

# CHAPTER 1

## PLAN BACKGROUND

### **Introduction**

Auburn's Comprehensive Plan unfolds as several layers of background, data, policies and plans set the direction to the future. While the Growth Management Act, Vision 2040 , and the King and Pierce County Planning Policies provide an overall framework for the plan; the foundation of the Plan exists in the aspirations of the people whom it will affect.

### **History**

From its beginnings, Auburn was a crossroads. Tribal groups such as the Skopamish, Smalhkamish, and Stkamish lived along the Green and White/Stuck Rivers. They forged trails over the Cascade Mountains, traded with tribes living east of the mountains and canoed down river to gather shellfish and trade with coastal tribes.

### **The 1800s**

In the mid-1800's, the first pioneers arrived in the White River Valley lured by the free and fertile land. In 1856 and 1857, a series of clashes occurred between the Indians who had long inhabited the area and the newly arrived settlers. The Point Elliott and Medicine Creek Treaties were signed which eventually resulted in the establishment of the Muckleshoot Reservation and recognized the Tribe's rights to off-reservation resources.

Railroads reached the area in the 1880's and brought adventurers from the East and Midwest United States, as well as Europe and Asia. Early farmers, many emigrants from Europe and Japan, tilled the rich soil and planted hops and other crops. The harvests were abundant and soon the White River Valley became one of the prime agricultural centers in the region.

In 1891, the future City of Auburn incorporated as the Town of Slaughter, named in honor of Lieutenant Slaughter who was killed in the Indian Wars. The name did not remain for long. The State legislature passed a bill on February 21, 1893, which changed the town's name to Auburn. A number of stories exist as to the name's origin with the most romantic concerning a reference to the first line of Oliver Goldsmith's 1770 poem, *The Deserted Village*: "Sweet Auburn! Loveliest village of the plain." In 1895, Auburn's population was approximately 300 people.

### **The 1900s**

As the area became more populated, the annual flooding of the rivers that provided the area with its fertile soils began to create problems. The White River had a particularly broad floodplain and flood waters would spread

over a large portion of the valley. During floods, debris would often choke the river and water would be diverted to the Stuck River. A record flood in 1906 resulted in a decision to permanently seal off the White River channel and to divert all water into the Stuck River. The diversion dam was built in 1913 and over the ensuing years, the former channel of the White River has been filled in and developed. Flooding remained an issue in the valley, however. To resolve these continuing problems, the Mud Mountain Dam was completed in 1950 on the upper White River and the Howard Hanson Dam was completed in 1962 on the Upper Green River.

Auburn's central location between Seattle and Tacoma has been a key factor in the rapid growth of the area. A powerhouse built in 1911 on the upper White River served Auburn and the cities of Seattle and Tacoma. This facility also served the legendary Interurban Railway. In 1910 the Northern Pacific Railroad selected the town as the site of its western freight terminal. When scores of permanent rail workers arrived and needed housing, Auburn experienced its first population boom. Between 1910 and 1920, the City's population expanded from 960 to 3,160 people, an increase of almost 230 percent.

World War II saw the second transformation of Auburn. The most dramatic change, however, affected the local Japanese American community. When the federal government relocated the residents of Japanese ancestry to distant internment camps for the duration of the war, many families lost businesses, homes and farms. Most of these families never returned.

Although Auburn remained a strong agricultural community for some time, the city became more industrialized in the years following the War. The Boeing Company opened an aircraft plant in Auburn in the 1960's and by the 1980s employed over 10,000 people at its Auburn plant. Other large employers moved into the area including the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) and the General Services Administration (GSA). Auburn Regional Medical Center has increased in size and provides health care to the South King County region. Numerous other businesses moved to Auburn as the availability of high quality industrial land with good access to transportation and relatively low cost lured them to the area. In 1994, over 26,000 people worked within the City of Auburn.

With the increase in the number of jobs came a rapid increase in the number of residents. By 1970, the population of the City reached over 21,000 people and by 2004 approximately 46,000 people.

As Auburn grew, its role within the Puget Sound region has evolved. Historically, Auburn has been treated as a relatively minor player in the region. Its relatively small population and perceived isolation in South

King County led to its being overshadowed in the region by the larger and more centrally located cities further north.

**The present  
and future**

The SuperMall signaled the beginning of a new era of Auburn's evolution. Auburn shoppers no longer needed to travel to regional malls outside of the community for most purchases. More importantly, consumers throughout the region now come to Auburn to do their shopping and Auburn is a major player in regional retailing. The construction of the Emerald Downs Racetrack, increased development on the Muckleshoot Reservation, Auburn Station with its parking garage and ground floor retail, and Auburn Downtown's designation as an urban center have greatly increased Auburn's significance in the region.

**Community  
Profile**

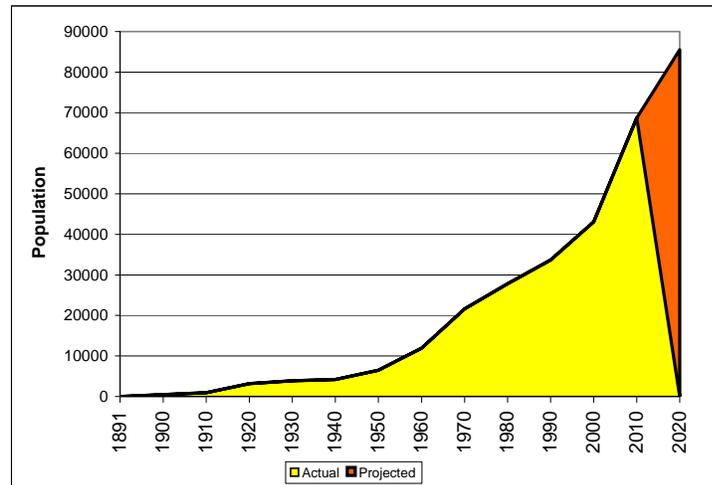
*Demographics*

This section provides demographic information about Auburn primarily taken from the 2000 United States Census. Census data tends to put the features and attributes of a community into prescribed groups of information. Grouping the data into prescribed categories enables the comparison of one community to another. It helps identify averages and trends. Since the information pertains primarily to average tendencies, a lot of individual exceptions are likely to exist. Nonetheless, from these average tendencies a common character begins to emerge that generally describes Auburn.

*Population Characteristics*

In 2008, Auburn ranks as the 13th most populated city within the State of Washington. It is located within the two most populous counties in the state (King and Pierce counties).

