

EASTERN OREGON TRADE + EVENT CENTER (EOTEC) STRATEGIC PLAN

JULY 10, 2019



PRESENTED BY:



SSW CONSULTING

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PROJECT TEAM

The City of Hermiston led this project with support of many community partners including the Umatilla County Fair Board, the Farm-City Pro Rodeo Board, and various interested businesses. The EOTEC Advisory Committee (advisory to the City Council) has been appointed to represent the community.

EASTERN OREGON TRADE + EVENT CENTER (EOTEC) ADVISORY COMMITTEE

David Drotzmann, Mayor
Steve Eldridge, Hermiston Community Member
Michael Kay, Farm-City Pro Rodeo Board
John Kirwan, City Councilor
Vijay Patel, A-1 Hospitality Group
Lucas Wagner, Umatilla County Fair Board
Steve Williams, Hermiston Community Member

HERMISTON CITY STAFF

Byron Smith, City Manager
Al Davis, VenuWorks/EOTEC Manager
Corey Pearson, VenuWorks
Holly Lambert, Accounting Tech
Nate Rivera, HES General Manager
Lilly Alarcon-Strong, City Recorder/Executive Assistant

CONSULTANT

Sara Singer Wilson
Principal/Owner SSW Consulting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Hermiston retained SSW Consulting, LLC to conduct public outreach to develop a strategic plan to assist the City in their management of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center (EOTEC) over the next 10 years. The process was designed to engage stakeholders across the community to develop broad support for the plan. This plan is a compilation of information from various stakeholders regarding operations and best practices. It also provides a summary of the public outreach efforts. This plan is intended to be a living document and should be reviewed and updated every two years.

PROJECT GOALS

- » Develop a community outreach process to engage EOTEC stakeholders and the broader Hermiston community on the future of the EOTEC
- » Identify a future vision for EOTEC through the community engagement process.
- » Develop goals and specific actions to assist the center in its transition to a year-round event facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mission

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is a versatile, accessible facility hosting and welcoming local and regional events that vary in size and focus, highlighting and complimenting the local economy of Hermiston and the Columbia basin. The Center serves the community and the region through the cooperation, coordination, and mutual success of its three principal entities, the City of Hermiston, the Umatilla County Fair, and the Farm City Pro Rodeo.

Facility Improvements

1. Secure water rights for the EOTEC site
2. Improve the landscaping and overall beautification of the site
3. Update the overall site plan
4. Improve security cameras and PA system for safety and emergency use
5. Provide dedicated office and storage space to Umatilla County Fair
6. Improve RV/camping area
7. Add a multi-sports facility
8. Improve access to the site
9. Improve parking on site
10. Build an indoor arena/pavilion

Operations

- » Improve customer service at EOTEC
- » Review event policies
- » Establish vendor contracts

- » Provide opportunities for community/non-profit meeting space at ALL public facilities
- » Clarify leadership and staffing roles

Marketing

1. Develop a marketing plan
 - a. Improve the website
 - b. Partner with local and regional tourism efforts
 - c. Develop a consistent EOTEC brand
 - d. Develop and share positive stories
2. Hire a marketing and sales position

Events

- » Concerts
- » Food Festivals
- » Farmers Markets
- » Beer and Wine Festivals
- » Athletic Events
- » Festival of Lights
- » Youth/Teen Events
- » Equestrian Events
- » Cultural Festivals
- » Arts and Craft Festivals



INTRODUCTION



The City of Hermiston is developing a strategic plan to assist the City in their management of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center (EOTEC) over the next 10 years.

This plan compiles information from community members, EOTEC customers, and other facility users regarding their ideas for future uses, events, and more. The strategic plan identifies shared community goals and priorities regarding future events, facility use, marketing, and policies.

HISTORY OF EOTEC

For several years the Hermiston community experienced significant growth, making it the largest and fastest growing city in Eastern Oregon. This growth prompted the development of new schools,

parks, hotels, restaurants, and retail shopping. Additionally, the City's vision for continued growth included relocating the Fair and Rodeo grounds from downtown Hermiston to a new location where the event could meet the demands of the growing community. The old fairgrounds required significant costly repairs to remain viable in their downtown location.

In 1984, the City purchased a 75-acre site south of the airport. In 2010, a collaborative process between Umatilla County and the City of Hermiston established the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center (EOTEC) to develop a new trade & event center, and related infrastructure to serve as a venue for family, sports, rodeo, fair, convention, trade, conference and entertainment shows and activities. In coordination with the Fair Board, Farm-City Pro Rodeo Board, and other community partners, EOTEC opened its doors on August 7, 2017. In 2018, the City took over management of the center, and the County has provided financial support to continue making planned improvements to the facility. The City has contracted with VenuWorks to manage the day-to-day operations of the facility. VenuWorks provides management, consulting, and event services for arena, performing arts centers and convention centers throughout the United States.



EOTEC MOVING FORWARD

This effort is timely because the City of Hermiston recently took over the management of EOTEC, and City leaders want to ensure EOTEC is a community space that aligns with community needs. Public support of EOTEC is critical to its success, and building community awareness and ensuring EOTEC's goals reflect Hermiston's community values to better serve the region.

PROJECT APPROACH

The project scope was developed by the City of Hermiston. City staff worked together with the SSW to develop an approach for this project that would result in a strategic plan to help achieve the project goals and outcomes listed below:

- » Develop a community outreach process to engage EOTEC stakeholders and the broader Hermiston community on the future of the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center (EOTEC)
- » Identify a future vision for EOTEC through the community engagement process.
- » Develop goals and specific actions to assist the center in its transition to a year-round event facility.

The City is seeking to develop a Strategic Plan with community and Council support that will be ready to implement by staff and community partners.

The approach included:

1. Setting Engagement Goals + Identifying Stakeholders
2. Developing a Community Engagement Strategy
3. Conducting Community Outreach
4. Preparing a Strategic Plan

ENGAGEMENT GOALS + STAKEHOLDERS

In coordination with City staff and the EOTEC Advisory Committee, the following engagement goals were identified:

- » Engage the Hermiston community and EOTEC stakeholders to identify the community vision for EOTEC.
- » Ensure process integrity throughout the engagement process. Leaders will encourage broad participation and balance competing demands and values in the decision making process.
- » Build community awareness, trust and relationships through open, positive, and respectful communications.
- » Provide engagement opportunities that are inclusive and accessible to everyone in the community.

A comprehensive list of community stakeholders was identified. Hermiston's demographics were evaluated to ensure accessible engagement practices were considered for people of all races, genders, and ages. The stakeholder list also included EOTEC current customers, potential customers, local businesses, visitors, and community partner organizations.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The engagement strategy for the EOTEC Strategic Plan was to work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that issues, aspirations and concerns were understood and considered. The strategy included elements of public information and outreach, while also providing for two-way communication. The team worked with stakeholders to ensure that their concerns, aspirations and issues were directly reflected in the goals and actions developed.

