

Planning Commission Agenda

August 5, 2025

6:00 PM

MAYOR
MATTHEW LUNDH

CITY ADMINISTRATOR
ROBERT OMANS

CITY PLANNER
COLLEDA MONICK

CITY CLERK
DEBBIE LEE



119 W FIRST STREET
CLE ELUM, WA 98922

PLANNING COMMISSION
GARY BERNDT
AMANDA HAHNEMANN
JONATHAN CORNELIUS
MARC KIRKPATRICK
COLIN BRISSEY - VICE-CHAIR
PAUL KANTWILL - CHAIR
IAN STEELE

COUNCIL LIASON - CASSIDY
BUECHLE-CURTIS

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1. **Call to Order & Roll Call**
2. **Public Comment - Limited To 5 Minutes**
3. **Adoption of Minutes**
 - a. July 15, 2025
4. **Business Requiring Public Hearings**
5. **Planning Update**
 - a. Planning Consultant Colleda Monick, Staff Announcements
6. **New Business**
 - a. 2017 Community Vision Summary, Chair Kantwill
 - b. CEMC 17.04.040 Nonconforming Uses
7. **Next Meeting Agenda Development**
8. **Commissioner Comments and Discussion**
9. **Adjourn**

Upcoming Meetings:

Public Works & Community Development Committee Meeting: August 6, 2025 @ 8:30 a.m.

Regular Council Meeting: August 12, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m.

Lodging Tax & Event Committee Meeting: August 13, 2025 @ 8:30 a.m.

Historical Preservation Commission Meeting: August 19, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m.

Planning Commission Meeting: August 19, 2025 @ 6:00 p.m.

Planning Commission Agenda August 5, 2025

119 W FIRST STREET
CLE ELUM, WA 98922

Public Safety & Health Committee Meeting: August 20, 2025 @ 2:00 p.m.

General Government Committee Meeting: August 27, 2025 @ 8:30 a.m.

Coal Mines Trail Commission Meeting: September 8, 2025 @ 4:00 p.m.

**City of Cle Elum
Planning Commission (CEPC) Meeting Minutes
City Council Chambers
July 15, 2025 | 6:00 PM**

Call to Order

Commissioner Berndt called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM

Roll Call

CEPC Members Present: Gary Berndt, Marc Kirkpatrick, Jon Cornelius, and Amanda Hahnemann

CEPC Members Absent: Ian Steele, Paul Kantwill and Vice-Chair Colin Brissey. **Commissioner Kirkpatrick made a motion to excuse Commissioner Steele, Kantwill and Brissey. Cornelius seconded. Motion carried.**

Council Liaison Absent: Cassidy Buechele-Curtis

Staff Present: Colleda Monick

Introduction: Commissioner Berndt introduced newly appointed Planning Commissioner Amanda Hahnemann, who is filling a non-city resident position on the Commission. Commissioner Hahnemann shared her enthusiasm for serving the community, expressing a strong passion for the City of Cle Elum. She noted that she owns a building and operates a business locally and looks forward to contributing positively to the City's planning efforts and working collaboratively with fellow commissioners.

Public Comment

None.

Adoption of Minutes

Commissioner Kirkpatrick motioned to accept the July 1, 2025 minutes as presented. Commissioner Cornelius seconded. Motion carried.

Public Hearing- City Planning

None.

Commission and Staff Reports

Colleda Monick, Staff Announcements:

- **Historic Preservation Commission Openings:** There is still a vacancy on the Historic Preservation Commission.
- **Links:** Three links were shared with Commissioners, a Seattle Times article on increased density requirements; California's HOME Act Turns One; and a podcast about parking.
- **National Night** out is August 5th, Cle Elum Park starting at 5 PM
- **Summer Scheduling:** Staff will send out an email to Commissioners' to confirm availability for the following meeting dates: August 5, August 19, September 2, September 16

New Business

Staff provided Commissioners requested follow up on Land Capacity Analysis and Housing Allocation, specifically second home projections, industrial land availability, previous projections and accuracy.

Staff also provided information on the public participation plan and when to expect outreach to the public to begin – fall/early winter.

Citizen Comments on Agenda Items

None

Next Meeting Agenda Development

- a. CEMC 17.04.040 Nonconforming Uses
- b. CEMC 14.30.140 Site and Design Review
- c. 2019 Community Vision Summary, Chair Kantwill
- d. Comp Plan Updates

Commissioner Comments and Discussion

Adjournment

Commissioner Cornelius moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:44 p.m. Commissioner Hahnemann seconded the motion. The motion carried. The Commission will reconvene on August 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., pending Commissioner availability.

Chair Kantwill

Date

Designing the Future Cle Elum Community Vision 2037



August 2017

**Prepared by Central Washington University Community Planning
Students in conjunction with the City of Cle Elum**

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Cle Elum has begun a Washington State planning requirement known as the “Periodic Review” to update its Comprehensive Plan. Periodic Reviews are often time consuming and expensive processes due to state statutory requirements which can represent a particular burden for smaller cities, such as Cle Elum.

Since the decline of Cle Elum’s historic role in mining, commercial forest management, and as a key transportation corridor pre-interstate, the City has had a particularly difficult time directing its transformation. If it cannot develop and implement proactive blueprints for its future, Cle Elum will continue to drift at the mercy of outside socioeconomic forces with little ability to direct its own outcomes. For Cle Elum’s citizens, the real benefit of the Periodic Review is that it presents the best opportunity to revisit current circumstances and define a cohesive future vision - a public/private blueprint for community character and sustainability. If the community stumbles in this exercise, the next structured opportunity will likely not present itself for another decade when the Periodic Review process will be required again by the State.

At the heart of the Periodic Review process is a community vision. The generation of that vision is the first step in the planning process from which more detailed planning elements are devised. If the community can forge a strong vision, it will then be reflected in the City’s Comprehensive Plan, private sector initiatives, economic development programs, housing objectives, codes and ordinances, and a variety of other community public policies and private investments. When truly successful, the process can set the course for the entire community for the next several decades – a constructive target that drives decision-making for years.

