

Molalla Area Vision and Action Plan 2030

January 1, 2020



Table of Contents

Cover photo by
Blue Sky Rafting
(Courtesy Of The Molalla River Alliance)

02	About this Plan
05	About Molalla
07	Findings
08	2030 Vision and Values
09	Vision Focus Areas: Strategies, Actions, Partners
10	Focus Area #1 - A resilient community that passionately recognizes and builds on its history, culture, and location
11	Focus Area #2 - A welcoming, friendly and vibrant community with an attractive hometown feel that is safe, hospitable, and inclusive of all residents, businesses and visitors
14	Focus Area #3 - An economically sound and growing community which is evident in the diversity of businesses, partnerships, education, innovation, and the strong work ethic of its people
15	Focus Area #4 - A full-service hub of resources
16	Focus Area #5 - A beautiful and tranquil area where people are deeply connected to its unique natural features
17	Appendix A: Acknowledgements
18	Appendix B: Plan process
19	Appendix C: Survey responses
21	Appendix D: Results from stakeholder interviews
23	Appendix E: Vocabulary and acronyms



Fly fishing on the Molalla
Photo: David Jackson Photography

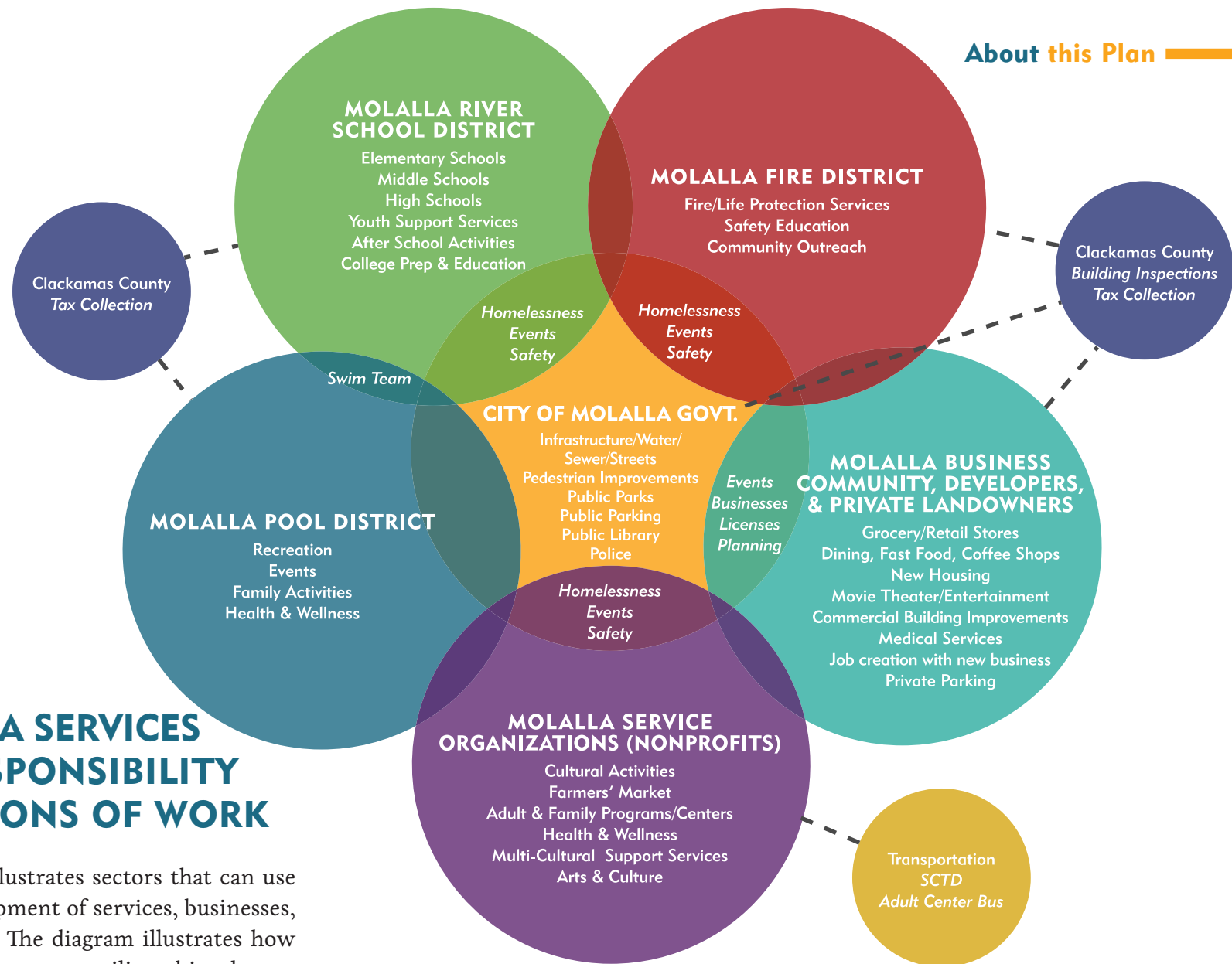
About this Plan

The Molalla Area Vision and Action Plan 2030 came from the work of dedicated citizens who sought to engage as many people as possible in producing a blueprint for Molalla's future. The plan outlines the vision, values, focus areas, strategies, and actions for all sectors of government, business, non-profits, individuals, and groups to use.

The planning process, spanning two and a half years, focused on listening to the people who live in and around Molalla, and make this their home. Listening and engagement took many forms including public meetings, stakeholder interviews, public surveys, group exercises and public events that included almost 1,000 people. Appendix A acknowledges those who have participated in the visioning process and Appendix B details the process.

