

# From the UPPER KITTITAS COUNTY VISION PLAN

June 8, 2005

Status of Key Recommendations shown in *italics*

Updated May 25, 2006

## 2. Key Recommendations

Building on the Foundation Statements, the following are specific recommendations for ways to forward the intent of the Foundation Statements. Many of the important issues identified in the Vision Plan are interconnected between categories. Just because one topic may be identified under a particular subject title, it should not be viewed as applicable to only that subject title.

### a. Public Involvement...

Kittitas County officials need to be more progressive in meeting public notice requirements. When opportunities are available for public comment on proposals and decisions, Kittitas County can go beyond the minimum state requirements for public notification. In turn, Upper County residents with an interest in land use planning and development need to be cognizant of the established procedures for public notice and proposing amendments.

The following are essential public involvement tools that Kittitas County can implement immediately:

- Post property that is subject to a land use application:
  - Use a minimum size sign of 16 sq ft;
  - Include public hearing date on posting;
  - Post all sides of property that front a public right of way;
  - Minimum two signs per parcel larger than one acre;
  - Include contact name for specific information;
  - Require sign to be erected upon issuance of Notice of Application;

*It is the intention of Kittitas County to implement this suggestion in the new development code.*
- Give written notice to property owners within 500' of property subject to proposal.

*It is the intention of Kittitas County to implement this suggestion in the new development code*
- For non-project actions, issue press releases (in addition to required legal notices) to all local print and broadcast media. Use the press release as a tool to educate the public on how the non-project action will change allowable uses.

*The press is presently notified of all land use applications. Coverage is given at the discretion of the news media*
- Publish legal notice in Upper County newspaper as well as newspaper of record.

*Any application located in the upper county is published in the Tribune*

- Hold public hearings in the Upper County when a proposal is located in the Upper County;

*This suggestion continues to be explored.*

- Keep the website up-to-date, and include pending actions, Notice of Applications issued, SEPA review distribution;

*Planning is underway to post all applications, staff reports and SEPA documents on the CDS website*

- Provide weekly email notification (per request) of Notice of Applications issued and receipt of request for non-project action;

*An application registry is kept at CDS and is available to any person who requests it.*

- Increase developer fees as applicable to cover costs of improved public notification. *Land use application fees were increased in July of 2005 with direction by the Board of County Commissioners to review these fees on an annual basis. Full cost recovery of permit review is expected to be phased in over a three year period.*

- Designate an Upper County location where residents will be able to review project and proposal files.

*This recommendation continues to be explored.*

- Write notices that are clear, concise and easily understood.

*Every attempt to meet this suggestion is being made. Certain legal requirements of publication require that format and information be provided in a particular manner.*

- Revise the administration of the current SEPA review process. Improve the analysis regarding the probable impact a proposal may have on the environment.

*SEPA review is beginning to address projects in a more comprehensive manner and analyzing the cumulative impacts a proposal may have*

## **b. Land Use...**

Changes occurring in all categories of land uses and the permanent effects to the built and natural environments are of great concern in Upper Kittitas County. More advanced levels of analysis need to be implemented to address the increasingly complex issues with proposed development.

- Residential ~

Encourage higher density residential development to locate in Urban Growth Areas.

Base the amount of land designated for residential use on the amount needed to accommodate the County's rural share of population growth;

- Update the County population growth projections and allocations;

*Completed by the Council of Governments in April 2006*

- Inventory existing land available for residential use and determine the amount of additional population that can be served;

*Individual cities are required to do this in urban areas as an element of their comprehensive plan update. The County is conducting this analysis for each of the 5 urban growth nodes*

- Designate residential lands in a way that preserves useful and contiguous open space, wildlife migration routes and habitat;

*Use of the public benefit rating system and the cluster sub-division code which was adopted in Jan. 2006*

- Implement development incentives to foster open space preservation through:
  - o Density bonuses leading to open space preservation.
  - o Cluster development preserving usable open space.
  - o Incorporate critical areas into preserved areas.
  - o Use of conservation easements to maintain open space in perpetuity.
  - o Transfer of development rights.
  - o Agriculture and Forest land protection programs.

