3 Vision

Preface

Plans are always formulated to anticipate and influence change, but few times in Ellensburg's history have so many forces been present to effect change. Today's community faces enormous growth pressures - with all the related pressures that accompany it - as well as demands for new services brought on by changes on the national and global scale. Ellensburg is on the cusp of change, and this document is a reflection of the community's response to it.

If this Comprehensive Plan represents the primary framework for policy formulation and decision-making over its time cycle, the Vision Statement provides the framework for the plan. Intentionally broad-brush in nature, a vision statement should express the greater wishes of the community at-large; it should be indefinite enough to engender consensus, yet specific enough to retain its locality and relevance to the rest of the plan. This chapter articulates the adopted vision statement for the Ellensburg Comprehensive Plan, and outlines the background related to its content and development. Specific goals, presented alongside the vision in the 1995 plan, have been moved to their related chapters.

Key Considerations

The single over-arching theme in views expressed by participants in this current update process - and a theme echoed in all previous plans - is the appreciation for and desire to retain Ellensburg's "small town feel." For the sake of this desire, this process has strongly
encouraged the community to define for itself what this means. Arguably, the 1995 update, "Ellensburg's Community of Choice" provides an indirect definition by articulating a vision and wide range of goals established through two years of debate and discussion. Of course, Ellensburg's built environment reflects this vision as well, for every decision made part of an urban fabric mirrors the values and resources of the community in which it takes place. This process has in effect posed the question again and again: "What are Ellensburg's essential qualities, and what energies must be spent to preserve, if not enhance them?"

It is perhaps a good sign that community input throughout this process closely matched input expressed in previous planning efforts. After all, one hallmark of small towns is their stability and sense of security - if only in contrast to the rapid change and pace of larger cities. That caring citizens - foregoing all other locales and electing to make their lives here - have so strongly repeated their love for "small town feel" and everything associated with stability, permanence, and community, affirms those qualities as genuine and lasting.

For this reason, this vision statement uses the 1995 version as its basis. It has been changed to move specific goals to related chapters, or refined to more accurately express original intent. It has been changed to provide more specificity where experience has shown it necessary to support chapter goals. Most importantly, it appears here as drafted and inspired by earlier efforts; as checked, affirmed and refined by thousands of comments, hundreds of hours, scores of letters, images and other expressions so thoughtfully contributed to this critical effort. Readers are strongly encouraged to review the documents and narrative related to the exceptional public participation informing this document; the community should take tremendous pride in the level of care demonstrated throughout this process.

**Primary Themes**

If the overall theme of Ellensburg's vision is its small town/rural nature, many other specific elements must also appear to define and support it. The vision expresses a desire to manage projected growth in a way that maintains Ellensburg as a small, compact, stable, traditional community with an attractive central business district and similarly-
developed residential areas. It expresses a desire for new development to be compatible with the existing urban framework; it envisions a continued role for the city as center of commercial, financial, governmental and cultural activities within Kittitas Valley, and it stresses downtown’s place as the hub at the center of it all. In short, and as the 1995 plan put it: “…while projected growth is recognized by most residents as both welcome and inevitable, the community desires that future growth not change things too much.”

Vision Statement

Preamble

One element added to this vision statement is a preamble, suggested in exercises testing the relevance of the prior statement, refined through public submittals, and ultimately composed by members of the effort’s Citizen Advisory Committee:

For the next ten years, Ellensburg citizens agree to use cooperative efforts toward building for our future. We acknowledge our shared fate for the well-being of Ellensburg. We remain committed to continuous participation with city government.

The town’s responsibility is to create a base for our health and safety that fosters civic pride, civic involvement, and innovative business for our current generation as well as to our past and future generations.

Central Washington University will continue to be a prominent focus. We will continue to be the center for Kittitas County government. We want to be the social center that highlights the Rodeo/Fair and includes other destination events throughout the year for our citizens and for tourism.

We strive to maintain our unique, distinctive characteristics and associations by knowing our neighbors and being civically involved. The elements of agriculture, small business, education, industry, government, investment and financial services, retirement, housing, hospital and health care, tourism, environmental protection, non-profit organizations, leisure and recreation, and a vibrant sustainable downtown core are the spokes that provide a strong community for the citizens of Ellensburg. Together, we create our future.

Vision Statement

Ellensburg is a community where residents recognize and cherish the many unique qualities that have shaped its past and will guide its future. Included among these are Ellensburg’s scenic, rural setting, its central location, its compact, walkable nature, its thriving and historic downtown, its university and related civic offerings, the presence of the County Seat, its rich agricultural
history and economy, its enterprising commercial sector and retail offerings, its clean environment, numerous and proximate recreational opportunities, and the connectedness and social wealth related to small-town life. Ellensburg residents recognize their role as stewards of their community, and through careful management, investment and hard work, are committed to supporting and enhancing these values so essential to the sustained health of their city.

