



CITY OF SNOHOMISH STRATEGIC PLANNING PROJECT COMMUNITY MEETING #1

COMMUNITY STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT AND VISIONING

On June 13, 2006, the City of Snohomish, in cooperation with the Snohomish Strategic Planning Community Advisory Committee, sponsored a Community Forum at the Snohomish Fire District #4 Training Center. Approximately 80 people participated in the forum, including residents, city staff and Community Advisory Committee members. After a brief introduction to the purpose, scope and timeline to the project, Task Force members and consultant staff led 6 small groups in a discussion of the following questions and open-ended statements:

- What are the key strengths of Snohomish?
- What challenges does Snohomish face?
- What opportunities are available to the City?
- In 20 years, the Snohomish will...
- A livable Snohomish is...

After the small group discussions, the groups reported the highlights of their conversations to the rest of the Community Forum participants. A complete summary of the comments provided by Forum participants is attached.

KEY THEMES

Throughout the responses, there was little disagreement and several themes emerged. In general, City of Snohomish residents have a strong sense of community and commitment to their neighbors and their City; enjoy the small town feel, good geographic location and the natural environment; and enjoy their community's character and quality of life amenities. Community Forum participants were concerned about the challenges of traffic congestion, aging city infrastructure, parking, public transportation and pedestrian safety; appropriateness of the business mix and attraction of new businesses; and shared some concerns about preserving the existing community feeling and keeping the City affordable. They were also concerned about managing the growth of the City, maintaining an appropriate housing mix and the lack of ethnic diversity in the community.

Since participants were content with the small, rural feel of Snohomish, they envisioned that in 20 years the City would retain those characteristics, but be more walkable and dense. Participants hoped that the City would enforce cohesive design standards and assist with strategic mixed-use developments so that the City can retain its small town feel, while providing local services to residents and continuing to raise Snohomish's profile as a tourist destination. Many participants felt it was important to maintain affordability of housing and services in Snohomish. Participants saw opportunities for park and trail development generally, specifically activating and orienting the river more towards the City.

ATTACHMENT A: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The following is a summary of each small group's response to the discussion questions, as written by the volunteer recorder/reporter on flip charts provided to each group. All comments have been grouped into categories.

STRENGTHS

Historic Atmosphere and Beautiful Historic District

- Historic district (5 comments)
- This is a small town with historic atmosphere
- The city has strong character and sense of community
- Strong sense of history – we want to keep it and preserve it
- Old homes add a historic flavor

Small Town Feel and Beautiful, Unique Look

- Snohomish looks unique and feels like a real small town
- The City has an established identity
- The City looks different than other cities
- Friendly, small town atmosphere
- Small town feel (2 comments)
- Beautiful setting – very attractive, beautiful houses
- Beautiful city
- Natural setting
- Beautiful City: historic district and natural beauty, like parks
- Quaint town feeling
- The feel of the Main street is wonderful
- Hanging baskets
- Small town atmosphere
- Charm & feel
- It is a destination location, the City has a strong personality
- Rural atmosphere
- A place to come back to
- Can live and work here, it is nice to be able to avoid commute
- Design standards have kept the City pristine and managed its growth
- The City has not experienced aggressive growth, hope to further preserve the neighborhoods

Excellent Geographic Location

- Central location of the City
- Our location is great – near the river and the airport
- Rural experience, historic entrance to community
- River (2 comments)
- Bypass US 2, location of State Route 9, also an opportunity for growth
- Airport
- Valley views
- Natural and physical geography creates a boundary around the City

Good Amenities & Recreational Opportunities

- Shopping is good here – many local vendors
- There is a diverse set of amenities here, like the soccer fields, attractions, library, parks, trails
- There are a number of activities
- Good urban experience
- There is good balance here between urban and rural, people don't have to go far for amenities
- There are many small businesses
- Fabulous library
- Downtown businesses are great, it's not just about tourism
- Hill Park
- People are able to walk everywhere
- Centennial trail and parks
- Quality of education
- Boys & Girls Club
- Library
- Gardens
- Great parks – very high per capita level of service
- Neighborhood parks/open spaces/lakes

The People: Strong Sense of Community

- People have a strong sense of community, passion for living here
- People here want to give back to the community
- Community support
- Service club cooperation
- Community togetherness, warm feeling of home
- Traditions of the community
- Neighborhoods are great here – people are nice and know each other
- Neighborhoods working together
- Caring people
- People – helpful, pleasant
- Sense of community, unique town - when first read about Snohomish, it felt good
- Sense of community, "know your neighbors"
- History and family feeling
 - People are friendly, talk to each other
 - Inviting city
- People are very important