**Figure 1.1**  
**Population of Auburn**



Source: City of Auburn's 2020 Population Estimate, April 6, 2004

Since the 1950's, Auburn's population has steadily increased. Between 1960 to 1980, Auburn's population increased an average of 8% per year. From 1980 to 1994, Auburn's population growth slowed to approximately 1.7% per year. In 1998 the City of Auburn began annexing several large tracts of land that precipitated the start of several large housing developments. The annexation of southwest Lea Hill in Year 2000 increased Auburn's population by nearly 3,000 people. As a result, Auburn's population growth doubled to an average of nearly 3.6% per year. More recent annexations have increased the City's population significantly. Based on figures from the Washington State Office of Financial Management and City records, Auburn's 2008 population is approximately 67,000.

### ***Racial Characteristics***

Approximately 79% of Auburn's population are white/non-Hispanic and 21% are people of color and/or Hispanic. This compares to 90% white/non-Hispanic and 10% people of color/Hispanic in 1990. From 1990 to 2000, approximately 28% of Auburn's new residents were white and the remaining 72% were people of color. Approximately 42% of Auburn's new residents between 1990 to 2000 were Latinos. Another racial group that increased its population in Auburn over the past 10 years was Native Americans. Figure 1.2 represents the projected racial distribution of Auburn if existing trends continue over the next 20 years, however it does not reflect the added population resulting from the recent annexations in 2008, as detailed information was not available.

**Figure 1.2**  
**Auburn's Projected Ethnic Population**

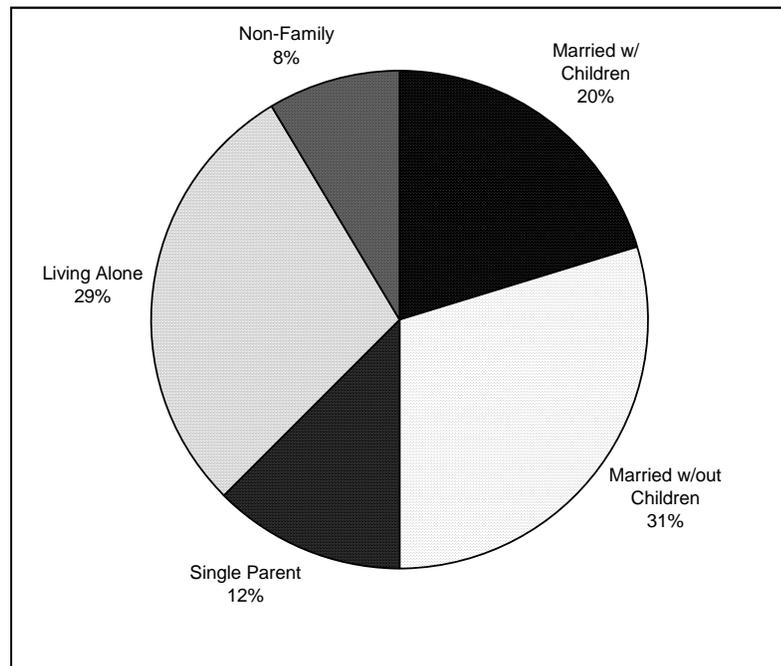
| Total Population                          | 2000   | 2000    | 2010   | 2010    | 2020   | 2020    |
|---|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
|   | count  | % Total | count  | % Total | count  | % Total |
| Total                                     | 40,314 | 100%    | 54,596 | 100%    | 71,608 | 100%    |
| White                                     | 33,382 | 83%     | 41,525 | 76%     | 51,348 | 72%     |
| Black/ African American                   | 977    | 2%      | 1,824  | 3%      | 2,818  | 4%      |
| American Indian and Alaska Native         | 1,024  | 3%      | 1,609  | 3%      | 2,300  | 3%      |
| Asian, Native Hawaiian & Pacific Islander | 1,614  | 4%      | 2,671  | 5%      | 3,916  | 5%      |
| Other Race                                | 1,477  | 4%      | 3,121  | 6%      | 5,037  | 7%      |
| Two or More Races **                      | 1,840  | 5%      | 3,847  | 7%      | 6,189  | 9%      |
| Total: People of Color                    | 6,932  | 17%     | 13,072 | 24%     | 20,260 | 28%     |
| Hispanic                                  | 3,019  | 7%      | 6,104  | 11%     | 9,710  | 14%     |

Source: Extrapolated from the Year 1980, 1990, 2000 U.S. Census

### *Household Characteristics*

The year 2000 Census indicates Auburn had 16,108 households. Families with children comprise less than one-third of Auburn's total households. Single parents, mostly, women, head approximately 12% of family households with children. A nearly equal number of households are people living alone or married couples with no children.

**Figure 1.3**  
**Types of Auburn Households**

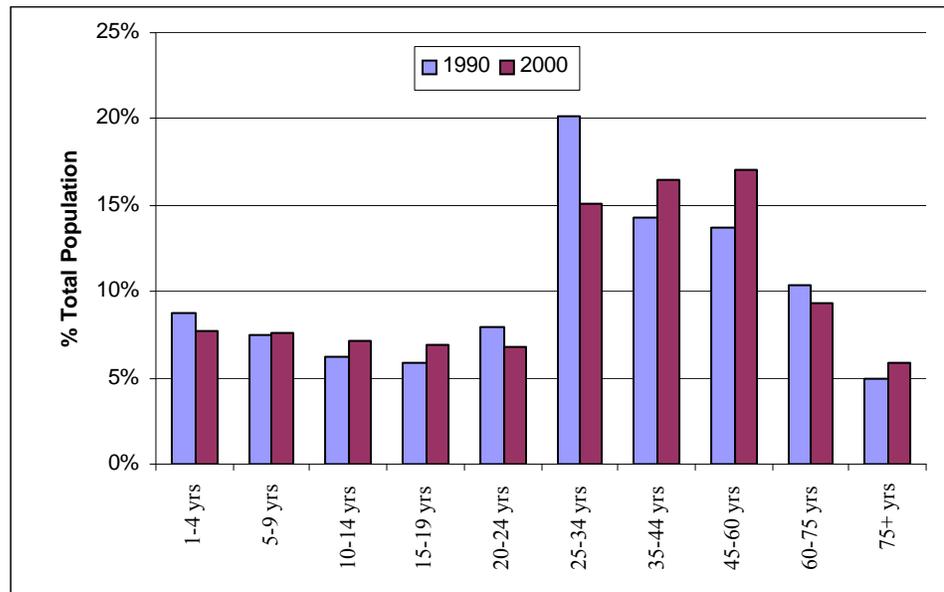


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Year 2000 Census

### *Age Characteristics*

The median age of the Auburn resident has increased from 31.6 years in 1990 to 34.1 years of age in the year 2000. Figure 1.4 illustrates the change in Auburn's age groups between 1990 and 2000. Of note is that the age groups between 35-60 years increased. Approximately 22 percent of Auburn's population are school age children (5-19 years). Seniors account for 15% of Auburn's total population – which is about the same as 1990 and slightly higher than the King County average (13%).