*Use of public benefit rating system and cluster subdivision code which was adopted in Jan. 2006*
- Implement impact fees and other mitigation tools to ensure growth and new development pays for itself.
 

*Use of SEPA to identify specific impacts and provide adequate mitigation. Proper application of existing county requirements including the road standards*

- Commercial/Industrial ~

Unless associated with resource lands, commercial and industrial lands are assumed to be urban in character. Commercial developments are particularly onerous as far as dispersing light pollution.

- Ensure that an adequate supply of commercial and industrial land is designated county-wide.

*Commercial and Industrial land needs and amounts will be addressed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. Generally, Commercial and Industrial lands are best suited for Cities and Urban Growth areas where adequate urban services can be provided*

- Create development standards for commercial areas that:
  - o Minimize artificial lighting in commercial and industrial areas;
  - o Direct artificial lighting downward;
  - o Develop light standards that encourage shared parking and paved areas;
  - o Preserve natural drainages;
  - o Encourages natural landscaping and screening;

*Development standards would need to be developed within the zoning code.*

- Designate commercial and industrial lands within Urban Growth Areas and Urban Growth Nodes.

*Commercial and Industrial land needs will be addressed as part of the county and cities comprehensive plan updates*

- Resource lands ~

The rich natural resources have historically been the lifeblood of Upper Kittitas County. Beyond timber and wood products production, resource lands support watersheds, wildlife habitat, recreation opportunities and more, as discussed earlier.

- Land use practices should secure the sustainability of these resources for future economic benefit.

- Forest lands should be designated at a minimum of 80 acres, and preserved in as much volume as possible.

*Commercial Forest lands in Kittitas County have a density of 1 unit per 80 acres*

- Encourage and implement incentives to discourage forest and agricultural lands out of resource designations. Resource lands should be held in perpetuity and available for resource uses.

*County has an open space program that allows property owners to place their property in an open space forest designation allowing for tax savings on those parcels.*

- Provide incentives to property owners to develop land conservation areas.

*Proposals developed by the Resource Lands Advisory Committee offers a variety of incentives for these areas.*

- Rural Areas ~

In the Upper County, the rural areas are where life happens. In other regions, rural areas are typically referred to as “left over lands”; the lands that are not designated for urban growth, resource lands or critical areas. The Upper County residents are adamantly determined to preserve their rural lifestyle. In order to achieve this, the following is recommended:

- Create development standards that permit clustering of building sites. The purpose of clustering is to retain large areas of open space, in perpetuity, to accommodate wildlife corridors and migration routes.

*The public benefit ratings system and the cluster subdivision code adopted in January of 2006 specifically addresses this recommendation*

- Refine the county-wide rural residential designation so that it does not create urban or rural sprawl that is overwhelming the rural character of the Upper Kittitas County.

*Alternatives are under consideration as part of the Comprehensive Plan update*

- Balance the designation of residential lands with the projected population distribution so that concentrations of population move from primarily rural to primarily urban county-wide.

*Efforts in the cities and county Comprehensive Plan update including revised population allocations from the Conference of Governments will examine this item.*

- Recognize and address the impacts of second home development on rural areas during the required 2006 comprehensive plan/development regulation update process.

*This issue has been a topic of discussion and consideration during the Comprehensive Plan update process.*

- Critical Areas ~

Critical Areas such as wildlife corridors and habitat, wetlands, flood plains, aquifer recharge and geological hazardous areas are vital components of the functioning ecosystem. Development standards regarding critical areas should be crafted to protect and retain these mechanisms.

- Identify and map all types of critical areas including flood hazards, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas and fish and wildlife habitat.

*The County will be updating its Critical Areas Ordinance in 2007*

- Review update, and implement critical area regulations for all types of the critical areas listed above.

*The County will be updating its Critical Areas Ordinance in 2007*

- Protection and preservation of wildlife and its habitat tops the priority list for Upper Kittitas residents.

*Comment Noted*

### **c. Housing...**

Rural areas are prime targets for the second home and the high end housing market. While a certain amount of this is desirable, housing policies and residential land designations should promote housing that is affordable to all income levels.

