

**Methodology and
Qualitative Analysis Report**
for the
Columbia River Gorge Commission

Prepared by:

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June 12, 2008

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The Columbia River Gorge Commission contracted with the Portland State University Survey Research Lab to conduct the qualitative analysis of their vision data gathered through a process called the Columbia Gorge Future Forum. Data was gathered from October 2007 through April 2008. This report describes the methodology used for the analysis and presents summaries of each of the themes resulting from the analysis. Additional reports that include all of the original responses and their respective codes applied during the analysis process have been created and submitted separately to the Commission.

Methodology

Data Collection

The Columbia River Gorge Commission gathered data using paper surveys at a kick-off event in October 2007, as well as during 16 community meetings conducted throughout six months following the kick-off. In addition, the Commission created a Web survey using Survey Monkey software, which was available while the community meetings were being held. The surveys included either three or four of the following open-ended questions:

1. *What do you value most about the Columbia Gorge (and your own community)? What would you like to remain the same in the future?*
2. *How is the Columbia Gorge (and your own community) changing? What issues will it face in the future?*
3. *Imagine the Columbia Gorge (and your own community) in 15-20 years time, and that it meets your highest expectations for the future. What do you see?*
4. *What is one or more local action in your own community that would help bring your vision closer to reality? Be specific.*

The surveys for the October kick-off and the web survey included only questions 1-3 and did not include the parenthetical statement “and your own community.” The community meetings included all four questions and the parenthetical references to their own communities.

To most efficiently use the resources available, PSU and the Commission agreed that the data from all three sources would be coded for the vision (#3) and the action (#4) questions, and only the vision question (#3) would be analyzed and summarized. In addition, the data was reviewed by Commission staff to only include responses that addressed Gorge-wide issues. Additional responses that addressed community-specific issues were removed for analysis at a later time. Table 1 represents a breakdown of the gorge-wide vision question data received by PSU for analysis.

Table 1: Distribution of Qualitative Vision Question Data Received

Source	Number of Responses
October 2007 Kick-off Event	88
<u>Community Meetings</u> <i>(in alphabetical order)</i>	
Carson, WA	11
Celilo, OR	8
Cascade Locks, OR	18
Corbett, OR	23
Hood River, OR	9
Latino Community	3
Lyle/Dallesport, WA	9
Mosier, OR	18
North Bonneville, WA	12
Stevenson, WA	17
The Dalles, OR	19
Underwood, WA	12
Washougal, WA	4
Wishram, WA (2)	6
White Salmon/Bingen, WA	10
Web Survey	143
TOTAL	410

Qualitative Data Analysis Approach

The approach to qualitative analysis of the text from the vision question was used to systematically code and summarize the data. Based on these summaries, the Commission will be able to identify the key themes and issues raised and, from those, develop their vision plan. The following steps itemize the qualitative analysis approach implemented.

Step 1: Create the Coding Tree

A coding tree is an outline of themes that are expected in the data and/or identified during an initial review of the data. It is important to identify a sufficient number of themes to be useful for the analysis process without going into so much detail that the coding process would be too difficult or the specificity of codes would not support later

uses of the data. The themes identified for this dataset resulted in a coding tree of 43 codes grouped into five “families.” A family is a general label into which a group of codes can be organized. Table 2 presents alphabetical listings of the families and the codes within each family. One additional family named “Other” with two codes is also included. The code “other” was used for any text that did not logically fit into any of the other 43 codes and “didn’t answer” was used for those responses that neglected to directly answer a given question.

Table 2: Coding Tree for the Columbia River Gorge Data

Communities (15 codes)	Environment (7 codes)
Arts and Entertainment	Air and Water Quality
Civic Engagement	Alternative Energy
Community Identities and Culture	Outdoor Recreation
Cooperation and Respect	Pollution
Crime and Safety	Scenic Beauty and NSA
Culture Heritage	Sustainability
Diversity	Wildlife
Education and Schools	Land Use (5 codes)
Government	Dams and Waterways
Health and Healthcare	Parks and Open Spaces
Indigenous Tribes	Resources and Land Management
Livability and Quality of Life	Trails
Population	Urban Growth and Development
Self-sufficient communities	Transportation and Infrastructure (5 codes)
Youth and Elderly	Biking and Walking
Economy (9 codes)	Bridge
Agriculture	Highways and Roads
Casino	Mass Transit & Alternative Transportation
Housing	Regional Transportation Network
Jobs and Wages	Other (2 codes)
Local Food Systems	Didn’t Answer
Local & Regional Economy	Other
Small and Local Businesses	
Technology	
Tourism	

Step 2: Import All Text Data into Analysis Software

To analyze the qualitative data, ATLAS.ti 5.0 (Scientific Software Development, 2004; www.atlasti.com) was selected as the most appropriate software. As data files with the individual responses by question were received, text data was formatted and imported into ATLAS.ti, where the appropriate codes would be created and applied.