The Ford Family Foundation supported this process every step of the way, including providing mentorship, funding, and community-building training for City Council members and project leaders Councilors Childress and Klein. Facilitation of the process by the Molalla City Council is a key example of the City's objective to have a clear and strategic citizen-led action plan.





MOLALLA AREA SERVICES AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY & INTERSECTIONS OF WORK

The following diagram illustrates sectors that can use this plan to guide development of services, businesses, initiatives and activities. The diagram illustrates how any organization or group can utilize this plan to align their strategic efforts with the plan's focus areas. Sector content within the diagram came from public feedback and does not include all services provided in and around Molalla.

Implementation

The plan will be implemented by committees made up of individuals from organizations named as Potential Partners in each focus area as well as others interested in a particular area. These committees will take ownership of one or more action items in their focus area. The plan will be reviewed annually to assess progress on all key focus areas, strategies and actions, and to make changes and additions.

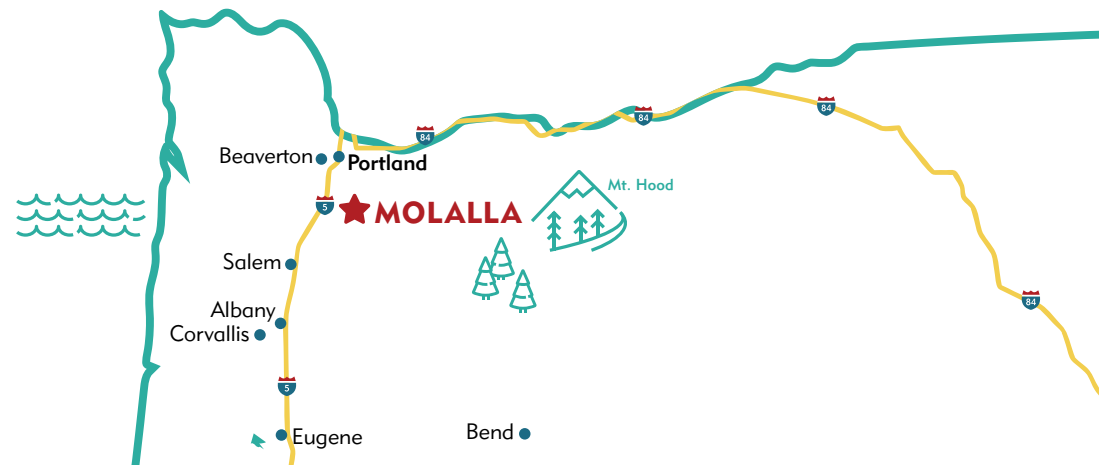


Dancer at 2018 Molalla 4th of July Parade
Photo: David Jackson Photography

About Molalla

Molalla, a community of approximately 9,800 residents, has a rich past and beautiful setting which is reflected today in its commitment to quality of life. The population is estimated to grow to 13,400 by 2030.

