

Lower Methow Community Visioning Process Summary of Results – Final Draft

December 10, 2007

Respondents to date: approximately 35 - 40 (hard to tell, some w/no i.d., some unanswered questions)

Location of Respondents: French Ck, McFarland Ck, Valley Floor, Methow town, Black Canyon, Gold Creek, Bill Shaw/Buckhorn Mt., "Methow River Ranch"

Tenure of Respondents: Range from 2yrs to 111! (A few homestead-era families). Median tenure/ownership: 23 yrs. Average tenure/ownership: 29 yrs. 7 Respondents over 40 years ownership.

Majority of Respondents are employed at least part time in the Methow; some work part time outside the valley; a handful are retired; a handful are second home owners employed elsewhere.

Majority of Respondents felt the recent overall rate of growth and development in the Lower Methow has been "Too Much". One respondent checked "Don't know," Two checked "Just Right," and a few didn't answer the question.

Preferred Land Use Vision (in order from most to least respondents):

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Orchards/Farms | 11. Parks |
| 2. Wildlife Habitat Areas | 12. Unincorporated Towns |
| 3. Trails (nonmotorized) | 13. Incorporated Towns |
| 4. Rangeland | 14. Tourist Facilities |
| 5. Livestock Production | 15. Cluster Neighborhoods |
| 6. Rural Residential/Ranchettes | 16. High Income Housing |
| 7. Forestry/Logging | 17. Commercial Areas (tied w/18) |
| 8. Recreational Activities | 18. Trails non-motorized (tied w/17) |
| 9. Middle Income Housing | 19. Industrial Sites (tied w/20) |
| 10. Low Income Housing | 20. Apartments and Condos (tied w/19) |

Values (in order from most to least respondents):

1. Open Space/Natural Beauty/Aesthetics
2. "Rural Environment"/Low Population/ Peace and Quiet/ Solitude/ Lack of traffic, noise
3. Sense of Community/Small Town Values/Long term full time residents/Friendly Neighbors
4. Recreation, Public Access, Natural Resources (including clean air/water), "The River"
5. Current lack of large scale development, light pollution, ridge top development
6. Agriculture
7. Wildlife

Others (single response): "Good place to raise kids," "Close to other nice places like Chelan and Okanogan," "Diversity in properties," "Not commercially developed," "Small business owner atmosphere"

Threats (in order from most to least respondents):

1. Unregulated development (major areas of emphasis sub-categorized below)
 - a. "Bad" or unregulated road building practices
 - b. Too much density allowed along river
 - c. Lack of adequate infrastructure to support the growth

Threats, cont'd

2. Water Quantity and Quality (major areas of emphasis sub-categorized below)
 - a. Too many new wells/ground water over-allocated
 - b. Danger of pollution to river from new roads
 - c. Danger of pollution to river from septic
3. Conversion of Ag lands, wildlife habitat and open space to housing
4. Land values and taxes pricing out locals
5. Loss of access to river, public lands
6. Potential for ridgeline development and night sky pollution
7. Traffic and speeds on road system
8. "Too many new people"/Suburbanization by outsiders

Other (one or two respondents): Wildfire/smoke, New Powerlines, "Too many regulations," Tourism, "Good Time Charlies from Westside," "Lack of wildfire awareness by new residents," "Cluster development"

Photo Exercise Summary:

Likes and Dislikes fell into several broad categories. Organized from most to least respondents.

Likes:

1. Working Orchards/Ag Lands/Gardens/Fruit Stands
2. Wildlife Habitat/Open Space/"Views"
3. Clean air, water, "rural environment"
4. Public Access (river and public lands)
5. Modest housing that blends w/landscape (old and new construction)
6. Lack of light pollution and ridgeline development

Others (one or two responses): Low traffic dirt roads, Community Center, Commercial center and school in Pateros, Preservation of historic sites and artifacts, Wells Dam

Dislikes:

1. "Roads gouging hillsides" – Shamrock et al. Many pictures of this and similar roads, citing concerns about erosion, dust/air pollution, weeds, river pollution, public safety, property rights of adjacent owners, scarring of the landscape, and need for more thorough road permitting system.
2. High density developments near Gold Ck Meadows, Alta Lake, other places. Emphasis on dislike of housing density along river particularly, citing water quality and recreational solitude for river users.
3. Loss of working ag and forests to housing conversion; loss of water rights for ag, displacement of wildlife
4. Trailers, single wides, manufactured homes, RV sheds and "trashy yards"
5. Garbage, pollution, graffiti and fire danger at public access sites
6. Traffic speed and noise, roadkill (many requests to lower speed limit)
7. Ridgeline development/Trophy Spec homes

Others (one or two responses): "industrial/commercial in the wrong place (should be in town)"; Chuckholes in roads; real estate signs too large, "Glare bombs (night lights without shields)"

Comments – some excerpts/paraphrasing of thoughts and suggestions across the board (no particular order):

- Night skies and ridgeline ordinances needed
- Seasonally and uninhabited trophy homes could dominate the landscape and raise taxes

