

# WALLOWA

# MAIN STREET

# STRATEGIC

# PLAN

2024-2027



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The Wallowa Main Street Committee wishes to acknowledge and thank community members, City of Wallowa representatives, and the Northeast Oregon Economic Development District who participated in meetings and surveys related to this plan.

### Committee Members

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# INTRODUCTION

## Strategic Planning Process

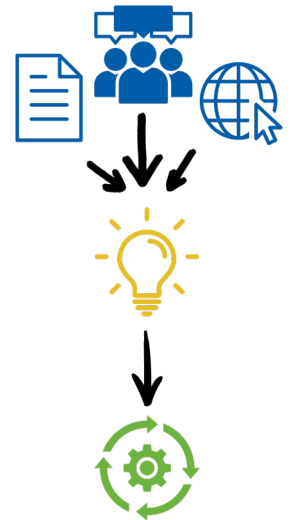
This strategic plan will guide the committee's work from 2024 to 2027. It is designed to be a dynamic document with priorities that could change annually. It includes the committee's mission, the vision for Wallowa's downtown area, goals for downtown, and strategies and objectives to achieve those goals.

Our strategic planning process has three primary phases:

**Phase 1**— requires **input** from existing data (such as previous plans or demographic information) and the community (community assessments, survey responses). This information allows us to identify our downtown's assets, challenges and opportunities.

**Phase 2**— involves using the information collected from the previous phase to **develop** mission and vision statements, goals, strategies, and objectives. This phase also includes drafting the plan and obtaining community feedback.

**Phase 3**— involves adopting the plan by the committee or city and creating an annual work plan to **implement** strategies.



## Main Street Model

Our planning process and committee structure is based on the Main Street approach. Main Street America™ developed the Main Street Four-Point Approach® to help communities improve their downtown area. There are four essential parts:

- **Economic Vitality:** enhance economic opportunities
- **Design:** quality design and attractive neighborhoods
- **Promotion:** effectively promote businesses and events
- **Organization:** develop a sustainable organization

This approach involves developing strategies to revitalize downtowns in each of the mentioned areas. Communities are encouraged to use existing resources or assets to identify and implement solutions to a downtown's challenges.



# CURRENT CONDITION

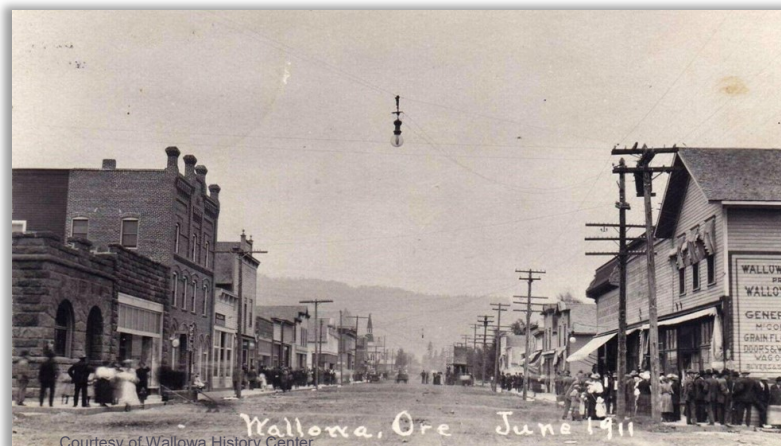
## Context

The rural town of Wallowa, Oregon, is home to about 819 residents (US Census of 2021). The community has worked hard to revive the downtown area in recent years. In 2019, they completed a Community Assessment with the help of Oregon Main Street. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a severe hailstorm in 2022 that caused over \$6 million in damages to over 500 homes and businesses and over 300 vehicles, the revitalization efforts slowed down significantly. These unexpected events exacerbated existing problems, causing several businesses to shut down.

