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## Accelerating Change: Bend, Oregon, Explores New Ways to Advance Its Community's Vision

By Steven Ames and Ruth Williamson

During the 1990s and 2000s, community visioning established itself as a significant tool in the planner's tool kit that could provide a broader context for the deliberations of local planners and decision makers — and help communities develop a shared sense of direction and strategies for desired community change. Blending such techniques as futures research and strategic planning with new and more participatory approaches to community involvement, the visioning process helped expand the notion of local planning, creating more inclusive, values-driven, visionary approaches for setting and achieving community goals.

During the same period, however, a lingering skepticism shadowed the visioning process, one that called into question the value of big-picture thinking at the local level or the capacity of average citizens to articulate robust, actionable, long-term community goals. Critics of visioning questioned its ability to actually deliver the outcomes it promised or to sustain such momentum as far into the future as the ambitious timelines touted by these planning efforts (2020, 2030, 2050). They saw visioning as, at best, a kind of passing fad, and, at worst, a misallocation of civic energy and public dollars.

Despite these critiques, the use of visioning persisted and even grew among cities across the country. The impetus to respond to emerging trends, think "outside the box," and envision longer-term civic goals manifests itself at some point in almost every community. This is something local elected officials are expected to provide, citizens are interested in participating in, and planners are charged with carrying out. Over time, visioning has proven to be a serious and timely adjunct to local planning for communities that have undertaken it — and it has been truly transformative for some.

Still, in order to demonstrate its ongoing utility and value, the visioning process also has had to find new, more sophisticated, cost-effective, and tech-savvy ways to help local communities navigate a maze of fast-breaking societal trends and issues and to deliver strategies for change that can be implemented in the real world. Just like the communities that visioning purports to serve, the process has had to evolve, adapt, and re-invent itself with changing times.

In Bend, Oregon, a small but vibrant city of about 80,000 people located three hours from Portland on the eastern slope of the Cascade Range, civic leaders and community members have come together to do that very thing. This *PAS Memo* tells the story of how, through its recently launched "Accelerate Bend" process, Bend 2030 — the community's established visioning initiative now entering its eighth year of activity — is working hard to ensure that Bend's long-range vision does not languish on a shelf somewhere, but rather continues to evolve, moving the city forward on a path toward its long-term civic goals.

Today, Bend 2030 is working with key local stakeholders to launch a handful of publicly generated "vision accelerator" projects — bold, collaborative, cross-sectoral initiatives developed with input from the wider public that have the power to significantly alter the community for the better. The Accelerate Bend process is not only renewing and updating Bend's five-year vision action plan, it is testing new models for engaging the public and accelerating desired change. Accelerate Bend is demonstrating that you *can* teach an old dog new tricks, targeting groundbreaking new outcomes for the community in the process.

## Bend, Oregon: A City on the Edge of Change

In 2005 the City of Bend celebrated its 100th anniversary. Throughout its first century it was no stranger to change. As in many western cities, Bend began as an isolated pioneer settlement with an economy first based on forestry, timber mills, and railroads. The city's economic focus later shifted to outdoor recreation and tourism, and then to an economy dominated by growth and real estate development. However, the city's progress came in fits and starts, and its historically

undiversified economy — closely linked to the area's natural resources — left it vulnerable to economic booms and busts.



Set where the High Cascades meet the high desert, Bend, Oregon, has a vision for its future — and a plan to get there. Photo © 2006 Dustin Mitsch / Alpen Exposure.

