

# **Results of the McMinnville Chamber of Commerce Business Survey**

Prepared for

Greater McMinnville Area  
Chamber of Commerce

by

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## SUMMARY

ECONorthwest conducted a survey of Chamber of Commerce members in June and July, 2001. About 25% of the 600 people contacted sent back responses.

The survey results suggest that respondents want McMinnville to grow at a manageable rate, that the City should work to retain existing businesses, that new businesses should not degrade the quality of life or the environment in McMinnville, and that various groups should work together to promote economic development that is compatible with the community. Specific findings are listed below.

- The results represent the attitudes and opinions of the 156 Chamber members that responded to the survey.
- The majority of respondents (56%) felt that McMinnville is better off than it was 10 years ago. Respondents pointed to downtown improvements and more services and businesses as factors that have improved McMinnville over the past 10 years.
- Only 20% of the respondents indicated they felt McMinnville is worse off than it was 10 years ago. Traffic and congestion and overcrowding were the most frequently cited reasons.
- A large majority of respondents (88%) felt that the City of McMinnville should work to *accommodate* growth, but not encourage or discourage growth.
- Respondents indicated that business recruitment and economic development efforts should be a shared responsibility with the City of McMinnville, the Greater McMinnville Area Chamber of Commerce, and McMinnville Industrial Promotions working together.
- Respondents indicated that quality of life/livability, location, and the local work force are factors that make McMinnville attractive to employers.
- Respondents indicate that transportation to Interstate 5 and Portland is a limiting factor in attracting additional employment to McMinnville.
- Respondents want policies that protect the environment and slightly favor expansion and retention of new businesses over business recruitment.
- Less than 25% of survey respondents think McMinnville has an adequate employment base.
- Finding quality employees and the economic slowdown were the most frequently cited concerns of survey respondents.

- About 45% of survey respondents indicated they plan to expand their business in the next five years. Those businesses estimate they will add more than 340 full-time jobs, of which nearly three-quarters will pay more than \$12.00 per hour. Only 20% of the businesses expressed a need for additional land to expand their business.



# INTRODUCTION

## BACKGROUND

In May 2001, the McMinnville Chamber of Commerce (the Chamber) was awarded grant funds for its proposal to conduct "a community-wide dialogue to define the City's economic development goals and objectives, and to build consensus among the various key stakeholder groups within the McMinnville area ...." At the same time, the City of McMinnville was conducting its state-required Periodic Review of its Comprehensive Land Use Plan. As part of that review, the City must update the economic element of the plan. Staff at the Chamber and the City recognized the overlap of the projects, and the opportunities that merging the two projects would provide.

The two projects are complementary. The City's work focuses on data collection and a description of current and likely future economic conditions. The Chamber's work focuses on community economic development goals. Those goals will be more realistic if they are informed by the analysis being conducted as part of the comprehensive plan update. ECONorthwest, a consulting firm in planning and economic development, was hired by both the City and the Chamber to assist with their respective projects.

## PURPOSE

As part of a process to define economic development goals, ECONorthwest worked with Chamber staff on a survey of Chamber members. The survey solicited opinions from the business community about economic development in McMinnville. This report summarizes the results of the business survey. The survey addressed:

- Attitudes about past and future growth and development;
- Opinions about McMinnville's comparative advantages;
- Opinions about the role of various organizations in economic development;
- Information about business expansion plans; and
- Information on characteristics of survey respondents.

The Chamber used the survey results to facilitate a chamber-sponsored workshop, held in September 2001, to develop a more defined economic vision and a strategy.

## METHODS

ECO and Chamber staff developed and administered the survey in June and July 2001. ECO developed a draft survey instrument that was then reviewed by the Chamber Executive Committee. ECO revised the survey instrument based on comments received from the Chamber.

The Chamber mailed the survey to 598 Chamber members on June 18, 2001. The surveys were sent back to the Chamber, whose staff then forwarded them to ECO. ECO received 148 valid responses to the initial survey mailing. The Chamber conducted a follow-up mailing on July 13. The Chamber accepted responses until July 30.

In total, the sample includes 156 valid survey responses, a response rate of 26%. That rate is 5 to 15 percentage points lower than what ECO estimated it would be, given the audience and topic. The likely reasons are that the survey (1) did not include an incentive, a technique ECO commonly uses to increase response rates; (2) was, of necessity, mailed in the middle of summer, when vacation schedules often reduce response rates; and (3) was mailed to the full Chamber mailing list, which included multiple people at some businesses.

Because the survey was sent only to Chamber members, and because there is no way on a quick survey like this one to test or correct for self-selection,<sup>1</sup> the survey sampling methodology was not a random sample, and is not intended to reflect the attitudes and opinions of all businesses in McMinnville. Rather, it reflects the attitudes and opinions of the individuals that represent the businesses that responded to the survey. This is consistent with the survey's purpose: to identify the range of attitudes and opinions of Chamber members concerning economic development in McMinnville.

Finally, ECONorthwest coded and analyzed the surveys using the computer program Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. This program provides the capability to cross-tabulate survey responses of two or more questions to facilitate analysis.

## **ORGANIZATION**

The remainder of this memorandum is organized around the survey results. We begin by evaluating respondents' opinions regarding economic development in McMinnville. Next, we evaluate issues affecting local business, including plans for expansion. We conclude by describing the characteristics of the individuals and the businesses they represent.

Two appendices supply more detail. Appendix A is a copy of the survey, showing all the questions, exactly as asked. Appendix B summarizes the written responses to the open-ended questions on the survey (the ones where a respondent writes an answer rather than checks a box or fills in a number).

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<sup>1</sup> For example, maybe the 25% of the sample that responded are the ones that are most concerned about economic development, and, because of that concern, are most in favor of policies that encourage economic development.