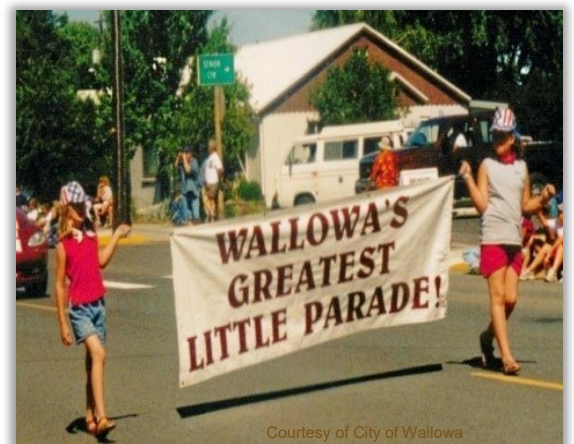
In early 2023, the Wallowa Main Street Committee was formed under the Wallowa County Rural Regional Main Street program to restart efforts to improve downtown. They conducted a new assessment to gather community input for this strategic plan. Compared to the 2019 Community Assessment, the 2023 assessment has several similar results but with a new urgency in bringing back retail and restaurant businesses. The State Highway 82 runs through the Main Street area, and the community members hope to offer more reasons for residents and visitors to spend time in downtown Wallowa while maintaining its small-town vibe.