Step 3: Code All Text Data

In order to analyze qualitative data, the size of the “text unit” (an individual piece of text data) must be decided. Text units can be words, lines, sentences or paragraphs. For the Columbia Gorge data, paragraphs were chosen as the text unit for coding. This resulted in all of the information in one respondent’s answer to one question equaling one text unit. This allowed for the text related to a given code remaining in the entire answer when it is printed in a code report to provide sufficient context. For example, if one answer to the vision question included information about civic engagement, wildlife, and housing, the whole response would be printed in the three separate code reports run for final analysis.

Coding qualitative text is a detailed process of reading, reflecting and interpreting. Coders read each text unit, often multiple times in order to fully grasp the content. The reader reflects on the content of the text, considering the multiple issues included. The reader interprets the content based on the codes available. Finally, the coder applies as many codes as the text unit references. Coders are not allowed to make assumptions about respondents’ answers (i.e., assuming an underlying meaning or inference beyond the written words), but to code the responses at face value in order to prevent bias.

Step 4: Edit, Refine, And Expand The Coding Tree While Coding

While the text was coded, new codes may become apparent. If that occurred, a new code was created and added to the existing coding tree. When new codes were created, previously coded data had to be reviewed and recoded as needed. Codes would also be periodically checked for redundancy, when two similar codes always occur in pairs. In this case, the two codes would be merged to create one single new code.

Step 6: Run Coded Text Reports

After all of the data was coded, using the qualitative analysis software, the large text file was sorted by code and reports were run for each of the 43 codes (excluding “other” and “didn’t answer”) for the vision and action questions. Each of the reports produced included all of the text units (i.e., complete answers to each question) that received a given code. With each text unit, the data source (either “Community and October

Data” or “Web Data”) and all of the codes applied to that text are printed (in alphabetical order, not the order in which the themes appear in the text unit) so that the reader knows all of the thematic areas in which that text will be considered in the analysis. Any given text unit will appear in as many reports as it received codes. It is important to note that the text is reprinted as it was received, without any editing for spelling, grammar, or clarity. Each text unit is preceded by a unique identifier assigned to each respondent. As an example, the following is an excerpt from the Arts and Entertainment report for the vision question.

Excerpt from an ATLAS.ti Coded Data Report for the Vision Question

16 quotation(s) for code: Arts and Entertainment

P 1: Community and October Data Q3.txt; Codes: [Arts and Entertainment] [Livability and Quality of Life] [Local and Regional Economy] [Small and Local Businesses] [Tourism]

ST5,"That we have affordable quaint tourist accommodations for travelers passing through. Small unique cafes all this type of businesses so local residents can make a living, not having to leave. Many more small festivals."

P 1: Community and October Data Q3.txt; Codes: [Air and Water Quality] [Arts and Entertainment] [Biking and Walking] [Dams and Waterways] [Diversity] [Education and Schools] [Government] [Parks and Open Spaces] [Scenic Beauty and NSA] [Trails] [Wildlife]

HR113,"A college -4 years! More music, art and cultural opportunities. A better library. Protection of scenic resources. No further degradation of the air, water, plants and wildlife. More biking/walking paths. More parks along our rivers. Policies that encourage diversity."

P 1: Community and October Data Q3.txt; Codes: [Air and Water Quality] [Arts and Entertainment] [Biking and Walking] [Health and Healthcare] [Population] [Resource and Land Management] [Small and Local Businesses] [Sustainability]

TD153,"clean air, more independent small businesses; fewer chains. People walking and bicycling - pedestrian areas. Health care practitioners who don't move away after a few years (reducing turnover). More cultural organizations - music, art, dance. Better use of water resources - fewer green lawns, more xeriscape gardening. No increase in population."

P 2: Web Data Q3.txt; Codes: [Arts and Entertainment] [Cultural Heritage] [Education and Schools] [Health and Healthcare] [Local food systems] [Salmon and Fishing] [Sustainability]

WE4,"Children and adults have access to quality education, health care, and jobs..while they also have opportunity to grow and raise their own food, or purchase it at a nearby fresh market. Historic structures are preserved and celebrated alongside of the natural environment. Arts and innovation are alive and well. So are the fish and the many mutations of green on basalt."

P 2: Web Data Q3.txt; Codes: [Agriculture] [Alternative Energy] [Arts and Entertainment] [Government] [Local and Regional Economy]

WE99,"A locally and regionally focused economy; thriving small-scale agriculture, vibrant arts community, excellent alternative energy infrastructure, excellent social services and community support."

