

SWOT: West Linn Economy

Strengths

- Clear long-range land use catalysts already in motion
 - Waterfront Community Vision Plan adopted for an underutilized ~275-acre Willamette River waterfront, including future zoning, transportation network, and development code work plus a financial plan framework.
 - VISION43 is explicitly aimed at revitalizing the Highway 43 corridor with safer crossings, pedestrian networks, and more vibrant commerce (i.e., “place-making” + economic activity).
- Strong “place” fundamentals: river access, historic Willamette area, quality-of-life appeal (helps attract residents, visitors, and small businesses).
- Demonstrated ability to win/partner on outside funding for infrastructure
 - Example: OR 43/Marylhurst safety project shows West Linn can be part of multi-source funding stacks (ODOT + grants + local).

Weaknesses

- Structural revenue constraint: unusually low property tax capacity + limited commercial/industrial base
 - The City’s own budget message notes a ~\$9M projected shortfall in the financial forecast and points directly to low per-capita property tax revenue due to a frozen base rate and a less diverse tax base (small, low-density commercial; almost no industry).
 - Budget also states property taxes are ~23% of total revenues, a major share of flexible funding—so being “low” matters a lot.
- Large capital needs competing with limited flexible dollars
 - The City notes the Water System Master Plan lists ~\$100M in needs over 20 years beyond current resources.
- High expectations for services (public safety, parks, quality infrastructure) in a community whose general revenues don’t match peers (per the budget narrative).

Opportunities

- Grow the tax base (not the rate) through targeted rezoning + redevelopment
 - VISION43 mixed-use code updates and corridor reinvestment can add new construction assessed value (one of the few ways Oregon cities materially grow property tax receipts under Measure 50 limits).
 - The waterfront vision is a once-in-a-generation “value creation” area: mixed-use, access, destination potential, and redevelopment-ready acreage.
- Use “growth-paying-for-growth” tools
 - Urban renewal/redevelopment mechanisms already exist locally (West Linn Redevelopment Agency) to help fund enabling infrastructure in targeted areas.
- Stack grants + partnerships for big-ticket priorities

- Urban renewal / TIF in targeted areas to fund enabling infrastructure that makes projects pencil (captures *future growth*, rather than increasing today's taxes).
- Public-private partnerships for placemaking, parking/shared facilities, event programming—especially in waterfront/Willamette areas.

4) Aggressively pursue outside dollars for the “must-do” list

- Transportation: continue grant-stacking like the OR 43 safety project model.
- Drinking water: expand SRF strategy + federal/state opportunities; the City's need is well-documented and regionally significant.

5) Squeeze more value from existing assets and operations

- Portfolio review of City-owned properties, leases, surplus assets; shared services; tech-enabled service delivery; better lifecycle maintenance planning to avoid “failure costs.”

“We want to grow and support businesses here because a healthier commercial base stabilizes City services without raising residential tax rates.”

EDC Analysis

Economic Development Committee – City of West Linn

Committee SWOT Snapshot

Strengths

- **Strong Public Connection:** Ability to engage local businesses, gather real-world insights, and represent the business community authentically.
- **High Research & Analysis Capacity:** Multiple members skilled in research, synthesis, and turning ideas into clear recommendations.
- **Institutional Knowledge:** Long-standing committee experience provides historical context and lessons learned.
- **Bias Toward Action:** Several members demonstrate follow-through and completion mindset.

Opportunities

- Increase public trust through visible, completed initiatives
- Strengthen City–Business partnerships through structured outreach
- Position the EDC as a “doer committee”, not just an advisory body
- Align EDC efforts more tightly with Council priorities and staff capacity

Threats

- Risk of high discussion / low execution
- Volunteer fatigue if work lacks clarity or outcomes
- Loss of credibility if recommendations stall without ownership

EDC Role Map (Aligned to Strengths)

Role	Primary Focus	Assigned Strength
Business Outreach Lead	Public engagement, listening, relationship-building	Lance