**Figure 1.4**  
**Auburn's Population Sorted by Age Group**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Year 2000 Census

### ***English Speaking***

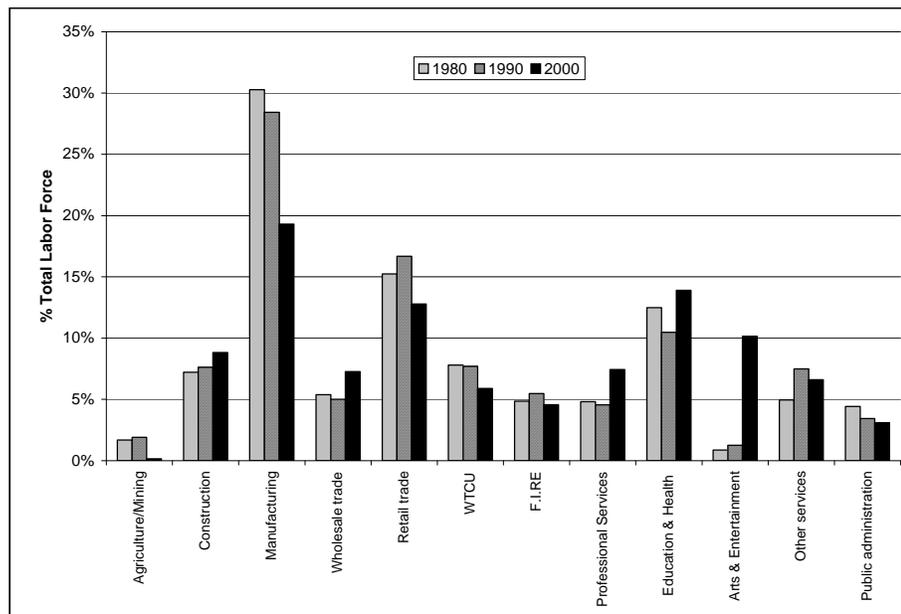
Approximately 14 percent of Auburn's population speaks a language other than English in their homes. A total of 750 (five percent) households identify themselves as households where no person 14 years of age or older speak only English or speak English very well. The principal household languages other than English are Spanish, Ukraine, Vietnamese and Russian.

### ***Resident Labor Force***

Since its population boom during the construction of the railroad freight terminals at the start of the 20th Century; Auburn has remained a blue collar community. The term -- blue collar-- refers to communities where a large number of its residents earn their livelihoods by wearing work clothes (i.e. blue denim overalls) or protective clothing. This trend, however, is declining. In 1990 one out of four of Auburn's residents worked in the manufacturing industries. Between 1990 and 2000 Auburn's resident labor force lost 1,000, or approximately one-fourth, of these manufacturing workers. Although Auburn's resident labor force increased by 2,540 workers, nearly 70% of these new jobs were in hospitality and entertainment industries. Over the next twenty years, new development in areas such as Lakeland Hills South the City can expect its resident labor force to be engaged to a greater degree in non-manufacturing employment. Figure 1.5 compares the composition of

Auburn's resident labor force in the Year 2000 to the 1980 and 1990 Census data.

**Figure 1.5**  
**Change in Auburn's Resident Labor Force**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), approximately 38,058 jobs are located in Auburn. More than half of these jobs are located in the City's west side which is characterized by region serving uses. The Census indicates Auburn residents fill approximately 5,811 (15%) of these. Roughly 69% of Auburn's adult labor force work outside of Auburn. Their average commute time in Year 2000 was 23 minutes compared to 19 minutes in Year 1990.

***Income Characteristics***

Low-income is defined as a household that earns less than 80% of the King County median household income (KCMI). In the year 2000, the King County median household income increased to \$53,000 per year. The definition of low income subsequently increased to include those households earning less than \$42,000 per year. In the year 2000, 53% of Auburn's households earned less than \$42,000 per year and, therefore, are low income.

**Figure 1.6**  
**Auburn's Median Incomes**

|                         | Auburn   |          |          | King County |          |          |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|----------|----------|
|                         | 1990     | 2000     | % Change | 1990        | 2000     | % Change |
| Per Capita Income       | \$13,866 | \$19,630 | 42%      | \$18,587    | \$29,521 | 59%      |
| Median Household Income | \$30,007 | \$39,208 | 31%      | \$36,179    | \$53,157 | 47%      |
| Median Family Income    | \$35,198 | \$45,426 | 29%      | \$44,555    | \$66,035 | 48%      |

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### **Poverty**

One reason Auburn's median household income lag behind the rest of King County is the increase in the number of Auburn households who live in poverty. Between 1990 and 2000, the number of Auburn residents living in poverty increased 43%. It is unclear how much of this increase is due to poverty-stricken people moving into Auburn or existing low-income households losing ground and slipping into poverty. In any event, it is one of the reasons Auburn's median income levels remained comparatively lower than the rest of King County. In the year 2000, roughly 5,000 Auburn residents, or 12% of its total population, live in poverty.

### **Housing Characteristics**

The number of housing units increased 31% from 14,786 in 1994 to 19,420 in 2004. A large number of these new homes were the result of recent annexations. The City of Auburn recently annexed Southwest Lea Hill and portions of Pierce County. Both of these annexation areas are growing at a substantially higher rate than the areas within Auburn's city limits prior to year 2000. Single-family housing remains the predominant type of housing at 46% of the total compared to 42% for multi-family housing and 12% for mobile homes.