Another way to think about the coded qualitative data is to count the number of times each theme occurred. However, doing this requires caution – qualitative data coding is more of an art than a science. Depending on the writer’s clarity of presenting her/his thoughts, the reader’s interpretation of the text, and the time invested in meticulous coding and recoding, it is possible that not all references to every theme are captured in the coding process. Alternatively, it is possible to apply a code to a text unit that other readers may not have interpreted in the same way. It is safe to assume, however, that the general ordering of themes based on frequency reasonably represents the topics that were mentioned more than others. Table 3 summarizes the text unit counts by code, itemized by source and question. The data labeled “community” is actually the combined data from the October kick-off and the 15 community meetings. A grand total of 3,015 codes were applied to the text units. The six families are presented in order of total text units across all codes. Within each family, the codes are presented from highest to lowest total number of text units across the two questions from all sources of data. Within each column, the highest text unit count is highlighted in *bold italics*.

Table 3: Text Unit Counts by Theme and Question

Thematic Codes	Q#3 Vision: Community	Q#3 Vision: Web	Q#4 Action: Community	Total Text Units
Communities				
Government	41	25	85	151
Cooperation and Respect	34	11	29	74
Community Identities and Culture	45	10	14	69
Civic Engagement	27	2	38	67
Livability and Quality of Life	38	18	6	62
Education and Schools	55	16	25	59
Culture Heritage	32	3	4	39
Diversity	31	3	4	38
Population	20	11	1	32
Self-sufficient communities	27	3	1	31
Youth and Elderly	25	1	5	31
Indigenous Tribes	17	1	12	30
Crime and Safety	13	3	13	29
Arts and Entertainment	14	2	2	18
Health and Healthcare	11	3	4	18
<i>Total Counts</i>	430	112	243	748

Thematic Codes	Q#3 Vision: Community	Q#3 Vision: Web	Q#4 Action: Community	Total
Environment				
Sustainability	100	21	14	135
Scenic Beauty and NSA	54	52	20	126
Alternative Energy	66	18	27	111
Outdoor Recreation	52	28	10	90
Air and Water Quality	61	14	10	85
Wildlife	53	10	8	71
Pollution	21	17	6	44
Salmon and Fishing	33	6	4	43
<i>Total Counts</i>	440	166	99	705

Thematic Codes	Q#3 Vision: Community	Q#3 Vision: Web	Q#4 Action: Community	Total
Economy				
Local and Regional Economy	97	26	17	140
Housing	82	20	24	126
Tourism	56	28	9	93
Small and Local Businesses	45	14	28	87
Jobs and Wages	58	13	9	80
Agriculture	30	18	10	58
Local food systems	29	10	14	53
Casino	12	9	5	26
Technology	15	4	5	24
<i>Total Counts</i>	424	142	121	687

Thematic Codes	Q#3 Vision: Community	Q#3 Vision: Web	Q#4 Action: Community	Total
Land Use and Development				
Urban Growth and Development	73	72	51	196
Resources and Land Management	54	44	39	137
Dams and Waterways	45	17	7	69
Trails	32	14	11	57
Parks and Open Spaces	26	15	6	47
<i>Total Counts</i>	230	162	114	506

Thematic Codes	Q#3 Vision: Community	Q#3 Vision: Web	Q#4 Action: Community	Total
Transportation and Infrastructure				
Mass Transit and Alternative Transportation	110	20	16	146
Biking and Walking	37	11	9	57
Regional Transportation Network	41	9	3	53
Highways and Roads	24	21	7	52
Bridge	12	10	2	24
<i>Total Counts</i>	224	71	37	332

Thematic Codes	Q#3 Vision: Community	Q#3 Vision: Web	Q#4 Action: Community	Total
Other				
Other	12	4	8	20
Didn't Answer	10	7	0	17
<i>Total Counts</i>	22	11	8	37

As the above table is reviewed, it is important to keep in mind that the questions posed to the respondents were broad, open-ended topics. Using this qualitative approach, it is assumed that the themes raised are the most important or prominent issues on the minds of the respondents. However, if asked more directly about all of the issues using different survey approaches, the same respondents might rate some of the low incidence themes quite high on scales of importance or relevance for the Columbia Gorge.

Step 7: Analyze and Synthesize the Coded Data

Once the data was organized in thematic reports, each code is summarized to depict the key issues and topics raised by the respondents. The following pages of this report include these summaries that can then be used to frame the vision plan for the Columbia River Gorge. This may involve moving beyond the specific codes of the data to develop higher-order themes, and finally drawing conclusions based on the analyzed data. However, the value of the individual responses and the detailed, coded data is never lost and can be used as a reference for other purposes in the future.

