



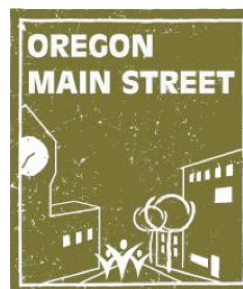
COQUILLE

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

On-Site Visit: November 7-8, 2019



Submitted by:
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Adaptive Preservation, LLC



Report prepared for:
Oregon Main Street Program

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OVERVIEW OF SITE VISIT

Consultant, Rebecca Ziegler of Adaptive Preservation, LLC, conducted the site visit for Coquille on November 7th and 8th, 2019. On Thursday morning, November 7th, the consultant met with Paul Recanzone, Chair of the Coquille Downtown Committee, and other community members to attend a downtown walking tour. This tour provided the consultant with a general context of the City as a whole while focusing on the downtown core. The remainder of the day included three focus group meetings, a driving tour of Coquille, and an evening town hall meeting.

The public town hall meeting was held that evening at the Coquille Community Center with more than 23 people in attendance. Elements of the town hall meeting included:

- An overview of the Main Street Four-Point Approach™
- Input from community members regarding concerns and their future vision for the downtown core
- Organizing those concerns around the four points of the Main Street Approach; and
- Encouraging community members to stay involved and to join one of the committees or task force groups they feel they would best be suited for.

Community members were excited to discuss what they wanted to see in their downtown and learn how they can get involved. This opportunity for public participation and discussion was invaluable for the consultant and was integrated into recommendations for this report.

On Friday morning, the consultant met with Mr. Recanzone to recap and layout the next steps for the Coquille Downtown Committee. The meetings on Thursday were well attended despite the fact that no other Coquille Downtown Committee members or City Staff participated. Overall, there was positive energy and strong interest in helping make downtown Coquille a better place to live and work.

DOWNTOWN VISION

The vision for Coquille's downtown can be found in the Coquille Urban Renewal Plan dating back to 1998. Some highlights include:

- Improve traffic circulation in the Coquille Central Business District in order to improve access to downtown businesses and increase pedestrian safety
- Increase the attractability of the Central Business District
- Increase the economic vitality of the Central Business District

Mr. Recanzone has created a downtown plan and provided the consultant with a draft. That report is a great starting point for downtown Coquille and it is encouraged that he continue to develop this plan in partnership with City Staff and Council members to integrate this document, or something similar, into the City's comprehensive plan.

These next sections list the strengths and opportunities of downtown Coquille along with actionable items. They are organized by the Four-Point Approach™ committee structure.

ORGANIZATION COMMITTEE

Creates a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort, including cultivating partnerships, community involvement, and resources for the district.

FINDINGS DURING SITE VISIT

- Strong community support and interest in improving the downtown
- Large retirement community with desire to support volunteer efforts
- Much of the Coquille Downtown leadership up to this point appears to be driven by one individual and expanding the volunteer base and board leadership will allow this committee to capitalize on the strong groundwork that has already been accomplished.
- Lack of involvement from the rest of the board and City staff.
- There is a strong desire to see downtown revitalized and a number of highly skilled and motivated volunteers to support that effort which makes Coquille an ideal candidate to succeed as a Main Street Community.
- No funding stream
- Lack of communication amongst businesses
- Lack of a cohesive vision for downtown. Some people want it to change while others want to keep the small town feel and are apprehensive of change.
- Award winning school district and opportunity to engage the youth
- Active local organizations like the Chamber of Commerce, Garden Club, and Rotary Club
- Coquille Downtown Committee is in the very beginning stages of development. A 501(c)(3) has been established under the umbrella of a different nonprofit name.



QUICK WINS- SHORT TERM ACTION ITEMS (0-6 MONTHS)

- Finalize name for the Coquille Downtown Committee. Potential ideas are Coquille Downtown Association or Coquille Main Street Organization. Once the name is finalized secure internet domain name for future website.
- Recruit an involved board (5-7 people), the current board struggles to stay actively engaged. It would be encouraged to have one property owner, one retail business owner, one food/beverage business owner, a city staff person, a community member

at large, and a representative from a large company like the Coos County Jail, Coquille Valley Hospital, or First Community Credit Union.

