

VISION FRAMEWORK AND GOALS

A. VISION STATEMENT



This Visioning Statement is a verbal snapshot of Kelso in the year 2030. It summarizes the desired character and characteristics of our community. It provides the ultimate goals for our community planning and development efforts over the next twenty years.

The Vision Statement is an outgrowth of a community visioning process that occurred in the fall of 2009. The process involved a series of community workshops in which Kelso citizens worked to articulate commonly held desires for the ideal Kelso of the future. The results of the three visioning workshops were the basis for the Vision Statement's Framework and Goals. The community visioning process was a first in Kelso's history and establishes a solid foundation on which to build a strong comprehensive plan.

The Vision Statement is intended to establish a direction instead of being a mere prediction. Rather than describing the features of Kelso as we think they are likely to be, it expresses what we would

like our community to become and believe we can achieve. It acknowledges past and current trends and Kelso's relationship to external factors, but also assumes an ability to shape the future in a positive way. The Vision Statement, therefore, is optimistic, affirming and enhancing the best of our attributes, past and existing, eliminating all negative influences on the city's ability to affect positive change and aspiring for those we hope to have.

A VISION FOR KELSO

KELSO in 2030 is an attractive, vibrant, and inviting place to live, work and visit. Our riverfront community, with its long shoreline, provides views and access to the Cowlitz River and is a destination place for residents and visitors. Kelso is a community with a small town feel, retaining its sense of history while adjusting gracefully to changes in the twenty-first century.

The City is a place where people are friendly and helpful, ideas are respected and action is taken based on collaborative decisions. We have a diverse population made up of various income and age groups from various ethnic and educational backgrounds. We are committed to developing and strengthening a healthy community by creating programs that assist those in need, encourage individual expressions, provide enrichment opportunities for an increasingly diverse population, and promote healthy lifestyles. High quality local schools are important to us. Our neighborhood, business, and civic associations; our faith-based groups; and

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our school organizations have strong citizen involvement.

Our neighborhoods are secure, stable and well-maintained, creating the foundation for our high quality of life. Each neighborhood has its own character which is a community asset. People from all economic, age, and ethnic groups live here in a variety of housing types. Our residential areas are well-maintained with single-family and multifamily homes and include traditional subdivisions, waterfront-oriented neighborhoods, and urban villages. We have worked to increase diversity and affordability, such as smaller homes on smaller lots, compact developments and accessory housing units. Mixed land uses in neighborhoods help to minimize driving. Many of our apartments and condominiums are close to commercial areas and transportation hubs.

Kelso's economy is strong and diverse. A healthy mix of businesses provide valuable economic returns including varied employment opportunities and high wages, a strong tax base with sustainable revenues that help fund public services, and a broad range of goods and services. Our business districts are attractive, distinctive and integral to the fabric of the City. Many serve as community gathering places and centers of cultural activity. Businesses choose to locate in Kelso because of our innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and because they are regarded as valued members of the community.

Historic downtown Kelso is a vibrant focal point of our hometown with a rich mix of commercial, residential, civic, and

cultural activities in a unique riverfront location.

Our Downtown maintains a human scale through carefully planned pedestrian and transit-oriented development. Many residents and visitors come to enjoy our parks, festivals, open markets and community events. We accommodate growth and change while maintaining strong linkages with our past. Important historic landmarks are preserved, and new development occurs in a manner that is compatible with and respectful of its historic context.

Our transportation system offers a variety of ways to meet our mobility needs and provides efficient and convenient access to all areas of Kelso and regional centers. Improved transit service and facilities allow us to commute within Kelso and to other regional destinations without overburdening our neighborhood streets. The City is pedestrian-friendly. Paths for safe pedestrian, bicycle and other transportation modes interconnect all parts of the City. In addition to the transportation functions they provide, our streets and paths are people-friendly and provide public spaces where people socialize.

The City has excellent police and fire protection, dependable water and sewer service, and well-maintained public facilities. Emergency preparedness for natural or manmade disasters is a high priority. We work closely with other jurisdictions on regional issues that affect our community. For recreation, we like to bike or walk to one of our many parks. We have well-maintained playgrounds, play fields, sport courts, and trails in or near each neighborhood. Our recreational programs offer a variety of year-round activities for all ages. Public access to our

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riverfront is provided by an unparalleled and still-expanding system of parks, trails, and vistas.

We preserve an open space network of wetlands, stream corridors, and wooded hillsides. These natural systems provide habitat for fish and wildlife and serve important biological, hydrological and geological functions. Streets are lined with a variety of trees, and vegetation is abundant throughout the City. The water and air are clean. We consider community stewardship of the environment to be very important.

Kelso in 2030 has become a delightful place to call home.

B. VISION GOALS

The Vision Goals express the fundamental principles for guiding growth and development in Kelso over the 20-year horizon of the Comprehensive Plan. They are based on and provide an extension of the aspirations and values embodied in the Vision Statement. By nature they are forward-looking and future-oriented. Even so, they were developed with a keen awareness of Kelso's history and a strong appreciation for traditions that history has given us. The Vision Goals address a wide range of topics and form the foundation for the goals and policies to be developed for the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Although all of the Vision Goals broadly apply to all Comprehensive Plan elements, some of the Vision Goals are more applicable to some elements than others. Each element

identifies the Vision Goals that are particularly relevant to that element.



