

Baker City Vision – 2030



Baker City Council

Adopted July 13, 2010

INTRODUCTION

It has been nearly 30 years since Baker City has undertaken a complete review and revision of the community's Comprehensive Plan. The first step in such a process is the formulation of a broadly supported community vision that combines people's aspirations with a number of strategic considerations. Based upon that vision or general target, comprehensive plan elements and program strategies can be later developed, perfected, and implemented over an extended time period with the knowledge that they are consistent with community objectives and a broader strategy. This document, developed in essence by the community-at-large and adopted by the City Council, is that broad *Vision*.

The Vision was developed through the following process. During the second half of 2009 and the first half of 2010 the Baker City Planning Department conducted an exhaustive public involvement program designed to serve as a structured community-wide conversation to define the future vision for the City. In the first phase of the project the Planning Department in conjunction with the Ford Family Foundation Leadership Institute conducted 14 focus groups. Based upon 332 hours of input from 133 community members, a report was developed entitled, "Inventing the Future." As reported in that study, a significant consensus exists in the community centered on a number of dominant and secondary themes. Those themes are summarized later in this Vision Statement. The results of the focus groups were then used as a solid foundation for the second phase of visioning process – the development of a "Discussion Draft Vision Statement".

A wide variety of public involvement techniques were employed in the second phase of the project to refine and insure that the community defined for itself its future vision. The "Discussion Draft Vision Statement" was taken to nine community groups and civic organizations involving approximately 250 individuals where a concept presentation was made, copies provided, and discussion solicited. Three school based community information workshops were also held where 1,800 personal invitations were delivered to households in the City along with widespread public advertising for the events. Finally, one-on-one interviews were conducted in which randomly selected individuals agreed to read the Discussion Draft and then discuss their comments and suggestions. Comments, impressions, and specific suggestions received in the process were incorporated in the Draft Vision Statement that was then submitted to the City Council for review and action.

The final Vision Statement that was developed represents a balancing act. Community visioning statements are a rare opportunity to set citizen based goals. But they are just that, broad based goals or a target for the community to aspire to in its endeavors over several decades. Baker City was bold enough to set its goals high, but realistic enough to recognize limitations. In so doing, the final result decades from now may not be the specific vision adopted, but it will potentially represent the best that the community was capable of achieving.

BASIC THEMES

The fourteen focus group sessions conducted with Baker City residents yielded consistent dominant and secondary themes across nearly all sub-groups tested. Those themes, which were represented in the "Discussion Draft", were consistently validated in the second phase of the public outreach process. It was clear from the focus groups and the Discussion Draft review what general community attributes people want to retain. It was equally clear the type of change, at least in principle, citizens would embrace to accomplish the desires they expressed.

The fundamental challenge and corresponding opportunity is to blend the community's strong preference for rural small town living with issues of improved community sustainability. Sustainability issues for Baker City relate to income levels, quality employment opportunities, retention or attraction of younger age cohorts, support of retail and service businesses, school district health, a broader base to finance infrastructure improvements, and the delivery of health care services.

The following Vision principles are designed to reflect and simultaneously accommodate the two most dominant concerns expressed in the focus groups - retention of a unique and authentic small town culture and improved economic sustainability. They are also designed to recognize a variety of other consistent themes that were expressed by the community.

SUMMARY OF DOMINANT AND SECONDARY PRINCIPLES

1. Retain a small city atmosphere and culture while growing at a moderate pace to a controlled new population base level that represents a more balanced and sustainable foundation for the community.
2. Improve the supply of family wage employment opportunities, wage and salary levels, and the number and diversity of professional positions.
3. Preserve and enhance the authenticity and uniqueness of Baker City, particularly the traditional commercial core that includes the Historic District, Broadway, 10th Street, and Campbell Street.
4. Discourage the establishment of large box stores or extensive strip malls, while concurrently encouraging the business climate within the existing traditional commercial areas.
5. Devise strategies that specifically retain and attract younger population cohorts in the community, including young adults and working age families with children.
6. Devise strategies that improve the supply and diversity of cultural amenities, entertainment options, and retail shopping variety.
7. Continue to emphasize and enhance the community's pedestrian friendly urban environment and park network.
8. Avoid community development strategies that may jeopardize the current climate of public safety.
9. Improve the quality of existing residential neighborhoods, expand quality housing options and price range diversity while being sensitive to the retention of affordable housing within the City's older residential core.
10. To the extent possible, rely on private sector initiative to achieve economic development goals. The footprint of local government, both in terms of services provided and the regulatory climate, should be maintained at only a basic level. The community should rely on non-profit initiative and the forces of private investment to naturally evolve under the forces of the free market system.

