



A VISION FOR ST. HELENS IN THE YEAR 2020

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One of the most obvious changes is the increased population. A total of 15,600 people now live in the City of St. Helens, and more are anticipated as the community's livability and proximity to Portland continue to attract new residents. This growth has created a number of significant changes for the people who live and/or work in St. Helens.

Because local employment opportunities were seen as very important to the quality of life, the City initiated an economic development program to attract small industries and service businesses. This has helped retain a community sense of independence while offsetting the reduced number of timber-related jobs. Additionally, by fulfilling its goal of 50 percent local employment in high paying technical jobs, St. Helens has avoided becoming a bedroom community.

A Historic Waterfront Redevelopment Plan has united both public and private resources of the community to create a new focus and center for the entire St. Helens area. The Old Town area has been revitalized with historic building restorations and construction of new buildings in a manner consistent with the area's historic character.

Planned open spaces provide effective access for the entire community to water-related activities on the Columbia. A community open space/plaza has been created to provide an area for local festivals and events. Commercial expansion has been limited to tourist-oriented businesses, such as restaurants and small shops, as well as some convenience services required by nearby residents. People are guided to both the Old Town and Uptown areas by gateway parks, created on Highway 30 and the Columbia River, as well as tree-lined boulevards and other urban design amenities. To assure that development proceeds in a manner consistent with community goals, architectural and planning design standards have been created by the City. Following their success in the Old Town area, similar, but unique, standards were prepared for the Uptown Area to assist in that area's revitalization.

St. Helens has a new community primary care facility to meet the health needs of south Columbia County. As a result of growth, local services have improved and there is less need for travel to Portland for retail goods and services.

To assure that St. Helens' special character is retained, the City Planning Commission has developed a plan for neighborhood-oriented development using schools or parks as a focus for activities and name familiarity. Emphasis is given throughout the community to pedestrian and bicycle connections to keep the scale of development small and residences in close proximity to work, school, and play. Views of the river, mountains, and other vistas seen from public property are protected.

To balance the effects of the added development that has occurred along Highway 30, guidelines have been created to limit the number of large discount, or similar, stores that can locate in the area. Further, an access program and frontage road plan have been developed to accommodate the expansion while retaining a small town appearance and meeting acceptable standards for service and safety. Further expansion of the highway strip has been halted at the southern gateway and the northern urban growth boundary.

In order to emphasize the unique character of St. Helens and improve the community's livability, a number of new programs have been initiated. Perhaps the most obvious is the new Parks and Open Spaces Plan that establishes green areas throughout the urban area and includes stream corridors, parks, schools, and special sites, such as the County Fairgrounds. In order to retain a more rural-, farm-, and forest-oriented character near the growing City, a coordinated effort with Columbia County reserves a belt of farm and forest zoning. Green areas and parks are also integrated into the community's neighborhoods as new development occurs or areas are redeveloped. Park funding comes from system development charges and a new City parks levy.

New, more expensive, housing has become common in St. Helens as subdivisions with scenic views of the Columbia River and forested areas have attracted affluent residents to the City. The majority of new housing continues to be for middle-income families who locate on the west side of Highway 30. Redevelopment of

the Uptown Area has resulted in some two-story apartment structures, kept to a smaller scale by City standards, and a number of remodeled existing residences that accommodate additional people through such methods as small rental apartments over garages and in-fill homes on previously vacant land.

Concerns about providing affordable housing prompted the City to adopt an Affordable Housing Plan that includes small-scale in-fill dwellings, a required percentage of affordable housing in multi-family developments, and programs to maintain existing housing.

Protection of historic buildings as well as the continuation of local events and festivals has become an important part of preserving St. Helens as a distinctive place. A Historic Resources Committee serves as a focus for recommendations on retaining local historic structures and coordinating local community special events.

To maintain high quality schools, a special intergovernmental coordination agreement between the City, County, and School District has been created. That cooperative relationship has allowed people to become more involved in, and aware of, the need for additional classrooms and schools prior to the need becoming a crisis. Further, programs and special equipment needed to preserve the high level of education are funded by public and private entities functioning together for the entire community's benefit. Youth programs are valued as an extension of the education process, and, with local young people as the primary concern, recreational opportunities such as skateboard parks were created. A Youth Commission was formed to serve as a liaison between the City, School District, and young people. Continuing coordination between these entities has improved community support for new facilities and provided better services.

Town meetings and other public events are regularly conducted to assure people believe they have, and actually do have, easy access to their local governments and other public agencies. The City sponsors a Community Mediation Program that provides training for local residents to facilitate neighborhood conflict resolution before local problems become larger community concerns. More informal activities, such as a Coffee Outreach, are sponsored by the City and local service groups to give people an opportunity to meet in homes and local businesses to discuss community issues and concerns in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Storm drainage, to deal with the increased paving and impermeable surface created by development, has been improved, particularly along roadways. This has resulted in improved pedestrian and bike access.

