

2018

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGIC WORK PLAN



# TOWN OF SKYKOMISH WASHINGTON



**TOYER STRATEGIC CONSULTING**  
NAVIGATE OPPORTUNITY

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The historic Town of Skykomish is situated in east King County along U.S. Highway 2 at the gateway to the Cascade Mountain Range. Located 16 miles west of Stevens Pass Ski Area, the Town is the closest stopping point for services. However, the Town's small population (206 based on the most recent Census estimate), limited retail and dining opportunities, and lack of visibility from the highway haven't allowed the Town to capitalize on its location strengths.

The Town Council retained Toyer Strategic Consulting to assist in creating an economic development work plan – a strategic planning exercise to organize the Town's infrastructure, comprehensive plan and economic development project needs into an achievable plan of work that will transform the Town's ability to support and attract new growth (residential, hotel, retail, etc.), as well as maintain the Town's historic character and natural livability.

## IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

With adoption of the economic development strategic work plan, the Town Council has initiated the first plan implementation. The implementation strategy for the Town involves the following next steps:

### Prioritization and Scheduling

It is ineffective (if not impossible) to attempt doing everything in a work plan simultaneously. Likewise, is it impractical (if not impossible) to only work on single actions. The Town Council is encouraged to prioritize and schedule the goals and tasks within this work plan concurrently with the development of the next Town budget and a forecast of the Town's financial position in the next 3-5 years.

Prioritization in accordance with budgeting should look at the following factors for scheduling goals and tasks:

1. Timing (simplicity, urgency, window of opportunity)
2. Impact (return on investment, financial and social considerations)
3. Resources (budget, staffing, partners, volunteers, time)

### Ownership, Assignment and Responsibility

Officially, the Town Council owns the responsibility for this work plan and its implementation. However, successful implementation will also rely heavily on the expertise, leadership and time of individuals and groups that include Town Council members, volunteers on Town boards and commissions, residents, partner organizations and more. This requires that as the Town Council delegates (assign) goals and tasks to individuals and groups, it must also establish clear expectations for the work involved, requirements for reporting on progress and the timing for the work to be completed.

### Tracking, Reporting and Adjusting

To effectively track the plan's implementation the tasks within each goal should be assigned a schedule for completion that ultimately corresponds with a deadline for the goal's completion.

The Town Council should consider setting aside time on a regular basis to review the schedule and progress of each task and goal, evaluate successes or failures, and adjust (as necessary) the schedule based on changing conditions, priorities, and/or resource availability.

## THE FINAL WORK PLAN

The goal of this strategic planning project is the creation, adoption and implementation of an economic development strategic work plan for the Town of Skykomish. The importance of the strategic work plan shouldn't be overshadowed by the narrative describing how it was developed.

Therefore, instead of starting with an executive summary or an overview of the process, the first several pages of this document present the work plan and steps for plan implementation.

The plan has been divided among four categories: **Infrastructure & Forward Planning**; **Business Expansion, Attraction & Investment**; **Housing Diversity**; and **Marketing and Branding**. Each category contains a series of goals, as well as the tasks (projects) required to accomplish each goal.

## INFRASTRUCTURE & FORWARD PLANNING

GOAL 1	<b>Improve U.S. Highway 2 Intersection to Generate Increased Local Traffic</b>	
	Task 1	Secure an agreed upon design with WSDOT
	Task 2A	Add intersection to Town's six-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)
	Task 2B	Ensure intersection improvement is prioritized in Town Comprehensive Plan
	Task 3	Add improvement as a priority project within county and regional transportation plans
	Task 4	Create coalition (businesses, land owners, regional partners, etc.) to lobby for state and federal funding
	Task 5	Consider relocation corridor businesses to downtown to create parking and Town gateway
GOAL 2	<b>Modify U.S. Highway 2 Signage to Improve Town's Visibility</b>	
	Task 1	Complete an inventory/survey of current signage
	Task 2	Develop community signage goals
	Task 3	Meet with WSDOT to agree on for replacement, modification or supplementation of signage
	Task 4	Add signage improvements to the Town's six year capital improvement plan (CIP)
GOAL 3	<b>Replace Miller Bridge</b>	
	Task 1	Develop strategy for bridge replacement campaign (safety, economic viability, housing, etc.)
	Task 2	Identify funding for study of bridge replacement alternatives (safety grant, regional grant, county, etc.)
	Task 3	Add City's preferred replacement alternative to six-year TIP
	Task 4	Lobby all levels of government to identify and secure funding for bridge replacement
GOAL 4	<b>Complete Trail Projects to Support Expanding "Day Use" Market</b>	
	Task 1	Maloney Trails
	Task 2	Water Trails
	Task 3	Iron Goat Trail
	Task 4A	Obtain funding to develop master plan for creation of new bike, pedestrian and multi-purpose trails
	Task 4B	Coordinate bike, pedestrian and multi-purpose trail planning with other regional partners
	Task 4C	Include Old Cascade Highway in master trail planning
	Task 5	Create a plan for constructing a pedestrian/bike bridge from downtown to Ballfield Park
GOAL 5	<b>Prioritize Other Capital Improvements Based on Support for Economic Development</b>	
	Task 1	Water system repairs and upgrades
	Task 2A	Improvements to support high speed fiber availability in the Town
	Task 2B	Investigate options for "connected community" including Town-wide WiFi
	Task 3	Complete update to Shoreline Master Plan & prioritize river access
	Task 4	Public bathrooms and public parking
	Task 5	Identify and add drainage improvements to Town six-year CIP (Outflow to River, Old Cascade Hwy E, etc.)
	Task 6	Establish a Town Beautification Plan - to support annual plantings, street banners, etc.
	Task 7	Coordinate with regional partners to identify alternative transportation options for residents and visitors (train, bus, etc.)
GOAL 6	<b>Complete Require Planning &amp; Town Code Updates</b>	
	Task 1	Incorporate CPAT & other current planning recommendations into Strategic Plan
	Task 2	Complete a master plan process for development of Old Forest Service Compound
	Task 2B	Evaluate master development plan for entire Town & consider Planned Action Ordinance
	Task 3A	Complete an evaluation of short-term and part-time rental ordinances in other communities
	Task 3B	Amend Town code to address short-term and part-time rental properties
	Task 4A	Complete an evaluation of nuisance and abandoned property codes in other communities
	Task 4B	Amend Town code to address nuisances, abandoned property
	Task 5	Create appropriate codes, policies, procedures and permitting to support events that use Town facilities
Task 6	Consider appropriate design standards in non-historical districts to maintain community's history and character	
	Task 7	Update boards and commissions, including roles and responsibilities, duties, etc.
	Task 8	Schedule and complete annual comprehensive plan amendments to implement the Strategic Plan

## BUSINESS EXPANSION, ATTRACTION & INVESTMENT

GOAL 1	<b>Expand Retail and Restaurant Opportunities</b>
	Task 1A Meet with owners of unoccupied real estate to determine future development or sale plans
	Task 2 Consider amendments to the zoning use matrix to encourage specific development types
	Task 3A Identify specific development opportunities based on industry segment targets
	Task 3B Develop a business case for each development opportunity
	Task 3C Market each business opportunity, including available resources to assist in business start-up/relocation
Task 4 Pursue a family-friendly restaurant for location in Skykomish	
GOAL 2	<b>Expand Overnight Stays by Adding New Lodging</b>
	Task 1A Identify public or private (or combination thereof) funding for a hotel feasibility study
	Task 1B Utilize feasibility study to attract investors or developers of new hotel rooms
	Task 2 Consider planned action ordinance as incentive to facilitate hotel investment
Task 3 Determine within Old Forest Service Compound Study if development should include rentals	
GOAL 3	<b>Support Vail's Development &amp; Investment Plans for Stevens Pass</b>
	Task 1 Hold quarterly meetings with local management and facilities personnel
	Task 2 Conduct a business retention and expansion (BRE) style "headquarters" meeting with Vail Corporate
GOAL 4	<b>Leverage Regional Partnerships to Increase Tourism Activity</b>
	Task 1A Actively participate in Snohomish County's Sustainable Tourism Program
	Task 1B Consider opportunities to participate financially in joint-marketing efforts
	Task 2 Meet with tourism organizations for Seattle & King County to identify new marketing opportunities for Skykomish
	Task 3 Meet with the Cascade Loop organization and its communities to identify opportunities for new events and co-marketing

## HOUSING DIVERSITY

GOAL 1	<b>Encourage Affordable &amp; Diverse Housing for Full Time Residents</b>
	Task 1 Evaluate potential use of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to create rental housing, as well as allow owner to stay on site
	Task 2 Consider amendments to zoning and use designations that might encourage housing
	Task 3 Consider surplus city owner properties that might support residential development
	Task 4 Investigate use of alternative technologies that might allow for additional housing density at a limited number of sites
GOAL 2	<b>Provide Support for Maintenance of Existing Housing Stock</b>
	Task 1 Partner with King County Housing Authority to promote local use of weatherization & other improvement programs
	Task 2 Investigate creation of housing repair loan or grant program through use of CDBG funds (ex. Kent, Auburn, etc.)
	Task 3 Host PSE for one or more community workshops to inform residents of rebates and other housing improvement programs
GOAL 3	<b>Expand Potential to Support Seasonal Worker Housing</b>
	Task 1 Determine if seasonally available facilities can support seasonal housing (school, city park, airfield, etc.)
	Task 2 Identify potential city (or other public lands) that could support seasonal workforce with campers

## MARKETING & BRANDING

GOAL 1	<b>Improve the "Skykomish" Brand</b>		
	Task 1	Identify the "Skykomish Brand"	
	Task 2	Refresh the image of the Town on Wikipedia, City-data and other similar websites	
	Task 3	Consider homes & business façade improvement programs including charitable painting programs, etc. (e.g. Global Paint for Charity)	
GOAL 2	<b>Hire a Marketing Firm to Develop &amp; Implement a Marketing Strategy</b>		
	Task 1	Expand or Replace the Existing Town Website with a Site that:	
	Key Elements	<i>Interactively (GIS, etc.) promotes key attractions to targeted audiences</i>	
		<i>Feature attractions in mobile friendly version of website</i>	
		<i>Promotes available business opportunities and real estate sites</i>	
		<i>Consider creation of "way-finding" app that can guide visitors to recreation, retail restaurants in Town</i>	
	Key Elements	<i>Allows for and includes video of use of local recreational sites</i>	
		Task 2	Improve Usage of Social Media & "Apps" to Reach Target Audiences
		<i>Develop and execute a social media strategy that highlights recreation, activities and etc.</i>	
		<i>Create vlogs or other visual elements that can be featured in social media</i>	
<i>Social media engagement (e.g. 'pop-up' contests, etc.)</i>			
	<i>Investigate use of proximity/entry "pop-up" alerts via mobile apps like Google Maps, TomTom, Mapquest</i>		
	<i>Evaluate/Review "apps" (e.g. Yelp, etc.) to highlight local businesses and boost ratings</i>		
Task 3	Place ads in newsletters/magazines of member based organizations that represent target audiences		
Task 4	Consider target audience direct mail (especially to member based organizations)		
GOAL 3	<b>Attract New Visitors to Skykomish</b>		
	Task 1	Create a one time kick-off event to reintroduce the Town as a destination	
	Task 2	Encourage/Create and Promote events & activities (e.g. model train show, classic car cruise through the Cascades, etc.)	
	Task 3	Expand Farmer's Market concept to include artisan shows and other niche markets that draw weekend visitors	
	Task 4	Support events that serve existing residents and attract families to Skykomish	
GOAL 4	<b>Create Cooperative Marketing Program for Vacation Rentals</b>		
	Task 1A	Evaluate the use of cooperative marketing programs for vacation rentals in other communities	
	Task 1B	Determine potential for public-private partnership in cooperative marketing program	
	Task 1C	Approve appropriate regulations, contracts, etc. to implement a cooperative marketing program	

## CONSULTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

In the process of completing this strategic planning exercise, the Consultant has identified a series of recommendations for the Town. These recommendations should be viewed as guidance that supports the work plan's goals and suggestions based on observations from other communities. The recommendations are in no particular order.