Visioning is a process by which a community envisions the future it wants with broad guidelines and strategies of how to achieve it. A visioning process brings people together to develop a shared image. It is a search for a community consensus. What do people want their community to be, what do they want to retain, and what do they want to change? From that vision, the city gains guidance for both short-term decisions and long-term planning.

The following document is a summary of a public involvement initiative that was conducted recently to explore what might be an appropriate vision for the City. Also included is a “draft vision” based on that process. This draft vision has been produced to provide a foundation upon which the greater community including the general public, Planning Commission, and City Council can react, discuss, and refine a final vision document for potential adoption. The final burden of judgment and potential decisions rests on the shoulders of elected officials. The gold standard being sought out is true social validity with the vast majority of area citizens. No community vision statement can satisfy everyone in the community, but it may be possible to forge a cohesive vision shared by a large majority of community members by working together constructively.

THE CLE ELUM VISIONING PROJECT

Finding, formulating, or forging by sheer political advocacy a vision that is truly shared community wide can be a timely, expensive, and challenging task. Cle Elum’s limited resources and staffing along with its smaller scale both required and allowed for an alternative approach. That approach was the voluntary assistance of community planning students from Central Washington University in a process that used both individual interviews and a series of community focus groups to assess community sentiment.

The technique of focus groups is well established as a cost effective and accurate methodology for testing public sentiment. It is generally superior to many other public involvement techniques that run a higher risk of distorted outcomes and are far more costly. Focus group results are most telling when a broad representative and diverse sample of citizens engage in a series of discussions, and during those discussions, different groups yield the same strong and consistent responses. That is precisely what occurred in the Cle Elum visioning project. There clearly is a strong foundation for a consensus vision for the community. To reduce potential bias, different facilitators and recorders were used for different groups and each reported the same basic themes.

Four separate focus groups, including a youth group, business group, long-time residents group, and a broader community group represented by individuals who lived outside but near the city limits, were conducted involving 31 individuals. During two-hour sessions each focus group discussed a series of community visioning questions, downtown urban design issues, and three futures scenarios. The scenario descriptions presented to the groups are reprinted below. They were designed to present three alternative paths that could realistically occur and to tease-out from participant's preferences from the starkly different options. Participants were assured that their individual comments would not be attributed to them by name in the final reporting to insure candid discussion, but there was no concern expressed by participants in that capacity.



The results from the various focus groups and individual interviews yielded highly consistent preferences and comments, although the consistency was sometimes expressed in different words. Comments are reported in the next section as: “dominant themes” and “secondary themes.” The three growth vision scenarios that provided a basis for a portion of the discussions were as follows:

Scenario Discussion

Below are three different ‘futures scenarios’ for the community that paint a picture of Cle Elum in twenty years. The scenarios reflect different evolving circumstances that may occur and the community’s planning approach. Which, if any, of the scenarios would be your preference, and do you have an alternative scenario that you would like to introduce?

Scenario 1 – Steady State

The “Steady State” or “No Frills” scenario describes the future of Cle Elum based on past and existing trends without a strong proactive planning focus for the future. Maintenance and community improvements will be reactionary over several decades without a strong community strategic vision. The focus will be on basic utilities and responding to growth as it may occur without a long-term economic strategy. Opportunities for economic sustainability and enhancement, along with cultural preservation will almost certainly be lost under the reactive

planning outlook. Coordinated reinvestment strategies between the City and surrounding communities that would benefit Cle Elum and the region as a whole will be missed. To visualize this future think about any number of former timber and mining based towns in Washington, Oregon, and Montana that have failed to commit to a strategic strategy to transform themselves in the quest to maintain a vibrant and sustainable community.

Upper Kittitas County will continue to grow as a recreational destination, and Suncadia will continue to develop and expand. Higher-end real estate development will define future growth, attracting recreational renters and part-time residents who commute outside of the area for employment. Without proper development strategies, Cle Elum will be cut-off from potential revenue as tourists and visitors flock to amenities, services and events provided by Suncadia, Roslyn, and other communities. Unable to take advantage of the growth, the city will be unable to attract new retail businesses and industries that would support both younger and older permanent residents. Cle Elum residents will remain obligated to travel to Ellensburg, Yakima, or North Bend for many of their retail and employment needs.

As the I-90 corridor improvements near completion, Cle Elum can expect an influx of traffic, with First Street becoming more difficult to cross and navigate as a pedestrian. Without a coordinated visual theme and pedestrian focused development, visitors will remain unenthusiastic about exploring downtown businesses. Without a community endorsed pro-active development strategy, Cle Elum will continue its stagnation trend of the last four decades. In so doing, it will miss community improvement opportunities and the ability to preserve and celebrate its rich history, along with attracting tourists who wish to experience the recreational activities available in the heart of the cascades.

Scenario 2 – Rural Enhancement

This scenario would give Cle Elum a gradually transformed community without the loss of its small town rural character or historic heritage. It is pro-active rather than a reactive approach to community development. It would entail modest growth with large-scale improvements flowing from a central community vision. Planned development and coordinated investments within the community and among neighboring communities would make Cle Elum more sustainable, facilitating the future needs of its residents and visitors. The City would be better prepared for population growth, preventing a loss of cultural identity. Cle Elum's rich history would be celebrated and continue to be a defining characteristic of the community. Similar to cities such as Kalispell, Montana or Coeur d' Alene, Idaho, Cle Elum would take advantage of its location to become a recreational destination for a variety of outdoor activities.

The revitalized, rural Cle Elum could be home to 5,000 to 7,000 residents. This population size would ensure a large enough community for the expansion of light retail and the support of local economic activities that will provide attractive employment for younger community members, and services that will benefit visitors and residents. While larger than the current day Cle Elum, the community would retain most of its small town character with growth capped under the City's growth management tools at the projected target size. Cle Elum residents would determine adjustments to the downtown streets. First Street would aim to become a pleasant, walkable destination that recreation tourists and local residents can enjoy in their day-to-day activities, creating an environment that promotes community interaction, pedestrian interest, and retail vitality.

