

2020 Business Survey
Report of Results
January 7, 2021



<u>Business Survey Comments Word Cloud:</u> This Word Cloud depicts the key themes pulled from respondents' open-ended comments in regards to Question 2 (desired downtown amenities) and Question 17 (respondent concerns not explicitly covered in the survey). The larger the word appears in the Word Cloud, the more frequently the term appeared.

Executive Summary

The City of Sisters conducted a business survey for 21 days during October and November in 2020. The survey targeted local business owners within Sisters city limits to gather direct input on public services, the local economy, and tourism. The City created its survey distribution list using business licenses to reach local businesses through email addresses, mailing addresses, and phone numbers.

A total of 382 surveys were distributed: An anonymous electronic survey link was emailed to 350 recipients and an additional 32 hard-copy surveys were mailed. Electronic survey recipients received a one-week advance email, letter, or phone call asking for their participation in the survey, an email containing the official electronic link to access the survey, two reminder emails with the survey's initial closing date on November 13th, and two emails about the survey's extension date to November 19th. The recipients of the mailed survey received a similar frequency of notification about the survey. Mailed surveys included a cover letter, a survey, and a return envelope with pre-paid postage within each delivered envelope. In the mailed version, the City noted to return the survey by 5:00 p.m. on November 13th.

Between October 29th and November 19th, the City received a 43.5% response rate with 142 completed surveys and 24 partially complete surveys. Although the City had hoped for a slightly higher response rate, this is a robust response rate for the City's first survey predominantly conducted electronically.

The distributed survey is attached as Exhibit B at the end of this report. If you would like a copy of the raw survey data, please contact Kerry Prosser, City Recorder, at kprosser@ci.sisters.or.us or call City Hall 541-549-6022.

The introductory paragraph to the mailed-survey stated:

The City of Sisters would like to know the opinions of local business owners, such as yourself, about public services, the local economy, and tourism. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the development of a tourism strategic plan to guide the long-term management of Transient Room Tax funds. Responses will be anonymous and used only for internal planning purposes.

This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. You have until the deadline on November 13th, 2020, by 5 pm to return your survey to the City of Sisters – either to the City Hall drop box directly or using the provided blue, pre-stamped envelope.

For more information or other accommodations, please contact Emme Shoup, Assistant Community Engagement & Program Coordinator, at 541-323-5216 or eshoup@ci.sisters.or.us.

The following pages contain a compilation of key results from the survey data and are *not* an exhaustive analysis. The presentation of this data has not been editorialized. This information will be used to guide future discussions and decisions by the City regarding public services, the local economy, and tourism. It is likely that additional conversations with local businesses will occur to drill down deeper on findings.

We hope you find this report helpful in summarizing the outputs from the 2020 Business Survey.

Results

Public Services and Infrastructure

 Question One asked local businesses to rate the following statements about the City of Sisters' public services and infrastructure. This same question was asked in the 2018 Business Survey, which reveals what areas have changed. Figure 1 compares the results of the survey responses in 2018 and 2020.

								Bel	ow		
		Excellent		Good		Average		Average		Poor	
		2018	2020	2018	2020	2018	2020	2018	2020	2018	2020
1	The overall services provided by the City of Sisters	38%	36%	48%	48%	12%	15%	1%	1%	1%	0%
2	Available parking in downtown	14%	21%	30%	44%	40%	24%	13%	7%	3%	3%
3	Information kiosks showing businesses and services	13%	12%	38%	37%	41%	34%	5%	12%	2%	5%
4	The City of Sisters website	20%	20%	46%	50%	32%	27%	2%	2%	0%	0%
5	Responsiveness of City Hall Staff	53%	40%	42%	39%	5%	20%	0%	1%	0%	1%
6	Maintenance of streets and parks*	52%	52%	41%	38%	6%	10%	0%	2%	1%	0%
8	Streetscape amenities (sidewalks, planters, etc.) in downtown	45%	58%	39%	40%	14%	2%	2%	1%	1%	0%

Figure 1: Control Question Comparison between the 2018 and 2020 Business Surveys

The percentages represent the number of respondents that rated each statement about the City's public services and infrastructure. For example, 58% of respondents rated the streetscape amenities as "Excellent" in the most recent survey – a 13% increase compared to 2018.

