



Newberry Regional  
**PARTNERSHIP**

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Newberry Regional Partnership  
**STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN**

# **Summary of Community Input**

**FINAL**

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Principal, Steve Maher New Media

**JULY 2024**

# NEWBERRY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT

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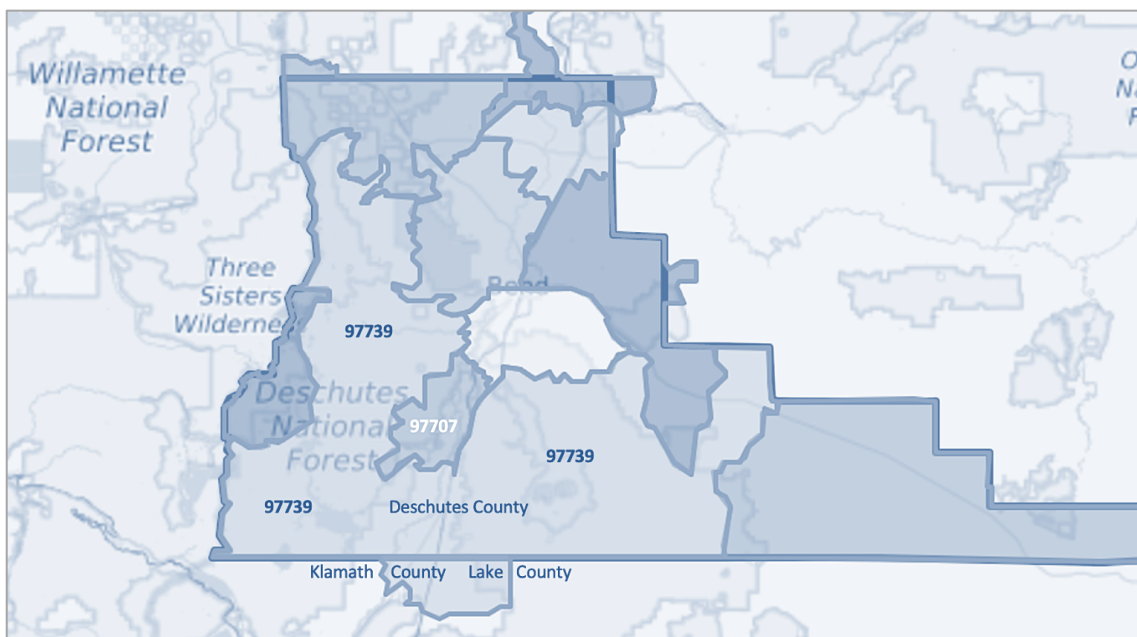
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# NEWBERRY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT

## INTRODUCTION

In 2023, the Newberry Regional Partnership (NRP), a group developing a strategic action plan for South Deschutes County, retained DCG Research to engage area residents on how to influence growth and change over time. DCG Research connected with residents through three main tools: A survey, focus groups, and community engagement sessions.

The community survey was conducted online in June and July 2023 and saw 1,162 completed surveys in an area with an estimated population of 21,000, according to the 2020 Census. Most of the survey respondents (56 percent) live in the La Pine area, Sunriver area, and other parts of South Deschutes County, including Three Rivers. Another 30 percent live in Klamath County and 11 percent live in Lake County. The Klamath County and Lake County residents generally utilize La Pine and Sunriver for services. When broken down by just zip codes (the zip codes extend into Klamath and Lake counties), 61 percent of the survey respondents (710 total) have homes in the 97739 La Pine zip code area, 34 percent of survey respondents (391) have homes in the 97707 Sunriver zip code area, and another 5 percent of respondents (60) live elsewhere. It should be noted that Three Rivers respondents fall into the Sunriver zip code area.



The survey contained both multiple-choice (aided) questions and open-ended (unaided) questions that were designed to provide residents a platform to voice their thoughts about living in the region.

In October 2023, DCG Research released a report, detailing initial findings from the survey.

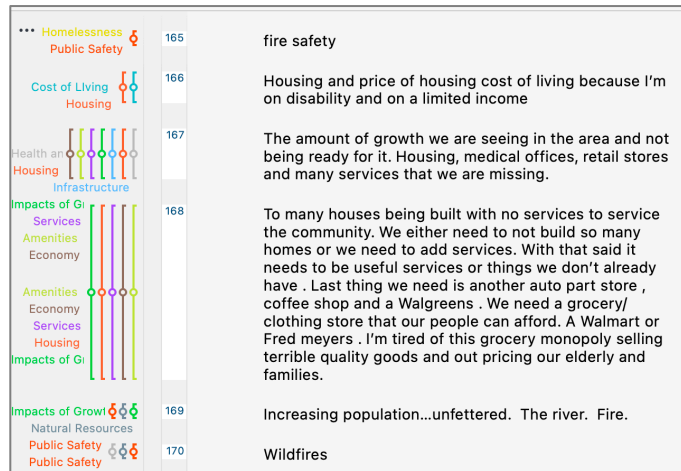
In October and November 2023, eight community civic engagements sessions were conducted in La Pine and Sunriver. Two sessions each were focused on arts and culture and education, respectively, while one each was focused on economic development, public safety, health and human services, and the environment. Detailed notes were compiled from all of these sessions.

In December 2023, four in-person focus groups were held in La Pine, Sunriver, and Three Rivers. The focus groups were tailored around the following topics: Education, Economic Development, Public Safety, and Health. Later that month, DCG Research followed up with a report on what was learned during those meetings.

In May 2024, Newberry Regional Partnership (NRP) retained consultants Steven Ames, Principal of Steven Ames Planning, and Steve Maher, Principal of Steve Maher New Media, (hereafter known in this report as ‘the Consultants’) to undertake the following activities:

- Conduct a more thorough qualitative analysis of community input to date, focusing on responses to two key open-ended survey questions that asked residents about community concerns and community quality of life;
- Collect and analyze additional quantitative data on the region;
- Prepare a summary report on what was discovered as part of this additional qualitative and quantitative data analysis;

- Speak with NRP’s advisors and stakeholders about additional ideas for strategies;
- Utilize the Consultants’ 2024 summary, DCG Research’s 2023 report on the community survey, focus groups and community civic engagement sessions, and additional feedback from NRP’s advisors and stakeholders to draft a set of preliminary strategies for a strategic action plan.



*Example of software used to code/segment all open-ended survey responses.*

- Help NRP test the draft strategies with residents. Learn which strategies community members consider the highest priority. Utilize that data to fine-tune the strategies.
- Present the strategies to the key NRP partners and stakeholders at a Summit in fall 2024.
- Lead in developing a final, five-year Strategic Action Plan for the area, organized around the project’s updated focus areas (a.k.a., “Six Dimensions of Community Vitality”)

The Consultants wish to thank DCG Research for its kind cooperation in the development of this report.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An analysis of data collected by the Newberry Regional Partnership in 2023 finds residents of Newberry Country — defined as those living in South Deschutes County and northern Klamath and Lake counties — share many areas of common ground.

Residents in the region want to see more steps taken to prepare for and prevent wildfires, which have been growing in frequency and severity. The number of homes adjacent to federal lands has increased significantly, making fire containment and protection of property more difficult. Illegal camping by homeless people on federal and state lands has added to the risk factor.

People also express concern about accelerated population growth and development, worried it will harm the region's prized natural resources and rural lifestyles. At the same time, they want more transportation, water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure put in place.

While Bend has received the largest share of new residents for several decades now, growth of late has been felt in all parts of Deschutes County, including its southern reaches. From 2010-2020, the county's unincorporated areas grew by 40,520 people, a 25-percent jump, and the City of La Pine's population rose from 1,640 to 2,512, a 53-percent hike, according to the Census Bureau.

Countywide, annual net migration is projected to remain above 5,000 into the foreseeable future, according to Portland State University's Population Research Center. From 2020-2050, the City of Bend's population is forecast to grow by 68 percent to 167,000, and the City of La Pine's population is forecast to jump 117 percent to 5,445 residents. As of July 2023, La Pine is Oregon's second fastest growing city, moving up from the number seven position in 2022.

Other findings from the analysis of Newberry data:

There is support for better health care services and other amenities that will reduce the need to drive to Bend, particularly during the winter when conditions can make traveling more dangerous.

Likewise, community members want more jobs close by so fewer residents have to commute to Bend, a better education system from pre-school through adulthood, and more affordable housing.

While there is much agreement from residents on several issues of concerns, the analysis found some differences, too, sometimes closely correlated to where people live.

Safety, including the wildfire threat, is the number one concern for residents throughout the surveyed area. However, the rate of La Pine zip code area residents concerned about wildfires and illegal camping is higher than the rate of Sunriver zip code area residents concerned about the same. A higher percentage of Sunriver area residents, on the other hand, are concerned about their community safety and personal safety than that of La Pine area residents. Hunting and shooting in the Sunriver area is a particularly contentious issue.

**Multiple-Choice ‘Concerns’ Question:**

| <b>Issues of Concern</b>                       | <b>Overall Survey Respondents</b> | <b>La Pine Zip Code Respondents</b> | <b>Sunriver Zip Code Respondents</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Wildfires and impacts of climate change</b> | 70 percent                        | 72 percent                          | 65 percent                           |
| <b>Drug and crime problems</b>                 | 71 percent                        | 75 percent                          | 66 percent                           |

**Open-Ended ‘Concerns’ Question:**

| <b>Safety Issues</b>                 | <b>Percent of all La Pine Zip Code Mentions</b> | <b>Percent of all Sunriver Zip Code Mentions</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Wildfires</b>                     | 32.2 percent                                    | 31.1 percent                                     |
| <b>Illegal Camping</b>               | 4.8 percent                                     | 4.8 percent                                      |
| <b>Community and Personal Safety</b> | 24.7 percent                                    | 29.9 percent                                     |
| <b>Hunting and Shooting</b>          | 0.4 percent                                     | 5.1 percent                                      |

Anti-growth sentiments also are stronger in the La Pine area than in the Sunriver area — perhaps not surprising giving the City of La Pine's status as the second fastest-growing city in Oregon and its history as a rural community. The influx of people throughout Central Oregon has exacerbated an already tight housing market and caused tension with longtime residents and people moving to the region. In the La Pine area, which has less expensive housing prices than in Bend and the Sunriver area, several residents expressed opposition to housing for lower-income households.

