation opportunities (i.e., assist with marketing, High-speed Internet access, accounting/financial management, access to capital, presentation skills, links to higher education resources, etc.) can assist small micro-enterprises trying to develop and formalize.

This can also help formalize businesses that are conducted in the home and prepare them to operate a storefront downtown. Additionally, business incubation can help stabilize businesses downtown that are on the verge of closing. These at-risk businesses may transition to an incubation site.

**Description.** Unused City owned buildings downtown could be used as an incubation site, for incubation services, and a commercial kitchen. For example, a primary mechanism for technical assistance through the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) is its Incubation With Walls, which is a traditional business incubation program that provides rents at or below market rates, individualized technical assistance, counseling with trained staff or volunteers, cooperative marketing, and business growth and development support. OAME’s incubation program Without Walls is a unique program that consists of providing the same core of services to minority businesses would receive in a traditional incubation facility, but in a location outside of the formal incubation facility.



Photo: Kai Bates

Figure 5. Bicyclist outside of a butcher shop in downtown Woodburn.



Figure 6. Latino business owned boot shop on Front Street.

**Action 1.8.** Establish partnerships between small business organizations and nonprofit and social service agencies that have established trust in the Latino community

**Rationale.** Traditional business and economic development agencies in other communities have created successful relationships with Latino nonprofit and social service agencies and developed programs for Latino entrepreneurs. These agencies may offer one-on-one counseling to assist entrepreneurs with their business plans, referrals, reading and comprehension programs, and translation services to overcome the language barrier.

For example, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District (MCEDD) works closely with Next Door, a social services provider located in Hood River, to effectively meet the needs of Latino entrepreneurs in the Gorge area. Next Door was created with a focus on community health, but also supports Latino entrepreneurs by referring businesses to the Small Business Development Center and the MCEDD loan process. Next Door provides a valuable intermediary between MCEDD and Latino entrepreneurs through a reading and comprehension program and translation services to overcome the language barrier.

**Description.** Develop an inventory of the social service agencies and key contacts that work with the Latino community in Woodburn. Use these organizations to help disseminate information to Latino business owners who may benefit from these resources. Identify gaps between services offered and the needs of Latino business owners. Identify resources offered by small business organizations and social service agencies to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure resources are researching individuals in need.

**Action 1.9.** Revise eligibility requirements for City loan and grant programs

**Rationale.** The City of Woodburn has started a loan and matching grants program to assist downtown property and business owners implement improvement projects. To date, nine grant funded projects are complete and five are currently pending.

Two have dropped out after being accepted - both dropped out because their plans had changed. Multiple bids are only required for work items listed at \$2,500 or higher and applicants are not required to go with the lowest bid. Applicants must use a licensed contractor if they're hiring labor. This is a major hurdle for business owners if they would like to hire family or friends to do the work if they are unable to do it themselves. Applicants are welcome to do the work themselves, but in this case the City can only pay for the materials. Property owners and business owners are both welcome to apply for the grants. Business owners that will be making changes to a building they do not own are required to get the property owners permission first.

**Description.** The Economic Development Coordinator, Urban Renewal Committee, and legal counsel should changing certain guidelines of the program such as the requirement to have to hire a licensed contractor if they want to get reimbursed for labor expenses. If they do the work themselves or hire someone who is not licensed, then they do not receive funding for labor. Additionally, they should work with Latino business owners' downtown to identify any other issues that hinder access to city loans and grants and work together to reduce these barriers. Once the program is amended, promote the new loan program to business owners.

## OPPORTUNITY 2 CREATE A MARKETING PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN

### Issues

Woodburn's downtown lacks a cohesive marketing and promotions plan. Without a marketing and promotions plan it is difficult for residents and visitors to recognize and be drawn to the downtown's unique character. For Woodburn, there is an opportunity to leverage regional tourism through effective promotion. Latino entrepreneurs are opening businesses in communities throughout Oregon, many of which offer specialized products and services that draw customers from throughout the region. Through effective marketing and promotion of these unique strengths, Latino small business clusters have the capacity to create their own tourist draw. Additionally, cities have the opportunity to capitalize on nearby tourist destinations to bring in a larger and more diverse customer base. This is exemplified in Woodburn, where the Latino owned businesses in the downtown offer a diverse array of restaurants, markets, boutiques, and services. While these businesses already draw customers from across the State of Oregon, several Latino business owners expressed a desire to increase tourism to the downtown. Locals rave about the excellent food available in downtown Woodburn, but this is not something that is well known outside of the community. There is an untapped opportunity to increase tourism and bring more business into downtown Woodburn through marketing and promotion. As one business owner said,

"I want our streets to be filled with tourists. I want people to say, 'Let's go to Woodburn...let's go have a good time/enjoy ourselves!'"

Most Latino businesses in the historic downtown cater to Latino customers that speak primarily Spanish. Many business owners would like to expand their market, attracting other Latinos and non-Latinos alike. With the Company Store Outlets, Oregon's second largest tourist attraction less than two miles away, some see the lack of promotion to this area in particular as a shortcoming.

With a lack of funds to market the downtown area as a whole, many store owners are looking to the City to help with promotions. Without this help, some businesses may not survive, or choose to go elsewhere. According to one owner who has two businesses downtown,

"The city needs to focus on increasing tourism. My husband and I have already closed one of our businesses here in Woodburn, and opened it in Sunnyside, WA. We're experimenting with this business...If Washington's economy is stronger we're going to move...The city can help us with publicity. I've attended city sponsored meetings in the past, and I've suggested that the city should develop a website, or Facebook page, that provides information to community members. This type of resource can also help businesses advertise their products and services."