Findings – Vision Question

The following summaries present the key issues raised by respondents in answering the vision question for the community, October, and web data. There were no notable differences between the three sets of data, and for the purposes of the summaries they were not differentiated. It is important to note that in these summaries represent an overview of what was being said by respondents. The number following each code represents the number of respondents who mentioned the corresponding topic. It is also important to keep this number in mind when reading the summaries – while the majority of respondents within a particular topic may be saying the same thing, overall, they may be in a small minority of the total respondents. The summaries reference this subset of respondents, and not the Gorge population as a whole.

Communities [n=263]

A total of 263 unique text units received one or more codes within the family entitled, “Communities.” The following paragraphs summarize the 15 individual codes and are presented in order of highest to lowest frequency. The number in parentheses after each code heading represents the number of coded text units identified for the given topic.

Education and Schools (71)

Residents want high quality K – 12 schools as well as increased educational opportunities for both children and adults throughout the Gorge. Many see education for children better integrated with the communities – with innovative learning opportunities built around the natural resources of the area, as well as practical skills training and programs such as internships or mentoring that prepare students for jobs in the region.

Higher educational opportunities are also a priority for these respondents, including community colleges that offer four year, and even advanced degrees, as well as continuing adult education. These residents envision top-notch programs that not only allow residents to complete their education locally, but also attract students from outside the region. Regional scientific research facilities, as well as programs and interpretive centers focused on issues unique to the region such as conservation and indigenous cultures are part of their vision for the Gorge’s future.

Government (66)

Residents want effective local governments that listen to the people and support the local communities' needs and vision. Local governments and agencies cooperate with one another across boundaries, and a regional coalition oversees Gorge-wide affairs while also respecting the needs and uniqueness of each individual community. Residents also want adequate funding for public agencies, and environmental and land use regulations to be enforced fairly and consistently to manage growth and natural resources.

Livability and Quality of Life (56)

Gorge residents envision towns where they can "live, work, and play," and where the quality of life of residents is a priority balanced with economic development. Communities will have goods and services accessible through small businesses, so residents can meet their needs locally and not have to travel to larger cities for essentials. Communities will be livable and affordable for all residents, with thriving town centers and community spaces. Local economies will provide jobs that allow all residents to afford and enjoy their communities without long commutes.

Community Identities and Culture (55)

Some residents place a high value on their local community and regional identities. Residents envision communities that maintain their unique identities while also staying connected and supporting common values for the Gorge. Regionally, localism and sustainability are valued by residents, and the agricultural and recreational atmosphere is protected, even as communities develop their own unique urban areas and identities. Community spaces such as parks and farmer's markets, alternative energy, and public transport all play a role in maintaining the local identities of communities.

Cooperation and Respect (45)

Residents see a future Gorge community that is built on cooperation and respect in a number of ways. They see more collaboration and cooperation between the different levels of government – state, county, and city – and greater respect and cooperation by governments with the people. Among communities, they see people respecting ethnic, cultural, and economic diversity, and greater inclusion for all groups in collaborative public processes. Communities in the region will work together on the basis of mutual respect, with the needs of all groups being given consideration. Residents will work together towards common goals and visions for their communities and the Gorge, and both residents and tourists will respect the environment and natural heritage of the region.

Cultural Heritage (35)

Cultural heritage and history is seen as an important part of the Gorge's identity. Residents see a future where tourists and residents are able to enjoy and learn about the region's heritage in a way that protects cultural assets. Local tribes will have their own traditions and cultural sites protected, and the Gorge as a whole places value on preserving the unique heritage of the region. Archaeological and historic structures are preserved along with the environment and traditional livelihoods are protected even as new technologies are adopted. The local and regional heritage is embraced and protected, and will be an integral part of what attracts residents and visitors to the Gorge.

Diversity (34)

Gorge residents envision increasing diversity in their communities as well as greater respect and accommodation for that diversity. They see diversified economies that meet the needs of all residents, and with affordable housing, allow residents from all income groups to live as neighbors. They see affordable and mixed-use development promoting diversity across age groups – allowing extended families and generations to stay close to each other with appropriate housing. There will be greater cultural and ethnic diversity and a greater appreciation and respect for those differences.

Population (31)

While some residents favor a decrease in population, or zero population growth in the Gorge, other residents envision development policies that deal with population increases in a way that protects the Gorge. Moderate population increases are accompanied by denser urban areas and more environmentally-friendly development that preserves open spaces. Controlled or zero population growth is seen as a way to help conserve the environment of the Gorge, and unavoidable population growth should be accompanied by good planning to protect the region and needs of existing residents.

Self-Sufficient Communities (30)

A number of residents envision small, independent communities that can provide for their own needs through local resources, with less reliance on outside input either economically or politically. This means food is grown and consumed locally, local economies are built on cottage industries that meet the needs of local residents for both products and jobs, and the local environment is tapped for local energy production. For some, this also means the expanded use of local currencies and barter economies. This vision of self-sufficiency includes sustainable development – less reliance on fossil fuels, and more small-scale, green energy production, protection of rural lands for farming, and greater utilization of local natural resources for developing local industries and businesses.