Our strategy was to engage the greater community including people 18 and over and of all races. Hermiston is over 35% Hispanic/Latino, so tactics to engage this segment of the community were used including translating materials from English to Spanish to ensure accessibility. Our engagement techniques were equitable to ensure broad participation was encouraged and accessible to everyone. The engagement strategy also included the staff from VenuWorks, existing renters/tenants, and potential future tenants.

Below is a list of outreach tools utilized to share information about the project and gather community input for the strategic plan.

- » Online Survey (available in English and Spanish)
- » Focus Groups
- » Interviews
- » E-blasts
- » Press Releases
- » Social Media
- » Brochure (available in English and Spanish)
- » Business Cards
- » Website
- » Open House
- » Community Events

STRATEGIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT

All public outreach was conducted between July – October 2018. Following the completion of the outreach period, the results were compiled and reviewed by SSW Consulting. The draft strategic plan was presented to the EOTEC Advisory Committee in October. The draft was also sent to all stakeholders who participated in the outreach process, and posted on the EOTEC and City website for review. Following the review period, final edits were made to the report before presenting it to the City Council for review and acceptance.

The recommendations are divided into the following sections:

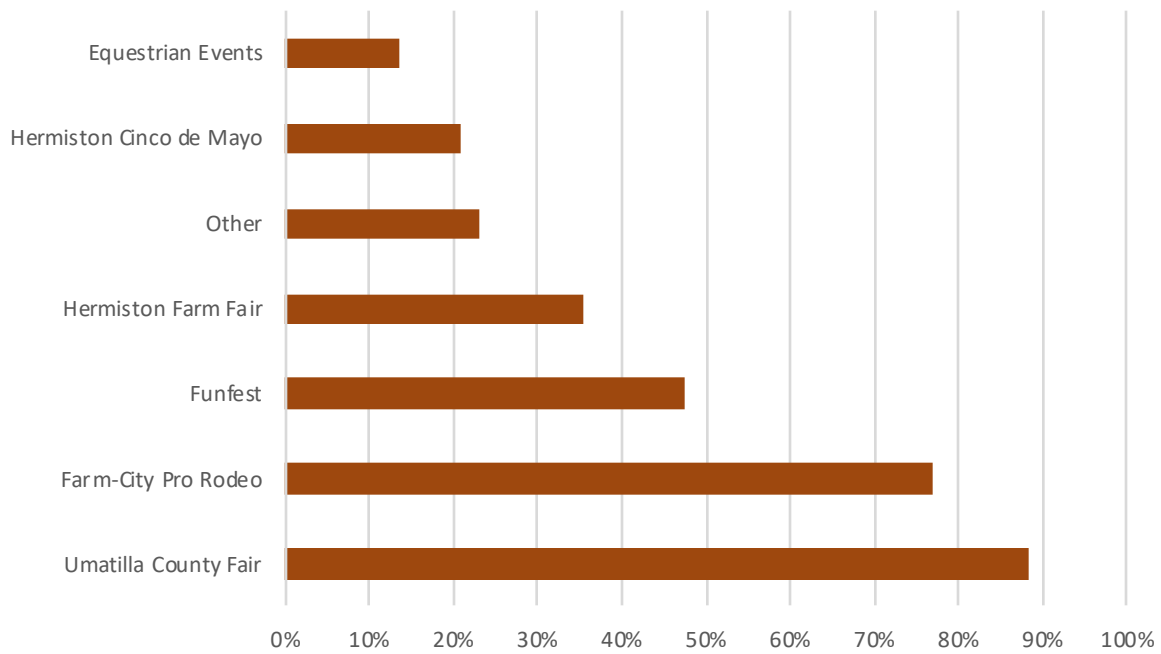
1. EOTEC Mission
2. Facility Improvements
3. Operations
4. Marketing
5. Events

OUTREACH SUMMARY

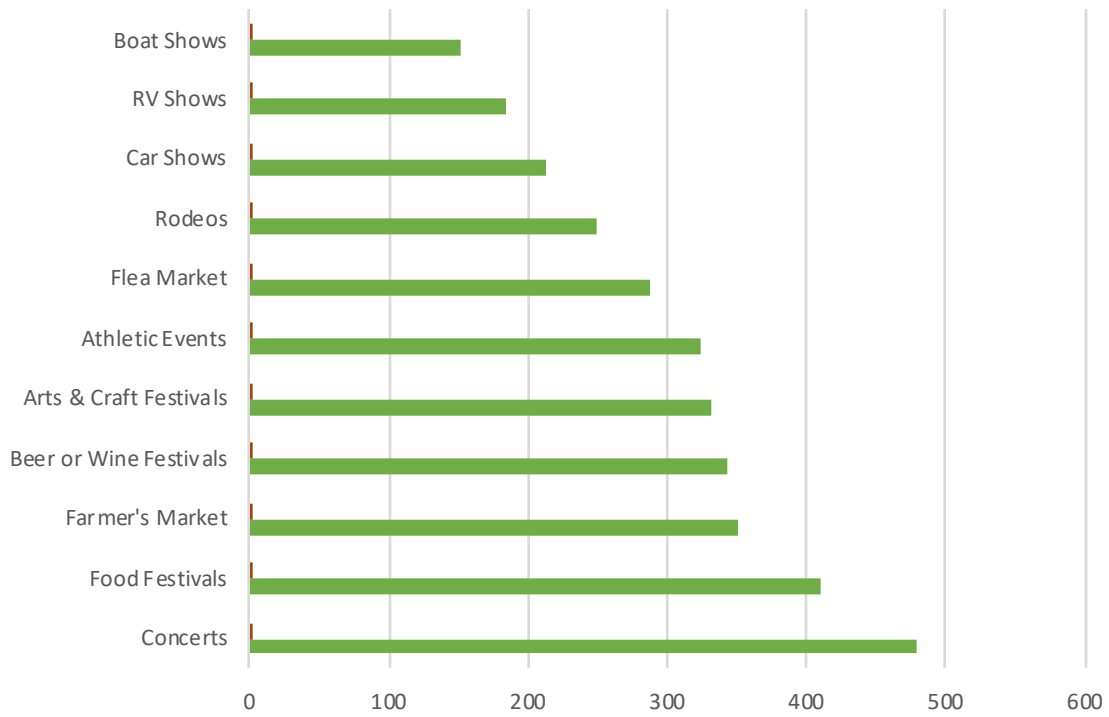
ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

The online survey was available in English and Spanish from July – October 2018. This tool was developed to reach the broader community. It was promoted through the project's print materials, e-blasts, social media, at community events, and on the City's website. The survey had 543 total respondents. The summary results are shown in the following graphs.