At the same time, a higher percentage of La Pine area residents want a better transportation system and infrastructure, more affordable housing, and more local jobs. Other than the need for a competitively priced grocery store, La Pine residents are generally split on adding new amenities. Some see additional retail, particularly large chain stores, as a threat to mom-and-pop businesses and the community's small town atmosphere.

Access to the outdoors is highly valued by residents in all areas. Some Sunriver residents, however, want overcrowding caused by tourists at recreation sites and inside Sunriver itself to be addressed.

A lower percentage of residents in Klamath and Lake counties express concerns about the impacts of growth than do Deschutes County residents. However, they are more worried about the lack of health care services and harm done to natural resources than those in Deschutes.

## CENSUS BUREAU DATA

The chart below provides quantitative Census Bureau data about this report’s study area.

Some items of note:

- The median household income is much higher in the Sunriver zip code area (including Three Rivers) than in the City of La Pine and the La Pine zip code area. The same is true of the rate of people holding at least a bachelor’s degree.
- Residents of both Sunriver and La Pine zip code areas are significantly older than people in other parts of the county and in the state. Three Rivers residents are about 10 years younger on average than overall Sunriver zip code residents. A little more than 19 percent of City of La Pine residents are under 18 years of age, the highest mark in the study area.
- There are significantly more people living in the La Pine zip code area even though Sunriver has slightly more housing units.
- The City of La Pine’s home ownership rate of 57 percent is 23 and 31 percentage points lower than the La Pine zip code area and Sunriver zip code area, respectively.
- Sunriver (including Three Rivers) and La Pine zip code areas possess a higher rate of home ownership than the state and Deschutes County.
- The City of La Pine and the La Pine zip code area are home to higher proportions of veterans, people with disabilities, and those without health care coverage than the Sunriver zip code area, Three Rivers, Deschutes County and the state as a whole.

| Demographic Indicator       | Sunriver Zip Code Area | Three Rivers CDP* | La Pine Zip Code Area | City of La Pine | Deschutes County | Oregon       |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Population                  | 7,833                  | 3,925             | 13,102                | 2,512           | 198,253          | 4.2 million  |
| Median age                  | 60.1 years             | 51.0 years        | 55.2 years            | 47.9 years      | 43.6 years       | 40.5 years   |
| Median household income     | \$78,508               | \$75,313          | \$56,318              | \$50,625        | \$82,052         | \$75,657     |
| Non-Hispanic white          | 86.4 percent           | 87.6 percent      | 83.4 percent          | 81.4 percent    | 85.3 percent     | 72.0 percent |
| Bachelor’s degree or higher | 50.5 percent           | 40.4 percent      | 15.6 percent          | 9.8 percent     | 44.8 percent     | 36.3 percent |
| Total housing units         | 7,658                  | 2,269             | 7,086                 | 1,226           | 94,110           | 1.8 million  |

|                                       |              |              |              |              |              |              |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Home ownership rate</b>            | 88.1 percent | 87.8 percent | 80.1 percent | 57.0 percent | 68.3 percent | 62.8 percent |
| <b>Homes valued above \$1 million</b> | 9.0 percent  | 4.8 percent  | 3.7 percent  | 2.2 percent  | 19.3 percent | 6.2 percent  |
| <b>Children under 18 years of age</b> | 10.2 percent | 12.6 percent | 13.6 percent | 19.1 percent | 18.7 percent | 19.6 percent |
| <b>People with disabilities</b>       | 10.3 percent | 13.9 percent | 21.6 percent | 22.7 percent | 12.2 percent | 15.8 percent |
| <b>Veterans</b>                       | 9.3 percent  | 9.9 percent  | 16.3 percent | 12.8 percent | 7.3 percent  | 7.4 percent  |
| <b>Without health care coverage</b>   | 5.8 percent  | 5.3 percent  | 9.0 percent  | 12.5 percent | 5.4 percent  | 6.0 percent  |
| <b>Average travel time to work</b>    | 24.5 min.    | 22.9 min.    | 31.2 min.    | 27.8 min.    | 19.8 min.    | 22.8 min.    |

**Sources:** 2020 U.S. Census, Census Bureau’s 2022 American Community Survey

\* *Three Rivers, a Census-Designated Place (CDP), is located within the Sunriver zip code area of 97707.*



## NRP 2023 PUBLIC SURVEY

### ANALYSIS OF MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

In its October 2023 report, DCG Research divided data from multiple-choice questions into three sets: Overall respondents, La Pine area zip code respondents, and Sunriver area zip code respondents. What follows is a recap of the DCG Research findings from the survey’s three main multiple-choice questions — listed in the DCG Research report as Questions No. 6, 7 and 8 — along with additional analysis from the Consultants.

#### Survey Question No. 7: How concerned are you with the following issues?

| Issues of Concern                        | Overall Respondents | La Pine Zip Code Respondents | Sunriver Zip Code Respondents |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Drug and crime problems                  | 71 percent          | 75 percent                   | 66 percent                    |
| Wildfires and impacts of climate change  | 70 percent          | 72 percent                   | 65 percent                    |
| Access to local health care              | 60 percent          | 61 percent                   | 58 percent                    |
| Lack of affordable and available housing | 60 percent          | 59 percent                   | 58 percent                    |
| Lack of public transportation            | 53 percent          | 52 percent                   | 53 percent                    |
| Access to local government services      | 53 percent          | 55 percent                   | 51 percent                    |
| Access to higher education               | 52 percent          | 54 percent                   | 47 percent                    |
| Access to child care                     | 47 percent          | 47 percent                   | 48 percent                    |

*Note: The percentage for each ‘Issue of Concern’ is derived by adding together the percentage of those who chose “Very Concerned” and those who chose “Somewhat Concerned” as their answers to this multiple-choice question.*

The top four concerns for overall survey respondents: Drug-and-crime problems (71 percent of respondents), wildfires and climate-change impacts (70 percent), lack of affordable and available housing (60 percent), and access to local health care (60 percent).

La Pine zip code residents are more concerned about wildfires and drugs-and-crime problems than their Sunriver counterparts (by a 7 to 9 percent difference). The wildfires and drugs-and-crime issues may reflect concerns about homeless camping in the woods around La Pine. The wildfire findings also may reflect Sunriver Resort’s success in carrying out fuel-reduction work.

Even though many La Pine area residents commute to Bend for jobs, shopping and other services, fewer La Pine area residents expressed concerns about access to public transportation and child care.

As noted with the above chart, the percentage for each ‘Issue of Concern’ is derived by adding together the percentage of those who chose “Very Concerned” and those who chose “Somewhat Concerned” as their answers to this multiple-choice question. Here is the breakdown of those responses as compiled by DCG Research:

| Q7 – ISSUES OF CONCERN                              | OVERALL STUDY<br>Very Concerned | OVERALL STUDY<br>Somewhat Concerned | BIGGEST CONCERNS<br>Very/Somewhat Concerned<br>TOTALS |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Access to higher education                          | 26%                             | 26%                                 | 52%   |
| Access to local health care                         | 27%                             | 33%                                 | 60%   |
| Lack of public transportation                       | 23%                             | 30%                                 | 53%   |
| Drug and crime problems                             | 36%                             | 35%                                 | 71%   |
| Access to local/regional government services        | 21%                             | 32%                                 | 53%   |
| Lack of affordable and available housing            | 33%                             | 27%                                 | 60%   |
| Growing risk of wildfires and other climate impacts | 40%                             | 30%                                 | 70%   |
| Access to childcare                                 | 24%                             | 23%                                 | 47%   |

**Survey Question No. 6: How pleased are you with the following services in your area?**

| Services                         | Overall    | La Pine<br>Zip Code | Sunriver<br>Zip Code |
|----------------------------------|------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Outdoor recreation opportunities | 72 percent | 72 percent          | 70 percent           |
| Fire protection                  | 69 percent | 71 percent          | 65 percent           |
| Law enforcement                  | 64 percent | 67 percent          | 59 percent           |
| Family-friendly things to do     | 58 percent | 54 percent          | 54 percent           |
| Retail shopping opportunities    | 47 percent | 45 percent          | 50 percent           |
| Quality of public education      | 44 percent | 43 percent          | 47 percent           |

*Note: The percentage for each of the ‘Services’ is derived by adding together the percentage of those who chose “Very Pleased” and those who chose “Somewhat Pleased” as their answers to this multiple-choice question.*

Overall survey respondents are most pleased with outdoor recreation (72 percent), fire protection (69 percent), law enforcement (64 percent), and family friendly things to do (58 percent). Forty-seven percent are pleased with retail shopping opportunities, and 44 percent with the quality of public education. The latter two services are the only ones that did not receive majority support.

All three sets of respondents ranked the answers in the same order, from 1 to 6, exhibiting remarkable consistency.

The Consultants also took note of overall survey respondents giving high marks for fire protection and law enforcement, while also choosing drug-and-crime problems and the growing risk of wildfires as the top two concerns in the previous question. A higher rate of La Pine zip code residents look upon law enforcement favorably than do Sunriver zip code residents (an 8 percent point difference). The same is seen in the rate of approval for fire protection (6 percent point difference).

