

# CHAPTER 15

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Introduction

A comprehensive plan is a set of policies intended to guide and coordinate other decisions. However, general comprehensive plan documents are further supported by more specific functional plans. Functional plans that further implement a comprehensive plan are usually referred to as "elements" of the comprehensive plan.

Other types of actions that further advance the implementation of the plan include regulatory measures, or development regulations, which control the physical development of the City. This chapter will describe the various actions, plans and measures necessary to implement this Plan.

This Plan is a policy plan, intended to provide a policy framework for future decision making. It is, however, not intended to be a rigid blueprint. The Plan is designed to be subject to amended and will be annually reviewed for that purpose. This is not say, however, that the Plan should be amended to fit any particular need or interest. To avoid frivolous amendments, policy amendments should follow a procedure designed to assess its need and appropriateness. Policy issues related to the proposed amendment need to be identified and adjusted in the same process. This chapter will describe this process.

### Public Improvement Elements

The most effective implementing actions for a comprehensive plan are often the development of key public facilities. A new street or water line can provide a powerful stimulus for new development. However, development of these facilities uncoordinated with use regulations or with the development of other facilities can result in facilities either too small or too large to serve the development which could otherwise occur in an area. The comprehensive plan serves as the coordinating device for this purpose.

Public facility elements not only outline a series of public construction projects, but also establish standards which private development projects must meet as they relate to those facilities. These standards are often implemented by various regulatory measures.

These facility plans or planning elements are intermediate implementing plans between the comprehensive plan and the actual construction of individual projects. The facility plans necessary to implement this Plan are listed below:

### **Comprehensive**

**Transportation Plan** The Comprehensive Transportation Plan, as the transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan, is the blueprint for transportation planning in Auburn. It functions as the overarching guide for development of the transportation system. The Plan evaluates the existing system by identifying key assets and improvement needs. These findings are incorporated into a needs assessment, which informs the direction the City will take in developing the future transportation system. The plan also contains objectives and policies to provide implementation guidance.

This Plan is multi-modal, addressing multiple forms of transportation in Auburn including the street network, non-motorized travel, and transit. Evaluating all modes uniformly enables the City to address its future network needs in a more comprehensive and balanced manner.

The City's current Transportation Plan was adopted in 2005 and builds upon the work completed to amend the Transportation Plan in 1994 in order to bring it into compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act

Other transportation related projects include:

**Airport Plan:** An updated Auburn Municipal Airport Master Plan (2001-2020) was adopted in 2002. This element should be periodically reviewed by airport management and updated as needed.

**Six Year Transportation Improvement Plan:** Street development projects are annually planned and coordinated by means of a six year Transportation Improvement Program, which is adopted by the City Council pursuant to State law. While the six-year plan is a very significant implementing measure, it is a working document, implementing the policy set forth in the transportation element, and should not be considered a formal planning element.

**Comprehensive Water  
Plan**

Development of the City water system involves two general planning components: the development of the source of water, and its transmission to the City's customers. The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan provide general guidance for the development of this system and its coordination with the other planning elements. This plan must include an element addressing water conservation. More detailed plans for the development of this system are found in the Comprehensive Water Plan. This document should be comprehensively reviewed and updated every six years. It should continue to be formally incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as a planning element.

**Comprehensive  
Sanitary Sewer  
Plan**

As in the case of water, all development in the City should be served by adequate sanitary sewer service. Such service is provided through the City's system. Consequently, development of the City sanitary sewerage system is also an essential implementing measure for the Comprehensive Plan. Sanitary sewer service involves two general types of activities: the collection of wastewater from each residential, commercial and industrial establishment in the City, together with its treatment and disposal. While the collection system is the responsibility of the City, the treatment and disposal of the waste are the responsibility of a regional system. The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan provide general guidance to the development of the City collection system and its coordination with the other planning elements. The Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan was updated and adopted in 2009. The Comprehensive Sanitary Sewer Plan should continue to be formally incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as a planning element.

**Parks and  
Recreation  
Element**

Adequate parks and recreation facilities are an essential urban amenity to maintain a suitable quality of life in the community. These are particularly important in implementing the overall goals of this Plan directed at ensuring a quality family environment. Unlike street, water, and sewer systems, however, these facilities are not a necessary prerequisite for development to occur. Consequently, good planning and vigilant implementation is even more important in order to ensure that community growth does not out-pace the development of these facilities and create a deficiency in these services. The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan set the overall policy guidance for the development of these facilities. This element should continue to be formally incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan.