STRATEGIC LIMITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Baker City, like any jurisdiction, has a number of strategic limitations and strengths that helps to define the logical options available to the community. The vision described below is presented in three separate components: economy, culture/demographic profile, and land-use/urban design. All three components as proposed are designed to accommodate certain underlying strategic considerations for the community.

They are also directly linked to each other. Success or failure of any economic sustainability strategy for the community doesn't occur in a vacuum. There are elements of land use, urban design, culture, and population demographics that must be considered and integrated into a comprehensive approach.

To understand and judge the proposed strategy of the vision presented, it is important to understand the strategic considerations upon which it was based.

1. Baker City has historically existed as a first tier regional service center for a broader geographic area dominated by a natural resources oriented economy. The city served as a regional service center for outlying resource industries and for an extended time period it also served as a focal point for resource industry manufacturing and processing within the city limits. It is that economic base during its heyday through the 1970s that fueled the development and health of the City's extensive commercial district and residential neighborhoods.
2. The structure of the timber industry has fundamentally changed in the last 30 years reflecting among other factors: 1) globalization import/export pressures, particularly from Canada, Alaska, and Siberia; 2) industry over capacity worldwide; 3) surges in fiber availability from private tree farms, particularly corporate plantations, due to advanced management practices and extensive planting in the second half of the last Century. This is particularly true in the Southeast where very short rotation lengths and advantageous topography have combined with advanced technology to make the region the national leader in both supply and cost advantage; and 4) issues of tax policy and environmental activism on federal lands. As a result of all these factors what little is left of Eastern Oregon's forest products industry is at a distinct competitive disadvantage. In the last decade 24 mills have closed in the Pacific Northwest.
3. Today, the City's existing commercial districts are far larger than the City's resident population can support given income levels and demographic make-up. Far less money is flowing through both the city and the larger service region than in decades past adjusted for inflation. Fewer people are working in Baker City and employment wages adjusted for inflation are significantly lower. A far higher percentage of the resident population is retired and on federal fixed incomes without substantial pension or private savings support. As that population continues to age their spending becomes increasingly restricted, particularly with increasing costs in health care and energy. In addition, shopping habits have changed with the use of the Internet and a tendency to seek out larger retail centers such as Boise, Tri-Cities, or Portland for major shopping ventures.

To revitalize the City's existing commercial districts and to support local business either additional revenue must be generated from the I-84 corridor, essentially bringing in more outside dollars through expanded destination tourism, or the city's population has to grow

with a related increase in employment options. Most likely both will need to occur if the city is to transform itself back onto a sustainable path. The city's current demographic profile dictates this reality. It is theoretically possible that if the city's basic demographics were different, meaning that the population stayed in the neighborhood of 10,000 but was once again composed of mostly working age individuals making higher wages, the town would be capable of supporting the existing commercial base, and enrollments in the school district would stabilize. However, that scenario is not possible under the current city profile with a high percentage of residents in either early or late stage retirement.

4. Baker City was once a proud and relatively healthy working class/merchant class community in balance with appropriate age and income distributions. It transformed over the last thirty years with shifting economic realities into what is today a working class retirement community. Basic demographic and economic trends now place the community at a cross-road. As the community's dominant generation of native-based retirees pass-on, the community faces a risk of significant decline. When residential neighborhoods and commercial districts decline enough, essentially due to not enough money flowing through the system, a downward spiral can be established that is nearly impossible to reverse without major urban renewal and social engineering interventions. Baker City must either transform itself economically or decline. That transformation doesn't have to mean losing the town's basic scale or character.
5. The national and international competition for manufacturing jobs is fierce. The primary factors companies consider in a location are the quality of the labor force, prevailing wage rates, and ease of transporting goods to market and traveling to the site. Against that backdrop, Baker City is not a strategically attractive location for larger manufacturing or professional services employers at this time. It is a particularly unattractive location for employers that require a significant number of highly educated, creative-class professionals such as the technology industries. The town has too small a pool of working age individuals in general, and too small a pool of younger skilled crafts persons and professionals to meet larger employment demands. In addition, very limited availability of higher quality housing stock, limited lot capacity, and little supply in quality rentals means that it would be extremely difficult for a large or medium sized employer to relocate significant numbers of key personnel into the community. The community currently lacks the educational institutions that many larger employers desire for support. Finally, transportation costs tend to be two to five times higher for both personnel and goods out of Baker City.

The pursuit of micro-employers is a more likely and appropriate scenario for Baker City in the manufacturing and professional services sector. It is unlikely that such a strategy could constitute the *primary* pillar in economic revitalization today for the City, but it is an important element to insure future economic diversification and as a potential incubator strategy for a far larger role in the future. One of the most effective strategies to promote high wage micro-employers to the community, the "lone eagle" approach, is through first focusing on destination tourism to prime the pump. Effective destination tourism strategies link improvements in urban design, recreation resources, and marketing that attract and showcase the city. That, in turn, can result in attracting high-wage, micro-employers to relocate.