**As noted with the above chart,** the percentage for each of the ‘Services’ is derived by adding together the percentage of those who chose “Very Pleased” and those who chose “Somewhat Pleased” as their answers to this multiple-choice question. Here is the breakdown of those responses as compiled by DCG Research:

| <b>Q6 – SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES</b> | <b>OVERALL STUDY Very Pleased</b> | <b>OVERALL STUDY Somewhat Pleased</b> | <b>MOST PLEASSED Very/Somewhat TOTALS</b> |
|--|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Fire protection                        | 34%                               | 35%                                   | <b>69%</b>                                |
| Law enforcement                        | 30%                               | 34%                                   | <b>64%</b>                                |
| Quality of public education            | 17%                               | 27%                                   | <b>44%</b>                                |
| Local retail (shopping) opportunities  | 15%                               | 32%                                   | <b>47%</b>                                |
| Outdoor recreation opportunities       | 42%                               | 30%                                   | <b>72%</b>                                |
| Family-friendly things to do           | 27%                               | 31%                                   | <b>58%</b>                                |

**Survey Question No. 8: How much do you agree with the following statement: “In the future my community needs to ... ”**

| <b>Potential Planning Goals for South Deschutes County</b>                     | <b>Overall Acceptance</b> | <b>La Pine Zip Code Acceptance</b> | <b>Sunriver Zip Code Acceptance</b> |
|--|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Be better prepared for wildfires and natural disasters</b>                  | 73 percent                | 76 percent                         | 68 percent                          |
| <b>Increase opportunities for community input into planning for the future</b> | 69 percent                | 64 percent                         | 62 percent                          |
| <b>Gain greater control over growth</b>  | 68 percent                | 71 percent                         | 62 percent                          |
| <b>Increase local family wage job growth</b>                                   | 67 percent                | 71 percent                         | 62 percent                          |
| <b>Prevent overbuilding and overdevelopment</b>                                | 65 percent                | 66 percent                         | 65 percent                          |

**Note:** The percentage of acceptance for each of the ‘Potential Planning Goals’ is derived by adding together the percentage of those who chose “Strongly Agree” and those who chose “Somewhat Agree” as their answers to this multiple-choice question.

This multiple-choice question was designed to test acceptance of possible goals of the Newberry Regional Partnership. All five statements received at least 67 percent support from survey respondents, with being “better prepared for wildfires” coming out on top at 73 percent. Large majorities also favor the two statements that push back against growth.

The Consultants noted a higher rate of La Pine zip code respondents favoring planning goals that would better prepare the community for wildfires, gain greater control over growth, and increase family-wage jobs than Sunriver zip code residents. More than 60 percent from both areas also want more opportunities to comment on community planning, and steps taken to prevent overbuilding and overdevelopment.

All of these results could indicate public support for a stronger role for planning in the region — a question that merits closer attention.

**As noted with the above chart,** the percentage of acceptance for each of the ‘Potential Planning Goals’ is derived by adding together the percentage of those who chose “Strongly Agree” and those who chose “Somewhat Agree” as their answers to this multiple-choice question. Here is the breakdown of those responses as compiled by DCG Research:

| <b>Q8 – ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSED PLANNING GOALS</b>                       | <b>OVERALL STUDY Strongly Agree</b> | <b>OVERALL STUDY Somewhat Agree</b> | <b>OVERALL AGREEMENT Strongly/Somewhat TOTALS</b> |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Gain greater control over growth  | 36%                                 | 32%                                 | <b>68%</b>  |
| Increase local family wage job growth                                   | 35%                                 | 32%                                 | <b>67%</b>  |
| Prevent over-building and development                                   | 39%                                 | 32%                                 | <b>71%</b>  |
| Increase opportunities for community input into planning for the future | 40%                                 | 29%                                 | <b>69%</b>  |
| Be better prepared for wildfires and natural disasters                  | 46%                                 | 27%                                 | <b>73%</b>  |

### **ANALYSIS OF OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

Open-ended questions generally provide a deeper dive into how people are thinking. They allow survey-takers to be more thorough and write as much as they want in response to a question, as opposed to multiple-choice questions in which respondents are limited to what is in front of them.

DCG Research recommended a deeper analysis of answers collected from three open-ended survey questions be conducted at a later time, which is what the Consultants have been tasked with. In the DCG Research report, these open-ended questions are labeled No. 4, 5 and 10.

DCG Research did provide the following, more broad analysis, of responses to Question No. 4:

#### **Survey Question No. 4: What are the biggest concerns about living where you do?**

A total of 970 survey respondents provided comments to this question. DCG Research found concerns falling into these broad categories:

- The majority of comments support controlled growth to protect the small-town, rural vibe of La Pine. There also were statements in favor of stopping all growth, reducing the impact of tourism, and concern about the growing number of part-time residents.
- Safety challenges, including wildfires, homeless people living in nearby forests, drug use, crime, and the response times of law enforcement in certain parts of the rural area
- Lack of access to health care, including 24/7 emergency care, hospital care, and specialty care, for those who do not want to drive to Bend
- Increasing traffic, including the impact that is having on accessing Highway 97 and on the safety of motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists
- Lack of a variety of restaurants and retail stores, with many survey respondents citing the need for a larger grocery store with better selection and pricing
- Increasing community divisiveness over a host of issues

The Consultants used analytical software to code and tag responses to this “Concerns” open-ended question in order to conduct a deeper review of the data. Below is a chart showing the Top 10 specific categories of responses. The ranking is based on the number of “mentions” in survey comments that fit one of the categories. Many survey respondents mentioned more than one concern in their comments. (Note: Answers about wildfires in the open-ended question have been placed in the Safety category, and not in the Natural Resources category.)

| Rank    | Category                   | No. of Mentions | Percentage of All Mentions |
|---------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1       | Safety                     | 280             | 18.7                       |
| 2       | Impacts of Growth          | 170             | 11.3                       |
| 3       | Natural Resources          | 126             | 8.4                        |
| 4       | Transportation             | 113             | 7.5                        |
| 5       | Health and Wellness        | 106             | 7.1                        |
| 6       | Economy, Business and Jobs | 68              | 4.5                        |
| 7       | Housing                    | 66              | 4.4                        |
| 8 (tie) | Homelessness               | 62              | 4.1                        |
| 8 (tie) | Infrastructure             | 62              | 4.1                        |
| 10      | Amenities                  | 60              | 4.0                        |

The Consultants decided to compare the responses to this open-ended question with the responses to the multiple-choice question on the same topic. In both questions, the Consultants found large numbers of people coalescing around concerns related to wildfire safety, growth and development, the transportation system, natural resources, and health care. One noticeable difference: While 60 percent of respondents to the multiple-choice question cite housing as a concern, housing ranks just seventh among concerns emerging from the open-ended question.

**The Consultants also compiled a list of subtopics for each of the categories. Here are the top subtopics, regardless of category. (Note: Survey respondents were not limited to how many subtopics they could mention in their answers to Survey Question No. 4.)**

| <b>Subtopic</b>   | <b>Number of Mentions</b> |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>1. Wildfires</b>   | 111                       |
| <b>2. Traffic</b>   | 65                        |
| <b>3. Community and Personal Safety</b>                               | 60                        |
| <b>4. Water Conservation</b>  | 50                        |
| <b>4. Medical Care</b>  | 50                        |
| <b>6. Population Increase</b>   | 49                        |
| <b>7. Illegal Camping</b>   | 37                        |
| <b>8. Safety of Roads (for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists)</b> | 48                        |
| <b>9. Overall Environmental Protection</b>                            | 34                        |
| <b>10. Crime</b>  | 32                        |
| <b>11. Small Town Atmosphere and Rural Lifestyle</b>                  | 30                        |
| <b>12. Grocery Stores</b>   | 28                        |
| <b>13. Jobs</b>   | 27                        |
| <b>14. Uncontrolled Growth</b>  | 25                        |
| <b>15. Waste Management</b>   | 22                        |

**A reading of ‘Concerns’ responses in the top categories provides additional insight into the thinking of residents:**

**1. Safety:** The threat of wildfires was mentioned many times by survey respondents, who cited overgrown properties, the lack of information in some communities about how to prepare and prevent wildfires, firefighter response times, and the need for evacuation plans and procedures. There also was worry expressed that homeless people camping in the forest will start wildfires. The recent Darlene 3 wildfire in the La Pine area appears to have deepened that concern in the community. Residents attending forums conducted after the Darlene 3 fire have emphasized those concerns.

Some Sunriver residents expressed concerns about the security of their neighborhoods. Growing traffic on Highway 97 and other roads is perceived as a safety issue for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Some survey respondents also complained about law enforcement response times.

While reviewing the responses in this category it was found that some survey respondents replied with such one-word answers as “safety” and “security,” making it difficult to determine what exactly the concern is centered on.

*“My primary concern is the safety of the community and the quality of the environment,”* wrote one resident. *“I hope that the community can provide a safe living environment, including reducing crime and traffic accidents, as well as providing emergency services and disaster protection measures.”*

*“Along Day Road, Burgess Road and Huntington Road, there is currently no safe way to walk or bike,”* another resident wrote.

*“I am concerned about the homeless camps on the surrounding public lands and the fire hazards that they produce,”* wrote a La Pine resident in the survey.

**2. Impacts of Growth:** Increasing population, development, and commercialization in a mostly rural part of the county is a big concern. Residents said it is impacting the transportation system and other infrastructure, affordable housing, natural resources (including water sources and availability), and access to outdoor recreation. Some said that signs of the South County’s past — older buildings and structures, for example — are being erased.

*“I’m concerned that we’ll just morph into another version of Bend,”* wrote a resident in the survey.

**3. Natural Resources:** Water conservation and water quality, waste management, and overall environmental protection are the top concerns in this response category. At the same time, drought is only called out three times by survey respondents, despite state drought declarations for the county as recently as 2023.

*“The aquifer is being tapped by out-of-control housing growth and causing wells to go dry,”* said one survey respondent.

**4. Transportation:** This category overlaps into other community challenges, such as the aforementioned public safety and growth impacts. But when the mentions of transportation are mined for subtopics, increased traffic congestion, and Highway 97 improvements top the list.

*“The lights are not coordinated very well to keep traffic moving,”* said a resident.

**5. Health and Wellness:** Concerns about barriers to quality and accessible health care make up about half of the mentions in this category. A fair number of respondents also brought up issues tied to wellness — such as breathing in wildfire smoke and access to healthy foods. Concerns about behavioral health services is mentioned just three times.

*“I am concerned about the lack of medical options. We have to go to Bend for anything that is specialized,”* said a resident.

**6. Economy, Business and Jobs:** The lack of jobs and higher wages are the biggest concerns. Respondents also cited small business struggles, labor shortages, economic development, and overall economic conditions.

*“Finding available workers is my biggest concern for South Deschutes County,”* said one resident.

**7. Housing:** The lack of affordable housing in a region that has seen a spike in home prices in recent years is the top concern in this category. But some residents also are critical of smaller homes being built in denser subdivisions, as well as where those subdivisions are being built.