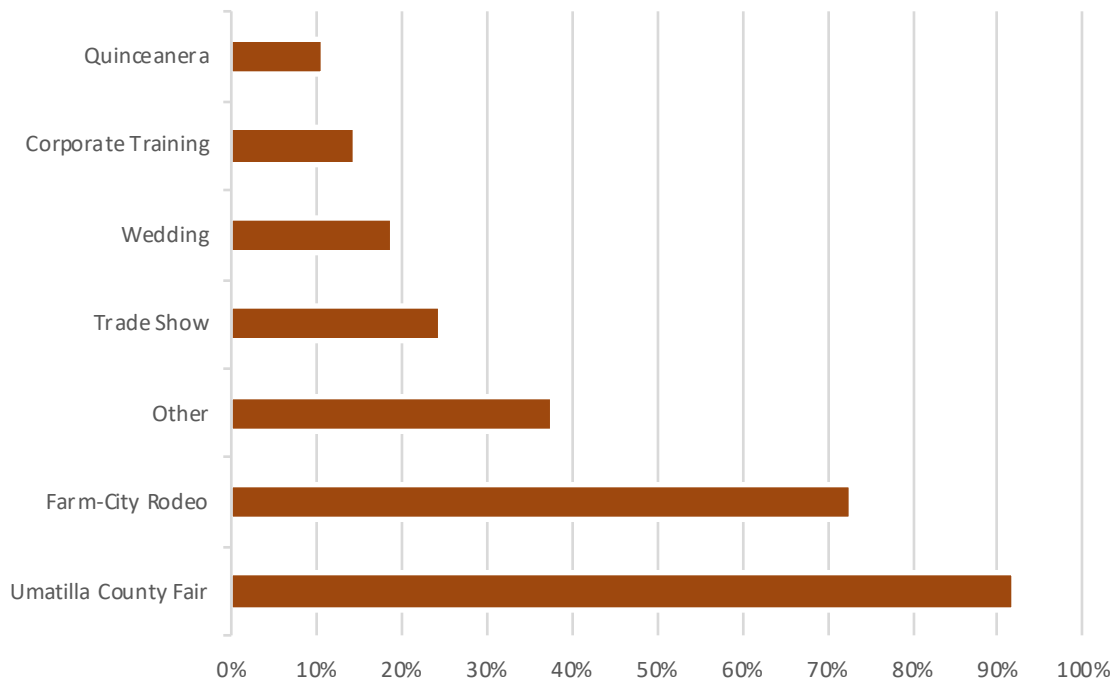
Events You Enjoy Attending in Hermiston



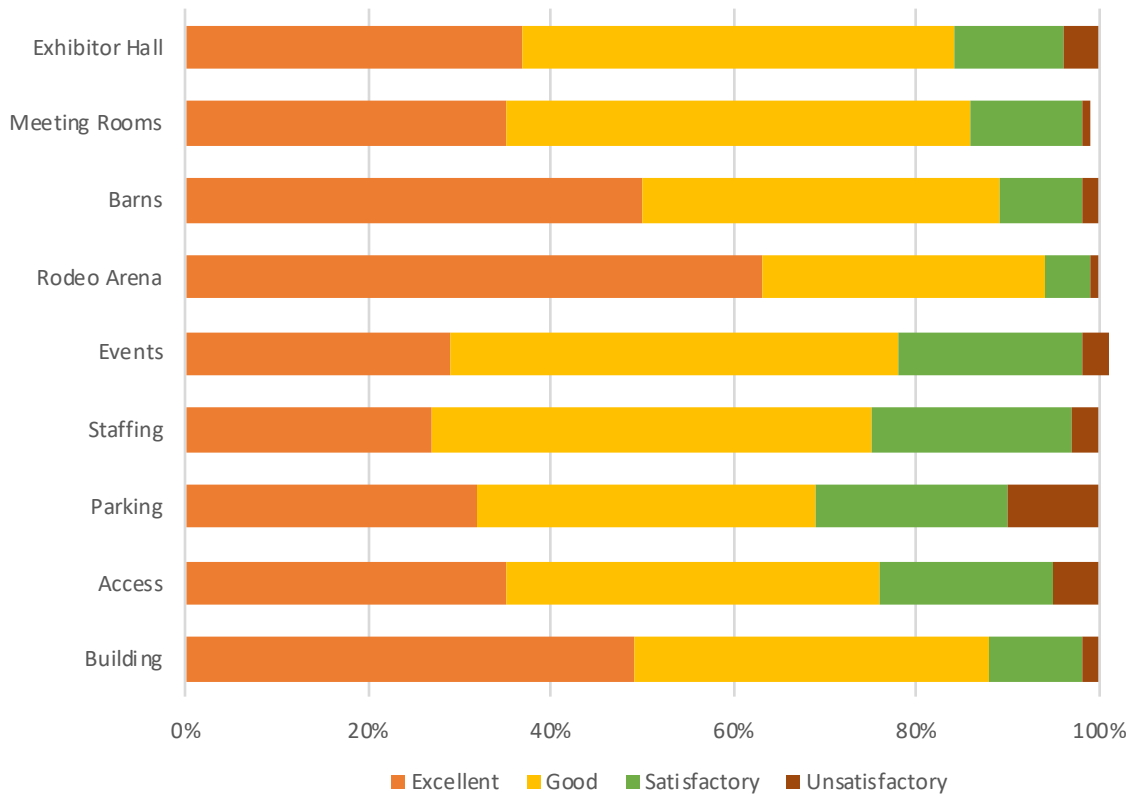
Types of Events You Would Like Access to in the Region



