

**Kittitas County Panel Discussion Summary
Hosted by Ellensburg Chamber of Commerce
May 27, 2004
Noon – 2pm
Ellensburg, Washington**

Introduction:

Jim Armstrong, Vice President of the Economic Development Group of Kittitas County

Panelists:

Tim Engstrom, Ellensburg Daily Record

Larry Sharpe, Coldwell Banker Kittitas Valley Realty

Tami Walton, Mountain High Sports

Major Outcomes of Discussion:

Our Community, Our Waters and the Cascades

There is a growing awareness that the landscapes and the communities that we cherish are rapidly changing due to population increases, development pressures, changing trends in the national and international economy that affects both our downtown core and our agricultural and natural resource businesses.

We recognize the challenge of wanting to grow and conserve, to maintain access for recreation and respect private property, and to provide enough water for fish and farmland and people. That is why we must think about these changes, create a common plan, and act together.

Although preservation of farmland, water and open space may be difficult it is a necessity that if we want to maintain these qualities, we need to try.

Dramatic Changes

We need to expect changes in our environment, economy and community over the next 100 years. For instance, agriculture as we know it will most likely change, as will our fuel and energy economy, population, climate and water storage capacity.

Planning

Strategic:

We need to be proactive and not reactive in confronting changes in our community. We need a plan that we can all agree upon, and then we need to act on it.

There is a political aspect to this planning as well. Unless we have people in power with the will to follow and act on the vision of the people, nothing will happen. We need a good political atmosphere at the county level that is amenable to implementing the vision of the people.

Cooperative:

It is important that everyone in the community is involved in this process and that we search for the middle ground to form cooperative solutions. We should not get caught in polarizing debates.

Creative:

Through more dialogues-type discussions in this county and in Chelan and Yakima counties, we could create a mission statement and vision for our region, in which we think about our values, what we care about as a guide for planning.

One idea would be develop a new thinking pattern with regards to water and efficiency. Just think about how we have radically changed our thinking and life patterns with regards to cigarettes – we need to have that kind of change in thinking with water too.

Stewardship

Ongoing management of our resources is what is key. The issue is not who owns the land, government or private landowners, but how that land is managed.