- Once the board is established, elect officers: president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.
- Establish an Organization Committee that reports to the board. Ideally this group would have at least four members and have active ties to other civic organizations.
- Draft bylaws, articles of incorporation, mission/vision statement.
- Establish a fiscal year, select a bank, and discuss financial items.
- Develop a master contact list of all volunteers and partnership opportunities within the community.
- Create a master contact list for all property owners and downtown businesses. Do this in partnership with the Promotions Committee.
- Determine the organization's boundaries/primary area of focus. Have the board vote and approve this boundary area.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION ITEMS (7-12 MONTHS)

- Hold a board goal setting session to create a 12-18 month work plan. Be sure to gather input constantly from your committees by having them brainstorm ideas and come up with a list of activities.
- In years past, the Coos County Jail has designed downtown street furniture. Capitalize on this partnership and talent to create more benches, flower baskets, way finding signage, or other street furniture for the downtown. Work in conjunction with the Design Committee to complete this project.
- Foster relationships with the senior/retirement community.
- Continue to develop a draft budget and strategize ways to fundraise and build monetary support.
- Utilizing the business and property owner master contact list, have a point person from the Organization Committee send monthly communications stating what is going on downtown. Do this in conjunction with the Promotions Committee.
- Engage the local school district and involve community youth in all downtown projects, either volunteering for a clean up day or perhaps painting a mural. Do this in conjunction with the Promotions and Design Committee.
- Create a Coquille Downtown Committee brochure to raise awareness of the program.

LONG TERM AND ONGOING ACTION ITEMS (13-24 MONTHS)

- Research the process for hiring a Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) intern to help the Coquille Downtown Committee.
- Identify funding streams to sustain efforts (e.g., grants, fundraising events, establishing an Economic Improvement District).
- Work closely with the City of Coquille for potential seed funding.
- Develop a volunteer recognition program. This could be a shout out on social media for the volunteer of the month or an award for volunteer of the year.

PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

Positions the downtown as the center of the community and hub of economic activity, while creating a positive image that showcases a community's unique characteristics.

FINDINGS DURING SITE VISIT

- Adequate amount of annual community events being held by other organizations (e.g., Gay 90s Celebration, National First Night, Christmas in Coquille, Firemen's BBQ).
- Entertainment options are limited. Sawdust Theatre is a great resource but is only open Memorial Day through Labor Day and then Friday and Saturday in the winter.
- Downtown does not have a great area that is conducive to hosting activities. No plaza or large green space.
- No cross-retail promotions amongst business owners. Owners do not collaborate or work together.
- Inconsistent store hours is a regular complaint from residents and visitors. Hard to host retail events.
- Desire to have more music events or events that occur on a monthly basis.
- People stated they never know what is going on in town. No consistent communication.
- There is a need to find ways to increase merchant participation in downtown events.
- Community members would like to see more social and cultural opportunities.
- Lack of a marketing plan or strategy for downtown events.

QUICK WINS- SHORT TERM ACTION ITEMS (0-6 MONTHS)

- Build upon events already happening. For example, Christmas in Coquille is a holiday parade and Christmas Tree lighting event. Encourage the Promotions Committee to revamp the wreath program. Move the wreaths into the businesses so people have to vote by entering businesses rather than going solely to the community center. This encourages people to step foot inside local businesses and could potentially be a strong "ring the cash register" event.
- Develop a communication system that lists all the key events going on year round within the community. One of the largest complaints was that community members and business owners alike felt they did not know when events were happening or how they to capitalize on them. Establishing a consistent communication system like a social media page, or newsletter would greatly improve the communication and allow for better planning.
- The Promotions Committee should capitalize



on the popular events that are already happening in downtown by finding ways to participate. Many downtown businesses stated they wanted to be more involved but weren't sure how to do so. Increasing merchant participation is the first step. For example, Christmas in Coquille occurs every year and many downtown businesses wanted to participate but weren't sure how. Creating a unified business retail event that plays off the holiday parade would be a great way to encourage people attending the parade to shop downtown. Encouraging all merchants to stay open later that day and offer discounts or special promotions would be a quick and easy way to participate in this event.

- Recruit at least four people to serve on the Promotions Committee. Once the committee is established have a goal setting session to determine top priorities for the year, report this to the board for their strategic visioning session.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION ITEMS (7-12 MONTHS)

- Coquille has numerous second hand stores. Capitalize on this and create an annual event featuring used goods, antiques, and vintage items. Recruit vendors to host a large block party event one weekend a year. Kathy, a local business owner, suggested this event could be called "Picker's Paradise".
- Encourage Sawdust Theatre to host a movie night or showcase different types of plays. Rent out the space for cultural talks or workshops. Help find new uses for this wonderful theatre during the shoulder season.
- Get organized with approachable work plans based on the Main Street Four-Point Approach™.
- Help the Organization committee with their monthly communication project. Find someone to volunteer to create the monthly newsletter and/or start a social media page. Capitalize on local talent.