Civic Engagement (29)

Communities where residents are actively engaged in government and community groups are part of many residents' vision for the future. They see local governments that listen to the people and more inclusive processes that give all residents a voice. They also see communities that have full-time residents who are engaged with each other and actively work together to create solutions and plans for the future, and who actively work to implement those shared goals. Both full and part-time residents are invested in their communities.

Youth and Elderly (26)

Gorge communities will have a diversity of residents, with seniors and families with children living together, and available housing and services will be accessible to all. There'll be greater availability of senior housing – including assisted living options and affordable housing that allows retirees to live independently in the community with families and youth. More accessible public transport and local medical care for seniors is also part of many residents' vision for the future. They see an environment that supports both seniors and children, with greater accessibility, affordable housing and recreational opportunities, and programs and activities for both youth and seniors.

Indigenous Tribes (18)

Some envision a future where the indigenous tribal communities in the Gorge are able to enjoy economic development while continuing with their traditional culture intact. They see the tribal cultures and traditions being respected within the Gorge, with ceremonial sites and livelihoods being preserved. They also see tribal communities that enjoy economic development based on fishing, with the falls and traditional lands being restored. They see empowered local tribal governments along with greater cooperation and political engagement with the rest of the Gorge, as well as greater communication and cooperation between the tribes. Non-indigenous residents and tourists are informed about and respect the legal rights, heritage, and culture of the indigenous communities.

Arts and Entertainment (16)

The arts are an important part of residents' future vision for the gorge, with art and music being part of a vibrant cultural atmosphere. These residents see art flourishing through cultural organizations, communities of artists, and small markets and festivals that bring art into the public sphere.

Crime and Safety (16)

Gorge residents see a future with safe communities. Crime is reduced with increased law enforcement. Recreational areas are kept safe through maintenance and upgraded emergency medical services. Roads are kept safe by increasing patrols to deal with traffic and dealing with natural dangers such as falling rocks or trees near roadways.

Health and Healthcare (14)

The Gorge will have quality healthcare that is affordable and accessible to all residents. Health care workers will stay in the area long term, increasing quality of care and reducing turnover. There will be options for staying healthy, and seniors in particular will have access locally to appropriate medical care.

Environment [297]

A total of 297 unique text units received one or more codes within the family entitled, “Environment.” The following paragraphs summarize the eight individual codes and are presented in order of highest to lowest frequency. The number in parentheses after each code heading represents the number of coded text units identified for the given topic.

Sustainability (121)

A “green” ethic will be an important part of the Gorge identity. Respondents see development that is slow and well-planned, with the impact on the natural environment always given consideration. Residents and businesses strive to live lighter on the land and reduce their carbon footprint. The industries in the region are small scale and utilize local resources in a way that respects and supports the ecology of the region. Open space is protected as development is contained in dense urban areas, and walkable communities help reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Housing is smaller and more energy efficient, and uses new technology to reduce consumption of resources. All stakeholders in the Gorge strive to protect the environment and reduce their impact, while enjoying the natural beauty and resources of the region.

Scenic Beauty and NSA (106)

Respondents envision a future where the scenic and natural beauty of the Gorge has been protected and continues to be an attraction for both locals and visitors. Development in the Gorge is sensitive to the natural beauty and has minimal visual impact. The regulations of the NSA are enforced and respected, although some residents wish to see these regulations eased for sustainable, “off-grid” houses that have low visual impact. New technology also allows development of building materials that blend into the natural environment. View sheds in the Gorge are protected not only within the boundaries of the NSA, but are also protected from development in the surrounding areas, so all views within the Gorge remain pristine.

Alternative Energy (84)

Respondents envision a Gorge that is energy independent – using alternative and innovative methods to power the Gorge region with clean energy, and possibly even producing enough clean energy to export. This alternative energy is developed in a way that still protects the scenic beauty and character of the Gorge. Wind and solar power are utilized, but in ways that make the production visually subordinate – industrial wind turbines are not visible from within the scenic area. Rather, energy production is distributed, with small scale but widespread production, such as solar panels on every rooftop, or biomass facilities within each community. Zoning and land use regulations help promote the development of small scale and residential power production. Water storage and power alternatives help to free the river from hydropower dams. Solar, wind, geothermal, and biomass facilities all play a role in localized, carbon-free energy production.

