



Milton-Freewater Downtown Alliance Receives \$200,000 Oregon Heritage Grant!

Milton-Freewater, Oregon, May 26: Oregon Heritage has awarded the Milton-Freewater Downtown Alliance (MFDA) a \$200,000 grant to improve two vacant properties on North Main Street. These include a remodel of 620 N. Main Street for a bakery coffee shop and interior renovation and roof repair of 514 N. Main.

Both properties are in an area that has some of the highest vacancies rates in MFDA's Main Street District which includes S. Main Street, Broadway Avenue and N. Main Street. MFDA sees these property improvements as being a catalyst for bringing new businesses to occupy vacant properties and creating a vibrant retail district that will support the needs of the community in addition to generating more foot traffic to the established businesses in the district.

Oregon Heritage, a division of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, awarded 28 matching grants worth \$5,000,000 to Oregon Main Street Network organizations across the state for building projects that encourage economic revitalization. Projects range from façade improvement to basic facilities and housing with awards ranging from \$23,850-\$200,000. The department funded applications that best conveyed the ability to stimulate private investment and local economic development, best fit within the community's long-range plan for downtown vitality, and community need.

The MFDA's revitalization project is one of ten in Oregon that will bring long vacant buildings in their main street districts back into use. Other grant projects include new housing or housing improvements, refurbishing properties to support local businesses, roof and electrical improvements to commercial properties, work to repair or restore historic theaters and restoration of properties destroyed by fire.

The grant program was created during the 2015 legislative session, and placed with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. The legislation established a permanent fund for the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant, and provided an initial infusion of funds from the sale of lottery bonds. The legislature included the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant in the lottery bond package approved in 2021. An additional grant round will occur in 2023. The funds must be used to award grants to participating Oregon Main Street Network organizations to acquire, rehabilitate or construct buildings to facilitate community revitalization. The program also requires that at least 50 percent of the funds go to rural communities as defined in the bill.

In November last year it was announced that the MFDA and Milton-Freewater Area Chamber of Commerce had joined forces to form the Milton-Freewater Chamber Downtown Alliance (MFCDA). The MFDA's success in receiving this grant for the renovation of properties on Main Street is a major step towards achieving their goals to create 'A Vibrant and Prosperous Milton-Freewater Where Everyone Benefits'.