^{*}Question 6 was presented as two separate questions in the 2020 Business Survey report. The 2020 data about "Maintenance of streets and parks" are averaged into one value for convenient comparison to the 2018 data. Overall, in the 2020 survey, the maintenance of parks was rated slightly higher (i.e., "Excellent" and "Good") than the maintenance of streets.

Local Business & Tourism

Question Three asked the respondents to identify what type of business they have. There was a total
of 124 responses. This information can be useful to differentiate the sentiments about tourism and
the local economy by industry. Respondents identifying as "Other" tended to either have multiple
businesses, or be in the construction industry or personal services industry.

	Choice Count	Percentage of Total responses
Retail	30	24.19%
Food & Beverage Service	9	7.26%
Lodging	25	20.16%
Personal Services	16	12.90%
Light Industrial / Manufacturing / Assembly	8	6.45%
Health Care	8	6.45%
Non-Profit	5	4.03%
Other	23	18.55%

Figure 2: Respondents' industry of business

 Question Four asked respondents to rank the business promotion methods that they use. Out of the six different business promotion options, they could rank the methods on a 1-6 scale, with one being most used and six being least used.

Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6
Word of Mouth / Referrals	53%	18%	14%	6%	3%	5%
Website	22%	27%	26%	14%	5%	6%
Chamber of Commerce	4%	4%	4%	19%	34%	35%
Social Media	15%	30%	21%	15%	11%	8%
Print Media	8%	9%	22%	26%	23%	11%
Other	24%	12%	12%	9%	15%	29%

Figure 3: Business promotion methods ranking

• Question 6 asks how much the respondent's business depends on tourism. Choices were either 0% dependent on tourism, Less than 50%, More than 50%, and Other. The majority of local business owners said their business was Less than 50% or 0% dependent on tourism (52%). A significant number of business owners said their business was More than 50% dependent on tourism (37%). Many who answered "Other" said they were a mix or virtually 100% dependent on tourism. As demonstrated in the comparison between Figure 4 and Figure 5, tourism-facing industries such as Retail, Food & Beverage Services, and Lodging rely much more on tourism than the other industries.

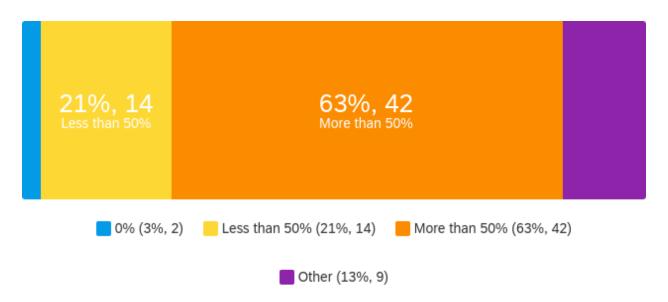


Figure 4: Tourism-facing industries amount of dependence on tourism

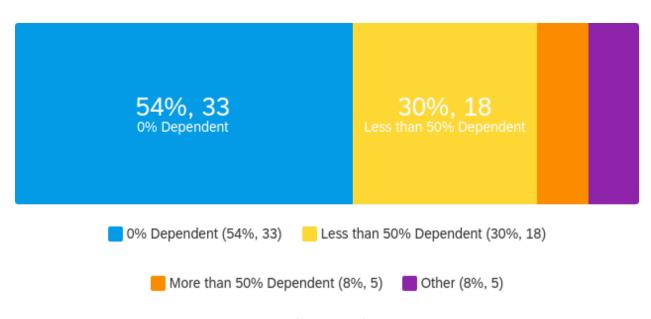


Figure 5: Other industries' amount of dependence on tourism

Question Seven asks for the respondent's opinion on if the City should invest additional resources to
increase tourism in the winter season. Increasing tourism funding for the winter season would create
events and amenities that would improve the slow shoulder season and stabilize a year-round, local
economy. The majority of responses were in support.