- In particular, consideration needs to be given to employees of recreation and tourism industries. These are growth industries in Upper Kittitas County that produce a number of low to moderate income jobs. Land use, housing, and transportation policies need to consider the income potential of residents employed by these and other service sector industries.
- Policies that encourage affordable housing dispersed throughout the community, rather than clustered in specific neighborhoods. Density bonuses are a common tool used to achieve this goal.

*Kittitas County has adopted in Jan 2006 the Public Benefit Rating System and the Cluster Subdivision code which allows for cluster development and bonus density.*

*Kittitas County modified the development code in 2006 to allow for Accessory Dwelling Units, Accessory Living Quarters and Special Care Manufactured Homes that promote affordable housing and care of family members.*

### **d. Transportation...**

The current transportation system is inadequate to accommodate recent developments and approved subdivisions that have yet to be developed. In order to avoid common urban traffic issues; steps must be taken now to require new development to pay for its fair share of impacts to the transportation system.

- Develop standards that require impact fees or other means of requiring new development to pay for its impact on the transportation system.

*The Kittitas County Road Standards require that all new roads meet these standards at the sole cost of the development.*

- Assure that an adequate road system is in place before permitting new development.  
*Kittitas County will continue to use and improve upon the use of SEPA and the County Road standards to address this issue.*

- Provide avenues and amenities for non-motorized modes of transportation. This may include:
  - Improvements to street lighting, assuring that lights are down lit.
  - Designating and constructing walking and biking trails.
  - Decrease the number of egress and ingress lanes on the highway.

*The public benefit rating system adopted in January 2006 provides incentives to meet these elements. The County Road standards identifies the criteria and spacing of ingress and egress points*

- Determine current level of service for arterials. Compare to adopted level of service to determine breadth of deficiencies.

*Kittitas County is currently in the process of updating the County Transportation Plan. Each year the 6 year transportation improvement program is updated.*

- Revive passenger rail service to improve transportation options and tourism.

*Not currently under consideration.*

#### **e. Utilities and Capital Facilities...**

Include utility and capital facilities planning that:

- Facilitates the development of all utilities at the appropriate levels of service to accommodate projected growth;

*Kittitas County works with utility providers as needed to facilitate the development of utilities.*

- Identifies service boundaries within which utility services will be provided;  
*Service boundaries acknowledged in the Comprehensive Plan and coordination exists to ensure utility district boundaries are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan when appropriate.*

- Encourages infilling of areas already served by utilities;

*The comprehensive plan encourages growth in the UGAs, UGNs*

- Addresses the proliferation of exempt wells and on-site septic systems;

*This is a broad area that is currently under discussion as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. Encouragement of the use of existing municipal systems is included in the Comprehensive Plan*

- Inventories existing lots with rights to install exempt wells.

*All lots greater than 1 acre if on septic and greater than ½ acre if on sewer have the right to drill an exempt well under current rules.*

- Coordinates future water system planning with the comprehensive plan of the city, county and other planning efforts pertaining to land use, other utilities and other community facilities.

*This is currently being accomplished through cooperation with the cities when development occurs in the UGAs and with utility systems as an element of their 6 year plan updates.*

- Ensures Kittitas County undertakes watershed planning, including an inventory of the aquifer.

*Kittitas County continues to work with regional and local entities for watershed planning.*

- Revises water policy to require more substantial proof of potable water before subdivision approval.

*Currently, cluster subdivisions are required to demonstrate potable water prior to final approval.*

*This requires drilling and testing of the group b or class a water system.*

- Ensures that capital facility planning is consistent with the comprehensive plan;

*Kittitas County currently reviews a number of capital facility plans to ensure consistency.*

- Ensures that the location and design of capital facilities creates minimal adverse impacts on the surrounding land use;

*The County Wide Planning Polices help to coordinate and site essential capital facilities*

- Provides that capital facilities are in place, or can be in place at the time of development;

*Development requirements are reviewed against existing capital facility plans for consistency*

- Ensures that new development does not lower the level of service standard for capital facilities.

*This is reviewed at the time of development review.*

- Seeks efficiencies through coordinated planning among local city and county governments and special purpose, junior taxing districts.

