Market Dynamics, Business Mix and Clustering

I. INTRODUCTION

This section of the Sweet Home Resource Team report focuses on market factors and business mix. It is intended to provide the Sweet Home Economic Development Group (SHEDG), the Sweet Home Chamber of Commerce and City staff with direction and guidance as they seek to achieve the goal of creating a more economically vibrant downtown area.

Among the key questions to address in creating a strong business district are:

- Who are downtown's customers?
- What are their shopping needs and interests?
- What shopping is available to them? What is the current 'supply' of retail/services?
- What are the market voids or niches that downtown can fill?
- How can downtown compete for the shopping dollars available in the trade area?
- What are the most profitable locations for businesses?
- How can this information be 'packaged' to strengthen existing businesses and to recruit new businesses?

The findings and conclusions of the market assessment and business analysis are based upon the following: community input during the Oregon Downtown Development Association's Resource Team visit from March 18 - 20, 2003; definition of downtown's trade area; analysis of demographic data; small group meetings during the Team visit; and over a dozen in-store interviews with selected business owners. The findings are divided into the following sections:

Section II: Current Business Profile
Section III: Trade Area and Market Segments
Section IV: Competitive Advantages, Disadvantages, Challenges and Opportunities
Section V: Business Mix
Section VI: Next Steps for Downtown Sweet Home

II. CURRENT BUSINESS PROFILE

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

A successful business mix in virtually any size downtown will have a balance and mix of uses that includes housing, professional and government services, entertainment and retail shopping. With the exception of the retail sector, the Sweet Home area is well represented with a diverse business base in each of the following categories. The commercial district as a whole is anchored on each end by the two largest grocery stores, Safeway and Thriftway. The core pedestrian-oriented shopping district focused on by the Resource Team, deal with the blocks between 10th and 15th Streets, including Long and Main Streets. Below is a summary of the types of firms engaged in business within this area.

Professional and Financial Services
This category includes banks, savings & loans, physicians, insurance agencies, financial advisors, attorneys, certified public accountants, home designers, and any other office situation that provides professional services. The function of this category is to provide downtown with employees that will use, and are able to pay for, other available services. This category tends to pay higher rents and have fewer turnovers than the retail and entertainment categories.

Among the prominent professional and financial service industries represented within downtown Sweet Home are: real estate, banks and credit unions, insurance, bookkeeping, funeral service, attorneys, CPAs, travel, veterinary services, chiropractors, photography, financial services, utilities and related activities.

Retail
The retail category includes grocery, pharmaceuticals, apparel, dry goods, hardware, cards and gifts, home furnishings, and any other category that provides goods with or without services. Successful small downtowns offer a mix of largely convenience and specialty goods. In many instances, the best-suited retailer for the downtown core will be a home-owned, sole proprietorship or small, local corporation. National corporate chains prefer mall locations.

Currently, the core downtown Sweet Home district has more than a dozen retail operations including: pharmacies, gifts, hardware, furniture, used bookstore, florists, health food, appliance, liquor store, convenience grocery, auto supply, feed and seed, nursery and pet supply, electronics and jewelry.

Entertainment/Restaurants
This category is closely related to retail except that businesses function as *attractors* for customers seeking entertainment venues. Entertainment establishments include restaurants, video stores, theatres, bars and taverns, coffee shops and any other business that attracts customers for social or entertainment purposes. This category supports the

retail services category by offering the downtown customer an opportunity for entertainment and refreshment. It also helps retain employees in the central core area.

Downtown Sweet Home is fortunate to have a movie theatre and several restaurants as entertainment anchors. In addition, the East Linn County Historic Museum is in the commercial district, an important cultural anchor for downtown Sweet Home. At least three bars/clubs exist as well as six eating establishments of various kinds.

Convenience Services
Downtown Sweet Home is fortunate to have a number of small businesses in the core business district that meet some of the basic needs of visitors and local residents alike. These include: gasoline, drugstores, bakery, convenience grocery, liquor, espresso, hair salons/barbers and other businesses.