LONG TERM AND ONGOING ACTION ITEMS (13-24 MONTHS)

- Focus on livability of Coquille and incorporate special events to promote quality of life and small town charm.
- Establish a signature event. Summer Concert Series, Picker Paradise, Farmers Market. Once the signature event has been identified begin developing a work plan and funding strategy.



ECONOMIC VITALITY COMMITTEE

Focuses on capital, incentives, and other economic and financial tools to assist new and existing businesses, catalyze property development, and create a supportive environment for entrepreneurs and innovators that drive local economies.

FINDINGS DURING SITE VISIT

- Lack of retail shops in downtown, most people leave town to shop. Retail leakage exists in every major retail category except grocery and gas.
- Multiple second hand stores but no new retail stores for community members to shop.
- Upper floors are underutilized and largely vacant.
- High vacancy rates (buildings and land).
- Wonderful river access sets Coquille up for good recreation or tourism potential.
- Market analysis shows that the Downtown can support market rate housing.
- Slow population growth. About a 1% growth per decade. State average is almost 11%.
- Numerous grocery stores within walking distance of downtown.
- Coquille is the County Seat. Coos County Corrections and Coquille Valley Hospital are strong economic drivers for the community.
- No upscale restaurant or brew pub located in the town.
- Lack of lodging options.
- Second hand stores are perceived by community members as junk stores.
- Bree's Upscale Retail is the most popular retail store in downtown and the only one where you can buy clothes.
- Major concern over the amount of youth leaving Coquille.
- Entry level jobs don't pay enough.
- Concern that there are numerous low income housing options but not many higher-end options to keep talent and high pay wage earners in the community.
- Higher end apartment rentals are not available in Coquille.
- Some absentee property owners have made no improvements to their buildings.
- The Urban Renewal Grant is a 50/50 matching grant but property owners find it difficult to fund their half.

QUICK WINS- SHORT TERM ACTION ITEMS (0-6 MONTHS)

- Conduct a vacancy rate analysis for ground floor and upper floor spaces. Build upon the work Mr. Recanzone has already started.
- Work with the City to improve the Urban Renewal Grant Program. Change the matching grant amount and/or criteria for projects. Market this program and help property owners navigate the grant process. Streamline the grant guidelines to be a 70/30 matching grant with a max amount of \$50,000. The grant program form is not current and needs updating along with clear requirements and criteria. It is confusing

regarding what projects are eligible.

- Identify appropriate uses for vacant second floor space.
- Support renovation and rehabilitation of historic buildings to improve work spaces for professional offices, retail opportunities, and potential housing.
- Focus on the Main Street Revitalization Grant for 2020. This grant opportunity could be monumental for the community of Coquille. Establish a task force to focus solely on this grant. Work closely with staff at the State Historic Preservation Office to ensure deadlines and criteria are met.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION ITEMS (7-12 MONTHS)

- While this is contentious, rents per square foot are well below market value. Encourage property owners to raise rents a small percentage so that they would have additional funds to make much needed improvements to their buildings. Or, give tenants a greatly reduced rent for a dedicated period of time if tenants make improvements themselves.
- The high density of second hand stores provides a great tourism opportunity. Work directly with business owners to freshen up their storefronts and merchandise to loose the “junk store” perception.

LONG TERM AND ONGOING ACTION ITEMS (13-24 MONTHS)

- The Coquille River Water Trail is a great amenity. Capitalize on the park system and establish improved pedestrian connections with the downtown.
- Develop a business recruitment packet for potential new businesses.
- Work to retain businesses in the downtown core. Complete a business assessment to see what their needs and pain points are.
- Recruit a brew pub of some sort. Give people a place to grab a drink after work or have dinner with their families.



DESIGN COMMITTEE

Supports a community's transformation by enhancing the physical and visual assets that set the commercial district apart.

FINDINGS DURING SITE VISIT

- Coquille Garden Club assists with the flower pots. This could be a potential partnership to build upon. They are organized and able to help with beautification projects.
- Downtown core is small and easily walkable.
- Many unique commercial properties in the downtown core are on the National Register of Historic Places.
- Most downtown buildings are perceived as ugly and rundown. No desire or initiative from property owners to fix up the interiors or exteriors (despite the Urban Renewal Grant).
- Group of artists are interested in heading up a mural program. Capitalize on local talent.
- Mayor would like to focus on a lighting project for downtown in the coming years along with a mural program.
- Merchandise in downtown businesses are generally well displayed. Some second hand or antique stores are cluttered. Some stores are crowded.
- Cluttered, unattractive entrances to the downtown.
- Overhead wires are obtrusive and give a sense of clutter.
- Inadequate, unattractive street lighting that leaves people feeling unsafe at night.
- 1st Street is the most prominent and community members and business owners would like to see a greater focus on 2nd street.
- Lack of downtown trees, greenery.
- Deferred maintenance on several buildings creates a run down appearance.



