



## **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee Staff Report**

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**Date:** January 7, 2025

**From:** Zoe Mombert, Assistant to the City Manager

**Subject: Whereabouts Implementation Support and Additional Projects**

### **Recommended Action:**

Provide directions to staff to advance the Tourism Development Strategy

### **Background:**

The Tourism Development Strategy was adopted in April 2025. The next step is to start implementing the strategy. The strategy project was under budget which leaves some funds available to start the implementation of a few strategy in addition to Whereabout providing implementation support. Whereabout has provided a brief description of a few opportunities for the Committee's consideration.

### **Implementation Support**

To support Explore Wilsonville and partners for successful implementation of the Tourism Development Strategy, we will schedule every-other-month meetings via phone/video conference for a year beyond plan completion. These meetings will be an opportunity for the Tourism Development Strategy Manager to share with us what is working, where there are challenges, and for us to discuss solutions together. We want the plan to be successful as much as you do and know an ongoing supportive relationship will pay dividends towards that future.

### **OTHER OPTIONS:**

#### **Launching the Strategy Implementation Team:**

**Core Tourism Development Strategy Implementation Team:** In the first stage, it is recommended that a core team meets quarterly to ensure progress on initial Strategies. An Annual Report on the first year should be compiled at fiscal year-end, along with progress on indicators. This would traditionally be included in the annual "Five-Year Action Plan and Annual One-Year Implementation Plan" of the Tourism Promotion Committee. This core team will include the Chair of the Tourism Promotion committee and Tourism Promotion Program staff, as well as representatives from Explore Tualatin Valley, Oregon's Mt. Hood Territory, Willamette Valley Visitors Association, and Wilsonville Area Chamber of Commerce.

**Ad Hoc Strategy Teams:** Ad Hoc Strategy teams will be convened for each Strategy. For each Strategy team, the team will identify a point person to manage and report on the work, set a more detailed work plan to achieve the Strategy, and meet monthly to do the actual work. The point person will report to the Tourism Promotion Committee on progress and hurdles it encounters in achieving the Strategy.

- Stand up and facilitate quarterly CTDSIT meetings for first year
- Provide structure and guidance for Ad-Hoc Strategy Teams

### **1.2 Evaluate needs and fund bicycle amenities such as maintenance stops, route maps, and bike route signage**

A key element of this development plan is its focus on both supporting outdoor recreation and non-automotive transportation, with particular emphasis on bicycle routes and accessibility. Promoting cycling will inevitably put greater scrutiny on the existing cycling infrastructure. In this Strategy, the City will take stock of its existing amenities, benchmark them against nearby locations along cycling routes, and establish an action plan to elevate its cycling ecosystem.

- Partner with Parks & Recreation
- Research and gap analysis
- Prioritized and phased recommendations for amenities and locations

### **1.8 Develop destination ambassadorship toolkit for tourism-oriented businesses to inform visitors and train front-line staff**

A key but often overlooked facet of destination management is the knowledge held by people visitors interact with directly—the frontline staff at hotels, restaurants, shops, and so on. These individuals can make or break a visit to Wilsonville. If they are knowledgeable about local highlights and experiences, they can elevate a visitor's experience dramatically. This can be difficult in an economy in which such positions are hard to fill and keep filled. Producing a destination toolkit that can be shared with local businesses is a smart way to train frontline ambassadors for the Wilsonville area at a modest investment. This could be a physical booklet, a series of training videos, onboarding workshops, or something else entirely.

### **1.10 Evaluate short-term rental (STR) opportunities and policies and create a Quick Start Guide to ease creation of new STRs for owners**

A sufficient inventory of short-term rental (STR) locations, offered through services such as Airbnb and VRBO, is a necessary component of any modern destination plan because of the flexibility they give to families and larger groups traveling together. If local regulations mandate these rentals charge a TLT on visitation, as Wilsonville's does, this helps the tourism program at large. As families are a key demographic of the Wilsonville plan, it makes great sense to promote legal, regulated STR activity. Creating a Quick Start Guide for property owners that helps them understand how to navigate permitting effectively will remove many barriers to market entry. However, since TLT is the funding source for the City's tourism-promotion program, Explore Wilsonville will want to primarily promote lodging properties located within city limits.

### **2.2 Develop partnerships to identify and foster the development of a Wilsonville-specific signature event**

Events are even better drivers of visitation if they support or elevate cultural, historical, or commercial features that are of importance to the community or region. Sometimes they can give a community an identity, like Gilroy, CA's Garlic Festival, or heighten the city's existing identity, like Leavenworth, WA's several Bavarian-themed festivals. Any discussion of a festival in Wilsonville should begin with the identification of a signature event that can be tied exclusively to the Wilsonville community. The conversations and forums initiated by the activity in Strategy 2.1 will likely kickstart this process, though the scale and impact of a signature festival or event will demand thorough community, commercial, and regional tourism engagement during the ideation and planning phases. Due to Wilsonville's location along I-5 and its large number of automobile dealers, an automotive-focused event could be considered.

**Fiscal Implications:**

There are funds available from the Tourism Development Strategy project (contract with Whereabout) which will be used to start the implementation of the strategy.

**Steps Following Approval:**

Whereabout will support the implementation of the Strategy and support the Tourism Promotion Committee on up to three additional projects.