1. **Town Vision.** Keep the 2005 Vision for Skykomish and its six concepts as the vision for your Town. These six concepts effectively represent your Town's identity, promote appropriately scaled economic development and they continue to represent who you are as a community.
2. **Project Management.** The use of Microsoft Project or a like project tracker should include your economic development strategic work plan, as well as any other Town planning efforts and capital projects. This will help the Town in managing all its projects and evaluate progress. Further, it can assist the Town Council in communicating to the public where the community is at in tackling a range of projects.
3. **Headquarters Call.** Stevens Pass is a critical existing business relationship for the Town and the Town should consider a leadership visit (often referred to as a headquarters call by economic developers) to Vail's headquarters to establish relationships with the new ownership and examine how the Town can benefit from future investment in your largest current draw for visitors to the area.
4. **Create an Events Committee, Board or Taskforce.** Have this group initially develop policy recommendations to guide the community's ability to rent out public spaces. Then direct the group to inventory the Town's current events and identify events the Town could support for the benefit its residents and attracting new visitors. Given that events require lots of volunteers to plan, coordinate and operate the event, it could be that this group also has some responsibility for managing official Town events.
5. **Learn from Others.** Meet with the leaders of communities like Leavenworth to discuss the code and policy challenges they have had in the past decade. Identifying areas where your codes and policies are weak or need to catch up to the transition you're experiencing should be a priority.
6. **Select or Create a Brand.** You are a gateway to adventure, history and nature. Having a specific brand would help you in promoting Skykomish's offerings to visitors, business opportunities and even future residents. Further, it is a critical step in determining how to deploy your limited resources by focusing marketing on specific target markets (e.g. day-use visitors).
7. **Encourage Desired Development.** Prioritize a review of the Town's zoning use matrix to ensure permitted uses (especially in the commercial zones) encourage the types of development you'd like to attract, while limiting or excluding uses that would not be consistent with the Town's vision and/or economic development goals.
8. **Plan Consistency.** Ensure all plans are consistent and plans are directly linked to multi-year budgets. With Skykomish currently completing several planning exercises and with additional planning (such as a master plan for the Old Forest Service Compound) necessary in order to realize future development opportunities, the consistency between these plans (especially its comprehensive plan, transportation plan and capital facilities plan) are critical to be in position for grants. More importantly, consistency ensures the Town Vision is present in decision-making.
9. **Business Attraction.** To attract a hotel and encourage retail and restaurant type development in the Town, the Town should prioritize the completion of a hotel feasibility study and measurement of the occupancy in the vehicle trips on U.S. Highway 2. This information can be used by the Town to proactively recruit opportunities.
10. **Supporting Signage.** From the Town's signage along U.S. Highway 2 to wayfinding signs directing people to specific attractions to adding business blade signage along Railroad Avenue, signage supports the Town's brand, the Town's marketing efforts and the Town's existing businesses.

## CONSULTANT PROJECT APPROACH

The success of any strategic planning effort is significantly dependent upon the process used. In our firm's experience, every community has "influencing factors" that can result in planning-level biases that if unmitigated will alter or limit a plan's relevance, ownership and execution. These influencing factors are not intended to be critiques. Instead they simply recognize the practical limitations of traditional planning and the need for a Consultant to more comprehensively understand the specific dynamics of how an individual community may share information and build consensus.

Several influencing factors identified by the Consultant at the outset of the project included:

1. Size of the Town's population and potential for public comments or information to be withheld or dismissed in open sessions due to social and other influences (i.e. don't want to appear opposed, don't want to express a non-majority opinion, etc.).
2. Town dynamics, including a small core group of leaders and a higher than typical percentage of part-time residents, which could increase the likelihood of group consensus being pulled in a direction that limits the scope of planning.
3. The small local employment base and an above average part-time (weekender) residential population create time constraints for individuals and dictate the need for a facilitated process responsive to the availability of stakeholders to participate.

To overcome these influencing factors, the Consultant selected a modified Delphi technique that relies upon a survey instrument supplemented by individual interviews of key stakeholders<sup>i</sup>. Both the survey and interviewing techniques are structured to engage participants as follows:

1. Establish the community's baseline identity (e.g. vision, mission, values)
2. Complete the community's asset inventory (e.g. infrastructure, recreation, available buildings or land, etc.)
3. Identify and explore the Town's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (S.W.O.T.)
4. Evaluate common opinions (consensus) in both how individuals view the community's need for economic development, as well as its leadership role in pursuing economic development
5. Evaluate relevant past and current planning projects to identify inconsistencies
6. Identify individual stakeholders for potential interviews

## TOWN LEADERSHIP TEAM

To assist with the early stages of this planning effort, the Consultant relied upon a Town Leadership Team that was organized by the Mayor. This team included Mayor Tony Grider, Councilman Todd Brunner, Councilman Henry Sladek and Parks Board Members Debbe and Steve Koch. The role of this leadership team was to assist the Consultant in kicking off the project, completing an initial asset inventory and reviewing the draft survey before circulation.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

The Consultant conducted an online survey<sup>ii</sup> in the Town of Skykomish between May 18, 2018 and June 15, 2018. A total of 37 surveys were tabulated, which represents a 17.9% response from the Town's 206 residents.

This survey, along with interviews, were used in the process to identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.), complete the Town's asset inventory, gauge the Town's vision, identify barriers to plan implementation, and explore the Town's support for economic development and the role of the Town Council. Three sections of this document review the results of the survey. They include: **Community Survey**, **Vision** and **Partnerships**.

The first question of the survey (shown in Figure 1 on the next page) is used by the Consultant to determine who responded to the survey. The method in which the question was posed, which included fixed responses and the ability to add an option, were selected based on early stakeholder input that suggested potential inconsistencies in how members of the community may view their residential status as well as the residential status of others regardless of the fact that nearly all share a common interest in being property owners.



Figure 1 Relationship of Respondent to Town (Partially Open Ended; Results Aggregated)

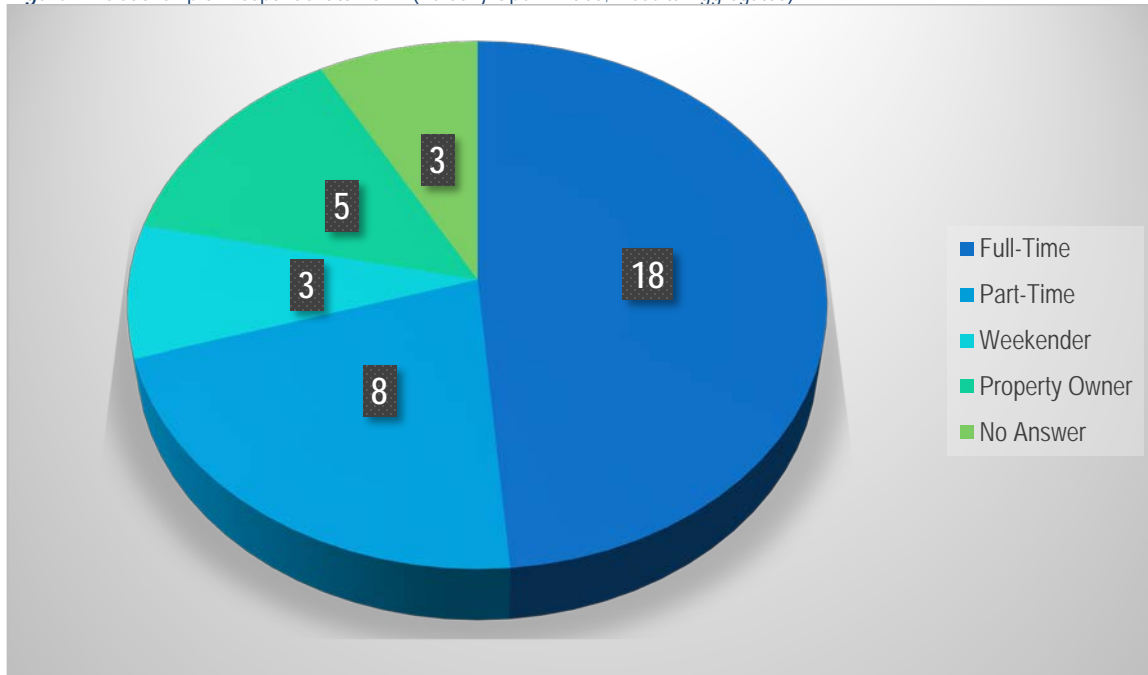


Figure 2 Respondent List of Greatest Assets within 30 minutes of Town



Respondents were asked to identify the greatest assets within a 30-minute drive of their community (Figure 2), as well as sites and buildings that could support future development (next page).

Responses in Figure 2 (above) are displayed in a word map form. To understand the significance of each response, words or phrases which stand out the most were those cited most often by respondents. For example, Stevens Pass is one of the most common responses, but Beckler Peak Trail was one of the least common responses.

Asset mapping using both questions in the survey assist the Consulting in beginning to identify community assets, as well as formulate potential Strengths and Opportunities in advance of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis part of the project. It should be noted that responses to these questions often identify assets that can be potential marketing opportunities for attracting both visitors and new businesses.

## Respondent Identification of Developable or Redevelopable Buildings & Sites

- Old Skykomish Hotel
- Big Bear Restaurant
- Vacant lot west of the Tow Yard
- Obsidian Property
- Vacant lots between Whistling Post & Old Skykomish Hotel
- Under-utilized and Vacant Homes
- East End of Train Depot
- McEvoy House
- Old Mill site at Mil Town west of Town
- Old cement plant at Grotto 2 miles west of Town

Additionally, respondents were asked to identify what's **GOING RIGHT** and **GOING WRONG** in Skykomish<sup>iii</sup> through a set of open-ended questions used for the early identification of community Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (S.W.O.T.):

### What's GOING RIGHT in Skykomish?

- Character of Town preserved, planning actively pursued, good community involvement, new infrastructure, positive financial situation, collaboration with larger organizations on regional projects
- Skykomish has a wonderful community of people committed to seeing the town come back alive. Open air markets, art, music, lodging & dining & the little railroad
- Environmental cleanup done, constructed sewer facility, new & re-development (businesses & residential), Mini Railroad & Park features with visitor's center
- Great community, friendly, mellow; people know each other pretty well, and want to improve the quality of life here. A lot of arts and crafts groups
- Friendly, open minded, small community, clean
- Skykomish Hotel development
- The deli is staying open
- Sewer system, river walk
- The downtown area getting all the cleanup funds certainly looks much better
- Efforts to continue operating the school, some Railroad Ave redevelopment, community events like parades, outdoor markets, events in the park, active community library
- Love the community, very connected
- The homes that have been fixed up, the old theater building a nice place for overnights, the town center, any business, and how pretty the town is maintained
- Railway, sidewalks and public spaces in town. Popularity of Stevens pass
- Water, garbage, and sewer are working well
- Many people care about the town
- Community feel and activities; local train park
- Molly G restoration, the short scale railway. I'd like to see more historical restoration. The community garden is also a positive thing
- The elected officials seem to be guiding the town in the right direction. As, the Great Northern miniature railroad keeps expanding it seems to be attracting more people. The town's infrastructure has greatly improved from where it was years ago
- New owners of Sky Deli. GNCR. Sky Crafters. New trails to Maloney Peak.
- Clean up is over, great air, water, scenery
- New owners of Sky Deli. GNCR. SkyCrafters. New trails to Maloney Peak.
- Clean up is over, great air, water, scenery
- Friendliness, a good bar, beautiful location

### What's GOING WRONG in Skykomish?

- Poor entrance from Hwy 2 into Town. Run down businesses along highway. Lack of local businesses. Lack of local employment opportunities. Lack of housing. Lack of lodging and hospitality services
- People are not crossing the bridge and if they do, it's hard to understand where to go. Additionally, there really isn't anything in town guiding them around - walks, visit points, etc.
- Lack of housing, lack of enough Lodging/overnight businesses, difficulty accessing to/from Town to Highway during weekends/high traffic times, Train noise, Fire Dept Siren noise
- It's been a bit of a shrinking ghost town, it's hard for people to work and live here, so it's largely retired folks or people who come up for the weekends. The community is fractured because of the large number of recreational home owners who don't get involved with the town
- For a town of only 200 people, the vocal minority does everything they can to stop the progress of any plans for improvement in the town. They have big ideas but absolutely no action and they prevent those that are actively taking on important roles to move forward.
- Skykomish Hotel being "owned" by the town, water/garbage fees, Spending by town government, ordinances by town government, "Design Review Board", Skykomish Historical Society, professional snow plow drivers, no REAL high-speed internet
- Skykomish could use an upgrade of their fresh water system the drinking water
- Regulations on every little thing
- Town government seems to move at a very slow pace,
- Seems like residents are buying up all the real estate before other have a chance
- Very little to keep someone there. Limited services worth staying for. Cascadia is sweet but the lodging is niche.
- Bridge over the Miller River
- Not considered enough as a destination for Stevens Pass
- Engaging part time residents in a meaningful way
- Unnecessary sirens and bells, un-maintained properties (eyesores)
- The Maloney Creek lookout trail was a fiasco and certainly not an 'attraction'. Just let nature reclaim that one...
- Landscaping maintenance at parks in town like the levee and in front of town hall, post office. Invasive bushes and plants should be eliminated when small to prevent way more work later. The gas station needs many improvements

