

Discussion Draft A Vision for Lopez Village

This vision statement was prepared based on discussion at the community meeting of July 13, 2002. It was revised based on comments at meeting of July 25 to detail what sustainability means in realizing the vision. The vision statement will serve as a preamble to the community plan for Lopez Village.

The Character of Lopez Island

Lopez Island has a unique traditional character and style of life. This character is different from that of the other San Juan Islands, and different from that of the mainland. This character is valued dearly both by those who have lived here for generations and those who have chosen to move here. The character we treasure is tied to this place, to its natural environment, the island setting and small and intimate scale of things. If it is lost here, there is no other place to go to find it again.

Among the things that are fundamental to that character are:

- A pace of life that is different from that of the mainland. This pace has its deadlines and its production and consumption, but is dominated not by these but by friendships, family, community, nature, creativity and beauty.
- A scale of place that is small and intimate, where the works of people do not dominate the natural world or the people themselves.
- A place of peace and quiet, where the sounds we hear are those of water and birds and leaves and footsteps and people's voices, rather than motors and fans and horns and bells and electronics.
- A people of independence and diversity in their work and ideas and lifestyles.
- A shared sensitivity to the natural world and the fundamental unity among all life, people, land, water and air. A recognition that people's actions have important effects, local and remote, short and long-term. An acknowledgement that these effects must be considered in how we live, how we work, and how we build our community.

Realities of Growth and Change

- We do not desire to prevent people from developing and using their property, or taking advantage of economic opportunities for themselves and their families. However, people's expectations of the scale and character of development and economic opportunity must be tempered by the need to retain the small scale and natural beauty that are the character of Lopez Island.
- As a consequence of people making productive use of their land, and of a free market economy in which people may buy and sell property and use it as permitted by law, we expect that the population of Lopez Island will continue to grow and change.
- Lopez village is and will continue to be the commercial, social and cultural center of Lopez Island. As the center of this growing population, Lopez Village will continue to grow and offer a more diverse range of goods, services and opportunities.

A Vision for Lopez Village

We see the these things in our vision for Lopez Village in the future:

- A place that retains and respects the unique character of Lopez Island.
 - The pace of life.
 - The peace and quiet.
 - The people of independence and diversity in their work, ideas and lifestyles.
 - The awareness that people live within the natural world.
 - The small scale of things, where the works of people do not overpower the people or the place.
- A place that is beautiful, with a scale of detail, design, texture, pattern, materials and finishes, and a quality of craftsmanship, that reflects work by people rather than by machines.
- A place with clear boundaries, that does not spill over or impose village things on the distinctly rural and natural areas around it.
- A place where old people and children and people with disabilities can get around safely on their own.
- A place where all people, including those with modest incomes, working people and families, and older people, can live simply and affordably.
- A place with a village core where automobiles are only permitted where they do not interfere with pedestrians, and where they do not impose their noise, fumes, radios, horns, and bells on people's conversations, and where they do not threaten people with their speed and size.
- A place where night is dominated by quiet and stars, and where revelry means an occasional celebration, not the reason to come here.
- A place that retains the existing connection of the place to the water, and to the nearby farms and woodlands.
- A place that retains a sense of its history in the preservation of important historic buildings and places and traditions within its fabric.
- A place that retains a village scale within the core, and a scale for other activities that does not let them overpower the village with traffic or visual impact.
- A place where work is a part of village life, even within residential areas.
- A place where Lopez Islanders feel at home and safe, and where visitors respect the people and the character of the place.

Making the Vision Real

As Lopez Village grows and changes much beyond its current level of activity, the things we value about Lopez Island and Lopez Village can only be saved, and the things we want to achieve can only be achieved, if we agree to place significant limits on ourselves. We cannot grow into this vision of a village and also honor the rural tradition of independence of action on every property. We are too close together, and each of our actions has too much effect on our neighbors.

More people will create economic opportunities that invite people to build bigger buildings, bigger parking lots, wider and faster roads. These things may be cheaper and easier and more efficient, but they take away from the human character and scale of Lopez Island, and are contrary to our vision of a quiet, compact, small village for people.

We will place limits on what each of us can do in order to achieve things we could never achieve through individual independent effort. If we refuse to adopt and honor these limits, the natural consequences of more activity and more people and more buildings will be the destruction of many of the things we value most. This destruction may be accomplished in the name of freedom and property rights, things we also value highly, but the destruction is certain – we have seen it nearly everywhere we go on the mainland. This destruction will occur through the independent, well-intentioned actions of all of us.

We believe that by adopting and honoring this vision and these limits, the important elements of the character of Lopez Island can be saved as the village grows and changes.

This vision implies certain things about the land use plan and the physical design of open spaces, paths, auto circulation, parking and buildings. This vision implies limits on how and when people may use their own property for commercial uses, what they can build and how they may use the buildings they build, and how they may use the public spaces around them:

In order to keep a village core for people, we must exclude automobiles. If automobiles are not absolutely excluded from the core, the village core will become increasingly dominated by automobiles. People will feel unwelcome, and the quiet village character will change, because of the threat and noise and fumes and mud and dust that these vehicles unavoidably create. What we must be willing to give up to have a village core for people as the area grows, is the ability to drive to every doorstep and park in front of our place of work or every store we want to visit. This ability is compatible with a people-oriented core only with a very low volume of activity.