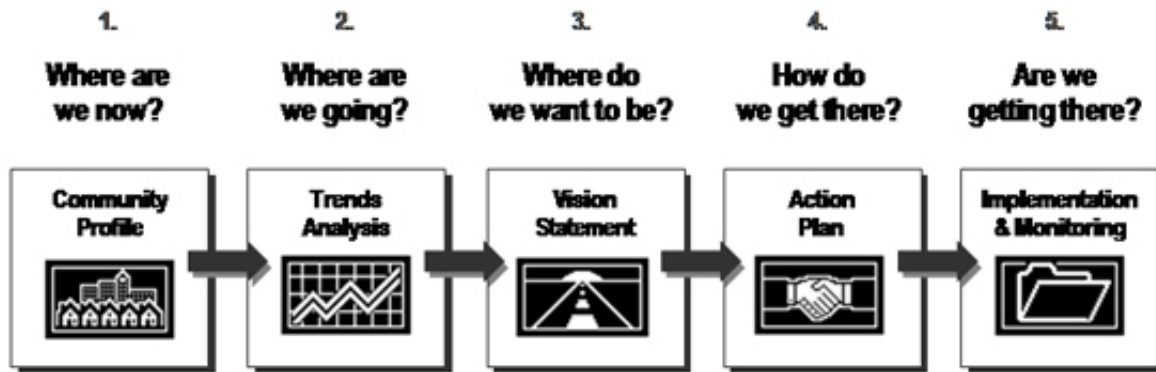
By the end of the 20th century Bend was once again in a boom cycle. In the 1990s the city's population expanded by more than 50 percent, and in the first five years of the 2000s the population increased by yet another 30 percent. By 2005, the Bend MSA had become the sixth fastest-growing metropolitan area in the country and the subject of intense media scrutiny. Headlines trumpeted the city's explosion of new residents, the burdens placed on its aging small-town infrastructure, and its skyrocketing housing costs, and noted an uneasy sense among locals and old-timers that all this growth could not be sustained. They were right.

In 2006 Bend's real estate market started to cool and its growth-and-development-oriented economy began to falter. By the time of the global financial crisis and Wall Street crash in 2008, the local economy was in freefall: the city's construction and real estate bubble had collapsed, unemployment soared into the double digits, mortgages were foreclosed upon in huge numbers, local businesses folded, and a good number of people simply picked up and left town. For a while, everything just seemed to stop.

## Bend 2030: A Groundbreaking Dialogue on the Future

Fortunately, at the very apex of Bend's population boom, city leaders — recognizing the community's increasing unease with its unbridled growth — had determined that they needed a strategic vision to guide future growth and long-range planning decisions. In 2005 the City of Bend launched "Bend 2030," a city-led, community-owned visioning process and the most extensive public conversation in the city's history.

Based on the much-used Oregon Model of community visioning (see below), Bend 2030 took the participatory ideals of the visioning process further than any community in the state had done before. Nearly one in seven residents was directly involved in the dialogue: attending major events, listening to neighborhood or service club presentations, conducting their own in-home "DIY" focus groups, participating in major visioning workshops and community briefings, recording their views and preferences, or being polled as part of a scientific vision validation survey.



The evolving Oregon Model reflects the collective experience of two generations of community visioning projects in the state. Image Steven Ames Planning © 2010.

Led by a 27-member citizen-based Vision Task Force, the year-and-a-half-long process resulted in a far-ranging, "whole-of-community" vision for a vibrant, livable, and, importantly, more sustainable Bend. Working with the involvement of more than 100 key community stakeholders, the visioning process also produced a detailed **strategic action plan** packed with scores of actions designed to make the vision a reality over time. Sixty-three public, private, and civic "Lead Partner" organizations signed on to help with some aspect of the plan's implementation. In all, it was a massive community undertaking.



Nearly 6,000 citizens directly participated in the Bend 2030 visioning process, from major public vision workshops (left) to detail-oriented action planning teams (right). Photos courtesy Bend 2030.

Beyond its comprehensive approach and robust engagement, the Bend 2030 visioning process was exceedingly fortunate to have good timing on its side. In mid-2005, when the project was first conceived, public readiness for a serious dialogue on growth was at its peak. Citizens jumped at the opportunity to have their say; more than 125 people applied to serve on the Vision Task Force alone. Bend 2030 unveiled the vision plan in early 2007, when the community was already beginning to feel the impact of an imploding economy. Had the City waited one more year, it is unlikely it would have had the foresight or wherewithal to pull off such an enterprise.

### The First Five Years: Advancing a Community's Vision in Tough Times

As the recession bore down, the Bend 2030 initiative focused on implementing the action plan. On the recommendation of its original conveners to spread the vision's ownership across the community, the project was spun out of City Hall and incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization charged with overseeing plan implementation. The task of promoting plan implementation fell to a newly appointed board of directors representing the City of Bend, Bend Park and Recreation District, Central Oregon Community College and Oregon State University-Cascades, and other agencies and businesses, as well as some members of the original Vision Task Force.



During the next five years, Bend 2030's Lead Partners began to piece together the mosaic of the vision through an array of actions across six vision focus areas: a well-planned city; vibrant economy; quality environment; safe, healthy people; strong community; and a creative learning culture, which included education.