Government/Educational Services
Downtown has been the traditional location for government offices and services such as the post office and library. Downtown Sweet Home is home to City Hall, the post office, the library, the high school and Linn Benton Community College. Together, these anchors attract hundreds of people to town each week.

ANCHOR VS. ATTRACTOR BUSINESSES

An important function of an *anchor* business is to serve as a catalyst to establish a complementary cluster of retail businesses around its perimeter. Anchor businesses are found in malls and are used to attract smaller business operations, which depend on customer traffic created by the anchor business. Small downtowns often have an anchor as a customer draw. Downtown Sweet Home has few, if any, large retail anchors. However, one business in downtown Sweet Home that is locally famous is the A & W Drive-in Restaurant. The pharmacies were also noted by many residents as anchor businesses generating a lot of customer traffic.

Small downtowns primarily depend on *attractor* businesses for customer traffic. Attractors are businesses or services that steadily serve the local community. It is important to recognize what type of customer business categories attract, and then leverage that information in recruiting new businesses into downtown.

The primary attractors represent the reasons that local shoppers are currently using the downtown Sweet Home district.

Primary Attractors to Downtown Sweet Home (examples)

Professional and other Services:
- Banks
- Insurance

Retail / Services
- Restaurants
- Hardware
- Gifts
- Florist

Dining/Entertainment/Arts
- Restaurants
- Movie Theatre

Government Services
- City Hall
- Library
- Post Office
- Linn-Benton Community College

III. TRADE AREA AND MARKET SEGMENTS

TRADE AREA DEFINITION

The trade area is the geographic area from which the great majority of regular customers originate. The market area was identified based on interviews with Sweet Home business owners, drive time estimates and the location of existing competitive shopping centers. The trade area drawn for this analysis focuses on a five-mile radius.

TARGET MARKETS

Market segments represent the consumers who currently or potentially shop in your downtown. Understanding who these consumers are, and knowing each segment's shopping habits and needs can help drive promotional campaigns, business recruitment and retention policies and business mix.

Sweet Home's *primary* customers are year-round trade area residents that shop there because of its convenience, location, and selection. Below are current demographics for the Sweet Home trade area market.

Exhibit 1: Trade Area Demographics, 2001

	Sweet Home 5-mile radius	**State Of Oregon**
Population	12,173	3.5 million
Average Annual Projected Growth Rate (2001-2006)	0.63%	1.3%
Households	4,630	1.3 million
Median Age	39.2	36.6
Percentage Age 19 or younger	28.7%	24.7%
Percentage Age 65 or over	17%	13%

Source: ESRI, Business Information Services

Most significant among the variables noted above is the fact that Sweet Home has a higher proportion of seniors, age 65 and older, and youth, age 19 and under, compared to the state as a whole. The large senior population is also reflected in the median age of Sweet Home trade area residents, 39.2, compared with 36.6 years for all Oregonians. The Sweet Home area is expected to grow at half the rate of the state on an average annual basis during the years (2001-2006).

Median household income in the Sweet Home trade area was estimated to be significantly lower than the state as a whole, $29,493 in 2001 compared to $39,178 for Oregon. Another indicator of economic vibrancy is the local unemployment rate.

Unemployment in Linn County has been and remains higher than the state average in recent times. Linn County's unemployment is at 8.7% compared to 6.8%.

OTHER TARGET MARKETS

Other potential markets for downtown Sweet Home are highway travelers, tourists and downtown/area workers. Below are data that illustrate the size of some of these market segments.

- Traffic volumes are very high on Highway 20. The most recent counts in Sweet Home on Highway 20 range from 5,000 to 6,000 Average Daily Traffic (ADT). All highway traffic provides the chance to lure customers to downtown businesses.

- Visitors spend over $87 million annually in Linn County. The Sweet Home Jamboree makes a major contribution to this figure with over 9,000 visitors coming to town for this 3 day annual event. The Chamber of Commerce also takes note of visitors to their office and in July 2002, received 400 calls and 170 walk-in visitors.

