Appendix C

Creswell Economic Development Strategic Plan
CRESWELL STAFF ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Purpose
This engagement summary presents an overview of the discussion held by Creswell staff at a work session on Wednesday, January 5, 2022. The purpose of the work session was to conduct a gaps analysis of feedback received through other stakeholder engagements.

Introduction
The Creswell City Council has directed staff to pursue an Economic Development Strategic Plan to serve as a tool to guide economic development activities in Creswell and provide a strong community foundation for completion of the City’s Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA), an analysis necessary for key economic development pursuits in cities in Oregon.

On Wednesday, January 5, 2022, Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) facilitated a work session with Creswell’s management team to review and conduct a gaps analysis of key SWOT (Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats) themes brought up by stakeholders in focus groups and interviews to date. The following City staff attended the meeting:

- City Manager, Michelle Amberg
- Public Works Director, Cliff Bellew
- Finance Director, James Piper
- Airport Director, Shelley Humble
- Planner, Maddie Phillips
- Planning Specialist, Curtis Thomas

In addition to contributing ideas that have not yet been captured through other engagements, the work session was an opportunity for City staff to provide critical feedback about the feasibility, impact, and potential for success of strategies discussed by stakeholders and peer communities from the City’s perspective. The management Team’s feedback provided a critical opportunity to “ground truth” some of the ideas discussed in focus groups and interviews, which form the basis of the Plan’s goals, objectives, and actions.
SWOT Gaps Analysis

Key themes that emerged from focus groups and interviews are presented below in black text. Creswell Staff discussed these SWOT results and provided additional commentary, context, and insight; Creswell staff comments are reflected below in red text.

Strengths

- Location, location, location
  - Benefits of proximity to metro area but still being a small town
  - Proximity to Eugene and metro area, UO, southern region
  - Access to I-5, Highway 99 corridor and amenities
  - Autonomous – Have a Main Street and community feel but still close to larger population
  - Access to markets, outlet for products, processors for local producers
  - Access to wine country, covered bridges
- Small town community feel – offer something Eugene-Springfield cannot
- Loyal citizens
  - Strong community support for local businesses, especially during COVID
  - Excitement/pride around agriculture
- City government is efficient, accessible, easy to work with
  - Awesome staff
  - Small government structure
  - Helpful, accessible to businesses (bigger fish in small pond)
  - Proactive with business
  - Business friendly environment
- Strong small businesses in community, entrepreneurial strength
  - Support for small businesses
  - Mentors for other small businesses/entrepreneurs
  - Many young entrepreneurs who care about the community, know and support each other
- Housing is cheaper
- Destination attractions and local gems
  - Airport
  - Championship-level golf course
  - Creswell Bakery Award winning places to eat – don’t need to call out just one
  - Lodging, places to eat
- Downtown has a lot of potential – some good businesses and opportunity for more
  - Downtown revitalization completed a few years ago – widened sidewalks, put in planter strips, increased attractiveness of a 4-block area of downtown. Could be stretched farther east to make downtown area a little stronger.
- Parking is accommodating/adequate.
• Water plant and water system is a strength (not a competitive disadvantage). Water IS safe to drink. State of the art plant still in its prime. Just received Outstanding Performer for plant and system from Oregon Health Department survey. Recently received 2nd in the state in best tasting water competition. Quality does cycle through the year (temperature). Finished water is exceptional/high quality.

Weaknesses

• Location a weakness as well as a strength – hard to compete with bigger markets
• Lack of real estate & developable land limits growth
  o Lack of large parcels – what exists is wet or constrained by ownership dynamics
  o Not enough opportunities to accommodate needs of growing businesses
• East-west divide
  o Rail traffic, I-5 inhibit connectivity
  o Lack of ability to develop on east side of freeway (lack of infrastructure)
• Chamber of Commerce could be stronger
• Creswell as a commuter/bedroom community
  o People spend their $ before coming home
  o Lack of jobs in town
• Infrastructure limits development, especially on east side
  o Internet connectivity
  o Consistent energy (outages)
  o Wastewater challenges
    ▪ Sewer treatment plant is not equal to accommodate amount of growth projected in next 20 years. Plant itself has been upgraded and is not old, but treatment technology is old. City has outgrown system. Looking to upgrade in near future. Is a genuine challenge.
    ▪ Fix is very expensive. Key element of challenge. Funding.
    ▪ “Dry industry” model is more economic (“wet industries”—like meat processing plant—are typically located in much larger municipalities)
      o Lack of infrastructure at the airport impedes activities that could occur there
• Lack of branding/storytelling
  o Not a big external draw to Creswell
  o Lack of visibility/web presence of local businesses
• Resource limitations (small town)
• Lack of clear center in Creswell
• “Drive-by” community
• Intro to Creswell right off I-5 is highway commercial/truck stops
• Lack key services/amenities needed to attract more business, fulfill needs of workforce (no grocery store)
• Political challenges – divisiveness
Vibe of downtown – something missing that gives people a reason to park, get out, and walk around

Evening food and beverage options?

