

Community Design

Conditions

Once a logging town, Sandpoint's image and economy has been re-shaped in recent decades. Today, the City is a destination for skiers, shoppers, and visitors seeking the peace and relaxation offered by Lake Pend Oreille and the forested hills surrounding the city. It is home to medical professionals, manufacturing businesses, and a diverse mix of people. Despite these changes, Sandpoint residents still cherish their community's small town scale, pace, relative affordability and rural image.

Sandpoint's residents are concerned that their community's character is at risk. Population growth, changes or loss of downtown businesses, influences from development in neighboring communities, rising property values, and the rising number of housing units dedicated to seasonal use have affected the way the community looks, functions, and feels. This comprehensive plan is seen as an important tool to preserve those characteristics cherished by residents and address identified issues. Sandpoint's physical layout, treatment of public spaces, and preservation of historic areas, neighborhoods and districts are seen as key.

This community design chapter articulates functional and aesthetic characteristics that



Figure 3.1 - Sandpoint's setting - between scenic Lake Pend Oreille and forested foothills, and adjacent to expansive wilderness areas - characterizes much of what residents prize about their lives here. (Image source: Brian Wolfe)

influence the overall appearance and “feel” of the City. It also presents goals and policies to guide the community in making decisions regarding its physical context, underscores the interrelationships between function and form, and highlights ties between the built environment and its inhabitants.

Planning Vision

The “vision” portion of this chapter (3.3-3.6) was developed through public input early in the planning process, taking the form of an outline of various community attributes. Building on hundreds of comments provided in written form and expressed verbally, in exercises, and through questionnaires, this vision outline was

crafted to guide the development of this plan's components. As decisions were made and the plan evolved, so did the planning vision.

In order to facilitate participants' long-view consideration of issues, many parts of the vision were expressed in a future-tense format; it is understood that all such conditions do not necessarily exist today.

This chapter translates the vision articulated in the following panels into actionable community design directives - identified later in this chapter. Led by the vision, those directives inform all of the goals and policies included in this plan.



Figure 3.2 - Sandpoint's diversity, issues and plan opportunities were reflected in participant photo submittals, and in the case of one participant, a beautifully-crafted short film. (Image source: Dan McCann, "Caviar & Corndogs.")

Planning Vision

Parks and Open Space

Sandpoint = Recreation

Sandpoint is a community where recreation is a focus, and the town boasts a wealth of nearby waterways, forested lands and mountains. The community also enjoys many neighborhood and large civic parks. Residents highly value these features, and wish to retain and develop an extensive, all-season trail network to connect their town to the waterways, urban park and wilderness areas that help define Sandpoint.

Though Sandpoint enjoys many natural riches today, the community envisions opportunities for additional public-access features, such as municipal golf, public boat slips, more neighborhood or “pocket” parks, ice-skating, youth-oriented features, indoor sports facilities, and additional shoreline greenbelt areas. In short, Sandpoint residents love to recreate, and having a diverse array of recreational options is seen as an important part of the community’s future.



Figure 3.3 - Throughout the planning process, participants voiced strong support for balancing transportation options - giving equal consideration to cycling, walking and driving. (Image source: camera exercise participant)

A Larger Perspective

Many residents know and love many outdoor and recreational features outside City boundaries, and recognize the need for long-range, inter-local planning to maximize – or even to properly capture – the area’s true potential. The community realizes that scenic views or key open spaces may not persist without proper action and foresight, and envisions a future where natural qualities enjoyed by citizens today are present tomorrow.

Streets and Transportation

Transportation Diversity

Sandpoint’s non-motorized accessibility is expected to pay dividends in many ways. Cycling is an option that many residents enjoy on a daily basis, due to the community’s compact layout and slower-paced, dispersed traffic patterns. The numerous features that enhance the pedestrian experience also beautify the town and help make it more sustainable. Residents or workers living a greater distance from

the town center are able to utilize “park and ride” facilities as part of their commute. In Sandpoint, transportation diversity is valued, and no one means of transportation overwhelms the others.

A Multimodal Town

Sandpoint is a town that values multimodal transportation. The community’s transportation investments and decisions give full consideration to improving the pedestrian experience, and elects to grow in ways that support the ability to shop, recreate, travel and commute on-foot. Sandpoint residents envision bikepaths, good sidewalks, safe lighting, street trees, canopies and awnings in downtown areas, benches, well-marked crosswalks, slower-paced, efficient traffic, and walkable neighborhoods throughout the city.