6. Advanced research in city and regional growth trends has established climate as one important causative factor in who thrives and who declines in today's mobile America. Many communities have successfully pursued the attraction of financially independent retirees as an underlying economic development strategy. Active, financially independent retirees have

little negative impact on municipal service costs, but provide substantial stimulus to the service and retail sectors of a local economy. They also provide a positive net contribution in property taxes. Baker City is not a good candidate for this revitalization strategy due to the winter climate. Current retirees overwhelmingly tend to be natives or returning natives. While some non-native middle and upper-middle income retirees will always be attracted to the community, particularly those engaging in a seasonal retirement lifestyle, it is not an economic development strategy that plays to Baker City's strengths. It also would further exacerbate the distorted age distribution in the community. It does hold potential as a secondary strategy related to other strategies that may be pursued, adding diversification to the economy.

7. Baker City's natural setting and outdoors recreation potential, both active and passive, is the single strongest strategic advantage it currently holds. Its isolation is both a disadvantage and advantage in the development of destination outdoor and heritage based tourism. In certain contexts, its isolation holds an attraction in and of itself if properly marketed. Heritage and outdoor recreation, which is collected referred to in this Vision Statement as "destination tourism", offers the ability to develop a broad range of smaller scale, lower capital opportunities for small business entrepreneurs. It is youth friendly, and tends to attract and retain younger age cohorts in a community, something that is important for Baker City. It is a strategy that will draw more outside money from the I-84 pipeline, and that has the secondary effect of stimulating the auxiliary strategies of attracting micro-manufacturing and active, financially independent retirees to the community due to increased exposure.
8. Both housing and urban design can be used as economic development strategies. Normally these two factors are thought of as community attributes or amenities, not economic strategies, but they can be used to tactical advantage. Baker City is a candidate to employ both housing and urban design strategies in meeting the vision themes expressed by the community.

One of Baker City's strategic strengths is its historic downtown. A second potential but undeveloped strength is its traditional "old town" commercial district configuration linking Broadway and 10th Street, both of which have the potential to recapture the charm and nostalgia of a former era. An effective urban design strategy has the ability to supercharge destination tourism and the length of I-84 stopovers. It can also attract micro-scale high-wage employers, financially independent retirees, and youth cohorts.

The ample provision of different affordable housing options in the community also holds potential as an economic strategy in its own right. The Pacific Northwest on a regional basis is one of most expensive housing markets in America, exceeding even the Northeast. Quality and affordable housing options attracts new residents. Baker City potentially has the resources to implement a strategy, when combined with other elements that would fuel the redevelopment of "old town" and "central commercial" neighborhoods as affordable options for first-time buyers and niche markets. It also has the ability to offer new advanced neo-traditional neighborhoods for a different market segment. These new neighborhood designs have the ability to be in character with the City's pedestrian friendly development pattern, while retaining the small town scale of Baker City. This consideration was a specific desire expressed in the community focus groups.

ECONOMIC VISION

Income Targets and Wage Scales

What were living wage scales in the 1970s and 1980s are no longer sufficient to sustain a family today due to the insidious creep of inflation. This is particularly true in the basics of food, shelter, transportation, health care, and education. While many classifications of jobs should be welcomed in Baker City, the long-term focus should be on the development or attraction of positions that offer salaries at or above the national average of \$45,000 per year with basic benefits. Further, the city's economy has an imbalance between hourly wage positions and professional salaried opportunities. To attract youthful or mid-career professionals back to the community, one particular area of emphasis should be the development of professional service businesses and high-tech, small-scale niche manufacturing.

Build on the Strength of Existing Businesses

One of most effective but often overlooked economic development strategies in an environment like Baker City is to support the expansion of existing businesses with the potential to grow outside their immediate market. Baker City will always be blessed with a number of such businesses. The support and promotion of this growth potential under the City Vision lies specifically with the Chamber of Commerce, other non-profit business development organizations, and private sector initiative – not subsidized assistance or support from local, state, or federal government programs.

Destination Tourism

The further development of destination tourism is the single most effective strategy available to the community to begin the process toward a more balanced, sustainable, and higher income economic base. It is not recommended as the ultimate goal, but instead, as the best vehicle to get to the end product of better employment options and greater vitality. It is a transition mechanism, buying both time and tactical benefits in the City's quest for a new and better balanced economy. It is also an economic strategy, when designed as suggested below that can be executed without prompting rapid and unsustainable population growth. Under this vision, destination tourism would first serve as an enhanced major pillar of the area economy, expanding significantly beyond its current limited scope. Later it would mature into less importance, being just one of several important economic pillars that support the attraction of high wage micro-manufacturing and professional service enterprises.