### What's Going RIGHT in Skykomish? *(Continued)*

- Hazardous waste clean-up and resultant building/site renovation, electronic communication about events in Skykomish, building a sense of community
- Fabulous group of people who are civically involved and work tirelessly to bring improvements to this wonderful little town.
- GNCR, OneMish, Depot Park, Library
- Train rides for kids
- Cleaning up the oil mess, improving buildings, homes, friendly people
- The Skykomish Hotel being stabilized, with a new roof etc. Frank Martin's Inn, saving one of our oldest buildings and providing lodging. Our school functioning well. The library still open and serving the community.
- Park Events, railroad, summer markets
- Not much drug activity or crime
- City council has welcomed new members with fresh ideas. I really like the email from city hall listing coming events. Have that email list school events.....e.g. plays, fund-raisers, Santa Claus arrival in Dec. The Sky Historic society has a newsletter called Rings of Time; - well written and should be widely distributed in stands around town and place in stores like Index, Gold Bar
- The engagement of people in town. Not losing the Deli was very big in the good news department. Newer people that are bringing new energy to the revitalization of the town.
- The mini train & pump track. The partial restoration of the old hotel. The school population has increased slightly. Local Music in the Park event (small) is a wonderful family event. The family style 4th of July celebration (as long as it doesn't get too big). Our annual tree lighting and Easter Egg hunt are so nice. The new Deputy Sheriff's presence is great. The volunteers in this town are amazing. Restoration of the movie theater is wonderful. We have a food bank, a library, great business owners for the businesses we do have and our Fire Dept is amazing. Our small town, Mayberry feel is why I love it here so much. People watch out for each other.
- I like the little train, and most importantly that the hotel is finally getting the attention and preservation it deserves!!
- Facebook groups keeping folks better connected, Parks and Rec board, Skykomish Ladies group, Skykomish Garden Club,
- The mini train and the two museums draw people and their sites are an asset. Local are gradually becoming more supportive of local happenings. The Arts Community is developing with programs and events. The school is doing more with the community.
- The school K thru 12
- Small town historic feel

### What's Going WRONG in Skykomish? *(Continued)*

- There are vacant businesses in town. It would be nice to see the Skykomish hotel operational again, either as a hotel or another type of business
- More reliable electricity and internet.
- While a strong effort is underway, there is an opportunity to further project the image of an attractive community that people want to visit. For example, the dormant hotel at Railroad and 5th presents the city as suffering from financial collapse. It just makes an otherwise quaint town look like a ghost town
- Two major disappointments are the closing of the Skylark Motel and not rebuilding and the washout of the Maloney Creek bridge
- Deli closing, no new "motel" along the river where motel used to be, lack of local citizen involvement in SHS, SEI, & other town initiatives
- Not a welcoming environment for business. Town has a well-earned reputation of being difficult to work with
- the gas station
- Before Skykomish will ever move ahead, they need to have their ordinances in place and a code enforcement officer to enforce the ordinances. The Bed and breakfast situation needs to be regulated and charged for
- Freight trains whistles are louder than Amtrak, the Onemish lodge and the half dozen AirB&B that have sprung up in town.
- I can't think of anything I think is specifically wrong, but things are slow moving, like progress on the hotel
- Too much control from the same small group of people who decided what this little town should be.
- The school system here is AWFUL
- I think that trying to inundate the ballpark with out of town campers & this 3 day music festival is too much. The town dump has been a mess with all kinds of people coming up to use it, sometimes just dumping on the ground when it is full. Need more hours of law enforcement with a good response time. Too many folks buying up houses and turning them in to AirBnBs and not even having to have a license to bring the town money. Our internet provider and service is horrible
- Hotel is ready but there are no takers, why is that? The town government should not be in the real estate business. We still have infrastructure issues that need to be addressed Rising cost of town utilities - water, garbage.
- All of the houses are being bought up by people that are turning them in to. Air B&B, and there are no restrictions or rules.
- Poor identity off of Highway 2 and missing highway signage (miles to Skykomish)

The "What's Going Right?" and "What's Going Wrong?" questions are comparable to the often asked "Right Direction, Wrong Track" question used often by pollsters in measuring the consensus of a group (typically the electorate). In this instance, the responses are important for two reasons. First, they present the Consultant and community with a more detailed account of the root causes influencing positive and negative beliefs about the community. Second, the detail helps to create the outline for the community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threat analysis.

Three additional questions were asked to further identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Figure 3 (below) represents what respondents believe is missing in Skykomish. Large, bold words and phrases indicate it was cited with higher frequency by the respondents. As Figure 3 reflects, businesses (especially a hotel, coffee shop and food services) are most commonly cited as missing.

**Figure 3** Respondent Answers to "What is Skykomish Missing?"



Next, respondents were asked to indicate what events have attracted the most visitors to Skykomish. Large, bolder words indicate the event was identified with a higher frequency. For example, the train rides provided by the Great Northern and Cascade Railway (GNCR) had the single largest number of responses. Events can be great opportunities for the Town to promote increased tourism while also providing existing residents access to desired activities and pop-up retail.

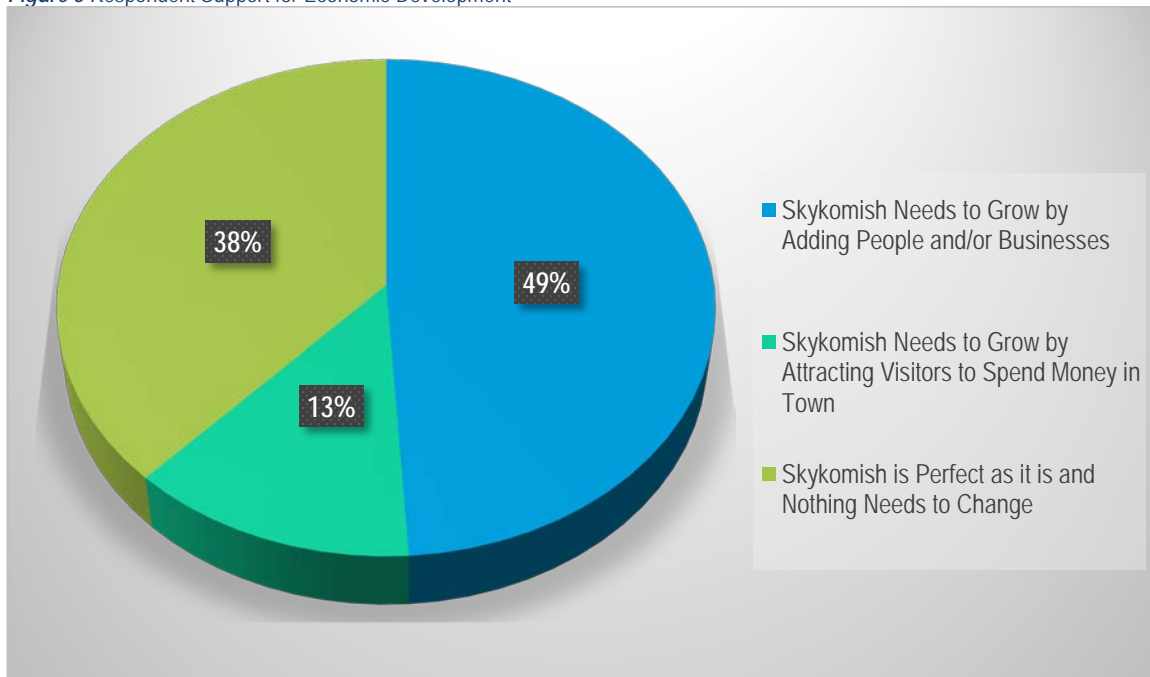
**Figure 4** Events Identified by Respondents as Attracting the Most Visitors



Respondents identified music (and more specifically music in the park) as an event that attracts visitors and is enjoyed by residents. Also popular are car shows and outdoor markets. There may be an opportunity going forward for communities on the Cascade Loop to create a "touring" week that combines events (car shows, markets, etc.) with corresponding stops in host communities.

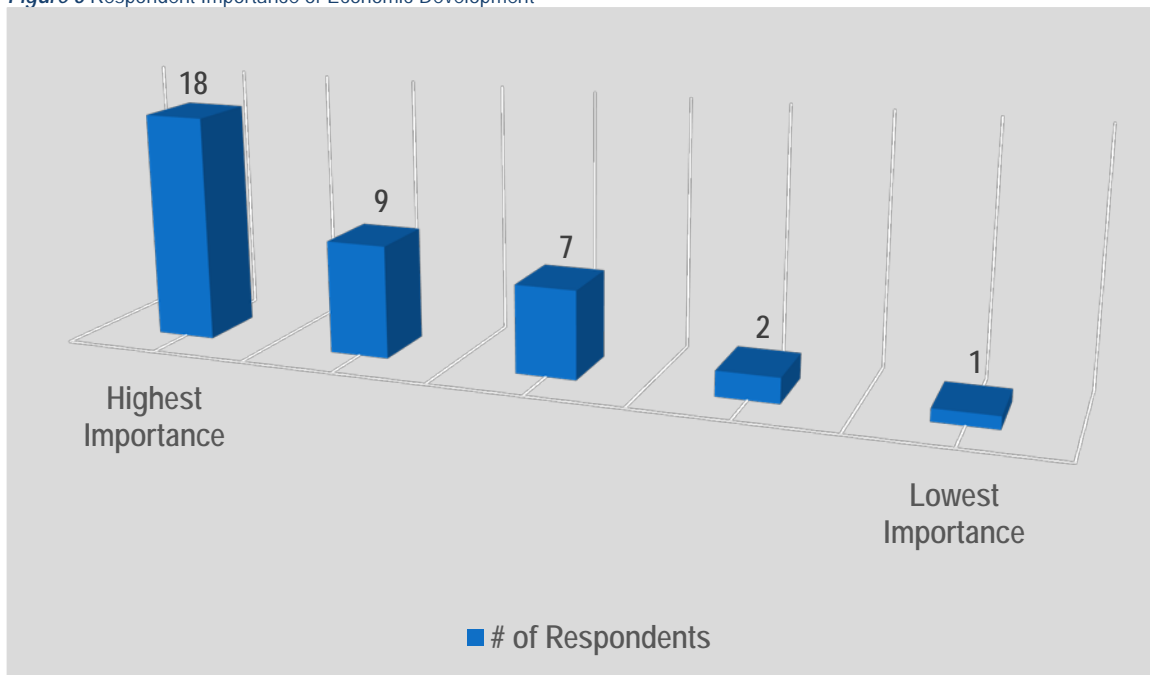
An example of a "touring" type event is the Register's Annual Great Ride Across Iowa (RAGBRAI). It is the largest bike-touring event in the world that selects 8,500 cyclists each year by lottery for a non-competitive bike ride from the west border to east border of Iowa. Each year's route has eight host communities that are overnight stops (the starting and finishing cities, and six cities in between). It is estimated that with official cyclists, unofficial cyclists, sag wagon staff and spectators, host communities can expect up to 20,000 visitors for that single day of activity. The event helps communities market themselves to wider audiences, as well as realize a significant single-day economic boost.

Figure 5 Respondent Support for Economic Development



The survey featured two questions that are asked to measure support for economic development and gauge its importance to residents. Figure 5 (above) shows that nearly half (49%) of the respondents believe Skykomish needs to grow by adding people and/or businesses and 62% of respondents support some form of growth in town. Figure 6 (below) shows that among respondents, economic development is considered a high priority with nearly three-fourths (75%) of respondents indicating on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being of the highest importance) that economic development ranks as a 1 or 2.

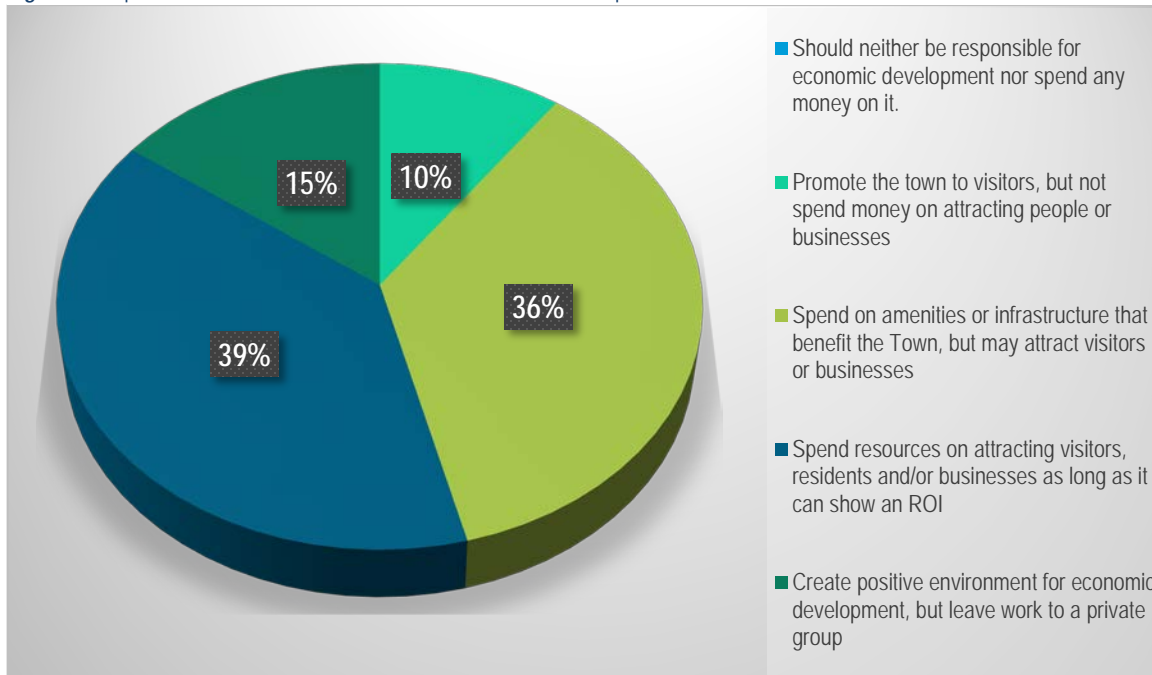
Figure 6 Respondent Importance of Economic Development



Respondents were then asked about their view of the Town Council's role in economic development. This question is used to determine whether the town generally believes economic development is the responsibility of their elected leaders (as well as the level as which they support elected leaders being involved).