Ellensburg has always proactively managed its future. The recruitment of rail lines, the rapid reconstruction of downtown following the 1889 fire, the development of locally owned utilities, the 1975 Comprehensive Plan and revival of the Downtown Historic District, the 1995 Comprehensive Plan update, and many other examples establish Ellensburg as a community that values and works hard to maintain and enhance its traditional identity. As such, Ellensburg’s growth will be accommodated within its Urban Growth Area, in a manner reflective of existing neighborhoods. Ellensburg’s centrality and transportation access will be leveraged to maintain the City’s traditional role as regional hub for trade.

The City of Ellensburg will be proactive in its economic environment by creating a stable, sustainable and diversified economy. The City will encourage business development and emphasize the creation of family wage jobs. The economic vision will enable the city and its citizens to achieve economic prosperity while preserving the environment and a high quality of life.

Ellensburg’s downtown is the heart of the community’s commercial, civic, social and cultural life. The historic core, composed of approximately 16 blocks of well-preserved and eclectic architecture, supports a wealth and diversity of uses, including specialty retail shops, professional services, general retail shops, housing, entertainment, dining and financial institutions. This role has been maintained through great sacrifice, and it will be actively preserved through a range of efforts, including investment to accommodate needed growth and infrastructure, residential occupation, and retail. Because downtown’s historic buildings are key to the City’s identity and cultural life, new buildings and
rehabilitation of existing buildings in the Downtown Historic District will complement the architecture and placement of the historic stock.

Ellensburg recognizes the importance of Central Washington University, and supports its role in providing advanced education. Indirect benefits offered by the University are also valued, including the student population’s role in the City’s cultural life, and the opportunities for citizens to join in cultural, educational, research and entertainment activities offered by the University. Opportunities to enhance ties between the City and the University will be pursued, including improved pedestrian links across University Way, coordination of planning between both agencies, and opportunities to spur housing investment in Downtown Ellensburg.

Ellensburg citizens are proud of the community’s agricultural traditions, and consider the presence of open space and farmlands surrounding urban areas key to their quality of life. Due to this, and to the direct and indirect economic benefits associated with farmlands, Ellensburg will pursue opportunities to further connect City and countryside in the form of dedicated open space, bicycle and foot-paths, and will pursue opportunities to define growth on the urban edge in ways that protect the presence and viability of farmlands surrounding the community.

Ellensburg’s economic diversity includes enterprising business, and small industrial and retail components; the community will foster the continued presence of these activities as part of its planning and regulatory considerations.

Ellensburg citizens cherish the characteristics of their existing neighborhoods, and wish to see those qualities continued in future residential growth. These qualities include walkability, connectivity with the existing street grid, street trees, sidewalks, affordability, and centrally-located, accessible neighborhood amenities such as parks, small retail, services and churches. All foster the sense of community, of "knowing one’s neighbor," and relationships with the downtown core valued by Ellensburg citizens.

Ellensburg citizens also prize the many public facilities and cultural events available to them, and look forward each year to the Fair and Rodeo and to numerous other civic events. The public library system is a vital part of the community, as are the many parks, pools, and walking paths already available. Primary and secondary schools are considered of critical importance to the community’s future. As such, present levels of municipal service in these elements shall be maintained on pace with, and to complement, growth.
Though residents generally value their existing quality of life, change is understood to be inevitable. To manage growth and leverage change for the betterment of its citizens, Ellensburg recognizes the need to work closely with the County government on matters related to long-range planning, including economic development, transportation, environmental issues, housing, and land use.

The health and continued existence of Ellensburg’s many wetlands, open spaces, streams, ponds, wooded areas, and fish and wildlife habitat are also recognized as key to its identity, as well as to the physical health and livelihood of the community. As such, Ellensburg will work to uphold all regulations related to the protection of these vital resources, and will seek creative solutions that add value to these measures wherever possible. Conservation of water and energy resources is to be promoted.

Healthy lifestyles, a healthful environment and productivity are synonymous. Effective health care shall be promoted for all Ellensburg citizens through preventive measures, and through the support of the local hospital, medical, and allied health care community. Ellensburg values the range of medical and associated services available within its boundaries, and recognizes their importance to surrounding communities. While not competing with advanced care provided by larger regional cities, Ellensburg supports the continued provision of health care, and expects area hospital and treatment capacity to grow on-pace with local demand.

We, the citizens of Ellensburg, in view of the many riches of our community, recognize that what surrounds us is a subtle form of wealth: it is well-being. We are committed to maintaining these priceless advantages.