Located at the foothills of the Cascade Range, near the Mount Hood National Forest, the city is situated 30 miles southeast of Portland, 32 miles northeast of Salem, and 13 miles east of Interstate 5. It is about an hour drive to the Oregon Coast, the Columbia River Gorge, and Mt. Hood for winter sports. The City of Molalla is near the Molalla River Recreation Area, and surrounded by rich agricultural land, ranches, and rural residential development. It has been said that Molalla is in the middle of nowhere yet in the middle of everywhere.



HISTORY AND FUTURE

Prior to the arrival of the first European settlers, the area was populated by the Molalla Indians. Descendants of the Molallas are now part of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. Recognition of Molalla's Native American heritage is prominent in the community through education and art. In 2017 the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde entered into an agreement with the Molalla River School District which changed its logo to a bear and coyote in order to retain its Indians mascot name. The school district agreed to use the Grand Ronde Tribe's fourth- and eighth-grade history curriculum.

Seeking fertile soils, ample water and rich grasses, pioneers were attracted to the Willamette Valley and Molalla area. The community established itself at the crossing of two Indian trails. That crossing is the downtown intersection of Molalla today. William Russell filed the first land claim in the area in 1840. In 1850, a post office opened, and the community began growing. By 1856, the first schools opened, and in 1857, the first general store.

In 1913 Molalla welcomed the first steam train, the first Molalla Buckeroo Rodeo, the first bank, the first locally published weekly newspaper, and the incorporation of the City. Over time, timber production became the community's largest commodity. At one point, with five sawmills operating, Molalla was a true timber town. Timber remained the mainstay of the community's economy until the 1980s.

Like many other rural communities in Oregon, the downturn of the timber industry in the 1980s impacted the community and required that Molalla evolve and diversify its economic base. Today, due to its proximity to Portland and Salem, approximately 90% of working residents, other than home business owners, work outside of Molalla, making it a bedroom community.



1914 Workers grading Robbins Hill
Photo: Molalla Area Historical Society

This plan represents community momentum to re-define Molalla's identity and future. Despite past challenges, Molalla demonstrates resilience. City government is focused on collaboration, creative problem solving, and support of community needs through effective leadership. Public schools are on an academic upswing and a strong network of non-profit organizations and innovative businesses demonstrate care for citizens through many fundraising events. Share the Love, for example, is an event held annually by Molalla High School that raises thousands of dollars for individuals and families in dire circumstances.

Findings

Appendix C shows survey responses to “What would improve the quality of life in Molalla?” People consistently called for grocery stores, restaurants, traffic and pedestrian improvements, parks and recreation, more business and retail establishments, and events/activities including children’s activities.

People also responded through stakeholder interviews to a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The analysis asked “What are the internal strengths and weaknesses of Molalla? What are external opportunities the city can reach for and better engage with? What are external threats and limitations facing Molalla?” A summary of the SWOT analysis is shown in Appendix D.

The planning process focused on identifying what people value most about Molalla, understanding which elements of the community they wish to preserve, and how they would like to see Molalla transform over the next 10 years.

Following is a word cloud image illustrating the top words that people used to describe the Molalla area. The larger the word, the more often people used it to describe what they value most about living in Molalla. These words became the foundation from which this plan was crafted.



2030 Vision and Values

Through public input it became apparent that the core values must be maintained and expanded to be more forward-thinking and inclusive. Five community values emerged to make up the 2030 vision. This vision creates the picture and goal of what the community wants Molalla to be in 2030.

In 2030 Molalla is:

1. A **resilient** community that passionately recognizes and builds on its history, culture, and location
2. a **welcoming**, friendly and vibrant community with an attractive hometown feel that is safe, hospitable, and inclusive of all residents, businesses and visitors
3. an **economically sound** and growing community which is evident in the diversity of businesses, partnerships, education, innovation, and the strong work ethic of its people
4. A full-service **hub of resources**
5. a **beautiful and tranquil** area where people are deeply connected to its unique natural features



Vision Focus Areas

STRATEGIES

ACTIONS

PARTNERS



This section of the plan provides strategies for how Molalla will reach the 2030 vision. It details areas of focus, actions, and partners. Strategies and actions provide guidance and concrete steps to realize the vision focus areas. These were carefully crafted from all the findings in the planning process, with special attention given to themes that were mentioned consistently as key to community improvement.

This plan also leaves room for additional ideas and actions that result from people working collaboratively toward community betterment. Often these spontaneous acts bring needed innovation, direction, spark, and fun to successfully motivate people toward achieving the vision.