Outdoor Recreation (80)

Outdoor recreation will be an important part of the Gorge culture and economy. Open spaces and nature will be preserved to ensure continued recreation opportunities. Long-term planning for sustainability will ensure diverse recreational opportunities with minimal impact. Recreational areas will be distributed and connected throughout the Gorge with trails and adequate visitor facilities that get people out of their vehicles and into the environment. Recreation will be managed with respect to the environment, though, and even as access for recreation is increased, certain areas will be protected from human activities. Some respondents see an increase in hunting and fishing, as well as wildlife refuges and interpretive opportunities that allow people to learn about the region as they enjoy the outdoors.

Air and Water Quality (75)

Respondents see a Gorge with clean air and water. The air and water quality is at a minimum maintained at current levels, but ideally improved over time. The rivers will be clean enough to safely swim in and even drink from. Regulations help ensure that the water in the Gorge is kept clean and plentiful. Air pollution is limited and reduced, so that skies will be clear all year round – enhancing the views of the mountains and night stars.

Wildlife (63)

Wildlife populations in the Gorge will be thriving and abundant. An increase in wildlife corridors and protected habitats will allow native wildlife to thrive and endangered species to recover. Land use will be done with consideration for native wildlife, and knowledge of local species will be encouraged. Species loss will be stopped, and several people also envision a return of the California condor to the gorge. Wildlife populations along with people will enjoy a better quality of life in the Gorge.

Salmon and Fishing (39)

Many respondents discussing this topic want to see an increase of efforts to protect salmon, and an increase in the salmon population. Although some saw a decrease or stopping of fishing as part of the future, others saw an increase of fishing or a protection for fishing by tribal communities and the establishment of tribal fish markets. Some respondents envision a restoration of healthy salmon populations so they can serve as a local food source. The removal of dams to restore salmon runs, or, the installation of fish weirs or salmon friendly dams, as well as stream buffers to protect salmon habitats were suggested by respondents.

Pollution (38)

The Gorge will enjoy a reduction in all kinds of pollution. There will be less exhaust and noise pollution from vehicles as transportation alternatives are developed and restrictions are placed on driving and trains traveling through the Gorge. There will also be a decrease in acid rain and light pollution. Major pollution sites such as coal plants or feedlots will be cleaned up and prevented through regulations. Businesses and residents in the Gorge will commit to having a 'lighter footprint' on the land and eliminating or reducing their pollution.

Economy [275]

A total of 275 unique text units received one or more codes within the family entitled, “Economy.” The following paragraphs summarize the nine individual codes and are presented in order of highest to lowest frequency. The number in parentheses after each code heading represents the number of coded text units identified for the given topic.

Local and Regional Economy (123)

Respondents envision a Gorge economy that is vibrant, diverse, and sustainable. For some, this means local communities have built up unique, niche, industries that fit together into a regional whole. Tourism and outdoor recreation are an important part of the economy, but are balanced by other industries that help meet the needs of local residents year-round. The economy allows full-time residents to live and work in their own communities. There are small cottage industries and environmentally sustainable businesses that are built on the local resources. High-tech industries will also play a role in the regional economy, with small e-based businesses that allow residents to telecommute or operate their own successful businesses out of their homes. A variety of small, local businesses will help support diverse and thriving communities.

Housing (102)

When discussing housing, affordable housing options were the primary issue raised by respondents. They want to see more diversity in housing options, allowing people of all incomes to live affordably and even have the opportunity to purchase their own homes. They want to see proactive steps taken to ensure that affordable housing remains available long-term. They want to see denser, mixed housing – with housing kept within urban areas, so people from a variety of backgrounds and generations can live together within accessible and well-planned communities, while preserving green spaces. Some Gorge residents would also like to see restrictions eased to facilitate the development of off-grid homes, and to allow people to put micro-energy production systems like solar panels or windmills in place on their homes. They would also like to see smaller, more efficient housing in general.

Tourism (84)

Tourism will be an important part of the Gorge, but will be balanced with other aspects of the economy and culture so that both tourists and locals can enjoy the region year-round. Visitors will be respectful of the environment, and tourism will be managed sustainably. Some see a future where tourists can take mass transit into and around the Gorge, allowing them to be car-free. Tourists will be attracted to the Gorge's natural environment as well as the unique local cultures, with tourists visiting to learn about the way of life and models of the local communities. Local businesses will cater to both locals and tourists. The natural environment and recreation areas of the Gorge will be protected and remain a valuable eco-tourism destination into the future.

Jobs and Wages (71)

Respondents envision Gorge communities with a variety of jobs for residents, and high employment rates. An increase in family wage jobs in particular will allow everyone to afford to live in their own communities. Some also envision communications technology allowing more people to telecommute for work.

Small and Local Businesses (59)

Respondents see Gorge communities with thriving small businesses, which meet the daily needs of residents and provide employment. They envision economic development that encourages local entrepreneurship, with a variety of shops, restaurants, home-based businesses, and sustainable cottage industries that are owned and operated by local residents.