Scenario 3 - Unfettered Growth

This scenario foresees overwhelming and unanticipated population growth without the planning and preparations needed to protect the small town character of Cle Elum. Like Scenario One, it is a reactionary approach to community planning. While it is impossible to accurately project future growth pressures, it is not beyond the possibility that under certain assumptions explosive growth could occur with Cle Elum's population increasing to 12,000 or even 20,000 individuals over the next 20 years if growth is unmanaged and demand is high enough. With the completion of the I-90 corridor improvements, the introduction of regional public transportation and self-driving technology, and the pull of more affordable housing, commuting further from Seattle will become more likely, creating more demand for residential development in and around Cle Elum.

This type of growth would drastically change the dynamics of the city, altering the culture, economy and environment. The city would become significantly more urbanized over a short period, losing much of its rural character. The experience would be akin to that of a Puyallup or Issaquah, Washington with rapid urbanization. Puyallup lost its small town feel and with that loss came increased crime rates and a fragmented community.

Cle Elum's economy would expand to fit its urban characteristics. With a larger population, corporations found in bigger cities could be attracted. Manufacturing may also move into the suburbs of Cle Elum if it can draw proper investment. New jobs created by the population boost may not provide a higher quality of life for full-time residents but it would improve the potential standard-of-living. This scenario may have advantages, but will come with uncomfortable changes and challenges for some of the current residents.

FOCUS GROUP & INTERVIEW RESULTS

Dominant Themes:

- Each of the focus groups and interviewees emphasized retaining the small town atmosphere and culture of Cle Elum as it evolves to deal with current and future realities. When asked what elements they enjoyed about Cle Elum, repeated ideas and phrases included: small town atmosphere, safe environment, everyone knows everyone, kind people, friendliness, very centralized, slow pace, and family values. Participants consistently referred to Cle Elum as a place where they did not feel at risk and were comfortable letting their children have the freedom to roam.
- Every group cited the area's natural beauty, historic heritage, and outdoor recreation assets as the community's economic future. Some groups described the area as evolving to a current and future "resort community," while others describe it as a "recreation based" economy being the "obvious and only strategy for sustainability and vitality." People repeatedly discussed the surrounding natural environment and recreation opportunities as being a major factor for why they reside in the community. With the broad endorsement and recognition that the community is transitioning to a recreation/resort economic base, there was widespread frustration in focus group discussions that Cle Elum was missing obvious opportunities to transform itself into the commercial "base-camp" role that it is suited to play in the Upper County. Other mentions of missed opportunities included the lack of better communicating the multi-cultural historic heritage associated with both mining and timber. Expanded recreation development, particularly a regional trail system along with other public options, was discussed. Finally, the historic value and interest of Cle Elum as an authentic

remnant of an earlier and simpler time, an “Era Town,” needed to be accentuated, preserved, and enhanced as not only its past but also the foundation of its future.

- All of the focus groups strongly endorsed the Vision Scenario Two (2) that described a proactive planning approach to small town enhancement along with a community that may climb to 5,000 to 7,000 residents. While still small, the new base of permanent residents would be large enough to support a sustainable, healthy community when combined with recreation weekend visitors and the other Upper County residents. Controlled transformation of the community to retain and enhance the historic character was viewed as either an acceptable change or a desirable improvement to ensure community survival. The scenario was viewed as more flexible, proactive, and the most desirable future. One particular concern with the growth was public safety and health with the desire for expanded medical service access. Equally, all focus groups strongly rejected Vision Scenario One (1), which suggested maintaining the current status quo approach and Vision Scenario Three (3) which was potential accommodation of explosive growth. Scenario One (1) was described as “scary,” “a continuation of past trends that forced people to move away from town,” “terrible for the business community,” and “a trend that they desperately wanted to stop.” While Vision Scenario Three (3) was often viewed as fundamentally unrealistic.
- Each of the focus groups stated their dissatisfaction with various elements of the community’s decline and the lack of vitality as Cle Elum’s historic economic base disappeared. Significant frustration surrounded the town’s seeming inability to develop a cohesive plan to transform itself and realize its revitalized potential. The historic lack of leadership and continuity in follow through led to an overwhelming message of “we need a central theme or vision and the leadership for sustained and consistent implementation over an extended time” from all groups aside from the youth group. Terms such as: depressed, financially stressed, increased poverty levels, lack of homeowner or city pride, poor infrastructure, ugly commercial core, no color, little shopping, and few employment opportunities were repeated by nearly all participants. Some participants expressed a desire for a community that retained the vitality and pride of ownership it had in the past. While others voiced their frustrations regarding the lack of retail options, poor sidewalks, and a downtown atmosphere that was not inviting to either residents or visitors. These frustrations were repeated in several focus groups with a general agreement that there was little reason to “come downtown.”

The focus groups desired enhancement of physical appearance, pedestrian friendliness, vibrancy, and diversity of retail businesses in the downtown commercial core. A common opinion was there is little to draw people downtown and basic shopping requires an out-of-town trip. Weekend residents and recreationalists utilize Roslyn or Suncadia for alternative entertainment, meals, or walk-and-shop experiences, instead of Cle Elum. The City is capturing very little of I-90’s twenty-five thousand vehicle trips per day due to a lack of attraction although it is the obvious location to serve as Upper County’s main service center. It was repeatedly stated that First Street was unfriendly to pedestrians and harbors an inappropriate mix of businesses better suited to secondary locations. First Street’s current physical design was the single most complained about issue by the business group and regional residents group. It was also a common topic among the other groups and was the first or one of the first topics brought up in individual interviews. Issues of width, safety, power lines, lack of landscaping, and the absence of a pedestrian oriented “walkable” downtown dominated discussions. There was a strong

consensus that the downtown core was the key to recognizing Cle Elum's potential as a recreation community service center and that potential hinged upon a pedestrian oriented core. The issue was recognized as the single largest constraint holding the community's revival back because it constitutes a psychological as well as physical barrier preventing meaningful community redevelopment. A desire to establish diagonal parking was expressed in several of the focus groups along with elimination of the center turning lane.

