

**Middle Methow Valley Vision Statement**

The Methow Valley has long been valued and revered for its intense natural beauty, strong sense of community, and for the self-reliance and motivation of its residents. Presently, as we face an acceleration of growth and development, it is our intention to institute and embrace a vision for the Methow Valley that fosters and preserves the rural character that define this valley. It is evident that protecting our high quality of life is of vital importance to us today, as well as into the foreseeable future and beyond.

Upon entering the Methow Valley, one is instantly greeted with a sense of awe and inspiration. Within the sheer natural splendor of this place, one notices the large tracts of agriculturally productive land on the valley floor that support family-owned farms, orchards, dairies, and livestock ranches. The hillsides surrounding these lands are comprised of functioning shrub-steppe and forest habitats that support healthy populations of native plants and animals. Ridgelines of the valley allow for unobstructed views of the surrounding mountains. The wildlife migration corridors that exist between and among these areas are protected as conservation lands for the benefit of the ecosystems and its inhabitants. Through this vibrant landscape flow the Methow River and its tributaries, which are teeming with self-sustaining populations of native aquatic life and surrounded by functioning floodplains and riparian forests. We vision our Methow Valley as a place characterized by self-reliant and sustainable ecological systems including, wildlife, wild and working lands. Integral to this vision are the human inhabitants who, through considerate stewardship of land, water and community, have created a place where all inhabitants have the opportunity to thrive in harmonious unity. One has the sense that the people who call this place home honor and revere the land and understand that the careful stewardship and preservation of the environment is vital to sustainable pathways to the future.

The Methow Valley is also remarkable for its rich and flourishing local economy. Small, locally owned and operated businesses provide residents and visitors alike with a multitude of goods and services. The towns of the Methow Valley are the focal points of this economy. They are gathering places that promote the economic and social health of the community, serving as a model for innovative and inspiring economic and community development. Housing and commercial development within the growth management zones of the towns has been planned to maximize open spaces and greenways that link the facilities and amenities each town has to offer. Buildings have been constructed and located so as to maximize their energy efficiency whilst minimizing their impact on the land and community. The people who live here have taken the time and energy to invest in their community, their quality of life, and the stewardship of the land. It is evident that there is a deep connection to place that flows through the people who call this special place home and they have been willing to protect and enhance our natural heritage, the thriving local economy and the diverse ecological communities for today and the future.

We realize that it can be difficult to define or quantify what constitutes a high quality of life, as these values cannot be bought, sold, or traded in a commercial sense. However, if the values that make for a high quality of life are considered ephemeral or of lesser importance than the acquisition of wealth, it will be diminished. We who now live in the Middle Methow Valley enjoy what we believe to be the highest level of quality of life that we can hope for. While there is always room for improvement in the quality of our lives, it is our vision to plan, control, and allow only the amount of growth, at a slow, sustainable rate of growth, that will permit and preserve the lifestyle that present residents of the Middle Methow enjoy and which people moving to our community so strongly seek to be part of. The quality of life and the style of life we enjoy is not only a benefit to our community that is difficult to quantify, it is also the absolute bedrock basis of the present day economy of the Middle Methow community. The Middle Methow is a highly desirable place to live. This attribute is a magnet which draws people to our community, who buys land and builds homes and businesses to support themselves in their life here. To the extent we damage or diminish our quality of life, we also damage and diminish the foundation of our local economy. In addition, past errors in planning and omissions in regulations have led to some scarring and degradation of the landscapes and produced threats to the ecosystem. Also, the evolution of the valley communities and their economy has presented past and ongoing problems of employment and affordable housing. As a result, this comprehensive plan must include both pathways to protect what remains as well as to alleviate and correct the problems of the past.

Our vision is to keep the Middle Methow Valley the way it is and allow for only that growth which sustains, promotes, and protects the way of life we now have here. The rate of growth that we experience must be slow so that the elements of change can be integrated into the present environment and our lives without displacing or overwhelming the attributes we so highly value, which includes:

- clean air;
- clean water;
- low pollution of all types (noise, light, air, water);
- strong and connected sense of community;
- low interpersonal conflict;
- low crime rate;
- large undeveloped areas of public land;
- large undeveloped areas of private land;
- a natural ecosystem which is still intact and which continues to support all the native fish, plants, animals, insects and other forms of life which are part of this ecosystem;
- peacefulness; and
- a personal sense of well-being and safeness.

In accordance with this vision for our community, we have prepared the following Goals and Policies for inclusion in the Okanogan County Comprehensive Plan.