A Scaled Approach

Being located along a major highway ensures Sandpoint residents know and appreciate the need to distinguish through-town traffic from in-town traffic. Balancing the needs of the former with local needs for a pace promoting safety, balanced mobility, and retail friendliness requires Sandpoint to consider, and in some cases direct, automotive transportation according to use and intensity. Balancing local needs with statewide or national concerns requires a strong local vision and strong partnerships among agencies, and Sandpoint’s priorities must be well-represented.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Diverse Housing for a Diverse Community

In recent times, Sandpoint’s fortunes have spurred growth and investment in such a way as to compromise affordability. To combat this, residents have become more proactive in a role for themselves and for the City in promoting and encouraging a wide range of housing types, keeping pace with housing demand, and acting to improve other livability factors to bridge the distance between costs of living in Sandpoint with what residents earn.

Mixed Use Options

One way in which Sandpoint addresses affordability is by promoting mixed-use development – reviving the traditional and beneficial adjacencies of varied residential and business uses. This approach, once common and typical of cities, is recognized by residents as an important way to foster walkability, make efficient use of infrastructure, improve safety, add personal convenience, improve social networks, and enhance civic character.

Beauty and Character

Residents of Sandpoint appreciate the town’s natural setting. They also love the overall beauty and character of the town’s built environment. Residents respect the work, investment and commitment by past generations to establish that character, and recognize the need to maintain the town’s built legacy. Current residents of Sandpoint wish to add to the built

environment in a way that is equal to or better than past works, insisting that new additions harmonize with the town's character and contribute to the long-term success of the City.

Preserving Traditional Neighborhoods

Sandpoint residents value their traditional neighborhoods, including the Downtown and areas such as Sixth Avenue. The community recognizes the need to preserve not just individual historic buildings, but the traditional scale and feeling of the city's original neighborhoods platted by Farmin.

Jobs and Economic Development

Sandpoint Recreation The fact that Sandpoint has a strong recreational focus is seen as key to the City's economic well-being. By actively developing, enhancing, and improving the community's many recreational strengths, the City benefits its residents today while helping to attract better-paying job providers tomorrow – particularly those wishing to attract and retain workers who consider recreational opportunities and the arts as essential in selecting a place to live.

The community also recognizes the opportunities inherent in supporting the development of walkable, scaled, commercial districts comprised of locally-owned businesses, both new and existing. These support Sandpoint's preference for tapping local resources and opportunities in a way that helps the community succeed over the long-term.

Better Education, Better Jobs

Sandpoint residents are strongly committed to improving educational opportunities in their town and region, and work to address local needs and enhance local economic opportunities. Sandpoint's future depends on the ability of residents to earn quality, living wages, and education – starting at home and into primary schools and upward – is highly valued.

Public Facilities and Services

An Environmentally Responsible Community

Residents envision an environmentally responsible and sustainable Sandpoint, including the implementation of improved recycling services, nurturing the community forest and encouraging energy and resource efficient construction along with innovative approaches to water quality and wastewater treatment. Besides making more efficient use of land and other resources, the community recognizes opportunities to realize economic benefit through regional leadership and knowledge as an environmentally responsible community.

Grow Services with Town Growth

Sandpoint's full range of services should grow at the same pace as the community. Such services include water, wastewater, parks and recreation facilities, health care services, solid waste disposal, libraries and transportation infrastructure and schools. Costs for these new or improved services should be shared equitably, according to long and short-term benefit.

Safe, by Design

In concert with Sandpoint's walkable nature, the community encourages planning and growth patterns that improve the abilities and efficiencies of police and fire services. Compact growth in Sandpoint is recognized as benefiting fire response times, as well as supporting a more neighborhood-friendly, personal approach to police protection.

Shopping and Commerce

"Keep it Distinctively Sandpoint"

Sandpoint residents greatly value the overall historic appearance of the downtown, and work hard to renovate, restore, and encourage full utilization of retail and upper floor space. The downtown maintains the feel of authenticity providing residents and visitors with a unquestionable sense of place. Citizens recognize the need for strategic thinking to ensure downtown's success, including the need to make it "authentic", e.g., ensuring the availability of goods and services needed for day-to-day life, as well as those focused on tourists and visitors.

Parking

Improved parking conditions are recognized as key to the community's success. The town is committed to applying creative, cost-effective methods to address public parking needs while preserving our traditional urban environment.

Future Features

Residents have many long-range hopes for their City, and some have indicated an interest in new or expanded these features including, but not limited to, a convention center; long-range consideration for mass transit needs; a new or improved commercial airport, and a dedicated community market. The community is fully rooted and appreciative of its place and built legacy, and looks forward to improving conditions for all residents through hard work, financial investment, and progressive, strategic decision making.