FOCUS AREA #1

Molalla is... a resilient community that passionately recognizes and builds on its history, culture, and location

STRATEGIES:

- Be deliberate about building identity
- Embed collaborative thinking and practice in all actions
- Identify, support, and build on local culture including arts, history, heritage, and humanities

Anyone interested in implementing actions is a potential partner.

ACTIONS

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Develop an awareness campaign that:

- celebrates the unique and interesting aspects of the area
- builds local pride of place and confidence in the Molalla community identity
- increases awareness about managed growth efforts
- Highlights community achievements (Share the Love, Running Club Charitable Giving, service orgs. efforts on behalf of those in need, etc.)

Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), City of Molalla (City), media partners, non-profits, Molalla River School District (MRSD), student groups, businesses, Kiwanis, Elks, Rotary, VFW, etc.

Create a live, work and play promotion video for Molalla

Chamber, City

Cultivate and continue to build on relationships with heritage partners

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Molalla Area Historical Society, City

Inventory local arts, heritage, historical sites, and other cultural assets, and make information available online (such as Dibble House, galleries, Apple Festival, Celebrate Molalla, farmers market, FFA)

Chamber, City, heritage partners, non-profits

Preserve significant buildings and other visible elements of local history

Molalla Area Historical Society, business owners, City

Build relationships by incentivizing collaborative work projects and be inclusive in planning and decision making events

City, Chamber, service organizations, community, MRSD, Molalla Fire District (MFD)

FOCUS AREA #2

Molalla is...a **welcoming**, friendly and vibrant community with an attractive hometown feel that is safe, hospitable, and inclusive of all residents, businesses and visitors

STRATEGIES

- Develop the physical infrastructure needed to support a welcoming community
- Foster socially welcoming activities and embrace diversity as our strength
- Engage youth

ACTIONS

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Research aesthetic design and architectural standards to create a plan which promotes development of an appealing and cohesive identity for downtown and throughout the community

City, business owners

Utilize the Transportation Master Plan to improve infrastructure and safety for all modes of travel (pedestrian, vehicles, bicycles, etc.) and identify new opportunities to enhance livability, i.e., Rails to Trails, bike/pedestrian paths, etc.

City, Clackamas County, Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), City of Canby, MRSD, MFD, Southern Pacific Hillvista Investment Co.

Implement wastewater treatment plant improvements to ensure compliance

City, state and federal agencies

Form a citizen advisory committee to provide input for development of an updated Parks/Greenspace Master Plan

City, service organizations, neighborhood associations, landowners

- Maintain and improve existing parks and recreation areas
- Add new community parks or elements to existing parks, i.e., dog park, serenity park, tree park, nature park

Map all points of entry to the city and identify landowner contacts to develop a plan to improve gateway, wayfinding and informational signage

City, state agencies

FOCUS AREA #2

(continued)

STRATEGIES

- Develop the physical infrastructure needed to support a welcoming community
- Engage youth
- Foster socially welcoming activities and embrace diversity as our strength

ACTIONS

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Build a new police station	City, landowners
Develop and implement a property reuse/redevelopment/new development strategy for properties along Highway 211 and in downtown	Chamber, City
Ensure that K–12 educational facilities meet community needs	MRSD, community
Improve downtown curb appeal: paint buildings, add vibrant colors with flowers/landscaping, artwork, banners, lighting	Property owners, Chamber
Improve awareness about free public parking locations in the downtown area	City
Create centrally located information board for community announcements and information	City, community groups, MRSD
Develop clear, consistent, effective ways of communicating with local people, including those whose first language is not English, as well as visitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly newsletter • Community calendar • Resource directory • Facebook, Next Door Neighbor (social media) • Molalla Communications reader boards 	City, Chamber, Mt. Hood Territory, County, Plaza Los Robles, Todos Juntos, regional contacts, MRSD, Library, Molalla Communications
Enhance City website to add event information and cross promote with Chamber and other entities	City, Chamber, service organizations, MRSD, MFD
Develop system for collecting and updating email address list for monthly community newsletter	City

FOCUS AREA #2

(continued)

STRATEGIES

- Develop the physical infrastructure needed to support a welcoming community
- Engage youth
- Foster socially welcoming activities and embrace diversity as our strength

ACTIONS

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Promote and utilize “Just Serve” website for connecting volunteers and volunteer opportunities