- Recreation tourism attracts significant numbers of visitors annually.
  -Sunnyside Campground hosted 47,975 campers in 2002 (Source: Linn County Parks Department)
  -2002 visits @ Foster Lake = 495,689 in 2002 (Source: US Army Corp of Engineers)

- The number of employees in Sweet Home's commercial district is estimated to be over 650 persons. Major industrial employers continue to exist in the Sweet Home area as well with Weyerhaeuser employing 250 and Foster Mill, 150.

Local residents, employees and area visitors offer significant untapped market potential for downtown Sweet Home businesses. More information on customer behavior is provided in Appendix A, "Buyers vs. Browsers."

IV. DOWNTOWN SWEET HOME'S COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES FOR BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Market Assessment asks: *How is Sweet Home doing compared to other comparably sized communities working to strengthen their downtown business district?* The response is organized into: Competitive Advantages, Competitive Disadvantages and Opportunities for future development.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Sweet Home has an extensive list of advantageous factors or attributes to build upon in its efforts to strengthen the business district.

1. Strong visitor and local resident markets. Sweet Home is conveniently located 45 minutes from Eugene, and less from Corvallis, offering easy access to water and mountain recreation for visitors. In addition, the town's close proximity to I-5 and jobs in metro areas or the interstate corridor has meant that Sweet Home has not suffered population loss as have other former mill communities. The five-mile local trade area is relatively large, with over 12,000 residents, allowing the Sweet Home business community the advantage of a potentially large customer market.

2. Well organized efforts for economic growth. Sweet Home, through the efforts of SHEDG, the City and other local groups, is much better focused and organized than most rural communities to capture commercial and industrial development. These organizations and others continue to work hard to diversify Sweet Home's economic base, including active efforts to serve the visitor industry among other activities. One relative newcomer noted, "Sweet Home is a progressive small town," referring to its strong planning and organizational efforts

3. At least 20 annual Sweet Home community and visitor events are a strong indicator of the community's ability to organize, to initiate change, to work to generate pride and to have fun! While only a handful of these events are viewed as ones geared toward visitors, many more offer the chance to attract individuals from well beyond the Sweet Home area.

4. Community pride and caring people. A year 2000 community survey indicated that among the top values of area residents are pride in their community and friendly, caring people. "This is a town that watches out for the kids, in particular,' one parent noted during the resource team visit. These attributes can and should be incorporated into Sweet Home's community and economic marketing efforts.

5. New investment is occurring! Big and small investments are underway throughout Sweet Home, ranging from the resort development and an apartment building

on Main Street, to several new businesses opening in the last two years and some plans for expansion. Some of these projects will be critical influences on the future development of downtown. Further, they send a strong positive message to the outside world about confidence in the future of Sweet Home.

6. Good selection of convenience goods. It is important that Sweet Home as a whole, continues to offer businesses, employees and local residents a variety of convenience goods and services that bring them to town on a daily basis. These businesses are vitally important to getting visitors to stop as well. A sample of Sweet Home's convenience businesses are: groceries (7+), gas, pharmacies (3), banks (3), auto, hardware (3), liquor, sporting goods and of course, restaurants.

7. Many creative, hard working downtown business owners. As one business owner commented, *"Our retail base has had to adapt to Wal-Mart and other changes in the retail base."* Downtown Sweet Home has several exemplary businesses where the merchants are working hard to offer excellent service and variety at a fair price and just as important, are staying in touch with the needs of their market place.

8. Although viewed by some as a double edged sword because of the truck traffic and noise, Highway 20 exposure is generally understood to be a plus for the downtown Sweet Home business district, providing outstanding visibility and exposure.