QUICK WINS- SHORT TERM ACTION ITEMS (0- 6 MONTHS)

- Recruit at least four people to serve on the Design Committee. Once committee is established have a goal setting session to determine top priorities for the year, report this to the board for their strategic visioning session.
- Engage a wide cross section of community volunteers for a Tidy-Up-Tuesday campaign. Every Tuesday or one Tuesday a month, volunteers would choose a block or perhaps one building to focus on making improvements. This could be with window displays, painting, replanting flowers in the flower pots, cleaning up trash, etc.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION ITEMS (7-12 MONTHS)

- Explore sidewalk and pedestrian enhancements including additional benches, planters and repairs where needed; improve general cleanliness. Do this in conjunction with the Coos County Jail and the Organization Committee.
- Work with the Economic Vitality Committee to help improve properties dramatically with the Urban Renewal Grant program the City offers.
- Add more landscaping and potted plants to the downtown core. This will soften the look and feel of downtown. Work with the Organization Committee to develop partnerships for maintenance of the plants.
- Lack of cohesive design among buildings, there are many unnecessary poles, signs, and wires that could easily be removed. Complete an inventory of obsolete infrastructure.
- Develop work plan for flower pots in the downtown, including who maintains them, who plants them and the timeline. Share this with surrounding business so they can help maintain the plants.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION ITEMS (7-12 MONTHS)

- Work with the City to establish some basic design guidelines for the downtown core (e.g., color palette, historic preservation design standards). Develop a list and find an architect to help design a palette of colors, awning choices, etc.
- Develop a mural program in conjunction with the City. Find a willing property owner and paint a first mural on a blank building facade. Do this in conjunction with the Organization Committee.

LONG TERM AND ONGOING ACTION ITEMS (13- 24 MONTHS)

- Under grounding of overhead wires, especially along the 1st Street pedestrian corridor is desired. Overhead wires could be relocated or placed underground.
- Advocate to renovate and preserve historic buildings.



APPENDIX A: MAIN STREET BACKGROUND

The Oregon Main Street (OMS) program provides assistance to communities in Oregon whether they are just beginning to explore options for their downtown or seeking national recognition as a Certified Main Street Community. The services of the OMS Programs are tailored to meet both the specific and typical needs of communities at each particular stage of downtown revitalization. Currently, there are 78 communities participating in one of the levels of the Oregon Main Street network.



OMS is a Main Street America™ Coordinating Program that works with communities to develop comprehensive, incremental revitalization strategies based on a community's unique assets, character, and heritage. Services are based on the successful Main Street Approach® developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation Main Street Center and include training and technical assistance. The goal is to build high quality, livable, and sustainable communities that will grow Oregon's economy while maintaining a sense of place.



It is a proven comprehensive approach to downtown commercial district revitalization. By fully integrating the program's four points (organization, promotion, design, and economic vitality) into a downtown management strategy, a local program could produce fundamental changes in a communities economic base.

OMS helps to lead a powerful, grassroots network consisting of more than 40 Coordinating Programs and more than 1,200 neighborhoods and communities across the country committed to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development.

To find out more about the OMS program, contact Sheri Stuart, Oregon Main Street Coordinate at sheri.stuart@oregon.gov or 503-986-0679.

Information on this page is cited from the Oregon Main Street and the National Main Street website. For more information please visit, www.oregon.gov/mainstreet.

APPENDIX B: MEETING PARTICIPANTS

**CHARMANE MITCHELL
MAYOR KATHI SIMONETTI
MICHAEL TENNSEN
AMY MARINO
HUGH PINKSTON
CATHLEEN SWANSON
ANNE PARKER
KAY MARINO
WILLIAM MARINO
ANDY TAYLOR
LESLIE JOHNSON
KAREN KIBBEE
DAVID JENNING**

**DONNA HUNDLEY
SANDRA DENNY
ELDON ROLLINS
BRANDY OLMSTEAD
FRAN CAPEHART
JEANNE LACOSTE
CAROL STANGEE
TINA HALLMARK
MARY MORRIS
WILLIAM DAILY
SAM BAUGH
ALBERT KELLEY
PAUL RECANZONE**

Please note this list is not exhaustive and only representative of who completed the sign in sheet. Please excuse any spelling errors or omissions.