All Vision Goals are intended to be achievable. They are not prioritized to give importance to some goals over others. Tradeoffs among goals will be necessary as they are applied to particular circumstances; but over time, it is intended that an appropriate balance will be achieved.

VG-1 Maintain and enhance Kelso's unique community character.

Discussion: To those who come to Kelso to live, work, shop, or play, Kelso is a unique and special place. Each of the City's neighborhoods and business districts has its own distinctive identity. A prime goal is to improve those qualities that will make our neighborhoods and our business districts attractive. Some of the important characteristics are a small town feel; strong sense of place; riverfront orientation; long shoreline with public views and access; pedestrian and transit friendly business districts; a human-scale downtown; a thriving urban center, numerous and diverse parks; neighborhoods with a variety of housing types, styles, and ages; abundant open

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space; historic structures; and a network of bike and pedestrian paths. The Comprehensive Plan must seek to support these and any other features which significantly contribute to the City's desired character.

VG-2 Support a strong sense of community.

Discussion: Kelso is far more than a product of its physical features. We have a strong sense of community supported by friendly and helpful people, a network of neighborhood, business, homeowners and civic associations, good schools and recreational opportunities. A wide range of human services and enrichment opportunities are available to encourage a stable and healthy community. New ideas are respected and shared to improve the quality of life in Kelso and the region. Parks, outdoor markets, festivals, community events and neighborhood retail districts foster good will and provide an opportunity for people to mingle and converse. Continued support of these attributes is important.

VG-3 Improve the vibrancy and stability of residential neighborhoods and mixed-use development with housing for diverse income, age groups and lifestyles.

Discussion: Establishing vibrant and safe neighborhoods as desirable places to live is a high priority. Part of the appeal of existing neighborhoods is their diversity, in terms of housing types, size, style, history, maturity, and affordability. An essential part of this diversity is maintaining the integrity of existing single family neighborhoods. We have

experienced changes in the composition of our population. These changes include an aging population, smaller households, racial and ethnic diversity and a broader range of household income. At the same time, Kelso has experienced a rise in housing costs, making it increasingly difficult to provide low- and moderate-cost housing. To meet the needs of Kelso's changing population, we must encourage creative approaches to providing suitable housing by establishing varied and flexible development standards and initiating programs which maintain or create housing to meet specific needs. Mixed-use and transit-oriented neighborhood retail are encouraged and integrated with our neighborhoods.

VG-4 Promote a strong and diverse economy.

Discussion: Kelso's economy should provide a variety of employment opportunities, a broad range of goods and services, and a strong tax base. We should strive to have a diversity of successful business sectors, including retail services, offices, industrial and high technology companies, automotive and educational institutions, and home-based businesses. A large number of creative and innovative entrepreneurs could be attracted to Kelso by our many cultural, recreational and civic activities and our beautiful setting.

Various commercial districts offer distinctive business locations. Our historic Downtown can become an attractive riverside pedestrian-oriented district. Our largest commercial area, oriented around the Three Rivers Mall,

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can become a vibrant regional retail and employment center. Other significant business nodes are located in West Kelso, North Kelso at Interstate 5 exit 40, South Kelso surrounding the SR-432/ Interstate 5 Interchange and numerous neighborhood commercial areas. These districts can integrate into the fabric of the community in a manner that respects and compliments the character of our neighborhoods and the quality of the natural environment. To protect and strengthen our economy, public and private interests must work together to create a climate that allows existing businesses to prosper and also attract new businesses compatible with Kelso's economic goals and character.

VG-5 Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas and a healthy environment.

Discussion: In addition to the Cowlitz River, Kelso contains a variety of natural features which, through a mixture of circumstance and conscious action, have been preserved in a natural state. Features such as wetlands, streams and springs play an important role in maintaining water quality, preventing floods, and providing wildlife habitat. Vegetation preservation throughout the city, particularly on steep hillsides, helps provide soil stability and oxygen to our ecosystem, and prevent erosion. Apart from their biological, hydrological, or geological functions, natural areas also make a significant contribution to Kelso's unique identity. They provide visual linkages with the natural environment, accentuate natural topography, define neighborhood and district boundaries, and provide visual relief to the built

environment. Maintaining clean air and water provides the community with a healthy environment. Efforts to maintain significant sensitive areas, natural features, the urban forest and vegetation, clean air and water through active community stewardship is critical to our quality of life.

VG-6: Identify, protect and preserve the City's historic resources, and enhance the identity of those areas in which they exist.

Discussion: Kelso is fortunate to have a richness and quality based on its long and colorful history. The many historic buildings, sites and neighborhoods reflect various stages of the City's development. These resources provide evidence of the community's historical continuity, and contribute to Kelso's identity. They are important and visible reminders of where we have been and they deserve active protection and enhancement.

VG-7 Provide a safe, family oriented environment in all residential neighborhoods.