COMPETITIVE DISADVANTAGES

1. Lack of cohesiveness. Empty lots, vacant buildings, 'loner' destination businesses and stand along businesses all challenge downtown Sweet Home, giving it a sense of disjointedness. Creating a unified pedestrian-friendly district demands uninterrupted storefronts and active retail or entertainment businesses with strong *street appeal.* This allows the district to develop a critical mass of businesses and serve as a destination for a large number of shoppers looking for a unique and broad selection of merchandise in an attractive and inviting atmosphere.

2. Lack of 'unified practices." Downtown Sweet Home businesses are still learning about the importance of working in a unified manner on ways to attract and keep customers in town. Store hours and open days vary widely from one business to the next, making it difficult to promote downtown Sweet Home as a unified shopping district. These issues are particularly key to gaining a larger share of the visitor market. The desire for longer business hours was identified as a prime issue in the 2000 community survey.

3. Downtown vacancies are a concern as are several idle properties. They signal vulnerability and economic decline, and potentially affect the success of established businesses in the district.

which hopefully may spur additional marketing. At present, there are no organized business promotions, no rack cards or brochures marketing Sweet Home businesses to either visitors or local shoppers.

CHALLENGES

1. Living up to the promise of the name *'Sweet* Home' is an ongoing challenge. A community's physical image tells a story, sends a message and is directly connected to Sweet Home's potential for economic expansion. As a whole, the 'downtrodden' appearance of downtown Sweet Home is not a selling point. As one local business owner commented, *"It looks like we don't care. It's going to take a different approach!"* Another said, *"It's got to start with each of us personally taking responsibility."*

2. A very large, long, spread out commercial district that increases the difficulty of creating a 'critical mass' of retail. In numbers, most businesses in Sweet Home are located outside of downtown and are free standing, auto-dependent establishments. Active recruitment of businesses to downtown properties and limitations on highway commercial may alter this development pattern over the long term. In the year 2000 community survey, the majority of residents (47%) concurred that the '*Best development plan' (for strengthening the commercial base) is to fill in the gaps along Main Street."*

3. Underutilized spaces in the retail core. Several prime retail spots in downtown are occupied by service or institutional uses, parking lots or part-time business occupants.

4. Coping with change is an ongoing challenge for Sweet Home and many small towns. Sweet Home has successfully dealt with many chapters or eras in its lifetime including:

- Native American Period (Kalapooians)
- Early Pioneering – farming
- Big Timber Era
- Post Timber Transition Period—Diversification: Recreation, Bedroom Community
- Future: Continued diversification…movement toward higher economic plateau

OPPORTUNITIES

Downtown Sweet Home has multiple opportunities for redevelopment and for the capture of shopper dollars. These will be touched upon below. More will be said about ways to capitalize on opportunities in the section on Next Steps. Business opportunities are addressed in the Business Mix section of the report.

1. Increased visitor growth and visitor spending should result from several current opportunities. The new marina being constructed at Foster Lake, the Resort @ Salmon

Run and the Highway 228 Scenic Byway designation will all generate increased visitor traffic, jobs/payroll and the potential for additional spending. Scenic byways across the country have tracked the economic benefits as increased business, tax revenue and jobs from tourist spending. The planned 728-acre, $200 million resort development anticipates creating 350 local jobs in the long run. Encouraging spending by the targeted high end resort visitors and dwellers will take considerable work on the part of local Sweet Home businesses and the community as a whole. A separate ODDA-sponsored workshop on this topic will occur in the spring 2003.

2. Tapping local retail spending. Potential retail spending based solely on Sweet Home's 5-mile trade area resident population and household incomes totals $94.5 million annually in 2001 (source: US Census and ESRI Business Information Services). No doubt, a significant portion of that spending is occurring outside of Sweet Home. In some categories, such as apparel, virtually all of the spending is happening elsewhere as there are no retailers in this category. Retail spending is distributed as follows:

- Leisure & Entertainment, $8.5 million
- Health, $4.7 million
- Transportation, $35.7 million
- Home Furnishings, $13.6 million
- Food, $22.5 million
- Apparel, $7.7million
- Misc Retail, $1.7 million

3. Gift stores/cluster. If downtown Sweet Home has a single niche or business cluster to promote it is gifts and specialty merchandise. A couple of businesses, such as 'A Country Welcome' and 'Our Heart's Desire' are almost exclusively gifts. In addition to these quality businesses, the drugstore, florists, fabric shop, jeweler and other stores have a selection of gift items. A rack card could be created to promote this niche to locals and out of towners alike.