Secondary Themes

- All focus groups expressed frustrations regarding traveling out of town to shop for a broad range of basic needs. The lack of a Big Box Store was cited in some focus groups as a fundamental inconvenience. Participants did not particularly like the idea of Big Box stores and were concerned about the impact on the town character, but missed the convenience that one would offer. The concept of a small, older style multi-story department store sized to the scale of Cle Elum that reflected the town's historic era was appealing to participants as an alternative to Big Box development. It was acknowledged that the development of a Big Box store was unrealistic given the community's size and demographics.
- The issue of the rising cost-of-living and decreasing housing affordability was brought up by many residents. People perceived housing affordability as an increasing issue, but recognized it was as much of a reflection of the limited local income potential as Westside influences. Some individuals commented that housing costs continued to represent good value in comparison to Westside circumstances and that was attracting long distance commuters forced out of Western Washington's housing market. Numerous comments were made regarding high rents in comparison to available incomes being a particular problem.
- Each group recognized the community was undergoing and would likely continue to undergo a shift in demographics, community structure, and economic base. Older residents mentioned the loss of the historically stable make-up of the neighborhoods and the higher percentage of part-time owners. Demographically, a significantly larger percentage of older residents - a characteristic commonly associated with former natural resource extraction dependent communities - was expected. However, that is not the case for Cle Elum where the demographic age profile is close to the state norm creating a mixed and conflicting picture. While the age profile does not reflect an overweighting toward older age cohorts, the school district has shown a slow shrinkage and stabilization in enrollment reflecting an out-migration of families with school age children and/or lack of growth in that demographic. This is contrary to trends elsewhere in Kittitas County and is likely a reflection of the weakness in family wage employment opportunities and the growth in Upper County's weekend/part-time residents. There was a common feeling that the level of poverty seemed to be increasing or was at least becoming more visually present in the community as well.
- There were observations from participants that the larger community or region is divided into separate interest groups – the older resident community and the evolving recreation-based community each with different socioeconomic characteristics. It is a sensitive issue that has been noticed repeatedly in communities undergoing a similar, slow transformation to their economic base. Participants' comments in the various focus groups strongly suggested in Cle Elum differences are as much a perception based on limited interactions as they are a real source of friction. While there are some differences in culture and socioeconomics (Westside-Eastside, Urban-Rural), appreciation and respect were observed coming from the

majority of individuals regardless of their background. New residents appreciated the rural, historic heritage of Cle Elum and the small town social interaction, which were named as reasons they chose to live in Cle Elum both full and part-time. Long-time residents recognized the importance of Suncadia doing well because of its effect on the entire community and although they had little social interaction with the residents of the resort community they appreciated the contributions of their presence. The business community felt their future and survival is largely dependent on the community's recreation base and resort transformation. Long-time residents also expressed feelings of part-time and "high-end" residents not participating or engaging enough in the community, while members of Suncadia and surrounding area mentioned the lack of Suncadia being viewed as part of the integrated community. Opportunities to work together as an evolving integrated community are not currently being taken advantage of and new residents feel left out and under-utilized in their interest to see Cle Elum become a more vibrant and sustainable community hub. Greater cooperation and coordination were indicated as necessities for being able to transform into a successful cohesive community.

- The community lacks both public facilities and private enterprises that cater to youth activities and interests. This concern was expressed not only in the youth group, but also other groups and individual interviews as a disincentive for families with school age children. Activities center, arcade, movie theater, public swimming pool, party barn, and/or other assorted youth related facilities were mentioned as both desirable and missing in the community.

VISION PRINCIPLES

The fundamental challenge and corresponding opportunity for Cle Elum is to blend the community's strong preference for rural, small town living with issues of improved community sustainability and economic base transformation. The consensus desire is a vision that is proactive whereby the community directs and controls its own future outcome, rather than passively reacting to market forces. Issues of community enhancement and sustainability relate to economic conditions, urban form, and related quality of life factors – all of which are interrelated. Translated, those issues must include a vision to:

- Improve the downtown's urban form and vitality.
- Develop a cohesive strategy for economic base transformation that combines retention of the community's cultural and historic heritage.
- Generate an economic agenda to enhance income levels.
- Increase quality local employment opportunities to reduce the need for commuting.
- Enhance facilities and employment designed to encourage the retention and attraction of younger age cohorts in balance with the growing retiree and recreation demographics of the city and region.
- Support the expansion of retail and service businesses.
- Encourage a larger population and business base to finance infrastructure improvements.
- Pursue the availability of basic and emergency health care services.

What follows are specific elements of an integrated community vision that includes: 1) an economic vision, 2) a land-use and urban form vision, and 3) a culture and demographic vision.

ECONOMIC VISION

The economic base options for any community must reflect the inherent strengths and weaknesses associated with its circumstances. In today's hyperactive, competitive economic development environment where individuals must take into account not only regional players but also global competitors, people play to their strengths and avoid unrealistic strategies. Before addressing the community's natural strengths, a brief history of the community is necessary.

Cle Elum was once a proud and relatively healthy community based on two commercial natural resource industries, timber harvesting and mining. It also had an important role as a transportation hub prior to the construction of I-90. The community's commercial district and housing stock was in balance with the economic base and population size. Appropriate age and income distributions existed reflecting a sustainable formula for the community. In the 1960s things began to change.

Basic demographic and economic trends have placed the community at a crossroads for more than four decades during which time it has been unable to aggressively grab the initiative to expedite the transition to a new economic base. It has been unable to recapture its former role as a vibrant transportation service center. Mining has long since played no meaningful role in the local economy, except in the context of the historic heritage left behind. Matters were further compounded for the community when it was caught in the restructuring of the commercial timber industry over the last 30 years. A combination of factors including globalization, industry over-capacity worldwide, and issues of tax policy and environmental activism combined to cause the closure of over 60 mills in the Pacific Northwest in the last two decades.

The Upper County's most significant weaknesses in an economic development capacity are its limited workforce and small population base, lack of basic urban services and amenities, high energy costs relative to other potential industrial locations in the region, limited power and water capacity for large users, and its limited land options causing higher land costs in comparison to other more competitive locations. The community also has a number of outstanding historic heritage resources that have not been developed or promoted for tourism. Cle Elum is fundamentally at a disadvantage to pursue a variety of economic strategies, including any significant manufacturing. Other disadvantages from manufacturing and transportation perspectives are winter weather, pass conditions, and not having access to particularly compelling transportation locations (i.e. the I-5 corridor, no water port access, and not at the junction of two central service interstates). While Interstate 90 provides easy access and has a current load of twenty-five thousand vehicular trips per day, Cle Elum's commercial district is not utilizing it.