*“I have kids that would like to stay in the area, but housing is so high I don’t know how they can ever buy their own home or even afford to rent,”* wrote a south county resident.

**8. Homelessness:** Concerns about homeless individuals and their behaviors and needs mostly centered on illegal camping, waste and trash left behind, and the wildfire threat.

*“We are turning into a homeless encampment because of all the national forest surrounding us,”* wrote a survey respondent.

**8. Infrastructure:** Residents believe the infrastructure in South Deschutes County is not keeping up with growth. As proof, they point to growing traffic congestion and many new homes. Some also say water and sewer infrastructure should be significantly upgraded. A smaller number call out the need for broadband expansion and better Internet reliability.

*“La Pine and the surrounding areas are growing fast. This means that utilities cannot keep up with the growth and water issues are becoming a big problem. Traffic is an issue also,”* wrote a resident in the survey.

**10. Amenities:** As explored elsewhere in this report, survey respondents cited the lack of competitively priced grocery stores in South Deschutes County as a significant problem, particularly for those with low incomes or on limited budgets facing other cost-of-living constraints or needing healthy fresh foods. At the same time, other survey respondents are critical of chain stores opening up and replacing, in some cases, mom-and-pop businesses.



*“Living in northern Klamath County means we have to rely on Deschutes County for services and sometimes the services are not extended to us, understandably so,”* wrote a Klamath County resident who has a La Pine area zip code. *“It feels like we are the ‘step children’ of this area that nobody wants to claim or help.”*

(Note: For a list of subtopics under all of the categories in the chart above, along with the number of mentions for each subtopic, please visit the Appendices section in this report.)

### La Pine Responses vs. Sunriver Responses

Using analytical software for this open-ended Survey Question No. 4, the Consultants compared the rate in which La Pine zip code residents mentioned issues of concern with the rate in which Sunriver zip code residents mentioned those same issues. This task was undertaken to see if real differences could be identified in how residents in the two places view community challenges — or if residents largely share common ground. Here is how the analysis came out:

| <b>Top Issues of Concern<br/>(as ranked by<br/>number of mentions)</b> | <b>Percent of all<br/>La Pine Zip Code<br/>Mentions</b> | <b>Percent of all<br/>Sunriver Zip Code<br/>Mentions</b> |
|--|---|--|
| <b>1. Safety</b>   | 16.6 percent  | 23.0 percent   |
| <b>2. Impacts of Growth</b>  | 13.3 percent  | 9.2 percent  |
| <b>3. Natural Resources</b>  | 7.3 percent   | 10.5 percent   |
| <b>4. Transportation</b>   | 8.6 percent   | 6.5 percent  |
| <b>5. Health and Wellness</b>  | 5.3 percent   | 10.2 percent   |
| <b>6. Economy, Business and Jobs</b>                                   | 5.4 percent   | 3.6 percent  |
| <b>7. Housing</b>  | 5.7 percent   | 2.7 percent  |
| <b>8. Homelessness</b>   | 5.4 percent   | 2.6 percent  |
| <b>8. Infrastructure</b>   | 4.5 percent   | 3.9 percent  |
| <b>10. Amenities</b>   | 4.7 percent   | 3.2 percent  |

Overall, those living in the La Pine zip code area and the Sunriver zip code area prioritize issues of concern in roughly the same rate and order. But there are some differences that likely reflect place, income, and age:

- Higher percentages of Sunriver zip code residents express concerns about community and personal safety, natural resource issues, and their health and wellness than do La Pine area residents.
- Higher percentages of La Pine zip code residents express concerns about growth, transportation, infrastructure, natural resources, economy and jobs, housing, homelessness, and amenities than do Sunriver area residents.
- While it is not shown in the chart above, 5 percent of all La Pine zip code mentions centered on losing the community’s small town atmosphere and rural lifestyle. Just 1.2 percent of all Sunriver zip code mentions cited the same.

### A closer look at safety concerns

With a higher rate of Sunriver zip code residents calling out safety concerns than La Pine zip code residents, an analysis of subtopics under the ‘Safety’ category revealed the following:

| Safety Subtopics   | Percent of all Sunriver Zip Code Safety Mentions | Percent of all La Pine Zip Code Safety Mentions |
|--|--|---|
| Community and Personal Safety                            | 29.9 percent                                     | 24.7 percent                                    |
| Wildfires  | 31.1 percent                                     | 32.2 percent                                    |
| Crime and Drugs  | 12.6 percent                                     | 10.6 percent                                    |
| Safety of Roads (for motorists, walkers, and bicyclists) | 7.2 percent                                      | 11.9 percent                                    |
| Emergency Response (law enforcement, firefighters, EMS)  | 8.4 percent                                      | 7.6 percent                                     |
| Hunting and Shooting                                     | 5.1 percent                                      | 0.4 percent                                     |
| Illegal Camping  | 4.8 percent                                      | 8.1 percent                                     |

About 5 percent of mentions among Sunriver area residents were about hunting and shooting near homes and recreation sites. Less than 1 percent of mentions by La Pine area residents listed that same issue as a concern. In fall 2023, hunters shot and killed four elk, including one illegally, close to homes in Sunriver’s Spring River Road area. While some NRP survey respondents cited that particular incident, they also brought up other hunting and shooting incidents in that area of the county. This is an issue NPR may want to take a closer look at.

### A closer look at growth concerns

Here is an analysis of subtopics under the ‘Impacts of Growth’ category:

| Impacts of Growth Subtopics             | Percent of all La Pine Zip Code Growth Mentions | Percent of all Sunriver Zip Code Growth Mentions |
|---|---|--|
| Overpopulation                          | 21.6 percent                                    | 15.7 percent                                     |
| Overdevelopment                         | 17.5 percent                                    | 9.6 percent                                      |
| Threat to Small Town & Rural Atmosphere | 14.6 percent                                    | 3.6 percent                                      |
| Infrastructure Not Keeping Up           | 9.9 percent                                     | 3.6 percent                                      |
| Harm to Natural Resources/Environment   | 9.9 percent                                     | 7.2 percent                                      |

The survey responses show several growth subtopics are concerns for a higher rate of La Pine zip code respondents than for Sunriver zip code respondents.

*“La Pine area residents are particularly concerned about overpopulation, overdevelopment, threats to the community’s small town atmosphere, and infrastructure needs not keeping up with growth,”* wrote a resident.

*“Growth to the extent where this doesn’t feel like a small town anymore,”* said another La Pine resident.

### A closer look at transportation concerns

Here is an analysis of subtopics under the ‘Transportation’ category:

| Transportation Subtopics       | Percent of all La Pine Zip Code Transportation Mentions | Percent of all Sunriver Zip Code Transportation Mentions |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Traffic Congestion             | 42.1 percent  | 40.0 percent   |
| Infrastructure and Road System | 28.0 percent  | 21.8 percent   |
| Public Transit                 | 9.4 percent   | 16.4 percent   |
| Rail                           | 5.6 percent   | 0.0 percent  |
| Unpaved Roads                  | 5.6 percent   | 5.5 percent  |

The rate of La Pine area residents citing deficiencies with transportation infrastructure and the road system is higher than the rate of Sunriver zip code residents citing the same. On the other hand, the rate of Sunriver zip code residents concerned about public transit service is higher than the rate of La Pine zip code residents concerned about the same.

*“We need the roads to handle the influx before and not after it’s a problem, and unfortunately it’s already a problem,”* wrote a La Pine resident.

*“We never used to have rush hour,”* wrote a Sunriver resident.

### **Klamath County & Lake County Responses vs. Deschutes County Responses**

Using analytical software for this open-ended Survey Question No. 4, the Consultants compared the rate in which Klamath County and Lake County residents mentioned issues of concern with the rate in which Deschutes County residents mentioned those same issues. Here is what that analysis revealed:

| <b>Klamath County &amp; Lake County Top Issues of Concerns</b> | <b>Percent of all Klamath &amp; Lake County Mentions</b> | <b>Deschutes County Top Issues of Concerns</b> | <b>Percent of all Deschutes County Mentions</b> |
|--|--|--|---|
| <b>1. Safety</b>   | 22.1 percent   | <b>1. Impacts of Growth</b>                    | 16.1 percent                                    |
| <b>2. Natural Resources</b>                                    | 13.1 percent   | <b>2. Safety</b>                               | 15.0 percent                                    |
| <b>3. Health &amp; Wellness</b>                                | 11.1 percent   | <b>3. Transportation</b>                       | 11.7 percent                                    |
| <b>4. Transportation</b>                                       | 9.5 percent  | <b>4. Natural Resources</b>                    | 7.6 percent                                     |
| <b>5. Economy</b>  | 5.5 percent  | <b>5. Health &amp; Wellness</b>                | 5.4 percent                                     |
| <b>6. Education</b>  | 5.3 percent  | <b>6. Housing</b>                              | 4.9 percent                                     |
| <b>7. Amenities</b>  | 4.8 percent  | <b>7. Community Divisiveness</b>               | 4.8 percent                                     |
| <b>8. Facilities &amp; Activities</b>                          | 4.3 percent  | <b>8. Homelessness</b>                         | 4.6 percent                                     |
| <b>9. Services</b>   | 3.8 percent  | <b>9. Economy</b>                              | 4.1 percent                                     |
| <b>10. Impacts of Growth</b>                                   | 3.3 percent  | <b>10. Cost of Living</b>                      | 3.6 percent                                     |
| <b>10. Infrastructure</b>                                      | 3.3 percent  |  |   |

In looking over this data, safety is a concern for a higher rate of Klamath County and Lake County residents than for Deschutes County residents. The same is true with concerns

expressed over natural resources, health care, and amenities. Deschutes County residents have a higher rate of concern regarding the impacts of growth and the transportation system.

**Survey Question No. 5: What would make living in your community better for you and your family?**

A total of 936 survey respondents provided answers to this question. DCG Research did not take a deep dive in analyzing this question, other than noting many of the comments reflect ways to solve concerns mentioned in the previous open-ended question.

The Consultants used analytical software to code and tag responses to this question, and then to extrapolate solutions or ideas that could suggest strategies for NRP’s Strategic Action Plan. **(Note:** For a list of the solutions and ideas, please visit the Appendices section in this report.)

