City of Redmond

Planning for Redmond's Future

Workshop Comments

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Old Redmond Schoolhouse Community Center

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Introduction

Background

In February 2000, the City Council endorsed three draft alternatives for growth through 2022 for further evaluation as part of updating Redmond's Comprehensive Plan. During workshops the previous year, more than 100 citizens expressed their views on these draft alternatives and on what community qualities are important to maintain and enhance Redmond's livability now and in the future.

In general, the draft growth alternatives represent different approaches in terms of the desired type, amount, location, and rate of further development in Redmond. Overall, the long-term vision for Redmond is not expected to change significantly under any of the alternatives.

Further work on the draft growth alternatives was delayed to allow integration of the growth alternatives work with an update of the City's transportation plan. In mid-October 2002, the Planning Commission resumed work with the next step in the process: further evaluation of the draft growth alternatives in order to select one as a preliminary preferred growth strategy.

The preliminary preferred growth strategy will be the basis for and focus of further analysis during the 2002/2003 Comprehensive Plan update. Following Planning Commission recommendation and City Council action on a preliminary preferred growth strategy, staff will develop a work plan identifying portions of the Comprehensive Plan and Development Guide that would need to be updated to carry out the preferred alternative.

In general, the January to June 2003 portion of the work plan will include further evaluation of the preliminary preferred growth strategy through environmental review, work on a Transportation Master Plan, and consideration of amendments to carry out the alternative. A primary purpose of this evaluation is to determine what updates are needed to City policies and regulations to guide future development in a manner that will maintain and improve Redmond's livability. This evaluation would include work by staff, further consideration of the alternative and implications by the public, further evaluation by the Planning Commission and ultimately, City Council adoption of an updated Comprehensive Plan.

Workshop Overview

The community was informed of the workshop by a mailing to 513 citizens who have participated in or expressed interest in growth-related issues. Other means the City used to advertise the workshop included sending media notices to several eastside newspapers, placing notices on the City's web page and RCTV Channel 21, including the workshop on the Planning Commission's extended agenda, and informing members of the City's Park Board and Trails Commission. The Greater Redmond Chamber of Commerce also distributed information about the workshop.
A total of 22 people attended the workshop. Among the participants were those who live, work or own property in Redmond, as well as those simply interested in the future community. Attendees also included the Mayor, Council members, Planning Commissioners, and staff.

At the workshop, staff provided information about the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan update and the three draft alternatives. Following the presentation, workshop participants broke into groups to discuss the potential pros and cons of the draft alternatives relative to the following important community qualities:

- Environment: Trees and open space define Redmond's appearance; environment protected

- Downtown: lively and walkable; stores, housing, jobs, and recreation
- Overlake technology center: can work and live; includes a park or theater
- Jobs: pay at least a "family-wage" and there's a healthy economy

- Residential neighborhoods: quiet and safe; character retained
- Housing: people of various family sizes, ages and incomes can live here

- Parks and other services: meet needs and contribute to high quality of life
- Transportation: meets needs, provides real alternatives to driving alone

At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to vote on which draft alternative they believe is most advantageous for each of the eight community qualities. Workshop participants also received a comment sheet for providing additional thoughts. A copy of the workshop agenda is provided on page 9.

Workshop Results

Workshop participants began by discussing what they value about Redmond now and for the future. Among the qualities that participants cited were:

- Friendly, safe neighborhoods; importance of maintaining traffic speeds and avoiding excess traffic in neighborhoods.
- Good family influence.
- Trees, parks, trails, open spaces.
- Safe, attractive, well used, and sustainable trails. Walkable community.
- Like the vibrancy of the community.
- Like job diversity; industrial growth.
- Downtown has spunk, like shopping opportunities. Want Downtown to remain "human scale".
- Like diversity of people, languages.
- Enjoy growth; encourages more diversity of people, more houses.
- Like cultural opportunities and schools.
- Value having a balance between elements of the community.

Detailed comments from the discussion groups for each of the eight community value categories and voting results are provided beginning on page 8 of this report. Among the major themes from the workshop were:

- Slower rate of growth can reduce pressure on the environment, but development also provides an opportunity to bring facilities into compliance that do not meet current regulations and to correct existing problems.

- Participants valued having good job opportunities and economic growth in the community; and particularly wanted to retain and support existing businesses. However, there were also concerns about increased commuting if job growth significantly outpaces housing growth.

- Overall, a number of participants favored greater diversity in the price and type of new housing in Redmond to enable people of various incomes and needs to continue to live here. Participants spoke to the importance of having opportunities for people who work in Redmond to own homes here, but some also expressed concerns about implications for industrial businesses in SE Redmond if more land is zoned for housing. There was support for providing more housing in Overlake and Downtown, but also some support for slowing the rate of growth.

