

2015 Talent Business Leaders Reception: Summary

The 2015 Talent Business Leaders reception was a resounding success, with a total of 50 people in attendance, 39 of which were local business leaders, representing 28 different local businesses. This surpassed our goal by quite a bit, and was an outstanding show of support from the business community.

We received excellent and varied feedback, but which did center on a few key themes:

- Recent changes and events in Talent are having a positive impact;
- Business leaders want to see community leaders take action toward a cohesive vision for the community, and to see how individual steps contribute to that larger vision;
- There are a variety of needs for new businesses, and a few have widespread agreement;
- They want frequent communication and collaboration between business leaders, city leaders, and planning, to support a proactive and planned approach to development.

The business leaders were broken up into 5 groups, and led through a discussion around 6 questions. This summary will introduce the questions that were asked, and then present summaries of the responses to each question.

1. Does Talent have the land, buildings, and utilities to meet your needs over the next several years?
What do you need more of?
2. Are there specific industries or businesses whose opening here would help you?
3. Do city services, everything from permitting to law enforcement, deliver everything you need? What could be better?
4. What effect have urban renewal and infrastructure projects had on your business?
5. What effect have city and chamber community events had on your business?
6. If you could name 3 things that the Chamber of City could do to further your success, what would they be?

Support for Specific Business Zones

Downtown

Business leaders need more rental and building space downtown, including refurbishing or renovating existing buildings. Upgrades to both the appearance and the functionality of existing buildings are needed to allow more businesses to use the existing spaces. It would also make the entire downtown area more attractive and economically vibrant. Some suggested the City take a more proactive approach in working with owners of blighted properties downtown, including both development projects and code enforcement, and potentially maintenance standards. More parking and parks, free wifi, and increased development density to support more shopping were also suggested.

Highway 99 Corridor

Business leaders on Hwy 99 would like sidewalks, bike lanes, slower traffic, and more interest and appeal. This will be addressed between Rapp and Creel by the upcoming road update, but business owners need more information about the specifics and timeline.

New Businesses to Support Existing Businesses

Business leaders suggested several types of businesses they believe would help either their business or the overall business climate in Talent. Many suggested a hotel and a brewery. The type of hotel should fit Talent, but some form of modern, appealing lodging is needed to support Talent being a destination point. And a brewery/pub would likely encourage more visitors from out of town. Business leaders also suggested

having more retail, including more artists, craftspeople, and wine tasting to compliment existing businesses. Others suggested medical support services, like imaging and a health food store. Rentable flexible-use spaces, for meetings and classes, as well as small scale manufacturing (maker space), were requested numerous times, and for a variety of uses. More commercial kitchen space is also needed. **Many business leaders are interested in the rental costs for community center rooms, including to address space needs for classes. They would like this information as soon as possible.**

Many people want more food options, and at more times, especially lunch spots. Specific suggestions included longer hours for existing restaurants, and a dedicated spot for a food truck court. Traditional community merchants like hardware and grocery stores were also suggested, as was a sheet metal shop to support prototyping; the only one now is in Medford. And they would like longer hours for shops as well.

City Services - How Can We Help?

Community Development

Most of the city services needs for businesses focus on planning and permitting. Business leaders shared concerns about the required time, rigidity, and costs of the process, and generally want “less red tape”. They feel that every new business should have the kind of “red carpet” treatment that they understand OSF to have received as they went through the planning and permitting process. It would be worth examining how things were done differently in that project, and whether it offers improvements to the city’s standard process. Some business leaders feel that the department is bogged down, preventing planning and permitting actions from moving more quickly than they might otherwise. Meeting requirements can cause further delays, potentially even killing momentum on development. They would like to see more flexibility in planning options, and a more proactive approach to reaching approvable development. They want to see an attitude of “How can we work together to reach this goal?” as opposed to “No, that isn’t allowed.” The cost of fees on new construction is a barrier, and they would like to be able to avoid or defer Streets SDC costs. Business leaders would also like more transparency about startup costs, potentially with a “cost calculator” ([an example is available through Portland's website](#)). Other suggestions included: a “counter approval” process, which would allow developers to move forward more quickly in the process; leniency with retrofitting of existing buildings; and a liaison who could be proactive in developing relationships between the City and new businesses. City officials, including planning, have been supportive, and have made the planning process easy for TonTons.

Safety

Business leaders did have some feedback about other city services and utilities. Overall, law enforcement is viewed highly and does an excellent job, but some attendees wish they had more time to get to know community members. One attendee did share an experience of crime concerns not being properly addressed, but most opinions were positive. Two areas were also mentioned as in need of additional police presence - the downtown core on Sunday afternoons and evenings, and the Skate Park any time. One traffic safety concern was also raised; it was suggested that the city consider a 4-way stop at the Main and Market streets intersection, at least until the roundabout is complete. There is also need to consider a streetlight behind the Talent Clinic.

Utilities

Utility needs are minimal, but what came up is the possibility of more electricity needed for manufacturing, and more high-speed internet options.

TURA/Infrastructure Projects Impact:

Looks great, keep up the good work! But seriously, finish the roundabout. And continue to look for ways to beautify barren or blighted land, including being proactive in partnering with property owners to make improvements, and adding touches like flowers and landscaping (and don't forget maintenance). The change is generating positive feelings, and it feels like development is taking off.

Chamber/Community Events Impact:

The events are creating positive community identification, bringing in new customers and foot traffic, and improving long-term exposure. The financial impact seen so far has been neutral to somewhat positive generally, but the longer term benefits are a good result. They're also helping to build community and relationships, and are giving Talent a dynamic feel, that things are growing and changing here.

What else can the City do?

- More social networking focused on Talent activities
- Family friendly activities and community vision
- More public art
- Help with maintaining private infrastructure
- Incentives to improve energy efficiency
- Advertising in Southern Oregon Magazine
- Work with RVTD to address bus route/noise in front of Camelot Theatre
- Connect with Senior Community
- Street re-alignment left 2 parking spaces on Talent Ave. "yellowed" when they didn't need to be - check if these can be put back to parking spaces
- Work with ODOT to move the 'Services' sign on I-5 further from the exit
- Treat Valley View as the 'gateway' to town

What else can the Chamber do?

- More social networking focused on Talent activities
- More sharing of information about new businesses
- More information about businesses from the Chamber
- Advertising in Southern Oregon Magazine
- Businesses need a better way to find a space
- Connect with Senior Community
- Family friendly activities