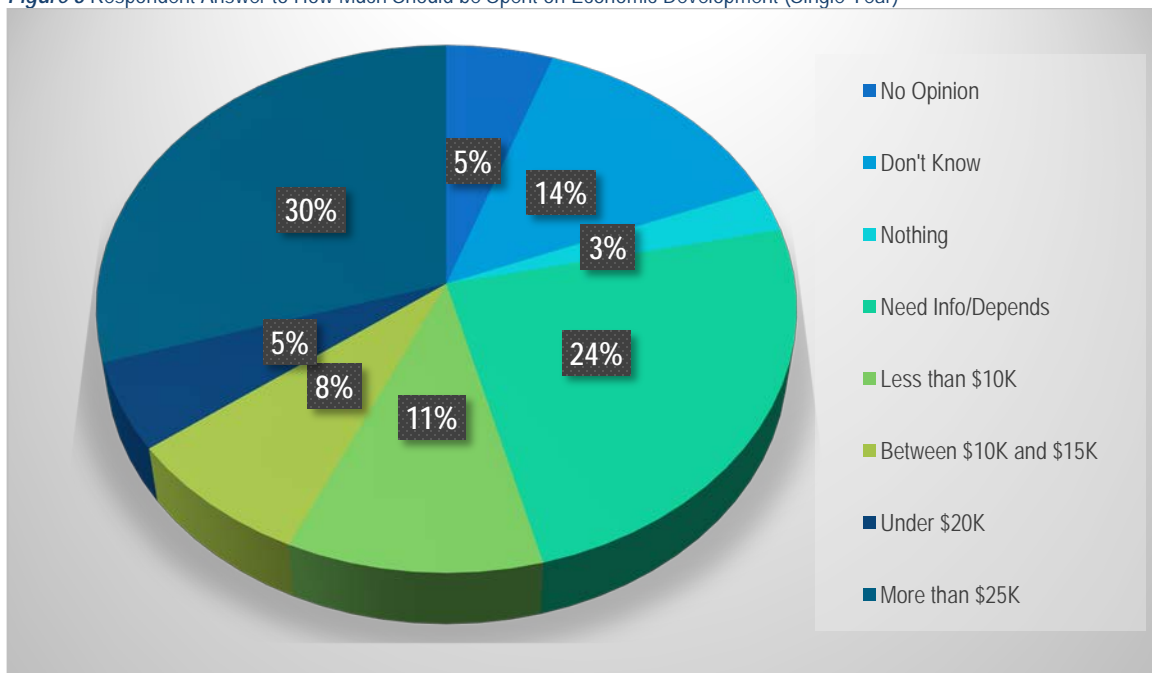
Figure 7 (below) shows that 100% of the respondents agree the Town Council should have some role in economic development. Roughly 85% of the respondents indicate the Town Council should actively support economic development, while 15% indicated the role is passive support for economic development, leaving the work to a private group. There was 0% support for defining the Town Council's role as "neither responsible for economic development nor spend any money on it."

Figure 7 Respondent View of Town Council Role in Economic Development



Respondents were then asked to indicate how much they felt the Town should spend on economic development in a single year. Figure 8 aggregates the responses as some respondents selected answers within specific ranges provided (e.g. \$10K to \$15K, while others chose to provide open-ended responses. Nearly one-third (30%) of the respondents indicated that more than \$25,000 should be spend in a single year, while nearly one-quarter (24%) indicated more information about the Town's budget, source of funds, etc. was needed before forming an opinion. As a whole, the responses show there is general support for Town spending on economic development, but spending will need to be explained in relation to the plan's goals and then measured to determine a return on investment (ROI).

Figure 8 Respondent Answer to How Much Should be Spent on Economic Development (Single Year)



Respondents were asked to identify where they had seen the Town invest in economic development in the last 3-5 years, as well as identify what areas of economic development they believe the Town should invest time and resources. These questions are used to identify differences (and potential conflicts) between how resources are prioritized and spent on various areas of economic development.

**Figure 9** In what areas of economic development have you seen the Town invest in the last 3-5 years?

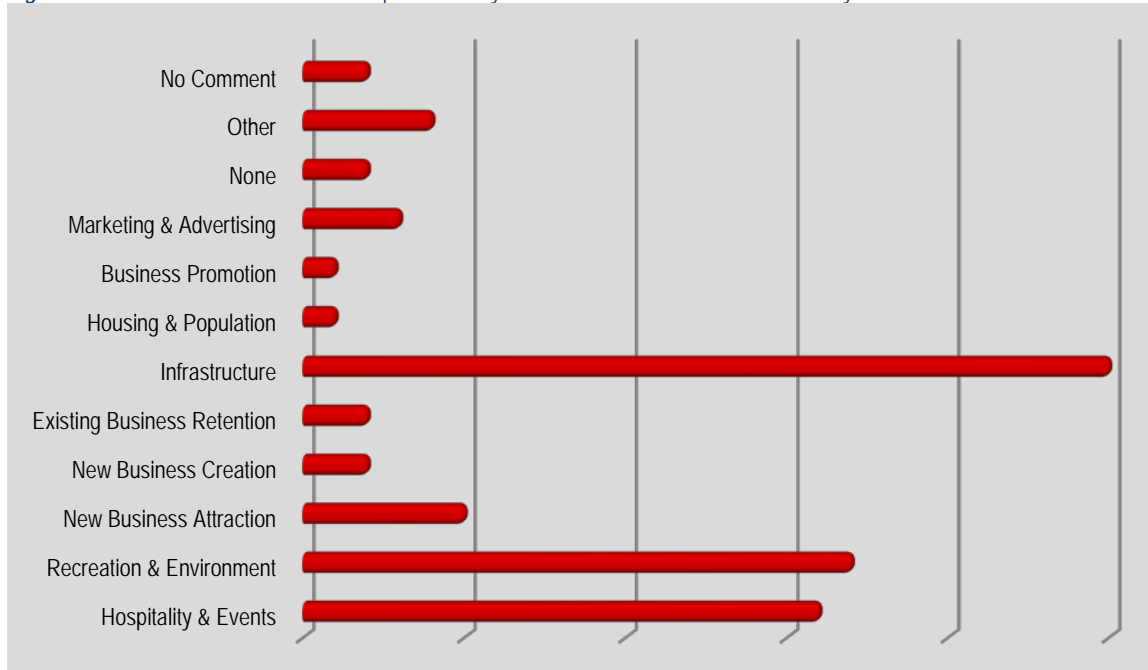
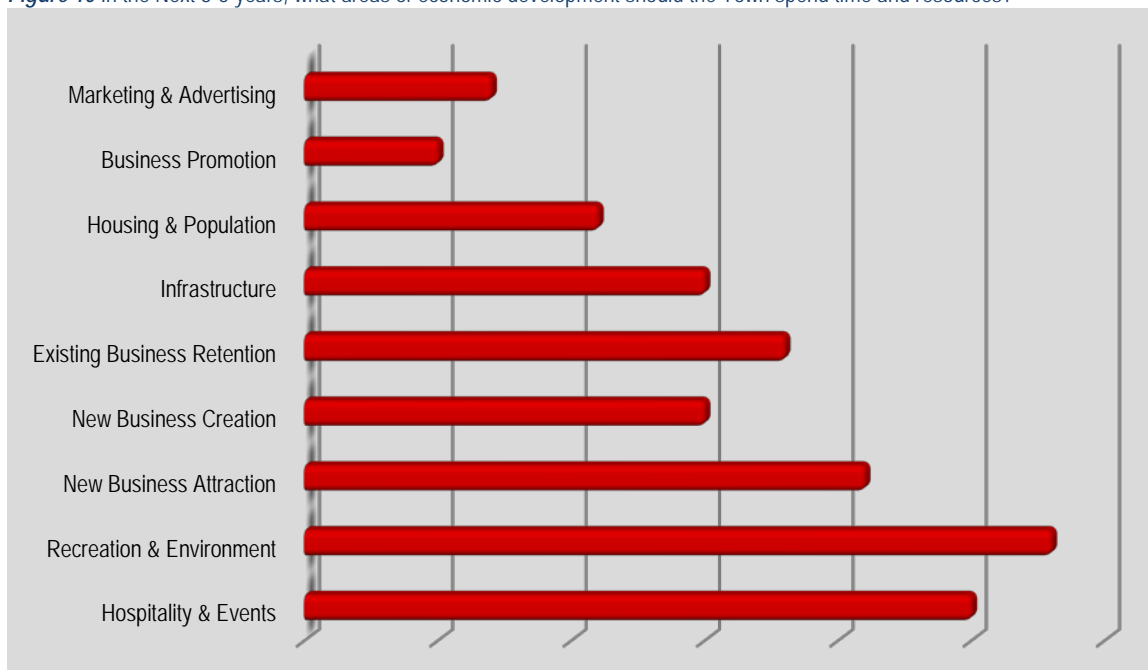


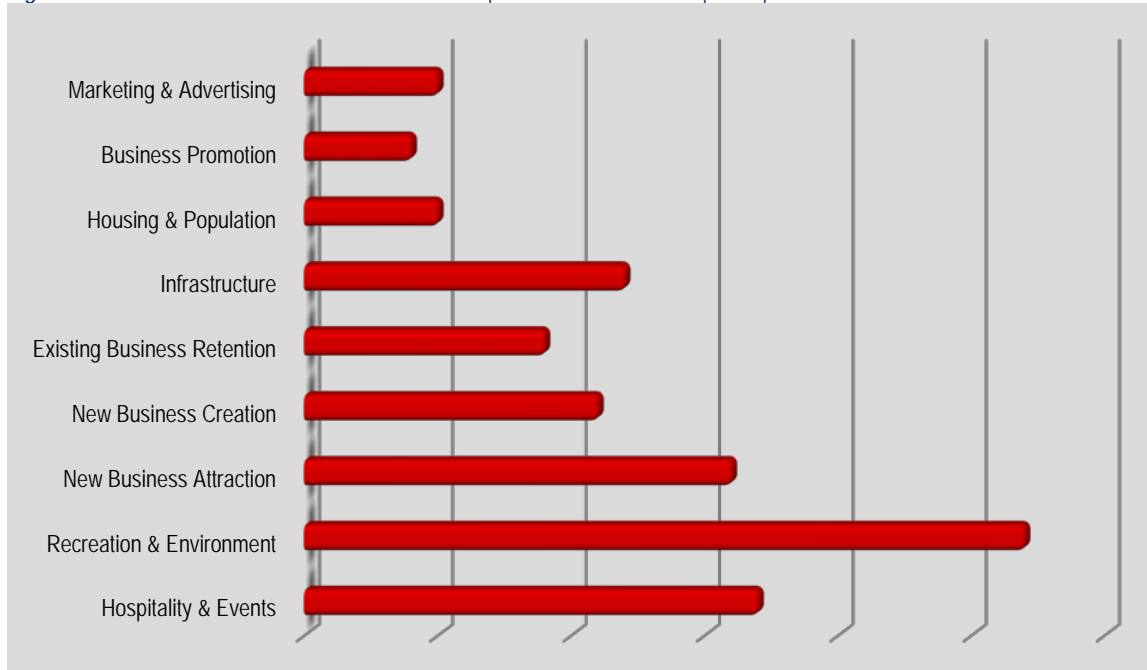
Figure 9 (above) shows that respondents believe that infrastructure, recreation and environment, and hospitality and events have received the most time and resources. While Figure 10 (below) indicates that respondents generally would like to see more emphasis put on business creation, retention and attraction. However, it is important to note that in the practice of economic development, investments in infrastructure and amenities (e.g. recreation and environment) are often critical factors that influence business creation retention and attraction.

**Figure 10** In the Next 3-5 years, what areas of economic development should the Town spend time and resources?



To further refine this analysis, respondents were asked to prioritize the Town's top three economic development priorities. Figure 11 (below) shows that respondents prioritize economic development in the areas of recreation and environment, hospitality and events and new business attraction. All three areas are consistent with respondents' support for economic development (Figure 5), what's missing in Skykomish (Figure 3) and how they view the role of the Town Council in economic development (Figure 7). When viewed collectively, respondents' answers supporting support for economic development are clearly tied to individual and collective benefits economic development is perceived to create for residents, including events, improved local services and expanded amenities (recreation, etc.).

**Figure 11** What areas of focus should be the Town's top three economic development priorities?



To prepare for the public workshop discussions on potential goals and tasks (projects), respondents were asked to identify 2-3 projects that if completed would attract additional businesses or visitors to Skykomish<sup>iv</sup>. Responses (below) are consistent with What's Missing in Skykomish (Figure 3) and closely follow the mix of economic development priorities respondents identified in Figure 11 (above).

