

MEMORANDUM

TO: Cindy Walbridge, Planning Director
Jennifer Donnelly, Senior Planner

FROM: Frank Angelo, Principal (updated by Cindy Walbridge 11/06)

DATE: April 17, 2006

RE: Hood River 2020 Final Report

The past few months have provided the City with quite a bit of information on community values, issues, opinions, and concerns. So what did we hear from the community?

- There is a great deal of concern about the pace and consequences of growth. These consequences are most apparent in rising housing costs and lack of availability of affordable housing.
- Housing affordability is a prevalent concern and a critical issue that residents believe should be addressed in the short-term.
- How things look is important – community design and the appearance of residential and commercial buildings are important to the community.
- Residents are very concerned about losing the small town atmosphere that they believe is one of Hood River's strongest assets.
- There is little support among existing residents for higher residential densities, even though higher residential density may be one tool to provide more affordable housing and a method of minimizing the need to expand the UGA.
- There is little support for expanding the UGA, even though expanding the UGA may be one way of reducing the need for higher residential densities in the city.
- The current economy is not an overriding issue, although concern was expressed about what is becoming a higher reliance on recreationally-based service jobs.
- Residents are generally pleased with City Services, with the exception of the Planning Department (which is likely perceived as the source of enabling new growth) and city services related to housing and employment.

It's apparent from the survey results that current residents don't necessarily believe that "bigger is better" – bigger being perceived as a negative outcome of growth and a threat to the "small town atmosphere." But smaller has its disadvantages as well, particularly when a community is "in demand" as the City of Hood River has been. As identified by residents the disadvantages mostly relate to housing issues in the community - affordability, design, density, rental units, and development standards.

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While an objective of this effort was to update the City's Vision Statement, it is clear that the existing, though not officially adopted Vision Statement is still valid.

Current Hood River Community Vision Statement (1995-2015)

Our Town

- *Hood River is Attractive, Livable and Viable*
- *Our Quality Environment is Preserved and Enhanced*
- *Our Community Identity is Not Limited by Political or Geographical Boundaries*
- *The Agricultural Land Base Continues to Be Significant*
- *All Aspects of Community Life are Ethnically Integrated*
- *A Diversity of Cultural Opportunities is Available*
- *We Live, Work and Play in a Safe Environment*
- *Housing is Affordable by All*

Our Economy

- *Clean, Light Industry Provides Family-Wage Jobs*

Community Issues

Beginning with the basic premise that Hood River will continue to attract new growth because of its location, proximity to natural resources, and recreational opportunities, it can be reasonably assumed that the City will likely be faced with the following planning issues:

1. Housing availability and affordability will continue to be a serious issue;
2. Community design will become more important as new housing types/styles enter the Hood River market;
3. Possible expansions to the UGA will need to be considered to accommodate new growth;
4. Preservation of open space, natural areas, and providing recreation opportunities for residents will be an important consideration as density increases;
5. Protecting existing neighborhoods from uses that are perceived as intruding or not compatible with existing uses will be a source of conflict;
6. While not identified during this recent survey as a major issue, as new growth continues, public facility issues will become a higher priority. This could include issues such as school capacity, transportation capacity and the need for new roads or road connections and parking in the downtown area; and
7. Continuing to involve residents and businesses in a meaningful way to discuss these issues, identify trade-offs and determine appropriate methods to address the issues will be critical if new planning concepts are to be successful.

Next Steps



With this in mind, some next steps for you to consider as you prepare your work programs and determine short-term priorities:

1. Focus on **Key Issues** that will influence growth in Hood River:

- Population will continue to grow and new residents will need to be accommodated. Discuss and update population and employment forecasts with the Planning Commission and City Council so there is an appreciation of the short-term and long-term forecasts. Remember, Hood River is planning for a population of:
 - 2005 – 6,783
 - 2010 – 8,425
 - 2015 – 9,388
 - 2020 – 10,363
 - 2025 – 11,439or 4,656 new residents over the next 20 years (+70%).
- Housing supply and affordability concerns will increase as pressures rise to provide the housing supply for residents wishing to move to Hood River as a permanent or a part-time resident.
- How things look is important (appearance and density). Community design and the appearance of residential and commercial buildings is important to the community and will become increasingly more important as “infill” projects continue to take place.
- Economic factors, the availability of family-wage jobs versus service jobs, the availability of industrial sites for business expansion or location, and the economic climate will have a large influence on the rate of growth and the type of residents that are attracted to Hood River. The survey and Town Hall meetings drove home the point that the current economic conditions in the city are being driven by service-based, recreational-based jobs.
- Given the anticipated growth, does the UGA need to expand? Consideration of UGA will need to include opportunities to accommodate more growth inside the current UGA through more efficient use of land (more compact development), land supply (how much buildable land remains inside the UGA) if expansion is needed, and where should it occur and for what purposes.
- Are there opportunities to “focus” new development to centers (or nodes) thereby minimizing impacts to existing neighborhoods and, perhaps, reducing the need to expand the UGA? If these opportunities are present, work with the community to identify the appropriate location for these



centers and identify implementation steps in the Zoning Code to make sure they develop in a manner that the community can accept.