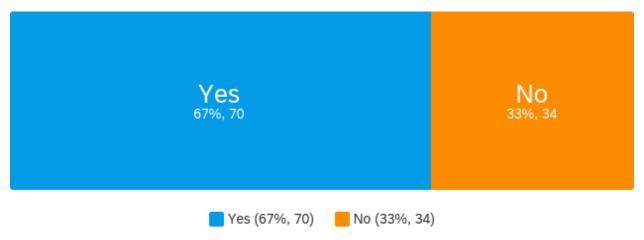


Figure 6: Sentiment on additional resources to help increase winter tourism**

Transient Room Tax & Visitor Experience

Respondents began this section of the survey by reading the following background information about Transient Room Tax (TRT) funds:

The Transient Room Tax (TRT) is collected on overnight lodging and generates funds to promote local tourism and support essential services. A portion of the TRT revenue is **restricted** and can only be used for tourism promotion or tourism-related facilities. Unrestricted funds can be used to fund any city services. A tourism strategic plan would work with key community partners to outline how the **restricted** revenue is used locally to benefit the local business community.

^{**}Not included in the Figure 6 totals, 21 other responses listed ideas on how additional resources could be used to increase winter tourism: thirteen comments were supportive, five were indifferent to investing additional resources, and three comments were explicitly against it.

• Question Ten asks how restricted funds collected from the Transient Room Tax should be applied in the local community. Respondents had the option to pick more than one answer.

	Choice	Count
Tourism-related public facilities that enhance visitor experiences	49%	83
Tourism Promotion: Marketing efforts to promote the City to instate visitors	29%	49
Tourism Promotion: Marketing efforts to promote the City to out-of-state and international visitors	22%	37

Figure 7: Use of TRT funds in Sisters, OR

Question Eleven asked respondents what they think is important to their customers' visitor
experiences. Respondents had the option to pick more than one answer. Local assets that are most
significant to visitors' experience in Sisters are amenities like bathrooms, water fountains, warming
huts, lodging options, local art & artists, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

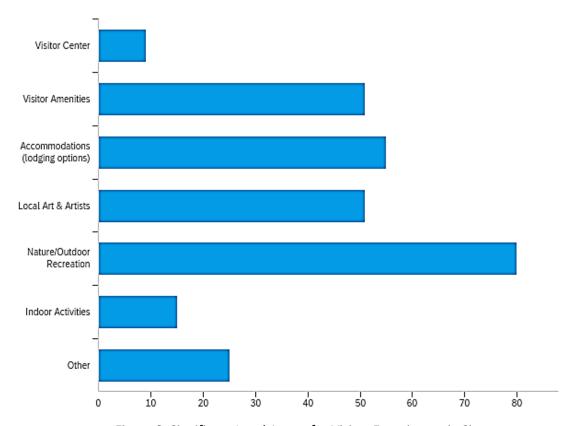


Figure 8: Significant Local Assets for Visitor Experiences in Sisters

• Question Twelve states that the City would like to develop a 3- to 5-year strategic plan regarding visitors and tourism. The Tourism Strategic Plan would guide the use of restricted TRT funds and help maintain a balance between tourism and local livability. Question Twelve then asks for the respondent's opinion on if the City should create a Sisters Tourism Strategic Plan. As shown in Figure 9, there is overwhelming support for the plan. The handful of comments submitted under "Other" were indifferent or specifically regarded tourism development restrictions and local livability.