Under the focus area of "well-planned city" alone, for example, the plan encompassed initiatives to develop a "greenprint" plan for open space protection, develop the city's first true public transit system, promote more neighborhood centers, create more walking and biking trails, and increase the supply of affordable housing. These actions spoke directly to concerns expressed by many residents when the city's growth was careening out of control.

Other projects included efforts to increase available lands for targeted industrial development, develop tourism approaches that generated more local benefit, improve environmental education for youth, expand and connect local volunteer programs, build new community college facilities, and — among the boldest of efforts — establish a bona fide four-year university campus in the heart of the city. In a sign of how deeply the plan reached into the community, a program was even launched to create public exhibits of local artists reflecting the aspirations of the 2030 Vision, becoming a popular feature of the city's regular First Friday artwalks.

As the primary steward — albeit not implementer — of the action plan, the Bend 2030 board focused on monitoring and tracking implementation activities, assisting Lead Partners where it could be helpful, networking with all of those organizations, and reporting back to the community on the whole of its progress. The plan's forward momentum was very organic, and yet the metrics of the implementation process were telling: by 2012, an estimated 85 percent of the actions in the plan were either under way or completed. Collectively, they demonstrated the power of a unifying vision to provide a community with greater focus, hope, and optimism — even in the bleakest of times.

### **Challenges on the Road to 2030: Searching for New Solutions and Approaches**

In 2011, nearing the end of the first five-year cycle of its action plan, the 2030 board paused to reflect on what might come next. The community was well down the road to recovery from its economic collapse and the 2030 plan was moving forward, but work remained. Clearly, there was a need to update the plan, but other challenges loomed for the organization. While support for a community vision polled extremely high — a scientific survey conducted by Portland State University's Survey Research Lab had concluded that 9 out of 10 residents approved of the concept — *awareness* of the vision or the efforts of Bend 2030 to implement it were beginning to fade. This led to a question posed by scores of similar visioning projects across the country: How do we sustain awareness of and engagement in a long-range vision over time?

There were other questions as well; some of them spoke to concerns expressed in the community while others were raised by the board itself. How do we keep our Lead Partners informed and involved, especially as they change and evolve as organizations? How do we keep local elected officials accountable to our vision, particularly as politicians come and go and community leadership continuously renews itself? How do we assure the sustainability of Bend 2030 as an ongoing enterprise? If there was a meta-question, it was this: How do we continue to ensure that the desired change first charted by our community continues to manifest itself over time?

The board began a deliberate search for new ideas, solutions, and approaches. It consulted with key public officials, city planners, and business leaders in the community. It focused on its own organizational growth and sustainability, including development of an internal strategic plan. It explored forming strategic partnerships to promote "big-ticket" actions and even undertook leadership for specific initiatives where only Bend 2030 had the breadth of mission or willingness to do so. This latter area of activity represented a new, more activist direction for the organization. It also responded to Bend 2030's would-be critics that the plan's actions probably would have happened anyway, even without a community vision or an organization to promote it. In truth, many would not have.

One such action was an interagency project to explore design alternatives for Mirror Pond, a beloved, iconic, but environmentally problematic impoundment on the Deschutes River in the middle of the city. It was through coordination efforts by Bend 2030 that other community agencies first came to the table and began the complicated process of finding publicly supported design solutions. Today, this **multi-year initiative** is advancing with re-investment from key stakeholder agencies and funding for a robust public outreach and education process — a critical next step towards a long-term resolution. A board representative from Bend 2030 sits on the Mirror Pond Steering Committee with other community leaders, contributing an equal voice and vote.

Another important initiative was the **Bend Living City Design Project**, a submission for a 2011 international sustainable design competition developed by a volunteer team of local planners and architects. Bend 2030 came up with a small stipend to fund this submission. The project fared well in the competition and, more importantly, had far-reaching, meaningful impacts on planning for

Bend's central area and its higher educational system. These projects not only encouraged the board to take a more active role in implementing the community's vision, but also gave rise to the notion of a "vision accelerator": a bold, one-of-a-kind project that cuts across sectors with the power to advance the community's progress toward its vision.



The Bend Living City Design Project visualized a more deeply sustainable Bend, informing a number of local planning initiatives and providing a model for a "vision accelerator" project. Photo courtesy Bend Living City Design Project, Bend 2030.

