

## MEMORANDUM

To: Ryan Wells  
Community Development Director  
The City of Cornelius  
1355 N Barlow St, Cornelius, OR 97113

From: Steve Faust  
*Project Manager*

Date: September 19, 2018

**Project Name:** *Cornelius Town Center Master Plan*

**Project No:** *18488*

**RE:** *Summary of Community Outreach*

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The City of Cornelius is developing a Town Center Plan to guide future growth and development in the city's downtown. The objective of the Town Center Plan, which also will encompass an Urban Renewal Plan for implementation, is to establish tools to implement a vision to revitalize Cornelius' urban core and encourage private investment and employment growth.

As part of the planning process, the City conducted extensive community outreach to residents, visitors and community leaders to understand their vision for the future of the Town Center. This process reached hundreds of individuals and households through a Vision Ideation Session, online survey, community conversations, stakeholder interviews, and intercept surveys at local events. This memorandum summarizes the key themes identified during the community outreach process. A compilation of community feedback can be found in the Appendix.



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## Key Findings

The following are the top themes that emerged from all community outreach activities along with comments that exemplify each theme:

**Build on existing assets** – Including the new Cornelius Place library, the Virginia Garcia Health Center, City Hall, Centro Cultural, and St. Alexander Catholic Church

*“I love the new library, the Virginia Garcia building, Centro, and the church. I like the proximity to all the services and activities.”*

**Diversify amenities and services** – More diverse retail, grocery, and restaurant options and more family-friendly activities

*“I wish I did not have to leave town to eat at a nice restaurant for lunch with my colleagues or for dinner with my family.”*

**Improve traffic congestion and safety** – Improved street design, connectivity, safety, walkability, congestion, and parking

*“More sidewalks in the neighborhoods would be really great. I live in south Cornelius and there are a bunch of streets where there are no sidewalks, yet there can be heavy traffic or speeding vehicles. I would like to see more enforcement of the speed limit on 10th avenue. As it is, currently, even commercial drivers are going ten miles over the speed limit, day in and day out.”*

**Add community spaces and events** – A new public pool or water feature, more culturally-relevant community spaces and programming, and a public/farmers market

*“One of the things that our family would love to see is perhaps an Aquatic Recreational Center for the kids to have a safe place to go and be physically fit”*

**Enhance livability for all residents** – Redevelopment and/or improved maintenance of dilapidated properties, increasing community cohesion/diversity, and improving access to housing, childcare, healthcare, and professional services

*“The area around Virginia Garcia is the nicest part of town. That being said, the town is very aged and dilapidated... There is not enough housing for members of every socioeconomic background.”*

## Unique Comments

While the focus of this memorandum is to summarize the most frequently recurring themes encountered during the outreach process, the following are a number of responses



that demonstrate the unique thinking and observations on the part of some Cornelius community members:

#### Quotes from Community Members

- “We frequent the Harleman Park. [I] just wish it had a water feature like a spray park of sorts. My dance group uses the stage area to practice during the non-rainy season.”
- “The long trail that is suppose [sic] to connect the cities of Forest Grove, Banks, Hillsboro and Cornelius would be a great start to incorporate wetlands and serene parks that our community could enjoy during our summers.”
- “I started running in the neighborhood once but got discouraged when I tripped and fell because of an uprooted sidewalk.”
- “I would like to see some educational signage regarding the history of the electric passenger railway, in town.”
- “We are in desperate need of additional local industry. Relying heavily on retail/service industry is unsustainable, long-term.”
- “We are surrounded by farms and it only makes sense to have a community area that provides local produce and goods. A community of large shipping containers can be converted into a unique food stalls.”
- “Parques donde podemos caminar y practicar danzas culturales. San Alejandro la Iglesia es un centro clave donde se reúne la gente para celebrar o honrar la vida de un ser querido.” *Translation: “[I would like to see] parks where we can walk and practice cultural dances. St Alexander’s Catholic Church is a key center where people meet to celebrate or honor the life of a loved one.”*
- “Identity really revolves around the Latino spaces. The farmland and agricultural land is a huge asset and makes our town special.”
- “I would love to have more community centers and spaces. A physical center of the town would be nice, kind of like Main Street for Forest Grove.”
- Cornelius needs to celebrate our culture like Ashland with the Shakespeare Festival or Sisters - maybe with a blueberry festival.
- There is a tourism opportunity along rural bike routes. Council Creek Trail could promote agricultural tourism with a stop like L.L. Stub Stewart State Park and amenities such as bike repair and coffee shops.