**Comprehensive  
Drainage  
Plan**

In the past, flooding was one of the most significant environmental constraints confronting the development of the City. While storm drainage continues to be an issue, the City now has a Storm Drainage Utility. The City's initial Comprehensive Drainage Plan was adopted in 1990 with a new Comprehensive Storm Drainage Plan adopted in 2002.

Major components of the proposed updated Comprehensive Drainage Plan include a 6-year capital improvement plan, a stormwater management program evaluation, water quality discharge improvement recommendations and recommended comprehensive subbasin plans. The subbasin plans provide recommended storm drainage improvement projects, using current and projected growth in the City as a basis. Proposed projects include pipeline upgrades, regional detention facilities, regional water quality facilities, infiltration facilities, wetland mitigation, and new outfalls to the Green River. The Comprehensive Drainage Plan also includes evaluation of retrofitting the City's existing untreated outfalls to the Rivers, adequately planning storm water drainage for future planned development, preventing flooding, protecting special-status fish species (e.g. those listed endangered or threatened by the Endangered Species Act, or as a Priority Species by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife) and aquatic habitat, and enhancing water quality.

## **Capital Facility Plans**

One of the most difficult aspects of implementing a Comprehensive Plan is funding the full range of needed public facilities. Since only a limited amount of funds are available for constructing such facilities, careful planning is needed to ensure maximum benefit from the expenditure of those resources. To maximize benefits the development of facilities should be planned over a period of years during which all the various functional facility needs can be balanced and addressed. A capital facility plan should be developed and annually updated for this purpose.

Significant emphasis was placed on the coordination of the capital facilities plan and the land use element by the Washington State Growth Management Act. Auburn's Capital Facilities Plan was significantly amended to meet these coordination requirements. Responsibility for maintenance of the capital facilities plan will be split between the Planning, Public Works and Finance Departments. The capital improvement program should include all capital improvement needs of the City in addition to the facilities identified in the specific planning elements discussed above.

This list of elements is not intended to be limiting and other elements can be added if needed.

## **Policy Elements**

In addition to plans which organize the development of the City's public facilities, other planning elements are needed which provide policy guidance for City decisions for various functional concerns which require coordination with the Comprehensive Plan. These elements are generally programmatic plans providing greater detail than is possible within the Comprehensive Plan itself. These plans are usually extensions of the more general policies of the Comprehensive Plan. These elements include:

## **Community Development Block Grant Plan**

The City of Auburn Consolidated Plan is a five year strategy to provide decent housing, create a suitable living environment and expand economic opportunities in accordance with the objectives of the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. The Consolidated Plan is reviewed by HUD relative to the City's requirements for block grant and other funding eligibility and is intended to ensure that the City's strategy to address community development needs is coordinated. The CDP is primarily an administrative instrument and does not need to be formally adopted as a planning element in the Comprehensive Plan. City staff annually monitors the City's progress toward implementing the strategies

presented in the Consolidated Plan. An "Annual Action Plan" is prepared and submitted each year for HUD's review and approval.

**Neighborhood  
Plans**

This Plan calls for the development of neighborhood plans for select neighborhoods within the City. These plans will address issues and concerns pertaining to land use, projected growth/decline, neighborhood identity, safety, education, youth and recreational activities. Through the process of developing these Neighborhood Plans, City staff can facilitate organization and community development within each neighborhood. These proposed Neighborhood Plans will eventually evolve into recognized elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Downtown Plan**

The future of the downtown area is a key concern of this Comprehensive Plan. Consequently a detailed plan for the downtown area that outlines strategies and implementation measures to foster and promote downtown redevelopment was adopted in 2001 and is considered to be an element of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Urban Design  
Element**

The Comprehensive Plan contains several policies regarding the enhancement of the City's visual quality and the visual impact of new development. The plan should provide guidance for improved site design, landscaping and architectural standards. Further, the plan should include a section on pedestrian friendly design. The plan should place special emphasis on design guidelines for multi-family housing and the downtown. These policies reflect a very strong community desire expressed in neighborhood meetings that the City should give greater attention to the role that visual character plays with regard to the quality of life in the City. However, the policies contained in this Plan only point out a general direction to be followed. A much more detailed analysis of the visual character of the community, upon which to base a much more effective and cohesive set of policies, is needed. This should be accomplished by the development of a special Urban Design element of the Comprehensive Plan. This plan should establish an administrative review procedure which will be integrated into the City's development review process.