Baker City's strongest strategic advantage is in the largely untapped area of destination tourism. It is the least difficult and lowest cost strategy to execute. It is also the one strategy most likely to render early benefits. As a strategy, it is largely in the control of the community to make it happen, unlike other economic development options that depend on the decision-making of outside interests. It will be attractive to younger age cohorts as low capital opportunities to establish niche businesses. It pulls vitally needed revenue into the local economy from the I-84 lifeline, and it increases the community's exposure and desirability for other types of business ventures and jobs. Finally, it is the fastest and most effective way to support many existing businesses and to add vigor into Baker City's commercial districts.

While tourism is typically associated with the lower wage scales of service sector employees, destination tourism based on a multitude of small businesses rather than large establishments can offer significant income potential for business owners and artisans. It's not the ideal solution for Baker City's low wage circumstances, just the best available option to fuel transition

objectives and youth attraction. Under this vision, large-scale destination resorts would not be pursued.

Destination Retail

Certain retail establishments or theme clusters of establishments can serve as major destinations, in and of themselves. Under this Vision the city's private sector should specifically develop a destination retail strategy and strive to either recruit and/or development internally in the community the necessary retail business attractions. The retail attraction(s) should be located in one of the City's vintage commercial districts – historic core, Broadway, and 10th Street. Some of the most successful attractions in this capacity, both nationally and internationally, are located in older warehouse buildings, existing historic structures, or redeveloped multi-story department stores.

Micro-Specialty Manufacturers and Services

Attracting high wage, micro-manufactures and professional service businesses is both a viable strategy for the community and consistent with current constraints. Under this Vision the strategy would be aggressively pursued, but it should be understood that the greatest success in attracting such enterprises lies in affiliated strategies related to destination tourism, urban design, and housing. The more attractive the community's attributes, the more likely Baker City will be successful in bringing such enterprises to town.

Lone Eagle Attraction

Lone Eagles are a specific term employed by economic development specialists to describe unique entrepreneurial individuals who bring to a community certain talents and/or resources. These are people who generally are attracted to a community due to some aspect of community character – a particular form of outdoor recreation resource, quality of life consideration, natural beauty, or cultural attributes. Baker City is a candidate to pursue a "Lone Eagle" sub-strategy in economic development. These individuals often bring needed capital to a community, new business energy, and other important business attributes that can make a difference in economies the size of Baker City's. The key to attracting Lone Eagles is the development of strategic attributes in the community.

Educational Institutions

Major educational institutions have the power to transform and stabilize a community. The establishment of a private educational boarding academy, where the student body originates from outside the area, is a realistic possibility for Baker City. Such institutions can offer a variety of benefits to a community, both economic and cultural. The most likely prospect and the vision offered here is the establishment of either a private boarding school(s) serving generally grades 8 through 12, or an advanced training institute(s) with a short duration in residence of 1 to 2 years.

These types of institutions attract a youthful clientele, typically outstanding educators in their field, and a broad assortment of other professional and non-professional positions.

Secondary education boarding schools also provide a constant string of parental visitors during what is typically the slow, non-tourist season. Baker City's scale, safe location, isolation, outdoor training and sporting opportunities, and the availability of existing structures are all strategic advantages.

In addition to private boarding academies, the community continues to be seriously handicapped by the lack of any substantial higher education facilities. Efforts should continue to be pursued to establish a more substantial campus for the Blue Mountain Community College

with potential satellite programs offered through Oregon's public university system. The attraction or local development of a first tier, private four-year college would be ideal and should also be pursued, but it constitutes a far higher hurdle to accomplish.

Theme Town Options

The creation and execution of a theme town strategy is clearly within the capabilities of Baker City, and should be seriously considered as part of the City's Vision. Theme towns are basically small scale communities that develop a concentration in a class of retail (i.e. books, collector vehicles, specialty jewelry, outdoor gear...etc.), skilled crafts (i.e. quilts, pottery, guns, photography, micro-brews....etc.), or recreation (i.e. biking, off-roading, long distance horse trekking.....etc.). While rarely employed, the theme town strategy has been highly successful in other communities that have specifically pursued retail, skilled crafts, or recreation based themes.

Research on successful theme towns indicates several necessary elements. The town has to be small enough that a concentration of theme establishments creates a sense of major presence and visual density for visitors. The town has to have a substantial supply of low cost commercial space. The town requires some sense of uniqueness and isolation. Finally, the location needs to be within 5 or 6 hours of several major population centers. Baker City is suited for the strategy for a number of reasons, including that it is a natural stopping point for travelers on I-84 moving between the Portland/Seattle I-5 corridor and the Boise/Salt Lake City metro areas.