### Wallowa, OR Main Street Area

Base Map Credit: Wallowa County GIS Department



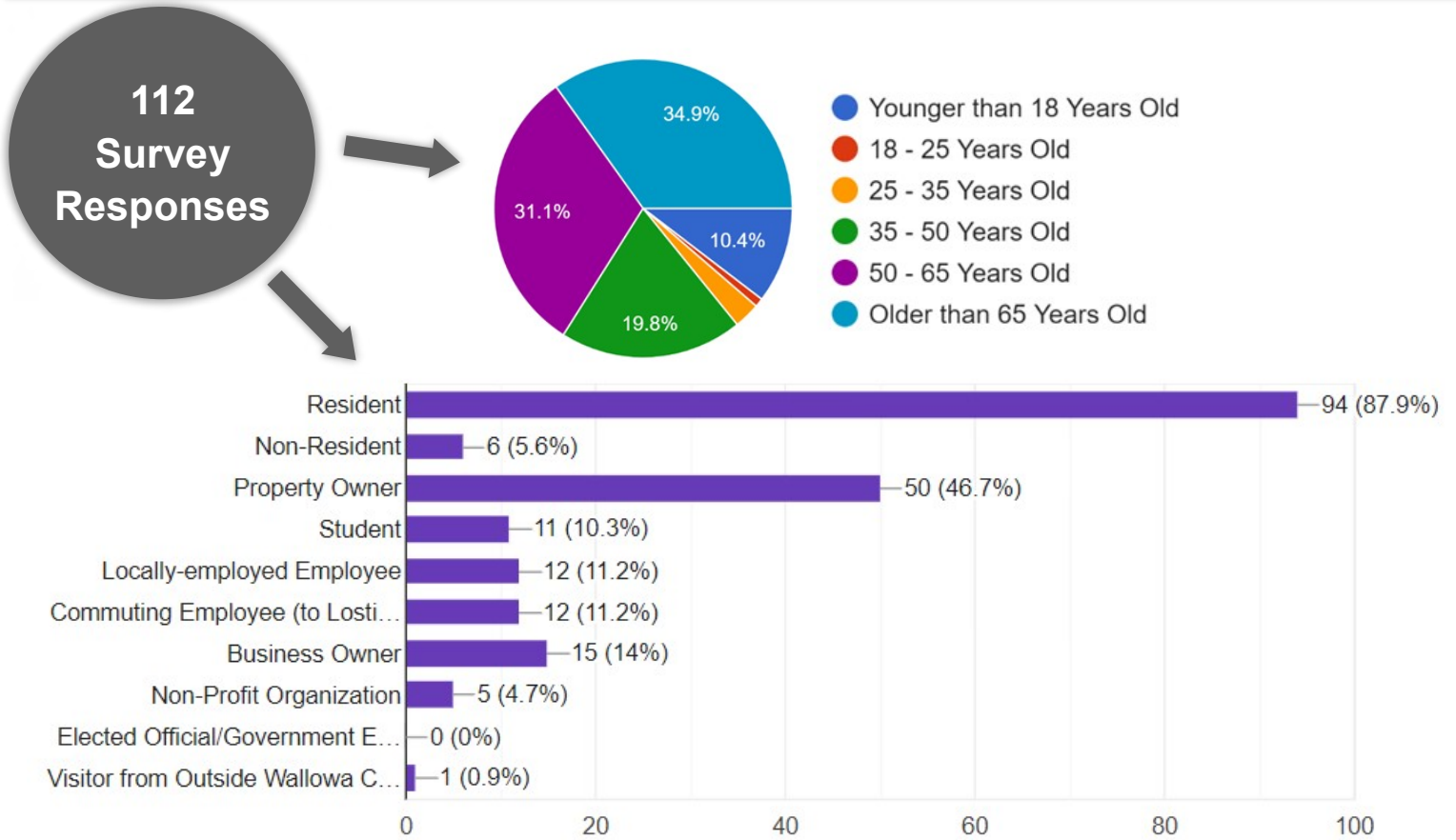
Courtesy of Wallowa History Center



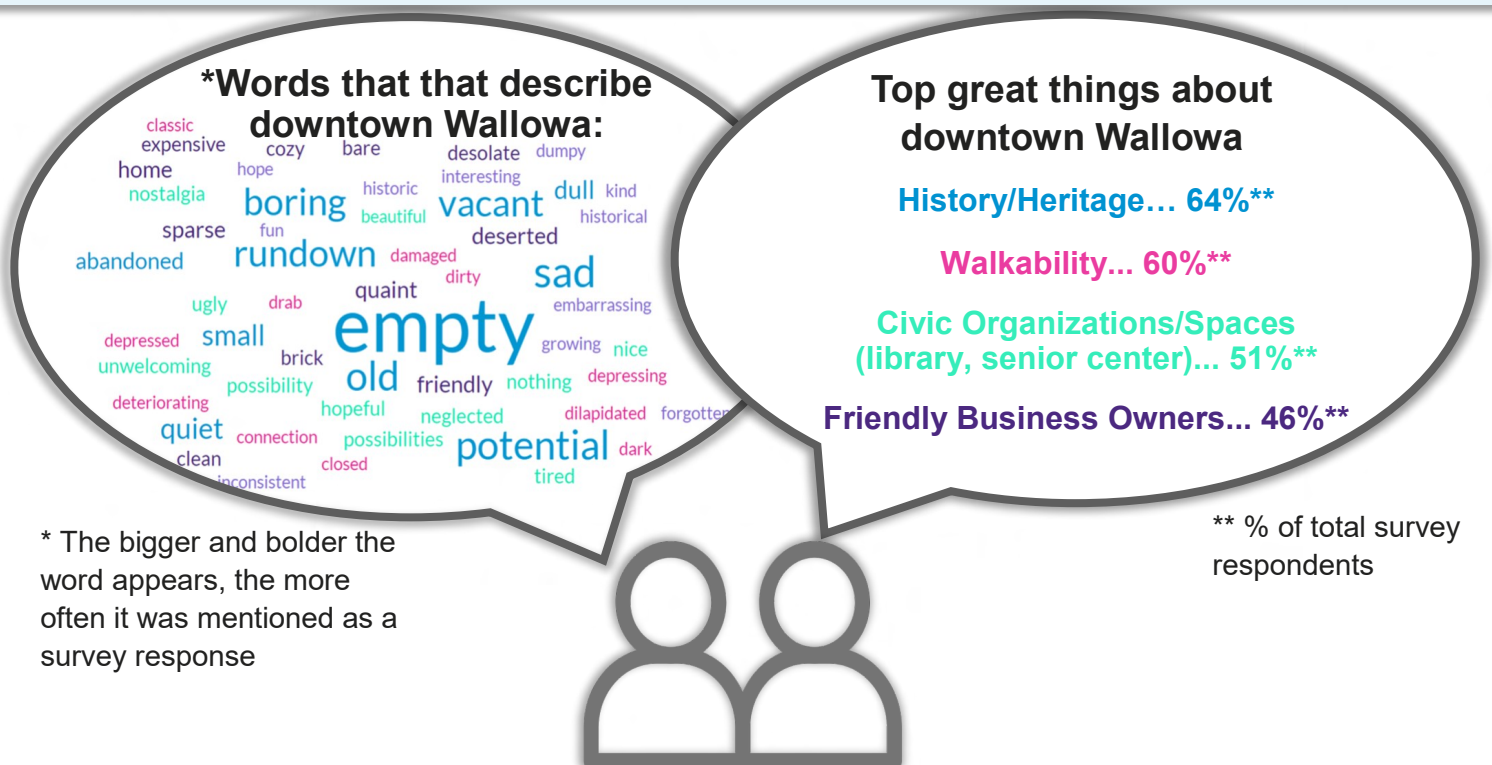
Courtesy of City of Wallowa

# 2023 Community Assessment

## Survey Statistics



## Community's General Attitude towards Downtown Wallowa





# Identified Assets

## Renovated Main Street Buildings

Following the hailstorm in August of 2022, many buildings throughout the town of Wallowa have undergone extensive renovations and updates since many roofs and west facing window needed repair or replacement. Not only were these improvements necessary, but they greatly enhanced the visual appeal and overall image of Wallowa.

## Invested Community Members

A key asset for Wallowa's revitalization efforts is its deeply invested and caring community members. Residents demonstrate a strong sense of ownership and commitment to the well-being of their town, which is seen through their active participation in community events, initiatives, and volunteer efforts. This community spirit is essential for going forward with projects and building a stronger, more resilient community for the future.

## Rich Historical Heritage

Wallowa's rich and deeply rooted history serves as a source of pride and identity for its residents which contributes to its unique charm and appeal.

“ People drive through and don't stop, things are improving with repairs since the hailstorm, and with assets like the pocket park, the new clinics, etc. but getting more foot traffic and sales for local businesses would be helpful.

~ Survey Respondent



Courtesy of WCRMS

We love walking in Wallowa! Most areas feel safe and clean. We would love even more walking areas and opportunities! The parks are beautiful, but the playground at Evans Park could use a serious update!!! The drinking fountains throughout town are wonderful, but they could be prettier and more eye-catching, so people notice them.

~ Survey Respondent

# Identified Challenges

## Business Hours

The lack of consistency in operating hours among the downtown businesses creates confusion for both residents and visitors. Having more steady and predictable hours can increase the foot traffic of the downtown area.

“ I would like more gathering opportunities and activity opportunities. Like a drinking/painting night, classes, some things to do in winter time. Also, would love to have active classes here for kids and adults. Like a gym/fitness club, or dance club for little kiddos (Zumba?).