An effective wayfinding system is essential to the successful marketing and promotion of downtown. Wayfinding involves consistent branding and sign placement to draw customers into a downtown from afar. In Woodburn, where the downtown has been bypassed by the development of Route 214, wayfinding and signage directing people toward the downtown are lacking. From the Woodburn Company Stores outlet mall on I-5, there is little signage to make navigation to downtown easy for a visitor to the area. A few signs indicate "City Center," but do not acknowledge the historic downtown or the unique stores located there. Likewise, once in downtown, signage for parking, store locations, and attractions is non-existent. This lack of a proper wayfinding system inhibits current visitors from discovering the downtown. Improving the wayfinding system presents an opportunity to attract a broader customer base.

### Ideas for Actions

**Action 2.1.** Create and implement an effective marketing and promotions strategy

**Rationale.** Effective marketing of the downtown has the potential to increase business and draw a portion of regional tourism to the downtown. Simply, people do not know the diversity of goods and services that exists in downtown Woodburn. A strong business mix is a major piece of placemaking and a successful downtown.



Photo: Kai Bates

Figure 7. Mexican Restaurant on Front Street in downtown Woodburn.

At first glance, downtown Woodburn is not a diverse business area. One might think there are only Mexican restaurants, clothes stores and food markets, with a few other services scattered around. This perception persists in part due to the inadequate signage, storefront design, and promotion of the unique aspects of the downtown.

Upon closer look, however, one realizes that no two stores are alike, and each offers a particular niche of goods and services. Some restaurants serve El Salvadoran and Chinese food, while each Mexican restaurant offers flavors and dishes from particular regions of that country. There are leather goods and dress shops, as well as sports clothes and used clothing shops. One can buy gold jewelry or furniture, and you can get your taxes done, your hair styled, mail a letter, cash a check, or get a car fixed. The mix may be nontraditional in the sense that it is not the mix that non-Latinos usually recognize, but for the Latino customer, there is a store for mostly anything.

**Description.** Downtown Woodburn should be promoted as a regional destination that is unique for Latino goods and services. It has an opportunity to create a brand that reflects and promotes the uniqueness of downtown Woodburn. The logo that is developed should be displayed prominently at entrances to the downtown

and it should be used consistently throughout all marketing materials to promote strong brand awareness. This brand should be based on the downtown vision statement and it should be used to inform all other marketing materials. Ideas for the brand can come out of the community visioning sessions. (discussed in Recommendation 6.2)

Leverage existing local attractions (i.e., visitor/information center at the Company Stores, local hotels, tourism information sites throughout the state, etc.) through strategic placement of brochures and marketing materials. Additionally, multi-media advertising would be a good start through the creation of a Downtown Woodburn website and social media. These advertising materials should leverage existing regional tourist attractions such as Woodburn Company Stores, Mt. Angel, Silver Falls State Park, and the Tulip Festival. It is important to coordinate these efforts between the city, neighborhood and business associations, and downtown business owners. The City currently provides funding to the Woodburn Area Tourism and Woodburn Area Chamber of Commerce to promote Woodburn. The City also supports downtown organizations such as Downtown Woodburn Unidos and Woodburn Downtown Association, which are both interested in creating downtown promotional campaigns.

**Action 2.2.** Develop a wayfinding system to promote downtown visitors

**Rationale.** Woodburn's proximity to established tourist destinations and large customer bases as well as The Woodburn Company Stores (the metropolitan areas of Salem and Portland) present an opportunity to bring people into the downtown to eat and shop. The outlets bring millions of tourists to the Woodburn area annually, yet many people shop, eat, and stay at the outlets and do not visit downtown. Developing a strategy to direct a fraction of this population to the downtown presents an enormous economic opportunity. Currently, there is no promotion of the downtown in The Company Stores' information kiosk, which is run by the Chamber of Commerce. The city could assist with promotion by finding a way to advertise businesses in the Woodburn Company Stores and develop a place on the city website with downtown business listings.

**Description.** A well-designed and user-friendly wayfinding system needs to be developed to make it easy for anyone to locate downtown Woodburn. This system should clearly and easily guide residents

and visitors to the downtown from key locations such as I-5, Woodburn Company Stores, and Routes 214 and 99E. In addition, map kiosks and signage should be placed throughout the downtown to direct people to attractions, transit stops, businesses, and parking locations. The wayfinding system should reflect the branding that is developed.

**Action 2.3.** Celebrate downtown Woodburn as a regional destination for cultural goods, services, and events

**Rationale.** Another opportunity to increase tourism to the downtown is through the promotion of multi-cultural events that display both Anglo and Latino cultures. The City of Woodburn and The Chamber of Commerce currently oversee the annual Fiesta Mexicana. In addition, The Woodburn Downtown Association (WDA) and Downtown Woodburn Unidos oversee events in the downtown with mixed success. Several Latino business owners are involved with the WDA and work with the city to organize festivals that celebrate Latino culture. One business owner emphasized that tourism could be increased if the cultural events had an educational or historical dimension. As one business owner expressed,

"They aren't making good use of culture. I don't think a student or a professional is interested in visiting Woodburn to listen to 'musica Ranchera.' I think a teacher or professional would visit Woodburn if we incorporated history into our events. For example, we could bring one of Portland's museum exhibits... people would come to explore and as a bonus would listen to our type of music."