Below is a chart showing the Top 10 categories of ‘livability’ responses. The ranking is based on the number of “mentions” in survey comments that fit one of the categories. Many survey respondents mentioned more than one quality-of-life desire in their comments.

| Rank | Category                   | No. of Mentions | Percentage of All Mentions |
|------|----------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 1    | Safety                     | 144             | 10.7                       |
| 2    | Transportation             | 134             | 10.0                       |
| 3    | Amenities                  | 107             | 8.0                        |
| 4    | Economy, Business and Jobs | 100             | 7.5                        |
| 5    | Facilities and Activities  | 90              | 6.7                        |
| 6    | Health and Wellness        | 88              | 6.6                        |
| 6    | Community Engagement       | 88              | 6.6                        |
| 8    | Natural Resources          | 74              | 5.2                        |
| 9    | Housing                    | 70              | 5.2                        |
| 10   | Outdoors                   | 68              | 5.1                        |

**An analysis of the top categories of ‘livability’ responses provided the following additional insight into the thinking of residents:**

**1. Safety:** Top safety solutions included better wildfire preparedness and prevention; reducing illegal camping by homeless people; curtailing drug sales and use; hiring more deputies, and cracking down on speeding and other aggressive driving.

*“There needs to be rules and fines to force accountability for absentee land owners in ladder fuel reduction in neighborhood areas,”* wrote a resident in the survey.

**2. Transportation:** Survey respondents favored several specific projects to improve the transportation system, including turning Highway 97 into a four-lane road all the way south to La Pine; developing safer access to Highway 97 off State Recreation Road, Paulina Lake Road, Burgess Road, 6th Street, and Finley Butte Road; eliminating the left turns onto Highway 97 at Wickiup Junction; putting in a four-way stop or a roundabout at Burgess and Day roads and a roundabout at South Century Drive and Huntington Road; and completing the unfinished bypass. Residents also are calling for better public transit; more protected bike paths; the paving of side roads to suppress dust; and redirecting semi-trucks around downtown La Pine.

*“Highway 97 is still dangerous where the lanes are not divided north of La Pine,”* wrote one resident.

*“I would like to see better public transportation between South Deschutes County and Bend. Something dependable, and with a decent schedule. Commuting is expensive. Seniors would appreciate a way to access the hospital,”* wrote a resident.

**3. Amenities:** Of the 107 times that survey respondents mention the need for additional amenities, 58 are focused on landing better and more competitively priced grocery stores and supermarkets. Other amenities that residents favored: A greater variety of places to shop and eat; more restaurants near Three Rivers; a pharmacy in Sunriver; and additional retailers in La Pine.

**4. Economy, Business and Jobs:** Generating good jobs, supporting existing businesses, recruiting companies from Bend, and promoting entrepreneurship are frequently mentioned in the survey. One person said doing so would add to the tax base, which in turn would allow for improvements and services.

*“Far too many people commute to Bend and would love the opportunity to stay closer to home if there were living-wage jobs available here,”* wrote a resident. *“Child care would allow even more people to be able to enter the workforce.”*

*“I support growth to meet the needs of a growing community,”* wrote another resident. *“I like the idea of having living wage jobs that stay in our area. Adding business that will allow people to live where they work will be a bonus and provide additional services for our growing community.”*

*“I know a lot of people are against growth. But growth will help us all and bring La Pine out of poverty,”* wrote a La Pine resident.

**5. Facilities and Activities:** Residents expressed a desire to see more facilities, events and activities across a broad spectrum of interests, including ones geared for families. They cited the need for additional investment in sports programs and facilities; more opportunities for teens and young adults; an increase in social, cultural and artistic events; and construction of a community pool for locals.

**6. Health and Wellness:** Increasing access to health care and improving overall community wellness are viewed as priorities. Suggestions included a 24-hour emergency department in South Deschutes County; an increase in behavioral health services and substance abuse treatment; and better access to specialty medical care. Residents also cited improved access to fresh and healthy foods, and a reduction in wildfire smoke as keys to improving community wellness.

**7. Community Engagement:** Survey respondents are concerned about community divisiveness centered on a host of issues, and see increased interactions and involvement of residents and groups as a way to develop a more cohesive community. Ideas on how do that vary but included: Finding ways to inform residents about important issues; engaging people where they are at; welcoming new residents; starting a volunteer program; giving people the green light to jointly create better living environments; and expanding the La Pine city limits to allow more people to participate in city government.

*“Be welcoming to newcomers who want to call south county home,” one resident wrote in the survey. “They are coming here for the same reasons we all have. Let them feel that welcome.”*

**8. Natural Resources:** Providing countywide curbside recycling and a recycling center, promoting renewable energy, finding ways to conserve water, and improving waste management are some of the specific ideas that residents said would make their lives better. In reviewing responses to this questions, phrases like “sustainable development,” “clean environment” and “safe water” were noted.

**9. Housing:** Addressing the housing affordability and availability issue is critically important to many residents. Some said that while some housing in South Deschutes County is less expensive than what is available in Bend, the cost is still higher than many people, including service workers and those with young families, can afford. However, not all survey respondents are supportive of affordable housing in the South County, maintaining it will just attract more growth and development in a mostly rural area.

*“My wife and I both work full time, and we struggle every month to make rent for a 1978 single-wide trailer that is falling apart and that our landlord-property management won't do anything about,” said one resident. “We pay \$1,200 and barely can afford that.”*

**10. Outdoors:** The number of times the outdoors is mentioned is relatively low when one considers the abundance of public lands, trails, lakes, rivers, and other recreational sites in south county. One possible explanation for the light response? Getting outdoors is a long-held community value and an “assumed” part of life.

Those who brought up the outdoors mostly suggested better walking and biking paths, including on thoroughfares like 6<sup>th</sup> Street in La Pine, and more parks geared for children. One respondent mentioned that promoting the community's outdoor assets could be a way to attract young families, increase school enrollments, and boost the local economy.

*"We lived in Sunriver for a few years and bike trails are life! La Pine has the opportunity to create a real beautiful space to live, play and work,"* wrote a resident.

*"A bike path from Oregon Water Wonderland to the (Sunriver) Village would be great for kids and adults and get a few more cars off the highway,"* wrote another.

The Consultants also took a closer look at two other categories of responses from this open-ended question:

**11. Education:** Improving education, from pre-school through later life, is considered crucial to bettering the lives of people in South Deschutes County. Some residents said that Bend schools receive more than a fair share of funding and other resources compared to La Pine schools. Among other suggestions: Developing a large childcare and preschool facility for families; providing more resources to teachers; increasing after-school and summer activities for kids; offering additional opportunities for training and industry certifications; and providing older adults with learning opportunities that meet their various needs and interests.

**12. Impacts of Growth:** The Consultants also took a closer look at the 'Impacts of Growth' category, which ranked No. 2 in Concerns responses yet No. 12 in Livability responses. As previously mentioned in this report, this may be due to the seemingly overwhelming challenges a community or region faces when trying to catch up or keep pace with growth.

The need for more infrastructure and facilities are mentioned as a way to keep pace with growth. The infrastructure cited? Roads, sidewalks, sewer systems, water systems, and the paving of dusty roads.

A few residents said both the La Pine city limits and the La Pine Urban Growth Boundary should be extended and water and sewer services provided to the annexed areas.

Some residents said the demolition of old buildings needs to cease, adding the community is losing connection to its historic roots.

*"Growth is good and the goal, but slow and steady wins the race,"* opined one resident. *"Too much too fast could make us lose track of our sense of community."*

Addressing crowded recreational spots where both residents and visitors are seeking access is another theme spotted in the responses.

*"Harper Bridge is a zoo in the summer,"* wrote a South County resident. *"If the Sunriver Owners Association and the resort are going to direct their guests to use this access point, they should be providing a safe parking lot and loading area."*



**Survey Question No. 9: Do you have any thoughts or comments you would like to share with the Newberry Regional Partnership team?**

A total of 620 comments were collected for this question. In its survey report, DCG Research reported many of the responses fell into the following broad categories: Concerns previously cited, appreciations to the Newberry Regional Partnership for engaging with residents, and reminders to keep residents involved in the process.

The Consultants used analytical software to code and investigate further the responses to this question. The team found DCG Research’s conclusions about this question to be accurate. However, several ideas for potential strategies were gleaned from the Consultants’ analysis and can be found in the Appendices section of this report.

## NRP 2023 FOCUS GROUPS

### FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Four topic-specific focus groups were held by DCG Research on Dec 6-7, 2023, in three locations in La Pine, Sunriver, and Three Rivers. A total of 55 people, viewed as a cross section of South Deschutes County, were selected as attendees. All had interest in the topic presented.

Each session began with three common questions posed by the moderator. Two of the questions dealt with community information. Attendees said they rely primarily on word of mouth to learn what is happening in their communities, with Facebook a distant second. A few younger participants said they would have interest in a local digital newspaper but few participants said they wanted to pay for local news.

The other common question asked respondents was what one word they would use to describe why they liked living where they live. The most common responses were: People, community, tranquility, and nature. It was agreed that protecting those values would be important in any long-range plan for South Deschutes County.

Moderators also posed questions tailored for each session. Below are summaries of responses for each of those questions, as reported by DCG Research; word clouds that the Consultants created from all of the responses from each session; and a set of additional comments from residents that the Consultants gleaned from the raw data file.

#### Education Focus Group

A major discussion theme was the lack of educational resources and a perceived inequality of financial support from tax-supported funding. Participants said the Bend-La Pine School District doesn't invest in South Deschutes County at the same level as in Bend and that support for affluent communities is greater than for lower-income communities. It was thought that more businesses and seniors would be willing to donate time, not money, toward in-school programs. Another idea was having a parent teacher organization (PTO) at all schools to increase parent involvement.



### Economic Development Focus Group

Participants favored having a more defined downtown area in La Pine, with better shopping opportunities and health care options. They said that retail environment should include mostly locally owned businesses, along with a few big-box retailers and a more competitively priced grocery store for essential items. Opinions about tourism were mixed — residents see the benefits but also the downsides. When it came to housing, attendees said they do not want South Deschutes County to become a bedroom community to Bend.



