

SECTION 4: IMPLEMENTING THE VISION

This section describes the specific actions that can be taken to make the Skykomish Vision a reality. As projects and actions occur, they will add to and reinforce each other to provide the conditions that will make the community's future Vision a reality.



Implementation Opportunities

It should be emphasized that the Vision for Skykomish is not to construct an “unobtainable” image of limited depth or duration, but to build the infrastructure and physical improvements that support the long term enhancement of the town. The construction of specific improvements will respect the value of the town’s history while recognizing the community’s current interests and providing the town and its guests with modern services and amenities. These new improvements will encourage public events, tourism, and commercial activity, that will drive private investments in the town, and in turn, will help support additional public improvements.

A key purpose for the Visioning report is for use by Ecology, BNSF, and the town of Skykomish during selection of remedy and development of the cleanup action plan. Ecology and BNSF will incorporate the Skykomish Vision into reconstruction of the cleanup areas as appropriate to the cleanup action. The cleanup will require reconstruction of the levee west of the bridge, areas in the town proper and areas of the railyard.

Some of the ideas expressed through Visioning will be accomplished as a part of the cleanup as areas impacted by the cleanup are reconstructed. It is recognized that only a portion of some Vision projects may be achievable with different cleanup actions. Other elements will be beyond the reach of the cleanup action but may be accomplished by the town through funding or assistance provided by other sources or as a part of the town’s long term planning. At the next update of the Skykomish Comprehensive Plan, the Capital Facilities Element should be updated to recognize the Vision, and implementation projects should be considered for prioritization in the capital improvement plan.

With a small population and tax base, there is no simple method

for the town to fund the concepts identified in the Vision that are not accomplished by the cleanup actions. The town may be able to implement certain aspects of the Vision by coordinating construction with cleanup actions to result in cost savings to the town without impacting the cleanup process. Projects may also be implemented with outside funding and costs might be shared with other agencies. For example, Skykomish recently entered into an interlocal agreement with King County for historic preservation services, and King County’s Historic Preservation Office may be able to help develop plans for and secure grant funding to restore historic properties.

While public agencies and funds are often used for public infrastructure projects, successful implementation of the Vision will require efforts throughout the Skykomish community. Volunteer and private actions will play a critical role. Individuals may embrace the Vision in how they decorate, maintain, and improve their own homes and businesses. The Vision does not dictate how citizens must use their land. The Vision leaves open a wide range of possibilities that individuals may or may not choose to act on. However, everyone in the town will benefit from working toward the shared Vision.

Priority Projects and Actions

The process of crafting the Skykomish Vision included several community meetings where the drafting of Vision concepts led directly to the identification of physical projects that would be needed to make the Vision a reality. An obvious example is the implementation of the Vision concept for the levee, which is already in the planning and design process. For it, the community recommended several opportunities to enhance the levee and to make it more park-like. Other implementation projects were suggested directly by individuals or groups and through the Vision process received community support. These priority projects and actions are described below.

PRIORITY PROJECTS AND ACTIONS

1. **Economic Development Council**
2. **“Skykomish General Store”**
3. **Levee reconstruction and school playfield expansion**
4. **Sanitary sewer system**
5. **Street improvements**
6. **Depot restoration**
7. **Trail and bike route development**
8. **Pedestrian park bridge**
9. **High-Speed communication infrastructure**
10. **Highway 2 signage**
11. **Entrances and viewpoints**
12. **Visitors Center**
13. **Music venue/park improvements**
14. **Railyard platform and overcrossing**

1. Economic Development Council -- One option to encourage private investment in the Vision is to initiate and support an economic development group or council. This group of community members could focus on pursuing various projects that would bring new revenue streams into town. “Job 1” might be the pursuit of a Stevens Pass shuttle service between Skykomish and the pass utilizing the town’s all weather parking.

2. “Skykomish General Store” – As a school assignment, students were asked to list their most critical needs for Skykomish. Number one on their list is a grocery or general store that would allow residents to shop, at least for basic needs, without having to drive several miles west. This is especially important to young people who have to rely on adults for private transportation outside of town.

3. Levee reconstruction and school playfield expansion – The levee is scheduled for cleanup and reconstruction in 2006 as the first cleanup action. Reconstruction of the levee creates the opportunity to implement several of the specific design recommendations adopted by the town, including making the levee more park-like, providing access along and to the water, and creating educational view points. It is also hoped that reconstruction can result in reclamation of the portion of Riverview Drive adjacent to the school to allow for expansion of the school playfield.