Leveraging Woodburn's culinary resources provides an additional opportunity to simultaneously stimulate tourism and offer opportunities for youth and prospective entrepreneurs. One business owner suggested the city could form partnerships with culinary schools to organize and promote culinary education and events in the plaza. This could provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs trying to establish their businesses and for youth who aren't interested in furthering their formal education. Culinary events offer an opportunity to capitalize on Woodburn's existing resources and talents.



Photo: Kai Bates

Figure 8. Men sit in the plaza in downtown Woodburn.



These events could provide students with an opportunity to prepare dishes, sell food to the public, and potentially make a profit.

**Description.** In addition to the current events being held in downtown, cross-cultural events and festivals should be developed. These events should be coordinated between the city and neighborhood and business associations. There is a potential to develop downtown Woodburn with its Victorian homes, museum, and rich Latino and Russian history as an educational field trip destination for surrounding schools. Most importantly, these events need to be heavily promoted using various online and print marketing materials.

### **OPPORTUNITY 3 BALANCE PLANNING PROCESSES WITH SHORT-TERM ACTIONS**

#### **Issues**

The process-oriented nature of local government planning in Oregon and the Main Street program sometimes creates a divide between government officials who want to create comprehensive public involvement processes and business owners who desire seeing immediate results from their investment of time.

The tension between process versus results can be attributed to several factors: limited English-language proficiency among Latino business owners, limited capital, and lack of time. Limited English-language proficiency often creates a barrier to participation in lengthy and technical planning and funding processes, especially if accurate translation services are not consistently available. Due to language barriers, some Latino business owners may feel excluded from the process because the workshop, city council meeting, or community meeting is not being conducted in a manner that is accessible. There are translators available at all City council meetings and open houses. But in some cases, such as with workshops, arrangements need to be made in advance for a translator to attend.



Photo: Kai Bates

Figure 9. Front Street in downtown Woodburn.

Letting the business owners know how to make arrangements ahead of time to request a translator is important.

Additionally, as many Latino small business owners are operating with limited capital reserves, they are often forced to make business decisions on a day-by-day or week-by-week basis, and thus long-range planning becomes a difficult thing to do when there are more pressing and immediate needs. Many Latino businesses literally cannot afford to wait extended periods of time for action to take place and often attempt short-term solutions in the interim. For example, some Latino business owners started their business out of necessity to make an income. Some start with few resources and do not have time to plan before the start up of their business or while operating their business.

To speed the process up for holding downtown events (specifically Mexican holiday festivals), several Latino and non-Latino business owners recently re-chartered the Woodburn Downtown Association.

In the words of one of the WDA members,

“I attended Unidos (The Main Street Steering Committee) meetings for about a year... However, I was probably one of the first ones to stop attending those meetings (and instead focused on re-organizing the WDA) because the group was moving too slowly. A lot of retired community (neighborhood association) residents were involved in this group, and they have a different idea of how things should be run. When I used to attend Unidos meetings, they would try to embarrass or ridicule me, they would discriminate against me. They would ask me why I didn't speak English, especially since I had been in the U.S. for so long. I didn't understand why they were saying these things because isn't this supposed to be a free country? They're also accustomed to working at a different pace. I wanted to be a part of something that moved a little faster because as a business owner I've struggled over the last few years. I don't have the luxury of just sitting around with my arms or hands crossed waiting for people to visit Woodburn. We have to “move” and promote events, games... with the WDA, I feel that we can promote Woodburn and help increase tourism. That's our goal.”

### Ideas for Actions

**Action 3.1.** Incorporate short-term milestones and incentives in long-term planning processes

**Rationale.** Short-term goals and incentives, rather than long term processes, can encourage those who need immediate return on their investment of time. Having small milestones incorporated throughout the process can keep Latino business owners working on long-term goals that are associated with “bigger picture” processes.

**Description.** Process was a major factor in losing participation as well, but lack of understanding of how business owners fit into the process was just as important. Therefore, throughout the process, transparency of the expectations, established roles for all parties involved, and results of a process should be stated up front.

Infuse short-term actions that will yield achievable results that are desired by the business owners (i.e., coordinating events downtown, clean-up day downtown, etc.). Be sure to provide adequate feedback and updates throughout the process for each short-term and long-term milestone.

**Action 3.2.** Establish culturally competent procedures to encourage diversity in the public participation activities

**Rationale.** Public participation is a necessary to revitalize disinvested spaces. Differences in cultures and a lack of shared values and heritage can often create barriers to true participation.

This can be particularly difficult as many immigrant groups lack political power in the new community due to laws restricting non-citizen voting rights. Woodburn is currently facing the challenges of low public participation and a community divided by differing values. Voter turnout is low across all ethnicities. The lack of civic participation on behalf of Latino business owners, and Latinos in general, in the political process seems to be a consequence of legal status, political representation, and free time. There have been only two Latinos on Woodburn's City Council, and presently there are none. There is the feeling that participation in city affairs puts one in danger of police action if their true immigration status is revealed.

Establishing cultural competency begins with a mutual openness and willingness to learn from one another. For example, to maximize both Anglo and Latino participation, meetings must be advertised and conducted in both Spanish and English. One business owner we interviewed described their experience attending a Woodburn Downtown Unidos meeting. At the meeting, business owners were invited to attend a business class with business experts and city staff. Although the business workshop was designed and advertised to help Spanish-speaking business owners, everything was written and conducted in English.

## Latino Small Businesses and Downtown Development

So in this case, the initiative to collaborate and communicate was not as successful because it was not designed in a culturally competent manner that effectively met the needs of all stakeholders involved. This was an unfortunate situation. Oregon Main Street had gone out of their way to bring in a facilitator all the way from California. She was highly recommended because her exceptional culturally relevant facilitation skills, and her ability to perform bilingual meetings. City staff was very surprised when it was conducted mostly in English.

