

INTRODUCTION

Where is Auburn?

The City of Auburn is located in the Puget Sound region of Washington State near the convergence of the Green and the White River valleys. Auburn municipal boundaries fall within both King County and Pierce County. Map I-1 displays the City's municipal boundaries and the City's potential annexation areas which have been designated in compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act and the King County and Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies. (For more details see Chapter 1). The terms potential annexation area and urban growth area are used interchangeably throughout this document. A portion of Auburn's remaining potential annexation area extends into Pierce County. While this Comprehensive Plan covers the area within the City's municipal limits, many of the policies should be applied to the potential annexation areas as well, since these areas will most likely become incorporated within the City of Auburn sometime in the future. The map delineates the location of the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation, of which two and one-half square miles of the six square mile reservation lie within the City limits.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a policy statement adopted by the City to guide decisions affecting the community's physical development. A comprehensive plan indicates how the City envisions the community's future, and sets forth strategies for achieving the desired community. A plan generally has three characteristics. First, it is comprehensive: the plan encompasses all the geographic and functional elements which have a bearing on the community's physical development. Second, it is general: The plan summarizes the major policies and proposals of the City, but does not usually indicate specific locations or establish detailed regulations. Third, it is long range: the plan looks beyond the current pressing issues confronting the community, to the community's future.

Why is a Comprehensive Plan Needed?

Many of the day-to-day decisions made by City officials can have a significant impact on how the community develops and functions. When these decisions are made in a piecemeal, uncoordinated manner, the result is likely to be land use and development patterns that are conflicting, inefficient and difficult to serve with public facilities and services. Piecemeal decisions frustrate a community's ability to manage its own destiny. By establishing the community's long-range general policy for its own physical development, a comprehensive plan coordinates and guides individual decisions in a manner that efficiently moves the community toward its overall goals. While other government agencies, financial institutions, developers and citizens all have a substantial impact on the community through their individual investment and development decisions, City government is the only entity with both the opportunity and responsibility to guide the community's overall development. The City is in the best position to coordinate and balance the often competing needs and pressures that confront the community as it approaches the future.

What Are the Functions of a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan serves many functions, including:

Policy Determination: In developing a comprehensive plan, the Planning Commission and the City Council set forth a coherent set of policies. This process has two functions. First, it encourages City officials to look at the big picture, to step away from current pressing needs to develop overriding policy goals for their community. Second, it allows the City Council to make explicit the policies that are guiding their decisions so that those policies may be viewed critically and subjected to open and democratic review.

Policy Implementation: A community can move more effectively toward its goals and implement its policies after they have been agreed to and formalized through adoption of a comprehensive plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a basic source of reference for officials as they consider the enactment of ordinances or regulations affecting the community's physical development (e.g. a zoning ordinance or a particular rezone), and when they make decisions pertaining to public facility investments (e.g. capital improvement programming or construction of a specific public facility). This ensures that the community's overall goals and policies are furthered, or implemented, by those decisions.

The plan also provides a practical guide to City officials as they administer City ordinances and programs. This ensures that the day-to-day decisions of City staff are consistent with the overall policy direction established by the City's legislative body.

Communication/Education: The comprehensive plan communicates to the public and to City staff the policy of the legislative body. This allows the staff, the public, private developers, business people, financial institutions, and other interested parties to anticipate what the decisions of the City are likely to be on any particular issue. As such, the plan provides predictability. Everyone is better able to plan activities knowing the probable response to their proposals and to protect investments made on the basis of policy. In addition, the comprehensive plan can educate the public, the business community, the staff and the legislative body itself on the workings, conditions, and issues within their City. This can stimulate interest about the community's affairs and increase the citizen participation in government.

Basis for Coordination: The plan serves to focus, direct and coordinate the efforts of the departments within City government by providing a general comprehensive statement of the City's policies and goals.

In addition to the above functions, the plan also provides a comprehensive means for the Planning Commission and the Planning staff to supply advice to the legislative body; it fulfills certain legal prerequisites for the regulation of land use and development; it serves as a basis for coordination between various governmental agencies; and it serves as a guide to the courts when reviewing the City's land use decisions.

How is the City's Policy Expressed?

This Comprehensive Plan is a "policy plan" which provides policy guidance in two forms. First, it sets forth the City's policies addressing the full range of issues which confront the community. Second, it graphically illustrates, through the use of the Comprehensive Plan map, how policy should be implemented geographically within the community. These two aspects of the City's policy are interrelated and must be considered when considering a land use or development decision.

A policy plan is considered to be a dynamic document, designed to provide guidance and predictability while being flexible and responsive to changing times and conditions. A good policy plan must be able to

balance the need to anticipate the future with the need to be flexible to respond to actual demands as they occur.

A comprehensive plan should be based upon sound planning principles and practices. However, it is critical that the comprehensive plan also take into account the uniqueness of the place and the community it addresses.

Structure of this Comprehensive Plan

This comprehensive plan is composed of five basic parts:

1. Background and Goals
2. Plan Elements and Policies
3. Comprehensive Plan Map
4. Implementation
5. Appendix

Parts 1, 3 and 4 and 5 are comprised of individual chapters. Part 2, Plan Elements and Policies, is made up of 12 chapters, each representing an individual policy area.

Chapter 1, Background and Goals, begins with a brief history of the City of Auburn, a community profile of Auburn residents and the process used to develop this comprehensive plan in 1986. It includes a description of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and the framework the Act established for planning in the State and King and Pierce Counties. As a result of the Act, a number of amendments were made to this comprehensive plan between 1990 and 1995. The chapter closes with a description of the City's Comprehensive Plan goals.

Part 2, Plan Elements and Policies, is comprised of chapters 2 through 13. These chapters comprise the main body of the plan. Each chapter begins with a general introduction of the issues which were identified through the public involvement process and other background information. Policies which address these issues and background information follow. Each chapter covers a specific element such as land use or transportation. The chapters are arranged so that the five elements required by the GMA - land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities and transportation come first and additional "optional" chapters covering topics such as economic development, the environment and parks and recreation follow.

In addition, a number of separate plans have been prepared to address specific planning areas or specific services within the City. These plans support the Comprehensive Plan and are formally incorporated into it as

elements. These include plans such as the City of Auburn Comprehensive Transportation Plan, and the City of Auburn Parks, Recreation and Openspace Plan.

Part 3 (Chapter 14) presents the Comprehensive Plan Map. The Plan Map gives geographic form to the Comprehensive Plan's land use policies by designating appropriate land use categories for the various areas within the City. Since it is intended that these land use categories guide future policy decisions, the Plan Map is accompanied by text which describes in detail the purpose of each category. Part 3 provides policies regarding management recommendations for some specific areas.

Part 4, Implementation, is covered in chapter 15. This chapter describes how this Comprehensive Plan will be used, and how the policies set forth in chapters 2 through 12 will be implemented.

Part 5, the Appendix, includes a glossary of terms used within this plan and a list of background reports and studies.