



VISION-TO-ACTION: BUILDING CONSENSUS THROUGH DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT

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Ponderay, “The Little City With a Big Future”, is located in Idaho’s panhandle on the shore of Lake Pend Oreille. In addition to beautiful lakefront views, it serves as the gateway to year-round outdoor recreation— a major draw for locals and visiting outdoor-enthusiasts alike. Ponderay has seen notable population growth within the last 10 years and expects that trend to continue into the future, particularly due to the region’s growing popularity as a retirement destination and outdoor recreation mecca.

Compared to other nearby cities, Ponderay lacks access to regional amenities such as safe access to Lake Pend Oreille and the Pend d’Oreille Bay Trail. Creation of the trail has been a fifteen year effort by community groups. One key obstacle to realizing the benefit of full, safe lakefront access is the waterfront’s historical use as an iron smelter site. Although the Historic Smelter Area was only active for a short period of time in the early 1900s, past activities have left the soil with high levels of lead and other metals. Cleanup of the smelter site would pave the way for the creation of a continuous an

accessible stretch of trail along the shore of Lake Pend Oreille from Sandpoint’s City Beach to Ponder Point, in addition to improving safety and quality of life for Ponderay residents.

With help from the Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR), the City of Ponderay was awarded a 2019 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Multipurpose Grant. Only 11 Multipurpose grants were given out that year, and Ponderay was by far the smallest community to receive funding. The grant will be used to plan for the cleanup and reuse of the Historic Panhandle Smelting & Refining Company Smelter Area properties on the shore of Lake Pend Oreille as well as provide funding for the environmental assessment and cleanup of the properties.

Cascadia Partners was retained by CCLR to provide real estate development and public engagement services toward this effort, with the goal to develop a series of aspirational land use scenarios for the brownfield site through a process called Vision-to-Action (V2A) planning.

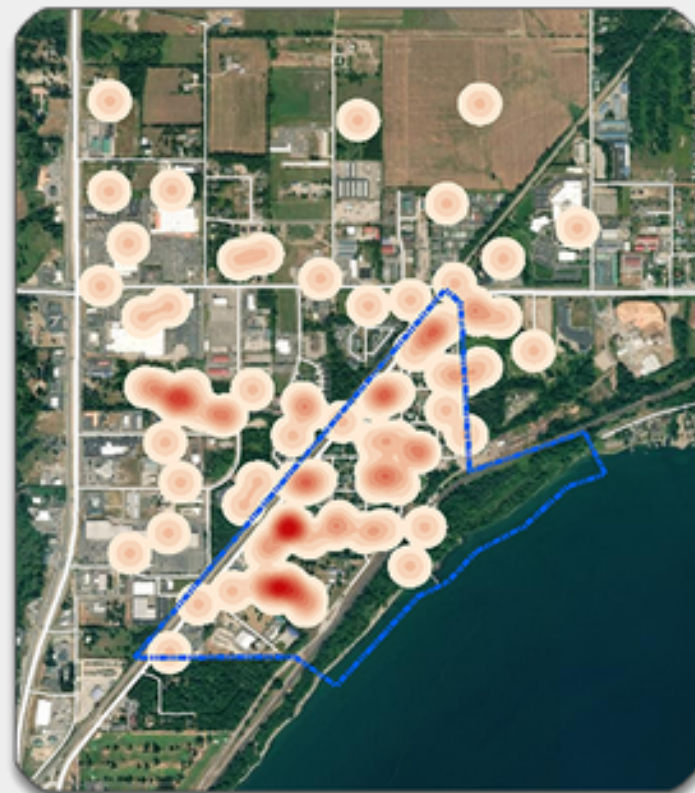


V2A is a method of reimagining blighted areas and engages stakeholders and planners to work together, establish goals, and compare alternatives to optimize redevelopment outcomes. Bringing local residents into the redevelopment process bolsters community spirit, promotes investment in public amenities and infrastructure, and upholds tenets of environmental justice. The V2A process also provides strong signals to private sector partners, and can help lower the risk of investment in higher risk sites, resulting in higher quality, community-informed and supported projects that are more likely to reach completion.

SURVEY



SURVEY RESPONSES



DEVELOPMENT IDEAS



In Ponderay, the community input on potential scenarios will help inform the scale and type of mitigation proposed in the site’s mitigation plan, as mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, the project’s timing, in the midst of a global pandemic, added a challenge to conducting traditional outreach and engagement, while also staying close to a fast-moving project timeline.

With the guidance of CCLR staff, Cascadia Partners developed outreach materials and a web-based digital open house, using Maptionnaire, a

map-based community engagement platform, to gather input from the community about their vision for the site and its surroundings. Over 225 people participated in this virtual open house during the four weeks it was open. Survey participants provided feedback on their preferences for housing, retail, and overall priorities as well as map-based feedback on where certain amenities should be located. Map-based feedback and other key priorities provided by the community went directly into shaping the creation of three “Development Ideas” for the future of Ponderay.

“The most important thing [CCLR] does for communities like ours is the confidence it gives us to keep moving forward knowing that we have an organization with vast experience in our corner...Recently when our public outreach efforts were faced with the challenges of the COVID-19 crisis, CCLR was there for us in an area wide planning effort. They helped us find a contractor and connect with the community by way of a Virtual Community Workshop. Our outreach was very successful, and we were able to complete the task and stay on track.”

**Erik Brubaker, Planning, Parks and Community Development Director
City of Ponderay, ID**

In addition to collecting broad community input, Cascadia Partners conducted six key stakeholder interviews to gain local insight and better understand nuances of this tight-knit community. Through a series of Zoom-based, virtual charrettes with the local brownfields team, Cascadia also developed a set of three alternative development scenarios for the Ponderay Village that considered various uses for the site.

These development concepts, informed by priorities submitted through the digital-open house and stakeholder interviews, posit three potential futures of Ponderay highlighting the impacts to housing, affordability, infrastructure, and accessibility. The first development scenario showed how Ponderay would

look if it continued in the trajectory that its current Comprehensive Plan outlines, while the second and third development scenarios model a future Ponderay with lake access and complementary development either near Harbison Field or current Ponderay Village, respectively.

The results of the V2A process are currently being used to develop an areawide reuse plan for Ponderay Village which will inform new zoning and capital improvements for the area. Regardless of which scenario is chosen or the direction the project moves in, it will have been informed by responsible and inclusive public engagement, ensuring the project is as beneficial to and supported by those who will be most impacted - the community of Ponderay.

The Center for Creative Land Recycling (CCLR) assists communities to convert abandoned or vacant properties into assets which create jobs, generate new tax revenues, and improve quality of life. CCLR is the leading national non-profit dedicated to land reuse and provides technical assistance for U.S. EPA Regions 2, 9, and 10.

Cascadia Partners is a full-service urban planning, real estate, environmental sustainability, and public engagement consulting firm based in Portland, OR. Cascadia services range from strategic planning and conceptual planning through development, and employ sophisticated analysis and a compelling, visual story that brings concepts to life. Cascadia Partners is a certified Emerging Small Business (ESB), staffed with planners, economists, real estate developers, climate adaptation and mitigation analysts, and public engagement specialists who are ready to help tackle any challenge facing cities and regions.



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