

Introduction

Purpose & Intent

This document, developed over the course of approximately 20 months of public input and commission review, is intended to guide Sandpoint and its vicinity's development and growth patterns for the next 20 years. This plan updates the existing comprehensive plan, originally adopted in 1977.

Over the more than 100 years of Sandpoint's history, the city has grown and changed tremendously. Incorporated in 1901, the community has evolved from a forest-based economy into a regionally and nationally-known city catering to snow-seekers, shoppers and seasonal visitors. The waterfront, historically an industrial area, is now being altered to take advantage of Lake Pend Oreille's beauty. The City grew by about 3,000 residents – about 56 percent – between 1990 and 2005, primarily from in-migration.

This plan is intended to be a road map for the community to follow as they consider planning decisions both large and small; some the City can control, some facilitate. It reflects the changing social and economic landscape of the community, and based on forecasts and existing trends, anticipates civic needs 20 years into the future. It seeks to serve everyone, including life-long



Figure 1.1 - Sandpoint's history extends many thousands of years into the past, when the Kalispel people first arrived and settled along the shores of Lake Pend Oreille. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

residents, relative newcomers, and those who will arrive. In short, this comprehensive plan is Sandpoint's vision for the future and strategic outline for getting there.

The Sandpoint Comprehensive Plan is prepared in accordance with the state of Idaho's Local Land Use Act, Title 67 Chapter 65, which requires, at a minimum, consideration of each of the following topics:

- *Property Rights*
- *Population*
- *School Facilities and Transportation*
- *Economic Development*
- *Land Use*
- *Natural Resources*

- *Hazardous Areas*
- *Transportation*
- *Special Areas or Sites*
- *Community Design*
- *National Interest Electric Transmission Corridors **
- *Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities*
- *Recreation*
- *Housing*
- *Implementation*

* No such corridors exist within the Sandpoint planning area.

As such, this plan is organized and configured using the following chapter structure:

- *Introduction ¹*
- *Community Design*
- *Housing*
- *Recreation*
- *Economic Development*
- *Special Areas or Sites*
- *Community Profile ²*
- *Land Use*
- *Transportation*
- *Public Services, Facilities and Utilities ³*
- *Natural Resources and Hazardous Areas*
- *Implementation*

¹ - Includes property rights element.

² - Includes population projections and planning.

³ - Includes schools and school facilities.

Study Area

The City of Sandpoint (pop. 8,105) is situated in Bonner County on the banks of Lake Pend Oreille, about 60 miles south of the Canadian border. This plan's study area includes the entire City area and Area of City



Figure 1.2 - Sandpoint, Idaho's location relative to the northwestern United States, and to major regional cities. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

Impact (ACI) – about 10,000 acres. A map including City limit lines and ACI boundaries is included as Appendix C, Land Use.

Area of City Impact

Idaho's Local Land Use Planning Act requires cities to identify areas they may wish to annex in the future by designating such areas as part of an Area of City Impact (ACI). Lands not included in the ACI are not typically eligible for annexation. Sandpoint's ACI extends southwest of the city limits to the limits of Dover and west of the City to the foothills that surround the city. To the northeast, the ACI shares a border with the City of Ponderay.

The ACI is currently rural in nature, predominated by small farms and large-lot homes.

Historic Planning

The Village of Sandpoint was incorporated in 1901, and in 1907 it was incorporated into the present day City of Sandpoint. The community adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1977, and adopted an updated version of it in 1983. Updates to the housing and hazardous areas sections occurred in 2004, with new sections added regarding school facilities, transportation and property rights.

In 2005, the City formed two urban renewal districts – one downtown and one by the airport – to stimulate strategically directed reinvestment. The Sandpoint Urban Renewal Agency (SURA) board hired a consultant to produce two feasibility studies and revenue allocation area plans for the proposed urban renewal areas. The districts were established and fine tuned in 2005. The official district lines have been altered a few times but the primary goals of districts remain the same. The agency was formed to construct an all-weather road (Great Northern Road/Woodland Drive) in the northern industrial zone and continue downtown revitalization in the central business district. (Figure 9.3)

This most recent update to the comprehensive plan was initiated in the spring of 2007, with adoption occurring in 2009.