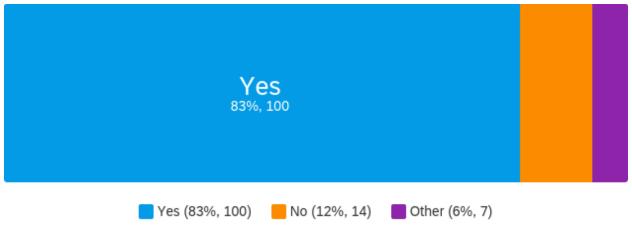


Figure 9: Support for a Tourism Strategic Plan

Question Thirteen asks if the City of Sisters should create a Sisters Tourism & Visitors Committee to
help guide a future Strategic Plan and use of restricted TRT funds. There was significant support for a
committee. A handful of comments were submitted under "Other" and were indifferent or voiced
concern about using TRT funds very consciously to support all local business industries, not just
tourism-facing industries.

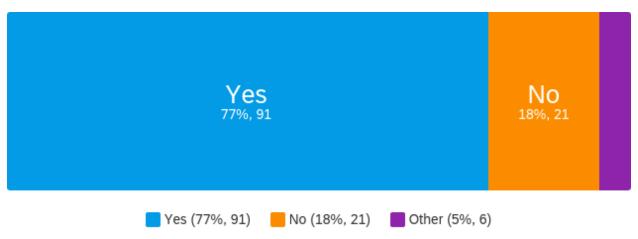


Figure 10: Formation of a Sisters Tourism & Visitor Experience Committee

Additional Downtown Business Resources

Question Fifteen asks if the respondent supports creating a Downtown Business Association and/or
the City participating in the Oregon Main Street Program. These would further support the Sisters
downtown core by supporting the local economy and built environment to create an even more
engaging experience for residents and tourists. Most of the respondents were curious and answered,
"I need more information" (43.6%). Many said, "Yes to both," or yes to only form a downtown business
association (26%). But a significant number of respondents said "No" to any of it (28%).

Local Economic Impacts

• Question Sixteen asks the respondent to rate how significantly their business had been affected by various events and issues that have impacted the local economy: availability of affordable housing; the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic; the 2020 fire season and/or related-smoke; the slow shoulder season(s)/Winter months; and a fill-in-the-blank option (which did not elicit any specific feedback). Overall, tourism sector industries (i.e., Retail, Lodging, and Food & Beverage Services) were generally impacted more than other industries. For those respondents of tourism sector industries, 87% (54) were somewhat or more significantly affected by the events and issues – with 13% of those businesses claiming to be severely impacted. As for the non-tourism sector industries, 0% claimed to be severely impacted, and 76% (41) of respondents claimed to be "Not at all" or "A little" impacted.

		Not at all affected	A little	Somewhat	Significantly	Severely Affected
1	Availability of affordable housing	40%	12%	28%	13%	6%
2	The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	10%	13%	17%	30%	30%
3	The 2020 fire season and/or related-smoke	11%	19%	23%	27%	20%
4	Slow shoulder season(s) / Winter months	30%	12%	25%	26%	7%

Figure 11: Economic Impacts on Local Businesses of Sisters, OR

End of Survey Statement

The closing statement of the survey to electronic and mailed survey recipients was the following:

Thank you for participating in the City of Sisters' 2020 Business Survey! We appreciate your time. If you have questions or comments you would like to follow-up with, or are you interested in taking part in the tourism strategic planning process, contact Emme Shoup, Assistant Community Engagement & Program Coordinator: 541-323-5216 or eshoup@ci.sisters.or.us.

Conclusion

The 2020 Business Survey asked various questions to understand in-city business owner perspectives on public services, infrastructure, tourism, and the local economy. With a 43.5% response rate, this data will help shape future conversations regarding public services, tourism planning and management, and use of TRT funds in the City of Sisters. The City appreciates those that took the time to fill out the survey.

