

Economic Development Policy Questions
Small Group Responses
January 12, 2010

The small group meeting was opened by Planning Board Chair Frank Linth.

Planning board members Jerry Knox and Bob Knuckey thanked the council and members of the public for attending the meeting. Both board members shared some general concerns about getting more people involved in the comprehensive plan update.

Planning board member Knox asked why the major business owners and major employers such as the manufacturers and school district weren't coming to the meetings. Planning board member Knuckey asked people to share their suggestions on how to get more people involved.

Chair Linth then opened the discussion of the economic element policy questions.

1. Are the economic development goals listed below from the 2004 comprehensive plan still valid in 2010?

Among other things, the Economic Development goals and policies of the 2004 Revised Comprehensive Plan establish an economic vision for the community and express support for the core goal of the local and State planning principles. In Sultan those goals are to:

- *Increase employment to reduce commutes.*
- *Provide a sound tax base.*
- *Encourage small business.*
- *Revitalize existing properties.*
- *Capture existing sales tax.*
- *Reduce commute to retail centers.*
- *Market retail & industrial land opportunities.*

Sultan's goal is to promote job growth somewhat in proportion to the demographic of local workers to reduce the home-to-work commute.

Reponses:

In general the group was in favor of the 2004 economic development goals. There was general consensus the role of government is to support the private sector by removing barriers to free markets.

There was some discussion about "capturing existing sales tax" which was a problem in the past. The state's business license registration process puts Sultan in the loop for approving business licenses. Capturing sales tax revenues is not really an issue today.

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Councilmember Pinson stated he felt it is government's role to create an environment for taking risk.

2. Two general policies in the city's 2008 revised economic development element (page 31) specifically prohibit expanding the city limits or allowing major additional residential development within the urban growth area until or unless there are sufficient public tax revenues and employment to support additional urban populations and services. These policies are sometimes referred to as the "retail before rooftops" policies.

Should the city continue to limit residential growth in this way or allow residential growth to meet market demands with the expectation commercial growth will follow even if it means residents will experience lower levels of public services and potentially higher fees?

Responses:

The group was in favor of letting market forces drive development whether it is residential development or retail/commercial development. The direction was to remove policies that favor one type of development over another type of development from the city's comprehensive plan.

There was discussion about the limiting factors to development. What are the constraints? Staff explained the waste water treatment plant is at 80% capacity and will need to add capacity to serve the 11,119 people planned for Sultan. The city will need to build another water reservoir to ensure adequate fire flow to new residential and commercial developments between Sultan Basin Road and Rice Road. At some point, traffic congestion may also be a limiting factor

Planning board member Steve Harris, felt the city and business owners needed to take advantage of the opportunity to capitalize on the US 2 traffic to provide additional customers to Sultan businesses. US 2 traffic could replace residences as the economic driver.

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3. Large commercial uses, like grocery stores are allowed in all residential zones.

Should the city remove large scale commercial uses from residential zones and continue to allow cottage and home based businesses?

Responses:

The majority was in favor of removing large scale commercial uses such as a grocery store from residential zones and continue to allow cottage and home based businesses.

The group discussed the definition of "large-scale commercial". There was consensus that this was a poorly worded question. There was additional support for allowing convenience stores in residential neighborhoods. The group discussed qualifiers for approval such as traffic, building footprint, type of use, etc.

Should the city expand the mixed-use concepts in highway oriented and central commercial?

Responses:

The group supported adding residential uses to commercial uses in a "mixed-use" development. Bart Dalmasso felt that mixed-use was acceptable except in the highway oriented development zone. He expressed concerns for having residential units too close to US 2 for safety reasons and recommended moving mixed-use back a block from the highway.

4. The Industrial Park Master Plan was adopted in 2002 to guide development of the area north of US 2 between Sultan Basin Road and Rice Road. The Plan has not spurred economic development and actually requires additional levels of regulation.

Should the city work to implement the Industrial Park Master Plan goals and policies to promote economic development in this area or decommission the plan and let the zoning code and market forces drive development in the area?

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Responses:

The group was in favor of decommissioning the industrial park master plan.

Chair Linth pointed out it isn't clear whether the Industrial Plan had any bearing on whether or not development has occurred in the industrial park. There was discussion of the additional level of regulations such as the binding site plan process that are required by the industrial park master plan.

5. Should the city focus retail development in "centers" located at key intersections with US 2 such as Old Owen Road, Fifth Street, and Rice Road?

Reponses:

There was no real consensus on whether the city should focus retail development in centers. The group discussed the future land use map and the current uses along US 2 between Rice Road and Old Owen Road. Bart Dalmasso advocated for zoning everything Highway Oriented Development because retail zoning has a higher value than industrial or commercial zoning.

6. Should the city consolidate commercial, industrial, and manufacturing uses adjacent to US 2 between retail centers or should the city retain the current mix of retail, commercial, industrial and manufacturing uses along US 2?

Responses:

The group believed the future land use map with a mix of Highway Oriented Zoning and Economic Development Zoning met the city's needs.

There was further discussion about property rights and the government's role to remove barriers. A number of the group members advocated for letting the market control development and investment in whatever land uses met the current economic conditions.

7. Should the city lead economic development by investing taxpayer dollars in purchasing and developing land for mixed use retail like Mill

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Creek Town Center and Redmond Town Center to spur private sector investment and retail development?

Responses:

There was no support for having the city take the lead and spur economic development through public investment. One member commented, "keep the city out of developing land."

8. Should the city use taxpayer dollars to actively promote economic development by hiring a professional economic development coordinator? Or, should the city have a hands-off approach to economic development and let market forces lead?

Responses:

There was no support for hiring an economic development coordinator or actively promoting economic development.

9. Should the city adopt commercial design standards to achieve a cohesive, pleasing look to commercial (retail, professional, office) development even if it costs a business owner more money to start a business in Sultan?

Responses:

There was no consensus on commercial design standards.

Group members discussed of junk vehicles and materials in and around Sultan's business district. Code enforcement and public nuisances should be addresses but not to the point of creating a cookie cutter look like Leavenworth. Safety standards are necessary but not to the point of limiting the use of private land.

10. Should the city prioritize taxpayer dollars to invest in new roads and infrastructure to support the business community over repairing existing roads, sewers and waterlines serving residential neighborhoods?

Responses:

There was overwhelming support for keeping current infrastructure repaired and maintained over investing in new infrastructure to serve the business community.

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11. What is the role of the Sky Valley Chamber in promoting economic development in Sultan? What is the city's role? What is the business community's role?

Responses:

The city's primary objective should be to partner with the business community, relax regulations and maintain infrastructure.