This strategy should not be confused with the fake frontier, mining town, or other associated tourist façade towns that have developed in some locations. Maintaining Baker City's authenticity is a strongly supported element of the Community Vision. Developing a community retail, service, or recreation concentration that can serve as a focus theme is appropriate under this Vision Statement. But the development of tourist façade town is not.

Residential Strategies

Home building generates substantial local economic activity and jobs, both directly and indirectly. Housing, both its construction but also its supply and affordability characteristics in a market, can be used as highly effective strategies to revitalize, stabilize, or rebalance local communities. The lack of higher quality housing options or a lack of diversity in choice in the housing market can quickly turn away perspective employers or potential residents needed to revitalize the community. The inverse is also true where attractive housing markets and exciting neighborhood designs can serve as the critical magnet in attracting new businesses. Housing strategies have never been a major component in Baker City economic development thinking. That is a particular shame because it is one area of skills strength in the local labor market, and an area that is conducive to small business creation.

The construction of 100 new homes per year in a typical metro area will generate \$21.1 million in local income, \$2.2 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 324 local jobs. Additionally, annually recurring positive impacts of building that same 100 homes generates \$3.1 million in local income year after year, along with \$743,000 in taxes and 53 local jobs.

The proposed vision, as described in some detail below on growth management controls, calls for an integrated housing strategy. A moderate population growth rate of up to 2.5%, unlikely to be achieved under current conditions of stagnation, could generate up to 100 new housing starts per year.

LAND USE & URBAN DESIGN VISION

Growth Management

The community focus groups illustrated that there exists a broad consensus to retain the City's small town feel and general scale while pursuing economic transformation and sustainability strategies. While there is little likelihood of rapid growth overtaking the community due to a variety of factors, there is a perception among some that economic development initiatives constitute a potentially serious risk to stated preferences. To reemphasize an important consideration, deflation is a far greater concern for Baker City than over stimulated growth.

To provide assurances that the basic Vision is achieved, it is suggested that the City develop a simple metered growth management program to be triggered if growth rates ever exceeded 5 percent in a calendar year. Said provisions would be developed and adopted both in the revised Comprehensive Plan and as an implementation ordinance with a predetermined trigger mechanism that would accommodate the cyclic swings in residential markets, but provide a "stop-loss" mechanism that would trigger the metered development provisions if sustained rapid growth market conditions occurred. The parameters of such a program would look something like the following, although the actual parameters would be a matter of future City Council discussion and adoption:

1. Single-family (detached and attached) residential building permits for new construction (not replacement) within City limits would be restricted on an annual basis to a maximum modest growth rate of 2.5 percent based on population if the City's growth rate ever exceeded 5 percent in a 12 month period. Assuming, for instance, an average household size of 2.5 persons this would restrict new housing starts to a maximum of 100 with a starting population of 10,000. Even under the maximum growth rate allowed, an unlikely scenario, the city would experience a slowly metered growth rate without being overwhelmed. When combined with other growth control features described below, the community would retain its current sense of scale and convenience while benefiting from the housing related economic stimulus.
2. The City should strive through regulatory and infrastructure incentives to direct 40 percent of the growth into infill locations and 60 percent into new expansion. By doing so, the City would encourage sufficient market pressure to drive infill and existing neighborhood revitalization, while accommodating market demand for a variety of other housing options. Those other housing options include advanced neighborhood designs that are not currently practical in the City's smaller infill parcels.
3. The City should plan on eventually reaching an ultimate population target in 25 to 30 years of 18,000 to 20,000 people. While still a modest sized town, it is a population range that offers greater benefits than costs, and it offers a better formula for community sustainability when combined with other features.

Infrastructure Concurrency

The term "concurrency" in land planning means that utility and infrastructure capacity should be concurrent with demands created by development. You only grow in those areas where you either have the needed capacity or the needed capacity is planned and developed in concert with the proposed development.

The City's newly revised Development Code specifically has provisions requiring concurrency. The City's Comprehensive Plan, when revised, should have stronger concurrency provisions incorporated, including coordinating future growth with utility planning. Utility capacity is a development magnet. Establish that capacity where you want to direct growth.

Based on a preliminary review of existing studies, the City's municipal sewer system operating at 70% of its existing capacity could accommodate approximately 18,000 residents. Approximately \$10 million (2008 dollars) will be required over the next 25 years for system replacements and upgrades. These costs will generally occur regardless if the City's population declines to 7,000 residents or raises to 20,000 residents. The larger the population base up to a point, the greater the expense can be spread per household. Further study will be required beyond the current information.