4. Property development. Downtown Sweet Home has vacant lots, underutilized and partly filled buildings, vacant upper stories and completely vacant buildings that are all important opportunities to shape the character and future economic activity downtown. Mixed use development should be encouraged at every step, allowing retail on the ground floor to generate street traffic and spending and encouraging office and residential upstairs. Two specific opportunities include the former gas station/auto repair shop site (13th & Main Streets), the vacant property at 9th & Main (owned by White's Electronics).

V. BUSINESS MIX

This is What Visitors Want

- Unique, one of a kind goods such as arts, crafts, gifts, galleries
- Antiques/reproductions/gifts
- Convenience goods—gas, grocery, etc
- Recreational/sporting goods and services
- Apparel & accessories – unique
- Restaurants and unique eating places
- *Variety* of cuisine and prices

Quality

Back to the Future!

- Enormous potential
- NO magic bullet
- Think BIG. Be BOLD.

Downtown Sweet Home will never be able to compete with large malls and strip centers in providing a large variety of retail goods, long and predictable shopping hours, and the image of low-cost retail items. However, the downtown customer will respond favorably when he or she feels that they are receiving good value for money spent, have a convenient and safe place to spend time, and consider the downtown area an interesting and attractive place to be.

To achieve the vision of downtown as a place serving multiple needs and markets, consideration should be given to the customer that is using the downtown as a destination to acquire needed items and services, or to spend time socializing and relaxing.

Downtown Sweet Home has the capability to serve local full-time residents, area workers and visitors with a wide range of goods and services. The keys will be:

- Providing excellent service
- Offering unique, quality merchandise
- Targeting high dollar volumes per square foot for a business to succeed. In other words, smaller spaces with in-depth, high turnover inventory.
- Working with downtown Sweet Home's existing business community to provide complementary product lines.

RETAIL CLUSTERS

One way to look at the downtown business mix is to examine the existing retail clusters. As noted, downtown has a variety of business clusters in different stages of development. When there is a healthy retail cluster in place, it encourages shopping activity. Common features of successful retail clusters include maintaining visual appeal with interesting window displays and street beautification and a contiguous storefront line.

A successful cluster must also be large enough and have several categories in order to maintain the interest of the browsing customer. The competitive business cluster is a grouping of similar businesses that serves the customer of the primary market by offering more choices, like a food court at a shopping mall. With several antique shops in close proximity, Sweet Home has the basis for an antique business cluster. The complementary business cluster contains businesses offering different products or services but appealing to the same customer profile.

The appropriate business mix for downtown Sweet Home depends on the following factors:

- Market potential—the target markets and the amount of money they have to spend.
- Existing business base—the current assets of downtown
- Business location to make it easy for customers
- Continuous marketing
- Retail trends

Downtown Sweet Home has current retail trends working in its favor. A recent Urban Land Institute retail development forum noted that:

"The most promising retail sectors are mixed-use town centers, community/neighborhood shopping centers and urban entertainment centers."

"Traditional malls have morphed into dinosaurs in over saturated markets. Main Street retail and urban mixed-use centers offer the best opportunities now."

RECOMMENDED BUSINESS MIX

The two primary goals of downtown Sweet Home related to business development should be to:

1) Retain, strengthen and expand the business base in downtown Sweet Home.
2) Recruit businesses that will complement and improve the existing downtown commercial mix and will enhance downtown's attractiveness to its target markets.