The community's obvious advantages are those surrounding recreational development in a variety of forms. Cle Elum is the closest "good" location on the Eastside with improved weather and mountain access, it is within a 90-minute drive from the metropolitan center of the Puget Sound region, and is a particularly convenient location for weekend recreation trips. Suncadia Resort is developing into a destination magnet that offers strong advantages for Cle Elum's economic base transformation.

Another central advantage for Cle Elum outside those associated with recreation development is to play off of Western Washington's weaknesses. While the area's recreation potential is a "pull factor," growing housing affordability issues and congestion conditions on the Westside are a "push factor" advantage. Not everyone wants to live in a Seattle metropolitan area environment.

Recruiting start-ups and smaller firms where owners have a decided preference for rural living is a viable option. Recreation based communities offer excellent small business ownership opportunities in retail, services, and construction. However, they suffer from lower wages for employees. Small tech service firms, micro specialty manufacturing, and other niche businesses offer additional economic diversification for the area and professional wage scales to supplement the recreation base.

The following are elements of the economic vision for Cle Elum:

Destination Tourism



Further development of destination tourism is the single most effective strategy available to the community in order to accelerate the process toward a more balanced, sustainable economic base. Recreation development has been the natural market trend for some time in the Upper County, enhancing that trend is the cornerstone of the City's economic vision. To accomplish enhancement, various objective implementation strategies may be utilized including developing historic/heritage resources, establishing an "Era Town" theme, redeveloping the central business core based on design standards, strengthening synergistic relationships with Suncadia, creating and promoting a regional trail system, and using destination retail strategies.

An "Era Town"

Era or theme towns are small-scale communities that develop one or more of three basic options: 1) a concentration of specialty retail, crafts, or arts, 2) a concentration of specialty recreation, or 3) an architectural theme that reflects a history or location. While rarely employed, the theme town strategy has been highly successful in other communities around the world when they have specific traits.



Research on successful theme towns indicates several necessary elements: the town has to be small enough that a concentration of theme establishments creates a sense of major presence and visual density for visitors, there must be a sense of uniqueness and isolation, and the location needs to be within several hours of a major population center. Cle Elum possesses those core elements that should allow the successful creation and execution of a theme town strategy.



One of the City's strengths is that it is a "real place" with an interesting history, retained in an authentic architectural core reflective of Americana in the 1930s. Reflective communities and the values and cultures they represent are slowly being lost in America today. The community has expressed a desire to retain, restore, and enhance that authenticity as they transform to a new economic base. Cle Elum's retention of those

characteristics will increase in value over the decades if enhanced and maintained now. Moreover, an “Era Town” strategy combined with the technique of “Destination Retail” (described below) will enable Cle Elum to once again take full advantage of the I-90 resource sitting adjacent to the town’s front door.

This strategy should not be confused with the fake frontier, mining town, or other associated tourist façade towns that have developed in some locations. Maintaining Cle Elum’s authenticity is a strongly supported element of the Community Vision. Existing authenticity, both enhanced and preserved, is a ready-made 1930s Era Town given the nature of Cle Elum.

Destination Retail



Certain retail establishments or theme clusters of establishments can serve as major destinations, in and of themselves. Food related businesses, currently existing in Cle Elum and the central core, would benefit from the attraction of other complimentary “destination” businesses. Under the Vision, Downtown and Chamber businesses would establish specific destination retail strategies to strive towards either recruitment or development of the necessary retail business attractions. Specific destination retail businesses that should be considered include, but are not limited to:

- Vintage Country Stores
- A Large Community Food Co-op (Boise and Dubuque Example)
- A Small Scale Multi-story Department Store
- Old Style Five and Dimes
- Outlet Stores
- Any unique artisan or specialty shops.

Some of the most successful attractions in this capacity, both nationally and internationally, are located in older warehouse buildings, existing historic structures, or redeveloped multi-story department stores. A destination retail strategy combined with an Era Town vision will place Cle Elum back where it belongs as a vibrant central service for the Upper County.

Renewal Initiatives

To an extent, possible private sector initiatives should be relied upon to achieve the economic development vision. The footprint of local government, both in terms of services provided and the regulatory climate, should be one of support and partnership. Tax increment financing should be investigated for central core redevelopment improvements normally taken outside of the sphere of the public sector. The creation of a “Cle Elum Community Investment Corporation,” where private capital could be assembled for destination retail ventures such as a large community co-op or an old style multistory department store scaled to Cle Elum’s situation are the types of projects that may be appropriate under a public/private partnership. Coordination by a Downtown Business Association or Chamber to facilitate rapid and

simultaneous initiatives would improve business outcomes as opposed to a drawn-out revitalization effort where momentum and synergy between business investments would be lacking.

Income Targets and Wage Scales

Living wage scales from the 1970s and 1980s are no longer sufficient to sustain a family in the current day due to the insidious creep of inflation. While many classifications of jobs should be welcomed in Cle Elum, the long-term focus should be on the development or attraction of positions that offer salaries at or above the national average with basic benefits. The City's economy has an imbalance between hourly wage positions and professional salaried opportunities. To attract youthful or mid-career professionals back to the community and reduce the need for commuting, emphasis should be placed on the development of professional service businesses, businesses ownership opportunities, as well as high-tech, small-scale niche manufacturing.

Build on the Strength of Existing Businesses

One of most effective but often overlooked economic development strategies in an environment such as Cle Elum is to support the expansion of existing businesses with the potential to grow outside of their immediate market. Cle Elum will always maintain a plethora of such businesses. The support and promotion of this growth potential under the City Vision lies specifically with the Chamber of Commerce and other non-profit business development organizations.