Agriculture (48)

Many see the Gorge as an agricultural community, and see farming protected and encouraged into the future. A diverse and sustainable agricultural industry will form the basis of the regional economy, providing livelihoods and food for residents. Some see agriculture coordinated with tourism, with tourists attracted to the region to visit farms and vineyards, and to learn from the Gorge's model of food production. This agriculture will be an important part of the economy, as well as the local culture. Preservation of farmland and policies that encourage agriculture will be part of preserving the Gorge's unique identity and environment.

Local Food Systems (39)

Gorge residents will be able to easily access food that is grown and produced locally. Towns will have local organic and community gardens, and the Gorge will have thriving 'Community Supported Agriculture' farms. Local farmers markets will also bring local produce to local residents, and some respondents also envision local tribal fish markets. Small and organic farms will be connected with local consumers and supported by a 'buy local' ethic in the communities.

Casino (21)

The majority of respondents referencing this topic were against developing a casino in the Gorge. Some respondents, however, envision a casino as an important part of the economic development in Cascade Locks, in combination with environmentally sustainable planning and development.

Technology (19)

Respondents see a Gorge where cutting edge technology keeps communities connected, provides jobs, and shapes sustainable development. Faster communications and niche technology businesses help create employment opportunities. Innovative technology shapes development, creating new, low-impact energy production that utilizes hydro- and solar energy, as well as low-impact, energy efficient buildings and transportation.

Land Use and Development [258]

A total of 258 unique text units received one or more codes within the family entitled, "Land Use and Development." The following paragraphs summarize the five individual codes and are presented in order of highest to lowest frequency. The number in parentheses after each code heading represents the number of coded text units identified for the given topic.

Urban Growth and Development (145)

Many respondents see future growth and development in the Gorge as a slow, deliberate, and well-managed process. Development outside the urban areas will be at a minimum restricted and only allowed in a way that does not impact the environment or scenic beauty of the area. Some respondents see ex-urban development being stopped completely, although a few respondents do see towns being allowed to expand outward with fewer limits. Many see towns becoming consolidated within broader open spaces - increasing in density and developing vibrant, walkable downtowns with mixed-use developments. Urban development will occur in a way that protects or enhances the natural environment and scenic beauty of the Gorge, creating livable communities and preserving open spaces and agricultural lands. Towns will also have well-used and maintained parks and community spaces like town squares. Development will occur with respect for the quality of life of Gorge residents and the natural environment.

Resource and Land Management (98)

Respondents see a future where conservation of the natural resources of the Gorge is a priority for both the government and the residents. Environmental rules and regulations will be enforced. Land will be carefully managed with areas designated for different uses, with recreation access preserved, but with certain areas set aside for protection. Forests in the Gorge will be healthy and well-maintained, with a few respondents wanting to see a reduction in wildfire hazards from dead trees. Some respondents would like to see an end to clear-cutting in the forests, with more sustainable forest products and industry being developed. Others want to see areas set aside and designated as planned old-growth forest, or conservation easements on federal lands. However, a few people wished to see an increase in access to federal lands for logging. Respondents also want to see effective water conservation, as well as conservation of other resources particular to the Gorge, such as the natural beauty and environment, energy sources, and agricultural land.

Dams and Waterways (62)

Some respondents want to see the Columbia River become a focal point for the Gorge economy and culture, being used for transportation to link towns as well as recreation. They want to see improved access to the river for recreation accompanied by efforts to protect the river and the shoreline. A few respondents wish to see low-impact developments along the shoreline. Many who discussed this topic want to see the river become clean enough to swim in and drink from, while many also wanted to see the dams removed and salmon runs and falls restored.

Trails (46)

Many respondents envision a system of trails that connects all the communities in the Gorge, allowing tourists to access and travel through the area without motorized vehicles, and residents to bike or walk for their everyday needs. Some see off-road bike routes that would follow the path of I-84, while others see a system of linked trails that accommodate bike travel as well as recreation hiking or mountain biking. These trails would increase access between towns, allowing residents to bike or walk for shopping - promoting alternative transportation while also supporting small businesses in the region. Other respondents see this network of trails serviced by mass transit options, attracting visitors from Portland who can travel into and around the region without a car – a few envision this option accompanied by a ban on visitors driving cars into the Gorge. Maintaining trail access and safety, and developing historic trails on both sides of the river were also mentioned by a few respondents.

Parks and Open Spaces (41)

Respondents see the Gorge continuing to have abundant open and green spaces. Many who discussed parks see buildings and housing consolidated into dense areas within protected open spaces. They see natural areas that are designated as areas for wildlife or recreation and protected accordingly. Some respondents want to see more parks along the rivers or more parks within towns that can serve as community spaces. Others wish to see an expansion of the federal saved areas or designated conservation districts. Preservation of open space will allow continued recreational use of the area and will help protect the health of the local ecosystem.