The moment of truth in the board's search for solutions may have been a roundtable it convened in October 2011 for select local business leaders from companies pioneering a more diverse and sustainable economy for the city. These included a progressive local development company, a locally based bank, and the area's largest provider of cable, Internet, and digital phone services, as well as newer research and technology companies, marketing and ad agencies, business start-ups, and others involved in Bend's budding creative economy. These individuals not only had a finger on the pulse of what might accelerate Bend's economy, but sound advice on how to connect it with the community's core values.

The takeaway was profound: business leaders felt the 2030 Vision was important but that its implementation was vague, complex, and difficult to track. The process had lost some degree of visibility and public recognition and, thus, momentum. It was time to revive the vision and plan and re-engage the public, but perhaps in a different way. Participants offered helpful advice: keep the process and the plan simple and uncomplicated, be bold and creative, communicate effectively, and take advantage of good marketing and electronic media.

Roundtable participants also suggested that Bend 2030 might consider stepping up to the plate in areas where the community had not progressed, such as fostering greater collaboration in the economic development community or promoting more business development in the central city.

## Accelerate Bend 2030: A New Model of Visioning

The 2030 board decided to conduct a five-year vision update process featuring expedited, more creative approaches to community planning. The process would be called "Accelerate Bend," based on the notion of developing initiatives that could *accelerate* the community's achievement of its vision — an image that played not-so-subtly on Bend's outdoor-oriented, somewhat speed-obsessed skiing-biking-paddling culture. This approach also reflected the reality that in recessionary times with fewer discretionary public funds the project had to accomplish more with fewer resources.

The process goals for Accelerate Bend were drawn straight from the board's internal strategic plan:

- Develop the next iteration of public input to update the community's vision and action plan
- Actively involve the plan's 63 Lead Partner organizations in the process
- Use the process as a way to refresh and revive the 2030 brand and community awareness
- Actively re-engage community members in the vision
- Cultivate a new generation of leadership for implementation of vision accelerator projects

The board also looked at the process as an opportunity to cultivate new board leadership.

Following advice from its business partners, the board designed an entirely new process for the update. It condensed the timeline to about half the length of the original Bend 2030 process, and streamlined it to include only essential planning and engagement activities. The process design also took a kind of "just-in-time" approach to participation, carefully selecting and applying the right engagement tool exactly when and where it was most needed.

The Accelerate Bend process sought to incorporate the best and most useful information technology by blending traditional outreach approaches with new ones. It strongly emphasized branding and marketing activities to capture public attention and then used social media to amplify them. Finally, it targeted development of singular outcomes in a short list of major projects for implementation over the next five years — "accelerator" projects defined as bold ideas within the realm of possibility, future-oriented but achievable in three to five years, and requiring collaboration across public, private, and civic sectors.

### The Accelerate Bend Vision Update Process

The 2030 board decided to launch the public process in May 2012 and conclude it by the end of September, well before national, state, and local election campaigns would begin to dominate civic discourse. This meant that key engagement activities would have to be conducted during the summer months, something of a challenge in a recreationally minded community like Bend. However, good planning and marketing overcame that obstacle.

In January 2012, the board formed a Steering Committee to guide the process. By February, it had raised the necessary money to fund the process. (Here, the board's earlier outreach to the local business community paid dividends.) The project budget was a modest \$28,000, kept low by incorporating in-kind support and pro bono technical assistance for marketing, graphic design, website design and support, process design, and meeting facilitation. In March, the board retained a half-time project manager to coordinate marketing and outreach activities while it continued to work out a detailed design and planning process.

Image Bend 2030, Geena Min Graphic Studio.



The Bend 2030 logo and tagline 'can be seen all over town, from shopping bags and street banners to public forums and Facebook pages.

Branding for the Accelerate process was built on top of Bend 2030's existing logo and tagline ("Bend 2030 – Vision Builds"), creating a kind of brand "overlay" complete with a simple but very effective new tagline ("What's your vision?"). While this layered branding strategy accomplished the objective of linking the old and new processes, the Accelerate Bend logo and tagline quickly became the de facto "handle" for the project.