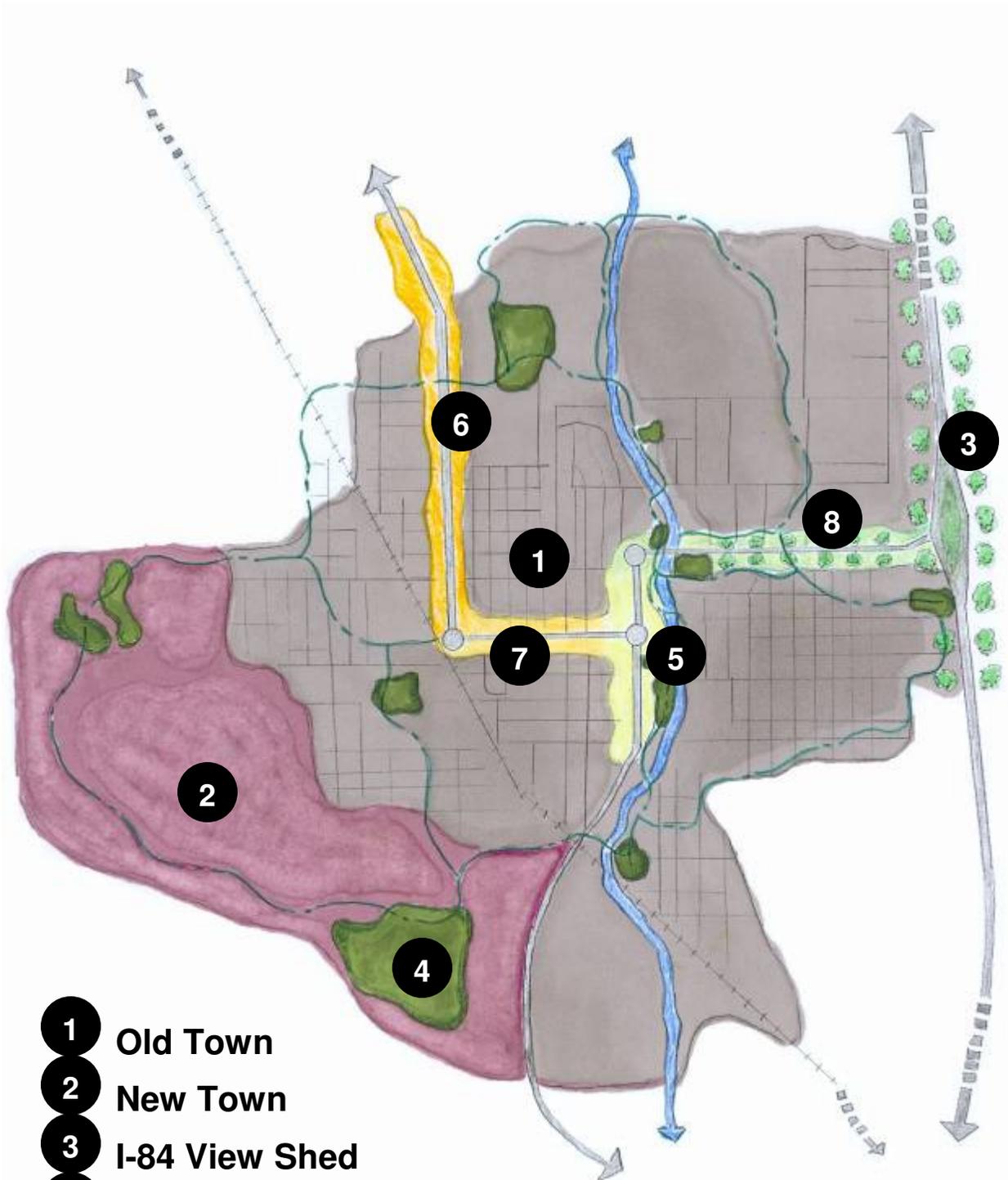
The City's water system capacity is more problematic. More than \$13 million (2008) dollars would have to be expended in the future (20 to 25 years) to cover both postponed system replacements and upgrades, and for needed expansion to accommodate a population up to 18,000. The City does not have a significant amount of excess capacity under the current system, and capacity would have to be added. However, there are certain benefits that current system users would enjoy with an expanded population base. The costs associated with certain system replacements and improvements, particularly the Mountain Pipeline project and water treatment improvements, could be spread over a larger utility base. Further study will be required beyond the current information.

UGB Expansion and Reconfiguration

Under the Vision it appears likely that the City currently has excess acreage under both industrial and commercial zoning to meet future demands. The older, interspersed industrial areas that are now essentially Brownfield sites in the western portion of the city also may need selective reclassification under the proposed Vision. It is also likely when further analysis is undertaken, that residential zoning is too limited to accomplish the Vision. Desirable and available large track residential acreage is currently too restricted within the city's UGB, limiting housing strategies.