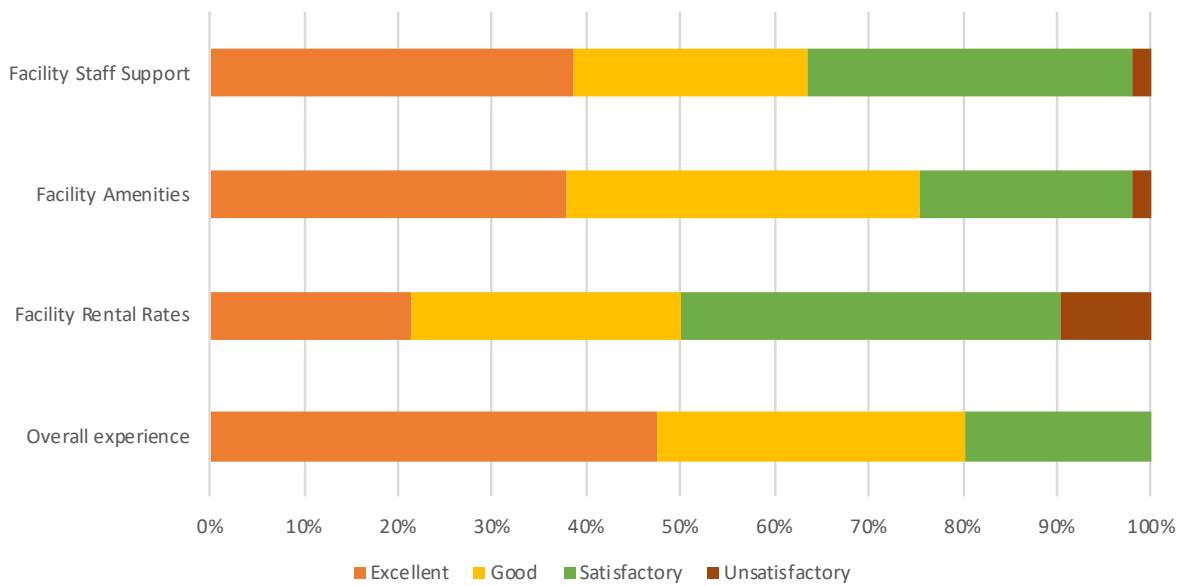
Types of Events Attended at EOTEC



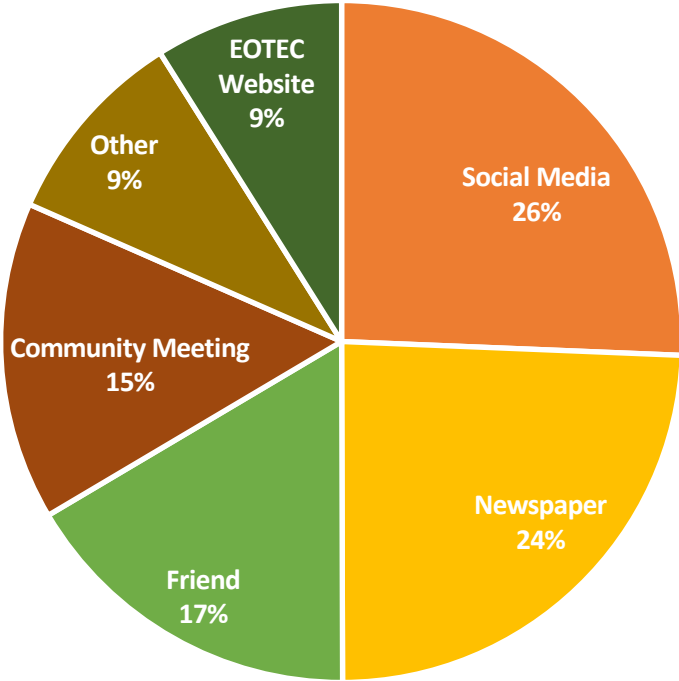
Facility Ratings from Event Attendees



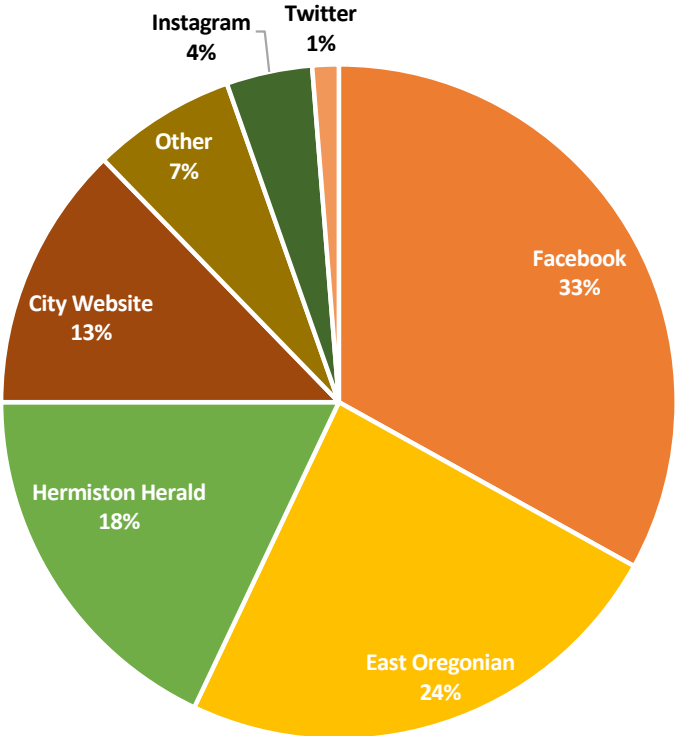
EOTEC Experience Rating by Event Hosts



How Did You Find Out About EOTEC?



Where Do You Find Information About Upcoming Events?



DEMOGRAPHICS

Our engagement goals included conducting a broad community engagement effort which was inclusive and accessible. While we weren't able to gather demographic information for every person we engaged, we were able to collect some information through the online survey. This data shows how the online survey respondents compare to Hermiston's demographic makeup.

DEMOGRAPHICS	CITY OF HERMISTON	ONLINE SURVEY RESPONDENTS
MALE	53%	35%
FEMALE	47%	64%
AGE UNDER 18	32%	1%
AGE 18-24	8%	3%
AGE 25-34	16%	20%
AGE 35-44	12%	31%
AGE 45-54	9%	22%
AGE 55-64	12%	15%
AGE 65+	11%	10%

OPEN HOUSE

An open house was hosted October 18 at EOTEC in partnership with a Fall Fest where families could participate in free hayrides and other fun fall activities. Approximately 100 visitors attended to enjoy the fall activities and share their input and priorities for the development of EOTEC. A summary of those results is shown below.