JustServe.org, community organizations

Create and deliver area resource guide to new utility bill customers

Service organizations, City, Clackamas County and specifically Health, Housing, and Human Services

Develop and encourage a wide range of events for the entire community

- Recreational/parks events
- National Night Out
- Buckeroo, Celebrate Molalla and other existing events
- Drug take-back day (April 27)

Police Department, MRSD, Library, City, Chamber

Create community-building activities, education, and awareness programs that intentionally focus on including all cultures and ethnic groups

Business owners, MRSD, City, Plaza Los Robles, Todos Juntos, service organizations

Add extra safety patrols in Molalla River Corridor

Community, Clackamas County, City

Hold a contest to create a slogan or theme for Molalla that supports this plan and tells our story

City, community

Organize community groups to hold cleanup events for neighborhoods, parks and other community areas

Community, businesses

Engage youth in City government and plan implementation committees

Youth, MRSD, service organizations

FOCUS AREA #3

Molalla is... an **economically sound** and growing community which is evident in the diversity of businesses, partnerships, education, innovation, and the strong work ethic of its people

STRATEGIES

- Develop and sustain an environment for successful economic development and managed growth
- Encourage youth participation in job development

ACTIONS

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

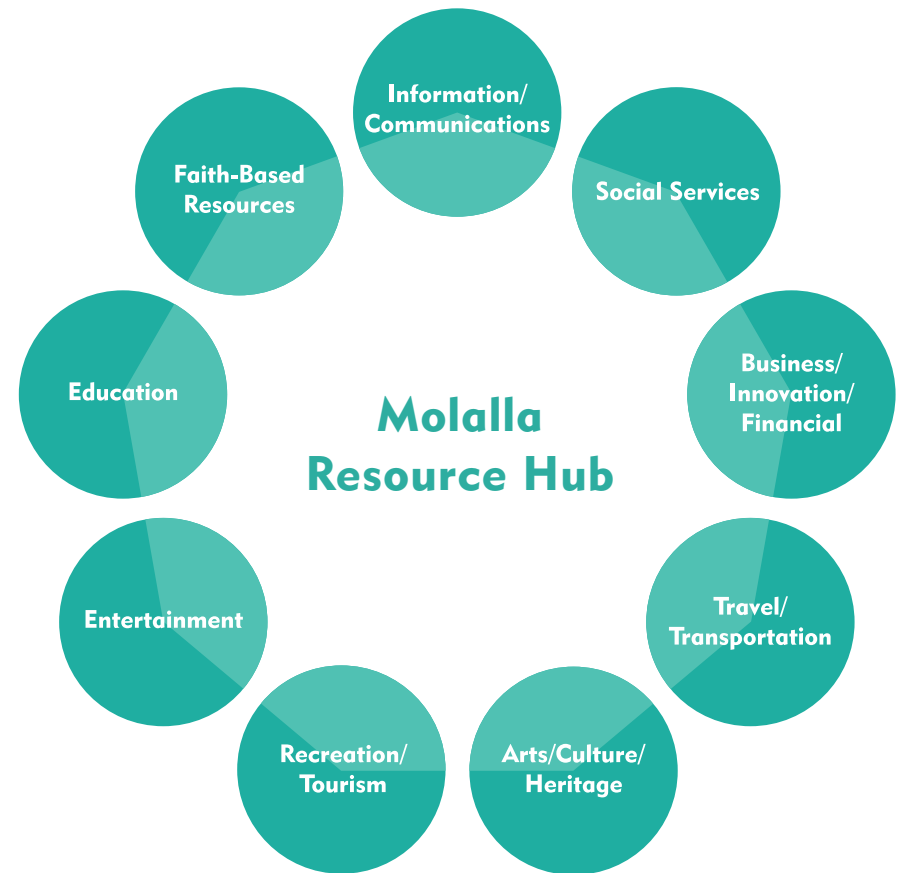
Develop directory of small to large businesses	City, Chamber
Create an economic development plan that identifies a foundation to grow resources and services for the community, i.e. shopping, entertainment, dining, and generates jobs	Clackamas County, City
Host a conference with local businesses, City of Molalla, and the MRSD Board of Directors on innovation and possible areas for growth in Molalla's local workforce	Local businesses, City, MRSD
Create a branding and marketing plan to encourage entrepreneurs and attract new businesses	Chamber of Commerce
Form a group to advise and advocate for business development	Business community
Strengthen promotion and support of local businesses, craftspeople, artisans, etc. (Made in Molalla)	Chamber of Commerce, business community
Develop a "start a new business" checklist for City website	Chamber, City
Create school/community/business initiatives to develop more local internships for students	Businesses, MRSD, Chamber, service organizations
Promote career technical education for youth, job development, and continuing education	Clackamas Community College, MRSD, Oregon Universities, Colleges, Extension Services

