

Application Form

Profile

Anton

First Name

Cobb

Last Name

Middle Initial

Email Address

Home Address

City

Suite or Apt

State

Postal Code

What Ward do you live in? *

☒ Ward 7

Primary Phone

Alternate Phone

Lively Station

Employer

Owner/Founder

Job Title

Organizational Development

Occupation

Which Boards would you like to apply for?

Salem Cultural and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board: Submitted

Which of the following City of Salem Board or Commission meetings have you attended? *

- ☒ Airport Advisory Commission
- ☒ Citizen Budget Committee
- ☒ Downtown Advisory Board

Interests & Experiences

What do you feel you can contribute as a board or commission member?

Salem has been my adopted home for 5 years, and the only place my daughter knows as home. My wife grew up here and her family has mostly stayed or returned. This is where we have decided to invest our time, energy and careers to help the Salem-area thrive, and fortify it as a place for families like ours to invest in. As a local business owner, employer, resident and member of the workforce, I hope to provide a perspective unique to my experience in each of these roles. It is important to me to support and join with the leaders and changemakers in the communities I am lucky to be a part of. When I lived in Portland, I formed an NPO called hOURLUNCH to help address child food insecurity in Portland. When in St. Johns, I was a member of the Founding Advisory Board for the Wayfinding Academy, a local non-profit two-year college located in my neighborhood. And here in the Mid-Willamette Valley I have invested my time in the hospitality and service industry, and in support of local service-based NPOs.

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What prompted your interest in applying to serve as a board or commission member?

Involvement in local government as Director of Insights & Industry Relations for Travel Salem from March 2022 - December 2024. Attended monthly City Council, Budget Committee, Neighborhood Association and Revenue Taskforce meetings during that time. Partnering with Salem Area Chamber of Commerce, and presenting on local tourism to Regional Rotary Clubs, Business Associations and City Councils throughout Marion & Polk Counties. Meeting with Salem City Councilors to discuss economic development priorities and engage in why our community members choose to get involved in city leadership, along with the help they require in order to protect and expand basic services and grow quality of life. Being a part of the Salem business community with perspective on the unique needs of our hospitality assets. Working directly with Willamette Workforce Partnership to expand their reach by creating their first Tourism and Hospitality sector. Seeing how change is made in our city, and what individuals and organizations are doing to promote economic development and public good. I have an opportunity through this commission to help support and drive economic impact through an industry I know has great potential for growth, in order to support our beleaguered cultural, hospitality and culinary communities. No small city can survive on resident revenue alone. Visitors bring new dollars into our economy, which can make the difference between local businesses staying afloat and closing their doors for good. I want to help our city work toward health and vibrancy.

Please explain how your education, professional, personal, or volunteer experience and knowledge qualify you to serve on the board(s) or commission(s) for which you are applying.

I have enjoyed a 25-year career in tourism and hospitality, both in the nonprofit and for-profit sectors; which has taken me from Chicago to Portland, and for the past 5-years to Salem. I have opened hotels as a sales & marketing leader with Hilton and Park Hotels; including The Duniway Portland and Signia by Hilton San Jose. I have founded and operated my own hospitality venture in Salem, Lively Station LLC. For the past nearly two years I have been employed by Travel Salem, as Director of Insights & Industry Relations, which provided direct knowledge and influence on Salem's tourism ecosystem. There I led the development process for Travel Salem's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, tracked and reported estimated economic impact data from Salem tourism, and managed communications with cultural, heritage, lodging, city & community stakeholders, including the production of the annual Mid-Willamette Valley Tourism Summit at the Salem Convention Center. I previously served on two advisory boards, the founding Advisory Board for the Wayfinding Academy in Portland, and on the Race, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Advisory Board for Willamette Valley Visitors Association, where I drafted their inaugural RDEI Statement.

List any experience you have with volunteering for the City of Salem or other organizations.