One of the major differences between the original visioning process and Accelerate Bend was the latter's extensive use of the Internet and social media. Information technology had changed significantly since 2005, and so had the available tools for public engagement. Facebook immediately proved to be the most useful social media tool for Accelerate Bend's outreach, ongoing branding, and marketing. (Twitter and other social media were deemed less effective for the purposes of the process.) A **Facebook marketing campaign** posted photos of Bend residents with their personal vision for Bend in a cartoon-like thought bubble and the tagline "What's Your Vision?" Tagged by the Steering Committee chair as the "Bubble Blitz," the campaign quickly took off and built steadily throughout the summer.





Accelerate Bend's "Bubble Blitz" became a significant outreach tool for the vision update process. Photo courtesy Bend 2030, Marika Smiley, Accelerate Bend Project Manager.



A "textable" micro-ad designed to promote the Tower Theatre event launching Accelerate Bend. Courtesy Bend 2030, Bend Living City Design Project, Geena Min Graphic Studio.

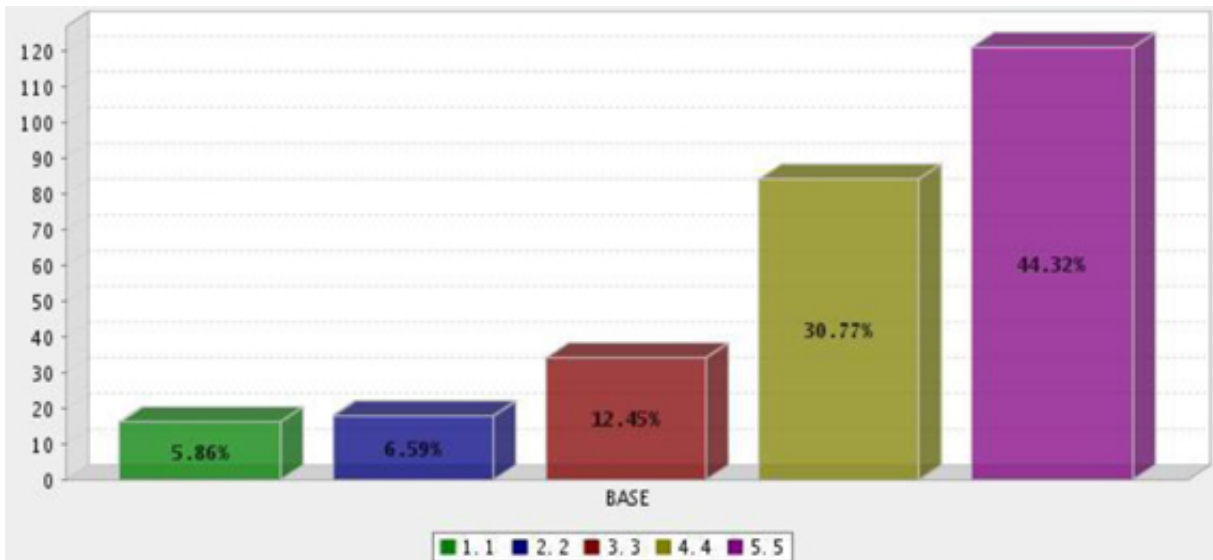
One of the original visioning process's most successful activities had been its January 2006 launch meeting held at the Tower Theatre, a small, beautifully restored movie palace in heart of downtown Bend. The board wanted to replicate that success while connecting the process to the original 2030 vision, so the Tower was chosen again as the venue for its May 2012 launch event, which focused on generating ideas for a working list of potential vision "accelerators." And just like seven years earlier, the launch drew a full house.

At the Tower, as part of a highly scripted program, well-known media personalities and community and business leaders refreshed the audience on the Bend 2030 vision and plan, educated them on some of the most successful actions that had been implemented in the last five years, and showcased the proposed four-year campus expansion of Oregon State University–Cascades as a model for other vision accelerator projects. The audience used electronic keypad polling with real-time, on-screen display of the polling results, a sophisticated but easy-to-use technique that helped the event cover a large amount of information, focused audience attention, and allowed individuals to feel heard.

Next, the major outcome of the Tower event — a draft list of potential accelerator projects organized by the six vision focus areas — was forwarded to six half-day community workshops (one for each focus area) held during June and July. The goal for each of these workshops was to sort through its starter list, add additional thoughts and ideas, and agree upon a handful of potential accelerator projects. The workshops were promoted at the Tower event and through social and other media outlets; attendance of about 30 to 40 interested citizens and community leaders at each event reflected the wider community while allowing small breakout groups to develop a range of accelerator ideas. The success of these workshops affirmed that there is no substitute for old-fashioned, face-to-face dialogue, an essential ingredient for building any kind of community consensus.