**What 2-3 projects (if completed) would attract additional businesses or visitors to Skykomish?**

- Mahoney Biking and Hiking Trails. Water Trails. Restore the historic commercial section of Skykomish.
- Depot Park / Tourism Redirection, Mountain Bike Downhill from Maloney Peak, New housing developments
- Redevelopment of the FS compound, as it has been initially discussed, along with the trail(s) connecting to Maloney Peak
- Help facilitate the project on north side of highway. Push to get the Sky Hotel, Sky River Motel and Maloney Store into productive operating hands
- Work with the new bike trail to have a good experience at the end of the trail in the compound. Make sure the Skykomish hotel has great occupants, leverage the Maloney store
- Fix bridge.
- Stevens Pass shuttle, organized area for river activity, trailhead facility for hiking or skiing
- Beautifying depot park
- Completing the renovation of the Skykomish hotel
- youth center would be a great start. Anything that moves people (and decision making) away from the alcohol serving establishments. Large community events like the OLD Tunnel Days (pre-1990's)
- summertime passenger train or a ski train that drops people off for a weekend, a Brewpub or upgrade to the whistling post
- Finishing the landscaping at depot park
- A winter transit partnership with Stevens Pass to alleviate their parking issues, provide jobs to Skykomish residents in bus driving, maintenance & operation, and give people a chance to put their boots on the ground in our town. Coordinate by encouraging services businesses (Sky Deli, Whistling Post, Cascadia) to remain open during peak transit operations.
- Demand the state NOT tear down the bridge at the washout, get tenants in the Hotel, signage on the highway
- Bike trail from Maloney Mountain, nurse log at SEI where parents & grandparents would bring children on a semi-regular basis to observe growth and natural changes, plant fish in local streams & lakes.
- Faster internet access, a willingness by the town to commit to economic growth, grow the population.
- Hotel, motel for visitors to stay
- Promote the Sky Hotel to be sold, use the Compound as a business, promote The North Cascade Environmental Learning Center to come to our community.
- Not sure
- The hotel completion and becoming a business source, the Maloney Mountain biking/hiking trails
- Year-round events, coordinating with Leavenworth, safety programs for the area, the hotel open on the corner



- I am not sure
- More lodging for skiers, hikers and bikers using the bike park at Stevens
- I have no idea
- A new hotel and a few other key businesses to draw folks in
- Bridge over the Miller river for pedestrians, bikes, & motor cycles. Mountain bike trails- especially easy ones
- Mt. Biking trails, bring ranger station into town, historic murals
- Hotel build out; marketing
- Finish the Molly G, put a sweet little cafe in there and invite and pay artists and musicians to play and hang their art there.
- Invite clubs, organizations and businesses to come to Sky to design
- Build a utility system that relies on renewable resources.
- A place for skiers to stay with nice food and entertainment.
- Complete the store fronts and hotel space in the Skykomish Hotel and adding a venue for vendors at the miniature railroad
- Finishing the old hotel so that businesses could move into the spaces.
- The Skykomish Hotel, putting the hotel back on the river and getting Big Bear open.
- Developing a small park by the bridge where the hotel used to be - and maybe a business where the post office used to be, Another restaurant
- Public Rest Stop with Restrooms, Winter Parking and shuttle for Stevens Pass visitors
- Bring the North Cascade Environmental Institute to the US Forest Service Compound
- Hiking and biking routes originating in town, possibly river rafting access points
- Public restroom in town center, highway sign, lights on bridge
- A bakery/restaurant in the old hotel, spectacular landscaping, especially along railroad ave. Think Leavenworth
- Sky River Inn, Skykomish Hotel, Public Bathrooms
- Farmers market, mountain bike festival, ski events

## THE TOWN VISION

In August of 2005, the Town of Skykomish completed its “Vision for Skykomish” – a community visioning project led by Berryman & Henigar and the University of Washington to define the vision for the future of Skykomish.

This vision relied upon six concepts as a foundation: *economic vitality, infrastructure, livability, history, connections and access, and environment*. These concepts are shown in detail in Figure 5, which is taken from the 2005 Vision for Skykomish.

Figure 12 Concepts Forming the Foundation of Skykomish's Vision

### SIX CONCEPTS FORMING THE FOUNDATION OF THE VISION

1. **ECONOMIC VITALITY** maintained by a balance between tourism-related industries, as well as those supporting and serving local and area residents.
2. Appropriate **INFRASTRUCTURE** and services to sustain the community and support future opportunities for growth.
3. Enhanced **LIVABILITY** of the town and maintenance of a high quality of life for young and older generations of Skykomish residents alike.
4. References to the unique **HISTORY** of the town and its character maintained in new development.
5. Clear, consistent **CONNECTIONS AND ACCESS** to the town from surrounding areas, as well as to cultural and natural amenities within the town.
6. Promotion of the town's strong relationship to the **ENVIRONMENT** in historical references through access to surrounding outdoor recreation opportunities and the education of visitors about processes that maintain its healthy status.

This project's community survey asked respondents to describe both the current vision of the Town as well as what they think the Town's vision should be.

This two-part question within the survey is used to:

1. Establish the present awareness and relevance of the Town's vision from 2005
2. Identify changes in the vision since its adoption
3. Explore any inconsistencies (in the planning process)
4. Determine framework for a new vision (if appropriate)

A summary of the 37 responses regarding the existing Town vision includes:

- 3 direct references to the 2005 vision
- 9 responses of “don't know” “unknown” “unclear” or “none”
- 6 mentions of history and/or specifically railroad history
- 5 responses citing status quo
- 6 responses mentioning tourism and specifically tourism related to recreation, nature and environment
- 8 responses focused on themes of maintaining small town feel, supporting small business, keeping a family atmosphere, improving services and infrastructure for existing residents

In total 23 (62%) of the responses directly or indirectly identified either the 2005 Vision or at least one of its six concepts.

### Identifying the Town Vision

More specifically, respondents were asked "What should the Town's vision be?"

- 11 responses addressed growing tourism, specifically outdoor recreation, nature and environmental opportunities
- 11 responses described small business growth and recognition of existing community, family environment and livability
- 6 responses focused on maintenance and restoration of the Town's historic character, relevance (rail, timber, buildings, etc.)
- 2 responses directed towards creating additional events for residents (and subsequently tourist)
- A single reference to the 2005 vision document in general
- 6 comments that expressed either no opinion or were not attributable to a theme/vision

In general, these responses are viewed as being consistent with the six concepts that form the foundation of the 2005 Vision for Skykomish.

### Thinking Big

Respondents were asked to "Think Big" and describe what Skykomish could look like in 4 and 7 years, including identifying the resources needed to achieve these visions and any obstacles that may be encountered. The next few pages highlight the answers.

#### THINKING BIG: In 4 years, what could Skykomish look like?\*

- Active commercial district
- Mahoney Bike Trails complete
- New entrance to town at Hwy 2
- A basecamp for recreation and a must stop on the way over the pass
- Redeveloped FS Compound area
- 2 or 3 additional operating hotels/inns
- Food service places (Big Bear)
- Roundabout on highway 2
- New development of 50-60 units on north side of highway
- Infill development throughout the rest of town
- A shuttle running to Stevens Pass
- FS trailheads from town, both winter & summer
- A thriving little tourist town with occupied hotels, gift shops, and coffee shops
- Same but wealthier fit residents
- More secure
- More business activity: hotel and restaurant are running
- 2 more restaurants, another hotel and perhaps an outdoor outfitter
- A FULL TIME OPEN restaurant
- Additional home operated businesses
- Some economic development and some increase in tourism
- Possibly two more restaurants and more lodging (hotel)
- A plan to promote economic development compatible with the rural environment
- Four new or expanded businesses (not just store front business but could be soft front, such as software, recreational event companies, etc)
- Ten new jobs
- More overnight visitors during the winter and summer, supporting the current businesses
- Destination town for recreation
- Bicycle friendly town
- No empty, run down houses
- Sports shop
- Expanded city limits with infrastructure extended also
- All store fronts and buildings filled with business
- A beautiful, landscaped town with restored old time buildings (railroad themed)
- THE Stop before/after the pass.
- More community, more show, more events
- It should look like a great place to visit and feel like a great place to live
- One or two more retail outlets like a pizza place
- More coordinated events between GNCR & SEI & a bike trail that will offer expanded options for families to stop and stay longer in town
- A new "motel" along the river
- Some kind of retail operation in the Hotel
- SEI could establish things like a week-long Natural History Seminar
- Artweek is very popular
- It should look like the Skykomish Visioning Plan
- Bustling!
- A few holes filled in on RR Ave with businesses
- The Sky Hotel up and running
- The bed and breakfasts under control
- Much the same as it is now
- Skiers and employees from Stevens Pass ski area housed in town
- 2-3 more businesses would make a big difference
- Railroad completed with history
- More Saturday markets, more for tourism stopping, along with music
- Better school--small enough that students could have almost individualized education paths with personal advisers. This would attract new students, revitalize the school & town
- A happy, peaceful place to be where you still know the people in your community
- With urban sprawl and the drugs/crime getting closer we will have more law enforcement available

- Amazon lockers for residents
- More hotel and VRBO bookings
- Natural /hippie ish shop
- Local businesses
- A town of refurbished buildings, some new buildings that look appropriate for a mountain town
- Nice places to stay, eat and be entertained
- An improved entrance from the Highway that is inviting. (i.e., clean up the gas station)
- Perhaps the town could get BN railway to build a nice structure to house some of their less-charming equipment
- There will more businesses and a bus you can catch into town
- A more vibrant downtown core with active businesses and tourist attractions
- A community center with a staff and daily activities for residents to enjoy
- The Skykomish Hotel should be finished sold and running
- Still be a quaint small town in a pristine and natural setting
- Cleaner, fewer vacant commercial properties
- The Forest Service Compound put to a good and organized use
- Busier

#### THINKING BIG: What resources are required to make this happen in 4 years?<sup>vi</sup>

- Money
- Active collaboration with regional groups
- Partnering with WSDOT and businesses on Hwy 2
- Grants and planning to redevelop the old Forest Service compound
- Active assistance to businesses wanting to locate in Skykomish
- Volunteers, Leadership, Financial
- A vision and detailed plan... and leaders working together to make it happen
- Grants combined with seed money from the towns NRD funds
- Attract entrepreneurial people
- Need to provide incentive for people to drive into town off the highway
- Jobs, transportation
- Attract more tourists
- Money. Lots and lots of money
- REAL high speed internet
- Getting the right company interested
- Attitude may be the most important attribute
- A "can do" town government leadership
- Implementation of a systematic economic development plan and follow through with a plan leader and support from the community
- An environment in town that allow business people to expand or implement businesses
- \$\$ to create more lodging possibilities
- Hotel, marketing/PR, a few "anchor" businesses
- Bridge over Miller river
- Attracting active skiers, hikers, Mt bikers
- Funding
- It took way too long, but Sky did find partners and resources to begin the Molly G restoration (the jewel of Sky) I imagine that the town will identify other buildings and petition for funds in a similar way to restore and improve them
- Workers that know how to keep the parks and public town land beautiful and maintained
- Vision, volunteers and money
- Continued support from the state and King County
- Focus & grant funds, and continued emphasis on ways to bring people to town
- Plus 1 MAJOR business draw & 3-4 auxiliary businesses. A corresponding growth of at least 100 people and housing for them
- Money, attraction for business, visitors
- Money and an interest in living and working here
- Money, that we likely don't have to available spend
- Grants for the railroad, volunteers, reaching out to other communities for markets, bring in people with yearly events
- Forward thinking superintendent, creative school board
- We would need people to invest in our town and open businesses
- Funding, Incentives for businesses to invest here, grants for a community center
- BNSF/DOE could possibly participate, possibly money remains in the Cleanup resource damage settlement fund, standard local, state and Federal sources - most are listed in the Comp Plan
- Local event promotion, highway signage, public restrooms

#### THINKING BIG: What obstacles stand in the way of making this happen in 4 years?<sup>vii</sup>

- Thinking small and local
- Politics
- "Skykomish Time" things tend to happen at a slower rate here
- Money, lack of money
- The town leaders?
- The constraints on the town or just its size it's surrounded by National Forest and terrain that make it kind of hard to expand much
- Money
- Attitude, leadership and commitment for success
- \$\$
- Profitability of biz in town
- SHS alone could bring \$30 to \$60K a year in grants if we had person power to execute the grants. I expect the same is true for SEI. If they had more human resources they could be a much bigger operation offering more environmental related activities.
- The Town's hesitation. It cannot make a commitment & hold to it
- Current council members visions?
- The Overall economy, what will happen nationwide and world-wide?
- Money and human resources
- Actually putting together a plan that is supported financially and volunteers to make it move
- maintaining status quo

- State of Washington not helping
- Spreading limited resources too thin across too many initiatives
- Funding
- Getting the surrounding communities approval for annexation
- Regarding the grounds and landscaping, having workers that won't or don't know how to do it
- Mayor, Town Council and funds
- Traffic on Highway 2
- Lack of funding
- Not enough hotels or motels for overnight stays
- Lack of volunteers is one key item in some areas

- Money, owners like the one at Big Bear jacking with people who want to open up businesses, no housing for those wanting to move here.
- Fundraising expertise, maybe we need to hire a lobbyist for more government funding?
- Establish a history of business startups that have success here
- Someone with a vision
- Getting to confidence to proceed. There is the tendency to micromanage which can discourage developers
- Town funding of public restrooms

#### THINKING BIG: In 7 years, what could Skykomish look like?<sup>viii</sup>

- Vibrant town with minimal commercial or residential vacancies (either land or buildings)
- New Town Campus with visitor facilities in place of the old Forest Service Compound
- Roundabout entrance to town on Hwy 2
- Town evolve into a community of creatives -- artists, craftspeople, who come to the mountains to create. . . a shop to sell their wares
- More widely known as a recreation hub, perhaps attract the Index brewpub, establish a festival for each season, active farmers market
- A busy visitor attraction with its own unique opportunities
- Growth and visual changes will be detrimental. This is NOT Seattle and most people are here because it's not
- It could look alive for one with its brand focused on the historical past
- Leavenworth but not cheesy. Methow/Winthrop
- 2 restaurants
- 2x the economy it has today
- Still small town with additional hotel access
- Hotels, shops, places to walk, hike, water. . .
- A small Bend OR
- A quaint little town that becomes a destination, not an afterthought
- People who live here who will love and take care of our town, not just use it up

- With a B & B in the McEvoy house bringing a few more patrons, the Hotel offering something that draws or supports people, and more focus on Sky as a destination
- Tourist center for Wild Sky & Alpine Lakes Wilderness areas
- The 1st overnight stop on Cascade Loop
- Partnership with Port of Seattle, Stevens pass and the Cascade Loop
- The Big Bear open
- It would be reviewed to better what was started . . . add necessary items to support the projects, and change what didn't work
- A more vibrant downtown core with active businesses and tourist attractions
- A community center with a staff and daily activities for residents to enjoy
- A town that would be inviting
- Maybe it would a fully occupied commercial district with 3 restaurants, an outfitter, small grocer with at least staples. A year round environmental, recreational and outdoor activity-based school. A low-level health care clinic if population were sufficient to support one.
- More in-town building activity

#### CONSULTANT NOTE:

Several responses to this question indicated it was unknown or that it was the same as the 4-year vision of what Skykomish could look like.