~Survey Respondent

## Community Gathering Space

There is a lack of indoor gathering places in the community. The senior center is often busy and reserving the space for activities is difficult. A central hub for residents to gather is essential for residents to come together, connect, and build a sense of community, such as a coffee shop or community center.

## Property maintenance

Some buildings are in a state of disrepair, which detracts from their historical significance and visual appeal. Prioritizing efforts to restore and maintain these structures will preserve a piece of the town's heritage and contribute to the efforts of beautifying and revitalizing the downtown.

## Building Relationships with Business/Property Owners

There is room for more collaboration between business owners and property owners. The Main Street Committee should develop strong and positive relationships with owners to help the town and businesses work together to address common goals and challenges which will ultimately drive collective efforts towards revitalization.

I want to keep the small town feel, but we also need to get some revenue from tourists and they don't have any intention on stopping here so we need to continue to fix up the town for ourselves and tourists.

~Survey Respondent”

## Sidewalks and ADA Accessibility

Improving both sidewalks and accessibility of buildings is crucial for enhancing the safety, mobility, and inclusivity for both residents and visitors.

# Identified Opportunities

## Enhance Business Support

Promote or host business advisory services for local entrepreneurs to increase their success and sustainability.

## Establish a Community Center

Identify and secure a dedicated space to serve as a central community center that can host activities, events, and gatherings to better connect residence.

## Update Signage

Enhance the aesthetic appeal and the visibility of the signage for buildings throughout the downtown area.

## Develop a Visitor Center

Establish a dedicated area for visitors to be welcomed and guided into exploring Wallowa, such as a kiosk or small building, to gain information about businesses, events and attractions.

“ I wish there was a way to encourage small businesses in Wallowa. Love our local grocery store, really miss the hardware store, drugstore, feed store, hairdresser or barber shop, things we must go elsewhere for. Seems like when a business goes under the building either gets torn down or repurposed for nonessential services.