### Public Safety Focus Group

As seen in the survey results, participants in this focus group expressed concern about wildfires and the threats they pose for humans, wildfire and property. They said many residents do not prepare their properties for wildfires and that getting more to do so will likely require pro-active efforts by government. Steps suggested included regular community meetings with fire officials, inspection of properties by fire departments, evacuation signs on all roads, and government communicating the availability of grants for property clearing. Most participants said they did not know where to get help. Participants said they have positive interactions with law enforcement, but many also complained of slow-response times, speeding on roads that endanger school kids, and the lack of road signage.



## Health Focus Group

Participants expressed excitement about La Pine Community Health Center's new building and expanded services. The difficulty in getting timely appointments and in accessing convenient public transportation were cited as the biggest frustrations with the health care system. Attendees said telehealth is a good option but shouldn't replace face-to-face appointments. The top recommendations for future services included building a 12-bed hospital; adding more local specialists, especially for addictions and recovery, mental health, and pediatrics; and greater support for people with disabilities and the homeless.



### Additional Comments Gleaned from the Focus Groups

- *"Don't be afraid of change. Visualize our community as up-and-coming. Encourage healthy growth and it will benefit everyone."*
- *"It's a hard balance between building reasonable housing units and still keep the local culture and history. It takes long-term vision and planning."*
- *"Increase the cleaning, cutting, harvesting, and thinning of forests. Pay the homeless and the unemployed to work in the forests like what was down in the 1930s and 1940s. The thinning of the areas around Sunriver have made our community safe from forest fires."*
- *"Pay attention to the health and well-being of residents, provide a variety of health facilities and services, and encourage the promotion of healthy lifestyles."*
- *"Having La Pine separate from the Bend school district and have local control would be a step in the right direction."*
- *"Place a strong focus on economic development strategies that promote job creation, entrepreneurship, and local business growth. This can help stimulate economic opportunities, improve the quality of life for residents, and create a thriving and resilient regional economy."*

- *"We need to continue to bring Sunriver and La Pine together. I've been here almost 25 years and have helped focus efforts on bringing the two communities together and removing the stereotypes folks in one area have for the other. We need to do more."*
- *"Central Oregon seems to want to promote people moving here — advertising access to outdoors and nature — but at the same time it limits access to the outdoors. While I get the need to preserve the wilderness, the 'solution' is misguided and does not serve the locals. More parking and new trailheads need to be constructed to disperse people into the outdoors and still preserve the existing ones. Cutting off access to the things that people move here for to have quality of life is not the answer."*
- *"As silly as some people think it is, we need a community swimming pool. Not all of us have transportation to nearby lakes and rivers."*
- *"Deepen the application of next-generation information technologies such as big data, Internet of Things, and artificial intelligence. Build an intelligent community security protection system, realize community digitalization and grid management, and strive to respond to emergencies more effectively."*
- *"The Newbury area could consider focusing on sustainability in its development. It can promote the use of renewable energy, reduce carbon emissions, improve environmental quality, and promote circular economy practices."*
- *"All I can say is we all deserve the same rights to live happy healthy lives with all the same assistance in life as all the rest. We in the rural areas need extra support to keep and help all who are here."*
- *"La Pine is a warm and wonderful community nestled in the foothills of the Cascades, full of heart in the heart of wilderness."*
- *"There is no place to house the history of the area. When all the older members pass on it will be lost. We can't expect anyone to understand or appreciate the small-town feel if they can't see how far it's already come. Development and change happens, but the past (history) doesn't have to be lost."*
- *"I have lived in La Pine for 16 years. I loved raising my kids in a small town. It would be nice to keep more of our money local, and that would mean more development."*
- *"There are too many streets in Deschutes River Woods and Three Rivers South that are not paved. People who live on streets in the county all deserve to have a decent road leading to their driveway. The potholes some people have to drive through are ridiculous."*
- *"Growth is a foregone conclusion. Growth affects services and water. We don't even have a sewage treatment plant."*

## NRP 2023 COMMUNITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT SERIES

### SESSION FINDINGS

The Consultants analyzed comments received at eight community civic engagement sessions held in October/November 2023 in La Pine and Sunriver. Many of the responses mirrored those collected via the survey and the focus groups. However, residents did bring up the following specific concerns and challenges that were either not mentioned in the survey or focus groups or were not described to the extent they are here. These comments will be useful in formulating preliminary strategies for testing with the community.

- There is a huge shortage of childcare, although that is not a new issue for South County.
- Three Rivers cannot receive grants, recycling services, and infrastructure improvements because it is not considered an unincorporated area.
- While housing prices and rents are significantly lower in the La Pine area than further north in the county, they are still high and leave many households with little disposable income.
- Some private properties are located next to state and federal lands that are clogged with woody debris, negating the fire preparedness work carried out by the private landowners.
- Sunriver can be a difficult place to navigate, especially for visitors, because of roundabouts, the structure of homes, and the resort's overall layout.
- There is no assisted living or other types of residential care in south county.
- Youth suffered significant mental-health trauma during the COVID years.
- An equity gap in arts and culture exists between the county's rural and urban areas.
- Where hunting is allowed and not allowed seems arbitrary and causes confusion.
- There is no access to the Internet in some rural areas.
- Facebook is the main method of receiving community information.
- Central Oregon Community College lacks a strong presence in South Deschutes County.
- Despite some data collection issues, La Pine High School's graduation rate is very much below those of the Bend high schools.

The Consultants also took note of several ideas for potential strategies that had not been mentioned or not been clearly described in the survey or during the focus groups. Those ideas can be found in the Appendices section of this report.

**NEWBERRY REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP  
SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY INPUT**

**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX 1

### Top Categories from the 2023 Survey Open-Ended ‘Concerns’ Question

#### Survey Question No. 4: What are the biggest concerns about living where you do?

The Consultants used analytical software to code and investigate further the responses to this question that was part of the community survey. Below are the top 20 more specific categories or “buckets” for responses to this question. Under each category are subtopics. The rankings for the categories and subtopics are based on the number of “mentions” in survey comments for those categories and subtopics. Many of the survey respondents’ comments contained mention of more than one category and/or one subtopic.

##### 1. Public Safety, 280 mentions

- Wildfires (prevention, preparedness, response), 111 mentions
- Community and personal security, 60
- Safety of roads (driving, walking, biking), 48
- Illegal camping, 37
- Crime, 32
- Shooting and hunting, 21
- Drugs, 16
- Emergency response (law enforcement, fire, EMS), 16
- Roaming dogs, 3
- Fire insurance, 2

##### 2. Impacts of Growth, 170 mentions

- Population increase, 49 mentions
- Uncontrolled growth, 25
- Commercialization, 21
- Transportation, 20
- Infrastructure, 18
- Water issues, 18
- Need for planning, 17
- Small town living, 15
- Housing, 15
- Over-tourism, 14
- Services lagging behind, 11
- Growth — general, 11
- Wildfire and nature, 8
- Public services, 6
- Noise pollution, 5
- Loss of tree canopies, 4
- Taxes, 3
- Anti-growth sentiments, 2
- Selling of public lands, 1
- Fire insurance, 1



### **3. Natural Resources, 126 mentions**

- Water conservation, 50 mentions
- Overall environmental protection, 34
- Waste management, 22
- Water quality, 21
- Impacts of development on, 14
- Wildlife habitat, 12
- Air quality, 9
- Forest health and protection, 7
- Climate change — general, 4
- Drought, 3
- Energy conservation, 3
- River protection, 1

### **4. Transportation, 113 mentions**

- Increased traffic, 65 mentions
- Highway 97, 18
- Public transportation, 13
- Road conditions — general, 11
- Road maintenance, 8
- Convenience, 8
- Rail, 5
- Roundabouts, 3
- Overpass, 3
- Pedestrians and walking, 3
- Trails and paths, 2
- Parking, 2

### **5. Health and Wellness, 106 mentions**

- Medical care, 50 mentions
- Smoke, dust and air quality, 20
- Overall community health, 10
- Healthy and safe foods, 7
- 24-hour emergency care, 4
- Behavioral health, 2
- Pharmacy, 2
- EMS response time, 1
- Affordability, 1

### **6. Economy, Business, and Jobs, 68 mentions**

- Jobs, 27 mentions
- Small business struggles, 15
- Wage and income levels, 12
- Economic conditions, 10

- Economic development, 8
- Anti-growth sentiments, 3
- Housing costs for workers, 2
- Lack of workers, 2
- Financial services, 2
- Inflation, 1

## **7. Housing, 66 mentions**

- Need for affordable housing, 35
- Criticism of housing types, numbers, placement, 19
- Housing — general, 10
- Housing prices, 8
- Short-term rentals, 5

## **8. Homelessness, 62 mentions**

- Illegal camping, 34 mentions
- Homeless — general, 20
- Wildfire threat, 12
- Waste and trash, 10
- Blocking roads and trails, 4
- Housing for, 3
- Lack of strategy for, 2

## **9. Infrastructure, 62 mentions**

- Roads and highways, 20 mentions
- Transportation — general, 16
- Water, 15
- Sewer, 9
- Broadband, 4
- Waste Management, 3
- Utilities, 2

## **10. Amenities, 60 mentions**

- Grocery stores, 28 mentions
- Criticism of chain stores, 17
- Other retail, 10
- Restaurants, 8
- Shopping general, 5
- Entertainment, 3
- Big box stores, 1

## **11. Education, 54 mentions**

- Education — general, 16 mentions

- Quality of education, 15
- Schools, 10
- Resources, 8
- Opportunities, 7
- Graduation rates, 5
- Teachers, 4
- Child care, 3
- Facilities, 3
- Student behavior, 2
- School buses, 2
- School district, 2
- COCC satellite, 1
- Choice, 1
- Preschool, 1
- Athletics, 1
- Cultural learning, 1

## **12. Small Town and Rural Atmosphere, 51 mentions**

- Loss of, 30 mentions
- Growing too fast, 9
- Harm from chain stores, 8
- Social connections, 3
- Community connections, 2
- Neighbors, 2
- Kid friendly, 1
- Gentrification, 1
- Investment properties, 1
- City decisions, 1