#### THINKING BIG: What resources are required to make this happen in 7 years?<sup>ix</sup>

- Active collaboration with regional organizations and groups
- Gift shop, art supply store
- Money and people who are willing to put in the actual effort, not just talking about it
- New leadership
- More money and positivity
- \$\$
- Embracing "outsiders"
- More population in area
- Funding
- Positive people
- More businesses, more housing, more opportunities for investors

- Grants, initiative, and individual investment
- Attracting investors [to] create an attraction worth stopping/staying for. Leavenworth just added a water park!
- Generate more money
- Financial advisor to oversee profit loss issues. Manage spending continue to be open minded for the community
- Money
- Local event promotion, highway signage, public restrooms

#### CONSULTANT NOTE:

The majority of responses to this question either indicated it was unknown or that it would take the same resources required to execute a 4-year vision of what Skykomish could look like.

## THINKING BIG: What obstacles stand in the way of making this happen in 7 years?\*

- Thinking small and local
- It's the people mostly. It's hard to live up where and work up here
- People who get in the way of others progress.
- Current leadership?
- Inaction, negativity, lack of communication and money
- \$\$
- Old timers
- Lack of support industry like plumbing & heating contractors.
- Funding sources
- Backers
- Negative people
- Money, positive working climate
- Ideas
- I'm not sure, but sometimes I think being a part of King County is the problem. So many regulations that slow growth because they don't apply to a small town in a national forest completely separated from the rest of the county.
- Mostly people power & of course investment which will mostly come after we've found ways to bring more people.
- Enough interest people willing to help
- Town funding of public restrooms

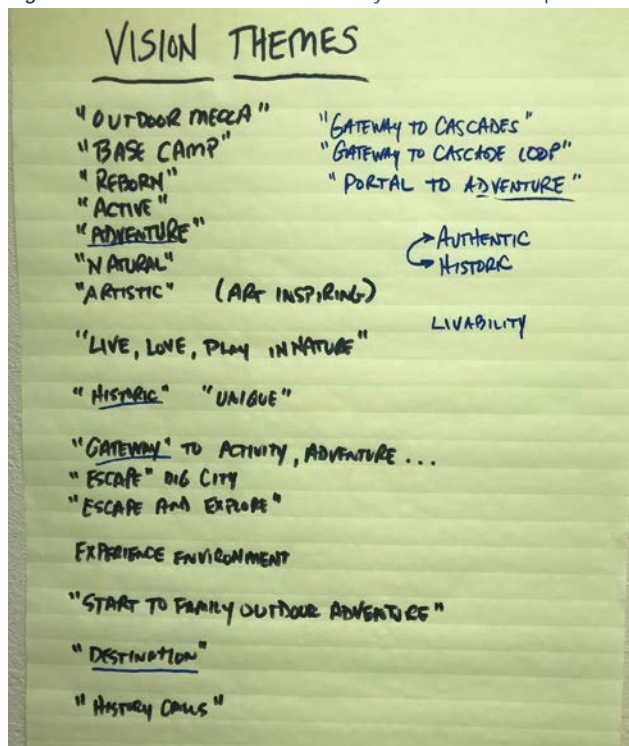
### CONSULTANT NOTE:

The majority of responses to this question either indicated unknown, don't know or same obstacles as those encountered in realizing the 4-year vision of what Skykomish could look like.

## The Town's Current Vision

The next step in the process of identifying a current vision for Skykomish, the consultant outlined "Vision Themes" in Figure 13 (below) based on the survey responses. When compared against the "Six Concepts" forming the foundation for Skykomish's vision in 2005, these vision themes are exceptionally consistent.

Figure 13 'Vision Themes' from the Survey & Public Workshop



## Vision Conclusions

Based on the survey responses and public discussion, the Town's economic development vision from 2005 continues to be relevant to and consistent with current economic development goals.

Therefore, it does not appear necessary for the Town to create a new vision.

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

A community's vision and expectations are often influenced by concerns about how the community may change. Identifying and addressing these concerns during the implementation of an economic development strategy is critical to maintaining support for economic development.

The following represents a list of concerns provided by respondents to the survey. As you can see from the nature of the responses, many of the concerns are integrally tied to and consistent with respondents' desire to maintain the Town's character. They also are reflective of the Town's Vision concepts.

## Respondent Economic Development Concerns

- Understand the geographic and social limits of the town to accommodate visitors. Do not sacrifice the historical character of the town for blind growth.
- Politics - getting in our own way
- Safe access to/from the highway
- The limited amount of land/space available for development (problem & blessing)
- [Skykomish] is shrinking rather than growing
- Changing the small-town atmosphere with developments of housing or businesses.
- That it will not be done or followed through. Mostly, that it will be delayed or discouraged.
- That it will change so much that it will be unlivable, either by crime, over development where you no longer know your neighbor or are afraid to know them. Too frantic for change that no thought is put into the whole thing
- We shouldn't put economic development into the hands of private entities, they will definitely not have the best interests in their hearts. They will all be only interested in the bottom line and what is in it for themselves.
- Would not like to become like Leavenworth

- Sky Deli closure is a real loss and the hotel development seems to have stalled
- The town had so much "red tape" that it's nearly impossible to get anything done
- Yes, the people "in charge"
- Going too fast - if you have an influx of people could overwhelm a lot of the infrastructure
- Yes, from inaction of the powers to be
- Taxes going up
- That others in town don't embrace this initiative and want to keep things the way they are and fight progress
- The town should not loan money out to attract business
- The basic needs: water, sewer, garbage & roads need to be kept up
- Trying to attract businesses first will not work if they don't have enough revenue opportunities
- Just do everything in your power to preserve charm and resist strip-mall style buildings and businesses
- Keep Maloney's Store for community use
- Keep it under control. The Town Council and Planning Commission need to be pro-active here
- Lack of clear direction and petty bickering over small issues rather than emphasis on the larger direction.
- Why hasn't the hotel been occupied already
- Only the lack of it and the marginal market potential. We need to bring more people to town, and then offer them opportunities to spend a few bucks.
- If the town comes up with a plan they should follow through. It's discouraging to participants to see their effort wasted

- We need to be careful to make sure we have the infrastructure to attract more people and events.
- Needs to be kept useful for our community.
- Family centered, no more bars need to be here
- Wouldn't like to see property taxes grow so much that current locals could no longer afford to live here, and the town become a "ski town" where only affluent people could own property/vacation homes
- Wouldn't like to see historic buildings be torn down or "refurbished" in a way that destroys the history in the name of economic growth that benefits only a few individuals
- One concern I have is that everything will get so expensive our locals that have been here for years will not be able to afford to stay here
- Airbnb's taking over and decreasing our actual town population
- That there is a level playing field for opportunity - not just for "insiders"
- It's going soooooo sloooooowwwww..... no clear leadership
- Not as long as the growth is controlled and it remains a small town
- The town has gone through this exercise many times in the past and for various reasons they all died a slow death
- Should be done by private business, not Town

*CONSULTANT NOTE:*

*There were four responses indicating the respondent was unsure, had no comment or did not know.*

## PARTNERSHIPS

The successful implementation of economic development projects further depends greatly on the ability to leverage resources (money, time, volunteers, expertise, etc.). While money is typically views as the more critical resources, partnerships are just as important. Partnerships can assist in leveraging grants, fundraising, managing projects, etc.

The community survey asked respondents to identify the most active local groups (Figure 14), the most active non-local groups (Figure 15) and groups that aren't currently involved but should be (Figure 16). The responses shown in the following figures appear in word maps where larger, bolder Partners are the most often cited.

*Figure 14 Most Active Local Groups as identified by Respondents*



Figure 15 Most Active Non-Local Groups as identified by Respondents

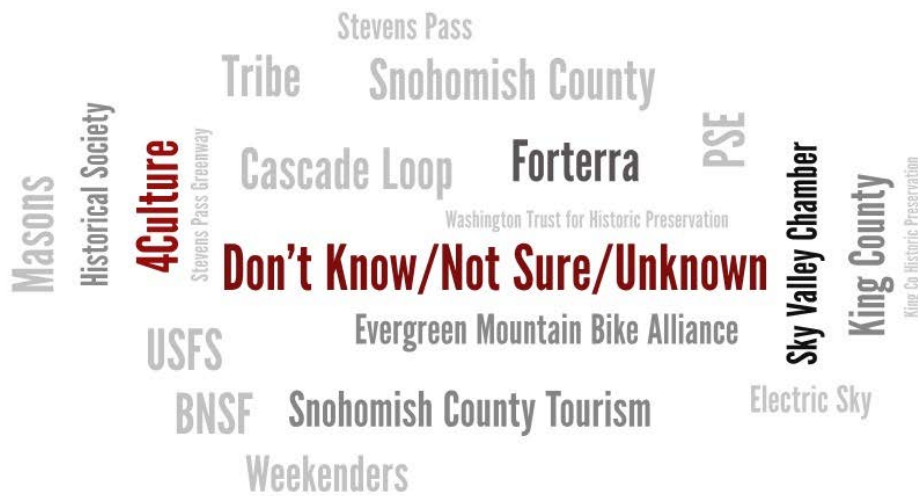


Figure 16 Groups Not Involved That Should Be as identified by Respondents



As the community proceeds with implementing economic development strategies from its work plan, these partners should be engaged.

For example, the Planning Commission can be relied upon to examine zoning uses, review master plans and recommend ordinances (e.g. code enforcement, etc.). By contrast, non-local groups and organizations such as the Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance and Snohomish County Tourism can be leveraged to promote the Town's recreational attractions and events to visitors. And, Stevens Pass can be partners in finding ways to link the Town with its closest and most recognizable attraction.

### S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats Analysis (or S.W.O.T. Analysis) is a planning technique used to help a person or group identify, organize and assess the abilities and competitiveness of an organization, business or community. While such an exercise has value, it can often be time-consuming as it involves multiple stakeholder meetings.

Completing a S.W.O.T. often requires multiple public meetings. However, Skykomish has several planning efforts underway that are competing for stakeholder time. Thus, this project relied on a modified Delphi technique<sup>1</sup> that employed a survey designed to capture like responses for a S.W.O.T. without the need for group forums. Survey responses were augmented by the information obtained in a handful of individual stakeholder interviews and later categorized and organized by the Consultant for discussion and refinement during the June 23<sup>rd</sup> public workshop. Each element of the S.W.O.T. is examined in the following write-up of the June 23 Workshop.

## JUNE 23<sup>rd</sup> PUBLIC WORKSHOP

A public workshop was held on June 23, 2018 in Town Hall. More than 25 residents and stakeholders attended the meeting, including the Mayor and Councilmembers Brunner, Farnham and Sladek. Other residents were present, including individuals holding positions on the Town's planning commission, fire department, parks board and more.

The goals of the public workshop were:

1. Review preliminary Community Survey results
2. Discuss the vision of the Town
3. Review the Town's present retail marketplace potential and other economic development factors
4. Review and confirm the S.W.O.T. assessment initiated in the Community Survey
5. Discuss potential economic development projects (goals, tasks, strategy)

The workshop opened with the Consultant briefly reviewing who had responded to the Community Survey (37 responses, including full-time residents, weekenders, etc.) and the respondents' general support for growth, noting that only 13% of respondents indicated Skykomish didn't need to grow.

Consultant presented an overview of the 2005 Vision for Skykomish and reviewed survey responses addressing the current and future Town vision. The public was presented with a list of "Vision Themes" and asked to provide input as to what was inaccurate, missing, etc. Figure 17a and 17b show the "Vision Themes" before and after workshop input.

