

CITY OF NISSWA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE
VISIONING SESSION THEMES – JANUARY 10TH, 2017



To: City of Nisswa Steering Committee
From: Ashley Kaisershot
Date: Jan. 18, 2017
Copies: Visioning Session Key Themes, Ideas, Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Dialogs from the January 10th Visioning Session revealed a set of common themes and a list of community ideas, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that will be addressed in the comprehensive plan update.

Key Themes

1. **Preserve the Nisswa Character:** Nisswa has a strong sense of community, and is known for its natural resources and central business district. Residents support a cooperative effort to preserve these unique characteristics. Efforts should be made to explore the built and natural assets that form the *identity* of Nisswa.
2. **Downtown:** The Central Business District plays a critical role in Nisswa’s identity. Community members want to see a coordinated and cooperative effort by the public, private, and institutional sectors for maintaining and improving the social, economic, and physical aspect of Nisswa’s downtown.
3. **Economic Viability of Downtown:** Residents support a coordinated effort to retain and attract the appropriate mix of retail/service business activity in the Central Business District.
4. **Housing Options:** Community members support an increase in diverse and affordable housing choices to address the change in housing needs, interests, and preference of its residents. Residents support a coordinated effort to provide housing options for people at all life stages within the city.
5. **Redevelopment:** Mixing compatible but different uses in a modern setting create vibrant neighborhoods with a distinctive sense of place. Residents support mixed use development, as well as redevelopment of properties adjacent to downtown in an effort to create a more pedestrian friendly and walkable center. Residents support development that enhances community character and identity.
6. **Community Facilities:** Nisswa’s Elementary school is a cherished asset that continues to bring young families to the community. Residents support efforts to explore plans to build a senior center, community facility, recreation center, and a medical clinic.
7. **Preservation of Environmentally Sensitive and Natural Resource Areas:** The abundance of natural resources plays a critical role in Nisswa’s identity and is one of the city’s most cherished asset. Natural features, forest tracts, lakes, rivers, streams, and environmentally sensitive areas should be protected and preserved for future generations.
8. **Expansion of Park Network:** Park and open space plays a critical role in residents’ quality of life and are viewed as a highly valued asset. Citizens support the expansion and improvements of their parks, trails, and public spaces.

9. **Expansion of Trail Networks and Increased Access:** Trails contribute to the quality of life for Nisswa residents and are a highly valued amenity. Residents support a coordinated effort to expand and improve on-street bicycle facilities and off-street trail networks.

Notes from the visioning session were compiled and a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats are as follows:

Strengths

- City parks, trails, and lakes
- Surrounding open space and natural environments
- Downtown Nisswa
- Paul Bunyan Trail
- Nisswa Elementary School and its dedication to quality education
- Proximity to Brainerd/Baxter micropolitan area
- Walkable and pedestrian friendly downtown
- Proximity to Highway 371
- Small town atmosphere
- Tourism industry
- Sense of pride, and community character

Opportunities

- Expansion of park and trail networks
- Expand on-street bicycle facilities and off-street trail networks
- Improved access, wayfinding, and signage for the Paul Bunyan Trail
- Preservation of natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas
- Retain and attract the appropriate mix of retail/service business activity
- Wayfinding and signage for downtown businesses
- Multi-family housing opportunities adjacent to downtown
- Intergovernmental cooperation with surrounding communities
- Development opportunities along the 371 corridor
- Housing opportunities along the Paul Bunyan Trail

Weaknesses

- Lack of housing options (affordable single family and multi-family options)
- Gaps in transportation networks (collector streets/frontage roads from north to south)
- Limited city services and capacity concerns
- No city water
- Lack of parking downtown in summer months
- Lack of community facilities (senior center, community and rec center, medical clinic)
- Limited public transportation option (or little advertising for current options)
- Poor or limited access to public beaches
- Need for senior housing

Threats

- Deteriorating environmental quality
- Lake quality concerns
- Population loss outside of tourist season
- Lack of life cycle housing
- Lack of housing options for workforce and young families
- Changing demographics and lack of housing needs
- Sewer capacity concerns
- Adapting to change
- Lack of housing options for work force
- Lack of support for multi-modal transportation options