**Figure 1.7**  
**Auburn's Housing Supply: 1990-2004**

| Type          | 1990          | 1994          | 2000          | 2004          | % Total     | 10 yr Diff   | % Diff     |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|------------|
| 1-unit        | 6,117         | 6,366         | 7,913         | 8,990         | 46%         | 2,624        | 41%        |
| 2-units       | 781           | 813           | 916           | 976           | 5%          | 163          | 20%        |
| 3&4 units     | 1,366         | 1,485         | 1,670         | 1,717         | 9%          | 232          | 16%        |
| 5+ units      | 3,751         | 3,916         | 4,782         | 5,385         | 28%         | 1,469        | 38%        |
| MH units      | 2,041         | 2,106         | 2,359         | 2,298         | 12%         | 192          | 9%         |
| SP-units      | 100           | 100           | 44            | 54            | 0%          | na           | na         |
| <b>totals</b> | <b>14,156</b> | <b>14,786</b> | <b>17,684</b> | <b>19,420</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>4,634</b> | <b>31%</b> |

Source: State of Washington Office of Financial Management

More than half (53%) of the housing units in Auburn are owner-occupied. The median year in which both rental and homeowner housing units were built was 1976 or 24 years ago. The average length of tenure of an Auburn homeowner is six years; whereas the average tenure of a renter is one year.

### **Employment Characteristics**

The City of Auburn's Comprehensive Land Use Plan divides the city into three parts. The west Auburn is designed to serve the Central Puget Sound region. East Auburn contains the majority of residential areas and downtown Auburn connects the two. In the year 2000 the Puget Sound Regional Council estimated nearly 38,500 people worked in Auburn. According to the Year 2000 Census, Auburn residents fill approximately 5,811 or 15% of the jobs located in Auburn. Over 32,000 people drive into Auburn each day to work. Some observe that Auburn has two distinct populations, a daytime population of people who earn their livelihoods in Auburn and a night/weekend population of people who live in Auburn but earn their livelihoods in other communities.

Figure 1.8 represents the distribution of jobs covered by unemployment insurance that located in Auburn. Since 1990 Auburn has lost nearly one-fourth of its manufacturing jobs. However, jobs in all of the other industries have significantly increased. Retail jobs have increased due, in large part, to the developments in and around the SuperMall. Construction jobs have increased as result of the large housing subdivisions underway in South Auburn. Jobs provided by the Muckleshoot Nation at their casino and other industries have more than doubled the number of jobs in the "Government / Tribal" category.

**Figure 1.8  
Jobs Located In Auburn**

|                      | 1990          | 1995          | 2000          | 2002          |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| <i>Const/Res</i>     | 871           | 1,681         | 3,642         | 2,795         |
| <i>FIRES</i>         | 4,267         | 5,306         | 7,156         | 6,378         |
| <i>Manufacturing</i> | 13,402        | 11,432        | 11,850        | 9,993         |
| <i>Retail</i>        | 4,267         | 4,565         | 6,978         | 6,933         |
| <i>WTCU</i>          | 2,214         | 3,264         | 5,946         | 4,713         |
| <i>Education</i>     | 1,368         | 1,166         | 1,422         | 1,425         |
| <i>Gvmt / Tribe</i>  | 1,202         | 1,247         | 1,496         | 3,659         |
| <i>Total</i>         | <b>27,591</b> | <b>28,663</b> | <b>38,490</b> | <b>35,895</b> |

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council,

In 2004 the area in the vicinity of Downtown Auburn was designated as an urban center. The King County Countywide Planning Policies establish a criteria for a minimum of 15,000 jobs within a half-mile radius of transit centers, which in Auburn's case is located in downtown. As result of this urban center designation and the implementation of the long-range plans that it entails, the number of jobs located in Downtown Auburn will significantly increase over the next 20 years.

## Planning Process

Through a comprehensive planning process a community seeks to understand itself, its problems and potentials, and the forces which will shape its future. On the basis of this understanding a city develops a response which can shape and prepare the community for the future. This plan culminates this process and states the City's policy to guide its way into the future.

Initial development of this plan in 1986 involved a range of diverse activities organized into four general steps.

### Step 1: Issue Identification

Planning Department staff completed a series of discussion papers which assessed various aspects of the community. These papers were prepared in close consultation with the City Planning Commission and the City Council Committee on Planning and Community Development to assure relevance of those studies to the concerns of the City's policy officials. (See the Appendix for a description of these studies.)

## **Step 2: Public Input**

A key component of the process was to actively solicit and encourage general public comment regarding the community and the public's view of its future. A series of neighborhood meetings were held between April and June of 1985 to gain citizen input to the planning process and to ensure that the City officials had a good understanding of citizen views as they established the goals and policies of the Plan.

## **Step 3: Policy Development**

The information gathered and obtained regarding the community and the views of its people became the basis for the Plan's policies. These policies were developed through an analysis of the issues that were raised by the first two steps. Staff then prepared recommendations regarding policy alternatives. The Planning Commission spent approximately 6 months reviewing these recommendations.

## **Step 4: Adoption**

The "Staff Draft and Recommendations" for the City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan was submitted to the Planning Commission in January, 1986. The Planning Commission reviewed and refined the Draft Plan during several regular and special meetings during the next four months, assisted by public input received at two public hearings held during that period. On May 6, 1986 the Planning Commission completed its review and formulated its recommendation to the City Council to adopt the "Staff Draft and Recommendations" as revised by 31 specific modifications.

Following receipt of the Planning Commission's recommendation, the City Council held a public hearing and referred the proposed Comprehensive Plan to its Committee on Planning and Community Development (PCDC). The Committee completed its review in July and forwarded its recommendations to the full Council. The Comprehensive Plan was formally adopted by the City Council on August 18, 1986.

## **Amendments for GMA Compliance**

The passage of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990 (see below) necessitated an update of this Comprehensive Plan. The update occurred in phases based upon the deadlines for compliance which were included in the Act. In 1991, the City revised its Urban Growth and Expansion Element. The following year, Auburn amended this plan and its development regulations to ensure that critical lands such as wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, steep slopes and floodplains were identified and

protected. In 1995, additional amendments were adopted to bring this plan into compliance with the Act.

## **Public Participation**

As with the initial adoption of this plan, the public played a key role in amending it for growth management compliance. To ensure that the widest range of the public was involved, Auburn used a multifaceted approach toward public involvement as shown below:

### *Neighborhood Meetings:*

Seven neighborhood meetings were held during the Summer of 1992 throughout the community to provide for both formal and informal interaction between citizens and planning staff members. Information was disseminated concerning planning and Growth Management, written surveys distributed and oral comments were taken. These meetings did not exclusively focus on planning to attract a wider spectrum of the public -- those interested in health and safety issues, crime, recreation, or community facilities and services -- in addition to those interested in planning issues. A total of over 150 residents attended these meetings.