Micro-Specialty Manufacturers and Services

Attracting high wage, micro-manufactures and professional service businesses is a viable strategy for the community and consistent with current constraints. Under this vision the strategy would be aggressively pursued, but it should be understood that the greatest success in attracting such enterprises lies in affiliated strategies related to destination tourism, urban design, and housing. The more attractive the community's attributes, the more likely Cle Elum will be successful in bringing such enterprises to town.

Lone Eagle Attraction

Lone Eagles are a specific term employed by economic development specialists to describe unique entrepreneurial individuals who bring to a community certain talents and/or resources. These are people who generally are attracted to a community due to some aspect of community character – a particular form of outdoor recreation resource, quality of life consideration, natural beauty, or cultural attributes. Cle Elum is a candidate to pursue a "Lone Eagle" sub-strategy in economic development. These individuals often bring needed capital to a community, new business energy, and other important business attributes that can make a difference in economies the size of Cle Elum. The key to attracting Lone Eagles is the development of strategic attributes in the community and creative outreach.

Residential Strategies

Home building, directly and indirectly, generates a substantial amount of local economic activity and jobs. Housing construction as well as its supply and affordability characteristics in a market can be used as highly effective strategies to revitalize, stabilize, or rebalance local communities. A lack of higher quality housing options or a shortfall in diverse choices in the housing market can quickly turn away the prospective employers or residents needed to revitalize the community. The inverse is also true, attractive housing markets and exciting neighborhood designs can serve as the magnet in attracting new businesses. Housing strategies have never

been a major component for Cle Elum's economic development planning, however, Suncadia represents an obvious example of the benefits that such a strategy can offer. Three major "Development Agreements" including Bullfrog Flats, (an agreement between Suncadia and the City on a portion of the Urban Growth Area that was annexed into city limits in 2002), have the ability in coming years to serve as a major engine in the implementation of the larger community vision.

The construction of 100 new homes per year in a typical metropolitan area will generate \$21.1 million in local income, \$2.2 million in taxes and other revenue for local governments, and 324 local jobs. Additionally, the annually recurring positive impacts of building that same 100 homes includes the generation of \$3.1 million in local income, \$743,000 in taxes, and 53 local jobs.

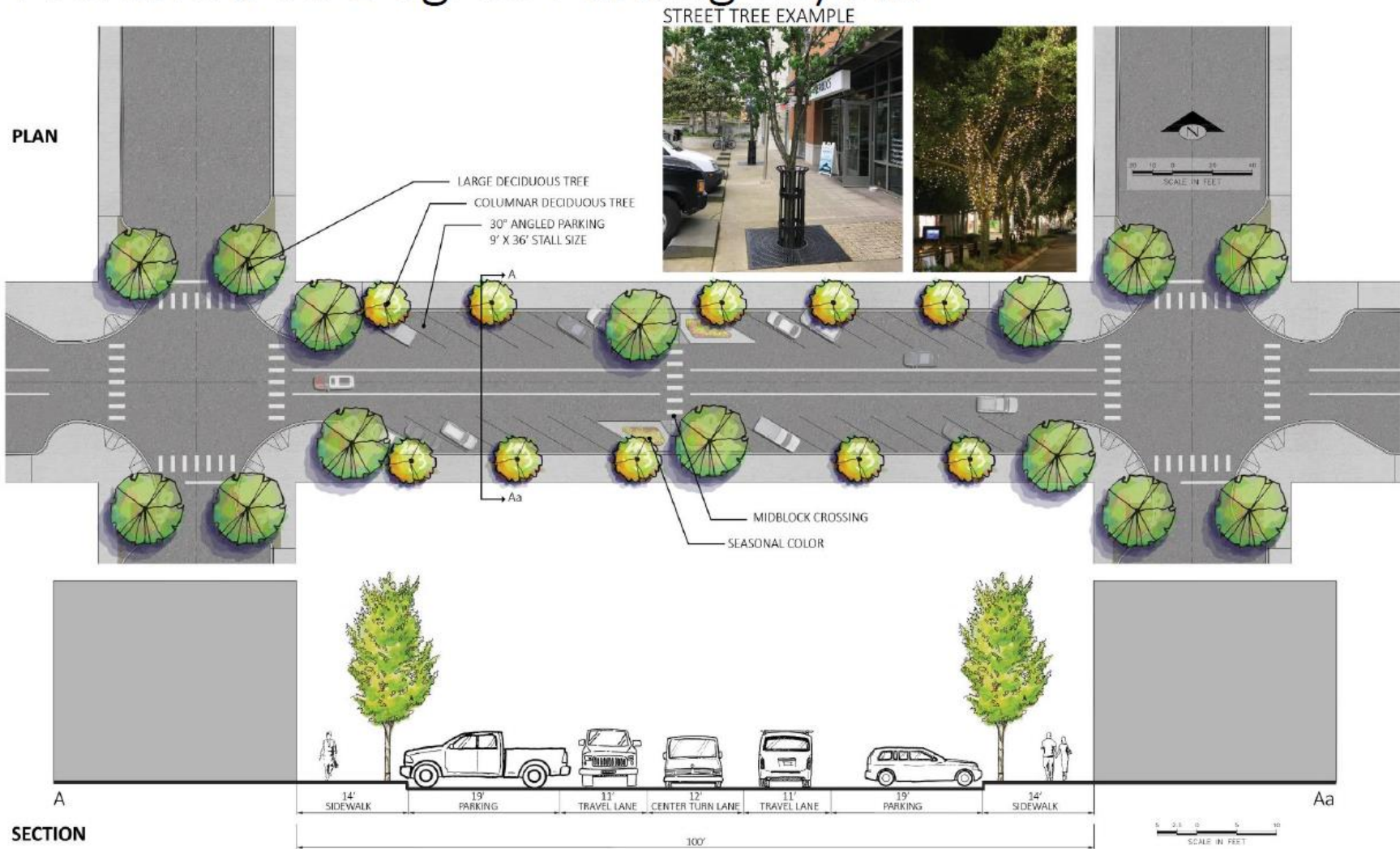
The ample provision of different affordable housing options in the community holds potential as an economic strategy in its own right. The Pacific Northwest on a regional basis is one of most expensive housing markets in America, exceeding even the Northeast. Quality and affordable housing options provide attraction for new residents and businesses.