## **13. Divisiveness, 49 mentions**

- Politics, 13 mentions
- Growth conflicts, 11
- Newcomers, 10
- Civility, 6
- Values, 6
- Neighborhood conflicts, 5
- Urban v. rural, 5
- Government, 5
- Discrimination, 4
- Unwelcoming, 3
- Tourist behavior, 3
- Lack of communication, 3
- Free speech hindrance, 2
- Racism, 1
- Family conflicts, 1
- Oregon and Idaho, 1

#### **14. Cost of living, 41 mentions**

- Groceries, 19 mentions
- Overall cost of living, 19
- Housing, 10
- Gasoline, 4
- Utilities, 2
- Taxes, 2
- Outdoor rec, 1

#### **15. Facilities and Activities, 40 mentions**

- Kids activities, 18 mentions
- Family friendly activities, 7
- Entertainment, 5
- Community pool, 4
- Parks, 4
- Sports, 4
- Gyms, 4
- Libraries, 3
- Cultural activities, 2
- Outdoor rec activities, 2
- Aquatic center, 1
- Park programs, 1
- Skating rink, 1
- Playground for seniors, 1
- Co-working spaces, 1
- Community gathering spaces, 1
- Access for people with disabilities, 1
- Dog park, 1
- Culinary, 1

#### **16. Civic & Community Engagement, 25 mentions**

- Communicating with officials, 5 mentions
- Community well-being, 4
- Community info, 3
- Politics, 2
- Governance, 2
- Relationship building, 2
- Friendliness, 2
- Voting, 1
- Lack of input, 1
- Youth ignored, 1
- Not welcoming, 1
- Civilized etiquette, 1
- Diversity, 1

- Representation, 1
- Cliques, 1
- Vision, 1
- Historical roots, 1

### **17. Outdoors, 24 mentions**

- Concerns about natural environment, 6 mentions
- Access to outdoor rec, 5
- Overuse and overcrowding, 5
- Impact on wildfire, 5
- Access to green spaces, 4
- Access to parks, 3
- Lack of paths, 2
- Lack of funding for, 2
- Rules ignored, 2
- E-bikes, 1
- Solitude, 1

### **18. Services, 22 mentions**

- Access to private services, 10 mentions
- Access to public services, 6
- Access to food, 3
- Access to shops, 2
- Access to more resources, 1
- Access to local news, 1

### **19. Social Services, 19 mentions**

- Food security, 5 mentions
- Housing, 3
- Behavioral health, 2
- Senior care, 2
- Substance abuse, 2
- Child abuse, 2
- Disabled, 1
- Employment, 1
- Welfare, 1

### **20. Resources, 10 mentions**

- Lack of resources — general, 4 mentions
- Better management of, 2
- Revenue sharing with Bend area not fair, 2
- Cleaner streets and other public properties, 2
- Fire Department staffing, 1
- More community info, 1

## APPENDIX 2

### Ideas for Strategies from the 2023 Survey Open-Ended 'Livability' Question (Organized by Updated NRP 'Six Dimensions of Community Vitality')

The Consultants used analytical software to code and categorize responses to this survey question. Below are ideas for potential strategies that were extrapolated from the data.

#### **Survey Question No. 5: What would make living in your community better for you and your family?**

##### **Education**

- Larger preschool facility for all families
- More funding going to La Pine to make the schools the same quality as all Bend and surrounding area schools.
- More opportunities for afterschool and summer activities for the kids (8 & 11)
- More equitable education services for La Pine as are available in Bend.

##### **Public Safety**

- Greater law enforcement presence and response time
- Reduce the speed limit in La Pine for safety.
- Highway 97 is still dangerous where the lanes are not divided north of La Pine. Continued road funds are needed to complete the divided road.
- Safer access to Highway 97 in La Pine area. State Rec road, Paulina Lake Road, Burgess Rd, 6th Street, and Finley Butte Rd.
- Roundabouts or lights to make turning left onto 97 safer.
- Separate bicycle paths to SunRiver and La Pine
- Require visitors to pay a fee and read the extreme fire danger precautions.
- More forest fire cleanup or controlled burns
- Assistance with clearing brush from property when no burning is allowed and no vehicle for dump runs
- Fire safe neighborhoods,
- Ceasing the hunting around homes

- Close the shooting/hunting zone from General Patch Bridge to Forest Acres
- Full time fire station in Sun Forest Estates
- Grants to help with clearing our property as a way to mitigate the dangers of wildfires
- Having a local sheriff station
- Illegal shooting and hunting behaviors along the Upper Deschutes River
- More escape routes out of Sunriver if there is a fire
- Thinning of the diseased trees.

### **Growth and Economic Development**

- Support entrepreneurship and innovation to promote economic growth and entrepreneurship.
- The sharing economy model
- Provide water/sewer and allow for all different types of development
- Strategic commercial development in areas that can handle the traffic flow
- Have a theme that makes us proud of the town like in Sisters
- Concept of the old West theme for South County.
- Prescribed fires in the EARLY part of the year and not during tourism summer season
- More rapid development of Berkshire's tourist attractions
- Reliable internet and cell service
- Improving internet access by adding fiber optic to rural areas
- Financial support or incentives to small businesses with 15 or fewer employees.
- More retail space in La Pine.
- Bus service once or twice week for people who live halfway between La Pine and Gilchrist
- Better public transportation between South Deschutes County and Bend.
- Transportation to the Redmond airport

- Fix the Burgess Rd & Highway 97 intersection.
- Consider a roundabout for the corner of South Century Drive and Huntington road.
- Add are a stoplight on 97 by Grocery Outlet and either a stoplight or a roundabout by the Corner Store
- Finishing the bypass
- Enlarging the 97 FWY with more lanes
- Redirecting semi-trucks around downtown La Pine
- I would like to see the post office relocated to cut down on the congestion in the main core of town.
- A four way stop at Burgess/Day
- An overpass on highway 97 to correct for the train crossing.
- Consider a roundabout for the corner of South Century Drive and Huntington road.
- Eliminate left turns onto Highway 97 at Wickiup Junction
- Paved roads for residents
- Paved roads in Cagle Subdivision
- Possible stop on the Highway by the Chevron station, it is impossible to turn left from there.
- Redirecting semi-trucks around downtown La Pine
- Signs off Highway 31 to indicate subdivisions and turns with lights so signs and streets can be seen at night
- A DMV that is open more than once a week.
- Housing for our service workers
- Low income housing
- Limiting short-term rentals
- Review the strategic growth plan that La Pine created 10 years ago and update it
- Expand La Pine UGB to include NW La Pine



- Change city ordinances to not allow single wide trailers be built in downtown
- A larger grocery store
- More competitive options for groceries
- More place to eat closer to Three Rivers
- Expand city limits, allow citizens who live in unincorporated La Pine to participate in city government
- The ability of people living outside La Pine city limits being able to run for office.
- Quit making our privately funded roads and paths so open to the public.

#### **Environment and Natural Resources**

- Garbage clean up in the forest areas just north of La Pine behind Ponderosa Pines. Lots of garbage dumping and homeless camping out there.
- A recycle center in the Sunriver business park, accessible to those living in all surrounding HOAs.
- Progress on water conservation
- Getting hooked to water treatment
- The renovation of old pipe networks, and the renovation of drainage systems
- Become a tree city
- Tree planting

#### **Arts, Culture and Recreation**

- An indoor pool
- A community pool
- Comprehensive parks and recreation department with varied and affordable offerings
- Movie theater
- Aquatic center
- Public shooting range

- Fishing spots for people with disabilities
- ATV trails
  
- Zip line park
  
- Dog park
  
- Public river access to the Deschutes and Little Deschutes, particularly kayak put ins/ take outs
  
- Having designated areas for tourists to load and offload when using the river. Harper Bridge is a zoo in the summer. If SROA and the resort are going to direct their guests to use this access point, they should be providing a safe parking lot and loading area.
  
- Recreation complex
  
- Spring festival
  
- Fall festival
  
- More bike paths
  
- Walking paths in the south of town
  
- The planned paved pathway between La pine and the Lava Butte Visitor Center could be a nice route for bikers who might want a longer, bike ride with less people to ride around.
  
- A multi-use riverside park with lawn and picnic tables
  
- Better parks for my children to play at
  
- Bike path along 6th St
  
- Bike trails!! We lived in Sunriver for a few years and bike trails are life! La Pine has the opportunity to create a real beautiful space to live, play and work!!!
  
- More investment in youth sports programs, fields, playgrounds.
  
- Skate rink
  
- Cultural events

### **Health and Human Services**

- Better healthcare services and facilities in South County
  
- A 24-hour emergency room.

- Access to 24 hour emergency room in La Pine
- Access to fresh and healthy food options
- Private ambulance service to transport patients from that emergency room to Bend
- Awareness, education and community activation around addressing the needs of families most impacted by poverty and trauma
- Address poverty in S. Deschutes County
- Better mental health facilities
- A hospital
- Pharmacy in Sunriver
- Produce markets that support healthy eating and sustainable agriculture
- Farmers markets
- Watering neighborhood dirt roads or paving our roads
- Dust suppression on gravel roads
- More money for local nonprofits such as Community Kitchen and the Activity Center
- Additional child care options — meaning ages 0-5 and Kindergarten through middle school.
- Opportunities for certificate/ job training
- A Community Volunteer Program
- Build on and advocate for programs to support low income families, senior citizens, substance use disorder programs
- A large animal vet
- We need a senior center
- Public toilets
- Walk friendly spaces that encourage and invite people to get out and connect with their community
- More community space for getting together, sharing, eating, and laughing.

- Public spaces to promote communication between residents and the formation of community cohesion
- Spaying and neutering of pets to cut down on feral and stray population

## APPENDIX 3

### Ideas for Strategies from the 2023 Community Civic Engagement Series

The Consultants analyzed comments received during eight community civic engagement sessions held by the Newberry Regional Partnership in October and November 2023 in La Pine and Sunriver. Below are ideas for potential strategies extrapolated from this data.