**Economic  
Development  
Element**

Current economic conditions and the policies of this Plan require development of a special City policy to facilitate the desired kinds of economic activity in the City.

**Historic  
Preservation  
Element**

This plan calls for the development of an element which includes a historic site and building inventory. It should also include recommendations regarding codes and incentives to carry out the goals and policies of the element.

**Regulatory  
Measures**

The planning elements and other implementing actions identified above addresses primarily public actions to implement the Comprehensive Plan. However, private actions must also be addressed if the goals of the Plan are to be achieved. These private actions are related to the implementation of the Plan through the City's regulatory powers. Since regulatory measures are developed and instituted by procedures required under State law, these measures are not usually considered or adopted as policy elements of the Comprehensive Plan, even though they may have a similar character. Some of these measures are intrinsically related to the Comprehensive Plan, such as the Zoning Code. Other regulatory measures are independent of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, State law prescribes standards and policies for shoreline management which the City must follow. However, good government requires that all the physical development regulatory programs of the City be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan in order to avoid inconsistency and conflict. Since the Comprehensive Plan has endeavored to provide such coordination, each of these regulatory measures will be treated as though they were direct implementing measures for the plan.

**Zoning Code**

Perhaps the most important of all the regulatory measures is the City zoning code, since it has the most direct bearing on the actual development and use of property. The zoning ordinance was originally adopted in 1987. Amendments have been made to the ordinance incrementally since that time. A thorough review of the entire zoning code was done and substantial changes made in 2009 to ensure it is clear and understandable to the public and meets the needs of current development practices and community expectations.

**Land Division Ordinance**

The land division ordinance was adopted in 1988 to replace the subdivision ordinance. A thorough review was done in 2009 with substantial changes to ensure that flexibility is maximized and costs are held to a reasonable level is appropriate.

**Concurrency Management System**

The City of Auburn implements the concurrency requirements of the Growth Management Act through the existing project evaluation system established under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). This method of implementation views the concurrency issue from the point of view of avoiding the unacceptable adverse environmental impacts that result if new development is approved without adequate services to support the development.

This process has proven to be effective, however, as the City revises its project review process it may be desirable to implement a concurrency management system separate from the SEPA review process. Change to the current process will be evaluated in terms of effectiveness and its consistency with the City's efforts in permit process improvements and streamlining.

**State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)**

State law establishes the obligation for local government to assess the impact of new development on environmental conditions, and to mitigate any significant adverse impacts as appropriate. The law also provides that local government must establish policies for such review and mitigation. This Plan has considered this need in identifying policies to guide SEPA review and determinations. As such the SEPA process becomes an implementing system for the policies of the plan.

**Shoreline Management Act**

The Shoreline Management Program is a State mandated regulatory system designed to protect the shoreline resources of the State. Once developed by local government (under State guidelines) and approved by the State, the program can only be modified with State approval. Most of the provisions and policies of the management program have been incorporated into this Comprehensive Plan. The shoreline management plan is considered to be a plan element.

**Building Code**

For the most part the building code addresses regulatory matters of a technical nature and does not involve policy considerations of the type provided in this Plan.

**Other Ordinances** There are a variety of other ordinances which may affect the physical development of the City. Where ever appropriate this Plan and its elements should be used for guidance in the development and administration of those ordinances.

**Zoning Code Administration**

There is a particularly direct relationship between the implementation of a Comprehensive Plan and a zoning code. While this Plan seeks to establish a comprehensive framework to guide future development, it also recognizes the need to provide for an efficient decision making process in order to avoid needless and often expensive delays for projects. Consequently, the zoning code and its administration should provide for decision making processes which are related to the significance of the policy issue involved. Minor issues (such as whether a proposed conditional use complies with standards established in the Plan) should be determined in relatively quick administrative processes. Major issues (such as a possible conflict with the Comprehensive Plan Map) should be thoroughly assessed and subject to full public scrutiny.