The City intentionally designed a "control question" to reflect change over time between the 2018 and 2020 Business Survey. Based on the data, businesses are still generally very satisfied with the services they receive from the City. Since the last Business Survey in 2018, concerns around available parking has decreased, and minor dissatisfaction revolves around the lack of information kiosks in the downtown area and maintenance of streets. However, the maintenance of parks and streetscape amenities in the downtown were rated most positively. The change in sentiment around specific public amenities could have resulted from how people interact with public spaces differently during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most respondents supported a Tourism & Visitors Committee and a Tourism Strategic Plan for Sisters. At the same time, many comments showed a desire for a broader, diversified year-round economy, better support for all local businesses (not just tourism-facing), and further consideration of local livability over tourism promotion. A future Committee may be one method the City can pursue to better facilitate dialogue and planning to represent a balance of the community's tourism priorities.

Beyond the potential of a Tourism Strategic Plan and Committee, there is interest in a Downtown Business Association (DBA) that could bring additional resources (i.e., more grant opportunities, technical assistance, promotion, etc.) and opportunity for collaboration among local businesses. With about half of respondents asking for "more information," the City plans to further explore the options of a DBA and/or participating in the Oregon Main Street program.

This survey was a unique opportunity to assess the current economic climate after this unusual year and better understand our local business community's specific wants and needs. There is a concern for our tourism-dependent brick-and-mortar businesses ability to weather the slower shoulder seasons. This feedback is important especially considering the 2020 shoulder season began early this year due to the wildfires and related-smoke and was impacted by COVID-19 public health regulations from the State.

The City plans to build on these survey results as a catalyst for discussions and adjustments in 2021. More conversation and education will need to occur with the community prior to any major changes. This work aligns well with the broader Comprehensive Plan Update the City is currently conducting with the community. Ultimately, these survey responses inform potential tailored methods and partnerships to improve opportunities for local businesses to thrive in a year-round economy and maintain a healthy balance of local livability and tourism.

If you have any questions or comments about the 2020 Business Survey and any topics it covered, please reach out to Kerry Prosser, City Recorder and Asst. to the City Manager: kprosser@ci.sisters.or.us or 541-549-6022.

EXHIBIT A

Survey Open-ended Comments Section (attached)

Open-Ended Questions and Comments Section

Throughout the survey, respondents had opportunities to share thoughts and concerns about the public services, infrastructure, tourism, and local economy in Sisters. Below are some highlighted comments.

- More water fountains, benches, trailer parking, dog park, public transit station
- A diversion of vehicular traffic to allow for better foot traffic on Cascade Ave.
- Saturday market with food, crafts, music
- Outdoor basketball court(s) with lines for basketball
- Safer bike routes for school kids
- Increase the number of garbage cans. Monitor their cleanliness—brighter street lighting for safety.
- Ice skating rink
- Shaded areas/pergolas for seating, working water bottle refill stations, sidewalk repair
- Cross Traffic has an extremely hard time. We need another traffic circle by the grade school.
- More Christmas activities
- Overhead glass crosswalk tunnel with stairs and elevator at both ends
- Dog park & dog-related activities
- Something to alert motorists racing through Sisters to stop at crosswalks
- Let's become a welcoming city!
- More garbage cans and bike racks
- Clear RV parking signs to direct RVs on where to park
- More trash cans and push bottom lighted crosswalks
- I think it's beautiful. Especially during the holidays
- We have enough tourism, thank you
- Horse-drawn sleigh rides
- Get rid of restrictions for VRBOs
- Groomed X-country and snowshoe trails at parks in town
- Sled dog races, Christmas tree cutting
- Conference Center and sporting events
- We do not need any more tourism. The population is exploding. I've been here for 20 years; this is not the town I moved to.
- Ability to drive around Sisters without waiting long term to cross any street. Maybe bypass for non-downtown traffic to get through and allow tourists better movement in downtown area while here.
- Maintaining the quality of surrounding nature areas, nature preservation
- A committee to maintain local livability
- How about using funds to help the businesses not have to pay such high prices for parking places. If you want to help businesses, lower the rate they pay to the City of Sisters. Don't generate more tourism
- I am concerned about large corporations getting preference over small locally-owned businesses because of their influence
- ...Winter is brutal for the stores in Sisters Rent is high, and more stores will be closing.