FOCUS AREA #4

Molalla is... a full-service hub of resources

STRATEGIES

- Inventory and promote available services, resources, and opportunities in Molalla



ACTIONS

Inventory existing community services and resources, identify gaps, and develop a digital and printable resource database/guide to be shared through service groups, the library, newspaper, and City website

Identify regional community needs and the infrastructure required to support them. Study successful models of collaborative efforts that have addressed such needs. Attract missing services to Molalla (Social Security Administration, Oregon Health Authority, health care, expanded bus service, language interpreters) and encourage greater collaboration across non-profits serving families.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Service organizations, City, Library, adult center, Molalla Aquatic Center

County, City/police, state agencies, non-profit agencies

FOCUS AREA #5

A beautiful and tranquil area where people are deeply connected to its unique natural features

STRATEGIES

- Strengthen regional partnerships to identify key natural resources
- Develop new and support existing programs dedicated to protecting natural areas
- Create sustainable tourism activities and promotion campaigns

ACTIONS

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Develop regional partnerships across public and private groups to promote wise use of natural resources and to celebrate and promote the wild and scenic Molalla River

City, non-profits, Molalla River Alliance, Bureau of Land Management, tree farmers, Molalla River Watch, Weyerhaeuser, Mt. Hood Territory

Add signage for Molalla River Recreational Area and promote the river corridor

City, ODOT, BLM, Friends of the Molalla River area, Molalla River Alliance

Develop places and spaces that promote tranquility

MRSD, City, community, businesses

Organize volunteer events for cleanup and maintenance of natural resources including the Molalla River

Molalla River Alliance, community, We Love Clean Rivers, Molalla River Watch

Develop strategies and funding resources to educate Molalla area residents about environmental sustainability through good stewardship and daily actions people can take

City, environmental organizations, OSU Extension Services, Forestry Service, MRSD

Appendix A

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Photo: David Jackson Photography

A HUGE THANK YOU TO...

The approximately 1,000 people who gave input to this planning process, including those who participated in public input sessions and stakeholder interviews

Molalla High School, Molalla Communications, Molalla Public Library, and the Moose Lodge provided public meeting spaces

The Ford Family Foundation for its ongoing support

Molalla City Council, and especially Elizabeth Klein and Leota Childress for their leadership

City of Molalla staff

Community Development Consultant Bill Flood

A special thanks to the High School Leadership students for their insights!

Appendix B

PLAN PROCESS

SCHEDULE	ACTIVITY
May 17, 2017	Initial meeting with The Ford Family Foundation
June 21, 2017	Public meeting to test surveys
Summer 2017	Input from early Visioning Committee
Fall 2017–Winter 2018	Two public surveys gather input from approximately 600 Molalla area residents
Spring 2018	Community development consultant Bill Flood contracted to determine public values, needs and desires to improve Molalla’s quality of life and assist with plan development
Summer 2018	Surveys analyzed and summarized, community values drafted
Fall 2018	First Molalla Community Celebration held with approximately 2,500 people attending; gathered feedback from community members on values and vision
Fall 2018	Analyzed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats through interviews with 50 stakeholders, including 25 high school leadership students
December 2018	Two community meetings held to review values and vision, and begin strategy development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School • Moose Lodge
Winter 2018	Four community meetings held to develop draft goals, actions, timeline, and partners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City focus at City Council retreat • Youth focus at Molalla High School • Business focus at Molalla Communications • Non-profit services focus at Library
Spring 2019	Plan writing, re-writing
July 2019	First draft plan developed
Fall 2019	Plan review
Winter 2019–2020	City Council approves Vision and Action Plan
Winter 2019–2020	Begin hiring process for Vision and Action Plan Implementation Coordinator

Appendix C

SURVEY RESPONSES

Two on-line public surveys gathered input from approximately 600 Molalla area residents. Following are responses from the second survey to the question “What would improve the quality of life in Molalla?”