Focus on Safe, Educated Community

- Excellent school district
- Educated community
 - Parents are very involved with their children
 - High school serves as an anchor
- City now has a good focus on families with children (sports and rec. programs are a strength)
- Lack of crime
- Strong city government

CHALLENGES

Traffic and Infrastructure

- Traffic – lack of alternate routes
- Through traffic through city is congested
- Increasing traffic
- Traffic flow through city is a challenge, development is coming before the traffic, so there's a need to be managed well
- Traffic congested at many times, which translates into lost revenue to people and businesses
- Traffic is very bad: where will we put everyone?
 - Can't put people on 2nd/D
 - Example: I don't go to Monroe because of the dense traffic
 - Bridge on Highway 9: WSDOT is expanding highway; with growth will bridge need expansion?
 - Example: Arlington moved their bridge + 3 turn lanes
 - There are too many people that are speeding
 - Bad access to the City: there is only one way in, and one way out
- The access to Snohomish Hwy 2 & 9 should have been wider
 - With Bickford developing, it is important to know how to manage traffic
- 3 Lakes road, Hwy 2 expansion would hopefully take a lot of traffic out of town
- There are many divergent routes
- Technical infrastructure is aged and needs upgrading (2 comments)
- Physical infrastructure is in poor condition – roads, water runoff, utilities, sidewalks (2 comments)
- There are not enough sidewalks in the City
- Public transit is lacking
- There is a lack of parking in the City (1st street, Pine)
- 1st street needs maintenance as the south side is sinking
- We need to make sure that the streets are safe for pedestrians
- We need to make the 1st St. streetscape safe for pedestrians
- We would like better access to the river, like boat ramp
- It would be great to have a trolley. When the trail is finished, may have enough room for rail

Business Mix and Job Creation

- We need to be attracting the right types of businesses to keep people in Snohomish
- Need to attract businesses to increase City tax base to provide desired services (2 comments)
- More business to create more jobs
- Important to see the recovery of retail base, hope that it keeps current direction
- Develop the business at launch, make it work better, could be a wonderful thing
- We don't have a hotel in town – could also be an opportunity
- We need more stores for miscellaneous things
- There is not enough commercially and industrially zoned land
- We need a department store like Target or Fred Meyer for misc. shopping
- There is a lack of "daily shopping" stores to be able to purchase such things as yarn, clothes, lumber
- It is challenging to mix big business with small mom & pop shops
- Important to attract new jobs
- We'd like to bring businesses here with highly educated employees
- We'd like a place by Blackman's Lake where visitors could park RVs/trailers

Education, Youth and Family Activities

- Young people don't have a lot of youth activities to do here
- There is not enough family entertainment
- The elementary and middle schools are overcrowded
- There will be 2 high schools in the near future – future rivalry?
- The new High school at Cathcart will bring development of Clearview

Environmental Challenges

- How do we keep our green buffer?
- We need to be maintaining a healthy environment
- Need to do creek buffer enforcement at Myricks Fork
- The City is bound geographically by the river
- Need more parks in NW part of city to keep current level of service in other parks of city
- Need better maintenance of parks
- We'd like to keep the farmland outside the city – we want to keep it rural
- Need to preserve nature on the trails and to protect trees

Preserve Existing Community and Small Town Feel

- We'd like to keep the small town feel
- We want to preserve what we have, especially neighborhoods and trees
- We'd like to maintain a sense of community
- It is important to stay a caring community and keep the intimate feel of the City
- We want to maintain livability

Providing Quality Housing, Keeping the City Affordable

- Difference between single family vs. multi-family residences
 - Maintenance of facilities is poor, there is deterioration
- Keeping residents who live outside the city; development on Highway 9 is content dense
 - Their area should be preserved
 - We don't want to push housing outside of area
- Need good share of low-income senior housing
- We'd like more appropriate senior housing
- The City is no longer affordable to many people
- We would like to keep city affordable
- Cost of living – expensive housing
- High utility rates (sewer – wastewater – stormwater)
- High sewer rates
- We want to minimize sewer rates

Managing the Growth, Balancing Old and New

- Growth is a big challenge
- Design standards are important. We have a unique opportunity to choose how our community looks; we need to be smart to make choices for ourselves, not make the fastest decision
- Need to manage airport growth
- We need to keep manageable, non-aggressive growth and low sewer rates
- We need to work on uniting the generations
- Providing many opportunities is important