EOTEC Improvements	# of Votes
Add Multi-Sports Facility	16
Landscaping (grass, trees, shaded areas, benches)	16
Improve RV/Camping Area	8
Noise mitigation for neighbors	7
Secure water rights	6
Complete rodeo bleachers	6
Pave Access Roads	5
Add/redesign access roads	5
Improve security cameras + PA system	5
Map of grounds and information center	5
Outside Lighting (Parking area)	3
Improve Meetings Rooms	2
Add indoor arena/pavilion	2
Expand barns	2
Directional Signage (in facility, on site, + on roadway)	1
Exit gates	1
EOTEC Challenges	# of Votes
Lack of Shade	18
Traffic Safety	17
RV Park/Camping	16
Clarify management structure and roles (who's in charge? City, Venu-Works, Advisory Committee, County, etc.)	11
Access to the facility	8
Lack of transportation options	5
Facilities need to be completed	5
Lack of Funding	5
Noise for Neighbors	5
Website + Availability of Information	4
Negative Social Media	3
Clarify policies and procedures	2
Lack of landscaping	2
Negative Media Coverage	1
Adequate # of Hotel Rooms	0

Future Events	# of Votes
Festival of Lights	37
Youth/Teen Events	22
Derby/Monster Truck	17
Motocross Races	13
Farmers Market	11
Beer/Wine Festivals	10
Outdoorsman Shows	10
Mud Run/Obstacle Course	8
Concerts	7
Food Festivals	7
Cultural Festivals	7
Home + Garden Show	6
Agricultural Shows	5
Air Show	5
Athletic Events	4
Quilt Show	3
Rodeos	2
Equestrian Events	2
Corporate Trainings	2
Tractor Pull	1
Track w/ Horse Races	1
Marketing Ideas	# of Votes
Add online calendar of events	22
Increase social media presence	8
Customer Service Training for Event Space Staff	8
Improve website (include sections for Fair and Rodeo)	5
Hire Sales/Marketing/Communication Position	5
Partner with tourism agencies/entities	5
Share positive stories with the media and community	5
Outreach to neighboring cities	4
Seek out events that go to other major markets	3
Quarterly community meetings to share updates (incl. media)	1

FOCUS GROUPS

SSW Consulting conducted four focus groups with community members representing different interests in the community. These groups provided in-depth insights regarding the challenges and future priorities for the facility. To review the notes from the compiled notes from these sessions, please see Appendix A.

INTERVIEWS

SSW conducted seven interviews with some of the primary stakeholders who have been involved in the project and represent different interests in the community. These interviews provided a close look at varying perspectives on EOTEC. The interviewees represented staff and board members from the Umatilla County Fair, Farm-City Pro Rodeo, OSU Extension, hoteliers, involved community members, and EOTEC neighbors.

OTHER OUTREACH

A variety of other outreach tools were used including the delivery of three E-blasts reaching nearly 300 individuals, in addition to the e-blast shared by Parks and Recreation reaching over 1,000 more people. Two press releases were sent resulting in newspaper coverage for the project promoting the survey and upcoming outreach opportunities. Several social media posts were sent out on the City's social media outlets reaching thousands of people across the community.

Printed materials including a brochure and business card were used at community events and meetings to share information about the project and to promote upcoming outreach opportunities. The City's website also information about the project and how to get involved.



**OPEN HOUSE HOSTED AT EOTEC ON
OCTOBER 18**

RECOMMENDATIONS

EOTEC'S MISSION

When the stakeholders were asked about the current perception of EOTEC's purpose in the community, the overall response was that many people view the facility as a place for hosting the Fair and Rodeo. While the fair and rodeo serve as anchor tenants, the facility is intended to host both local and regional events. Stakeholders shared their feedback on the vision for EOTEC over the next 10 years as a convention destination that balances the demands of the local community with the need to attract regional events to support the sustainable operation of the facility. EOTEC provides great economic opportunity for Hermiston by attracting outside visitors and supporting local and regional tourism efforts. The space was conceived by the local community to bolster the economy while also creating a community gathering space offering diverse events for the region throughout the year. It will be critical to communicate this mission as part of EOTEC's marketing efforts to attract new events.

A Vision for EOTEC...

The Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is a versatile, accessible facility hosting and welcoming local and regional events that vary in size and focus, highlighting and complimenting the local economy of Hermiston and the Columbia basin. The Center serves the community and the region through the cooperation, coordination, and mutual success of its three principal entities, the City of Hermiston, the Umatilla County Fair, and the Farm City Pro Rodeo.

FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS

The following recommendations were ranked as the highest priorities during the community outreach for improving the facility. While these improvements are high priority actions, the entire list of suggested facility improvements can be found at the end of this section. These opportunities should be reviewed and considered if grant opportunities, county/state/or federal funding opportunities become available, donation or partnership opportunities can be leverage, or a health or safety issue needs to be addressed.

1. Secure water rights for the EOTEC site

During the interviews and focus groups, it was noted that water rights had not been secured for the site, which has created challenges for ensuring an adequate and sustainable water supply for ongoing operations and future improvements. While not raised in the comments during the online survey, it was ranked as one of the highest priorities during the second half of our outreach efforts. One of the top priorities for the site is to add



landscaping and trees, and concerns were raised in regards to having adequate an adequate water supply to maintain landscaping improvements and any future development on the site. Water rights to irrigate the property are being pursued in the following ways:

- » Continue to work with the Stanfield Irrigation District to secure water rights for the site.
- » Develop a back-up plan for other water sources to irrigate the site.

2. Improve the landscaping and overall beautification of the site.

Hundreds of comments were received through the community outreach regarding the need for trees, grass, benches, shaded areas, and overall improvement of the aesthetics of EOTEC's outdoor areas. Several actions were identified:

- » Develop a landscape master plan for the site that includes a plan for trees, grass, benches, and shade
- » Work with City staff, Umatilla County Fair, and the Rodeo in finalizing the landscape improvements.
- » Ensure proper irrigation infrastructure is available to support the installation of new landscaping improvements.
- » Improve on- and off-site directional signage with an emphasis on establishing a sign on Hwy. 395 directing people to the facility
- » Fund and implement landscaping plan, and budget funds for ongoing maintenance.

3. Update the overall site plan

The initial site plan included a diverse list of amenities based on the initial planning efforts with the project partners. As development has occurred and events have grown, the initial site plan needs to be revisited and updated based on recent data, community input and partner needs.

4. Improve security cameras and PA system for safety and emergency use

5. Provide dedicated office and storage space to Umatilla County Fair

The Umatilla County Fair staff offices and storage space were included in the facility's initial planning phases, and their offices have been housed in the building since opening in 2017 in a temporary office space. To better accommodate the Fair's programming needs, the City would like to move the fair staff to a dedicated office space and provide them with the necessary storage space for housing the fair's equipment and materials.