Volunteer and development partner: Family Building Blocks, Salem Angels, Marion and Polk Food Share. Member of the Willamette Valley Visitor Association RDEI Advisory Committee. Joined in the City of Salem's Revenue Taskforce process through taking part in town halls and committee meetings. Volunteer speaker: TEDx Mt Hood and Rotary Club of Lake Oswego. Parent volunteer at Montessori Discovery Center. Founded hOURLUNCH in 2014 in partnership with Oregon Food Bank and NoKidHungry. Recipient of two community-service awards: Spirit of Hospitality Award from Travel Portland; CEO Light & Warmth Award from Hilton (Hilton's top team-member honor).

Briefly explain any experience you have working with your neighborhood association or other public bodies or committees.

Attended neighborhood association meetings for nearly all NA, to plan and implement the City of Salem's Intersection Art program and street mural celebration block parties. Oversaw SCAN, Grant and West Salem murals and neighborhood block parties. Also attended SWAN meetings as a South Salem resident and business owner. Joined Salem's Non-Profit destination marketing and management organization, Travel Salem, in 2023. Attended revenue task force and budget committee meetings as Director of Insights and Industry Relations, as well as resident and business owner. Involved in planning and race day support for IRONMAN 70.3 Oregon. Presented to Salem Main Street, regional Rotary Clubs, Chambers and regional business associations and city councils throughout Marion & Polk Counties. Forged unique development partnerships with Family Building Blocks, Marion and Polk Food Share and Salem Angels. Member of Salem Area Chamber of Commerce. Family YMCA of Marion & Polk Counties member, donor, Chief Organizational Development Officer, and participant in their inaugural Livestrong Program. Partnered with Willamette Workforce Partnership to develop a tourism & hospitality sector within their charter. Drafted the RDEI statement for Willamette Valley through leadership role on the Willamette Valley Visitor Association RDEI Advisory Committee. Responsible for producing the 2023 and 2024 Mid-Willamette Valley Tourism Summit and Most Oregon Part of Oregon Awards; bringing together stakeholders, community members, cultural and heritage leaders, city officials and legislators for celebration, education and reporting around economic development in Salem through tourism & hospitality.

Can you commit to attending a minimum of 75 percent of scheduled meetings? (Please refer to the City's website for the meeting schedule. Failure to meet the attendance requirement may result in removal from office.)

☒ Yes ☐ No

Please list up to three (3) references whom we could contact to learn more about your qualifications (name/email address or phone number/relationship).

Scott Snyder scott.snyder@grandhotelsalem.com Travel Salem Board of Directors Tim Sinatra tsinatra@theyonline.org CEO, Family YMCA of Marion & Polk Counties

In your opinion, what do cultural amenities such as Bush House, Deepwood Estate, Historic Elsinore Theatre or the Hallie Ford Museum of Art contribute to our community and quality of life?

Cultural and heritage assets like those listed are key drivers for visitors and visitor spending in the city of Salem. According to Placer.ai data published by Travel Salem, in 2022 the top 5 Salem attractions drove 445,800 visitors from 50+ miles away; which made up 10% of the 4.5 million total visits at those attractions. Our cultural assets do a lot with minimal resources, in a lot of cases with exceptional ROI. Our unique amenities help define our identity beyond commerce, and as an important way to acknowledge and further the conversation around our city's heritage. Salem Art Association has done valuable work in celebrating and recontextualizing the history of the Bush House Museum. Deepwood Museum & Gardens has had success in making Victorian high tea engaging and relevant for modern visitors. Hallie Ford Museum and Historic Elsinore Theatre make a point of celebrating and showcasing Northwest stories. I have fractional personal experience with the challenges of managing a historically relevant asset. The main Lively Station building was built in 1914 as a general store, which was located alongside Livesley Station. That important train depot connected Salem to the Roberts Community and was named after Salem's mayor and "Hop King of Oregon," Thomas Livesly. Despite the challenges of its age, that connection is important to the fabric of our business and helps us tell the continued story of that historic asset, and deeply-rooted community. One of our goals in partnering with the authors of *The Roberts Community: Echoes of the Past*, was to introduce the Roberts community to Salem residents and visitors. And bring focus back on a historic community that continues to have vital influence on Salem's story. These assets offer community spaces, places of celebration and reflection. They are points of beautification for our city. They are employers within our embattled tourism & hospitality industry. Along with investment dollars, I would encourage residents and businesses to support our cultural assets by being regular patrons & volunteers, and by offering workforce assistance, legislative support and leadership opportunities like this committee.

