

VISION: Teams working on concrete goals and strategies

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Prosperous Sisters.

The Vision Action Teams each started with 20 strategies identified by the community related to their area of concern, prioritized them, and have refined them down to five strategies. For each strategy, which is designed to support the connected focus area, the team identified actions to be taken, as well as leading and supporting partners to carry out the actions. They also created milestones in achieving the actions. Implementation timelines, ranging from less than one year to five-plus years, were established.

Each team has a designated leader whose responsibilities include keeping the team on track and summarizing and reporting on strategies and progress.

Janel Ruehl, program coordinator for Community and Economic Development at Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, is the leader for Connected Sisters. Ruehl said, "The VAT process has been very collaborative in the most authentic sense of the word." She believes her team "has done an outstanding job honoring the input from the rest of the community" that was gathered in surveys, interviews, and community meetings.

"At the same time, I still think there are some voices that haven't participated significantly in this process through any of these channels," Ruehl offered.

She indicated particularly the younger residents of Sisters Country (18-35) and the Latino population. Ruehl would like to see these populations involved more directly in the implementation of the action plan.

Each team is providing and receiving feedback and suggestions from each other as they deal with "thorny issues" that need to be resolved.

NXT consultant Steven Ames, who is co-facilitating the Visioning Project, said the teamwork has been terrific.

"The VAT has been working hard and very collaboratively in pulling together actions," Ames said. "The strategy list has been altered slightly, with a few strategies merged, and a few new ones pulled up from the larger list. It's a well-balanced slate of initiatives from bricks and mortar to planning- and process-oriented projects."

The types of strategies identified range from things like promoting the small-town atmosphere, to increasing

the availability of affordable housing, to developing and promoting a Sisters Makers District, to improving communications connectivity and infrastructure.

Sisters Community Development Director Patrick Davenport, who is the team leader for Resilient Sisters, made particular note of team members' contributions.

"Team members are sacrificing significant personal time to contribute their perspective, experiences, and concerns to make this Vision and Action Plan a success and right-sized for Sisters," he said.

Livable Sisters team leader, Nicole Mardell, is an associate planner in the Deschutes County Community Development Department. She said her team worked hard to vet each strategy and action, unpacking the potential challenges and opportunities before including it in the plan.

"We have included some

very concrete goals to accomplish in a defined amount of time, as well as more innovative ideas to work toward in the future," Mardell reported.

The VAT met on Monday, November 26, to finalize the draft Visioning document to be presented to the City Council at their Wednesday, November 28 workshop. Between the Council meeting and early February, final adjustments will be made, lead and supporting partners will be recruited to bring the action steps to life, and the Sisters Horizons Vision will become a living document.

Ruehl concluded, "The VAT team represents a wealth of passion and expertise, with a real heart of service. I think the visioning project is in good hands at this stage."

Ames expressed satisfaction with the process. "Overall, we are pleased and impressed. This is a special, caring place and the VAT and its work demonstrate that in spades!"

Dazzled...



PHOTO BY JERRY BALDOCK

Young shoppers enjoyed the whimsical display at Garden of Eden Gifts while shopping downtown Sisters after the Christmas Parade.

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