

Main Street Assessment: What the State Said & How We're Responding

Big Picture

Oregon Main Street (OMS) visited Forest Grove in 2025 to assess our downtown program. They saw passion and progress, but also confusion and communication gaps. Their main message: the foundation is solid, but roles, funding, and consistency need clarity.

1. Board & Organization

What OMS Said:

- Strong community history and vision.
- Concern of a councilor on the Main Street Board and possible conflicts of interest if not handled appropriately.
- Confusion about structure and who leads Main Street.
- Broad NDAs may discourage volunteers.

Our Response:

- City Club is the Main Street administrator as a 501(c)(6), with a supporting 501(c)(3) for grants.
- Clearer structure: one board, one mission, metrics tracked and published.
- Ethics Commission confirmed no conflict of interest; recusals and policies are in place.
- Moving from NDAs to a simpler privacy/conflict policy.

2. Design & Downtown Experience

What OMS Said:

- Downtown is charming but some find it "boring."
- Building maintenance is uneven, grants are hard to access.
- Parking, lighting, and walkability need improvement.
- Beautification and inviting spaces are lacking.

Our Response:

- Advocating for City-led infrastructure fixes (trash, sidewalks, outlets).
- Pushing for downtown standards: no boarded windows, graffiti removal, upkeep.
- Supporting more murals, pop-ups, and creative placemaking.
- Historic preservation is key and we already have an active Landmarks Board.

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3. Economic Vitality

What OMS Said:

- Strong mix of businesses but not well recognized.
- Vacancies and storage use hurt downtown vitality.
- Businesses need clearer support, grants, and navigation.
- Desire for market analysis and a stronger service ecosystem.

Our Response:

- Growing vacancy promotion tools and pop-up activations.
- Building a “Business Navigator” role + resource packet.
- Working on standards to limit long-term vacancies.
- Exploring an ecosystem map to align services and partners.
- Committed to economic equity, downtown must serve all income levels.

4. Promotions & Events

What OMS Said:

- Events are popular but sometimes hurt local storefronts.
- Current events may not reflect full community diversity.
- Downtown identity and marketing need clarity.
- People don't know Main Street boundaries.

Our Response:

- Redesigned Oktoberfest layout in a pilot so shops stay visible.
- Actively expanding inclusive, family-friendly programming.
- Developing a clear Main Street district map.
- Building a stronger social media/digital presence.
- Launching a more user friendly shared community calendar (Locable) — ready for partners to join.

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5. Outreach & Partnerships

What OMS Said:

- Communication feels inconsistent (“start and stop”).
- Overlap and unclear roles among City, Chamber, City Club, nonprofits.
- Partners want Main Street to be the downtown facilitator.
- Stronger partnerships with Pacific University and schools suggested.

Our Response:

- Acknowledge early challenges, we're just over a year old, building from scratch.
- Clarified: City Club convenes and connects, not replaces partners.
- New collaborative calendar reduces conflicts and overlaps.
- Stronger Pacific University ties (internships, student engagement) in progress.
- Clearer agreements with partners will come as funding grows.

Why This Matters

- Main Street is proven: **\$18 return for every \$1 invested.**
- A vibrant downtown boosts property values, jobs, and community pride.
- Success requires *partnership, not just passion*. City Club is building the structure now we need the City, partners, and residents to lean in.

How You Can Help

- **Speak Up:** Tell Council you support Main Street.
- **Show Up:** Attend events and shop local.
- **Sign Up:** Volunteer or join City Club where everyone's voice matters.