### *Speaker Availability*

Numerous presentations were made to organizations, neighborhood groups and other groups of individuals who desired more information regarding growth management or planning issues. These informal talks were typically held in settings that the group felt most comfortable in, and during the regularly scheduled meeting time of the groups. These meetings were held throughout the planning process.

### *Articles in the AUBURN UPDATE Community Newsletter*

Easy to understand articles provided the public with information regarding growth management issues, Growth Management contacts, and the availability of speakers. The Auburn Update is distributed to all postal customers -- both residential and commercial -- within the two zip codes that cover the Auburn area.

### *News Releases*

The media was provided with updates regarding neighborhood meetings, planning issues, and growth management contacts.

### *Planning Commission Workshops*

From April to July 1994, the Planning Commission held a series of workshops to review the draft amendments to the comprehensive plan. All of these meetings were open to the public. These drafts were made available prior to the meeting and public comment was encouraged on the drafts at any time.

### *Open Houses*

In September and October 1994, three open houses were held to gain public comment on the Draft Amended Plan. Over 100 residents attended these informal meetings.

### *Public Hearings*

In addition to these opportunities for informal input, the formal adoption process included the required public hearings in front of both the Planning Commission and the City Council. The Planning Commission held hearings in October, November and December, 1994. At the December 6, 1994, hearing the Commission voted unanimously to forward the Plan to the City Council (as modified by an addendum) with a recommendation for adoption. Final Council adoption of the amendments occurred after a public hearing on April 17, 1995.

### *Annual Amendment Process*

Since the time of the GMA Comprehensive Plan's adoption in 1995 the City of Auburn has amended the comprehensive plan on an annual basis as provided for by State law. Amendments outside of the annual amendment process have also occurred during this time frame using the emergency provision allowed by the Growth Management Act.

The amendment process affords the public an opportunity to request changes to the plan annually to address changing circumstances and also has allowed the City to address amendments to State law and the changing needs of the community.

## **Washington State's GMA**

### *The Washington State Growth Management Act*

During the 1980's, Auburn, King County and the entire Puget Sound region experienced an extremely rapid rate of growth in both population and employment. This rapid growth brought with it increased traffic congestion, air and water pollution, increased housing costs and the loss of acres of natural areas and resource lands. In response to these problems,

the State Legislature passed HB 2929, the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990 and amendments in each of the following years.

The GMA requires that Auburn, King County and all jurisdictions within the county develop comprehensive plans which meet statewide goals. The GMA contains the following 14 statewide planning goals which must be considered as local jurisdictions develop and adopt comprehensive plans.

- GOAL 1 Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- GOAL 2 Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- GOAL 3 Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- GOAL 4 Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all segments of the population, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
- GOAL 5 Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- GOAL 6 Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
- GOAL 7 Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- GOAL 8 Maintain and enhance natural resource based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
- GOAL 9 Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.

- GOAL 10 Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- GOAL 11 Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- GOAL 12 Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
- GOAL 13 Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- GOAL 14 The goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 98.58.020.

The basic objective of the GMA is to give guidance and encouragement to all jurisdictions planning under the Act as they develop their vision in accordance with state-wide goals. While meeting these goals required a significant rewrite of the existing comprehensive plans for some jurisdictions, Auburn's comprehensive plan was adopted in 1986 and included many of the goals and provisions of the Act. Even taking this into account however, Auburn undertook a number of activities to make its comprehensive plan consistent with the requirements of the Act.

These activities included the following:

- Designation of, in conjunction with King and Pierce Counties, an urban growth area sufficient to accommodate population growth to 2012.
- Designation of, in conjunction with King and Pierce Counties and adjacent jurisdictions, a potential annexation area for the City of Auburn. (The Comprehensive Plan was amended in 1991 to designate an interim boundary and manage growth in these areas).
- Development of, in conjunction with King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap Counties and the jurisdictions within them, a multi-county planning framework (see below Multi-county Planning Policies: Vision 2020 and 2040) which serves to guide the development of comprehensive plans within these counties and ensure consistency of those plans.
- Development of, in conjunction with King and Pierce Counties and the jurisdictions within them, a county-wide planning framework (see below Countywide Policies) which serves to guide the

development of comprehensive plans within the counties and ensure consistency of those plans.

- Designation and protection of resource lands (forest, agricultural and mineral) and critical areas (wetlands, geologically hazardous areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, aquifer recharge areas, and frequently flooded areas). (The Comprehensive Plan was amended in 1992 to designate and protect these areas.)
- Provision of separate plan elements, including land use, housing, utilities, transportation and capital facilities. These elements require substantial inventorying and data collection, maps and descriptive text, and analysis. In addition, these elements must be consistent and coordinated.
- Adoption of a comprehensive plan in compliance with the Act.
- Adoption of development regulations which implement the plan.

## Multi-County Policies

### *Vision 2020 and Vision 2040*

The GMA required the development of multi-county planning policies for Snohomish, Pierce and King Counties resulting in Vision 2020. The vision is for diverse, economically healthy, and environmentally sensitive communities connected and served by a high-quality transportation system that emphasizes the movement of people.

VISION 2020 represents a public policy commitment to both the land use patterns that can achieve a compact centers concept, and a reordering of transportation investment priorities to emphasize transit, ride-sharing, efficiency, demand management and the maintenance of current facilities. To achieve this end, VISION 2020 supports the development of more compact living and working places, limiting the expansion of the urban area and focusing a significant amount of new employment and housing into mixed-use centers served by an efficient, transit-oriented, multimodal systems. It results in accommodating growth in regional travel demand through greater commitment to, and investment in, public transit.

In April 2008, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) updated Vision 2020 with a new planning document, Vision 2040. This document continues the principles included within Vision 2020 and provides a stronger environmental focus in recognition of the need to ensure long-term sustainability in the region, including addressing issues of climate change.

Vision 2040 continues to recognize Auburn as a Regional Growth Center. Regional Growth Centers are “designated areas of high-intensity residential and employment development...Regional growth centers serve as a primary framework for regional transportation and economic development planning.” (*Vision 2040*, pg. 52)

For more details on Vision 2040, see *Vision 2040: People–Prosperity–Planet: The Growth Management, Environmental, Economic and Transportation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region*.

## ***County-Wide Planning Policies***

### *King County Countywide Planning Policies*

The Growth Management Act requires representatives of the county and each of its municipalities to establish county-wide planning policies. These policies are intended to (1) provide processes for coordinating planning activities in the region; (2) obtain consistency between state, regional, and local jurisdictions; and (3) provide a policy framework for the development and adoption of coordinated and consistent comprehensive land use plans throughout the county. The county-wide planning policies cover the establishment of urban growth areas, the provision of urban services, the siting of essential public facilities, economic development, transportation and affordable housing.

