



Woodland 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update: Vision Survey Results Summary May 7, 2015

Overview

The City of Woodland conducted a vision survey in the first quarter of 2015 and received 111 responses to questions about the City's existing assets and citizen priorities for future City planning actions. The goal of the survey was to identify elements of a vision statement that will inform future city comprehensive planning efforts. Residents valued the existing small-town community feeling built on livable neighborhoods and quality schools, while prioritizing future expansion of economic development to attract jobs and commercial services as well as expanding infrastructure to serve planned development.

Survey Purpose and Content

The survey included qualitative and quantitative questions to gain feedback about residents' favorite parts of their community, level of agreement with aspects of the existing city vision, and priorities for future City planning actions. The goal of the survey was to determine current and future aspects of Woodland that should be reflected in a vision statement to guide planning priorities for the next 20 years, to be incorporated into the 20-year Comprehensive Plan being developed by 2016. Survey questions included:

- What do you value most about Woodland? (Open-ended response.)
- What are the City's two greatest strengths and assets? (Open-ended response.)
- Rate the importance of various community features for the city's future. (Rate statements on neighborhoods, parks, downtown, and other features, listed fully in Table 1 below.)
- Prioritize the most important actions the City should take to make Woodland an even better place to live, work and visit in the future. (Rank top three actions to recruit businesses, protect the environment, and invest in infrastructure, listed fully in Table 2 below.)

Survey Methods

Woodland residents had opportunities to complete the survey online or using a paper form. Copies of the survey were mailed to Woodland residents with their March utility bills with instructions to complete the paper form or complete the online version linked from the City's webpage. The City also used the City webpage and facebook to advertise the survey. The survey was open for the month of March. A total of 111 responses were received, with 97 paper responses and 14 online responses. A small number of responses were received at an earlier community discussion about the comprehensive plan held at the Woodland Quality Community Coalition meeting held January 22, 2015. These responses were combined with the March survey results for ease of reporting.

Survey Results

Overall takeaways from the data were:

- Residents painted a picture of a small, quiet, relatively affordable, full-service community enhanced by proximity to regional outdoor and metropolitan resources.
- The importance of economic opportunities, both for employment and commercial development serving local needs.
- Medium priority accorded to environmental protection and restoration, which could be boosted if combined with future parks and trails which were highly rated.
- Low priority accorded to providing a variety of housing options, which could be interpreted as a negative response to current range of housing options. Woodland has one of the highest percentages of apartment and multifamily residential units in the southwest Washington area.

Open-ended responses about the best and most-valued features of Woodland focused around the small town environment and prime location relative to larger metropolitan areas and recreation areas. Respondents repeatedly praised the small-town atmosphere that promoted a sense of community, strong ties to neighbors, and livability. Local services that contribute to the community included schools, parks, community events, emergency services, and availability locally of basic commercial services like groceries. Horseshoe Lake, the Lewis River, Mt. St Helens, and tulip fields were a few local landmarks that define Woodland and contribute to its quiet, at times pastoral environment. Its location relative to larger metro areas from Vancouver to Longview and to natural recreation sites like Mt. St. Helens is highly prized, as well as convenient freeway access to reach nearby destinations.

Table 1: Importance of Community Features for Future

Aspect	Level of Agreement*
Livable neighborhoods	3.77
A quality, comprehensive education system	3.66
Public facilities, services, and utilities to meet community needs	3.47
A strong, vibrant and diverse economy that provides jobs for residents	3.45
Availability of commercial goods and services to meet community needs	3.44
Woodland's "small-town" atmosphere	3.42
Preservation and restoration of the natural environment	3.37
Variety of active and passive recreational opportunities	3.28
Community gathering places and events	3.13
Downtown as a unique and special place to visit, shop and live	3.02
A safe, balanced, and efficient transportation system	2.88
A variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of all community members	2.87

*Out of a possible score of 4. Responses ranged from 1 (not very important) to 4 (very important).

The top-rated features for Woodland’s future included livable neighborhoods and quality schools, as shown in Table 1. On average, respondents identified all identified features ranging from public facilities to downtown as “important” or “very important,” with the exception of the transportation system and

variety of housing opportunities. This level of disagreement may be attributable to frustration with the current state of these systems, e.g. community perceptions of traffic congestion or dense residential development.

The top two priorities for future City actions were related to the economy: recruiting new businesses to expand employment options and attracting commercial development such as retail and services, as shown in Table 2. An additional cluster of priority actions related to City infrastructure and amenities, including public infrastructure, parks and trails, and environmental protection. The lowest ranked priority was for the City to promote additional housing options, similar to the low level of importance accorded to providing a variety of housing opportunities for the future.

Table 2: Top Priority Future City Actions

Action	Ranked in Top Three*	Ranked First*
Recruit new businesses for more employment opportunities	69	36
Pursue additional commercial services (retail, restaurants, services, entertainment)	66	29
Invest in infrastructure (roads and bridges, municipal buildings, water and sewer)	56	25
Protect the environment (manage floodplain development, steep slopes, wetlands and creeks)	52	23
Add new parks, trails and recreational amenities	50	25
Promote cultural and social activities (festivals, public art, music in the park)	45	15
Preserve historic structures and features	42	20
Promote renovation and development of underutilized properties	39	12
Promote additional housing options, including variety of housing types and total residential supply	27	7

*Respondents were asked to rank their top three priorities on a scale of 1-3.

Prepared by:
Elizabeth Decker
edecker@jetplanning.net