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## Vision Ideation Session

The City hosted a Vision Ideation Session on June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018 with key city leaders and stakeholders. The purpose of the Vision Ideation Session was not to focus on the Town Center, but to take a broader view to envision a realistic and desired future for Cornelius. The session focused on two primary questions: What should the vision for the future of Cornelius be? What makes Cornelius unique and how can we build on that?

Participants articulated seven themes that comprise their vision for Cornelius:

1. The City should maintain flexibility in applying regulations and ensure that they are easily understood by Cornelius residents.
2. Cornelius should celebrate diversity and community, showcasing what makes Cornelius unique through art, community gathering spaces, and its family-friendly environment.
3. Cornelius needs to become a destination with amenities such as wineries, restaurants, cultural celebrations, year-round events, and possibly a new event center.
4. The City should continue making Cornelius a safe, walkable/bikeable, mixed-use community through improved street design, pedestrian connections and safety measures, diverse housing types, bicycle network, and access to professional services.
5. Youth in Cornelius need access to youth-friendly activities, such as recreational opportunities, a public pool or aquatic center, and safe play areas.
6. Cornelius should support education and business development through measures such as incentives, economic development planning, educational, and training opportunities, and fostering partnerships and relationships within the community.
7. The City should continue to improve its services and communication to strengthen the resilience of the community and help residents in need.

Additionally, participants discussed several unique aspects of Cornelius and ways to build on those assets. They note that Cornelius has many assets to support niche industry, especially in relationship to agriculture, including a young labor force interested in technology and underutilized properties such as the Hanks/Grande Foods property. The City could support industry growth and potentially agri-tech development through measures such as a technical school, providing resources, materials, and access to markets for farmers, and redevelopment of existing sites.

Participants also describe Cornelius as a unique interface of nature, country, and history that could be conducive to tourism with the right amenities. They suggest that promoting



agricultural and nature tourism strategically along rural bike routes and historic tourism along the historic train route could attract a larger tourism industry.

Finally, participants indicate that Cornelius has a series of diverse and family-oriented communities that are unique to the city, and the City should build on that identity through the creation of a “sense of place” and fostering inclusion and opportunities for residents, especially youth. They note that the benefits of growth and development should support the current residents living here, rather than push them elsewhere.

## Online Survey and Community Conversations

An online, open-form survey was distributed in both English and Spanish between July 16 and Sept 13 to gauge what community members like about downtown Cornelius and what they would like to see in the future. The survey garnered 119 responses. The same themes were covered in “community conversations” with ten community groups, including:

- Cornelius Downtown Advisory Group (2)
- Centro Cultural Staff
- Forest Grove/Cornelius Chamber of Commerce
- Cornelius Economic Development Commission
- Cornelius Development & Operations Staff
- Cornelius Youth Advisory Council
- Adelante Mujeres
- Cornelius Boosters
- Cornelius, West Dairy Creek Citizen Participation Organization (CPO 12C)
- Rotary Club
- Cornelius Latino Businesses

### What Community Members Like

Among survey and community conversation participants, there are several dominant themes that emerged regarding what they liked about Cornelius. The availability of services for Cornelius residents, including the new Cornelius library, the Virginia Garcia Health Center, City Hall, Centro Cultural, and St. Alexander Catholic Church are the most frequently cited by respondents.

Some respondents enjoy the availability of retail shopping, grocery options, and existing restaurants, and many appreciate the new transportation improvements along Adair and Baseline Streets, including streetlamps and improved sidewalks. Community members value both the proximity of local services and sidewalk improvements around the Town Center, and indicate that these factors have increased pedestrian activity, though most



people still travel by car. Among existing parks, Harleman Park is a popular destination for Cornelius residents and visitors. Finally, several respondents feel that Cornelius has an iconic aesthetic that is authentic, small, and rooted in a rich agricultural history.

### What Community Members Would Like to See

Community members have a variety of ideas of amenities and services that they would like to see in Cornelius. Traffic improvements that promote bike and pedestrian safety and walkability, better transit connections, slower traffic, continued streetscape improvements, and alleviated parking and traffic congestion are important for many respondents. Some express concern about the interface of the highway with town center activities and development. Many respondents note a desire for more affordable and diverse housing opportunities for residents of all socioeconomic backgrounds. Many would like to see improved maintenance or modernization of buildings within the town center and design or features like public art that create a “unifying feel”. Some note that there isn’t presently a clear, identifiable town center district.

Access to recreational options such as parks and trails is a frequently cited theme. Respondents express a strong desire for both a public swimming pool or water feature (such as a splash park) and a recreation/learning center with youth-friendly programming. Additionally, some feel that increased community gathering community spaces such as a plaza or market, public events including live music, and more culturally-relevant community spaces and programming could foster a stronger sense of community.