6. Improve RV/camping area

The RV/Camping area was included in the initial plans for the EOTEC site, and the community is still very supportive of this amenity. The RV/Camping area not only satisfies a community priority, but also provides an opportunity to generate revenue for the facility year-round. Suggested actions include:



- » Explore costs and feasibility of making electrical and dump station improvements to existing RV camping areas
- » Continue to seek funding for further development of RV Park infrastructure
- » Construct RV/Camping improvements as they are funded and found feasible

7. Add a multi-sports facility

There is great interest in attracting more athletic and youth events to Hermiston, which would require the addition of new athletic facilities. Many comments expressed the desire for additional athletic facilities that could accommodate activities such as lacrosse, baseball, soccer, swimming, volleyball, basketball, and more. During the focus groups and interviews, community stakeholders expanded on this idea to highlight how these facilities could be both a regional and local draw. Locally, these facilities could provide practice fields and recreational opportunities for youth and people of all ages. Regionally, the facilities could be designed to host larger tournaments attracting families from across the region to support local tourism efforts. Suggested actions for this recommendation include:

- » Conduct a needs assessment for local athletic facilities to identify the type of facilities needed to support the local and regional demands
- » Prepare a preliminary design for a facility based on the results of the needs assessment
- » Conduct a feasibility study
- » Identify funding for implementation

8. Improve access to the site

During large events such as the Fair and Rodeo, access to the site is limited. Visitors and neighbors experience traffic congestion, traffic safety issues, and dust from the unpaved access roads. Several actions were identified to help improve access to the site:

- » Treat access roads during large events to prevent dust
- » Increase traffic safety patrols during large events
- » Consider the use of temporary traffic signals during large events
- » Assess and design improved access roads for future development
- » Fund and construct improved access roads
- » Explore additional transit/emergency vehicle entrance to the facility from hwy 395
- » Add street lighting to airport road

9. Improve parking on site

While the paved parking is more than adequate for many smaller events, parking for large events still has some challenges which need to be addressed. The following actions were suggested:

- » Treat parking areas during large events and improve overflow parking areas with gravel, pavement or other materials to mitigate the impacts from dust
- » Provide additional signage for overflow parking areas
- » Add lighting to parking areas

10. Build an indoor arena/pavilion

An indoor arena/pavilion could be used to allow for more equestrian events as well as other types of programming. The following actions are recommended:

- » Work closely with partners to identify the specific uses and needs for this facility
- » Select a site, develop a conceptual design, and determine the estimated cost

Other Facility Improvement Priorities

The following list of suggested improvements did not rank as high as those improvements recommended above, but they are still important for future consideration and could be prioritized higher based on the criteria mentioned earlier in this section.

- » Expand the building
- » Conduct noise assessment and add noise mitigation features for the site
- » Improve meeting rooms (acoustics, lighting, A/V equipment, furnishings, decor, etc.)
- » Complete the rodeo bleachers
- » Expand and enhance barns
- » Add space for nursing moms
- » Add a food court area during large events with seating and shaded or air-conditioned areas
- » Provide additional restrooms outside the building to alleviate lines during large events
- » Provide a map of the grounds and general information at a visitor information center during events
- » Increase transportation options to/from the facility during large events
- » Add an amphitheater
- » Improve the kitchen area within the building

Other improvements mentioned include on-site transportation for seniors or those with disabilities during large outdoor events (ie. Golf carts), add water fountains throughout the facility, evaluate facility rates and ensure they are consistent with market rates, address light pollution issue for neighbors, provide animal boarding for those traveling through Hermiston.

OPERATIONS

The following recommendations were made to improve the overall operations of the facility.

Improve customer service at EOTEC

EOTEC has experienced many staffing changes since its opening, as well as changes in its operations. Customers have felt the impacts of these changes and suggested several actions for improving the overall tenant/visitor experience at EOTEC:

- » Conduct customer service training for all EOTEC staff
- » Provide policies that hold staff accountable for providing excellent customer service and displaying a high level of professionalism
- » Improve communications with neighbors, community partners (hotels, restaurants, and others in the tourism industry) to keep them apprised of facility events, improvements and general updates

Review event policies

Review all event policies and ensure consistent enforcement and communication. If there are certain exceptions that will impact the community, ensure that any potential impacts are communicated to the interested parties in a timely manner. These policies may be related to scheduling, noise, event times, and traffic safety management plans. Consider impacts to tenants, neighbors, vendors, and the broader community.

Additionally, in reviewing EOTEC's scheduling policy, ensure the policy supports EOTEC's mission to balance the goal to provide community gathering space with the goals to generate revenue through planning and hosting larger regional events that will attract visitors to Hermiston.

Establish vendor contracts

EOTEC customers expressed a need for streamlining event planning at EOTEC by developing contracts with preferred vendors. Part of EOTEC's mission is to attract events which bring out of town customers to Hermiston. These regional visitors would prefer to have a list of vendors to choose from when planning their event since they may not be familiar with the local service providers. When making event arrangements, many customers would prefer to have catering menus, A/V services, equipment rentals, and more offered to them through the facility.

- » Work with local event planners to understand customer vendor needs
- » Evaluate local vendors and establish contracts with preferred providers for EOTEC services

Provide opportunities for community/non-profit meeting space at ALL public facilities

One of the challenges raised during the outreach was the lack of affordable meeting space for community and non-profit groups. These groups cannot afford to pay the non-profit rates at EOTEC. Additionally, the transition of the management of the Hermiston Community Center to the Parks & Recreation Department has resulted in high demand for events and recreation programs at this facility, reducing its availability for community and non-profit groups. While EOTEC's rates may be cost-prohibitive for these groups, there are many facilities in the community that could accommodate their needs. The following steps are recommended:

- » Review the non-profit and community group rates and policies at all City facilities
- » Provide information regarding available facilities and their rates to these groups
- » Review EOTEC's scheduling policy and look for non-peak usage times that could be available for non-profit groups
- » Ask other community partners including schools, churches, businesses, hotels and others about available meeting space to develop a comprehensive list of resources for all community and non-profit groups
- » Provide facility staff with updated information to share with customers if requested facilities are unavailable

Clarify leadership and staffing roles

There have been many staffing and management changes since the opening of the facility. Clearly define and communicate the roles and responsibilities of EOTEC staff. Communicate with tenants, tourism partners, neighbors and the greater community who to contact regarding event booking questions, EOTEC improvement questions or concerns, marketing opportunities, etc.

MARKETING

EOTEC receives funds from the Tourism Promotion Assessment (TPA) to support marketing efforts for EOTEC. Hermiston's hotels collect a \$1.00 tax per occupied room per night. These funds are to support marketing efforts at EOTEC. As the center seeks to attract new regional events that will support the local economy through tourism dollars, this revenue will continue to increase to support marketing and operations. As mentioned earlier, for sustainable operations, EOTEC must attract more outside visitors for larger events to achieve the desired economic impacts for the community.

Local marketing efforts are also important to continue building community support for the facility. EOTEC faced challenges during construction and the first year of operations which were documented in local newspapers and on social media. However, there are many stories of community collaboration among diverse partners, local fundraising efforts, and successful events that have not been widely shared. To shift the narrative, EOTEC must improve its marketing strategy. A strong marketing effort will help to attract new regional events, share stories of community celebrations and collaboration, and build EOTEC's reputation as the premier event center in the region.

