

Brightly, Oregon

Part 1:

SLIDE 1: Nestled within the natural beauty of the Pacific Northwest lies the charming town of Brightly, Oregon. You can see the town of 2000 residents here, nestled along the Umpqua river. There is a creek that runs through town that has been straightened over the past 100 years to open up more agricultural land, but as we will talk about in a bit, the straightening has led to heavy sedimentation in the lower stretch. The creek now exceeds its banks and causes significant flooding during spring rain storms.

SLIDE 2: But first, let's talk more about Brightly. The town's residents have forged a culture that revolves around mutual support, engagement, and a shared commitment to fostering a better tomorrow. Brightly's identity is rooted in its enduring camaraderie. Community members unite to support one another at local centers like food banks, post-church gatherings, or within schools and libraries. No matter the issue, neighbors always lend a hand. When disasters strike, the people of the town roll up their sleeves and pitch in to aid in response and recovery. They take care of themselves and their own.

SLIDE 3: Brightly buzzes with activity year-round, but its true spirit shines during the annual summer celebration. As the days stretch long, the Brightly community joins together to celebrate its rich history and vibrant community, coming alive with music, food, and laughter. At the heart of it all is the annual rodeo, electrifying the air with cheers for the local contenders.

SLIDE 4: In the midst of strength and solidarity, challenges exist. The same few individuals lead countless volunteer initiatives, burdening their capacity.

Finding new volunteers is an ongoing challenge. Community events, while vibrant, fail to represent the community's rich tapestry of backgrounds. For example, Brightly is home to a strong Latino base, consisting of 40% of the population. However, the Latino culture and residents are generally missing from community events, and community services and resources are rarely available in Spanish.

SLIDE 5: Like many rural areas in America, Brightly residents face significant housing and health accessibility challenges, especially among its most vulnerable populations. A third of residents are aged 65 or older, which is 50% higher than the state average. Nearly a quarter of residents have a disability, with obstacles to mobility and independent living prevailing as the most prevalent challenges. These challenges highlight the need to address health, safety, and accessibility concerns.

SLIDE 6: As the elderly population grows, addressing the intersection of heat waves intensified by climate change becomes increasingly crucial for safeguarding their health. Rising temperatures pose heightened risks such as heat-related illnesses and exacerbate existing health conditions among seniors and outdoor workers. Implementing adaptive strategies, from urban planning to community outreach and healthcare provisions, is essential to protect individuals from the escalating impacts of climate-driven heat events.

SLIDE 7: Brightly is fortunate to possess an adequately staffed local medical clinic and sufficient emergency services, but many care needs – including all specialty, maternal, mental health, and hospital care – require travel to the City of Townsend, a 60-minute drive away. The distance poses severe challenges for many, especially the elderly and those without reliable transportation.

SLIDE 8: With median income and employment opportunities significantly below state averages, accessibility and affordability of housing is also a pressing concern

in Brightly. Housing options are limited and expensive relative to the median income of Brightly residents, and many homes are in need of repair. Additional housing stock at a reasonable price is desperately needed to house the local workforce.

However, Brightly is taking strides to address these challenges by updating zoning regulations to encourage the development of affordable workforce housing, including modern prefab and multifamily housing options.

SLIDE 9: Despite hurdles, Brightly's community spirit has fostered innovative solutions. The local clinic is exploring options to improve access to healthcare. They received an Oregon Health Authority grant in 2021 to enable alternative health-need transportation options, including a bus that transports residents to medical appointments in the City of Townsend, 60 minutes away. In addition, the school district is partnering with a state children's hospital, launching a district-wide healthy eating and exercise program aimed at increasing health literacy and lowering chronic disease among youth. In addition the town is opening cooling shelters for their population during summer heat waves.

SLIDE 10: As Brightly navigates housing and transportation challenges, the community's efforts to ensure safe, attainable, and accessible housing and transportation options for all its residents are commendable. With a focus on sustainable growth and community engagement, Brightly is not just facing its challenges head-on but is also laying the groundwork for a brighter, more resilient future.

Part 1 – BREAK FOR MENTIMETER:

Collective Identity and Community Support

Safeguards to Human Health and Social Welfare

Part 2:

SLIDE 11: The 2008 economic downturn severely impacted Brightly's small business and Main Street vitality, with the COVID pandemic further hindering local businesses. Brightly's Main Street is rundown, with many landscape trees neglected and dying. Several storefronts are empty but, thankfully, only require heavy TLC, rather than complete demolition. Still, a few gems remain, like the 100-year-old hobby and pharmacy store that plants long-blooming flowers against the storefront each spring.

SLIDE 12: Brightly's largest employer is the active and busy lumber mill, but all processed lumber is shipped out of the area. There are hobbyist woodworkers and the opportunity for a construction industry in town, but mechanisms to keep local lumber in town to enable small-scale projects or build a local construction industry are missing. Beyond lumber and a few local restaurants, there is a lack of economic diversity and no economic development plan, leading to low wages and challenges attracting new business investments. There are programs available regionally to help new and existing businesses thrive, such as the USDA Rural Development and local economic development associations, but these resources are underutilized.