The most desirable areas for new residential expansion as identified by focus groups and initial technical planning analysis are to the west. These areas include acreage within the City's UGB and beyond the current UGB boundaries, south of Campbell Street. (See Land Use Vision illustration). These areas offer greater separation from the influence of the Interstate, better views, logical expansion of utilities, and little to no impact on high value agricultural lands. The area also offers larger track sizes necessary for advanced design projects and economies of scale.

Under the Vision the UGB would be expanded to the west, incorporating those areas south of Campbell Street up to and possibly including some bench areas. Hughes Lane would remain a "hard boundary" to the north, protecting high value agricultural soils and operations. No expansion would occur to the south or east of the current UGB boundaries.



- 1 Old Town
- 2 New Town
- 3 I-84 View Shed
- 4 Hypothetical Greenway & Park System
- 5 Historic Core
- 6 Retro Corridor
- 7 Artisan Corridor
- 8 Gateway Corridor

Themed Commercial Districts and Entrance Corridors

Baker City's vintage commercial districts are part of the heritage that area citizens expressed a strong desire to preserve. They are also key economic development assets under the right type of redevelopment. While the community has long recognized the value of the Downtown Historic District, far less attention has been directed to the Broadway and 10th Street corridors.

Under the Vision the City's older commercial districts would present three separate but connected commercial zones. Connected physically in the transportation pattern, each district through streetscape urban design techniques could lead visitors from one themed area to the next. Connected strategically, it is suggested that the HBC function eventually be expanded or transformed into a larger renewal district or segmented business district association.

Also under the Vision, as strongly expressed in the focus groups, large single-story box stores and strip malls are discouraged. The desire is to retain and enhance retail commercial energy into the existing commercial districts to drive revitalization. It is also designed to retain one of Baker City's key assets, its historic urban form.

1. **Historic Core:** The City's role in redevelopment of the downtown Historic District is now largely complete after two decades of involvement. With the anticipated completion in the near future of the new Central Park, final link in the Leo Adler Pathway, Resort Street redevelopment, and potential Court Plaza the physical transformations that the City is capable of providing will be largely finished. Further development of destination tourism and associated private sector investment will be the key to the District's further advancement. Destination retail, particularly undertaken through retro-style multistory department store formats, has the potential to serve as an important anchor further energizing the historic core, and it should be encouraged. Ultimately, small satellite parking lots on the outskirts of the central core should be acquired and developed in strategic locations.



2. **Retro Corridor:** Tenth Street offers the potential for a second commercial heritage experience, complementing the Historic District. Tenth Street still retains the remnants of its historic roots – a 1950s highway strip. With attention to signage and streetscape redevelopment, a retro-highway strip can be brought back to life with greater vitality. Targeted urban renewal of the Strip will contribute to both population growth and the expansion of area tourism. These two factors, in turn, will lead to greater economic vitality of the commercial zone. Under the Vision, as the price of commercial square footage rises along the Strip, the current mix of businesses on Tenth Street would likely

shift. Those businesses requiring larger space such as car dealers and agricultural supplies would tend to shift to the developing commercial areas east of the Interstate. This would likely occur as businesses capitalized on the higher land values associated with their current locations on the Strip, and their need to expand into areas better suited for large scale commercial businesses as the local economy grew.



3. **Artisan Corridor:** Broadway represents both a key connector and unique redevelopment challenge. One potential scenario for the revitalization of Broadway is the creation of its own distinct character or district. Under the Vision it is suggested that Broadway be redeveloped as a mixed, high density residential/commercial corridor. The Middle School would be retained in its current location as an anchor feature. The street would ultimately become the focal point or district for a targeted city theme as established in the economic Vision. High density residential development as storefront conversions or secondary story development would further complement district character.



4. **City Gateway:** The Campbell Street corridor is a critical component in any strategy to revitalize the City. The corridor acts as the City's gateway creating first and lasting impressions associated with its most important economic lifeline, I-84. Unfortunately, when the Oregon Department of Transportation undertook the redevelopment of Campbell Street, a major opportunity was not capitalized upon. In fact, circumstances were made worse. Due to location, Baker City is an obvious overnight rest-stop for many travelers on I-84. Many of those repeat stopovers (people that represent potential business prospects, future residents, or extended day visitors), have never bothered to investigate the City beyond the first blocks of Campbell Street. A more inviting boulevard design for Campbell Street would have lasting benefits for both City businesses and the community at-large. While the opportunity was missed in the past, a stronger urban design orientation with a boulevard format still needs to be executed in the future.



