

Plan envisions Grand Ronde in 25 years

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal member and Tribal Director of Development Pete Wakeland along with three staffers from Portland-based Cardno WRG presided over a community meeting on Nov. 17 to unveil the Tribe's plans for Grand Ronde.

Cardno WRG was hired to strategize with Tribal officials and produce a vision for the community 25 years out.

The Grand Ronde Community Master Plan aims to "create an area with a sense of connectivity," said Wakeland, "places where people can get to without having to get in their cars." It also intends to give the Tribe a sense of how projects will unfold in the years ahead to better budget for them.

Based on the idea that Grand Ronde can be "a place to rebuild a Tribal community," the new plan takes a close-up and long-term look at steps that will give the Tribal community "a strong sense of place," according to the draft.

Phasing in steps to make this goal happen were not available at the time of the community meeting, but will be part of the document that will go to Tribal Council before the end of the year, according to Mimi Doukas, director of Land Use Planning and a principal for Cardno, and Wakeland.

To help the Tribe and Tribal community value Tribal holdings, the plan defines "an assortment of distinctive, interconnected districts that collectively create a dynamic community," according to the draft document.

Housing districts, for example, are divided into Elders', central, northeast, Grand Meadows, gateway-Bunnsville and south neighborhoods.

Short term, Cardno WRG has proposed to Tribal Council that the primary focus should be filling in the core areas: central neighborhood, government center and the Elders' neighborhood.

"The more you knit that together," said Doukas, "the more you create a sense of community."

Long term, housing is being considered for south of Highway 18 to serve casino and Tribal staff, as well as businesses that also may be developing according to the plan.

To housing, the draft adds an employment, or business, district, a tourism district and a heritage district. Each has a description and strategy for future development.

The business district as currently proposed would be located along Highway 18, west of Grand Ronde Road, with a feeder road over the railroad tracks just south of Bunnsville.

The draft calls for "economic diversity." Doukas further defined that as manufacturing, distribution and maybe incubator-type facilities.

The timing of each of these projects is critical to the success of the development, and that will be further considered as Tribal staff and the Cardno team consider phasing and implementing the plan.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

W. Ryan Givens, a senior planner with Cardno WRG of Portland, explains the Grand Ronde Community Master Plan to Tribal Elders and Grand Ronde residents Gladys Hobbs, left, and Violet Folden during an open house in the Governance Center Atrium on Tuesday, Nov. 17.

"We'll be considering what tools we use and what infrastructure will be needed," said Doukas.

The draft document also calls for "a network of open space and recreational facilities, expanding government services such as education and safety, and providing support services such as neighborhood retail that collectively create a vibrant, functioning community."

The plan calls for building on existing investments and responding to the natural environment, by preserving streams and woodlands, and building parks to develop a community that is walkable for the majority of residents.

The plan was developed, according to Cardno's Senior Community Planner W. Ryan Givens, based on the Tribal vision for its future matched with existing infrastructure, land ownership and land use patterns in the area.

A challenge to the ongoing effort, according to Tribal engineer Eric Scott, is the sheer number of different government and land use regulations that cover Tribal lands.

Wakeland sees a challenge in the vast infrastructure needs of continued development. "Nobody sees infrastructure or thinks about it, but it's got to go in before anything else happens," he said.

He points to areas needing water and sewer hookups and new roads.

On the other hand, Cardno staffers say that it is unusual to work with a group as motivated as the Tribe.

"This is definitely a group that knows what it

wants," said Givens.

Where state highways often divide a community, Cardno has used state highways 18 and 22 as boundaries for the future Tribal community, to keep its many districts closer together.

Wakeland described the document as a work in process.

Although only a dozen attended the informal meeting, they included Mark Jeffery, superintendent of the Willamina School District, who will likely have input in any local school development project the Tribe proposes.

The group also included Karl Ekstrom, manager of the Grand Ronde Water District, who will likely be involved in Tribal developments needing local water supplies.

Tribal Elder Violet Folden, who grew up in Grand Ronde, said that "what we're seeing here is just amazing."

"I do miss the railroad tracks," she said. "My aunt and uncle (Tribal Elders Buck and Laura Riggs) used to live over by the river on the other side of 18, and the only way I remember going over there was on the railroad trestle across the river."

As it turns out, the Oregon Department of Transportation has plans in the next five or six years to build an interchange at the intersection of highways 18 and 22, and then some years later at the intersection of Highway 18 and Grand Ronde Road.

The early word is that there will again be an overpass at Grand Ronde Road, this one over the highway. ■

Interior seeks input on new policy

The Department of the Interior will hold a meeting beginning at 9 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 9, at the Portland Holiday Inn, 8439 N.E. Columbia Blvd., in an effort to develop a department-wide policy on Tribal consultation.

The new Tribal consultation policy, announced Nov. 24 by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar and Assistant Secretary of Indian Affairs Larry Echo Hawk, will be developed with input from the nation's 564 federally recognized Tribes.

"President Obama respects the inherent sovereignty of Indian nations and believes that the federal government must honor its commitments to American Indians and Alaska Native communities," Salazar said.

"On Nov. 5, President Obama issued his executive memorandum supporting Tribal consultation as 'a critical ingredient of a sound and productive

federal-Tribal relationship,'" Echo Hawk said. "The effort we are undertaking to develop Interior's plan as called for by the President will begin a new and positive chapter in the history of federal-Tribal relations."

Obama directed federal agency heads to submit to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget within 90 days a detailed plan of action to implement Tribal consultation. The Department of Interior is seeking Tribal comments via e-mail, regular mail and meetings by Jan. 15, 2010.

The Portland meeting will run from 9 a.m. to noon and then 1 to 4 p.m.

The first Tribal consultation meeting was scheduled on Dec. 2 in Anchorage, Alaska. Other meetings after Portland will be held in Washington, D.C., Minneapolis, Oklahoma City, Phoenix and Sacramento. ■