**Description.** Have bilingual translators/translation services available at public meetings, especially when a topic will likely result in high turnout from the non-English speaking community. When possible, have a less formal process in running meetings (i.e., no sign in sheets, getting up to a podium to speak, being required to sign a card with address and name to speak, etc.).

Encourage the City to improve communications with the staff about the benefits of a translator, the use of translator equipment, and how to recruit bilingual/bicultural employees to these types of meetings to assist with language barriers.

Additionally, if in-house interpreters are not available, providing a live interpreter over the phone (i.e., AT&T Language Lines) could serve as a viable option. Look to other cities (i.e., City of Eugene) to develop a Diversity and Equity Strategic Plan to successfully access language access needs and create a culturally competent environment for city facilities and meetings.



Figure 10. Mexican restaurant on Front Street in downtown Woodburn.

## OPPORTUNITY 4 FACILITATE IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### Issues

Many of the buildings and streetscapes in downtown Woodburn are in disrepair and should be updated. Updating storefronts and streetscapes would improve the comfort and perceptions of safety of downtown visitors. This section addresses four of the most commonly noted issues that interviewees mentioned related to the built environment: storefront and signage, lighting, public rest rooms, and parking.

**Storefront and Signage:** As an extension of the building itself, the appearance of storefronts is vital to the success or failure of a retail store. In downtown Woodburn, we observed numerous businesses with storefronts in disrepair, with cluttered windows and confusing or hard to understand signage.

However, it is still important that Latino business owners try to observe retail design best-practices while still maintaining a unique Latino character. In downtown Woodburn we routinely observed storefront windows that were filled with signage and products on shelves. Often, these products were dusty and old, and the signage handwritten on construction paper and taped to the window.

Signage provides a crucial first impression to attract new customers. These techniques reflect both a cheap and easy way to attract attention and display sale items, but they also suggest a lack of resources, time, and English-language proficiency. As a result, these types of signs are sometimes a distraction and deterrent to potential customers who are used to professional business practices. Several of the more successful businesses downtown strive for a more professional storefront. A transparent view into the store may draw potential customers inside.



Photo: Kai Bates

Figure 11. Inside a Latino owned business which sells boots and formal wear.

**Lighting:** In addition to storefront treatments, it is also important that downtown districts and their stores are properly lit to make them attractive to customers. This includes capturing as much natural daylight as possible and maintaining sufficient artificial light on the streets, sidewalks, and in stores. In downtown Woodburn, few businesses can afford extensive lighting and many stores rely on whatever lighting fixtures exist in the space when they move in. In some stores, existing lighting is obscured by the enormous amount of inventory. One market's ceiling is home to dozens of colorful piñatas that unfortunately contribute to a dark and cluttered feeling in the store. The goal of maximum inventory often detracts from the amount of natural light that can penetrate a space and the visibility of the products themselves.

**Public Rest rooms:** One Latino business owner felt the city should build public rest rooms because he frequently has to clean up excrement in the alleyway. He said that if he doesn't quickly clean up these piles of excrement in the summer, the odor outside his store becomes a major issue.

**Parking:** Parking is also seen as a barrier to attracting customers to downtown. On-street parking on Front Street fills up quick on busy days, and adjacent parking areas are not well signed. The City has conducted a preliminary parking analysis, but one store owner felt the city could help provide more parking and parking enforcement. He noted that some cars park on the street, in the same spot, for days. Additionally, people who live in the units above his store and Chemeketa Community College students use the parking spaces outside his store.

Latino businesses in downtown Woodburn are somewhat critical of efforts by the City to help the downtown area. Despite infrastructure improvements and concerted efforts to conduct outreach and build trust, business owners still see the basic, day-to-day maintenance needs of the downtown going unmet.

According to one store owner,

"I was paying for trash services, but my trash wasn't being removed. The apartment complex trash cans behind my restaurant, for example, were not emptied for two months. As a business owner, that really affects me negatively. I called the trash company, the landlord, and even the police department...and I still couldn't get someone to clean up the mess."

Allied Waste is not a City entity. In situations like these, code enforcement would contact the landlord but not dispose of the garbage. It is important that the City help educate the business owners what the City can and cannot do and what other entities are required to do. The City is currently educating business owners about this issue.

### Ideas for Actions

**Action 4.1.** Create an incentive/assistance program to facilitate the development of professional bilingual storefront signage

**Rationale.** The city needs to develop a storefront design program that encourages businesses to include signage that is in both English and Spanish so that a greater number of potential customers know what products and/or services are available. In addition, Latino business owners need to recognize traditional retail design standards that can help promote business activity while also preserving the unique character of their businesses. This will encourage a diverse customer base to frequent the stores.

The appearance of storefronts is vital to the success or failure of a retail store. In downtown Woodburn, we observed signage that was predominately written in Spanish, which can make some Non-Latino customers feel unwelcome. While it is important that business owners maintain a unique Latino character, translating signage into English, so that Anglo customers know what products and services the businesses provide will help expand their market share.

**Description.** The City can help incentivize the development of professional bilingual signage by creating a matching grant program. The city can enforce existing signage ordinances in the downtown and remove old posters on vacant buildings. This presents a great opportunity to partner high school students with business owners to develop professional bilingual signage (see action item 1.4). The most prominent users of posters are the existing businesses. Vacant buildings are being maintained by members of the WDA.