1. Develop a marketing plan

Using the information and recommendations from this report as well as input from staff and partners, develop a marketing plan with the goal to promote facility sales, market EOTEC events, and meet facility revenue projections.

a. Improve the website

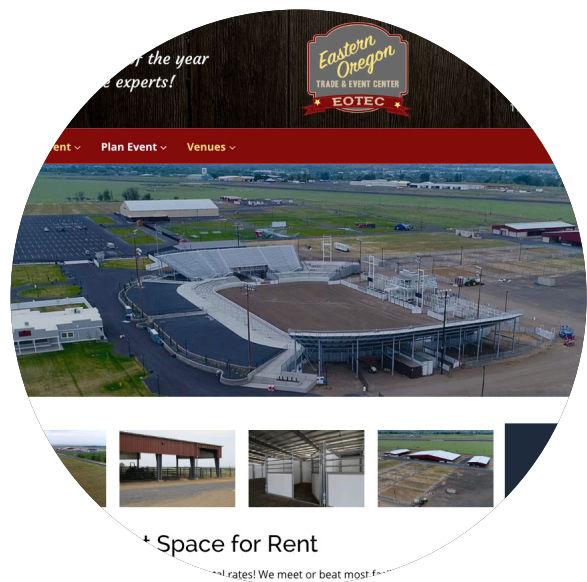
One of the top priorities for improving marketing efforts is to improve EOTEC's website. Stakeholders suggested providing a regularly updated online calendar showing public events, facility availability for private rentals, and information about community events being hosted at EOTEC. For example, the County Fair and Farm-City Pro Rodeo general information should be available or linked on the website. Information regarding parking, transportation, and facility maps should also be available. The website should feature high-quality, professional photos of the facility and events.

b. Partner with local and regional tourism efforts

The local tourism group, Travel Hermiston, as well as the regional group, Eastern Oregon Visitors Association, are comprised of tourism professionals and service industry representatives who share common goals in attracting visitors to the region. EOTEC should be represented in these groups to build relationships and seek out partnerships for attracting future events. EOTEC staff should use these opportunities to seek out events that are going to other nearby markets.

c. Develop a consistent EOTEC brand

Since the transition of the management of the facility, there is confusion throughout the community regarding EOTEC's identity. Develop a



consistent EOTEC brand and tag-line to use on marketing materials, signage, and in messaging for the facility.

d. Develop and share positive stories

One of the challenges identified in the outreach was the negative press and social media that has circulated throughout the development and opening of EOTEC. There are many positive stories to share about the events and improvements happening at the facility, but someone must take the lead in identifying and sharing these stories. Some suggested actions include:

- » Sharing a monthly e-blast regarding upcoming events, facility improvements, event planning tips, and general updates
- » Develop a strong social media presence where stories can be shared and events can be promoted
- » Develop press releases for events or to announce major facility improvements
- » Leverage community and regional partners and supporters as champions to share positive stories and build support across the region

2. Hire a marketing and sales position

It is recommended that EOTEC dedicate specific resources to Marketing and Sales. This could take the form of an employee or the form of an agreement with a public relations/marketing firm. This dedication of resources will be key in attracting new events and marketing existing events held at the facility.

EVENTS

The overall top priority for EOTEC expressed across all community outreach efforts was to attract more events to the facility. We asked the community to share their priorities for future types of events. While many results were expressed in the online survey, there was variation in the results expressed during the in-person outreach. The list below is a mix of the priorities generated as part of the survey and the in-person outreach.

Concerts

Consider using the rodeo arena or providing additional seating to attract bigger name artists. Communicate with neighbors regarding event times, noise, and other potential event impacts.

Food Festivals

Suggestions included Taste of Oregon, Food Truck event, and BBQ contests.

Farmers Markets

Beer and Wine Festivals

Athletic Events

Consider cycling, lacrosse, soccer, running, swimming, 5K events and more.

Festival of Lights

Youth/Teen Events

The fair provides many agricultural related youth events, but additional teen events could include events partnering with OMSI, career events, educational events, dances, battle of the bands, nerf wars, paint-ball, etc.

Equestrian Events

Suggestions included barrel racing, roping events, mounted shooting, livestock auctions, etc.

Cultural Festivals

Suggestions included Caledonia Games, Celtic Festival/Highland Games, Oktoberfest, Plays, musicals, etc.

Arts and Craft Festivals

Suggestions included a quilt show, holiday bazaars, antique events, etc.

Other event ideas included:

- » Flea Market
- » Rodeos
- » Car Shows
- » RV Shows
- » Boat Shows
- » Mud Run/Obstacle Course
- » Trainings
- » High School Graduation
- » Outdoorsman Shows
- » Derby/Monster Truck Events
- » Motocross Races
- » Home + Garden Show
- » Agricultural Show
- » Air Show

APPENDIX

EOTEC STRATEGIC PLAN

FOCUS GROUP NOTES

Current EOTEC Mission

- An event center (auctions, fair, rodeo, quinceañeras)
- Concept for the design was for a Ag. Seminar and Trade Show
- Horse Sales
- Equestrian Events
- It's background/purpose was to vacate the property downtown to avoid debt for a new High School. The property made way for the School District to acquire the property downtown to expand the existing high school. Significant issues existed with facilities by the post office.
- Fair
- Convention Destination/Large Convention Space
- Heads in Beds – Generate Tourism
- Bring money to the community
- Fair and Rodeo Site
- Culture
- Make money at all costs
- Disaster shelter
- Tourism
- Community Involvement
- A gathering place
- Diversity of events
- Destination
- Attraction
-

Current Assets/What Do We Love About EOTEC?

- Size
- Area to develop grounds (possible future sports fields)
- Restrooms across the facility
- Amazing bar amenities
- Fiber Optic Network (excellent WIFI)
- Rodeo grounds
- Livestock barns
- Building/Event Center
- Lots of space with potential for growth
- Not crowded like the old location
- Great location that accommodates larger events, better access
- Brings people into the community
- Nice rodeo facility
- Event Center - new opportunities
- Easy to find for people from out of town
- Meeting rooms – spacious, nice equipment, comfortable furnishings, privacy
- Parking is plentiful for events
- Great meeting space – spacious, access, kitchen, indoor and outdoor space, parking
- Versatile
- Potential for adding value
- Frames Hermiston as a regional leader
- Opportunity for growth

- Proximity to airport
- Accommodates large and small groups
- Location – not being in the center of town allows for larger events
- Big improvement from previous grounds – better infrastructure

Most Proud Of...