The Countywide Planning Policies are a framework to guide the development of the comprehensive plans for King County and each city within the county. The Countywide Planning Policies do not dictate the way each jurisdiction will handle its share of growth or which city will choose to have one or more Urban Centers. Rather, the policies set up criteria and allow local decisions.

### *The Countywide Planning Policies' Vision*

As adopted in 1992, the Countywide Planning Policies are a vision statement of how King County should grow over the next 20 years. Amendments to these policies were adopted in 1994. The policies established an Urban Growth Area within the western one-third of the county where most future growth and development would occur in order to reduce urban sprawl, enhance open space, protect rural areas and more efficiently use social services, transportation and utilities.

**Urban Centers** were designated within existing cities which serve as areas of concentrated employment and housing and a wide variety of land uses, including retail, recreational, cultural and public facilities, parks and

open spaces, with direct service by high-capacity transit. Emphasizing growth in the urban centers will contribute to achieving the GMA goal of concentrating infrastructure investments and preventing further urban sprawl. Auburn achieved urban center status in 2004. Some other Urban Centers include the downtowns of Bellevue, Seattle, Renton, Federal Way, SeaTac, Kent and Redmond.

The policies also call for designation of **Manufacturing/Industrial Centers**, recognizing that these sites are key components of a strong regional economy. These centers would be zoned to preserve and encourage industrial growth. Examples include the Duwamish River industrial area and Kent.

The 1994 amendments to the King County Countywide Planning Policies placed an increased emphasis on **Activity Areas**. Activity areas are locations that contain a mix of uses and function as a significant focal point of the local community. These areas will typically have a pedestrian-oriented environment and be served by a high level of peak hour transit service. 15th Street SW and 15th Street NW clearly fit this designation.

The Countywide Planning Policies contain growth targets for each jurisdiction. These targets represent commitments by jurisdictions to provide sufficient land and infrastructure to accommodate these targets, but recognize that achievement of targets is dependent on many variables including the marketplace. King County's residential target range for Auburn is approximately 6,003 new households and its employment target range is approximately 6,079 new jobs by 2022. These pre-annexation targets are to be accommodated within the 2005 (pre-annexation) city limits.

One of the critical issues facing the region as it grows is the provision of affordable housing. In the Puget Sound Region, housing prices have skyrocketed over the past ten years. The County-wide policies recognize housing affordability as a regional issue and seek to encourage that all jurisdictions accept their fair share of affordable housing.

Auburn has historically had a positive response to providing a range of housing opportunities to all groups. The City has demonstrated a willingness to accept its "fair share" of these units on a regional basis (some would say more than its fair share). Auburn is willing to continue to meet regional housing goals, however, this willingness will only be the case if it can be demonstrated that there is a regional effort to spread these units and their related costs on an equitable basis throughout all of the communities in the region.

The Planning Policies also address “Urban Separators,” which are low-density areas or areas of little development within the Urban Growth Area. These areas are considered to be permanent low-density lands that cannot be redesignated within the 20-year planning cycle (which began in 2004) to other urban uses or higher densities. (*King County Countywide Planning Policies*, pg. 27)

There are significant areas of lands designated as “Urban Separator” within the Lea Hill portion of the City of Auburn (see the Comprehensive Land Use Map). Pursuant to the King County Countywide Planning Policies, these areas are zoned for residential development not to exceed densities of approximately one dwelling unit per acre. No modifications to the development regulations governing these areas can occur without King County review and concurrence.

#### *Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies*

The southern portion of Auburn lies within Pierce County.

As with the King County Countywide Policies, the Pierce County policies establish guidelines and a framework from which county and municipal comprehensive plans are to be developed and adopted. While the Growth Management Act requires the policies to cover eight general areas, the Pierce County Policies address a total of twelve including: affordable housing; agricultural lands; economic development; education; historic, archaeological and cultural preservation; natural resources; open space and protection of environmentally sensitive lands; siting of public capital facilities of countywide or statewide nature; transportation facilities and strategies; urban growth areas; buildable lands; and amendments and transition.

The development of the Countywide Planning Policies involved a significant level of coordination and cooperation between the county and the incorporated Cities and towns within it. The Countywide Planning Policies were adopted in June 1992 by the Pierce County Council and ratified by the cities and towns. In 2002, the City of Auburn obtained voting member status in the Pierce County Regional Council (PCRC) - the body of elected officials that oversees the Countywide Planning Policies.

The PCRC has assigned 2022 population allocations to the jurisdictions. Auburn’s 2022 population allocation is 10,500 people (based on 2005 city limits).

For more detailed information, see the *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County*.

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## **CITY OF AUBURN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS**

This comprehensive plan is based upon 22 goals which were developed in response to the wide range of issues identified by the public involvement process. These 22 goals form the framework for all of the policies contained in this comprehensive plan. To achieve balance in the City's development, these goals must be viewed as a whole without pursuing one to the exclusion of the others. When viewed in total, these goals form the Community's vision for the City of Auburn and its surrounding areas.

Following each goal there is a brief discussion of the intent of that goal. In addition, there is a listing of the chapters of this comprehensive plan which contain references to that goal. The policies which implement the goal follow that discussion and analysis in the individual chapters.

### **GOAL 1. PLANNING APPROACH**

To manage growth in a manner which enhances, rather than detracts from community quality and values by actively coordinating land use type and intensity with City facility and service provision and development.

**Discussion:** The City of Auburn will change and evolve as approximately 6,000 new households, 6,000 new employees locate in the City's King County portion to the year 2022, and 10,500 people reside in the City's Pierce County portion by the same time frame. By planning for and managing this growth and recognizing the crucial link between public service and facility provision and land use, Auburn can ensure that this new development will further the community goals and aspirations outlined in this plan rather than degrading the high quality of life that its residents currently enjoy.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 2: General Approach to Planning*, and *Chapter 5: Capital Facilities*.

### **GOAL 2. FLEXIBILITY**

To provide predictability in the regulation of land use and development, especially where residential uses are affected, but to also provide flexibility for development through performance standards that allow

development to occur while still protecting and enhancing natural resources, cultural resources and critical lands and in overall compliance with this Comprehensive Plan.