Design Directives

Sandpoint's community planning concept, as rooted in the vision, can be discussed in terms of the design directives outlined here. Each of the directives extends the community's vision into action, launching the plan into public policy. Based on community discussion and the evolution of the plan's vision, these directives reflect the community's desire to temper outward expansion into the Area of City Impact (ACI), to provide for a more compact pattern of land development within city limits, to provide public services at a level that's both sustainable and consistent with community demand, and to promote a healthy and balanced local economy that keeps Sandpoint prosperous.



Figure 3.4 - The plan envisions increased density to emulate many of Sandpoint's existing urban patterns and traditional neighborhoods. Captioning this image, a participant wrote: "Apartments above garage - positive." (Image source: Camera exercise participant)

Ensure that parks and recreation are a significant component of Sandpoint's makeup

Residents wish to enjoy the outdoors, whether by using a City park, taking a bike ride, paddling on the lake, or exploring the nearby woods. Integrating the community's love for outdoor activity is a critical component of this plan.

Encourage diversity in transportation modes

Though the private auto dominates the street, residents wish to encourage increased use of bicycles and non-motorized transportation as viable transportation options. This includes doing more than making sidewalks and street crossings safe. Sandpoint's land use arrangement and transportation network create patterns where residents and visitors choose to walk or ride instead of choosing to drive.

Direct growth into Downtown Sandpoint and other emerging higher intensity districts

As population growth occurs, Sandpoint residents wish to resist the temptation to push that growth into the Area of City Impact. Instead, the directive here is to focus a large share of that growth into the community's downtown and other designated higher intensity districts. This will take advantage of the population influx to stimulate reinvestment in these areas, creating exciting community centers where people can live, work, shop, meet, and mingle.

Preserve the community's historic character

An important part of Sandpoint's charm and its attractiveness to current residents is its historic neighborhoods. Many of the neighborhoods are composed of modest homes on parcels 6,000 square feet in area. Residents generally wish to preserve these neighborhoods. Individual structures should respect the bulk, mass and architecture of the existing fabric. New development is seamlessly integrated with no one structure or development dominating the streetscape. This directive also applies to the architectural character of the downtown and to those higher intensity districts that have yet to emerge. Development should respect the town's heritage, in both architecture and placement.

Promote sustainable development

This plan provides goals and policies intended to help Sandpoint achieve levels of economic, environmental and social sustainability that will ensure future generations will enjoy Sandpoint just as much as (or more than) previous ones.

Shape a Sandpoint that's easily served

Provision of public services is key to a city's success. The Sandpoint community wishes to see the town served by all of its infrastructure and parks...and it wants the services to be provided on an affordable cost-effective basis. This has direct implications on community design, ensuring the entire city is arranged, developed, and managed to ensure that public services maintain fiscal balance and always mindful of the fiscal impacts on the individual tax and rate payers.

☒ Goal CD-1: Historic Town

Retain Sandpoint's position and image as an historic town.

Policies

- A** Ensure that all commercial, single and multi-family development respect the town's unique historic character, in architecture, density and in site planning.
- B** Facilitate reinvestment in and adaptive reuse of historic structures, districts and neighborhoods.
- C** Publicize the community's heritage through interpretive trails, historic plaques, art and other public displays.
- D** Encourage civic efforts to celebrate the community's history and continue historic community events.
- E** Focus civic, social, and commercial activity in the downtown.

☒ Goal CD-2: Resource Conservation

Facilitate resource conservation and community development in Sandpoint's design.

Policies

- A** Locate population intensity in and near the downtown and where urban services are readily available.
- B** Encourage development of architecturally designed townhomes and apartments that reflect the architectural character of the neighborhood to increase residential densities in CA-3, CA-3B, CA-4 and CA-5 districts.
- C** Encourage mixed use in CA-4 and CA-5 areas.
- D** Design public transportation services linking residential, industrial and commercial districts.
- E** Deny extension of urban service in ACI for low density development.
- F** Encourage small accessory dwelling units throughout Sandpoint.

☒ Goal CD-3: Quality Growth

Make higher density areas dynamic, attractive and desirable places to live and operate businesses.

Policies

- A** Support making streetscapes and public spaces functional, safe and attractive.
- B** Arrange land uses to focus public activity in CA-3B, CA-4 and CA-5 districts.
- C** In higher density areas locate buildings to emphasize the relationship to the street, encourage pedestrian access, and establish identities of individual districts and mixed use neighborhoods.
- D** Design and work toward making multimodal travel safe, efficient, and connected.
- E** Reduce the amount of land devoted to surface parking, including but not limited to encouraging parking structures in CA-4 and especially CA-5 districts.

☒ Goal CD-4: Sustainable Growth

Make Sandpoint sustainable.

Policies

- A** Encourage the development of a sustainability policy to help guide City expenditures, actions, and community development.