- Participants spoke to the importance of planning for land use and transportation needs together, and to addressing needs for a variety of kinds of transportation.

- In general, some participants expressed concern about the loss of natural areas and trees, worsening traffic and transportation chokepoints, and needs for parks and other services. Some were concerned about the overall rate of growth in Redmond and implications for assuring facilities and services needed for growth.

The overall results of participants' voting on the draft growth alternatives are as follows:

- Participants scored Draft Alternative 1 highest for supporting the Downtown vision; retaining the character of existing residential neighborhoods; promoting family wage jobs/healthy economy; and meeting needs for parks, transportation and other services.

- Participants scored Draft Alternative 2 highest for protecting environmental quality.

- Participants scored Draft Alternatives 1 and 3 highest for supporting the vision for Overlake and for providing housing for people of various family sizes, ages and incomes.

See page 8 for a tabulation of the voting results.

Comments from Workshop Discussion Groups

Environment

- Redmond's existing environment is beautiful. However, do not restrict additional housing opportunities – too much emphasis on preserving open space on individual properties. R-1 is unrealistic and is not an efficient use of land.
- Beautiful environment – must be well balanced with growth.
- Existing policies protect the environment (like Alternative 1).
- Alternative 1 could provide more opportunities to accommodate growth in locations where impacts can be better designed, controlled and funded.
- Alternative 1: Meets GMA goals, intensity of development protects rural areas.
- Advocate concentrated growth within City versus sprawl into cherished open space.
- Concerned about Alternative 1: highest increase in jobs; more cars and pollution.
- Impacts on water quality and loss of trees an issue with Alternative 1.
- Concerned about rapid growth with Alternative 1.
- Alternative 2: Want a slower pace of growth. See lots of unoccupied commercial space. Traffic is too much already. Value green space/corridors
- Alternative 2: Preserves environment, which is vital. Need to be connected to the earth, retain land for growing food.
- Redmond used to have more open spaces to go to. Now, there's no place to go for open space, play areas, and trails and too much traffic.
- Increased needs for wildlife habitat protection have occurred because there is so much development and wildlife are running out of places to live.

Downtown

- Like Alternative 1: know where we are going now. But, don't like apartments on NE 85th.
- Alternative 1 does the most to support Downtown.
- Alternative 1: Like higher density downtown, higher and taller buildings.
- What about the businesses that are not thriving downtown now? How are we going to preserve historical buildings/sites?
- Prefer high density in downtown, but slower pace of growth. Need to "catch up" with infrastructure needs. Need time to assess needs; probably won't realistically catch up, but need to be able to plan better. (like Alternative 2)
- Prefer a slower pace of growth (like Alternative 2).
- Alternative 3 serves downtown best.
- More people Downtown is better; more fun and safer environment.
- Don't want more hotels Downtown.

Overlake Technology Center

- More housing (mixed use) helps save environment.
- Grass Lawn: some parks overused, growth puts pressure on parks.
- Like housing above commercial.
- Want more housing and affordable housing.
- Now Overlake is just a corporate area, nothing is occurring at night to help keep people in the area. Need to make this a place where people want to be during the day and evening.

Housing

- Benefit of Alternative 1: Encourages multi-family/single family.
- Single-family residences should be protected and preserved. Unsure of and concerned about how growth would occur under Alternative 1. (concerned about Alternative 1)
- More jobs may reduce ability to build homes in Redmond.
- Don't like Alternative 1 – too rapid commercial growth. Alternative 2 allows more time to consider changes. Slower pace; able to review plans. Agree with additional density - only way to provide additional housing choice and affordability. Go slow, but accommodate growth Downtown and at Overlake to match additional commercial growth, with housing to serve it (when growth occurs). (like Alternatives 2 and 3)
- Alternative 3: If there's more housing for existing jobs, it could reduce commuting.
- Better supply of housing increases opportunity for affordability.
- Need to build smaller units; use vertical space. Density should increase (like Alternative 3).
- Only way people will be able to afford to live here is to increase density. (like Alternative 3).
- Important to have affordable housing, not just apartments/rental, but also ownership housing for people working in Redmond.
- Need a variety of housing. Some want single-family homes with a fenced yard. To entice people into the community, go with smaller lots – 5,500, 6,000 square foot. Need lots that are livable, need to be safe for kids and pedestrians.
- Young people live far out or in redeveloped areas closer in.