#### **Economic Development Session**

**Held Oct. 10, 2023, in La Pine**

- Recruit developers to pre-build retail space for commercial businesses in La Pine
- Develop more commercial and retail services in the more densely populated Three Rivers area on readily available vacant land
- Open a homeless shelter in south Deschutes County

#### **Public Safety Session**

**Held Oct. 12, 2023, in Sunriver**

- Proactively educate visitors about wildfire risks and safety
- Proactively educate residents about complying with wildfire preparedness steps
- Find more resources available for people who want to do fuel reduction and risk prevention
- Help residents and visitors become more familiar with potential wildfire evacuation routes in complicated road systems in the Sunriver, Three Rivers and La Pine areas. Stress that the routes may not be the ones utilized in a wildfire.
- Install signs alongside roads and trails about wildfire risks
- Encourage homeowners to purchase high-moisture saplings and plants that don't burn well in wildfires
- Encourage the Sunriver Homeowners Association to sell lava gravel to property owners at a reasonable cost

#### **Health and Human Services Session**

**Held in Oct. 17, 2023, in La Pine**

- Provide drug and alcohol inpatient and outpatient care
- Form mental health crisis response teams to respond with law enforcement to incidents involving people in mental crisis

- Develop a trauma-informed practitioner network
- Provide activities for people with disabilities
- Partner with the L’Arche non-profit that creates community networks for people with and without intellectual disabilities
- Provide women specific health care, such as OBYGN and prenatal services
- Provide primary family care on weekends at St. Charles
- Provide public transportation van services for seniors who don’t drive and can’t afford cab fare to Bend for medical appointments and other services
- Provide home health and infusion services

**Arts and Culture Sessions**

**Held Oct. 24 and Nov. 2, 2023, in La Pine and Sunriver, respectively**

- Highlight local culture, heritage, and talent
- Form an arts committee or alliance to support artists and organize community art projects
- Develop and maintain a community arts and entertainment calendar and other communication tools
- Create greater awareness and knowledge of indigenous cultures. Build upon recent cultural activities at Frontier Days.
- Develop a collaborative space for nonprofits
- Open a museum that highlights South Deschutes County’s history
- Pull organizations together and create a hands-on-music-in-public-places program
- Display large representational art pieces in La Pine
- Explore outdoor art projects like the one in Lincoln, Mont., and the Blackfoot pathways
- Build a theater or shared space for community groups to use
- Develop theater space for Sunriver Community Theater
- Incorporate music education at La Pine Elementary, Rosland Elementary, and La Pine Middle School

- Encourage Sunriver Stars, Sunriver Music Festival, and Bend La Pine Recreation District to work together on events and activities.
- Research Connect Central Oregon (<https://connectcentraloregon.org/>)

### **Environment and Natural Resources Session**

**Held Nov. 7, 2023, in La Pine**

- Educate residents and visitors about how to safely recreate during hunting season
- Add signage along trails to notify people that they are hiking or biking in a hunting zone
- Provide a map of “no shoot” zones to the public on the Deschutes County website

### **Education Sessions**

**Held Nov. 14 and Nov. 16, 2023, in La Pine and Sunriver, respectively**

- Offer an after-school STEAM program
- Create parent teacher associations at La Pine Elementary, Rosland, and La Pine Middle schools
- Participate in the South County Collaborative and its focus on youth
- Provide alternative class time for students who can’t or won’t attend regular class times
- Offer preschool for free or at little cost to disadvantaged families
- Install an electronic reader board near Highway 97 or at Day Road as a way to communicate school information. Also utilize the fire station reader board.
- Place a bond measure on a future ballot to expand COCC facilities and programs in South Deschutes County
- Encourage a foundation or business to offer scholarships to OSU-Cascades and La Pine and Sunriver area students
- Encourage a large employer to sponsor higher education classes in South Deschutes County
- Encourage COCC to provide a computer lab at the La Pine Recreation District and to offer more community education classes in La Pine
- The nitrate that is leaking into the rivers and waterways is a result of unintentional community planning. The rivers sit below the water tables, which rest atop impermeable layers. Runoff from unintentional sewer leakage is getting into the water tables and then transferring to the river. In contrast, the irrigation and sewer systems in communities like Sunriver and Crosswater are designed to ensure toxic substances are not getting into the river.

## APPENDIX 4

### Ideas for Strategies from the June 2024 Consultant Site Visit

#### For the Three Rivers community:

- Behavioral health is an issue. Getting a mental health team in for a call would take too long. No stabilization center in Three Rivers or in La Pine.
- Short-term rentals not looked upon favorably.
- No grocery store. Food desert.
- Wildfire risk is high due to packed-in, unkempt properties, and confusion about escape routes
- Public transit needed. Dangerous for teen-agers to be driving on Highway 97 in the winter.
- Desire for more health care and government services
- Safe Routes to Schools are needed
- Water and sewer issues (If \$20 million EPA grant is received, that will be the focus.)
- Lack of community information due to decline in media
- Lack of planning
- Need a sheriff's deputy here as it's a long ways from La Pine for deputies to respond to and it is located outside Sunriver (and its police force).
- Expand critical home repairs program?

#### For the La Pine area:

- Expect continuing spillover along Highway 97 from Bend to La Pine in the coming years. Much planning and preparation is needed for this spillover, let alone the current growth. There is a need for infrastructure, too.
- Take advantage of La Pine's connection to outdoor recreation opportunities. La Pine is surrounded by lakes, rivers, creeks, trails, national monument, and resorts. Market it and own it.
- Deschutes County Land Trust recently purchased 1,090 acres east of La Pine.
- Construct large homes, trails, and other amenities to lure company owners to move to La Pine



- Expand adult education at La Pine Rec and Parks
- Engage with COCC about a satellite campus in La Pine
- Economic development strategy: Increase the classes for residents that will directly lead to jobs. For example, COCC will soon be adding pre-apprentice program for construction industry. Could there be a class for health care, too? For robotics?
- OSU Cascades Innovation Lab interested in working in rural areas, including LaPine
- Find funding for a school resource officer in La Pine. There is one now at the Three Rivers School in the Sunriver Business Park.
- New home construction will bring younger people to La Pine because first-time home buyers are shut out of Bend. La Pine could begin to market the community to younger people and point out La Pine’s access to the outdoors.
- The coming business incubator is for start-up entrepreneurs and manufacturers. The plan is to focus initially on advanced manufacturing, specialty food and beverage, and outdoor apparel. The idea is to position La Pine as a place where businesses can locate.
- Potential for business spillover from Bend to La Pine?
- Land costs in La Pine for businesses are comparable to those in Prineville.
- Some want more affordable housing constructed in La Pine.
- La Pine is primed for housing growth. Its water reservoir was expanded. The city has 350 vacant acres that are zoned residential. There also is vacant BLM land nearby.
- There are digital equity issues for the elderly. This is a red flag in terms of wildfires preparedness. Expand tech help to elderly. An area south of La Pine has no broadband.
- La Pine is a fresh produce desert.
- Big need for a large grocery store, although population and income levels may not support one at the moment.
- Need for more access points off the highway
- Teacher retention is an issue. School district says La Pine gets its fair share of funding, but locals say the school soccer fields, restrooms and auditorium need improvements. And the CTE should be expanded.
- Could the critical home repairs program run by Habitat for Humanity be expanded even more so it reaches mores households?

- Lack of community info. Weekly newspaper folded a year or two ago. (Check out the Fund for Oregon Rural Journalism.)
- To entice shoppers from outside the La Pine area: Provide a diversity of opportunities, including restaurants, shopping, services, health care, and a large grocery store.
- Better public transit. La Pine is home to many people commuting to Bend or Sunriver and back every day. It also is dangerous for teen-agers and others to be driving on Highway 97 in the winter.
- Septic and water is a big issue. (If \$20 million EPA grant is received, that will be the focus.)
- Air quality is an issue during wildfires, as smoke infiltrates older homes and manufactured homes.
- The second floor at the new community health center will be devoted to behavioral health services. But getting employees may be difficult?
- Even with the new community health center and the St. Charles clinic, there is still a shortage of specialty health care in La Pine.
- Federal and state employees should be given the tools to enforce laws in the woods where the homeless are illegally camping.
- Pedestrians face dangerous conditions on Highway 97, Burgess Road, and 6<sup>th</sup> Street. They are not designed for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Publicize and sign an alternative route to Mount Bachelor from La Pine
- Finish widening Highway 97 (the project ran out of money)
- It's very difficult to turn onto to Highway 97 from certain locations. Expand the access points off the highway.
- Traffic is number one concern of the sheriff's office in La Pine. Deputies have interest in seeing a traffic unit started.
- A law enforcement facility is needed in La Pine: More space, holding cells, and an interview room.
- Continuing education is needed for gun safety. It also would help if new residents and visitors are aware of where hunting legally takes place so they aren't surprised and don't call for police.
- Expand tech help to elderly (this is particularly important during a wildfire event)

- To prepare and prevent wildfires, unkempt properties need to be cleaned up and residents and visitors need to be better informed. The difficulty is that there are thousands of properties that need to be cleaned up, and many residents don't want to be told to clean up their properties or even to do that work.
- Maintain La Pine's historical roots and small town living. There are too many older buildings being torn to make way for new things.

**For the Sunriver area:**

- Higher educated people live in Sunriver or own property there, so business opportunities exist
- Sunriver Business Park: Make it safer with sidewalks, crosswalks, parking, nearby roundabouts, and a rebrand of the place. It is not in Sunriver and it is not a traditional business park.
- Specialty health care is lacking at Sunriver
- No dentist, no pharmacy, no eye care
- Better public transit. It also is dangerous for teen-agers and others to be driving on Highway 97 in the winter.
- Sunriver HOA will release its strategic plan soon.
- Cell tower capacity will overload in a major evacuation event. Existing alert system for wildfires and other natural disasters will fail.
- Situational awareness: Visitors lack knowledge about wildfires. 20,000 people are here in the summer at Sunriver. There are two evacuation routes, but people don't know where to go.
- Public safety top issues for Sunriver police: Wildfires, e-bikes, and river safety and usage
- Homeless are residing in the forest on all sides of Sunriver
- Sunriver has 950+ employees. It needs workforce housing. It also struggles to fill all positions. It is currently offering housekeepers a \$1,100 bonus and pay at \$22 an hour.