- Population is growing
- We need to protect community boundaries, don't bow down to convenience
- Need to balance old and new

Perceptions and Attitudes

- Disconnect within the City
- Divisive personalities and opinions
- Lack of ethnic diversity (2 comments)
- Need to access the local Latino community and assimilate them
- Lack of city revenue is a challenge

Surrounding Communities

- How do we handle influence of our neighbors (Monroe, Everett)?
- We don't want to become like Monroe: strip commercial
- Grow like no other community
- We don't want the opportunities to slip away and go to other communities
- UGA – expansion issues
 - We should be enticing neighbors to become part of the City

Other

- Airport, expansion of housing, density, parks
- Care for our aging citizens
- We need to control lighting in city, so that we can preserve the starry sky
- Adding new to old in pastime way
- North/South cohesive – Bickford area

OPPORTUNITIES

Facing Growth and an Increase in Density

- Everyone wants to move to Snohomish
- Population will increase
 - The State Growth Management Act means growth is a reality
 - Our question is how do we control growth while we want to maximize our potential?
- More people leads to more local wealth
- Beware of the opportunity for bad growth
- Consider the impacts of the Growth Management Act, it encourages dense housing
- We need to grow beautifully by protecting the lake and creeks

Maintain Cohesive Design Standards

- Design standards
- Maintain cohesive design standards
- Preservation of existing development standards
 - Example: Mill Creek has charm
- Unfortunate that trees were lost around the Snohomish Station Development
- Maintain and create areas for walking
- To maintain rural feel the City needs building, zoning codes
 - One-third of an acre is too small for residential to be further divided

CITY OF SNOHOMISH STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- 2nd Street and Avenue A are examples of good development, developed through the Design Review Board
- Keep height limits at 35 feet, this preserves the small town character

Strategic, Appropriate Development

- Consider mixed-use, pedestrian friendly development, at a small scale
- Keep development under these design standards
- There is development in Cathcart area
- Blending residential and commercial development
- Mixed use development creates quality urban environment
- Not yet spoiled by bad development like many communities: Marysville, Monroe, Lynnwood
- Prepare for development, design standards to make it compatible with the City as it is now
- Pursue responsible developers
- Continue development in grids, no cul-de-sacs
- Avoid more “bicycle tree” developments
- Protect floodplain from development
- Mixed use developments are welcome
 - We should be able to live and work in the same town
- City needs sidewalks and new streets
- The City needs sidewalks everywhere, sidewalks are part of a city

Increase Transportation Options and Address Traffic Challenges

- WSDOT needs to Improve Highway 2
- Trolley
- Trolley car on rails
- Christmas trolley driving on streets is an opportunity
 - Would fit along Avenue D
 - Snoqualmie, Issaquah are examples

Orient the City Towards the River and Invest in Parks and Trails

- Snohomish has parks, open space, river, natural beauty
- Make downtown attractive from the river side: access to river
- Take advantage of river
- Orient 1st Street and the rest of Town towards the river
- Riverfront
- Strengthen orientation to river for:
 - Access
 - Views
 - Boating
 - Scenic
 - Shops on river, raise nice park areas
 - Review Riverfront Master Plan
- Make the river available for recreational use
- Water activity
- Use of Snohomish River and waterfront
 - Bring dock and greater use of Cady Park
- Improve boating area, come from Everett
- Development or park system at river, pedestrian friendly

- City yard could be turned into park
- Parks mitigation fees
- Trail development
 - Link with river
- Trails
- Connect trail system so people can bike to Everett
- Center for trail systems
 - People will go from here
 - Continue to develop cent. Trail

Take Advantage of Growing Retail and Tourism Opportunities

- Economic wave is developing
- Retail brings recurring tax dollars
- Commercial development can raise public revenues
 - For an increase in public services
 - Helps to make the City affordable and livable
- City needs to build sales tax revenues, not property tax revenues
- Activate town entry to attract visitors and tourists

Provide a Place for Residents to Work, Shop, Live and Play

- Attract jobs
- Make sure we can provide local services
- Attract high tech industries
 - More revenue for City and jobs
- Attract hotel industry and possibly convention center

Increase Cultural and Community Activities

- Create cultural "facilities"
- Develop farmers market area
- Snohomish has an existing involved community
- There is a lot of existing and vital community service organizations and groups
 - The City should seize the opportunities to work with them
- Cultural center
 - Expand the art center