The year 2000 Community Survey summarized the retail/service interests and desires of nearly 1,000 participating Sweet Home residents:

- Greater selection, 66%
- Competitive prices, 51%
- Better quality, 33%
- Longer business hours, 29%
- Make businesses look better, 29%

Below are listed the merchandise and business types with the greatest chance for success that also build upon existing business anchors and respond to the needs identified by local residents and businesses during the site visit, as well as the 2000 Community Survey. In many instances, a separate business may not be able to be supported, but rather, merchandise lines can be added to complement the offerings of existing businesses. Several businesses in town already model this concept: Seamingly Creative and Roger's Floral Shop both have a very good mix of complementary goods and services, for example: flowers, gifts & formal wear; fabric, quilting supplies, sewing services, hand made apparel & gifts.

- Restaurants offering more variety—deli/bagel shop, Italian, Thai
- Brew pub with live music
- Home accessories: framing, art, antiques/reproduction, lamps, rugs, etc
- Healthy restaurant food/grocery
- Children/Baby Clothes—new & used
- Specialty Toy/Game Shop: new & used CDs, computer games, etc.
- Youth oriented merchandise/activities—bike & board shop
- Unique specialty apparel
- Bath & body supplies
- Antiques and collectibles
- Craft store
- Party store
- Office supply/copy center
- Internet café (computer access and coffee)

Success will be achieved with stores that:

- Serve both visitors and area residents
- Aggressively market to these target customer groups
- Offer multiple, complementary product lines of good quality
- Start small and grow to fill niches
- Have focus, imagination and strive to meet the needs of the customer

FEATURES OF SUCCESSFUL DOWNTOWN BUSINESS

Retail and business standards are just as important as the types of businesses attracted to downtown Sweet Home. The focus should be on superior retail standards when qualifying and recruiting a prospective downtown business. They include:

Strong Business Values

- *Planning*
- *Commitment*
- *Passion*
- *Tenacity*
- *Understanding*

Strong Merchandising Elements

- *Up to date point-of-sale practices*
- *Appropriate turnover of goods*
- *Interesting visual displays*
- *Emphasis on value over price*

Superior Customer Service

- *Developing human relationships*
- *Determining customer needs*
- *Servicing customer needs*
- *After-sale contact*

Appendix B includes a more detailed summary of considerations for qualifying a prospective business for downtown Sweet Home.

VI. NEXT STEPS

Business/market development and expansion opportunities in downtown Sweet Home are strong. Building on the momentum of the resource team and the market assessment, the following recommendations are provided as *next steps* for action. They are organized as a 3-Point Program focused on:

1. Marketing
2. Business Development
3. Property Development

1. Marketing

Goal: Capture local and visitor shopper dollars—off season and through active promotion campaigns/activities

TO DO:

A. For Sweet Home, marketing must begin with steps toward improving its physical image.
   - Follow through on this goal and action steps that currently exist in your strategic plan.
   - In addition, provide Visual Merchandising technical assistance to downtown and other businesses, (to include window displays, lighting, entry way ideas, store displays, etc) There may be students at one of the local universities who would be able to take this on through a class or special project.
   - Never lose sight of the critical objective--*Make it irresistible for visitors to stop!*

B. Develop a Downtown Promotion Calendar and other activities to get more business from the market than is already coming to Sweet Home! For example, get the 9,000 Jamboree visitors into the stores!! Develop a coupon book or a 'country and western' trivia game, bingo, or some other activity to get visitors into the stores.

In addition, consider the following retail promotions:
   - Frequent shopper campaigns
   - Senior citizen days
   - Downtown Worker Club
   - High school student discounts
   - Retail promotions tied with your other events
   - Holiday promotions

C. Promote what you do have!
   - Develop a simple business directory
   - Develop a series of rack cards focused on: restaurants, gifts, and specialty. As noted, there are at several gift shops in downtown.

- *Keep it simple.* Visitors won't take the time to read elaborate write-ups.