Idaho Requirements and the Local Land Use Planning Act

The State Legislature enacted the Local Land Use Planning Act in 1972. This act serves



Figure 1.3 - Several hundred residents helped develop the comprehensive plan, through questionnaires, photographs, committee meetings, or as in the case of this image, community gatherings. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

as a guide for planning growth within the state of Idaho, and mandates criteria for developing comprehensive plans. The Act states its purposes in section 67-6502:

The purpose of this act shall be to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of the state of Idaho as follows:

- 1) *To protect private property rights while making accommodations for other necessary types of development such as low-cost housing and mobile home parks.*
- 2) *To ensure that adequate public facilities and services are provided to the people at reasonable cost.*
- 3) *To ensure that the economy of the State and localities is protected.*

- 4) *To ensure that the important environmental features of the State and localities are protected.*
- 5) *To encourage the protection of prime agricultural, forestry, and mining lands for production of food, fiber, and minerals.*
- 6) *To encourage urban and urban-type development within incorporated cities.*
- 7) *To avoid undue concentration of population and overcrowding of land.*
- 8) *To ensure that the development on land is commensurate with the physical characteristics of the land.*
- 9) *To protect life and property in areas subject to natural hazards and disasters.*
- 10) *To protect fish, wildlife, and recreation resources.*
- 11) *To avoid undue water and air pollution.*
- 12) *To allow local school districts to participate in the community planning and development process so as to address public school needs and impacts on an ongoing basis.*

Private Property Rights

Title 67, Chapter 65 of Idaho State law requires comprehensive plans to address private property rights. This comprehensive plan addresses property rights in the introduction, setting the tone for all remaining chapters. Throughout the public participation process, residents expressed support for upholding and respecting rights of private property holders. Private property rights were considered throughout the comprehensive planning process, and were used to test any proposed land use changes. The State of Idaho published a checklist for communities to consider as they

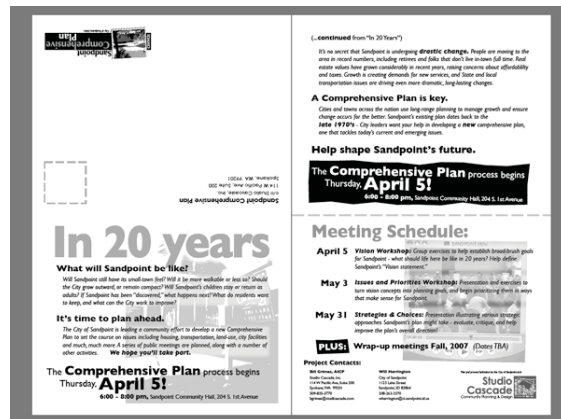


Figure 1.4 - One early part of the planning process distributed postcard-sized notices to hundreds of residents across the City, providing an introduction to the process and meeting dates. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

adopt new regulations as part of a 2007 memo from the State Attorney General, entitled "Idaho Regulatory Takings Act Guidelines." A copy of this memo, including the checklist is included in this plan as Appendix B.

Public Participation Program

Sandpoint residents were consulted and helped lead the formation and development of the plan. Efforts including several public meetings, a community questionnaire, informal polling, an informational booth during local events, hearings, mail and E-mail notices, and a project website helped facilitate communication and provided opportunities for input by the public. The public participation program introduced Sandpoint residents to a more "form-based" style of planning, effectively incorporating resident goals regarding the City's appearance as well as ones related to land-use. Led by frequent and passionate input supporting the City's traditional urban fabric, the process asked participants to consider how they wanted their city to look, feel and function over the course of the plan's 20-year

horizon. Responses to these and more topical vision inquiries informed the development of several schematic growth strategies; these in turn led the formation of this plan's land use, and goal and policy framework.

The following presents an overview of the public process used to develop this comprehensive plan:

Workshops

The heart of the public participation program for Sandpoint's comp plan update was the series of workshops facilitated by the City and its consultant between April and October 2007. The workshops asked participants to consider, as meetings progressed, their vision for Sandpoint, their planning priorities, the merits of growth strategies, and presented alternatives. A summary of each workshop is provided below. A far more extensive record of the process, including transcribed comments, participant photographs, workshop exercises and questionnaire results has been provided to the City on CD-ROM. Some presentations and hearings following the initial process were videotaped by staff; for copies of tapes or other electronic documentation, including signatures, contact the City of Sandpoint.