There are a variety of economic development priorities expressed in both the survey and community conversations. Respondents frequently indicate a desire for a greater variety of restaurants, including options for families, late-night, upscale, food carts, and bakeries or cafes. More grocery options, including a farmer’s market or other agritourism opportunities, also are very common themes. Greater availability of family-friendly entertainment options and more opportunities for retail shopping and small, locally-owned businesses are priorities for many respondents. Other economic development desires include the redevelopment of dilapidated properties, greater access to professional and office services, and attracting tourism.

### Stakeholder Interviews

Seven phone interviews were conducted with key stakeholders and leaders in the community that represent a variety of interests and areas of expertise. These interviews provide in-depth views of what’s going on in Cornelius today and what kind of opportunities exist for the future of downtown. Interviews focused on what interviewees



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like about downtown Cornelius today and what changes they would like to see in the future. Interviewees included:

- Arturo Villaseñor, Business Owner
- Ed Bacon, Business Owner
- Francisco Cervantes, Resident
- Karl Pishaw, Emanuel Lutheran Church Pastor
- Kathy Murphy, Business Owner
- Luis Hernández, Resident and Planning Commissioner
- Robert Perkins, Business Owner

### What Interviewees Like

There are many aspects of Cornelius that stakeholders enjoy and consider important to build on. Interviewees embrace the Latino identity and culture, such as the Virginia Garcia mural and building. Centro Cultural, Virginia Garcia, and St. Alexander Catholic Church are major community gathering resources and spaces. The new Cornelius Place library and courtyard will be new resources that provide a sense of place in the community.

Stakeholders note that there are barriers that prevent Cornelius being an inviting place for community members and visitors. The city lacks a bike and pedestrian-friendly environment, traffic congestion is increasingly problematic, and transit services are inadequate to provide travelers with reasonable alternatives. Other cities like Hillsboro and Forest Grove offer a better selection of retail and restaurant options, and problems such as homelessness, public drug use, and segregation/division are becoming more apparent in Cornelius.

### What Interviewees Would Like to See

Interviewees identified access to affordable housing and rental opportunities, including multi-family housing and tiny homes, as community priorities. Some stakeholders suggest that more community centers, spaces, events, and public art would provide a sense of place and identity for the Cornelius Town Center. Additionally, increased transit options to and from Cornelius, better bike and pedestrian facilities/environments, continued street improvements, and traffic alleviation would benefit both community members and visitors. Redevelopment or maintenance of dilapidated properties such as Grande Plaza or the Western States Fire Apparatus building is a strong priority among interviewees as is increased availability of services for residents such as childcare, healthcare, and professional services. A greater variety of restaurants and retail also are desired.



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## Community Events

Intercept surveys were conducted at twelve local events in Cornelius and Forest Grove as part of the community outreach effort. Surveys consisted of informal conversations with community members to determine the types of amenities they would like to see in Cornelius. A total of 349 individuals or households were interviewed about what they would like to see for the future of Cornelius. Surveys were conducted at the following events:

- Movies in the Park (4)
- Concerts in the Park (2)
- Cornelius National Night Out
- Centro Cultural Taquiza
- Virginia Garcia Health Fair
- Forest Grove Farmers Market
- Forest Grove Annual Corn Roast
- ¡El Grito! Festival Comunitario

While many themes were discussed during surveys, several dominant themes emerged. Family-friendly and mid-range priced restaurant options including quality chains, food carts, and more overall variety of restaurant types are desired. Additionally, more indoor and outdoor, family-friendly activities are popular requests among survey participants, especially features such as a public pool or splash pad, more events and festivals, and a farmers market.

Traffic congestion and safety are among top priorities for those interviewed, and transportation improvements that facilitate safer road crossings, greater visibility around parked cars, connected pedestrian corridors, and better parking options are frequently cited by respondents.

Community amenities and identity are common discussion themes, with many respondents expressing a desire for better community gathering spaces such as a plaza or community garden, and more parks, playgrounds and natural spaces. Other respondents want to see an image of Cornelius that incorporates Latino culture.

In addition to these themes, respondent comments and observations recorded during intercept surveys include:

- Satisfaction with Fred Meyer, but desire for additional clothing stores, grocery options, and a Target or a mall
- Desire for a coffee shop and chain restaurants such as Chipotle and In-N-Out





- Desire for more trails and walking paths
- Need for affordable housing in Cornelius
  - o Desire for apartments and mixed-use housing
  - o Concern about new housing and associated congestion
- Satisfaction with the library and streetlamps