

downtown
Transformation



**How do you want to
transform downtown?**



Newberg Downtown Coalition

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Thanks to the editing team for digesting meeting notes from the Downtown Transformation breakout groups and final plenary session to compile a cogent report.

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Seize the Opportunity



Newberg is at an exciting point in its history. The Newberg/Dundee Bypass, a topic of discussion for over 50 years, is under construction right now. Newberg has decided to take advantage of this opportunity to transform our downtown. We have a unique opportunity to act as a community and implement our vision of the future. We have the chance to reshape downtown and form the cultural, civic, and commercial heart of our community into a space that reflects the vibrancy and optimism of its citizens.

First Street started as a dirt road before it was paved with gravel, then asphalt, to accommodate wagons and automobiles. Later, tracks were laid for the Red Electric commuter rail line, and finally those tracks were paved over as Highway 99W became the highly trafficked route it is today. In recent history, downtown has been defined by the heavy flow of traffic and a one way-couplet. The completion of the Newberg/Dundee Bypass is expected to bring significant reductions in Newberg Highway 99W traffic.

In April of 2014, the Newberg Downtown Coalition gathered citizens in public meetings to ask, "How do you want to transform downtown?" We should grasp this golden opportunity to bring the dreams and vision of Newberg into the here and now. The goal was to create a blueprint for present and future community leaders that lists tangible action steps to move our present downtown forward to our ideal. This report is that blueprint.



Attendees, including City of Newberg planning staff who served as a resource, formed groups and revisited the vision generated in 2002. The previous vision did not have the exciting reality of the bypass construction and attendees were encouraged to use that vision as a basis, but not feel constrained by it. The desired outcome of the 2014 meetings was to create a list of distinct projects and their desired outcomes. After the first meeting, participants submitted their collected reports and the agenda for the second meeting was formed by these reports.

Ten areas of focus percolated to the surface during the process: Street Closures, Signage and Way-finding, Crosswalk Improvements, Business Mix, Street Configuration, Public Art, Public Restrooms, Sidewalk Treatments, Building and Storefront Appearance, and Parking. Attendees got to use electronic polling devices to vote on and receive immediate results on questions that arose during discussion.

This document describes these areas of focus in a narrative format and concludes with a summary of the key projects outlined at the public meetings.

Benches and other sidewalk features are designed by local artists and schoolchildren, built by local craftspeople, and funded by donations from community groups and individuals wishing to contribute to the atmosphere of downtown. Even mundane elements such as public restrooms incorporate the artistic flair of the neighborhood. Public projects involve planning for artistic elements at every stage and create a unified framework for private and community driven endeavors. These efforts are guided by a Public Art Team who help provide uniformity and advice to both public and private entities on questions of design and suggestions for sources of grant funding.

Signs with the distinct visual style of downtown present information and directions reinforcing the special character of the district. They inform and direct downtown visitors to parking, restrooms, walking and biking trails, and points of interest. The same artistic themes present in public art elements are reflected by the signage.

Historical architecture is preserved and restored when possible. Fanciful elements such as historical elements of sidewalks are framed by pavers making a simple walk down First Street into a treasure hunt. New construction follows the mixed-use model of retail space at street level with office or living space above. It also incorporates a visual style that is a pleasant addition to the older buildings, but not required to mimic them.

Downtown is a place pedestrians, cyclists, and visitors of all ages feel at ease. Every crosswalk has a bulb-out that reduces the distance to cross the street. Decorative pavers and landscaping make each bulb-out an appealing addition to the streetscape. Pedestrian activated warning lights let motorists know well in advance to slow down for crosswalks that don't benefit from a stop light such as Garfield, School, and Washington Streets.

Visitors and shoppers appreciate conveniently placed public restrooms. Facilities similar to the Portland Loo or the Sidewalk Restroom encourage foot traffic and leisurely window-shopping, especially by adults with young children. A short term solution is the strategic placement of port-a-potties at the empty lot at Howard Street and First Street or the Merchants' Parking Lot on Second Street between Howard and College Streets.

Wide sidewalks allow ample seating outside of downtown's many eateries and coffee shops and patrons have plenty of room to dine "al fresco". Plentiful shade trees and awnings provide refuge from the sun and the occasional rain shower. The additional space on the sidewalks allows for more street furniture like benches, wine-barrel planters, and bike racks without impeding pedestrians.

Public parking is easy to find thanks in part to improved signage but also thanks to the newly renovated Merchants' Parking Lot. Additional public parking spaces may become available by working with owners of vacant downtown lots and in diagonal parking along sections of First and Howard Streets. Parking areas are surfaced with decorative pavers and ample landscaping that keep them from being barren asphalt islands. Instead, parking areas are designed with the idea that they are a "people place used by cars", and not a "car place used by people".