WHAT WOULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN MOLALLA?	# OF PEOPLE RESPONDING 444 TOTAL	% OF PEOPLE RESPONDING TO THIS ITEM
Grocery	152	34%
Restaurants (including fast-food)	121	27%
Traffic improvements (roads, streets, lights)	83	19%
School improvements (especially a new middle school)	82	18%
Pedestrian improvements (sidewalks/trails/walking, bike lanes, lights)	69	16%
Parks, recreation	58	13%
More retail	56	13%
More business (especially downtown)	39	9%
Events, activities, including children’s activities	40	9%
Coffee shop	32	7%
Youth hang-out spot, activities	30	7%
Movie theatre	29	7%

SURVEY RESPONSES (continued)

Appendix C: Survey Responses

WHAT WOULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN MOLALLA?	# OF PEOPLE RESPONDING 444 TOTAL	% OF PEOPLE RESPONDING TO THIS ITEM
Local culture (support for aesthetic improvements, library, rodeo, arts, food carts, farmer's market, etc.)	28	6%
Facelift for downtown	26	6%
Address drugs, crime, safety	21	5%
Open pool/aquatic center	20	5%
Transport/bus (especially to Woodburn)	19	4%
Clinic (Spanish-speaking)	14	3%
Bring people together, build community	12	3%
Parking	8	2%
More jobs	8	2%
Address homeless issue	7	2%
New development with infrastructure, housing, affordable and senior housing	7	2%
No new housing/building	6	1%
Spanish interpreters	4	1%

Appendix D

RESULTS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over 50 people responded through stakeholder interviews to a SWOT analysis. The analysis asked “What are the internal strengths and weaknesses of Molalla? What are external opportunities the City can reach for and better engage with? What are external threats and limitations facing Molalla?” Following is a summary of responses.

STRENGTHS

- People care about one another
- People are dedicated to hard work
- Our diversity—multiple generations and ages, cultures, ethnicities, agricultural workers, blue collar workers, and professionals, etc.
- A small-town feeling, relaxed and slower paced environment—peaceful, quiet, and safe
- The natural setting, resources, and history
- Proximity to agriculture
- Location in the region
- Schools are on the rise
- City is improving services
- Strong non-profits
- Room to grow
- Optimism, excitement about claiming the future
- Businesses, services, projects, initiatives in Molalla that are working

Appendix D

RESULTS FROM STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS (continued)

Appendix D: Results from Stakeholder Interviews

WEAKNESSES

- Lack of strong, positive identity; low self-esteem
- Lack of vision
- Negative myths about Molalla that are barriers to advancement
- Visual look of downtown and points of arrival in Molalla are not strong
- Not enough community engagement and volunteerism
- Not all people feel safe
- Lack of enough retail, industry, and local jobs
- Struggle to find balance of growth/change while preserving current values

OPPORTUNITIES

- Address all the prior weaknesses
- Molalla's population is nearing 10,000 residents, creating opportunities for expanded market offerings
- Build on the unique natural setting
- Existing events that can build identity
- Existing partners including the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Clackamas County Economic Development Department, and the Oregon Department of Transportation, as well as great potential for new partnerships
- Attract visitors and others traveling on Molalla's main highways and arterial roads to stop, linger, and experience all Molalla has to offer

THREATS

- Not having control over Highways 213 and 211 (Molalla's Main Street) which are the major arterials of traffic into the community
- Being a commuter town with people not supporting and doing business in Molalla
- Some perceive the location as too far from other communities
- Lack of clear, strong identity
- If Molalla doesn't claim its future, someone else will
- Trying so hard to maintain status quo that opportunities are missed

Appendix E

VOCABULARY & ACRONYMS

Actions – Specific steps, activities, projects or programs to implement strategies

Evaluation and Assessment – Specifically how the Implementation Action Committee will annually reflect on and measure progress toward reaching the vision and implementing actions and strategies

MFD – Molalla Fire District

MRSD – Molalla River School District

ODOT – Oregon Department of Transportation

Potential Partner(s) – A person or group/organization collaborating with others toward an area of mutual interest

SCTD – South Clackamas Transportation District

Strategies – Statements describing how to implement the vision focus areas

SWOT – Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats

Values – Core beliefs of community members

Vision – The picture of what the community wants Molalla to be in 2030

Vision Focus Areas – Key areas and topics for putting the vision into practice