

FERN RIDGE PROGRESS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2008

In 2006, forty-one members of the Fern Ridge community participated in a series of four meetings whose purpose was to update the 1996 Fern Ridge Area Strategic Plan. The update builds upon the work done ten years earlier by the Fern Ridge Community Response Team. The impetus for the update was the belief that factors influencing the community had changed dramatically since the original plan was devised. The chairs of each of the committees listed below formed a Progress Board to coordinate achievements of the adopted goals, strategies and action plans.

The current board members are: Ric Ingham, City of Veneta, Heather Hill, Lane County Fire District #1; Sharon Hobart-Hardin, Veneta City Council, Chair; Joan Mariner Fern Ridge Community Action Network and Tami Sakany Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce.

The Strategic Plan Update process, facilitated by Rural Development Initiatives, utilized the original four building blocks of the 1996 Strategic Plan. These four areas and their subsequent goals are:

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: Develop a business community that provides diverse products and services that meet local market demands while attracting outside dollars.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

In 2007, the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce opened its first office, thus allowing the Chamber to gather together business information from Lane County, LCOG and Lane Community College Business Development Center. This material is now available to any business owner, entrepreneur or interested party.

Recently, the Chamber initiated a series of round tables for restaurants, builders and developers, community issues, entrepreneurs and Highway 126 transportation to share information on issues and potential solutions. The groups meet monthly and continue to grow as they form the basis for the Business Assistance Team.

INFRASTRUCTURE

GOAL: Create a sustainable water system for the Fern Ridge Community that meets the potable, waste and storm water needs of future growth.

GOAL: Develop an inventory, needs assessment and action plan for energy and communications

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

To date, these goals have been addressed through a variety of actions including the coming on line of Wells 10 and 11, the development of a dialogue with the Eugene Water and Electric Board and the federal agencies regulating Fern Ridge Reservoir.

The City of Veneta was successful in developing a contract with Comspan to promote telecommunications through a fiber optics system to service the entire community, commencing in the fall of 2009.

Given the demise of the city's fifty-year-old community swimming pool, the consensus was to concentrate on replacing the pool in the near future and explore the concept of a Parks and Recreation District at a later date. In addition, the Veneta Parks Board is working on the upgrade of Ralph Johnson Park and through a land exchange, extended Fern Park. The Parks Board sponsored its first Earth Day Celebration that attracted over 60 residents to assist in tree planting, bio-swale planting and clean up in Territorial Park. The event was so successful it was awarded SOLV's 2007 Project Oregon award for Best Project by a First Time Coordinator. The City of Veneta received a state grant of \$327,000 to purchase the seven acre Bolton Hill Sports Complex thereby ensuring that children in Fern Ridge will always have public fields on which to play soccer, baseball, softball and football.

QUALITY OF LIFE

GOAL: To provide a quality of life which allows people in the community to access the fundamental necessities and amenities of life

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In the spring of 2007, Applegate Regional Theater (ART, Inc.) produced a community musical, Lumberjacks and Wedding Belles that was sold out at every performance. Following this success, the producer, Lu Krueger, formed a musical theater group, Kaleidoscope, which presented The Wizard of Oz this past May. Once again, all performances were sold out. Both of these productions have engaged over 30 citizens.

In 2007, a small group of volunteers collaborated with Bi-Mart, to use their east wall on Highway 126 to paint the first community mural. Under the direction of muralist and volunteer Joseph Collins, student artists from Crow and Elmira High Schools spent a little over a month, transforming the blank wall into a colorful depiction of the natural beauty of the Fern Ridge Reservoir area. The mural, entitled Wings and Wine, also featured the new Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce brand "Fern Ridge: Inspired by Nature."

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

GOAL: The Fern Ridge community will develop volunteer opportunities for non-profit program and essential services.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Over the two years since the adoption of the Update, the Progress Board has facilitated three community events to foster communication between non-profits, provide information on upcoming events and assist in volunteer recruitment. The latest event held January 24 of this year was entitled A Community Conversation and attracted over 60 individuals despite inclement weather. The success of these efforts has led to the Progress Board exploring the possibility of establishing a Volunteer Coordinator Pilot Project with a database of volunteer opportunities for five non-profits to be selected through a request for proposals. In addition, funding will be sought to hire a part-time coordinator dedicated to recruitment, training, recognition and expansion.

The Pilot Project noted is being developed in partnership with the Fern Ridge Community Action Network (Fern Ridge C.A.N.) This newly established organization is the product of a Ford Family Leadership program formed in the fall of 2007. After a series of four training sessions, sponsored by the Ford Family Foundation and facilitated by Rural Development Initiatives, the 5-year program is well on its way to meeting its goal of producing a pool of 60 volunteer leaders.