D. Business owners need to challenge themselves to know and respond to their customers inside and out! Guidelines include:
   - Customer service is the #1, #2 and #3 most important issue
   - *Constantly,* offer something new and fresh
   - Adapt to the season! Longer hours in summer season would be very beneficial.
   - Focus on your Destination Product(s)
   - Create impulse-oriented displays

E. Recognize & reward business owners going 'above & beyond,' with monthly awards for Best Window Display, Best Service Program, Best Remodel or whatever categories fit.

2. Business Development

Goal: Strengthen existing businesses and attract new ones.

TO DO:

A. Create a critical mass of retail by clustering businesses to allow downtown Sweet Home to play to shopper's impulses. Start with the core blocks between 10th & 14th Streets. The guidelines are:

   - Connect Complementary Products
   - Think Synergies: 1+1 = 3!
   - Group Businesses Serving the Same Customer Base (For example, Long Street has businesses offering pet supplies & vet services. Wouldn't it be great if a groomer were on this street too?)
   - Scatter Restaurants/Food

Clustering goals are:
   - Encourage pedestrian/shopper movement!
   - Avoid creating a downtown of 'destination businesses'
   - Strive to create a full-service downtown district

How this happens is:
   - Sell and promote the economic and market vision for downtown
   - Get close to property owners & realtors
   - Form a BEAT block system where individuals/volunteers are trained and assigned to stay in regular touch with business and property owners in each block.
   - Target key properties
   - Purchase and redevelop properties! (Congrats, you're doing this already!)

B. Get *everyone* involved on the Downtown Sweet Home Sales Team.
- Be clear on what 'products' and opportunities you are selling.
- Develop hard facts to document those opportunities—a preliminary recruitment packet
- Prepare a game plan to target niche businesses.
- Determine what message you are conveying. Make it a positive one.

C. Retain/diversify/expand existing businesses.
- Target new businesses/merchandise to fill niche opportunities.
- Target free standing 'loner' businesses to bring (back) downtown!
- Sponsor educational sessions on Strategies for Success during a Down Economy; Diversifying your Merchandise; etc.

3. Property Development

Goal: Redevelop key vacant properties; provide infill development opportunities

One thing is clear in Sweet Home: market intervention is needed! Properties will continue (as they have for years) to sit in disrepair without aggressive intervention. One Sweet Home business owner summed up the situation as:

- *"The old guys who own these buildings and are retiring on the rent need to let us (the next generation) take them over. We want to keep moving forward, grow and GET OUT OF THE PAST"*

TO DO:

A. Form a Property Development Committee to Target Key Properties (focus on your strongest blocks in core downtown area). Some actions include:

- Sell and promote the economic and market vision for downtown
- Get to know the interests of all property owners & realtor
- Develop Property Info Sheets (Who owns? For sale? Lease? Cost?)
- Target Businesses to Key Properties (using clustering guidelines)
- Package Incentives: Façade Improvement Program, Loan Funds, SBDC Technical Assistance
- Form a Land Trust, a CDC, Urban Renewal District or other entity to purchase and redevelop property

B. Consider creative options for temporary leases of properties and enticing ways to attract interest in downtown properties. Here are some ideas that other towns have successfully implemented:

- Retail incubators
- Youth business incubator (one is soon to open in Coquille)
- Youth Dance Club (Fridays)
- Holiday Bazaar / Harvest Festival (3 week lease, brings thousands of shoppers to town)

- Multiple home-based businesses rent space at the Holidays
- "Your Business Here" displays and sets

C. Make vacant downtown storefronts 'come alive' with rotating exhibits. Here are some ideas:

- Wash the windows!
- Art displays by local school kids
- Nonprofit organization displays
- Holiday decoration contests
- Adopt a Window – school room displays
- 12 Days of Christmas
- Hollywood Manikin/Movie Set Displays
- Homecoming Exhibits—tributes to graduates or current students
- Historical displays & photographs

With 180 graduating high school seniors who all need community service hours to graduate, get the kids involved in Sweet Home's downtown. Give them a role, a stake—maybe they'll work harder to keep it clean for everyone.

Remember, a key to economic revitalization is that:

"To get where you want to go, you have to leave where you are."