Jobs -- Economic Development

- Alternative 1: Supports community qualities.
- Alternative 1: Could these jobs be long-term, and allow people who live here to work here?
- Good to have high number of jobs.
- Think about alternative for commercial growth only. Like Alternative 1, but need more density: mixed use in downtown and Overlake. Need more parking downtown.
- Alternative 3: Prefer this level of employment, but where will new jobs go?
- Alternative 3: But don't choke jobs.

- Too many jobs versus residents is bad for the environment.
- Hotels will not provide family wage jobs. Look at types of jobs that can provide a wage adequate to support a family.
- The problem with increasing the size of the commercial sector is they have a louder voice than residents.
- It's better for existing companies in Redmond if they can build new buildings here, if needed. If they go somewhere else, families will move also.
- Need an alternative to allow existing businesses to expand versus new construction – keep businesses here.
- Any thought given to reliance on Microsoft "one large employer" versus diversification?
- Need healthy economy for viable city.
- Jobs help support downtown spunk.

Parks, Police/Fire, and Other Services

- Alternative 1: greater benefit for transportation improvements through increased revenue and mitigation for development compared to the other two alternatives.
- Alternative with the highest job growth can support more funding for services.
- Good development equals better services through good design and thinking through community needs versus sprawl and inadequate services.
- Alternative 1: means high demand for parks and recreation.
- Alternative 1: means greatest demand (strain) for police and fire services.
- Services provided by City must expand and contract with needs.

Parks

- Great cities have wonderful parks.
- Alternative 1 could bring in more dollars for parks and more employees could pay more money to use parks.
- There aren't enough parks now! User groups are pitted against each other.
- Land along Avondale needs to be developed for parks to reduce pressure elsewhere.
- Grass Lawn is overused. Needs to be two times the size. Cannot be alone there anymore.
- Consider establishing a policy that allows only Redmond residents to use City parks.
- Need a balance between needs for active sports, occasional users, passive parks, etc…
- Need an arboretum at Farrel-McWhirter park.
- What are the current and projected needs for parks?

Transportation

- Alternative 1: means more houses and jobs; more congestion so more likely to take transit, therefore a better transportation system.
- Need commercial and residential density to get transit.

- Will we use transit?
- Ridiculous to take bus because of bad service, need to transfer to go short distances.
- Alternative 3 is better for transportation system. Streets are crowded because people need to live far north and south of Redmond to afford a house or to find the kind of home they want for a family.
- Commuting long distances is a serious problem and is bad for the environment. Also results in loss of personal and family time.
- Important to plan for land use and transportation in the same forum.
- Need to do safety improvements for pedestrians at Redmond Way/170th Bank of America.
- Public transportation – need to extend hours, provide better links, provide more accessibility (frequency); what about elevated trains along SR 520?
- Need more bicycle-friendly facilities and support from employers.
- Need new ideas to promote carpooling and use of high occupancy vehicle lanes, such as designating areas where people could gather for carpooling to a common destination.
- Transportation – area of greatest impact – is a regional issue

Other Comments

- Like to see a real no-growth alternative.
- Do not like unattractive vacant lots.
- How do the growth alternatives Redmond is considering compare to neighboring cities and what they're considering for the future?
- How is development in Redmond Ridge counted with respect to future plans for growth?
- Would be helpful to know how far people travel to work.

Planning for Redmond's Future

Which Draft Alternative Do You Think Would Do the Most for Redmond's Livability?

(results of voting board at October 21, 2002 Workshop)

Community Qualities	Alt. 1: Continue Existing Policy Approach and Trends	Alt. 2: Slow Growth in Both Housing and Commercial Development	Alt. 3: Emphasize Housing, Slow Growth in Commercial Development	Comments
Environment: trees and open space define Redmond's appearance; environment protected.	6	10	1	1 vote on edge between Alternatives 2 and 3
Downtown: lively and walkable, with stores, housing, jobs and recreation	12	4	3	
Overlake technology center: place to work, live, shop and recreate.	6	5	6	
Residential neighborhoods: quiet and safe, character retained	8	4	5	
Housing: people of various family sizes, ages and incomes can live here	8	4	8	Needs to be stronger emphasis on affordable housing for those earning $35,000 to $55,000 per year (such as cottages)
Jobs: pay at least a "family-wage" and there's a healthy economy	12	3	2	There should be an alternative to enable existing business in Redmond to expand, but slow development of space for new businesses. Family wage is not related to growth.
Parks and other services: meet needs and contribute to high quality of life	9	7	1	
Transportation: meets needs and provides real alternatives to driving alone.	11	5	2	1 vote on edge between Alternatives 2 and 3