LAND USE & URBAN DESIGN VISION

First Street / Main Street

First Street, Cle Elum's "Main Street," constitutes the single most pressing urban design limitation that has hindered Cle Elum's transformation to a vibrant destination recreation service center. As currently configured, it effectively prevents a pedestrian oriented downtown core and the implementation of any Era Town concept. It is intimidating for pedestrians, unattractive, constitutes a poor configuration for parking, is merchant unfriendly, and the street network routes heavy truck traffic through the core of downtown. The City and community recognizes these issues and with the assistance of a landscape architecture firm has developed a design, the "Preferred Alternative," that was adopted by the City Council as part of a Downtown Revitalization Planning Project to plan for future street improvement projects to significantly improve the downtown and increase the potential for economic revitalization. Below is the Downtown Revitalization Plan's Preferred Alternative as adopted by Council. This Preferred Alternative is a high clip conceptual plan that sets the tone for design of the street level improvements to parking and street tree layouts, including sidewalk furnishings. Ultimately a critical part of the City's Vision would be the transformation of First Street, and later, potentially other side streets in the central business core.

Preferred 30 Degree Parking Layout



CLE ELUM DOWNTOWN PLANNING
CITY COUNCIL

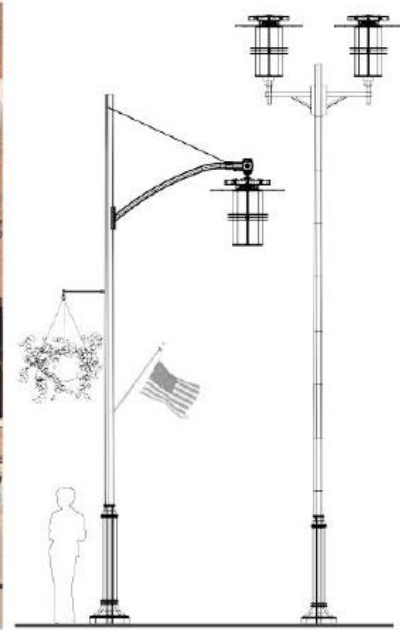


5

Preferred Site Furnishings



STERNBERG CHATEAU PEDESTRIAN LIGHT
Single head along street, double head at intersections



EXISTING COAL CART
At intersections



EXISTING STREET LIGHT
With banner



BANNER TO ANNOUNCE EVENTS



WESTPORT NO SCRATCH BIKE RACK



PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY EXAMPLE
Artist - Abraham Anghik Ruben



CONCRETE SIDEWALK PAVING PATTERN



LANDSCAPEFORMS PLAZA PLANTER



CANTEBURY DESIGNS RECEPTACLE



MAGLIN MLB700 WOOD BENCH



CLE ELUM DOWNTOWN PLANNING
CITY COUNCIL



7

Design Guidelines / Standards

For the implementation of an Era Town vision, Cle Elum will need to develop and adopt design guidelines/standards for the central business core. This would be the most effective if the core area included is the same geographical area used for the Downtown Revitalization Plan (Preferred Alternative). Design guidelines/standards are required to provide general direction and guidance to architects and business owners creating consistency in the maintenance of the old historic character of the business district. The most effective design guidelines blend guidance with an element of designer flexibility to permit creative application. Guidance on color schemes, appropriate façade treatments, signage, and a broad range of visual examples is an effective format that can easily be seen already in existence across the nation. Design guidance can be done either as “voluntary guidelines” or as “design standards,” which require formal review and City approval. Both approaches have advantages and potential disadvantages. It is recommended that the business community in collaboration with the City should perfect the guidelines and in the process answer one key administrative question: whether the City uses guidelines or standards.

Growth Management

The community focus groups illustrated the existence of a broad consensus to retain the City’s small town feel and general scale while pursuing economic transformation and sustainability strategies. Although there is little likelihood of rapid growth overtaking the community due to a variety of factors, there is a perception among some that economic development initiatives constitute a potentially serious risk to stated preferences. To reemphasize an important consideration, existing neighborhood and central core decline are a greater concern for Cle Elum than over-stimulated growth.

The Vision calls for Cle Elum to retain a small city atmosphere and culture while growing at a managed pace to a new controlled population level that represents a more balanced and sustainable foundation for the community. It promotes population expansion within the City’s existing Urban Growth Area (UGA) to allow a total population of 5,000 to 7,000 permanent residents. Under the Vision, it appears likely that the City currently has adequate acreage under both industrial and commercial zoning inside the UGA to meet possible future demands. The addition of substantial commercial zoned acreage would reduce the incentive to focus on central core improvements. It is also likely when further analysis is undertaken, existing residential zoning, when taking into account the three current Development Agreements, is sufficient to accomplish the Vision. Desirable large track residential acreage is currently available within the city’s UGA enabling the implementation of various housing strategies.

Infrastructure Concurrency

The term “concurrency” in planning means utility and infrastructure capacities should be compatible with demands created by the development. Cities can only grow in areas where the necessary capacity is met or the capacity is planned and developed simultaneously with the overall development.

Cle Elum’s Comprehensive Plan, when revised, should ensure that concurrency provisions are incorporated per state requirements, including the coordination of future growth with utility planning. Utility and infrastructure capacities act as a development magnet which can be used to direct growth.

Based on a preliminary review of existing studies, the City's municipal sewer system and water system have the needed capacities in place to accommodate the proposed population.

Pedestrian and Bike Greenway Networks

Cle Elum's historic development pattern, in conjunction with other Upper County towns, offers an outstanding foundation for local trails and bike path networks that could ultimately extend to Snoqualmie Pass and the Lower County requiring little new trail development. Suncadia's location and associated trail network incorporates an additional element of opportunity. Substantial potential exists to provide a regional asset that would be both a major quality-of-life feature for the community and a major pillar for destination tourism. Planning efforts are underway and should continue to be incorporated as part of the community's long-term vision. Parks and pathways are not just important lifestyle amenities for existing citizens; they are a tool for economic development attracting businesses and new residents.