- Rodeo with no bad seats, beautiful, clean spectator area
- Hermiston is a crossroads (250 miles from everywhere) and we have a mild climate (draw for events in winter, spring)
- Community support during the fair is incredible
- Ability of the community to fundraise and support
- Barn equipment is first class
- Rodeo – voted best footing arena
- Everything is new in the facility – restrooms are really nice
- Welcoming presentation and nice layout for the Fair
- Agricultural Events
- Fair and Rodeo
- Cinco de Mayo – Multi-cultural programming
- Collaboration of agencies
- Effort to grow the facility and our community (made Hermiston bigger by moving it out of the center of town)
- Dedicated leadership
- Place for diverse groups to come together (ex. 7 different churches)
- Many agencies that were in crisis came together to plan and solve a big challenge (School District, Fair, Rodeo, County, etc.)
- Grow the community event – Fair and Rodeo

Challenges

- A/V quality
- Need additional meeting space (similar to the size of meeting room 1 and the small meeting room)
- Need blackout blinds for meeting rooms
- Parking – enough spaces, but pavement or something to mitigate dust
- RV parking
- RV Park location and proximity (should be away from carnival area)
- Adding access control within the site itself – more fences
- Traffic management
- Traffic infrastructure to get people to the site – kayak, Uber, Lyft
- Proximity to hotels
- Trade show booths need better access to electricity
- Need to provide shade amenities
- Door access security features (concerns with cash storage and security during fair)
- Entering/Accessing site for pedestrians – also look at restroom access point at the rodeo ground
- Need bathrooms on the rodeo site
- Marketing
- Strategically planning for future expansion (property acquisition – site master plan)
- Water
- Who is responsible – Who is in charge vs. the IGA arrangement before
- Communication – who do you reach out to or who will reach out when things are going to impact neighbors?
- Fair and rodeo parking – the dust is really bad

- Traffic – not just on the fair weekend
- Noise – even with indoor events
- Limited staff on site – we have sent companies to check out the facility and no one is around. Customer service needs to be a priority and there needs to be a different level of professionalism.
- Marketing budget, but no marketing
- Rumor of TPA money being spent for Parks and Recreation
- Events not listed or distributed to local partners
- Not enough employees to make things happen
- Structure – who's doing what? Staff responsibilities are not clear – restaurants and hotels need to be informed when large groups are coming to town so they can be prepared to host – this doesn't send a positive message for tourism.
- Sales team to promote EOTEC – other cities have a position that is focused on this sole responsibility
- Timely response to inquiries
- Website - updated and functional
- Shade in common areas
- Cost to use the facility – for local users and non-profits the cost has become too high. Plus, with changes at the community center, there are challenges for these local groups having no space to meet and gather. There has been a push to use EOTEC vs. the Community Center, but many groups can't afford it
- # of break out rooms is too limited
- RV area is a dust bowl
- Access is limited during big events
- Lack of care to landscaping
- Change is hard – difficult to adjust to the new way of operating
- Parking entrance is a bottle neck
- Barns are overcrowded for fair use
- Signage lacking from 395
- Communication with the public
- City focus to detriment of other relations (ie. The Chamber)
- Access roads and signage
- Dust, dust, dust
- No solid management – during events, who is in charge – who is responsible for following up?
- Poorly advertised
- Brings more crime to neighborhood - trespassing, vehicle crimes, fighting
- Noise too late at night – indoor and outdoor
- Lack of ownership/leadership – stepping up when needed and taking control
- Water and ground improvements
- Negative community perceptions
- Signage
- Making EOTEC self-sufficient
- Communication onsite – PA system for announcements, safety purposes
- Size is still not sufficient for larger events – there are not enough breakout rooms
- Change is hard
- Camping and RV Space
- Accessibility to community and non-profits
- Poor quality of kitchen, bathroom, equipment and tables

Our Vision for the Future

- A venue for BIG name concerts

- Community based facility used for a multitude of both regional and local events
- Facility that is connected to the community as Hermiston grows via infrastructure and services
- A well-designed facility that brings added value to the community
- Expanded community, Central to community, Known destination
- In the long-term, a place of celebration regionally for a variety of attractions
- Attract events such as Moda Health Conference, OR Governor Conference, FFA, 4H local groups, Corporate Trainings, Large Scale Job Fairs
- Versatile, accessible facility that can sufficiently host and welcome regional events that vary in size and focus – highlighting and complimenting the local economy of Hermiston and the Columbia Basin
- Accommodate a wide variety of events year round
- Event Center for the region – camp ground with animal lodging

How Do We Change the Narrative?

- Build trust
- Better communication
- City needs a PR person to share positive stories – do social media, press, etc.
- Share the information regarding rate comps (include in final report)
- City has great vision, but consistency and managing timelines or communicating changes has been lacking
- Leverage outside partners and experience (ex. Chamber)
- Form realistic expectations

Future Amenities

- Improve RV/Camping Area (12)
- Pave Access Roads (7)
- Add/Redesign Access Roads (1)
- Add multi-sport facilities (5)
- Improve meeting rooms (A/V Equipment, shades, acoustics) (1)
- Improve parking lot (1)
- Expand facility for larger events (2)
- Indoor Arena/Pavilion (8)
- Landscaping (Grass, trees, shaded areas, benches) (6)
- More Marketing (7)
- Additional restrooms (1)
- Additional site lighting (1)
- Directional signage (in facility, on the site, and on roadways) (2)
- Barn enhancements to maximize use (1)
- Secure water rights for the property (13)
- Expand barns (2)
- Complete rodeo bleachers (6)
- Light mitigation for neighbors
- Noise mitigation for neighbors (5)
- Online calendar to assist with coordinating local services/events
- Website offering more specific information including an online calendar of events (3)
- Staff training – enhance professionalism and communication with partners (2)
- Indoor amphitheater
- Space/Access for non-profits and community groups (FFA, 4H, etc.) (2)

Future Events

- Concerts (10)
- Rodeos (2)
- Food Festivals (5)
- Farmers Market
- Athletic Events (6)
- Car Show (6)
- Boat Show
- Beer/Wine Festivals (9)
- RV Shows
- Arts + Crafts Festival (1)
- Flea Market (1)
- Equestrian Events (10)
- Outdoorsman Shows (hunting, fishing, guns, etc.) (4)
- Cultural Festivals (7)
- Magic + Comedy Shows
- Home + Garden Show (1)
- Agricultural Show (6)
- Running/Cross Country Race
- Mud Run/Obstacle Course (1)
- Derby/Monster Truck Event
- Tractor Pull (1)
- Air Show (1)
- Corporate Trainings (4)
- Drone Demonstrations (1)
- Livestock Sales (4)
- Youth/Teen Activities (Partner with OMSI, Laser Tag, Nerf Obstacle Course) (8)
- Seasonal Ice Skating Rink (1)

Other Comments/Ideas

- Coordination w/ local airport
- Vendor Relationships Needed (Catering, etc.)
- Use for Emergency Preparedness – FEMA \$\$
- Walking path to EOTEC from downtown or neighborhoods



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