### Vision Themes

Figure 17a Vision Themes Based on Survey Responses

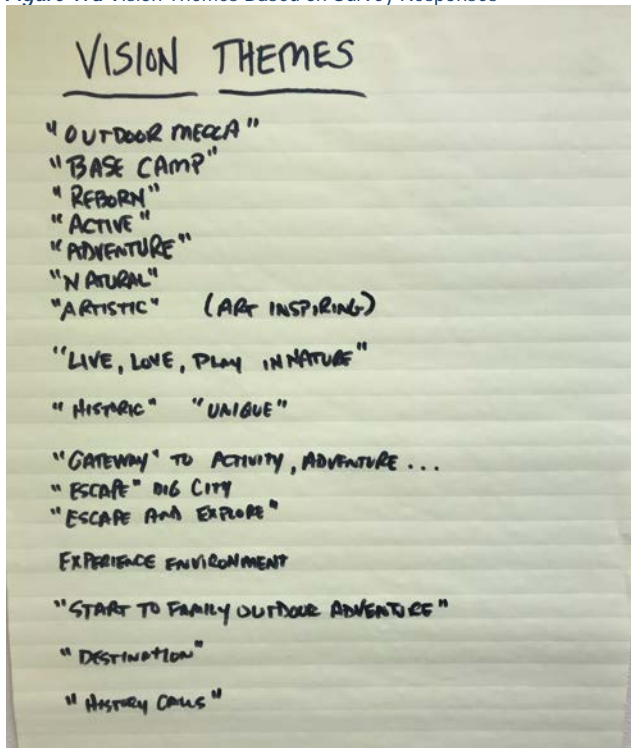
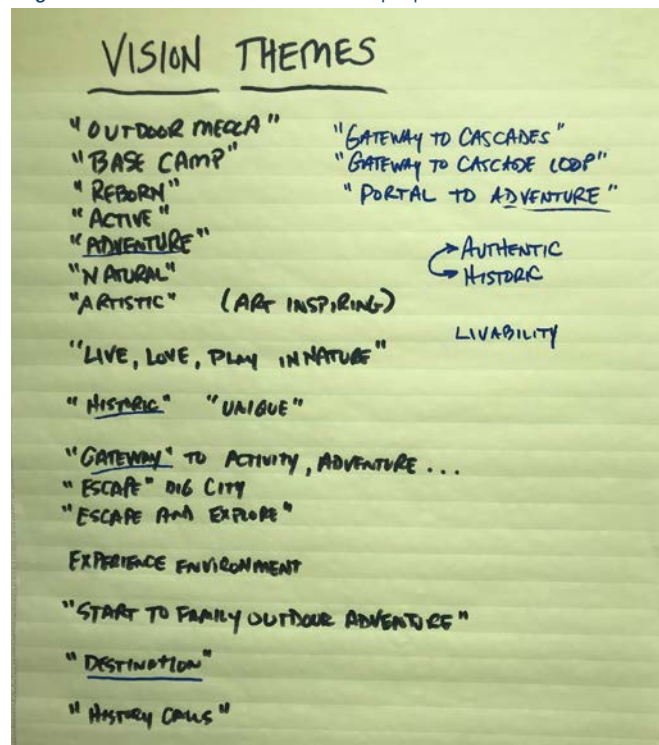


Figure 17b Vision Themes Post Workshop Input



As discussed in [REDACTED], the Vision Themes generated by the community survey and public workshop are consistent with the six concepts that form the foundation of the 2005 Vision for Skykomish. Given this consistency, Skykomish should look at the present effort as an update to its 2005 Vision, refreshing the Town's list of goals (projects, tasks) to reflect the actions needed to move the Town in the direction of its common vision.



The next step of the public workshop was to present the public with information on the Town's retail marketplace potential and discuss factors that will influence economic development in Skykomish.

The Consultant relied on ESRI for the research on retail marketplace potential. Data was pulled for three geographical areas comprising rings of 5 miles, 10 miles and 20 miles around Skykomish. The furthest point (20 miles) was used because it included the Stevens Pass Ski Area but did not extend so far south as to capture economic data associated with the Interstate 90 corridor.

### Retail Marketplace Potential

One of the Town's greatest challenges is a lack of food services and retail goods available locally. This requires residents to travel elsewhere (or shop online) to make purchases. Further, it discourages visitors from stopping in Skykomish.

In contrast however, it is not surprising that the data<sup>xi</sup> shows (within the 5-mile ring) the Town is capturing roughly \$1.68 million more than it's expected retail potential. This differential is directly related to gasoline sales, as well as beer, wine and liquor sales.

However, when looking at the 20-mile radius the area is leaking over \$75.5 million in potential annual retail sales, which are realized elsewhere. This is most likely influenced by the lack of available retail, food (restaurant) and lodging within the 20-mile trade area. By contrast, the 1-mile trade area extending from Leavenworth's city center generates a surplus of \$51 million in annual retail sales, drawing customers from outside this 1-mile area.

Economic development efforts by Skykomish that attract just 10% of the retail potential for the 20-mile radius would more than double the current economic activity present within Skykomish's 5-mile trade area. Based on the annual retail leakage in the 20-mile radius, the largest potential markets for retail and food services are:

Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers	\$19.7 million	General Merchandise Stores	\$16.4 million <sup>1</sup>
Food Service & Drinking Places	\$7.4 million	Health & Personal Care Stores	\$6.9 million
Grocery Stores	\$6.4 million		

Responses to "What is missing in Skykomish?" (Figure 3) and "Thinking Big" consistently identify these as significant economic development project opportunities the residents desire.

One note of caution is that the long-term success of retail and restaurant businesses in Skykomish will likely depend on the Town attracting additional lodging for overnight stays. One of the reasons for Leavenworth's large retail surplus is the amount of lodging that attracts visitors into their 1-mile trade area.

### Average Daily Trips (ADT)

In addition to looking at the retail potential within the area, future economic development opportunities in Skykomish will look at vehicular traffic to determine whether to make an investment. Traffic counts from WSDOT indicate between 5,900 and 6,400 vehicle trips per day on U.S. Highway 2. By contrast, U.S. Highway 2 in Leavenworth averages between 11,000 and 12,000 average daily trips<sup>xii</sup>.

The volume of traffic passing Skykomish falls below the thresholds typically looked at by restaurants and retailers. For example, most fast food restaurants (and even small coffee shop chains) generally require average daily traffic counts of at least 15,000 vehicles with many seeking counts of 35,000 or greater. With lower traffic counts but high retail potential, the Town should:

1. Work with WSDOT and/or a research organization/university (e.g. University of Washington) to study the occupancy of the vehicles to quantify the number of people each vehicle trip brings to the area.
2. Work with WSDOT, King County or a research organization/university to get independent traffic counts for the average annual daily trips on N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street to determine how many travelers are turning off U.S. Highway 2 into Skykomish.

Data on the occupancy of vehicles allows the Town to demonstrate the size of the market in Skykomish to potential businesses and investors that would otherwise look at the lower traffic counts as a disqualifying factor. Plus, having data for N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street that is independent of U.S. Highway 2 can help the Town measure the success of efforts to attract new visitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Department stores represent ~\$11 million of this figure

Public S.W.O.T. Discussion

Survey respondents were asked to identify the Town's strengths. Figure 18a (below left) shows an outline of strengths based on the survey responses. Figure 18b (below right) shows the outline as amended by the public during the June 23<sup>rd</sup> workshop.

Figure 18a Strengths Outline Based on Survey Responses

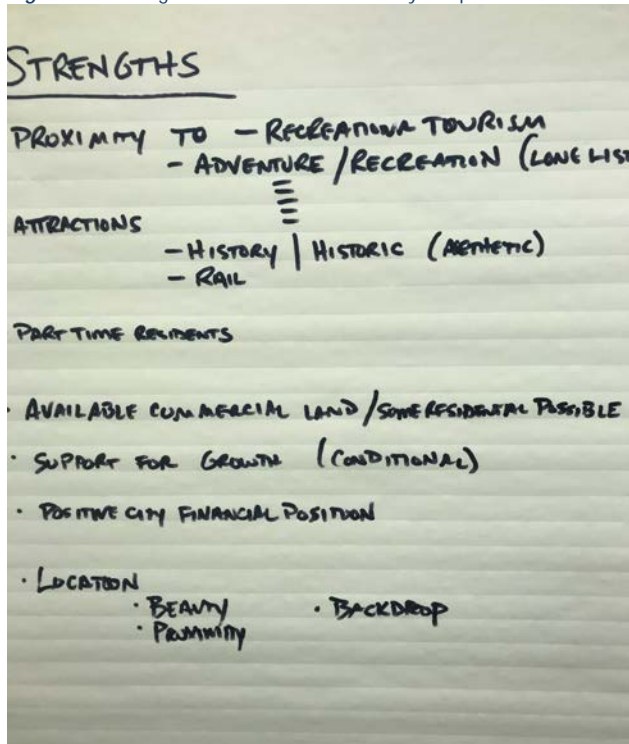
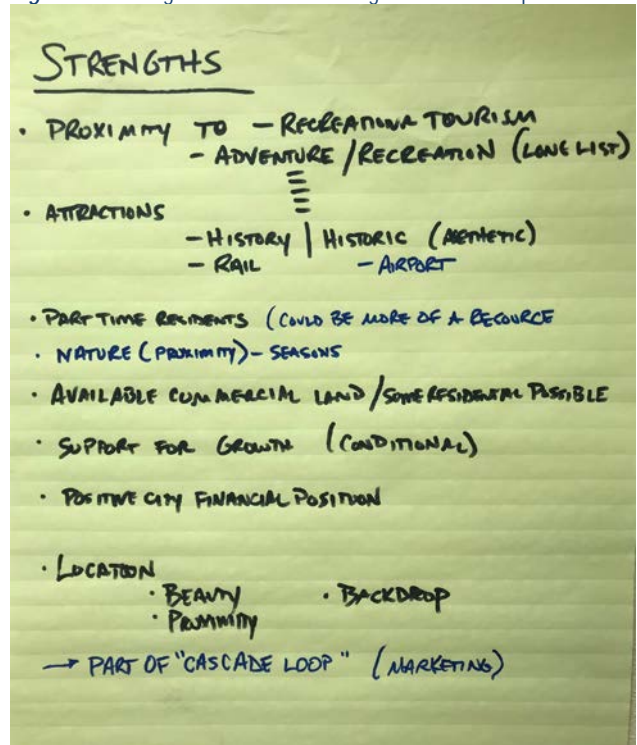


Figure 18b Strengths as Amended During Public Workshop



Survey respondents were asked to identify the Town's weaknesses. Figure 19a (below left) shows an outline of weaknesses based on the survey responses. Figure 19b (below right) shows the outline as amended by the public during the June 23<sup>rd</sup> workshop.

Figure 19a Weaknesses Outline Based on Survey Responses

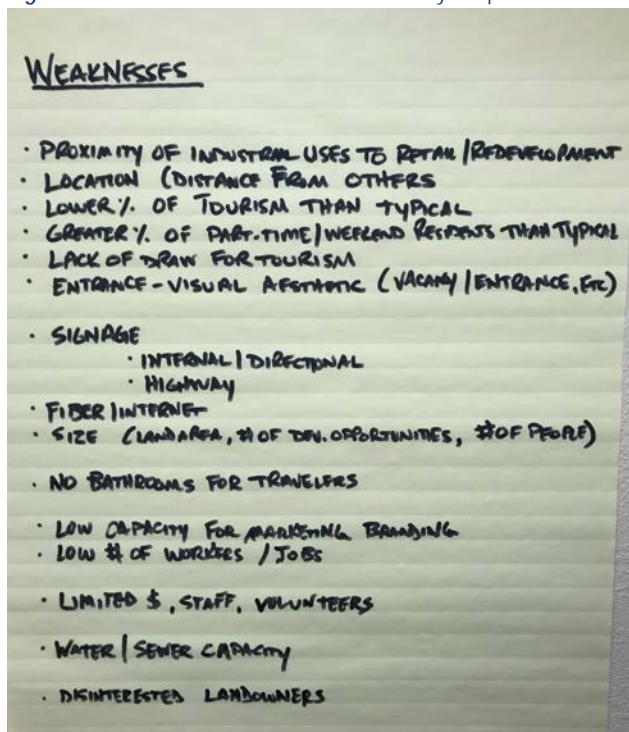
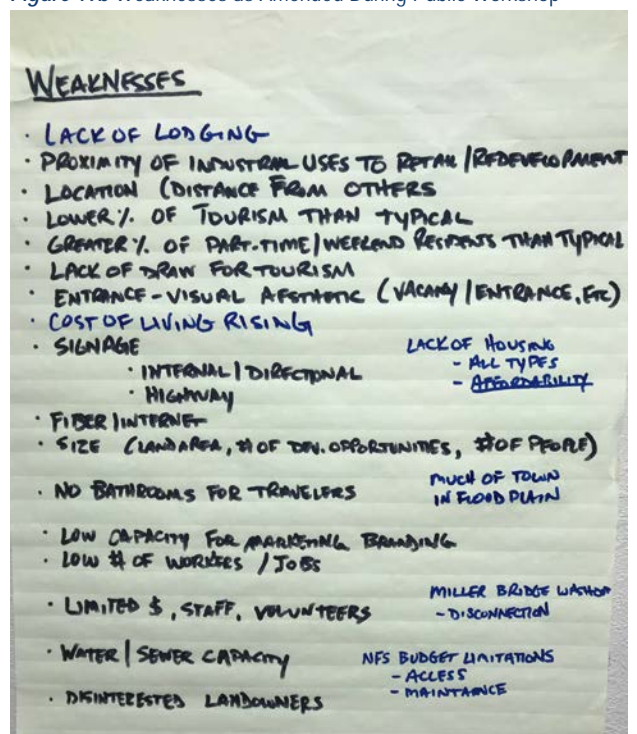


Figure 19b Weaknesses as Amended During Public Workshop



Survey respondents were asked to identify the Town's opportunities. Figure 20a (below left) shows an outline of opportunities based on the survey responses. Figure 20b (below right) shows the outline as amended by the public during the June 23<sup>rd</sup> workshop.