Discussion: Kelso has grown over the years and as we've grown, many neighborhoods have been added. These new neighborhoods have been integrated into the city and should be provided with ample safe opportunities for recreation and made safe for pedestrians with the installation of sidewalks. These sidewalks will provide a safe area for children to play and access an assortment of recreation areas nearby. These areas set aside for recreation can be connected by a series of trails created in large part by converted alley rights-of-way.

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VG-8 Maintain existing park facilities while seeking opportunities to expand and enhance the current range of facilities and recreational programs.

Discussion: Kelso is regionally known for its outstanding parks. Kelso's parks provide a prominent source of community identity and pride. The City is perhaps best known for its world class facilities at Tam O'Shanter Park. In addition, Kelso has a rich variety of well-maintained smaller parks, including neighborhood playgrounds, ball fields, and skate parks, walking trails, natural and landscaped open spaces, an outdoor water park, as well as the Catlin community center. Recreational programs should be offered that provide year round, low cost or free activities for all age groups. It should be a standing city policy that the range and quality of park facilities and programs now available to Kelso residents keep pace with future population growth. To ensure wise use of available resources, planning for future park facilities must be coordinated with other public and private providers of recreation services. Where possible, multiple uses of public facilities, such as City-school park partnerships, should be sought. At a minimum, park facilities should be maintained close to current levels of service. Because of the importance of parks in defining Kelso's character and promoting a healthy community, the city should also continue to explore ways to enhance the park system beyond the needs generated by new growth, including additional funding sources such as state and federal grants.

VG-9 Ensure public safety

Discussion: Police and fire protection are essential to the community's quality of life. Prompt response times with appropriate resources are critical. The Kelso Police Department and Cowlitz 2 Fire and Rescue provide top quality services to ensure that quality of life is maintained at the highest possible level. The City also has also taken on a central role in area wide emergency preparedness and ensuring a timely and effective response to natural and manmade disasters. Plans are in place and well coordinated with local hospitals, schools, communication systems and other local jurisdictions. The Police Department works closely with the school district to ensure area schools provide a safe learning environment. Current efforts should be continued and new opportunities to improve explored.

VG-10 Provide safety and accessibility for those who use alternative modes of transportation within and between neighborhoods, public spaces, and business districts.

Discussion: An important part of Kelso's character should be its safety and accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists. Such alternatives can provide an opportunity for daily exercise, which promotes a healthy lifestyle and results in a reduction in vehicle emissions and cleaner air. To meet this goal, we need a completely connected system of pathways for pedestrians and bicyclists that are safe and convenient. Such pathways can take a variety of forms, ranging from concrete sidewalks, bike

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lanes, and unimproved trails. The need for pedestrian pathways and bike lanes is especially important to the most common destinations, such as schools, parks, public buildings, and business districts. Also important in fostering pedestrian and bike accessibility are land use patterns, site designs, and building designs that encourage and facilitate access for pedestrians, bicyclists and other users. The paths should also be designed to provide public spaces where people socialize and should connect to the regional pedestrian and bicycle trail systems.

VG-11 Maintain adequate Level of Service standards for all public facilities and infrastructure.

Discussion: Facilities and services for transportation, police and fire protection, water, sewer, and surface water control are essential for the day to day functioning of the city. Maintaining an adopted level for these services as well as other essential public infrastructure as growth occurs is a high priority. Where possible, we should continue to improve all of these facilities and services above the minimum adopted levels of service to improve our quality of life and the environment. The City should also explore additional ways to fund needed improvements, such as through grants.

VG-12 Solve regional problems that affect Kelso through regional coordination and partnerships.

Discussion: Many challenges facing Kelso and other local communities may only be solved through regional planning, funding and action.

Transportation, affordable housing, employment, and natural resource management are just a few of the issues that need regional coordination. A city-by-city approach often results in impacts on neighboring communities. Interlocal cooperation, consistent standards and regulations between jurisdictions and regional planning and implementation are important to solving these regional issues.

VG-13 Promote active citizen involvement and outreach education in development decisions and planning for Kelso's future.

Discussion: Kelso's future will be determined by a myriad of independent actions taken by individuals and groups who live, work, shop, and play here. Planning for the future offers the opportunity for all community members to cooperatively identify a vision for the city's future and to coordinate their actions in achieving that vision. If such planning is to have meaning, however, a broad base of credibility and responsibility must be established. To ensure that this occurs, the city should actively encourage community participation from all sectors of the city in the ongoing preparation and amendment of plans and implementing actions. This involvement should also include community outreach educational programs to inform and solicit ideas. For development decisions, the city should actively encourage collaboration and consensus with the community, stakeholders and developers to assure predictable and timely results.

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VG-14 Establish development regulations that are both fair and predictable.

Discussion: Achieving the desired future for Kelso will depend on actions undertaken by both governmental agencies and private property owners. To ensure that these public and private actions support the Comprehensive Plan and are consistent with public health, safety, and welfare, governmental regulation of development will continue to be necessary. Such regulation, however, must fairly balance public interests with private property rights. It is important also that regulations be clearly written to assure predictable results, are fair and cost-effective, and that they are administered expeditiously to avoid undue delay.