An early priority was assigned to improve local transportation services, particularly public transit services. In addition to expanding the available methods of moving people and goods through the variety of improved transit services (bike lanes, sidewalks, and arterial roadways), more creative methods were tried. A ferry crossing the Columbia River to Woodland, a commuter train to Portland, and the establishment of vanpools all helped to ease the burden of new people living in and visiting the St. Helens area.

Removal of a substantive frustration for many local drivers occurred when agreement was reached with local railroad managers to eliminate crossing blockages during high roadway volume periods. An improved arterial street network, such as the connection of Millard Road to Gable Road in the southern portion of the urban area, has helped to provide effective and efficient roadway transportation options for local residents.

Improvements to other City services, such as the water system and police force, occurred as the community grew. St. Helens is a changed community, but much of the change has brought new vigor, beauty, and services to the local people. It is an exciting and bustling new town, but one that has retained its historic character and continues to see itself, and to be seen by others, as a small town with a comfortable place for all local citizens, both new and old.

In this way St. Helens is as it has always been, but improved with age and revitalized by new people and opportunities.

ST. HELENS VISION ACTION PLAN

This Action Plan is a series of activities designed to implement and create the image for St. Helens' future as contained in the St. Helens Vision Statement.

	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCES	HURDLES	TIMING
1	Revitalize Waterfront Development Committee	City	City		06-1-97
2	Create Health Services Task Force	Hospital District	County/Hospital Bd.		06-1-97
3	Create Historic Resources Committee	City	Historical Society	Public education	06-1-97
4	Begin a Coffee Outreach	City	City/local service groups		06-1-97
5	Charge Planning Commission with duty to see that the Vision is used (train all new members of City staff, elected & appointed officials)	City	City		06-1-97
6	Create Old Town Development Group	City/ Chamber of Commerce	City/Chamber of Commerce/Port		09-1-97
7	Amend Comprehensive Plan for community scale bike connections as in the Transportation Plan	City	Consultants	Public support	09-1-97
8	Amend Comprehensive Plan for views protection	City	In progress w/City		09-1-97
9	Continue City/County/School coordination and formalize with Intergovernmental Agreement	City/St. Helens School District 502	City/County		09-1-97
10	Create Youth Committee	City	Schools/County		09-1-97
11	Adopt new Transportation System Plan	City	City/County/State		09-1-97
12	Create an ongoing Transportation Committee to evaluate innovative options	City	City/County/State		09-1-97
13	Provide new Parks and Open Spaces Plan in Periodic Review	City/County	City/County	Lack of money	09-1-97
14	Amend local Capital Improvement Plan and Systems Transportation Improvement Plan (based upon Transportation System Plan)	City	City/County/State		09-1-97
15	Create Gateway design	City	City		12-1-97
16	Create Economic Development Forum	Chamber of Commerce	Chamber/City/ Mutual Agreement		12-1-97
17	Establish Friends of Schools	City/St. Helens School District 502	City/Bd. of Educ./ Chamber/Realtors		12-1-97
18	Amend City zoning to foster Oldtown tourism	City	City		03-1-98
19	Adopt urban amenity design package (e.g., tree-lined streets, benches)	City	Consultants	Lack of money	03-1-98

	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCES	HURDLES	TIMING
20	Amend City zoning on large scale development and Aribbon@ commercial strip	City	City/County Periodic Review		03-1-98
21	Sponsor Community Plaza design competition	Chamber of Commerce	Fundraising	Lack of money	04-1-98
22	Develop a Neighborhood Plan	City	Planning Commission	Public education	04-1-98
23	Create Community Mediation Program	City/County	City/County	Lack of money	04-1-98
24	Update and adopt Storm Drainage Plan	City/County	City/County		06-1-98
25	Create design standards for Oldtown	City	City/Consultant	Lack of public support	09-1-98
26	Maintain active Bike/ Pedestrian Capital Improvements Plan (based on Transportation System Plan)	City/County	City/County/State		09-1-98
27	Create Redevelopment Guidelines	City	City/Consultants		12-1-98
28	Create Waterfront Development and Open Spaces Site Plan in Periodic Review Process	City	Chamber of Commerce- Designated money		03-1-99
29	Amend comprehensive Plan for Millard Road Center in Periodic Review	City	City/ Private Development	Developer needed	03-1-99
30	Create Affordable Housing Plan	City	City/County	Support needed	05-1-99
31	Transfer industrial land to City for Open Spaces public purchase about jobs	City/private property	Tax deduction/	Concern about jobs	09-1-99
32	Create design standards for Uptown	City	City		09-1-00