“Old Town” and “New Town” Residential Districts

Housing in its own right can be an important economic revitalization strategy for the community. Under the Vision various housing objectives and different market demands would be met through a land use pattern that could be characterized as the city's “old town district” and “new town district”.

Baker City's historic residential neighborhoods reflect a classic turn-of-the-century grid pattern with small city lots, often with back alleys. Modern subdivision designs that attempt to improve upon but generally replicate the advantages of this older pattern are often referred to as neo-

traditional neighborhoods. Baker City's historic residential neighborhoods are highly mixed in character, and many of the units are approaching obsolescence in need of major renovations and/or high levels of maintenance. These mixed neighborhoods provide a rich reserve of affordable housing opportunity for youthful first-time homebuyers – an important target market for the City. With a potentially high “funky” factor and a readymade environment where sweat equity can be a replacement for higher incomes, “Old Town” with promotion, would take on a distinctly bohemian and young family's character, driving renovations.

Other segments of society are attracted to other housing experiences. New construction, low maintenance, elderly friendly, modern design, larger lots, or advanced subdivision formats appeal to fundamentally different age and income groups. Without the availability of those housing and neighborhood options, currently in very short supply in Baker City, people bypass the community for alternative locations. This often influences small business relocation decisions and can be a discouragement to the type of people that Baker City needs to once again attract to the community to regain balance. Under the Vision, the “New Town District” would provide those options, while complementing choices offered by the “Old Town District”. “New Town” development patterns, as provided for in the City's new Development Code standards and design assistance provisions, would offer consumers choice that was in character with Baker City's heritage of walk-able communities and traditional design.

Pedestrian and Bike Greenway Networks

Baker City's historic development pattern and recent parkway design improvements have established the foundation of a bike and pedestrian friendly community. Substantial potential exists to further that character, which is a goal strongly expressed by area citizens. The community has never prepared a comprehensive parks and pathway plan to guide the incremental development and management of a thoughtful, interconnected system. Under the Vision such a plan would be developed guiding both old and new town improvements, encouraging coordination of future park and pathway elements. Eventually, the City should consider taking to the voters the establishment of a separate funding mechanism, potentially a park and pathway district, to incrementally finance future projects through a grant matching and maintenance mechanism. Parks and pathways are not just important lifestyle amenities for existing citizens, they are a tool for economic development attracting businesses and new residents.

The I-84 Freeway View Shed

America's freeway corridors have become a homogenized, run-on sentence in the minds of highway travelers. Little distinguishes one town from another as judged from those fleeting moments as you pass by a community at 70 miles per hour. The image that Baker City projects from the I-84 corridor can be easily and inexpensively modified to communicate that the community is authentically different - it is special and worthy of your attention. In particular, Baker City's Interstate corridor has two aspects to it that make it both a prime candidate and critical consideration to such an approach. The first is that north bound traffic entering the Baker Valley looks down upon the City, making the area in the UGB east of the Interstate a particularly sensitive view shed in terms of image projected. The second is that the most critical area of the Baker City Interstate corridor is a short expanse from the Campbell Street exit to the Richland exit, limiting the need for investment.

Under the Vision, ODOT would be petitioned to establish two planting strips down the east and west sides of I-84 of equally spaced of low-rise evergreen trees that would not overgrow the site or represent a potential traffic hazard. The landscape planning effect would be that of a soft,

unifying enclosure that would distinguish the Baker City Freeway corridor. The technique would, overtime, transform and establish an appropriate entryway image for the City.

A second technique that should be investigated is the development of *voluntary* design guidelines, particularly roofing color, to create a consistency effect for new commercial structures built on the east side of I-84 within the UGB. Consistency in accent or primary roofing color, a no or little cost approach, will significantly improve the visual image and uniqueness of the City for drivers approaching from the south on I-84.

CULTURE AND DEMOGRAPHIC VISION

Regaining Age Cohort Balance within the Community

The general vision strategies outlined in this document are designed to provide a conducive environment for regaining a healthy age balance within the City's population. Currently children, young adults, and working age families with children are under represented. City policy deliberations under this vision that may effect the community's age distribution should strive to encourage both the retention and attraction of younger residents, without discriminating against older age cohorts. To some extent this can be accomplished with the encouragement of youth oriented amenities and recreation opportunities.

Community Diversity

Baker City has lost diversity, not with intention, but by circumstance. It has lost diversity in areas of income distribution, education attainment levels, and age distribution in ways that retard opportunity and a healthy civic society. It never has had the opportunity to experience any significant levels of interracial diversity or international culture diversity. Diversity of culture and tolerance has always been an American strength and underlying principal in our society. Current neighborhood configurations in Baker City have been and should continue to be conducive to the promotion of diversity. Under this vision Baker City would actively promote diversity within the community, both in our land development and economic revitalization efforts.