

## Memorandum

Date: March 12, 2009

To: Chris Jordan  
*City Manager*

From: Kirsten Wyatt  
*Assistant to the City Manager*

Subject: Main Street Program Decisions

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### **Purpose**

This memorandum poses a policy question that needs to be answered by the City Council:

1. What is the City Council's preferred level for the Main Street program in West Linn?

### **Background on the Main Street Program**

- The Main Street program provides assistance, training, technical services, and resources to communities interested in preserving, revitalizing, and establishing their downtown commercial districts.
- For more information, see:
  - [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org)
  - <http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/business/mainstreet/>
- There are three levels of requirements, services, and community commitments that a community must meet before receiving national recognition as a Main Street city:
  - “Exploring” is for communities that demonstrate an interest in revitalizing their downtowns and want to learn more about the Main Street approach.
  - “Transforming” is for communities who are committed to downtown revitalization using the Main Street approach but need technical assistance to take them to the next level.
  - “Performing Main Street” is for those communities who were previously certified National Main Street cities and those communities with advanced downtown programs following the Main Street approach.
- Currently, a group of citizens in the Willamette area are working together and with City staff on the “Exploring” phase to create preservation-based commercial district revitalization focused in the Willamette area.
- The existing Main Street group and City staff will attend an upcoming Main Street training on March 19 and 20, 2009 at Marylhurst.

### Other Issues

- There is a March 20, 2009 deadline for West Linn’s application to progress from “Exploring” to “Transforming.” The application package requires a commitment from the City Council in the form of a resolution. A resolution, if adopted at the March 23, 2009 City Council meeting, could be referenced in the application package and included at a later date.
- There is a March 23, 2009 deadline for West Linn’s application to the Tourism Development Council (TDC) for grant funding for tourism based projects. TDC staff has indicated that consultant and project costs related to the Main Street program could potentially receive funding.
- TDC funding would not cover all of the anticipated costs for progressing from “Exploring” to “Transforming,” but TDC funding would cover the anticipated costs to remain at the “Exploring” level.
- The approaching March 20 deadline asks the City to make an additional commitment that includes two significant assumptions:
  1. The City will dedicate eight hours of staff or consultant time a week (416 hours a year) to the Main Street program; this equates to a \$50,000+ consultant cost;
  2. The City is absolutely committed to a Main Street program in the Willamette area.
- The City Council identified support for the Main Street program during the recent goal-setting session.
- The City recently created an Economic Development Taskforce charged with (among other things):
  - *“Section 3: The Task Force will also review and make recommendations concerning methods by which the City’s role in enhancing business prosperity can be funded such as local business districts, the Main Street program, and urban renewal districts.”*
- Recruitment for the Economic Development Taskforce is currently underway and appointments are expected soon.
- The Planning Department has identified significant activities the City can pursue as an “Exploring” community; these activities could be funded by TDC funds and no additional City funding would be required (with the exception of staff time):
  - Assistance on two community assessments
  - Assistance with work plans and defining technical focus of plans and goals
  - Training workshops and annual conference
  - Mentoring from a “Performing” community
  - Help with generating community interest
  - Consultation with state/county staff
  - Assistance with promotion of program and local press releases.
  - Access to state’s library resources on program

### **Benefits & Drawbacks**

- The benefit of remaining at the “Exploring” level is the ability to work on the above-listed activities without a required level of commitment from the City – the City is able to take the “Exploring” level at its own pace and to work with the existing Main Street interest group and the newly-formed Economic Development Taskforce. Also, the cost of this phase can be covered by anticipated grant funding.
- The drawback of remaining at the “Exploring” level is that the City will need to wait until March 2010 to progress to “Transforming.”
- The benefit of progressing to the “Transforming” level is the added level of prestige associated with this level.
- The drawback of progressing to the “Transforming” level is the required financial and staffing commitment given that the Economic Development Taskforce has not fully reviewed this Main Street program location and concept.

### **Options**

1. Direct staff to remain at the “Exploring” level and to work with the existing Main Street interest group and the soon-to-be-formed Economic Development Taskforce to ensure that by March 2010, the City is ready to progress to the “Transforming” level after participating in the activities as described by the Planning Department.
2. Direct staff to prepare the application to progress to the “Transforming” level and approve a resolution at the March 23, 2009 City Council meeting.

### **Recommendation**

- Staff recommends Option #1 – Direct staff to remain at the “Exploring” level. This will provide the City the needed time to fully explore the Main Street program in partnership with the existing Main Street interest group and Economic Development Taskforce. In addition, funding can be secured from the TDC to participate in the plethora of activities that can inform the decision to move ahead to the “Transforming” level in March 2010.