~Survey Respondent

I would like to see some monthly events, such as music, plays, readings etc. somehow. I would like to see more activities for families and youth.

~Survey Respondent

A lot of out of towners have no idea there is a tire shop here so I think there needs to be signage for businesses that are off the main route on the main route so tourists can utilize their services also (tire shop, car wash, laundry, visitor center (where is it?), campgrounds, I'm sure there are others).

”  
~Survey Respondent



Courtesy of City of Wallowa



# MISSION, VISION & VALUES

## Mission

The Wallowa Main Street Committee aims to make our community stronger and vibrant by bringing people together, building relationships, finding resources and leveraging what we have to offer.

## Vision

For Wallowa Main Street/Downtown area to have a historical appeal where there is a resilient and inclusive hometown feel. We take pride in the stewardship of our community and creating welcoming spaces.

## Values

### History/Heritage

We are committed to preserving and showcasing our history and strive to create an enjoyable experience for everyone who visits us.

### Community-oriented

We are committed to prioritizing the community in the vision and strategies for downtown Wallowa.

### Collaboration

We foster strong relationships with our property and business owners, partners, and volunteers to create a resilient downtown support system.

### Kindness

We welcome and show appreciation to our community members and visitors by how we communicate and share resources.



# GOALS & STRATEGIES

As mentioned in the Introduction, our goals and strategies have a foundation in the Main Street Approach. Our annual workplan is informed by our objectives.



## Goals

1. Increase the number of investors and businesses in the community by developing effective strategies.
2. Foster a sense of community by creating and improving public spaces that encourage social interaction and engagement.
3. Enhance the attractiveness of main street by implementing plans to preserve and beautify it.

## Strategy #1

ECONOMIC  
VITALITY

PROMOTION

Attract and retain both investors and businesses or organizations

### Objectives

- Promote or host 1-2 business training opportunities per year
- Host biannual networking meetings/activities with businesses and property owners
- Find and share at least 2 funding opportunities per year from grants, private foundations, and sponsorships to provide incentives for Wallowa businesses to open or expand such as business coaching, grants, or tax incentives
- Focus on finding resources to rehabilitate buildings to better incentivize business owners to open shops
- Work with at least 2 community partners and organizations to broaden support for business and property owners

## Strategy #2

DESIGN

PROMOTION

Create spaces for both the community and visitors

### Objectives

- Host 2 additional annual downtown events such as live music, craft fairs, or farmers' markets.
- Maintain inventory of available/vacant land and buildings biannually to find a place for events such as wedding receptions, yoga classes, dance classes, bingo, paint and sip nights and community dinners.
- Seek out at least 1 business/building that would serve as a gathering place such as a coffee shop, tavern, or other sit-down shop



## Strategy #3

DESIGN

PROMOTION

Preserve and beautify main street area

### Objectives

- Research developing design regulations for main street by Spring 2025
- Brainstorm with property owners on ways to have well-maintained sidewalks in downtown by Spring 2025
- Host annual cleanup days or create a cleanup incentive campaign
- Install public amenities like bike racks, outdoor seating, and water fountains to enhance the comfort and convenience by Winter 2027
- Design and install easy to read and attention-grabbing welcome sign as well as signage for businesses and amenities by Winter 2026
- Preserve and showcase Wallowa's cultural and historical heritage through interpretive signage, providing maps of local trails and installing more public art by Winter 2027



## Strategy #4

ORGANIZATION

Continue to encourage community input and engagement

### Objectives

- Have regular newsletters that reach every household
- Establish a clear and easy way to receive feedback from community members and business/property owners at any time. Such as: post contact information on committee's webpage, utilize social media messaging and polls, offer physical and digital evaluation forms, conduct surveys, and hold focus groups as needed.
- Regularly recruit volunteers and show appreciation for their time and labor



Courtesy of City of Wallowa



Courtesy of City of Wallowa



Courtesy of City of Wallowa



Courtesy of City of Wallowa



Courtesy of City of Wallowa



Courtesy of Paul Doherty



Courtesy of Paul Doherty