SLIDE 13: The community's youth have access to a K-12 program and offer some job skills training through high school. However, opportunities for advanced trade skills education in town are scarce, leaving gaps in the local electrician, plumbing, construction, and welding industries.

Career or technical education, including certificates, workforce training programs, and an Associate Degree program are available in the City of Townsend. However,

the bus that transports people for medical services is not available for residents interested in furthering their education, an easy fix, some think.

SLIDE 14: However, the town's youth are provided with various after-school leadership programs and sports leagues. A group of young individuals from Brightly has joined the Youth Conservation Corps. They are working on various projects to improve wildlife habitats, clean campgrounds to protect the environment, and provide awareness regarding protection of vital natural resources. Their efforts demonstrate that a grassroots approach can help protect the environment while simultaneously uplifting the community's resilience.

SLIDE 15: In addition, the surrounding area is rich with natural resource amenities, like forest trail systems, Forest Service land for camping and off-road recreation, and access to waterways that include fishing and hunting. Each summer and fall Brightly undergoes an influx of recreators and hunters, and while the gas station provides some outdoor gear, services for more comprehensive outdoor equipment are only available in the City of Townsend. A strong desire exists for outfitters and guides, and other recreation-focused businesses in town.

SLIDE 16: Driven by a shared vision of sustainable growth and inclusive prosperity, Brightly embraces the power of collective action. Elected officials recognize the need for community input and try their best to ensure every voice is heard, including those of the local youth. Information about council meetings and community surveys is shared through the City website and facebook page. But attendance is low at community meetings, and it is unclear if the website communications are used by residents.

Local officials are aware of the need for an economic development plan. However, this effort is unable to move forward due to a lack of capacity. Many seats remain

vacant on the city's committees that would take on this important task.

Additionally, Elected Officials remain in office for many consecutive terms, due to lack of interest in running for office and a growing misunderstanding of how to run. Long tenures in office lead to individual burnout and slower action.

Part 2 – BREAK FOR MENTIMETER:

Diverse Livelihoods and Employment

Sustainable Economy

Effective Leadership

Part 3:

SLIDE 17: Brightly, Oregon faces several hazard problems, the most pressing being flooding and wildfire. The main creek running through Brightly was straightened over the last 100 years to open up more land for farming, ranching, and development. Consequently, the floodplains nearby the creeks are no longer capable of holding the excess flood water or sediment, causing both an increase in the frequency and severity of flooding and loss of critical wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Flood waters frequently impact the local lumbermill, Brightly's largest employer. More than once, flood water reached the local water treatment facility, jeopardizing the town's clean water supply.

SLIDE 18: The loss of wetland wildlife in the area threatens the health of the local ecosystem and the fishing and hunting industry. Brightly is a stark example of how a simple hazard of creek channelization can trigger a chain reaction of cascading effects. A hydrology assessment is needed to better understand the causes and consequences of flooding, and to identify potential solutions. However, the city has not had the time or resources to explore FEMA funding and grant opportunities.

SLIDE 19: The areas surrounding Brightly also face wildfire threats due to a combination of prolonged droughts, extreme heat waves, and dense vegetation.

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This threatens the safety of the already limited housing stock and businesses both within and surrounding Brightly. Luckily, there are many actions homeowners and business owners can take to protect their property, such as clearing flammable debris and plants at least 30 feet away from their home. More education on wildfire preparedness is much needed.

SLIDE 20: Finally, a recent surge in population growth, which is projected to increase, has brought unforeseen challenges. Demands on water and energy resources are escalating. An increase in extreme climate conditions, such as heat and drought, exacerbates these challenges. The region, once known for its reliable snow melt runoff and late spring rainfall, is now experiencing more frequent and intense droughts and heat waves. The traditional sources of water, such as local rivers and aquifers, are becoming increasingly strained, with water levels dropping to historic lows during dry spells. This threatens the source of drinking water for residents, as well as farmers dependent on irrigation. Heat waves are straining the local energy sector and increasing the cost of energy for residents. While the water crisis remains a challenge, the community is making progress toward diversifying energy sources by promoting solar panel installations and advocating for government support in transitioning to renewable energy grids.

Part 3 – BREAK FOR MENTIMETER:

Built to Last

Effective Disaster Management

Natural Stewardship

Thriving Today and in the Future

Conclusion

As the sun dips below the horizon, casting a warm glow, the spirit of Brightly shines brighter than ever before. In their journey towards progress, the community discovers not only the strength within themselves but also the boundless potential of unity and determination. And so, amidst the challenges of today, Brightly marches forward, guided by the promise of a tomorrow filled with hope and resilience.