Transportation and Infrastructure [178]

A total of 178 unique text units received one or more codes within the family entitled, "Environment." The following paragraphs summarize the five individual codes and are presented in order of highest to lowest frequency. The number in parentheses after each code heading represents the number of coded text units identified for the given topic.

Mass Transit and Alternative Transportation (130)

Residents of the Gorge placed an emphasis on developing an effective, well-managed mass transit system and supporting a wide range of alternative modes of transportation. The use of trains, especially commuter trains, was frequently suggested as away to improve transportation within and around the Gorge, as well as to reduce the use of cars. Walking and biking were encouraged as ways to access communities and scenic areas, with many respondents suggesting that a network of trails be established that was connected by a mass transit system. Other suggestions for modes of transportation included street cars, trams, light rail, buses and boats, with a focus on establishing a convenient, fuel-efficient, accessible, cost-effective mix of transportation options. Some respondents encouraged taking transportation underground as a means to preserve the scenic beauty of the area. A priority was placed on public transportation that has low environmental impact. One respondent proposed that the Gorge consider incorporating magnetically levitating trains into the system to transport electricity and people. A number of respondents pointed out that telecommuting would also be a form of "alternative transportation" that could be encouraged to reduce traffic and the negative impact on the environment.

Regional Transportation Network (50)

Respondents' vision of the Gorge is an array of unique, often independent communities that are interconnected through an effective transportation system. Not only would that transportation network connect the Gorge communities, both east to west and north to south (i.e., across the river), but it would also connect the Gorge to the Portland metro area. Some respondents suggested the inclusion of a high-speed, commuter train between Portland and other cities and towns along the Gorge. The regional transportation network would support mobility, facilitate local economies, and increase access to various parts of the Scenic Area. The transportation could take the form of a commuter train, light rail, a speed train, a ferry system, a 6-lane freeway, and/or feeder bus lines to park & ride lots. Residents prioritized a transportation system that is environmentally-sound, rapid, convenient, cost-effective, accessible, innovative, clean, and safe.

Biking and Walking (48)

Respondents reported valuing the option of biking and walking as a means of getting around in the Gorge. They identified bike and pedestrian paths as a mechanism to connect communities, to reduce the reliance on motorized vehicles in the area, to increase bike-riding tourism and to create “bikable” and “walkable” communities. To support this, however, respondents called for an increase in the number and safety of biking and walking paths, including on bridges (see section below). Some respondents offered specific suggestions, including “turn Hwy 30 into non-motorized route”, establishing commuter trains or ferry boats to support bicyclists and pedestrians and connect communities and support the economy, and creating “multi-use trails for bicycle and pedestrian travel fashioned after the river where segments attach to and eddy down to local communities.”

Highways and Roads (45)

Some suggestions were made regarding the highways and roads throughout the Gorge. Respondents called for more, better, eco-friendly and well-maintained highways. Some specific suggestions included limiting the traffic on Highway 14 to just local access, adding lanes to I-84 to fully support industrial traffic, carrying freight on barges rather than on roads, turning Highway 30 into a non-motorized route and making I-84 and Hwy 14 toll roads. One recommended way to route larger trucks to acceptable highways was to include weigh stations for close monitoring. Respondents had a clear desire for a balance between the natural surroundings of the Gorge with the need for public and commercial transportation. A few respondents thought that the highways could be partially raised or culverts be created to allow wildlife access to the river, while another respondent suggested that parts of I-84 be submerged. The priority of ensuring that the Historic Columbia River Highway be reconnected, maintained and preserved was clear.

Bridge (22)

Gorge residents mentioned the value of having new and/or improved bridges across the Columbia River. Some of those respondents specifically requested a new Hood River bridge, others suggested new bridge locations (e.g., “from Troutdale to Steamboat in Washougal” or “from Bingen”) and others just called for a new, state-of-the-art river crossing. Many mentioned that the bridge(s) should safely accommodate bicycles and pedestrians along with motor vehicles. Finally, requests were made for the bridge(s) to be cheaper or completely free, as well as quiet.

Conclusions

The above summaries are intended as a guide – providing an overview of key topics that can be used to frame a vision plan as well as serve as a reference for other purposes in the future. This analysis provides a foundation from which the data can be further synthesized or organized into different higher-order themes, although the value of the individual responses and coded data is never lost. The details of individual responses, or those unique responses that could be considered outliers, may be hidden within these overview summaries. Consequently, individual responses should always be considered when drawing final conclusions, as each individual brings with them different contextual knowledge that may influence how the data can be interpreted.