



**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
DRAFT MINUTES**

Monday, February 28, 2022

Held Electronically

View on Channel 9 or Channels 180 and 181 (for Charter Communications customers)
or live stream via rvtv.sou.edu select RVTV Prime.

Written and oral testimony will be accepted for public input. For written testimony, email public-testimony@ashland.or.us using the subject line: Ashland City Council Public Testimony.

For oral testimony, fill out a Speaker Request Form at ashland.or.us/speakerrequest and return to the City Recorder. The deadline for submitting written testimony or speaker request forms will be on Monday, February 28th at 10 a.m. and must comply with Council Rules to be accepted.

Due to the Mayor's absence Councilor President Tonya Graham called the Study Session to order at 5:30 PM.

Councilors' Hyatt, Seffinger, Jensen, Moran and DuQuenne were present.

1. Public Input (15 minutes, maximum)

None.

2. EcoNorthwest Economic Diversity Study

Bob Barker and Kryn Sausedo from EcoNorthwest presented a presentation (*see attached*)

Items discussed were:

- Project Overview
- Objective
- Process
- Schedule
- Council Questions and Input

Council discussed the following questions:

- What are the qualities that make Ashland unique?
- What are the greatest risks to the Ashland economy?
- What are the opportunities for expansion and diversification in the local economy?
- What are specific actions the community could do to move toward those outcomes?

3. Look Ahead

Council discussed the Look Ahead.

Council discussed having an Executive Session Policy.

City Attorney Katrina Brown spoke that there is currently no policy on this subject.

Seffinger/Jensen spoke to direct Staff to bring back a discussion regarding media access in Executive Sessions to a future Meeting.

DuQuenne/Moran spoke to direct Staff to review the CIP Budget and bring back to Council to discuss at a future Meeting.

4. Adjournment

The Study Session was adjourned at 7:11 PM.

Respectfully Submitted by:

City Recorder Melissa Huhtala

Attest:

Mayor Akins

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Administrator's office at (541) 488-6002 (TTY phone number 1-800-735-2900). Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

Ashland Economic Diversification Study

City Council Study Session

February 28, 2022

ECONorthwest

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- **Introductions**
- **Project Overview**
- **Council Input and Discussion**

- **Project is sponsored by the Ashland Chamber of Commerce with federal grant funding**
- **Objective:**
 - Exploration of Ashland's economy
 - Analysis of balance and resiliency
 - Project is not: Goal 9 or land use study, zoning/market review, housing study
- **Process:**
 - Data analysis and engagement
 - Comparable cities
 - SWOT
- **Deliverable:**
 - Plan that leverages existing strengths, addresses weaknesses to support a more diverse and resilient economy
- **Schedule:**
 - March – Ongoing analysis and engagement
 - April – Preliminary findings

Council Input and Discussion

- Purpose & Process
 - Gather City Council perspectives to inform SWOT, diversification targets, potential actions
 - Five questions
 - Each council member responds to question individually
 - Share big ideas or themes
 - 1-3 minutes per response; approximately 15 minutes per question
 - Share responses on screen to confirm correct

**What are the qualities that make
Ashland unique?**

What are the qualities that make Ashland unique?

- People
 - Value conservation, shared ideals
 - Older, experienced residents
- High quality of life (schools, outdoors, arts)
- Agriculture, culinary amenities
- Outdoor recreation
- Year-round amenities
- Unique mix (university, parks, theater, accessible location)
- More affordable than certain markets
- Quality of life

What insights have you gained about the Ashland economy from the last two years?

What insights have you gained about the Ashland economy from the last two years?

- Theater has changed (OSF), impacts tourism
- Restaurants have shifted
- Less dependency on OSF to drive local economy
- Creative business owners that look beyond traditional visitors
- Climate change affects visitors
 - Also forest landscape
- Customer habits have shifted
- Art walks/events have struggled
- More visitors that strain certain resources
- Need to make SOU, other areas more welcoming
- Haven't diversified economy
- Workforce availability struggling
- Still looking to increase jobs base
- Innovative solutions (flexible spaces for restaurants, etc.)
- Opportunity for introspection
- Pandemic had distinct affect on certain sectors (theater and academia)
- Childcare supply has diminished
- Foundational infrastructure (housing and childcare) impact larger economy
- Downtown lost some vibrancy

What are the greatest risks to the Ashland economy in the next ten years?

What are the greatest risks to the Ashland economy in the next ten years?

- Climate/environment
 - Smoke
 - Fire/destruction
 - Shifting calendar
 - Water access/rights (rain/snow)
- Accommodate youth customer base
- Qualified workforce
- Workforce housing
 - Need various types
 - Development fees
- Small business climate
- Lack of younger demographic
- Affordability for young businesses (space, land, etc.)
- Collaborative teamwork
- Ability to implement
- Shifting demographic/interests/lifestyles

What are opportunities for expansion and diversification in the local economy?

What are opportunities for expansion and diversification in the local economy?

- SOU – revitalization process
 - Anchor for town
 - Research, outdoor programs
- OSF – reimagine itself
- Outdoor recreation
 - Mountain biking
- Seasonal shift
 - Expand calendar to spring/fall
- Diversification
 - in addition to tourism
- Help local employers expand
 - Identify and remove barriers
- Promote assets that Ashland already has
- Local suppliers
- Health Care
 - Access to physicians, care
 - Asset for existing/potential residents
 - Expansion of services
- Croman Mill site, RR site
 - Business/workforce housing
- Be more inviting/flexible for development
 - Incentivize development
 - Explore barriers
- Attraction approaches
 - Tech, other employers
- Experiential services
- Create inclusive environment for artists

What are specific actions the community could do to move towards those outcomes?

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- Expand local childcare
- Expand healthcare
- Make housing more affordable/attainable
- Increase housing supply
- Reduce cost of living
- Embrace change
- Support business community to grow
- Improve collaboration and communication
- Work with intention/purpose
- Make Ashland welcoming to all
- Support parks system
- Maintain city/policing staff levels
- Further partnership with Chamber, Travel Ashland
- Strengthen unique elements, diversity
- Keep city flexible/affordable
- Make land more accessible/affordable
- Support small/BIPOC business community and entrepreneurs

- The second thing I mentioned is that we can offer many things in a small town that are typically found in larger cities.
- I think Councilor Seffinger is saying that we don't understand what young people want and without that, we can't figure out how to make Ashland welcoming to them.
- My language is specific about adapting to climate change. We need to adapt our economy and we need to reduce our wildfire risk in town to protect our economy. Councilor Hyatt's water statement is aligned with climate adaptation as well.
- And, we need to address the businesses we need (like child care) that the market can't provide on its own because of high land prices.

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