Focus on Youth and Family Activities

- Focus on families
- Things for young people to do, more culture
 - Move theatre
 - Concerts!
 - Community theatre
 - Performance center
 - Bowling alley
- Increasing youth activities
- Keep kids' play areas and parking close to development
- Schools!
- Capitalize on the incoming new school, capture those new residents in downtown shopping

Other Comments

- Make the historic district more ADA compliant, more accessible
- Consider the airport expansion
- Marriage of small town and economic growth
- Work with the local Latino community
- More art and sculpture!
- Make sure to keep existing farmland outside the city as farmland, helps keep the City's rural feel
- Restore confidence of citizens in city council and city hall
- Land – acquire strategic pieces of property in the city, Armory, public works site
 - YMCA, community center

VISIONING FOR SNOHOMISH

In 20 years...

Preservation of Current Feel, Specifically Rural, Small Town

- Small town atmosphere preserved
- We will be able to look up and still see the sky!
- Small town atmosphere
- Maintained character
- Polished but still quaint
- Maintain historical look
 - No cul-de-sacs
 - No roundabouts or rotaries
 - Keep tourist identity, but keep small town feel
- Will still have historic character
- No greater than 15,000 people
- City should be an improved version of what is already here, rural small town feel
 - Make sure that what we're talking about will be implemented
- Not too different!
- Like it is now
- Will revere the city's history, revel in its parks and enjoy its culture
 - City should have pride in community
- The reality is the City will be twice as big
- Take care of residents, remain quaint and welcoming to visitors to a city that has chosen to hold to Main Street America

Enforced Design Standards

- Streets will be aesthetically pleasing
- City will have no neon signs
- Residential parcels should not be broken up into small lots; no "postage stamp" lots

Increased Downtown Density and Successful Mixed-Use Development

- The City will have more density in historic district
 - People will walk everywhere
- A lot more houses, more shopping and Bickford corridor will be developed
- There will be a limited number of rentals, prefer condos

Provide Services and Employment Locally

- Retain and grow the balance between living and working in the City
- Would like to see more business in town so the City has a higher tax base, we need revenues from businesses to provide tax base
- Will be a self-contained sustainable community, you can get everything you need here
- Live, work, shop locally
- Desirable community
 - Live, work, shop
- Vibrant, full and affordable services
- Will be sufficient to meet needs of community
- A vibrant historic district that's doing well economically
- Will be self-sufficient
- Basic needs met in the community
- A comfortable, casual, living experience
- Still be community that is attracting businesses and families
 - Excellent schools
 - Self-sufficient
- Amazing companies compete to locate here and lots of living wage jobs

Will Be Affordable

- Affordable
- Keep low-income housing
- Will be affordable
- Avoid gentrification and excessive taxes
- A place kids will want to and can come back to
- Safe place for kids
- "Want" it to be more affordable and livable

Improved Transit and Traffic

- Good transit system
- Improvements in how traffic moves through the city
- Roads to accommodate people who are traveling through Snohomish

Encouragement for Pedestrian and other Modes

- Walkable (3 comments)
- Pedestrian friendly
- Make everyone get out of their car and ride a bike
- Boardwalk through historic district
 - Plus more trees
 - More walkers
- Beautiful sidewalks that are walkable for all
- Street, trees, sidewalk
 - More sidewalks are lined with trees
 - Trees generally have a 30 – 50 year lifespan, maintain
- Have more sidewalks
- Build a trolley to Woodinville!
- A center plaza – fountains, no cars, businesses on the perimeter
- Parking – In 20 years plenty of parking

Successful Parks, Trails, Connections to the River

- Trail system will be connected!
- Stronger appreciation for rivers
- City will be a place for an uplifting adventure
- Will be a crossroads for bicyclists and hikers
- Connections to river
- Build on both sides of the river
 - Beautified the waterway to incorporate trails and public activities
- Be more livable and beautiful
- Face the river and the mill will be a park
- Have lost 1st to the river
- Treed community
- Has beautiful parks & outdoor recreation facilities
- Lots of green spaces and parks
 - Keep a clean environment

Tourism Destination

- Will be a tourist destination
- Town for locals as well as tourists
- Keep the Farmers Market (encourage it)

Land Use, Preservation of Industrial Space

- Preserve industrial space, business, zoning
 - Family wage jobs

Attract a Mix of Ages

- Attract young and senior citizens
- Progressive and attractive senior living houses
- Have a first class senior center

A Safe, Clean, Healthy Place to Live

- Safe and healthy
- Will be a safe town
- Clean

Other Comments

- Third installment of the sewer
- Continued access to good healthcare
- Decentralize medical services