- Keep commercial development where services already exist
- High mounted night lights shine into neighbors' homes and clear across the river. They should have visor shields so they mostly shine down. It's discourteous."
- Pateros really is the center of the Universe!
- Misrepresentation of environmental and social demands leads to unrealistic potentials (home sales) never being met – taxes increase whether homes are vacant or not
- Development impacts traffic and displaces wildlife, leading to more roadkill and less habitat
- Forests need to be managed for wildlife and fire prevention
- Irresponsible development of land needs to be looked at closely
- Lower the speed limit (many requests)
- Want to preserve historic evidence on the landscape (eg old irrigation structures, homesteads)
- Like to see Agriculture thrive in the valley. Need to keep taxes reasonable to make this possible
- There should be a permit process so the hillside doesn't get carved up
- Need a well-balanced community with hi-density development inside town limits
- Would be nice if building sites were on 20 acre minimum parcels (several responses)
- Storage units should be in Industrial area, or at least hidden. Not replacing ag lands
- I live in (several locations, several respondents with same theme) where houses are crammed onto small pieces of ground in flood plains and volcanic mud flow zones, all in the name of making a buck. Let's not do this in the Methow!
- We are looking to retire in the area in the next 10-12 years. What could be considered for the area is an Urgent Care or Telemedicine Clinic to bring concerted health care to rural or underserved populations in the Methow..a Wellness medical facility could also be a valuable consideration.
- New residents should attend wildfire risk management seminars, and learn about fire history in the Methow.
- How can we stay in our homes when taxes keep going up? How can we put a limit on development?
- Low income housing should be located in town
- Apartments and Condos contribute to traffic and crime and threaten rural values.
- Let's face it, developers are there to make money off the land with little or no regard to its impact.
- Too many new wells!
- Lower Valley is winter range for our wildlife. It is getting less and less for the animals – there are places in the river that stink with pollution. Adverse effects from new roads.
- Everyone should be aware of DNR Forest Stewardship programs for timber and wildlife habitat management.
- Industrial sites should be located in a town
- Accessible positive activities should be available for teens
- Apartments/condos should be located in a town
- Agricultural water is not domestic water!
- Taxing property based on comparables leads to taxing locals out of the area
- What kind of investment in community can be expected from part time "recreational" home owners?
- Increased population brings noise and air pollution
- I believe the Advisory group should look seriously at the impact of tourism on the valley. Not just economic benefits, but also its role in air and water pollution, highway congestion, etc. For me, the integrity of the valley has been in decline for 30-some years; for others the decline began sooner; and for some – the decline has not yet begun. Good luck with your task!
- Are Weekend Monuments to Wealth a good use of the land?

- “According to National Geographic map, nearly every square inch of the world is in jeopardy because of farming practices. I imagine some in the valley feel the same way. However, farming is necessary for any quality of life in a populated world. Farming should not be just quaint, picturesque islands of history in the valley, but an integral part of it. Also, I believe logging should be an important participant in the quality of life in the valley. Farming and logging add more to the quality of life in the valley than they subtract. Tourism may add more money, but in the valley it appears to border on Disney in the wilderness...
- One of my issues is the visual impact of manufactured homes and RV sheds popping up along the road. But I don't know if one can dictate architectural taste.
- Agriculture is a very important and wonderful part of the Methow Valley and needs to remain so. People need to see the big picture here. We do not want to be a country that ends up importing all of America's food. We need Agriculture!
- Who is going to control insects, etc. in scattered fruit trees left amongst new housing developments? If trees aren't sprayed, the few remaining orchards will have to deal with spread of pests.
- Growth is inevitable. As new growth restrictions are put into place are the current land owners expected to abide by the same requirements? Are we supposed to upgrade our roads to meet erosion and weed requirements? Are we expected to be grandfathered in? We need to be careful what we ask for.
- First and foremost, use sensibility when dividing up acreage. Maintain 20 acre parcels as in the past. There is only so much water to accommodate existing dwellings.
- Road maintenance, additional traffic keeps (bill shaw) road torn up. Schedule more upkeep and do something to slow people down
- Okanogan County must take a more proactive stance on Big Development – they can't be allowed to come to the Methow Valley and just rip the land up
- Limit size and cost of homes
- Low impact recreation is more appropriate than hi impact recreation
- Regulations need to protect farmers from the complaints of smells, etc. and other common farming situations when newcomers who are not used to farming and ranching buy adjacent property.
- Something must be done so that escalating land taxes don't drive out current residents. The times have changed, and rising land prices/taxes is now more likely to prevent children from returning than lack of employment. I would like to see the Methow become the exception to what is happening all over the West: increased dependence on petroleum for transport of food, increasing number of huge expensive homes build without regard for the natural limitations of the land (slides, floods, fire), farmers needing to sell property because of development pressure, dense development obstructing wildlife passage and habitat, viewsheds ruined by masses of houses and or poor visual choices; deteriorating air quality; and water use being allocated in a way that restricts the sustainability of communities and encourages development beyond the natural limitations of the land.
- We need to look at other areas which have limited the RATE of growth – i.e. the Growth Plan in Boulder, CO and others. Was it successful? Are there good models?
- (excerpt from 3 page comment letter)When the DOE tells Twisp they don't have any water left to pump, I'm confused. There is already homes and businesses there , why not continue letting that area (town) grow? By not developing (in town) homes will continue to litter our hay fields and orchards...I don't like the treated water (from town) discharged into the river during hot summer months because our technology hasn't figured out how to pull nitrates out of water. Why not put this water in a ditch and let the plants pull out nitrates? .. This plan would leave me with a cleaner river to swim in.
- I got your ink pen.