**Action 4.2.** Create a program to equip entrepreneurs with tools to create an indoor ambience that is inviting to a diverse customer base while retaining its unique cultural elements

**Rationale.** There is an opportunity to increase and diversify downtown Woodburn’s customer base through culturally competent marketing strategies. A few Latino restaurant owners reported that they do have a substantial Anglo customer base that appreciates their unique products. However, interviews with Anglo residents reveal that the language barrier, lack of bilingual advertising, and other cultural differences deter them from visiting downtown. Initiatives to foster cultural competency within the Anglo and Latino populations present an opportunity to increase the customer base and bring more Anglo Woodburn residents downtown.

**Description.** Encourage and equip business owners with tools to improve inside ambience and display. This may be done with a high school student program, peer-to-peer mentoring, or satellite organization. (see action items 1.4, 1.5, 1.8)

**Action 4.3.** Minimize the appearance of downtown vacancies

**Rationale.** Though Downtown Woodburn has experienced many years of neglect and disinvestment, Latino businesses play a significant role in revitalizing the area by establishing businesses in vacant spaces and by maintaining business activity. While infrastructure and streetscape improvements have helped the downtown, it still suffers from underutilized public spaces and a community perception of city disinvestment.

**Description.** Minimizing the appearance of downtown vacancies by filling empty windows with art or temporary business mock-ups until the spaces can be fully occupied increases the perception of a healthy and vital downtown. City officials should partner with local high school and community college business and art programs to develop vacant storefronts into attractive spaces that draw new business endeavors. Additionally, non-vacant storefronts can participate in displaying artwork in their windows as well as part of a coordinated art-walk promotional effort to attract people to the downtown. DWU has recently created an art program and is displaying student artwork in the vacant Association Hall.

**Action 4.4.** Work with Latino business owners to provide public amenities and attractive open spaces

**Rationale.** Public spaces that lack general amenities and attractiveness are underutilized and become centers for illegal or undesirable activities. As part of a revitalization plan, city officials need to ensure a space that attracts visitors from both within and outside the community through accessible restrooms and well-maintained streets and alleys.



Figure 12. Window of a store front in downtown Woodburn.

Photo: Kai Bates

**Description.** It is understood that due to budget cuts trash services have been cut. However, the city needs to partner with business owners to prioritize City services downtown. Also, many business owners may benefit from more education regarding the responsibilities of the City and the kind of services the City is able to provide. Lack of civic understanding creates barriers to participation within the community. Many residents do not understand what the City does or how it works. The City has recognized this and is consistently working to clarify misconceptions. Even though there is a lack of funding, the City should consider ways to finance the construction of public rest rooms in the downtown. In the interim, the City should consider directing people to rest rooms that currently exist in public facilities downtown.

**Action 4.5.** Advertise available parking and enforce parking regulations

**Rationale.** There is a perception that there is not enough parking downtown to accommodate shoppers. This perception deters potential customers who would otherwise frequent downtown stores. However, there are parking lots (i.e., Chemekta Community College, City Hall, and Post Office) that are underutilized.

**Description.** The City should make an agreement with owners of parking lots nearby (those mentioned above) to ensure these spaces can be used for downtown patrons. Integrate parking signage into wayfinding system. (see action 2.2)

## OPPORTUNITY 5 INCREASE ACTUAL AND PERCEIVED SAFETY FOR ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### Issues

The notion of safety is very important to all downtown residents, especially business owners. Downtown has changed significantly over the past ten years. Latino businesses invested in disinvested space and are critical to improving the downtown. The City of Woodburn accelerated this revitalization through urban renewal investment and projects. Despite these dramatic improvements over the past decade, the perception that the downtown is unsafe continues to persist and deter customers.

Cultural differences in the use of space are another contributing factor to the perceived lack of safety in the downtown. According to numerous studies, the use of public space tends to be much higher among Latinos than either Anglos or African Americans. Latino's traditional use of street corners, parking lots, and sidewalks also differs culturally from Anglos. Whereas Anglo culture often views these spaces as "transitional" spaces for getting from the vehicle to a final, inner destination, Latinos often use this space as a replacement for, or expansion of, yards and public parks. Often viewed as idle loitering by Anglos, Latino social life and commerce also occurs in these spaces – day laborers use the space to find jobs and street vendors to sell food and wares from pushcarts and vans.

The varied use of public space is particularly evident in Latino's use of the plaza in downtown Woodburn. The plaza was built on the site of a parking lot, which was historically used by Latinos who also frequented the bars and restaurants. This space was a hangout spot, with many people loitering and socializing. In the past it was also a place of illegal activities such as the selling and use of drugs and prostitution. As part of the revitalization effort, the plaza was designed to replace the parking lot, and was done so to reflect Latino or Mexican aesthetics.

Today, Latinos use the space much as plazas are used in Mexico. It is a place to sit in the sun, enjoy the water fountain and gazebo, to see and be seen, or to just promenade through. With these perceptions in place, the debate on the value of the plaza, as an attraction to downtown, or as a deterrent to visitors and potential economic opportunities from non-Mexican visitors, remains.

The perceived issues of safety are exacerbated by the presence of one or two Latinos in the downtown plaza who “loiter” and approach people to sell false documents or drugs. This activity has been an ongoing issue for the City and was mentioned by a large majority of people who we interviewed, both Latino and non-Latino, as a barrier to the perceived safety of downtown. One Latino business owner states,

“People who are up to no good selling drugs and false identification cards. They don’t bother me, but they help perpetuate Woodburn’s negative reputation.”