What We Want





The downtown area offers a broad scope of retail sales, restaurants, coffee shops, and services that cater to the walk-in customer. Downtown is a destination both in and out of Newberg and a place people want to travel TO rather than travel THROUGH. People walk, bike, and drive to downtown for shopping and services.

Local goods and services are downtown's focus and shopping is a delightful voyage of exploration and discovery instead of a get-in-get-out chore. Through incentives, code changes, and promotion the types of businesses that settle downtown is subtly shaped over time without disruptive regulation. As growth occurs, codes are reviewed to allow more upward expansion. Mixed-use buildings are encouraged. A vibrant culture develops as downtown becomes a place to be and be seen. Downtown frequently hosts festivals and special events and First Street is the center of public life. Downtown businesses are open longer hours and evenings downtown are just as relaxing for visitors and profitable for merchants as daylight hours.

Howard or School Street may be closed or redesigned to allow temporary closures between First and Hancock transforming the street into a public courtyard and green space. Visitors can enjoy the lively atmosphere amidst food carts, and places for people to gather and enjoy this beautifully landscaped island in the middle of the district. This "Camellia Court" ties the downtown and Newberg Cultural District closer together and is a central hub for festivals and events.

Thanks to the Newberg/Dundee Bypass, downtown traffic is greatly reduced and is no longer such an oppressive constraint for the district. People driving downtown are on their way somewhere locally for business or pleasure. New traffic configurations have restored easy access to all businesses, and the drive through the district is wonderful advertising for life in Newberg. First and Hancock Streets are no longer defined by Highway 99W running through them, but instead are known for their attractive retail shops and fine restaurants as well as the plentiful shade trees along their length.

First and Hancock Streets are reverted back to two-way, two-lane streets, freeing up space for wider sidewalks and a green median planted with over-arching shade trees. The one-way couplet is a thing of the past – no longer an obstacle to closing First Street for festivals or returning parades to the center of town.

The reduction of traffic to two lanes frees up space that can be repurposed to make downtown even more attractive. Usages vary and possibilities include more bike lanes, diagonal parking, wider sidewalks, and a green median strip. Different sections of downtown can benefit from different configurations of this reclaimed space depending on the usage of those areas.



The following projects are distinct items proposed by citizens attending the public meetings. These action items include:

- Establish a Public Art and Design committee to encourage the inclusion of artistic elements throughout development and provide a unified sense of design for downtown. This committee will involve representatives from the community, downtown merchants, city government, and community groups like the Newberg Downtown Coalition.
- Adopt a 1% For Art budgeting requirement for all public projects.
- Involve local artists, schoolchildren, and community groups to aid in the design and creation of street furniture, planters, and mosaic pavements. Adopting the camellia as a design element and theme is strongly supported.
- Include a treed median as part of any traffic realignment plan.
- Improve safety at crosswalks on Highway 99W that don't benefit from a stoplight by including pedestrian triggered warning lights and improved signage.
- Install public restrooms. The Portland Loo and Romtec's Sidewalk Restroom are two options that can be considered. A short-term solution would be the placement of port-a-potties at strategic locations throughout downtown.
- Widen sidewalks to allow space for more outdoor seating at restaurants as well as public seating. Sidewalks could be extended with decorative pavers, possibly funded in part by allowing citizens to sponsor bricks.
- Improve the public Merchants' Parking Lot and include landscaping
- Adopt a long-term plan for a multi-level parking structure.
- Study closing First Street to vehicular traffic for short term festival or parade use or as a permanent pedestrian mall.
- Review codes and policies with the mindset of encouraging development of street-level downtown businesses focused on restaurant and retail that attracts foot traffic. In addition, review codes and policies to encourage the development of multi-story mixed use retail/office/residential space on vacant properties in the downtown district.
- Study permanently closing Howard or School Street between First and Hancock and transform the area into a pedestrian mall with green space and areas for food carts and other vendors.
- Market downtown as a destination and create a special sense of place with distinct signage and way-finding design.
- Return First and Hancock to two lanes of traffic travelling two ways.
- Study the potential for Second Street improvements to draw even more of the traffic load from First, extending the downtown core one block south and encouraging commercial development on Second that draws in even more foot traffic to the district.
- Create a detailed proposal for the use of road space freed up by reducing First and Hancock Streets from to two lanes of traffic. Diagonal parking, tree medians, wider sidewalks, and bike lanes are all favored. Solicit further citizen involvement on this issue.

Taking Action