4. Sanitary sewer system – Concurrent with the Vision process, the town has sought Community Development Block Grant funds to study the implementation of a community sewer system. Sewer infrastructure would resolve environmental issues associated with substandard septic systems and increase the feasibility of supporting new commercial developments. Sewer would also be consistent with the objectives of the Growth Management Act.

5. Street improvements – As the most common form of public space in Skykomish (as with most cities), the look and character of the street system strongly influences the image of the town. Street improvements could echo the 1920's era style evident along Railroad Avenue and include additional historic references. During cleanup it is anticipated that several sections of local streets will be reconstructed.

6. Depot restoration – Restoring the depot building is a possible means of developing a tourism center, a museum, a public restroom, a trailhead, or an information center. However the depot is used once restored, it is a vital symbol of Skykomish's past. The Skykomish design guidelines as well as a recent school project contemplate relocating the depot to its original location on the south side of the tracks where it would be a focal point for those coming across the bridge. The King County Historic Preservation Office, the Skykomish Historical Society and BNSF should coordinate with any plans involving the depot.

7. Trail and bike route development – As a central component of attracting visitors, Skykomish sees itself as a destination for outdoor recreation. Adjacent to forest lands, it logically makes sense to develop trails and trail heads in Skykomish that connect to regional trails. This could be coordinated with the US Forest Service, Green Trails, Washington Trails Association and other trail groups. Grant funding may be available for converting abandoned rail corridors to trail use. Improving and designating bicycle routes should be coordinated with regional bicycle clubs and the Department of Transportation

8. Pedestrian park bridge – As documented in the Skykomish Parks Plan, a pedestrian bridge to the Skykomish Park would provide connectivity between the north and south sides of town and increase

the feasibility of using the park as a regional music/event venue. Visitors could park and eat in town, then walk across the bridge to the park venue. Proposals should be coordinated with sewer planning, as a pedestrian bridge might be able to serve a dual purpose as a utility crossing. A similar pedestrian river crossing may be seen in Newhalem, WA.

9. High-speed communication infrastructure – The town seeks enhanced communications systems to support commercial operations and home-based businesses. With high-speed connections, work-from-home options become viable. Reconstruction of streets and other areas should be designed to facilitate new and future utility installations.

10. Highway 2 signage – Traveling quickly on Highway 2, many motorists pass by without noticing the gem of Skykomish. New "Entering Skykomish" signs, designed in the Northwest character of the town, would herald its approach. The reader board could be relocated to a more visible location. New highway signs would direct bicyclists to the Old Cascade Highway "Scenic Route." Highway signage should be coordinated with the Department of Transportation.

11. Entrances and viewpoints – People want to stop when an area holds interest and is attractive. Therefore, the first views of Skykomish from Highway 2 need to be improved. Landscaping and flower beds could be planted near the entrance off Highway 2. Views of the town from the north need to be opened up. Lighting could be added to the bridge and the old hotel's cupola. Improvements should be coordinated with the Department of Transportation and private property owners.

12. Visitors Center – To attract and welcome visitors as part of the

economic development strategy, the town seeks a Visitors Center that would provide information about local and regional activities, be an opportunity for shuttle parking, and provide public restrooms. The visitors center might be part of a restored depot building, but could be located elsewhere. Planning should be coordinated with King County Office of Historic Preservation and the Skykomish Historical Society.

13. Music venue/park improvements – A music/event venue would bring in people from around the region and potentially result in additional revenue. A venue could be located at the Skykomish park. Coordination might occur with regional music promoters such as House of Blues (operator of the Gorge Amphitheater).

14. Railyard platform and overcrossing – An overcrossing at the railyard would provide for a safe pedestrian crossing over the active tracks. Currently, school children from the south must cross back and forth each day. More than a simple pedestrian overcrossing, a railyard platform would also be a visual centerpiece, reflect the rail heritage in its design, and be a viewing deck to watch the trains come and go. Development of an overcrossing should be coordinated with BNSF and could be synchronized with cleanup actions.

Timing

The cleanup presents a unique opportunity to achieve many of the projects listed above. Some may be directly implemented as part of a cleanup action, such as a street reconstruction. For others, cleanup actions may present a window of opportunity to make efficient use of other funding sources. As cleanup actions occur, much of the Vision may be realized as early as 2010. Nonetheless, the Vision is a long term plan that should continue to be implemented over the next several decades, recognizing that the town's Vision may evolve over that time.

It is with the long term in mind that the community should set about building their future. The first steps may be the easiest – the “planting of petunias.” As small steps are taken, momentum will build. Completing smaller projects will demonstrate a commitment to the Vision which will help secure additional funding. As projects are built, private investment will be more likely. And as businesses make improvements, more visitors will be attracted, building an ongoing cycle of renewal.