**Discussion:** Predictability of land development regulation is important to both existing and future property owners and to new development. It assures property owners that adjacent properties will develop in a consistent manner and it helps new development to plan for their development based on knowing what is allowed and what is not. Since all parcels are not identical, however, it is helpful to have some flexibility in land development regulation. While a variance can sometimes resolve some of these issues, regulations which provide some flexibility in the form of performance standards can help to provide development which better meets the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan rather than strict adherence to a set standard established in the zoning ordinance.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 2: General Approach to Planning*.

### GOAL 3.

#### REGIONAL COORDINATION

To work together with both local and regional agencies and jurisdictions to promote coordinated regional growth, recognizing Auburn's regional role as an urban center, while maintaining local self-determination.

**Discussion:** Auburn is firm in its commitment to work with other jurisdictions and agencies throughout the region to address regional issues and opportunities. Auburn's designation as an urban center reflects its commitment to the region's planning strategy. Auburn is just as strongly committed, however, to local self-determination and the ability of local jurisdictions to determine what is in its best self interest. These two commitments are not necessarily in conflict and can and will be balanced to assure that both the City and the region benefit from these efforts.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 2: General Approach to Planning*.

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**GOAL 4**                      **COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

To maintain and enhance Auburn's character as a family oriented community while managing potential economic opportunities in a manner that provides necessary employment and fiscal support for needed services, and while recognizing the need to provide social services and opportunities for housing to a wide array of household types and sizes.

**Discussion:** Auburn prides itself on its small city atmosphere. This is a character that the residents of Auburn wish to maintain while recognizing that economic development opportunities provide tax revenue, important services and employment opportunities to the community and the region. Auburn has always recognized that there is a wide array of household types and sizes throughout the region and reaffirms its commitment to allow for the development of a variety of housing types to meet the diverse needs of these groups.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 2: General Approach to Planning*.

**GOAL 5.**                      **CITY EXPANSION AND ANNEXATION**

To ensure the orderly development and annexation of the City's potential annexation areas in a manner that provides for the adequate and cost-effective provision of required urban services and facilities, reduces sprawl, implements the goals, objectives and policies of the Auburn Comprehensive Plan, and protects designated rural areas.

**Discussion:** The successful completion of the Lea Hill and West Hill Annexations in 2007 has left little unincorporated land within the City's potential annexation area. A few isolated islands remain within the King County portion of the city, while a single area (2<sup>nd</sup> St. E.) remains within Pierce County. While development on these unincorporated lands can have impacts on the City itself, including, but not limited to, traffic, parks and city utilities, the city can exert limited control over the development which takes place in these areas. For these reasons, Auburn has a vested interest in seeing that the City increases its ability to manage development in these areas through conditional provision of utilities and/or by requiring annexation.

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A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use* and *Chapter 13: Development in the Unincorporated Areas and Annexation*.

## GOAL 6. URBAN FORM

To establish an orderly urban form which separates uses on the basis of their functional relationship to the community, and which reinforces the identity of the community.

**Discussion:** City form can be described as the general shape of the community and how its individual parts relate to one another. The overall shape of Auburn is heavily influenced by its location in a deep river valley surrounded by relatively steep hillsides. In the past, there were land use conflicts as a result of the city's limited topography with incompatible uses locating near one another. To resolve these problems, City policy on the "urban form" of Auburn has been to separate uses based on their relationship to the community. This plan separates the City into three areas: the region serving area (western Auburn) which is a concentration of the employment base with sufficient existing and potential jobs to be of regional significance; the community serving area (eastern Auburn) which contains the majority of residential areas and locally oriented businesses; and the downtown which uniquely serves both the region and the local community.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use*.

## GOAL 7. RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

To emphasize housing development at single family densities, in order to reestablish a mix of housing types appropriate for a family oriented community, while recognizing the need and desire for both low density and moderate density housing appropriately located, to meet the housing needs of all members of the community.

**Discussion:** During the late 1980's and early 1990's, much of the residential development which has occurred in Auburn was in the form of multi-family housing. This had a significant impact on community character as the percentage of multifamily housing has increased markedly. While

Auburn recognizes that many households cannot afford or do not desire single family detached housing and therefore allows a wide range of housing types within the community, the development of new single family detached housing is a priority of the City in order to maintain its traditional community character.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use* and *Chapter 4: Housing*.

**GOAL 8. NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY**

To maintain and protect all viable and stable residential neighborhoods.

**Discussion:** Stable residential neighborhoods are a key component of the Auburn Community. Auburn values its residential neighborhoods and seeks to maintain and protect those that are viable and stable.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use* and *Chapter 4: Housing*.

**GOAL 9. COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

To maintain and establish a variety of commercial environments which provide the full range of commercial services to the community and region in a manner which reduces conflicts between different types of commercial services and other uses.

**Discussion:** Commercial uses range from a small corner store providing service primarily to the neighborhood around it to a large shopping mall which serves the entire region. Auburn contains both of these types of commercial uses and recognizes their importance in providing service to both Auburn and regional residents. The City will provide opportunities for the full range of commercial uses while insuring that their impacts on each other and on other uses are minimized.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use*.

**GOAL 10. DOWNTOWN**

To encourage development and redevelopment within Downtown Auburn which reflects its unique character as the community's historic center, that is consistent with the Auburn Downtown Plan's vision for and designation of Downtown Auburn as an urban center within King County and the Puget Sound Region.

**Discussion:** Downtown Auburn plays a unique role within the city as it serves as both a regional and a local center. It is a key component of Auburn's identity and therefore the City is committed to its revitalization and stability as the city's cultural and governmental center.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use*.

**GOAL 11. INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT**

To provide for, establish and maintain a balance of industrial uses that respond to local and regional needs and enhance the City's image through optimal siting and location, while taking into consideration tax policy impacts of streamlined sales tax and/or other similar legislation.

**Discussion:** The Auburn area has historically been a good location for industrial uses due to the ease of access provided by the railroads and by its location near several major highways. Auburn recognizes the important role industry plays in providing tax revenue and employment opportunities to the residents of Auburn and the region. The City seeks to diversify the types of businesses and industries located here to ensure that the local economy is independent of the ups and downs of any given industry. Further, since much of the City's industrial land is located in highly visible areas, it is extremely crucial that these facilities be well designed and sited. For many, these facilities provide a first impression of Auburn as they pass through the area. However, land made available for industrial development shall take into consideration impacts of tax policy and tax structure upon the City of Auburn.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use*.