Opportunities

Surrounded by beautiful farmland – opportunity for farm to table, local flavors, agricultural processing

- Local market/vendors/products
- Value-added meat processing facility to address supply chain bottleneck, support farmers and homesteaders
  - Meat processing would be a challenge (live animal to finished product – processes generate very heavy loading in the wastewater system that we could not accommodate).
  - Public Works has looked into wet industry and dry industry – wet industry not feasible even after upgrade; would make an upgrade even more expensive (would need to oversize wastewater treatment system to accommodate). Restricted by not having a larger volume waterway to discharge into; requires a much higher treatment process to accommodate effluent stream.
  - Foster Farms previously had their own treatment facility. Perhaps that model could work. They haven’t operated in many years – DEQ and EPA have changed rules, that approach might be restricted today. Foster Farms facility also outside UGB.
  - Context for comments: Customers come up from Douglas County and far-reaching areas to Mohawk Meats in Springfield (have the market cornered – no true competition). Opportunity for lower scale processing? City role in this?
  - Permanent infrastructure for farmer’s market
  - Food and beverage works as an alternative to wood industry
  - Incubator spaces for food and beverage (like Bohemia Food Hub in Cottage Grove)

Leverage outdoor recreation, culinary food trails, arts/culture/heritage – products in these areas supported at state and regional level

Opportunities around tourism (e.g. golf, river, access to outdoors, wine country, covered bridges, airport)

Fiber and tech industry could grow

Medicine and bio-med/tech

People moving to smaller towns, Creswell projected to grow

- COVID
- Tight housing markets in other cities
- Livability, affordability

Enhancement of downtown

- Build on successful businesses (e.g. Creswell Bakery)
- Concentration of businesses downtown to draw people
  - Mixed use, residential converting to commercial – catalytic
  - Livability
- Stronger Chamber of Commerce
- Marketing Creswell and its businesses
- More support for entrepreneurs needing support/incubation
  - Provide spaces for entrepreneurs and businesses to grow so they can stay in Creswell
  - Mentorship
  - Focus on Creswell as a good place for entrepreneurs, starting business
- Unique opportunities relating to COVID
  - Opened opportunity for entrepreneurship
  - Elevated importance of local food systems
- Integrate locals into local workforce
  - Avoid brain drain, keep hometown talent at home
  - Partner with schools to provide mentorship opportunities, career pathways – give students the opportunity to think about their future in their hometown
  - Teach students how to start businesses
- Embrace bedroom community dynamic, connection to Eugene-Springfield
  - Regional economy/workforce – Creswell can offer people a great place to live and raise their family while they work somewhere else or from home
  - Livability, affordability but still access to higher wage jobs in the metro area
  - Synergies with other metro satellite communities
  - Other small communities have had success focusing on housing
  - Must have employment within the City if we want to grow economically.
    - Employees (regardless of where they live) will patronize businesses.
    - Property tax side – with employment usually comes big equipment. More property tax than residential property would bring in. More payback for the amount of services it uses.
- Capture overflow from Eugene (e.g. hospitality events, people looking for housing)
- Provide more developable land (e.g. Bald Knob)
- Airport represents big potential/opportunity – needs infrastructure
- Infrastructure bill could present significant opportunities to fulfill infrastructure needs
  - Now is the time to communicate needs with legislators
  - Make sure elected officials and Regional Solutions Team know priority projects
- Revitalization is a key piece which could be emphasized – could be extended east to make it stronger. Entry to town could be strengthened. Banner or “Gateway.”
- Lodging
Threats

- Ideological division/sensitivity can make or break a business (risk of alienating customers)
- Lack of real estate
- Local money spent elsewhere (in Eugene/Springfield)
- Natural hazards – climate change, drought, wildfire, earthquake/seismic impacts to reservoirs (need to be anchored) and transmission water lines (fairly old line needs to be moved).
- Safety/security concerns (no local police)
- Inconsistency in business traffic
- Infrastructure is expensive and there’s not a lot of state or federal funding (but more important than incentives)
- More attractive jobs (wages/pay) in more dense areas (metro)
- Changes in federal regulation (e.g. FEMA floodplain, environmental regulations)
- Smaller cities particularly vulnerable to economic downturns
- Sewer challenges with privately held entity on east side – tension with DEQ, DEQ won’t allow expansion/extension until resolved.
  - Emerald Valley Golf Course treatment facility installed on east side of the City in the late 60s/early 70s. City did not have infrastructure on east side – it was in the County at that time. Still in place. City still has no infrastructure, but City has expanded. New private entity runs system. Under injunction not to allow new extensions until they have met requirements through DEQ’s permitting. No plans for City to take over. Lack of control is a real challenge, potentially limits development. Regional Solutions Team and other efforts have not been able to get over the private ownership challenge.
  - Airport does not have water or sewer presently. Septic tanks on field and wells (3 of each).
    - Developer seeking opportunity was unable to move forward due to lack of water/sewer service.
    - Plan being developed to install a wastewater treatment system (separate from existing private entity and City system).
- Transportation challenges beyond Creswell’s control (e.g. challenges with rail, difficult/unsafe intersections, access to businesses limited by ODOT)
- Housing crisis – not enough available land to meet Creswell housing needs