By August, Accelerate Bend had moved on to its next phase of activity, again relying on newer tools and techniques. The steering committee was temporarily expanded to form a new "Board-Plus Committee," incorporating a number of citizens-at-large who had risen up through the Accelerate process. The committee's task was to review and reconcile the short lists of potential accelerator projects from the six focus area workshops, eliminating redundancy or cross-purposes, and ensure that every accelerator was a distinctive, bold, and free-standing concept worthy of public consideration. The result was a final draft list of 21 accelerators.

Using **QuestionPro** online survey software, the committee posted the draft list and gave the community two weeks for public review. Participants could comment on individual accelerators and record their preferences for the top projects. Several hundred citizens visited the website and a large percentage of them completed the lengthy survey. The software automatically generated graphic tables of the polling results for all six focus areas and for every accelerator project.



The QuestionPro online survey tool allowed citizens to rate draft Accelerator Projects, such as the popular "Deschutes River Reach Project," for their desirability on a scale of one (low) to five (high). Image Bend 2030.

From this last flurry of public feedback, the Board-Plus Committee did a final review of the list of accelerators, tallied preferential numbers, and selected the top-scoring ideas to highlight at a public celebration in September. At this event, held at Central Oregon Community College, another capacity audience watched a "reveal" of top accelerators, heard presentations on highlighted projects from the 2030 board, and then toured a "Marketplace of Ideas" to meet proponents of the various accelerator ideas, network, and make comment.

### A New Slate of Accelerators Launch as Bend 2030 Retools

Early in January 2013, after a brief fall hiatus to compile the data and outcomes of Accelerate Bend, debrief, and plan ahead, the Bend 2030 board provided an update on the Accelerate Bend process to the Central Oregon City Club, the region's premier public affairs forum. There, the board presented community leaders with **a report** on the results of what was now being called Accelerate Bend—Phase One. With this brief but comprehensive community dialogue under its belt and a short list of bold ideas developed, scrutinized, and refined by the community (see sidebar), Bend 2030 was already looking forward to Phase Two and helping to launch those accelerators with the most momentum and community support.

### Accelerate Bend's New Vision Accelerator Projects

In the 2012 "Accelerate Bend" process, "more than 1,500 participants developed strategies to move the city forward on the path to a positive, prosperous, more sustainable future. Outcomes included a list of 21 citizen-generated "accelerator" projects within six vision focus areas designed to make Bend's preferred future happen even faster.

#### Quality Environment

- *Deschutes River Reach Project:* Implement a range of programs to preserve and protect the Deschutes River as Bend's signature natural legacy.
- *Sustainable Local Food Production:* Strengthen and enrich Central Oregon's budding local sustainable food movement.
- *Healthy Forests Initiative:* Preserve, protect, and sustain the good health of the forestlands that surround and permeate Bend.
- *Comprehensive Waste Reduction / Prevention Plan:* Develop a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to waste reuse, reduction, and recycling.

#### Safe, Healthy People

- *Community Health & Wellness Initiative:* Develop a comprehensive approach to promote health and wellness throughout the community.
- *Prescription to Thrive:* Bolster the local and regional effort to curb youth obesity.
- *Youth Drop-In Center:* Establish a dedicated drop-in center for our at-risk, runaway, and



homeless youth.

- *Simpson Avenue Recreation / Education Hub*: Catalyze the vision and partnership between Bend Park and Recreation District and OSU-Cascades.

### Strong Community

- *Neighborhood Connections*: Reinforce strong, active, connected local neighborhoods and communities through new programs and activities.
- *Workforce Development Through Volunteerism*: Advance volunteerism by promoting career development opportunities for students, the unemployed, and underemployed.
- *A Center for Hope*: Assist community members in critical need of support through a "one-stop" facility for vital resources and services.
- *Community "Third Places"*: Create purposeful community spaces throughout the community where people can gather and connect.

### Well-Planned City

- *Central Area Plan Advancement*: Transform the central city core with new, vibrant, higher-density mixed-use residential and commercial development.
- *Neighborhood Ecodistrict Project*: Develop one or more neighborhood "ecodistricts" to accelerate neighborhood-scale sustainability.
- *Third Street Redevelopment Initiative*: Promote a range of improvements to integrate and connect neighborhood and commercial areas on Third Street.

