

HERITAGE WORKS!

CASE STUDIES FROM OREGON HERITAGE



DAYTON Downtown Revitalization Through Community Engagement



The City of Dayton was established in 1850 as a river port on the Yamhill River. Located in Oregon's Yamhill Valley "wine country," they have a strong agricultural heritage and have always been a hub for area farmers. One of the special features of Dayton is a beautiful central park surrounded by downtown business blocks. The Courthouse Square Park was donated in the unfulfilled hope the county seat would be located there. Downtown property and business owners are invested in creating an economically vibrant community and a unique destination for visitors based on their history and heritage.

One of the challenges facing Dayton is a very small economic base which means they need to reinvent themselves to make the most of their assets. Their desire to "do it well" led them to apply for the Oregon Main Street program in 2009 to give them the structure to organize their revitalization efforts. After creating the Dayton Community Development Association, a 501c3 nonprofit organization, the board held a retreat with Oregon Main Street staff to determine strengths and weaknesses and establish goals and objectives.

As a follow-up, they sponsored a community meeting where they invited community leaders and residents to learn about the Main Street Approach. By the end of the evening, they had populated their four committees (Organization, Promotion, Design, and Economic Restructuring) with about 30 volunteers. As a follow-up, they held a volunteer training session with Oregon Main Street staff, and the committees are now meeting regularly to develop and implement activities.

TOOLS USED

- Main Street - Goal Setting
- Main Street - Board and Committee Training
- Main Street - Committee Work Plan Development
- Oregon Heritage - Design Technical Assistance
- Certified Local Government Grants
- Dayton Historical Preservation Committee
- City of Dayton Funding
- Yamhill County Funding
- Yamhill County Cultural Coalition Grant

Recognizing early on that their historic downtown buildings are an important asset, DCDA encouraged the City to apply to become a Certified Local Government. They saw the benefits of establishing a local design ordinance and the financial assistance available through the CLG grant program.

Some of the key accomplishments to date include:



Organization – developed an application and membership/sponsorship process; applied and received grants from the City and the County; developing a volunteer recognition and retention program; and are working on a funding plan.

Design – served as a pilot project for a design team from the State Historic Preservation Office and Oregon Main Street to meet with downtown business and property owners and provide façade improvement recommendations. As a result of this project, one property owner received a grant to implement the design recommendation from Oregon Main Street and three others received grants through the Certified Local Government program. They leveraged \$16,000 in grant funds for a total investment of \$41,000. In addition, they received grant funds for a mural from the Yamhill County Cultural Coalition which was also recommended during the design team visit. They are creating historical markers for the Courthouse Square Park.

Promotion – organized their first community event, including a town “family portrait” featuring a

gathering of over 250 residents at the Courthouse Square Park. In addition, they worked in partnership with other groups for a community holiday celebration, and revived the community’s Cinco de Mayo event.

Economic Restructuring – conducted a survey to gauge local shopping habits. Developed a positioning and branding statement, and are working on a food hub anchor. One new business opened downtown in 2011 with no business closures.

Community engagement has been one of the major successes for DCDA. In 2011 alone this tiny town benefited from approximately 1350 volunteer hours spent on downtown revitalization activities. In addition, the City and the County have been solid partners providing both philosophical and financial support. DCDA recognizes downtown revitalization won’t happen overnight – it is a slow, steady, and incremental process. Within the next 5-10 years, they plan on developing into a unique destination that is an integral part of the growing tourism in the Yamhill Valley, while developing their agricultural bounty into an asset that the community and visitors can benefit from.