Question applies to Salem Cultural and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board

In your opinion, are there any opportunities in Salem to improve its image as a tourist destination?

In my time with Travel Salem I conducted and analyzed visitor sentiment surveys, including those through IRONMAN, Destinations International and Travel Salem's own Visitor Profile Report. Consensus is that Salem is a wonderful place to visit. Public services like public restrooms, signage and road conditions tend to top the list of areas of opportunity. While more resident facing issues like safety, rank lower in the minds of travelers. All of these common challenges take resources to address, which are limited. But what is also apparent, and perhaps more easily addressed, is that our visitor tends to be 50+ years old, traveling as a couple, with higher income. I believe there is an immediate opportunity to market our food, events and regional assets to younger travelers who will in turn help us spread the word via social media, word-of-mouth and online reviews. Chefs are moving here from Portland. Young potential residents continue to discover our city, but in some ways we are still a hidden gem even to Oregon residents. And what visitors may know of Salem may be outdated. We know that Salem is an exciting, vibrant place to live and visit in the heart of the Willamette Valley, with the laurels to be a top culinary destination. We have James Beard recognized chefs, minority owned and operated restaurants, breweries & wineries, and attractions that offer innovative experiences. All of which add to the diversity of year-round offerings that helped Salem rebound so quickly and substantially for travelers in the years following Covid. Investment in year-round youth, semi-pro and recreational sports, are another key to driving vital Nov-Mar business. Any perception of being closed for the winter will be dissuaded by the activity and economy driven by sports travel, which can be spurred on by turf and facility projects, and our unique lodging, cultural and culinary experiences available during those months. We can quickly address accessibility challenges by creating direct dialogue with communities that are seeking specific assets. A good start may be inventorying the offerings we already have and communicating that information to potential visitors, including non-English speakers. I also believe that the Salem area has the character and community to support a unifying brand around the proud Salem name. I like when I see visitors to Salem wearing Portland branded apparel and I think there is an opportunity to send them back with Salem branded apparel, which was made in Salem, in support of Salem projects and furthering the messaging and appreciation of our authentic and dynamic city. Managing Salem's image as a top tourism destination requires citywide support and clear goals and measurements. As a unified body involving lodging, tourism, marketing, cultural/heritage, recreation and city leadership, I would propose adopting a shared goal for the city. An example could be becoming #1 on US News & World Report's "Best Places To Live in the US" within the next 5 years. Like Salem, the cities that already top that list have rich cultural and recreational assets, value, desirability and quality of life. These qualities that make them top places to live also make them enticing places to visit. Is something like this attainable? • We are already on the list at #108! • We scored 6.0 with the top score being just 7.1! • #2 on the list is Boise, ID, which is already in our regional competitive set for visitors and lodging performance! • Portland is #41... and many visitors to Salem, including myself, moved here from Portland seeking improvements in value and quality of life! There is already no place most of us would rather live than Salem, and I can't imagine better marketing as a tourism destination than working together to make it official. Only 107 cities left to beat – let's get started!

Question applies to Salem Cultural and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board

The Salem Cultural and Tourism Promotion Advisory Board includes one member from the for-profit tourism industry. Are you applying for this position?

☒ Yes ☐ No

I have both for-profit and non-profit tourism industry experience. Happy to fill vacancy for whichever role is best suited.

Demographics

Some boards and commissions require membership to be racially, politically or geographically proportionate to the general public. The following information helps track our recruitment and diversity efforts.

Ethnicity

Gender

Question