 Anywhere off the main areas will continue to have empty storefronts. Lower rents/or seasonally adjusted rents could greatly help the retail stores.

- The intersection at Cork Cellars & Pine (there's others also) is terrible! You can't see. We also need better 20mph signs
- Not over taxing the infrastructure with too much affordable housing projects
- Lack of monitoring higher speeds on Cascade. Lack of monitoring stop signs (especially Hood and Elm) as cars roll through or just slow down at this intersection. Kids on skateboards on sidewalks. Safety concern.
- Consider moving Folk Festival to a different date because of the ongoing smoke/fire issues
- Stop the development of new houses and let's keep this town livable
- The restrictions against vacation rentals within 250ft of each other is inexplicable for a town opportune with tourism
- Thorough, reliable snow clearing on sidewalks throughout downtown! Every snowfall, some sidewalks are nicely cleared, others are cleared badly and some are not cleared at all. It makes the town look unwelcoming and unsophisticated, as well as hard to walk through. Warming fires in downtown would also be welcoming.
- Appreciate what you do!
- Sisters needs a year-round economy that's not centered entirely around tourism. Don't forget about businesses that aren't lodging, restaurant or tourism driven retail
- The Chamber of Commerce needs to do more for local businesses. They used to bring businesses together to collaborate. They used to do more events. They need to be held accountable for the funding
- Possible workshops for the downtown merchants & dining social media to assist in attracting customers in. Developing a hashtag for all retail and dining to use on their Instagram #insisters.
- Ultimately, livability for residents is MUCH more important than increasing tourism, the traffic through town and the clogged roadways are problematic as well as the environmental impact
- I think a Tourism Committee could do a great job collaborating with the Chamber on using TRT funds for marketing

EXHIBIT B

City of Sisters 2020 Business Survey (attached)

CITY OF SISTERS 2020 BUSINESS SURVEY

The City of Sisters would like to know the opinions of local business owners, such as yourself, about public services, local economy and tourism. Your feedback on this survey will help inform the development of a tourism strategic plan to guide the long-term management of Transient Room Tax funds. **Responses will be anonymous** and used only for internal planning purposes.

This survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. You have until the deadline on **November 13**, **2020 by 5pm** to return your survey to the City of Sisters – either to the City Hall drop box directly or using the provided blue, pre-stamped envelope.

For more information or other accommodations, please contact Emme Shoup, Assistant Community Engagement & Program Coordinator, at 541-323-5216 or eshoup@ci.sisters.or.us.

Public Services and Infrastructure

Question 1: Please rate the following statements about public services and infrastructure in the City of Sisters. (Select the box that applies).

	Excellent	Good	Average	Below Average	Poor
The overall services provided by the City of Sisters	0	0	0	0	0
Available parking in downtown	0	0	0	0	0
Information kiosks showing businesses and services	0	0	0	0	0
The City of Sisters' website	0	0	0	0	0
Responsiveness of City Hall staff	0	0	0	0	0
Maintenance of streets	0	0	0	0	0
Maintenance of parks	0	0	0	0	0
Streetscape amenities (sidewalks, planters, etc.) in downtown	Ο	Ο	0	Ο	O

Question 2:	: What different amenities would you like to see in the downtown? Please answer below.
	Local Businesses & Tourism
Question 3:	: What type of business do you have? (Select the box that applies).
0	Retail
0	Food & Beverage Service
0	Lodging
0	Personal Services
0	Light Industrial / Manufacturing / Assembly
0	Health Care
0	Non-profit
0	Other (please specify)

Question 4: How do you promote your business? In the boxes on the left, please rank your promotion methods from 1 to 6, 1 is the most used and 6 is the least used.

Word of Mouth / Referrals
Website
Chamber of Commerce
Social Media
Print Media
Other (please specify):

Question 5: Please indicate the season(s) that you are closed or operating at reduced days/hours. (You may select more than one).