- The ability to provide public facilities and new capacity (for schools, transportation, sewer, water, etc...) should be considered when making decisions regarding expansion of the UGA or when new areas are identified for additional infill development.

2. Update the **Planning Tools** that are available to the City to address these issues.

The City's Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code, Design Standards, Transportation System Plan, and Capital Improvement Program all provide tools for making decisions on the Key Issues.

- In our presentation to the City Council, staff noted the following short-term items that the Planning Commission and Council could consider:

1. Adopt the 1995 Vision Statement.
2. Conduct an update of the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Ordinance to consider the following items that have been identified through this visioning process:

- Establish maximum lot coverage in residential zones.
- Limit the # of townhouses in residential zones. Allow only through conditional use permits.
- Delete residential parking exemption in CBD/Heights area of the City. Consider adding a parking in-lieu-of fee to the ordinance.
- Require a conditional use for establishing a new bed and breakfast.
- Adopt a method to calculate density for new residential developments.
- Should density calculation for a PUD be changed?
- Should greater density require smaller footprints?
- Establish Design Guidelines for historic neighborhoods and/or for all neighborhoods?
- Adopt Residential neighborhood design guidelines and standards.
- Research validity of requiring affordable housing or other factors as part of an annexation approval.
- Conduct public hearings to adopt accessory dwelling units provisions and consider other measures to address affordable housing listed in the Affordable Housing Report 7/2006.
- Continue and enhance the street connectivity plan which includes connecting sidewalks, bike and walking paths



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- Work with Parks District to link the walking and bike paths to the Master Plan network
 - How to address future “teardowns” in historic/older neighborhoods
 - How to address negative effects of a 2nd home ownership town
 - Update Industrial lands inventory and perform the EOA analysis
 - Clear and objective design standards for strip commercial development
 - Address the “empty big box” syndrome
 - Address wireless
 - Work on an incentive based land use requirements
 - Conduct a buildable lands inventory and analysis for residential lands to determine where the City is in relation to the 20 year supply.
 - Become a Tree City USA.
 - During the City’s consideration of these items, staff should consider the potential for unintended consequences that could result from implementation of some of these items. For instance, establishing maximum lot coverage in residential zones could have the unintended consequence of reducing the City’s residential land supply and, inadvertently, creating additional pressures to expand the UGA.
 - These amendments may also trigger amendments to other Hood River planning documents such as the Comprehensive Plan or Transportation System Plan to ensure that adopted City documents are consistent.
3. Continue **Community Participation** and discussions on land use issues, opportunities and trade-offs.
- It will be important to clearly communicate opportunities and trade-offs to the community. For instance the survey results indicated little support for increasing housing density in the city. At the same time, the survey results indicated little support for expanding the UGA to accommodate new growth. On the surface, it’s understandable how both would be preferences of current city residents. However, providing opportunities for increased density (or more compact growth) in the current city limits may reduce or defer the need to expand the UGA.
 - Would there be more support for higher density / compact development if it can be done in a manner that is attractive and minimizes impacts to existing neighborhoods? If so, can this be achieved without increasing housing costs and keeping this housing type more “affordable”?



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- In order to provide affordable housing, is the community willing to accept regulations that require an affordable housing element of certain developments (i.e. over a certain size, in a particular location, etc...)?
 - Communication with residents and businesses provides the best opportunity to identify competing interests or objectives and to identify methods to balance these interests. Communication with these groups will also let you know when you've successfully achieved an objective.
 - The Keeping Hood River on Track survey provided an opportunity for feedback that residents and businesses don't normally have. As a method of keeping in touch with residents and businesses, many of whom took the survey on-line, the City could include a "Question of the Month" on the City's Home Page to tap into the pulse of the community on current issues. The question should be presented in a manner that lays out some of the trade-offs noted above or other key trade-offs on issues that face the city, rather than just asking a "how do you feel about..." question.

As a concluding comment, you may wish to visit the City of Bend's Home Page to examine the vision effort that the city is currently working on with its residents and businesses (http://www.bend2030.org/Vision_Summit_Results/.) I visited the site and was struck by the fact that the issues that are rising to the top in Bend's survey deal more with public facilities. Improving roads and providing transit services are very high on the issue list. With some responses to the Keeping Hood River on Track survey indicating that residents don't want Hood River to "become like Bend" this ongoing survey/vision statement effort by Bend may be instructive to Hood River's future planning program and may help identify future priorities.