

Economic Development Element

Purpose and Relationship to GMA

This element provides a blueprint for actions aimed at increasing Skykomish's economic well-being. The 2002 Legislature amended the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70.070) to require cities to prepare an economic development element consisting of the following:

- *An inventory of existing businesses;*
- *An analysis of the economic impact of existing businesses considering the number of employees, business activity, historical growth, and projected employment capabilities;*
- *A statement of goals, policies, objectives and mandatory provisions to promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and the recruitment of new businesses; and*
- *Identification of future needs including capital facilities, infrastructure, and work force training to foster economic development opportunities.*

State funds to pay for this work have not been authorized, so the mandate is currently not in force. In the meantime, the Town has determined that it is important to establish a framework of goals, policies, and strategies that can work with those of the other elements to guide future economic growth and development.

Because of its size and remote location, Skykomish plays a minor role in the regional economy. While Town government has limited ability to influence the economy, it is important to establish this framework and use it to forge local and regional partnerships that provide jobs, increase revenues, and improve the quality of life.

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

The following goals, policies, and strategies are intended to provide a foundation for Town decisions regarding incentives that promote desired results; regulations that strengthen the Town's ability to guide planning; and measures for monitoring and assessing performance.

Goals

- ED-G1** Support economic growth through business retention, expansion, and formation consistent with the Comprehensive Plan vision and the other elements.
- ED-G2** Promote the creation of family-wage jobs that will serve the residents of Skykomish.
- ED-G3** Encourage economic sectors that:
- Pay higher-than-average wages;
 - Bring new capital into the local economy;
 - Can be sustained in the Town;
 - Maintain sound environmental practices; and
 - Diversify the economic base.
- ED-G4** Create public-private partnerships that will nurture entrepreneurship, innovation, and business growth.
- ED-G5** Maintain public capital facilities infrastructure and regulatory incentives that will foster new business development.

Policies and Strategies

▪ **Interjurisdictional Coordination, and Technical and Funding Assistance**

- ED-P1** The Town should work with the Washington State Department of Trade and Economic Development, the King County Economic Development Board, and Snohomish County Economic Development Council (Evergreen Crescent Partnership), to evaluate economic development options, garner technical assistance, and identify opportunities for coordinated marketing and cost-sharing promotion.
- ED-P2** The Town should work with the Washington State Department of Trade and Economic Development, and the King County Economic Development Board to promote tourist-related business and activity in Skykomish.
- ED-P3** The Town should work with the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad to identify any railroad land that may be surplus, and consider the economic development opportunities associated with the reclamation of that land.

ED-P4 The Town should consider business opportunities presented by the proximity of the Skykomish State Airport and coordinate with the Aviation Division of the Washington Department of Transportation on opportunities for joint use of that facility.

▪ **Business Development**

Skykomish needs to establish a foundation of information and self-knowledge upon which it can efficiently and effectively leverage the Town's resources, the resources of other governmental agencies, regional and state economic development organizations, and existing local business interests to act in a coordinated manner to pursue economic development. This foundation of information will provide the "intellectual infrastructure" necessary to use resources wisely to expand existing businesses and provide the social, cultural, economic, and governmental climate needed to attract new businesses.

ED-P5 Prepare and maintain an assessment of Skykomish's business strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

Business leaders and the Town should evaluate the kinds of businesses and jobs that can be supported by the community. This would include assessing Skykomish's competitive advantages and disadvantages, workforce characteristics, and the status of barriers and incentives for business development and operation. This analysis should be periodically re-evaluated.

ED-P6 Encourage development of a community economic development advisory body to coordinate with the Mayor and Town Council to develop and implement a Skykomish business development plan.

An advisory commission or committee comprised of key landowners, business owners, school district representatives, and community organizations would serve as a sounding board for business initiatives sponsored by the Town or other proponents; assist in recruiting new businesses; and advise the Town as it reviews and refines these goals and policies.

ED-P7 Develop a marketing and information program to support business recruitment and retention efforts.

The market assessment and business development plan would provide a "toolkit" of materials promoting Skykomish as a destination and place to do business. This could include informational materials such as fliers, coordinated website information, checklists, and brochures that can be used in targeted marketing efforts as well as to assist existing businesses in planning for building improvement and expansion, and clarifying how to process land use requests.

ED-P8 The Town should evaluate services necessary to support local residents and businesses as well as visitors, and identify opportunities to attract and locate such businesses in Skykomish.

▪ Infrastructure and Capital Facilities

Adequate roads, utilities, and telecommunications facilities are fundamental to Skykomish's ability to attract and retain businesses and the jobs that go with them.

While the short-term and long-term needs for these facilities are addressed in other plan elements, it is important that the Town identify those facilities needed to attract and retain businesses and establish a plan for how such facilities will be developed, maintained, and updated.

ED-P9 Support the installation of telecommunications technology in the Town in order to provide secure, reliable, and affordable access to citizens, businesses, and institutions.

The Town should evaluate opportunities to install fiber optic and cable telecommunications technology that will link homes, businesses, and institutions together.

ED-P10 Encourage and facilitate the potential development of a proprietary sewage treatment device in order to support and expand business opportunities in the community.

▪ Permitting

The Town should review its permitting materials for their consistency and readability, and review its permitting process to ensure that permit requests are equitable reviewed and processed. Review of these materials and processes should be aimed at reducing legal liability for infringements of legal rights, ensuring that business proposals comply with codes and standards, and ensuring consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and state and federal law.

ED-P11 The Town should review its land development permitting materials and develop comprehensive and clear checklists and forms that request necessary review information, and provide a clear understanding of the review process and schedule.

To expedite the project review process, the Town may seek to develop a checklist for application in-take and review. A checklist could assist staff in evaluating an applicant's proposal to ensure that all necessary building permit, land use, or other application forms are provided at the beginning stages of a project. Information on the review process and the average time for permit decisions should also be provided. The knowledge that all permit requests are expedited and processed equitably and in a timely manner will enhance Skykomish's reputation as a good place to do business.

- **Entrepreneur and Work Force Training and Support**

Two types of support are critical to sustaining a strong local economy. Residents and existing business owners frequently need assistance in preparing business plans and marketing strategies and need help in securing appropriate training in management and operations. Local businesses also need properly trained employees to work in their establishments. The Town should encourage and support opportunities for education and training institutions of employers and employees to enable residents to improve their competencies.

ED-P12 Provide information about county, state, and federal agencies, such as the U.S. Small Business Administration, and related organizations' programs for training business owners and managers.

ED-P13 Work with employers and social service providers to coordinate employment and training opportunities for disadvantaged persons including support for transportation, dependent day-care, language, and access to housing.

The economic development advisory commission and staff could be charged with managing these activities in conjunction with other related partners such as institutions, developers, and agencies.

- **Monitoring**

The Town should monitor the performance of these policies and strategies on a regular basis so that they can be amended or supplemented to remain current with community needs.

ED-P14 Establish performance measures for economic development. These may be in terms of new jobs created, increased tax revenues, increased retail sales, as well as qualitative terms such as wider diversity in shopping and service availability and higher quality employment opportunities.

This is tied to the "ED-P4" policy and strategy. The performance measures should be formulated as part of the business development planning process.