- O Spring
- O Summer
- O Autumn
- O Winter
- O We do not reduce hours

Question 6	: How much does your business depend on tourism? (Select the box that applies).
0	0%
0	Less than 50%
0	More than 50%
0	100%
0	Other (please specify)
Question 7	: Should the City invest additional resources to help increase tourism in the winter season?
	Yes
0	No
0	If you have ideas, please share below
	: In your opinion, what type of events would increase customers to your business during the
	nths? (You may select more than one).
	Festival of Lights
	WinterFest
	Downtown Amenity such as an Ice Rink
	Snow Sports Competition
0	Outdoor Holiday Market
0	Interactive activities (ex: sleigh rides, New Year's fireworks)
0	Not applicable to my business
0	Other (please specify)
O	
applies).	: How far do the majority of your customers/visitors travel to get here? (Select the box that
	Less than 50 miles (local)
	50 miles or more (tourists and non-locals)
	Other (please specify)
J	

Transient Room Tax & Visitor Experience

Please read the following:

The Transient Room Tax (TRT) is collected on overnight lodging and generates funds to promote local tourism and support essential services. A portion of the TRT revenue is **restricted** and can only be used for tourism promotion or tourism-related facilities. Unrestricted funds can be used to fund any city services. A tourism strategic plan would work with key community partners to outline how the **restricted** revenue is used locally to benefit the local business community.

Question 10: What do you think the **restricted** funds collected from TRT should be used for? (You can select more than one).

- O Tourism-related public facilities to enhance visitor experiences
- O Tourism Promotion: Marketing efforts to promote the City to in-state visitors
- O Tourism Promotion: Marketing efforts to promote the City to out-of-state and international visitors

Question 11: What is important to the visitor experience of your customers? (You can select more than one).

0	Visitor Center
O	Visitor Amenities (ex: bathrooms, water fountain, warming hut)
O	Accommodations (lodging options)
0	Local Art & Artists
0	Nature/Outdoor Recreation
0	Indoor Activities
O	Other (please specify)

Question 12: The City would like to develop a 3-5 year collaborative strategic plan in regard to tourism. The Tourism Strategic Plan would guide the use of **restricted** TRT funds and maintain a balance between tourism and local livability. Should the City create the Sisters Tourism Strategic Plan? (Select the box that applies).

0	Yes
0	No
O	Other (please specify)

Question 13: Should the City of Sisters create a Sisters Tourism & Visitor Experience committee to help guide the use of restricted Transient Room Tax funds? (Select the box that applies).

0	Yes
0	No
0	Other (please specify)

Chamber of Commerce

Question 1	.4: Are you a member of the Sisters Chamber of Commerce? (Select the box that applies).
0	Yes
0	I used to be a member
0	If you are not, please explain why below

Question 15: Do you support the creation of a Downtown Business Association and/or participate in the Oregon Main Street Program? For more information, use this link: https://www.mainstreet.org/home

- O Yes, both
- O Yes, a Downtown Business Association only
- O Yes, participate in Oregon Main Street only
- O I need more information
- O No

Local Economic Impacts

Question 16: How significantly has your business been affected by the following events/issues:

	Not at all affected	A little	Somewhat	Significantly	Severely Affected
Availability of affordable housing	0	0	0	0	0
The economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	0	0	0	0	0
The 2020 fire season and/or related-smoke	0	0	0	0	0
Slow shoulder season(s) / Winter months	0	0	0	0	О
Fill in the blank(s) below of other events/issues:	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0
	0	0	0	0	0

Question 17: Are there any other concerns you would like to include that have not been covered?							
	1						
	- 1						

--- End of Survey ---

Thank you for participating in the City of Sister's 2020 Business Survey! We appreciate your time. Do you have questions or comments you would like to follow-up with? Are you interested in being part of the tourism strategic planning process? Please contact Emme Shoup, Assistant Community Engagement & Program Coordinator, at 541-323-5216 or eshoup@ci.sisters.or.us.