

Tualatin/Tigard Selected as Potential “Blue Zone” Demonstration Community

BY TUALATIN MAYOR LOU OGDEN

Recently we received word from the Oregon Business Council that together, the two communities of Tualatin and Tigard, have been selected as finalists for consideration as a Blue Zones Demonstration Community, part of the Oregon Healthiest State Initiative. Our two cities have come together, along with dozens of community partners, on a mission to become a healthier, happier community. Tigard and Tualatin elected officials and staff have endorsed this proposal; however, this is a “Community” initiative and not a City project. With more than 50 endorsements from elected officials, organizations, and community partners we are excited and ready to embrace the Blue Zones philosophies and practices.

While the Tigard/Tualatin community is relatively affluent and has initiatives in place to continually strengthen livability for all, we recognize that additional challenges remain. While the median household income in our community is relatively high, about 20% of



families earn income at or below \$35,000 (living wage threshold). In Washington County, from 1970 to 2010, the total population more than tripled – growing four times faster than the U.S. and nearly three times as fast as the

state of Oregon. During this time period, individuals living below the federal poverty level has grown 500%, three times faster than the state of Oregon. The burden of poverty is disproportionately borne by families with children, people of color, people with disabilities, and adults with less than a high school education. Creating a community where active living, healthy eating, and robust lifestyles are the norm is important to all our citizens and the Blue Zones initiative is a tremendous long-term strategy and practice to make that a reality.

Our cities have adopted community visions that support healthy, active communities. In Tualatin Tomorrow, the community vision includes a goal to promote and facilitate community health and wellness with eight community-identified actions which support achieving this goal. In Tigard, the vision is to be the most walkable community in the Pacific Northwest where people of all ages and abilities enjoy healthy and interconnected lives. Both Tigard and Tualatin participate in the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Cities campaign sponsored by the League of Oregon Cities, Oregon Public Health Institute and Kaiser Permanente; and, we are committed to taking this effort to the next level and broadly engaging all stakeholders in our community to raise awareness about community health and implement change to

become a healthier and happier community, where all people enjoy a higher quality of life and well-being.



We have already started the engagement process to build support for this effort, and our community is ready and excited to welcome Blue Zones. Our support comes from individuals, non-profits, the faith community, the School District, the business community, and regional partners including Washington and Clackamas Counties, TriMet, Metro, Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue and our local, state and federal elected leaders. Our broad community support includes youth, seniors and cultural

groups. Our health care providers, particularly Providence Health and Services and Legacy Meridian Park Medical Center have stepped up to be anchor providers in this endeavor.

We look forward to the next steps in the process, in early October when we welcome Blue Zones Oregon to our community for their site visit, so we can share more information about how the Blue Zones project could change the lives of the people in our community and serve as an example to others across the state and country for increasing community health and well-being.



Lou Ogden,
Tualatin Mayor