### Vibrant Economy

- *Economic & Business Development Collaboration*: Improve and enhance collaboration within Central Oregon's economic and business development community.
- *Central Area High Tech / Creative District*: Advance Bend's "creative economy" building on local knowledge, information, and creativity.
- *Community Arts & Events Facility / Destination*: Establish a signature arts and events facility as both a community resource and visitor destination for Bend.

### Creative Learning Culture

- *Higher Education Innovation & Enterprise*: Create a stronger link between higher education, innovation, and enterprise in the region.
- *Creative Arts Center*: Develop a community hub for creative expression of artists and the engagement of audiences.
- *Arts & Culture Alliance*: Build on and advance the successes of Bend's Arts & Cultural Alliance.

### View the Bend 2030 Vision Accelerator Projects flyer.

Already, some projects on the short list of highlighted accelerators at the September celebration were moving forward. They included:

- The **City of Bend's Central Area Plan**, to transform Bend's central city with new, vibrant, higher-density mixed-use residential and commercial development.
- The **Deschutes River Reach Project**, which ties together a range of programs designed to preserve and protect the Deschutes River as Bend's signature natural legacy.
- The **Bend Sustainable Neighborhood Initiative**, which will develop one or more advanced neighborhood "ecodistricts" to accelerate district-scale sustainability and provide models for replication citywide.

Meanwhile, other accelerator projects are preparing to launch, under development, or waiting for a champion to pick them up and run. Regardless of their current status, all projects on the Accelerate Bend list have been thoroughly vetted, refined, and approved by the community. It will be the work of the next 18 months for Bend 2030 to find the partners, support, and momentum to make them happen.

Soon, Bend 2030 will go back to its standard role of monitoring, supporting, and reporting back to the community — and perhaps acting as a catalyst for selected vision accelerator projects that might not otherwise move forward. Given changing times and scarce financial resources against a history of economic peaks and valleys, a lingering sense of urgency in this community remains. At the same time, with the city's renewed sense of optimism and a spirit of what's-over-the-hill that

has manifested itself time and again, there is no doubt that many of these projects will soon start accelerating Bend toward a better future.

### High-Altitude Observations on Accelerating Change

Accelerate Bend offered a rare opportunity for planners and advocates of community change to revive a successful planning process, rethink the process to fit dramatically changed circumstances, incorporate new approaches and tools, reinvent a valuable local brand, and ultimately "re-vision" the future of a community — all on a very thin dime. Along the way, some of the lessons to be learned were profound:

- Visionary planning in the 21st century is more important than ever. If societal change is accelerating and we want our communities to adapt, then our methods of planning for the future must do the same.
- All the usual cultural, political, bureaucratic, and fiscal disincentives to thinking and planning for the long-term are still here — some more pronounced than ever — but one thing is different: citizens clearly understand that their world is changing, and they seek solutions.
- A well-conceived and well-designed framework for a community vision and plan — such as Bend 2030's core vision and six focus areas — can provide a touchstone and enduring platform for ongoing long-range plans.
- Planners need to develop new approaches and engagement tools — conceptual, visual, and technological — that match how people seek out and absorb new information, today and into the future. Creativity is the ultimate calling card.
- Ultimately, implementing visionary change relies on cross-sectoral collaboration among public, private, civic, nonprofit, and community-based groups. No one entity can be responsible for a community's preferred future. We have to build that future together.

## Conclusion

In the final analysis, what then is the impact of a visioning process? Certainly, the list of actions it identifies provides a compass point and a path forward through the haze of priorities a growing community must reconcile. And in recessionary times, a vision reasserts the bedrock of values that reminds decision makers of what matters most to their constituency.

But there is something else ... something beyond words that a vision provides. A vision becomes the vessel for the aspirations of a community that wants to be excellent. As such, it speaks volumes about the culture and attitude of its citizens. In Bend, Oregon, they describe it this way: "Bend 2030 — Inspiring, strengthening and deepening partnerships — keeping Bend an amazing place to live."

The evolutionary subtext of this mission statement may have been understated when the vision was first adopted in 2006. Yet the fact the vision continues to evolve is what holds the real promise of its achievement by the year 2030.

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