CULTURE AND DEMOGRAPHIC VISION

Community Diversity

Cle Elum and the surrounding community are undergoing transformations of its socioeconomic composition. In a very real sense, diversity is increasing in the community as the area becomes a mixing zone of Westside-Eastside cultures, urban-rural cultures, and permanent residents with part-time residents. Diversity of culture and tolerance has always been an American strength and underlying principle in its society. Current neighborhood configurations in Cle Elum have been and should continue to be conducive to the promotion of the diversity transformation underway. To ease this transformation and reduce the potential friction associated with change, several concepts should be considered.

A structured small group forum over a rotating brunch or lunch is one format that has been found to be effective in the Ellensburg area to develop expanded social networks. Community working groups should make a concerted effort to recruit mixed memberships. All of the expanded community has expressed an interest in developing a greater public appreciation for the area's historic and cultural heritage. Improvements to these interests could be benefited by different backgrounds throughout the expanded community working together to further develop the resource and information base. Finally, a friendly and potentially humorous code of good neighbor conduct should be developed and routinely emphasized in an ongoing public information campaign. Effective examples include the UK's approach to deal with potential cultural misunderstandings on its 180,000-mile trail system across **private** lands, the approach is not resented and the nation's three billion annual walkers can proudly and happily quote the ten key bullet points.

CONCLUSION

An exceedingly strong foundation exists for a cohesive community vision for Cle Elum. The testing of public opinion through both individual interviews and focus groups yields a consistent picture of what the community desires to retain as well as change in the future. That vision includes a more cohesive, pro-active community-wide strategy based on two central pillars: retaining its basic historic character as a moderate scale, rural community while at the same time transforming to a more sustainable economic base. The economic base's main focus would be the development of a vibrant, pedestrian oriented recreation service center that captures Cle Elum's strategic location and the regional trends already underway. Included in the vision is the

retention and enhancement of Cle Elum's historic heritage as an "Era Town" along with strategies for destination tourism, downtown redevelopment, and the attraction of destination retail establishments. The transformation would also include other elements of economic diversification over time, including micro-specialty manufacturers and services, and expansion as a commuter base. It is anticipated under the vision that the community would eventually grow to resident base of 5,000 to 7,000 individuals within the City's Urban Growth Area.

City of Cle Elum Planning Commission

August 5, 2025

Subject – Nonconforming Uses

Staff Narrative: These changes are being proposed to provide greater flexibility for home and property owners to modify lawfully established nonconforming uses.

17.04.040 Nonconforming uses.

The lawful use of any building, structure, land or sign in existence at the time of the passage of the ordinance codified in this title, although such use does not conform to the provisions of this title, may be continued subject to the limitations of this section.

A. Expansion – No existing building, structure or land ~~devoted containing~~ to a nonconforming use shall be expanded, enlarged, reconstructed, intensified or structurally altered unless the ~~use thereof is changed to a use permitted in the zoning district in which the building, structure, or land is located following standards are met:~~

- ~~1. Degree of nonconformity is not increased...~~
- ~~2. Building or use expansion shall not exceed 50% of existing...~~
- ~~1.3. All other applicable standards of the underlying zone are met...~~

B. Change – When authorized by the planning director, a nonconforming use may be changed to a use of a like nature or use that is more in conformance with the existing regulations.

C. Extension – When authorized by the planning director, a nonconforming use may be extended throughout those parts of a building which were manifestly designed or arranged for such use prior to the date when such use of the building became nonconforming, if no structural alterations except those required by law are made therein.

D. Discontinuance – When a nonconforming use of land or a nonconforming use of all or part of a structure is discontinued or abandoned for a period of one year, such use shall be considered abandoned and lose its nonconforming status. Normal seasonal cessation of use, or temporary discontinuance for purposes of maintenance or improvements, shall not be included in determination of the one-year period of discontinuance.

E. Reversion – If a nonconforming use is changed to a permitted use, the nonconforming use shall not be resumed.

F. Residential exception – Legally established residential uses located in any ~~residential~~ zoning district shall not be deemed nonconforming for the purposes of residential alteration, residential enlargement or residential expansion provided:

1. The residential use was legally established.

~~2. The residential use was established at least fifty years prior to the adoption of this regulation.~~

32. The residential use has been continuous and has never lapsed for more than twelve consecutive months.

43. The residential use shall comply with the development standards of the underlying zone in which it is located.

~~5. A declaration of covenant between the property owner and the city of Cle Elum must be completed and executed prior to the issuance of a building permit, and shall be recorded with the Kittitas County Auditors Office, stating generally:~~

~~The current Residential use and proposed expansion, enlargement or alteration is not located within a residential zone and is therefore subject to noise, dust, vibration, smoke, activity, and the like associated with legally permitted uses in the zoning district. Legally permitted uses in compliance with Cle Elum Municipal Code in any zone have the right to continue without hindrance.~~

17.04.050 Nonconforming buildings and structures.

A building or structure in existence at the time of the passage of the ordinance codified in this title, although such use does not conform to the provisions of this title, may be maintained subject to the limitations of this section.

A. Expansion – A nonconforming structure may not be changed, altered, replaced, added to or expanded in any manner, except as provided in ~~subsection B of this section and unless such change or alteration does not increase the degree of nonconformity or would bring the structure into conformity with provisions of the zoning code.CEMC 17.04.040(A).~~

B. Repair – ~~Such Normal structural~~ repair and maintenance work as required to keep the structure in sound condition may be made, ~~including replacement of walls, fixtures and plumbing provided no structural alterations shall be made except such as are required by law or ordinance or authorized by the planning director.~~

C. Reconstruction of a Nonconforming Structure - In case of damage or destruction by fire or other causes ~~requiring expenditures for repair in excess of one-half of the assessed value as shown on the county assessor's records~~ the structure can be rebuilt as it was immediately prior to destruction, the structure or structures, other than residential dwellings, shall not be rebuilt unless ~~they conform to all requirements of the zoning code.the damage or in a manner that is less nonconforming.~~ Permits to repair the damage must be applied for within one year and construction must be completed within two years of the damage occurring or the legal nonconforming status will be lost.

GD. Any nonconforming structures shall be maintained in usable condition or the nonconforming status shall be lost.