The key parts of the village core for people should include the following:

- A **compact, central pedestrian zone** linking key features of the core, that is not accessible to automobiles, at least during the times that people are heavily using it. This pedestrian zone should provide continuous pedestrian access uninterrupted

by vehicle traffic within the area bounded by but not including Weeks Road, Washburn Place, Village Road and Lopez Road.

The pedestrian zone may include both pedestrian-only walks and streets used by motor vehicles that are closed to motor vehicles during most of the day or closed only at high pedestrian periods such as weekends during the summer. Some or all streets within this zone could be kept open for commercial deliveries, vehicles of the handicapped, and public transportation vehicles.

Certain uses, and all large-scale uses, should be excluded from the pedestrian zone because of their dependence on direct access by automobiles and their potential to place large gaps in pedestrian activity. These uses include large specialized retail outlets such as large grocery stores and hardware stores.

Only limited office, service, public or other non-retail or non-pedestrian-oriented uses should be permitted at ground level within the pedestrian zone in order to keep pedestrian activity at a relatively high level throughout this zone. Businesses cannot thrive in a pedestrian zone unless retail continuity is maintained.

The pedestrian zone should be small, and parking should be located near this pedestrian zone, so that access is convenient to all businesses within it.

- The pedestrian zone should include a number of indoor and outdoor places of varying sizes and shapes where people can meet to converse, play, eat, court, celebrate, show off, learn, compete.
- The pedestrian zone should have public restrooms.
- The pedestrian zone should be linked to pedestrian paths that connect to outer residential, rural and natural areas.
- The pedestrian zone should have view corridors to the water and the surrounding countryside protected from development or visual barriers.
- The village core should have roadways that are designed to keep traffic moving slowly.

In order to sustain its local culture and uniqueness, Lopez Village must have its own governance with respect to land use and project design.

In order to preserve our connection to our history, we must save some key landmarks with conservancy or public ownership or management. These landmarks include the Weeks Barn, Sally's Garden, Village Park, [list to be completed].

In order to preserve the relation of the village to its natural setting, we must preserve visual and physical connections to the natural world inside and outside the village. These connections include those to the hills to the east and south, to the wetlands and Fisherman Bay to the south, and to the peninsula, water and other islands to the west. This means accepting limits on structures, landscaping, fences and activities within view corridors, and preserving walking paths in areas that are now private property, as areas develop.

In order to permit and encourage a small-scale diversity of land uses, including permitting commercial development or small-scale industrial uses in residential areas, we must restrict commercial and industrial uses in mixed-use residential areas by time of day, and accept limitations on the intensity and type of activity permitted in predominately residential areas. Residents must also agree that a certain level of commercial activity is acceptable within mixed use residential areas.

In order to achieve quiet nights in an active village with tourist-oriented businesses, we must agree that no businesses may operate late at night, and that no one may use mechanical or electronic equipment at night in a way that would be considered inappropriate to a quiet residential neighborhood.

If intensive nighttime activities are permitted anywhere on a regular basis (such as eating and drinking places, movie theaters, live entertainment places, open after 9:00 or 10:00 P.M.), they should be limited to a small fun zone or kept internal to resort facilities outside the core. These activities and the automobile traffic associated with them must not be permitted to interfere with the peace and quiet of the community as a whole at night.

However, we must recognize that we live in a community where agriculture and forestry that are an integral part of island life must occasionally create high noise levels and noise at unusual hours. These are noises that when reasonable and necessary are part of the character of Lopez Island.

In order to achieve quiet nights at village densities of development, all mechanical and electronic equipment including pumps, compressors, generators, fans must be low-noise varieties, and/or shielded to prevent unnecessary noise audible outside the property. Speakers, paging systems, bells and alarms are unnecessary for businesses outside, and should be prohibited. (Limited use of amplification outdoors for public performances or public events may be appropriate and should be permitted.)

In order that we may all see the stars with the projected higher densities for Lopez Village, no bright lights may be permitted outside at night anywhere, except temporarily when needed for safety or in emergencies. If lighting is not absolutely restricted to rural levels by such a prohibition, the local lighting level will increase substantially with development. This increase will both light the sky background, reducing the contrast with the stars, and increase the artificial light sources in our field of vision, reducing the sensitivity of our eyes. These combined effects will gradually make most of the stars we are able to see today invisible to our unaided eyes, and will substantially diminish the feeling of the star-filled sky we now experience.

All necessary outside lights must be mounted low, directed downward and shielded to prevent their shining upward or outward from any property. Decorative lighting is an oxymoron. All exterior lights, including all public or private street, parking lot and walkway lights, must be turned off completely, or actuated temporarily and only as needed by motion sensors or short-duration timers, during the late night hours.

In order to sustain the natural cycles of air and water and energy and plants and animals that sustain us, we need to design our community and live in a way that is harmonious with the natural world of which we are a part. Among the best practices of human development and human activity that sustain natural systems are:

- Minimize the amount of space converted from undisturbed natural habitat to modified habitat or human habitat, both locally and remotely, by our structures, our use of land, and our use of energy and natural resources.
- Minimize the consumption or modification of non-renewable resources including free-flowing and underground waters, petroleum products mined from the earth, natural habitat areas, and natural ecosystems.
- Minimize the introduction of organisms, chemicals, or other byproducts of our activity including heat, electromagnetic fields, and radioisotopes, into the environment in quantities or qualities or locations substantially different from those existing in nature.