*The County Wide Planning Policies provide a mechanism for coordinated planning for capital facilities*

#### **f. Recreation...**

Opportunities for and access to outdoor recreation are the foundation of life as well as economic drivers in Upper Kittitas County. Non-consumptive recreation is an essential component of the Upper County's future. Officials must be active players in identifying, promoting, and preserving these opportunities. Creative or standard tools such as mitigation or purchasing as necessary, can be used to offset the increased negative impact development is having on the public's ability to access outdoor recreation areas.

- Local city and county governments must identify corridors and trails where the public will continue to have access to recreation facilities.

*The Kittitas County Outdoor Recreation Inventory dated June 1, 2004 identifies recreational opportunities in Kittitas County*

- The County should permit commercial recreation facilities through a Conditional Use Permit process. The purpose is to insure site specific evaluation is complete and that impacts of the specific development are addressed.

*Private recreation facilities are reviewed in most cases through a Conditional Use permit process*

- Local jurisdictions can ensure the public continues to have access to public lands by identifying, mapping, and signing the access points.

*The public benefit rating system adopted as an element of the Cluster Subdivision Code in January 2006 provides incentives to development to maintain public access to public lands across privately owned lands.*

#### **g. Economic Development...**

Policies regarding economic development should be geared to developing a sustainable economy<sup>1</sup>. The natural beauty and features of the area are building blocks on which to establish and expand the region's tourism and outdoor recreation industries.

Implementation of well-thought-out plans will protect these very qualities at risk of being overused.

- Communities and region-wide organizations must actively work together to promote the area.

*Noted. Kittitas County works closely with and support the efforts of the Economic Development Group*

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<sup>1</sup> The goal of community sustainability is to establish local economies that are economically viable, environmentally sound and socially responsible. Achieving this goal requires participation from all sectors of the community, both to determine community needs and to identify and implement innovative and appropriate solutions. Source: Sustainable Communities Network

- Efforts must be made to seek complementing industries to balance and diversify the local economy.

*Noted. Please see above*

#### **h. Aesthetics...**

Development regulations must be implemented that will preserve the natural outdoor assets that the people of the Upper County so value.

- Maintain rural character by limiting building heights.

*The Kittitas County Code currently limits building height. With the exception of certain uses including agricultural uses.*

- Preserve the dark night skies through the development of standards for neighbour-friendly lighting, reducing up lighting in the Upper County.

*Where appropriate, development has been conditioned to require lighting to be directed downward. Development of a dark sky ordinance could be considered to address this issue with more certainty.*

- Provide education about lighting options.
- Reduce the visual impact of parking facilities.

*Large parking facilities are generally associated with commercial and industrial development within cities and UGAs.*

- Empower code enforcement efforts; assign authority and resources especially for removing hazards caused by dilapidated buildings and abandoned vehicles, numerous inoperable/ unlicensed vehicles (including cars, trucks, boats, RV's, trailers) in open storage in residential areas.

*Kittitas County has recently updated and strengthened the enforcement section of the Code. In addition, reorganization within the staff and job descriptions at CDS have allowed the use of more staff resources to be devoted to code enforcement*

#### **i. State Environmental Policy Act/Growth Management Act**

County and City officials must use SEPA to its fullest potential. SEPA is designed to carry the substantive authority to mitigate issues and potential negative impacts to the environment that may not already be covered by specific local regulations. The Growth Management Act also provides the authority for local governments to establish land use designations and resolve issues at a non-project level. Through implementation of the tenants of GMA - critical areas identification and protection, comprehensive planning based on projected growth, adoption of development regulations that are consistent with the comprehensive plans - much of the animosity and ill will that has developed with recent land use activity will be improved.

- Assure Comprehensive Plan Maps and Zoning Maps are consistent, with a one-to-one correlation between land use designations and zoning districts.

*This issue is being discussed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. No policy direction is available at this time*

- Review existing land use patterns and systems and designate appropriate land use and zoning categories that are respectful of those existing patterns.

*This issue is being discussed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. No policy direction is available at this time*

- Implement SEPA throughout the planning process to ensure all impacts to the natural and built environments are adequately addressed at each level.

*This is currently an element of the review process*