While these people probably pose no real physical threat, they are a psychological threat, and therefore act as a major deterrent for customers, visitors, and families visiting downtown and the plaza. Another business owner had a unique perspective. He said,

“I’ve heard people make comments about the downtown area. They say they don’t visit the downtown because as soon as they get out of their cars they have these guys come up to them saying, ‘I.D.’s, drugs...’ And we’re talking about Latinos... they’re the ones who are saying this. And I used to think the same way before I started my business. I hardly used to visit downtown Woodburn in the past.”

Efforts by the police to curb these activities have been mostly successful, but their current protocol prohibits them from proactively evicting these men without a known or obvious sign of wrongdoing. However, there are economic consequences of their presence, and the business owners end up losing customers.

One business owner further emphasized this point, saying,

“The city can help clean up the streets because the guys who hang out around the plaza tend to scare my customers away, especially my female customers. And that’s really unfortunate, because my female customers generally spend more money on my services and products. I’ve had some of my female customers tell me that they’re only willing to visit me before 4 pm because these guys scare them. In some cases, they’ll approach my customer’s car (one guy near the driver’s side window, the other near the passenger side window) before they even finish parking. So sometimes my customers drive off instead. They’ll call me later and tell me what happened.”

Despite the decrease in crime and the need for police to patrol downtown to remove individuals engaging in illegal activities such as selling drugs or documents, the downtown police presence is still viewed as a deterrent to some potential Latino customers, many of whom remain undocumented. Like most people, Latinos rely on automobiles for transportation, but they are fearful of the consequences should the police pull them over. The latest Oregon driver’s license law requiring proof of residency before taking a driving test has also decreased the number of people downtown, reducing the customer base further. As told by one business owner,

“Before the implementation of the new driver’s license law, three or four years ago, I would have to wait several minutes to cross Front St. because there was so much traffic. Today, I can cross the street with my eyes closed because the street has very little cars. Tons of people walking around throughout the entire day... Also, there is pressure from the police. They pull you over for whatever reason, and they ask for proof of insurance and a driver’s license. Unfortunately, people who don’t have a driver’s license anymore are arrested and sometimes deported. So if an individual gets arrested or deported, the rest of his or her family gets scared and they end up moving.”





Photo: Kai Bates

Figure 13. Two Latino owned businesses side by side in downtown Woodburn.

### Ideas for Actions

**Action 5.1.** Continue the collaboration between police, downtown Latino and non-Latino business owners, and nearby residents to ensure safe, clean public spaces for visitors

**Rationale.** The police effort has undoubtedly reduced crime in the area, and the police are serving as a community bridge-builder between cultural groups. As one business owner told us,

“Police officers patrolling the streets and walking into businesses—I don’t think it’s necessarily a bad idea when they visit our stores. The other day a police officer visited my store and we had a good conversation.”

However, perception plays a large role in situations like this. When the police escorted neighborhood members around downtown one weekend in an effort to increase ties, some were skeptical.

“However, I didn’t like when they visited my store with the neighborhood association folks.

One lady, for example, made a comment I didn’t like. She said they were going to visit our stores (with police officers) every weekend. For me, she was trying to scare us with that comment because I’m pretty sure she doesn’t like us. She doesn’t depend on me, and I don’t depend on her; so she shouldn’t make those types of comments.”

The statement by the Latino business owner illustrates the need for a partnership between the business owners’ downtown, surrounding neighbors, and police so that actions such as the walk downtown are well received and effective in making the downtown safer for all.

**Description.** Business owners, surrounding neighborhood residents, and city officials need to partner with police officials to review law enforcement efforts to minimize the downtown’s real and perceived safety issue. An action plan crafted with the input from each of these groups should be adopted and pursued. Continue community walks downtown, but with Latino business owners helping craft how the walk will take place.

## OPPORTUNITY 6 CREATE A SHARED VISION FOR DOWNTOWN

### Issues

The successful integration of immigrants to Oregon communities requires sensitivity to cultural issues and communication. This requires a willingness to participate and communicate on behalf of both native and immigrant communities. Cities nationwide have demonstrated success initiating these efforts. Woodburn is home to a diverse population defined by age, culture, and religion. Latino business owners expressed a desire to work together with the Anglo population. However, there must be a willingness to listen and collaborate on both sides. There is an opportunity to increase transparency and communication behind decisions. As one business owner expressed,

“...there are lots of ways to work together. First and foremost, communication. We have to listen to them, and I would also like for them to listen to us.”

He also expressed a desire for the city to explain their motives and reasons behind their decisions,

“For example, we ask for their help sometimes...as far as organizing events. We want to help increase tourism. So we would like for them not to close down doors or deny us when we make requests for permits. The Latino population holds values similar to mainstream America such as religion, family, history, and a belief in the American Dream.”

With a recognition of these shared values, and that all parties value downtown Woodburn, there is an opportunity to create pathways for the city, Anglo, and Latino populations to effectively communicate and work together on decisions to improve the downtown. Growing tension between new immigrants and the established families of a community often come to the fore when issues of placemaking and cultural heritage of the established group are perceived as being threatened by the new immigrants.

In small Latino-receiving cities like Woodburn, this may occur when the disinvested downtown or an important cultural landmark becomes “Latinized.” One interview with a community resident highlights this point:

“I would say Hispanic businesses started showing themselves pretty vibrantly in the mid to late 1990s...and that kind of caused an undercurrent of resentment among the non-Hispanics. Our little PIX Theater became a furniture store with placards all over the front, you know, that’s a piece of our own little history; we want to go see movies. Well, the theater ran for a while but just Mexican movies. Then, it closed down and became a furniture store...That in itself was kind of a focal point for a lot of the non-Hispanics... Then [non-Hispanics] started waking up and seeing that this migration’s taking place and they’re going ‘Oh my God,’ and that’s where we’re going ever since.”