"Vision: Issues & Options Workshop": April 5, 2007

This workshop had participant groups identify and assess the issues and opportunities that will face Sandpoint in the next 20 years. Groups then put those comments into the form of a vision for the city and presented their ideas to the assembled whole.

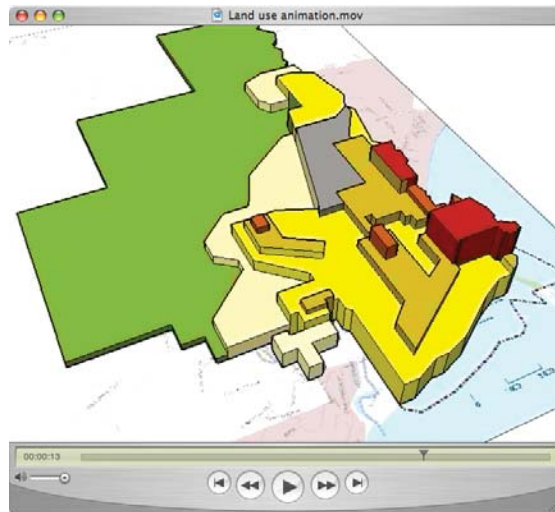


Figure 1.5 - As the plan developed, several visualization tools were employed to help illustrate policy choices. This image, part of an early land-use scheme, presents the various context area designations as extrusions. (Image source: Studio Cascade, Inc.)

"Plan Priorities Workshop": May 3, 2007

After reviewing the first workshop's comments, the consultant generated a vision statement for consideration at the May 3rd workshop. The exercise asked participants to rate the various vision items with the exercise results presented during the workshop. The consultants engaged the community in a dialogue about the results as they were revealed to help understand why certain issues were more important than others.

"Growth Strategies Workshop": May 31, 2007

Participants reviewed four growth strategies: "Hip Sandpoint," "Hometown Sandpoint," "Business Sandpoint," and "Recreational Sandpoint." Each of these strategies highlighted one or more vision items that participants in the previous workshops identified as highly important. "Hip Sandpoint" showcased the evolving

arts and entertainment focus of Sandpoint's downtown and increasing the walkability of the city. "Hometown Sandpoint" focused on preserving and enhancing the character of neighborhoods while increasing connections between them and establishing small-scale mixed-use centers within them. "Business Sandpoint" was designed to maximize the space devoted to commercial activities in the city and diversify the economy. "Recreational Sandpoint" highlighted outdoor activities available in and around Sandpoint, and identified ways to improve them as a potential economic and quality of life strategy.

"Alternatives Workshop": September 11, 2007

Over the summer, consultants evaluated comments on the four growth strategies presented at the previous workshop, considered input from summertime activities, and produced four modified strategies – each a refinement of the best attributes of the previous four. Participants worked in groups to highlight the best parts of each growth strategy, and identify items they would change.

"Policy Workshop": October 11, 2007

In this workshop, participants turned their attention to goals and policies to lead Sandpoint's future. Attendees considered and responded individually to a range of draft goals and policies, and then worked in groups to refine their responses. Each group presented their priority policies to all, including minority comments and details on how group conclusions were reached.

Questionnaire

The City of Sandpoint Planning Department and the plan's steering committee distributed a questionnaire during the summer of 2007. Five hundred questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of utility customers in the Sandpoint area, of which 149 (30 percent) were returned. Additional questionnaires were distributed at community events throughout the summer.

Using this document

Each element required by Idaho's Local Land Use Act is developed within this plan, and includes an inventory of that section's facilities and services, previous and existing conditions, trends, desirable goals and objectives, or desirable future situations for each planning component, the community's 20-year vision for those facilities and services, and goals and policies defining a path to reach that vision. All goals and policies in this document were developed to reflect issues and concerns expressed by the public during the process. The plan also recognizes and addresses issues brought on by recent and rapid growth in Sandpoint, as well as those envisioned under 20-year growth projections.