Figure 20a Opportunities Outline Based on Survey Responses

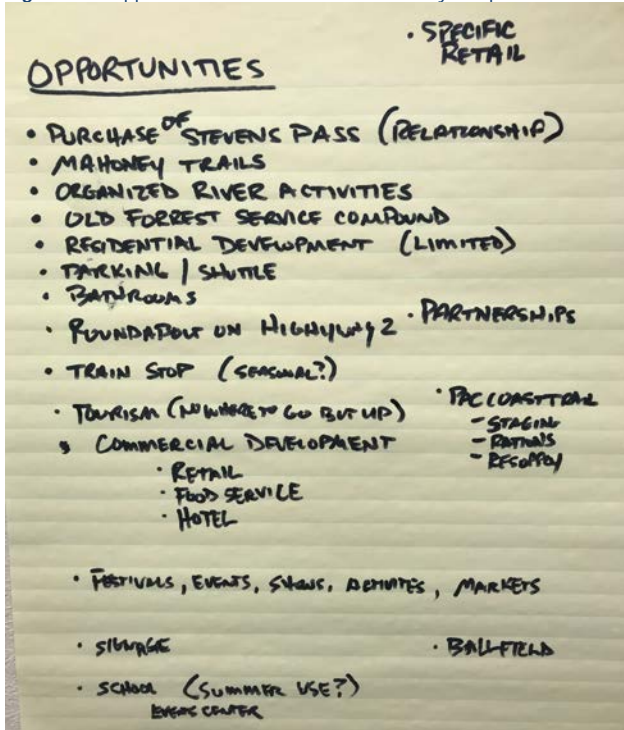
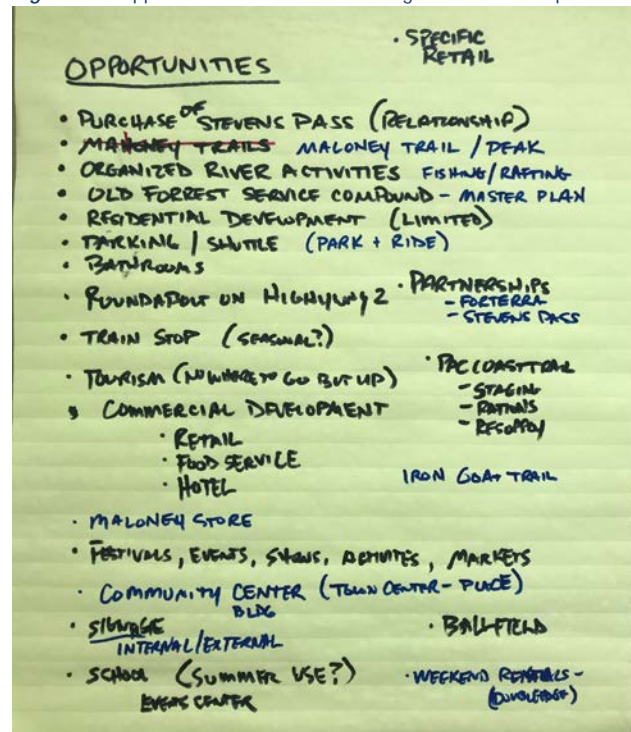


Figure 20b Opportunities as Amended During Public Workshop



Survey respondents were asked to identify the Town's threats. Figure 21a (below left) shows an outline of threats based on the survey responses. Figure 21b (below right) shows the outline as amended by the public during the June 23<sup>rd</sup> workshop.

Figure 21a Threats Outline Based on Survey Responses

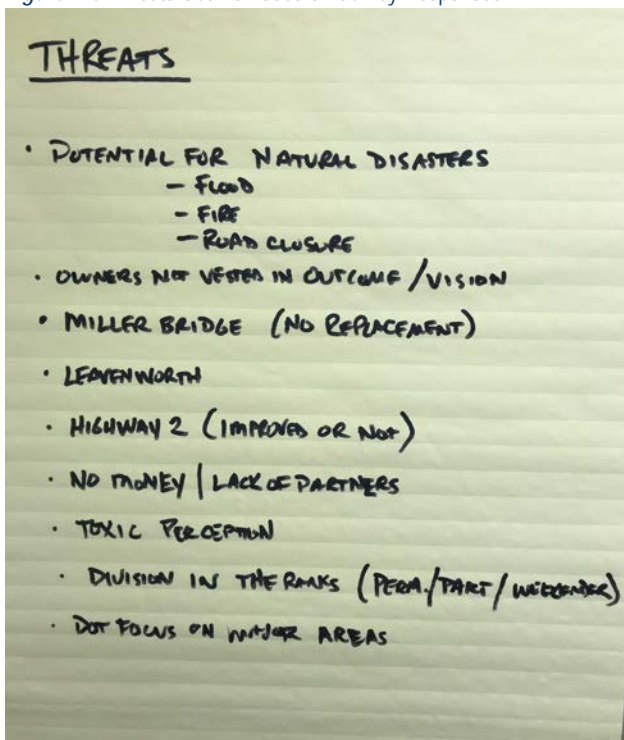
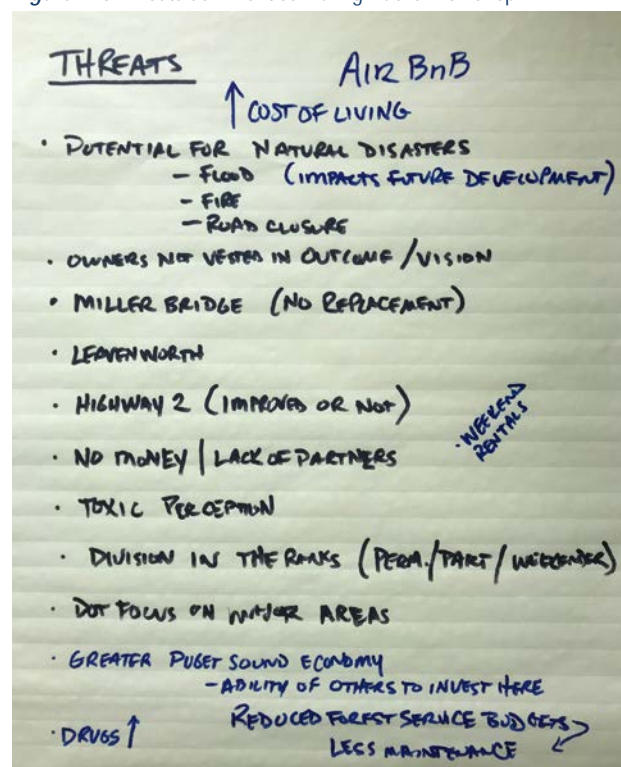


Figure 21b Threats as Amended During Public Workshop



### Initial List of Economic Development Projects & Goals

After completing the S.W.O.T., the Consultant facilitated discussions on the following areas of economic development:

- Land Use & Regulations
- Retail, Food & Hospitality
- Infrastructure & Development
- Events, Activities & Attractions
- Marketing & Branding

The goal of each discussion topic was to begin identifying specific economic development goals and the projects or tasks necessary to achieve the goals.

### Land Use & Regulations

Within this discussion topic, several items were brought up, including:

- Master Planning for the Old Forest Service Compound
- Housing (nuisances, more needed for seasonal workers, residential to rental balance, ADUs, affordability, etc.)
- Potential regulation of AirBnB properties
- Design standards to encourage historic aesthetic in town (outside historic district)
- Creation of a Lodging Co-Op to bring overnight lodging (motels, hotels, AirBnB) together for marketing
- Revisiting zoning and the comprehensive plan to look at long-term development opportunities
- Evaluating existing permitting uses to determine how the Town can encourage desired development opportunities

### Retail, Food & Hospitality

- Need to attract new businesses to fill empty store fronts, especially on main drag through town
- Entrance to town must be addressed (aesthetic/beautification, signage, intersection improvement)
- Lighting of bridge as sign Town is open
- Expand ability to attract day-use market including those using Maloney Trail, other trails, river, ski resort
- Improving the Town's position as that of a destination
- Develop information to assist in the attraction of hotel, retail and food businesses (economic analysis, business case, etc.)

### Infrastructure & Development

- U.S. Highway 2 improvement
- Miller Bridge Replacement
- Additional trails, completion of trails, connection of trails
- Public bathrooms, shuttle/parking, train stop
- Fiber

### Events, Activities & Attractions/Marketing & Branding

These topics were condensed at the end for purposes of time.

- Need to establish criteria for events, especially on Town property (like ballfield)
- Take advantage of location on Cascade Loop
- Importance of train history
- Town should understand and target specific visitors it wants to attract (leisure, adventure, recreation, etc.)

## TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOP

A final public workshop was held with the Town Council on July 28<sup>th</sup> in Town Hall. The purpose of the workshop was to review the draft economic development strategic work plan and refine its goals and tasks. Further, it was an opportunity to discuss the Town Vision and whether the Town Council agreed that the 2005 Vision was consistent with the Town's current vision.

Several public comments in this workshop were directed at the need to recognize the importance keeping the Town vision in mind (supporting the historic and small-town aesthetic; preserving and creating affordable housing opportunities; balancing growth with amenities for residents).

## Edits to Draft Work Plan

The following revisions were made to the draft work plan because of the Council discussion and public input.

- Added Old Cascade Highway as a trail connection opportunity (Infrastructure & Forward Planning)
- Added construction of a bridge from town to the ballfield park (Infrastructure & Forward Planning)
- Added advocacy for rail and transit opportunities (Infrastructure & Forward Planning)
- Edited to address need for family-friendly restaurant/dining opportunities (Business Expansion, Attraction & Investment)
- Added tasks specific to working with King County and the Cascade Loop Partnership (Business Expansion, Attraction & Investment)
- Added task of selecting a brand for Skykomish (Marketing & Branding)
- Added events for new residents, specifically families (Marketing & Branding)

## Implementation Discussion

The Town Council acknowledged in the workshop that they are in the process of obtaining Microsoft Project to insert the work plan into a tracker that will help with managing the various elements of the plan over the plan horizon. It was consensus among the Council present that prioritization and assignment of tasks would need to be tackled in a separate process over the coming weeks as they begin to create next year's budget, review required planning (compliance with GMA, etc.) and examine resources that could be available in the next few years. One area of implementation discussed in this public workshop was the need for the Town to align its comprehensive plan, six-year transportation improvement plan and six-year capital facility plan to correspond with their economic development goals (and projects).

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<sup>i</sup> The Delphi technique (aka method) is recognized by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) as an approach to building and reaching consensus, as well as prioritizing problems, solutions, strategies and goals. The Delphi method is a systematic, interactive forecasting method that relies on a panel of experts. Experts answer two or more rounds of questionnaires. After each round, a facilitator anonymously summarizes the experts' forecasts and reasons for their judgments. Experts are then encouraged to revise previous answers in light of information from other experts. It is believed that during this process the range of the answers will decrease and the group will converge towards the "correct" answer. The process concludes after reaching a predefined terminus (e.g. number of rounds, achievement of consensus, stability of results, etc.). The method was developed by Project RAND in the 1950s for a report on the future technological capabilities of the Army Air Corp and its purpose was to overcome situations where experts were often influenced by cognitive biases. More detail on the Delphi method can be reviewed in a paper by Norman Dalkey titled "The Delphi Method: An Experimental Study of Group Opinion" in 1969.

<sup>ii</sup> A copy of the full survey is included as Appendix A

<sup>iii</sup> Open ended responses to this question were edited and/or shorten by the Consultant to eliminate spelling errors, specific names of people, off-topic statements and unrelated narratives. Such editing was used to ensure clear and focused responses, as well as provide the anonymity to respondents (for the good of the whole) that was promised in the opening explanation of the survey instrument.

<sup>iv</sup> See endnote i

<sup>v</sup> See endnote i

<sup>vi</sup> See endnote i

<sup>vii</sup> See endnote i

<sup>viii</sup> See endnote i

<sup>ix</sup> See endnote i

<sup>x</sup> See endnote i

<sup>xi</sup> Copies of the Retail Marketplace Potential Reports, as well as other economic data, market profiles and key facts and figures are attached in Appendix B

<sup>xii</sup> Sources: ESRI and Kalibrate