While public participation and cultural competency are important for bridging the divide between the existing and new population, revitalization and placemaking also require a balance between acknowledging the common heritage of the past while embracing the cultural diversity of today.



Figure 14. Salvadoran restaurant in the building the first fire station was located in downtown Woodburn.

Photo: Roanel Herrera

In interviews with Woodburn community members, discussion of introducing a mural ordinance as part of the downtown public art initiative has shown that the concept of past and present place is evident. According to one resident,

“People here are afraid of what the murals are going to depict. They don’t want Aztec Indian murals put on a historical building. There could be a very well good place for it...I think that’s a fear. They want huge, Hispanic cultural murals. I’m speaking just from long time residents that don’t break that barrier. They’re afraid they’re going to be forced to see more of that culture, a slap in the face to their own culture. Anything to make the city more beautiful is fine with me, but you don’t want to insult either culture, and I’m afraid that the longtime Woodburn residents are going to feel insulted...if this is not done appropriately.”

The development of a new common identity and sense of place is crucial in the revitalization of spaces like downtown Woodburn. The new identity of place becomes an integral part of promotions, advertising, and wayfinding systems that support a healthy and sustainable economic base for the community, as seen throughout Main Street downtowns. The common heritage that develops can then become the basis of not only economic growth and stability, but of community pride which helps transform a disinvested downtown into a vibrant and shared space that both communities can celebrate.

City governments with a growing Latino population need to plan, act, and think creatively in order to face the challenges of being an immigrant receiving community. Celebrating community diversity through art projects, murals, oral history projects, and original festivals can help groups create a shared identity.

### Ideas for Actions

**Action 6.1.** Expand and complete the Woodburn Oral History Project

**Rationale.** Oral history projects provide an avenue to build communication and humanize diverse groups of people in a community that may not interact on a daily basis.

Communities throughout the United States have initiated Oral History Projects as a means to build communication and collaboration with great success. In 2001, the Woodburn Regional Oral History Project was started as a partnership between the Woodburn Historical Society and Chemeketa Community College. Several interviews have been conducted and are waiting to be transcribed. We recommend the Oral History Project be revived and completed with a focus on the downtown area. This project could potentially be turned over to high school students. Both the process and the final product could serve as a bridge between diverse communities.

**Description.** Establish a partnership between the Woodburn History Museum, Chemeketa Community College, Settlemier House, and high school students to revive and redesign the existing Woodburn Oral History project. There is an opportunity to make this project more downtown specific and serve as a promotional piece for the downtown and as a bridge builder for different stakeholders who live, work, and play downtown. Ensure that the stories collected are accessible and interactive. High School students may develop exhibits that can be placed in community gathering spaces and develop an interactive multi-lingual website where the community can learn about the project and their neighbors. Community members may be able to interface with the website to add their own content (stories—written, audio, video; images—photos or original artwork). Additionally, develop a partnership with the local newspaper (Woodburn Independent) and other local publications (Spanish and Russian) to run a weekly community story.

**Action 6.2.** Initiate a long-term visioning process for the downtown

**Rationale.** Entrepreneurialism and a sense of community are an integral part of life in non-metropolitan communities. For Latinos pursuing small business ownership and city officials interested in revitalizing neglected downtowns, bridging the cultural and linguistic divide is not only a desire, it is a necessity.

The research and recommendations referred to throughout this report are intended to help create a statewide dialogue wherein the related goals – vital downtowns and sustainable multicultural communities – can be achieved.

A critical activity for multicultural communities like Woodburn is to encourage people to engage in community dialogue. This activity may take many forms, but its main goals are to increase cross-cultural competency and create shared ideals and a vision for a community. Community dialogue involves people from city agencies, the business community, neighborhood associations, and residents getting to know one another. Effective community dialogue can make in-roads towards resolving difficult situations or perceptions between the groups.

**Description.** A visioning process for a community like Woodburn should include all stakeholders within the community, not just city officials and select community members. With more input from the entire community, Woodburn can provide a more inclusive vision for its residents and its downtown and unite groups behind shared goals for the future.

The City should invite an outside consultant to assist with facilitating creative engagement activities that can incorporate cultural and generational differences in the community. Link these visioning activities to short term achievable actions that reflect community goals. (see action 3.1.)

### **Action 6.3.** Start Community Teaching Programs

**Rationale.** Community teaching programs, such as the ones pioneered by Littleton, Colorado, and Goshen, Indiana, establish one-on-one connections between residents in order to share stories, get help with language skills (both English and Spanish), and even assist in the process of naturalization and citizenship. These programs leverage the knowledge and skills of ordinary people, and connect those who may not have been associated otherwise. This program can also help bring individuals downtown that may not do so otherwise. This can help dismantle negative perceptions of the downtown and persistent stereotypes between communities. This could be a natural spin-off from the current downtown community walks sponsored by the police. (See action 5.1)



Figure 15. People fill the plaza in downtown Woodburn for a community event sponsored by Latino business owners.

Photo: Roanel Herrera

**Description.** It will be important to house this program in an institution or organization in which cross-cultural groups feel comfortable using the space. The library downtown can serve as a great space to connect people because it is already a shared space between multiple communities. Additionally, Woodburn should reach out to other organizations and cities throughout the nation for advice to craft a successful program.