**GOAL 12. URBAN REDEVELOPMENT**

To encourage redevelopment of underutilized areas to reduce sprawl and take full advantage of the City's investment in existing infrastructure.

**Discussion:** There is already a large area served by a comprehensive network of infrastructure both within and adjacent to the City limits. The provision of this network has required a significant investment of money and resources. Within this area, there is significant acreage of underutilized land. The City seeks to encourage development and redevelopment of these parcels, particularly in the downtown area to fully utilize this investment.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 3: Land Use* and *Chapter 4: Housing*.

**GOAL 13. CITY UTILITIES**

To protect the public health and safety by providing efficient and cost-effective water, sanitary sewer, storm drainage and solid waste services to the community. Ensure that development will only occur if the urban services necessary to support the development will be available at the time of development.

**Discussion:** The provision of urban services to its residents and its utility customers is a critical role played by the city of Auburn. Auburn is committed to providing these services in the most efficient and cost effective manner. As rapid growth occurs it can become difficult to provide these services to support the new development. Auburn will only permit development if adequate public utilities are, or can be guaranteed to be, available to support new development.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 5: Capital Facilities*.

**GOAL 14. PUBLIC BUILDINGS**

To maximize public access and provide for the appropriate location and development of public and quasi-public facilities that serve the cultural, educational, recreational, religious and public service needs of the community.

**Discussion:** Buildings which house City departments or other agencies which provide services to the general public should be sited in areas which are accessible to all segments of the population.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 5: Capital Facilities*.

**GOAL 15. PRIVATE UTILITIES**

To ensure safe, efficient provision of private utilities to serve all segments and activities of the community.

**Discussion:** Some private utility companies provide services, such as cable television and natural gas, within the City of Auburn. Auburn is committed to ensuring that the companies that provide these services provide them to all segments of the City's population and are integrated, where appropriate, into the City's development process.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 6: Private Utilities*.

**GOAL 16. TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Auburn will plan, expand, and improve its transportation system in cooperation and coordination with adjacent and regional jurisdictions to ensure concurrency compliance with the Growth Management Act, and to provide a safe and efficient multimodal system that meets the community needs and facilitates the land use plan.

**Discussion:** The increase in traffic congestion in the region is probably the most apparent indicator that the growth occurring in the region is outstripping the ability of the area's infrastructure to support it. The City of Auburn recognizes that the high cost and difficulty of continually expanding the City's road network to meet the increased demand, and the lowering of the region's air quality, have placed an emphasis on encouraging modes other than the automobile (multimodalism), decreasing the demand for travel (TDM-transportation demand management) and most fully utilizing its existing network (TSM-transportation system management). The encouragement and support of multimodalism, TDM and TSM are key components of the

City's approach to addressing its transportation needs. Further, Auburn recognizes that if it is to address its transportation problems, it must work together with others in the region to address these issues. To ensure that new development does not outstrip the ability of the city's transportation system to serve it, Auburn will only permit development if adequate transportation facilities are, or can be guaranteed to be, available to support new development.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 7: Transportation*.

## **GOAL 17. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

To ensure the long term economic health of the City and the region through a diversified economic base which supports a wide range of employment opportunities for Auburn's residents and those of the region and through the promotion of quality industrial and commercial development which matches the aspirations of the community.

**Discussion:** Auburn strongly supports economic development within the City as it provides tax revenue, important services and employment to the residents of both Auburn and the entire region. The City seeks to diversify its economic base to ensure long term economic stability independent of the up and down cycles of individual businesses and industries. Economic development will not be pursued blindly, however, and any potential development will be reviewed in relation to the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 8: Economic Development*.

## **GOAL 18. ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES**

To maintain and promote a safe and healthy environment, preserve the quality of life, and to protect the area's most unique, sensitive and productive natural resources. To encourage natural resource industries within the City to operate in a manner which enhances, rather than detracts from, the orderly development of the City.

**Discussion:** Thick forests, wildlife habitats, and river shorelines are but some of the attractions of Auburn and its surrounding areas.

As development occurs however, some of these features, which serve to make the area attractive are being lost. Auburn is committed to the maintenance, enhancement and preservation of these features in recognition of the important role they play in Auburn and the region's high quality of life.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 9: The Environment*.

**GOAL 19. HAZARDS**

To minimize the risk from environmental and manmade hazards to present and future residents of the community.

**Discussion:** Natural and manmade hazards exist in the Auburn area which can threaten the health, safety and property of Auburn residents and businesses. Some of these hazards include flooding, landslides, earthquakes, volcanic activity and waste materials. The City will seek to limit the exposure of the residents and businesses of this community to these hazards.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 9: The Environment*.

**GOAL 20. HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

To maintain, preserve and enhance the City's historic, cultural and archaeological resources to provide a sense of local identity and history to the residents and visitors of the community.

**Discussion:** Unlike many cities within the Puget Sound Region, Auburn has a long and established history. Auburn has been a vibrant and freestanding community for over 100 years. In the past several decades, the region has experienced significant population growth. Due to the nature of this growth, the differences between one community and another have blurred and communities are becoming more and more alike. If Auburn is to retain its identity as a unique community, it must seek to emphasize its differences and celebrate them. Auburn's history is a part of its identity that is unique to Auburn. Through the recognition and preservation of its past, Auburn can ensure

its uniqueness and strengthen its identity as it moves into the future.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 10: Historic Preservation*.

**GOAL 21. PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE**

To provide and maintain a comprehensive system of parks and open spaces that responds to the recreational, cultural, environmental and aesthetic needs and desires of the City's residents.

**Discussion:** The availability of parks and open spaces to the residents of Auburn play a key role in the resident's high quality of life. As more development occurs in this area, the importance of these places increase. Auburn is committed to expanding and maintaining the City's park and open space system to ensure that its residents are adequately served by this vital community service.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 11: Parks, Recreation and Open Space*.

**GOAL 22. URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL QUALITY**

To ensure a high quality visual environment through appropriate design standards and procedures which encourage high quality architectural and landscape design in all development and through the placement of artwork in public places. The City recognizes the linkages between transportation, land use and site design and encourage development which eases access by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users.

**Discussion:** As urban areas develop, and particularly as densities increase, the quality of development plays a major factor in maintaining the quality of life for the area's residents and employees. Auburn places a high value on good design, visual quality and landscaping in all development - new and old. Auburn will seek to develop standards and programs to ensure that all development is of high quality and is visually appealing.

A discussion of issues and policies related to this goal can be found in *Chapter 4: Housing* and *Chapter 12: Urban Design*.