**Action 6.4.** Make downtown Woodburn the hub of the community

**Rationale.** Communities with a mix of cultures must strive to become culturally competent when it comes to the use of space, especially public spaces. Perceptions can sometimes undermine the reality if one group does not understand the traditions of another group. Education and community conversation can often help mitigate misconceptions, and public spaces can be utilized more fully by all members of a community. In Woodburn, we found this to be the case given the testimonies from various groups. There seems to be a correlation between people who harbor misconceptions about Latino's use of space and their own lack of familiarity with the culture or relationships with members of the Latino culture. Those who did have friends who were Latino, or who knew Latino business owners personally, tended to not be as fearful about the plaza and its users and had a more favorable opinion about the downtown in general.

**Description.** Purposefully make downtown the hub of the community. Currently, the plaza is used for many community events, including the Day of the Child, Mother's Day, Mexican Independence, Mayor's Tree Lighting, Fiesta Mexicana Parade and Downtown Trick or Treat. These events are very well established attract thousands of people to the downtown.

Continue to strategically locate fundraisers, community walks, farmers market, art fairs, regional community festivals, and cultural events. For example, start the Relay for Life event downtown and make downtown a satellite for regional tourist attractions such as the tulip festival. In addition, events should strive to be cross-cultural. Lastly, continue community walks downtown. (see action 5.1)

**Action 6.5.** Consolidate fragmented business leadership through a small business leadership roundtable

**Rationale.** There are many organizations with a shared interest in improving the downtown. However, a lack of communication and shared vision prevents the maximization of resources and efforts to improve the downtown. There are a variety of downtown business organizations that represent different constituents. Consolidating fragmented business leadership will provide a venue for the WDA, UNIDOS, the Chamber of Commerce, and other interested parties to collaborate and align goals and strategies. A combined effort will eliminate redundancy and resources can be strategically leveraged to improve the downtown.

**Description.** Key leaders of each organization may gather for a luncheon once a month to discuss goals for downtown and establish an ongoing dialogue and specific projects for collaboration (i.e., painting over graffiti in alley ways, trash clean up, events, etc.). It is not suggested that they disband and become one organization.

### CONCLUSION

The ideas for actions listed above will take an authentic commitment from the City of Woodburn, Latino business owners, and multiple organizations and agencies. Investing time and resources in Latino businesses downtown is an investment in the long-term revitalization of Woodburn. Latino entrepreneurs in downtown Woodburn contribute to the economic and social health of the community. It is understood that in order for the action items to be fully deployable it is going to take the participation of the business community. Although it was not the exclusive focus of the research of this project, creative public engagement strategies to involve Latino business owners need to be developed. There are a number of other studies that specifically look at how cities can conduct effective outreach in Latino communities. Appendix A contains a list of such resources.

The ideas for action described in this report provide strategies and opportunities to build bridges between the varied philosophies and business practices found in receiving communities throughout Oregon and the United States. These strategies are intended as a resource for communities in their effort to support Latino businesses and encourage a successful downtown.



Figure 16. Shoe and jewelry store in downtown Woodburn.

Photo: Kai Bates

## APPENDIX A: Further Reading

Here is a list of reports about engaging the Latino community.

Bada, Xóchitl, Jonathan Fox, Robert Donnelly, and Andrew Selee. April 2010. CONTEXT MATTERS: Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement in Nine U.S. Cities. In Series on Latino Immigrant Civic Engagement. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

Bada, Xóchitl, Jonathan Fox, and Andrew Selee. "Invisible No More: Mexican Migrant Civic Participation in the United States." Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 2006.

Downs-Karkos, Susan. 2011. THE RECEIVING COMMUNITIES TOOLKIT: A Guide For Engaging Mainstream America In Immigrant Integration. Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning and Welcoming America.

Fix, Michael, Margie McHugh, Aaron Matteo Terrazas, and Lauren Laglagaron. "Los Angeles on the Leading Edge: Immigrant Integration Indicators and Their Policy Implications." Washington, DC: Migrant Policy Institute, 2008.

Keidan, Greg. A Local Officials Guide to Immigrant Civic Engagement. In Collaborative Governance Initiative. Sacramento: Institute for Local Governemnt.

Lanfer, Ashley Graves, and Madeleine Taylor. Immigrant Engagement in Public Open Space: Strategies for the New Boston. Boston: BARR FOUNDATION.

Leighninger, Matt, and Bonnie C. Mann. Civic Engagement and Recent Immigrant Communities: A planning guide for local officials and other community leaders. Washington, DC: National League of Cities- Center for Research and Innovation.

Leighton, Eliza, Kim Propeack, Megan Reinstein, David Staples, Anjali Chen, and Jennifer Morley. "A Regional Citizenship Promotion Plan: For Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C." In The New Americans Initiative. Silver Spring, Maryland: CASA deMaryland, 2008.

López, Monique G., Mackie Welch, and Gerardo Sandoval. 2011. Engaging the Latino Community in Salem. Eugene: University of Oregon- Sustainable Cities Initiative.

Morse, Ann, and Brian K. Ray. "Building the New American Community: Newcomer Integration and Inclusion Experiences in Non-Traditional Gateway Cities." Washington, DC: The Migrant Policy Institute, 2004.

Sandoval, Gerardo, and Monique G. López. 2012. Supporting Latino Civic Empowerment in Oregon. Eugene: University of Oregon- Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management.

Svara, James H., and Janet Denhardt. October 15, 2010. The Connected Community: Local Governments as Partners in Citizen Engagement and Community Building. Arizona State University.



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