**Rezones**

There are two types of rezones that may be made under this Plan: A rezone which clearly implements or is in full conformance with the Comprehensive Plan and rezones which involve a Plan policy question, issue or interpretation or are in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan. Rezones that implement the Comprehensive Plan are processed by the hearing examiner system and are subject to Council review. Rezones involving potential policy decisions or interpretations of the plan are considered by the Planning Commission and City Council, with appropriate hearings. Rezones that are in conflict with the Comprehensive Plan are subject to the plan amendment process (both the Plan amendment and the rezone can be processed simultaneously).

**Conditional Use Permits**

Conditional use permits should be divided into two classes under the zoning code. Routine permits intended to merely check compliance with standards should be an administrative process with appeal to the City's Hearing Examiner. Permits involving more substantive policy questions or interpretations should be processed through the hearing examiner system, with appeal to Superior Court.

**Plan Review, Update, and Amendment**

A comprehensive plan provides the policy framework necessary for City programs and projects to follow to achieve the long term goals which have been identified. This comprehensive plan has a twenty year horizon - long term, but within a frame of reference that can be reasonably comprehended. This does not mean that this plan should be unchangeable.

As community goals and conditions change, this plan should be amended and updated to reflect these new circumstances.

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) limits the process of amending a comprehensive plan to once a year. This will enable changes to be considered in terms of their cumulative impacts rather than on a piecemeal basis.

The GMA also requires a jurisdiction to thoroughly review and update its comprehensive plan every seven years dating from December 2004, in order to ensure both internal consistency and consistency with State laws.

### **Timing of Amendments**

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan should occur no more frequently than once every calendar year, except as allowed by State Law (RCW 36.70A.130) or in cases of emergency as described below. All amendment proposals shall be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. All amendments should, where feasible, be reviewed as part of a coordinated SEPA process so that the environmental impacts may also be assessed cumulatively.

While Comprehensive Plan amendments should only occur once per year as described above, requests for Comprehensive Plan amendments may be filed at anytime during the year. Those requests will be “docketed” until the next appropriate annual amendment cycle.

Comprehensive plan amendments may also be adopted whenever an emergency exists, as defined in the State GMA. Plan amendments may also be considered outside the annual amendment process whenever necessary to resolve an appeal of an appeal of the Plan that has been filed with the Growth Management Hearings Board or with Superior Court. In such instances, the Planning Director will prepare a written statement which clearly describes the reasons why the amendment is necessary, why it must be considered outside of the annual amendment process, and how the amendment will allow compliance with RCW 36.70A. This statement will be considered by both the Planning Commission and the City Council in adopting the amendment. Emergency amendments are not considered as the one amendment per calendar year.

This Comprehensive Plan may also be amended in other ways:

#### *Adoption of a new Plan Element*

The formal adoption of a plan element is an amplification of the policy of the Comprehensive Plan. When a proposed plan element is being processed, the policies of the element should be compared to the policies

of the Plan itself and other planning elements. If changes are necessary to the adopted Comprehensive Plan, consideration of a new plan element must occur in conjunction with the annual amendment process.

*Special Amendment Due to Regulatory Process*

Requests will be made for Plan amendments to accommodate development projects which would be inconsistent with the Plan. Usually these amendments also involve a rezone. These amendments shall be processed in accord with the law governing plan amendments. Special scrutiny will be made during the SEPA process to assess potential impacts of the Plan change. In addition to the information needed to assess any rezone, staff analysis of the proposed rezone should include a detailed assessment of the implications of the proposed change to the Plan and its goals. Special care should be given to include policy statements in this analysis as well as the policy of the Comprehensive Plan Map. All needed changes should be identified and considered in the same process. While any affected rezone can be processed at the same time as a Plan amendment, the amendment process will usually involve more time than a regular rezone, particularly if the amendment request must be docketed until the start of the annual amendment process.

*Regular Plan Review*

The Planning Commission shall monitor the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission may periodically identify Plan changes or studies that assess planning issues and make appropriate recommendations for Plan amendments. These amendments may be made to any Plan element or to the main text of the Comprehensive Plan itself. Such amendments would be processed according to law.

*Full Update*

The entire planning framework should be periodically reviewed and assessed; approximately once every seven years. This review should receive a high priority in the City budget process in order to ensure that the Plan remains relevant to future conditions.

**Hierarchy of Policy**

In general, this Comprehensive Plan is intended to establish the overall guiding policies for the orderly development of the City. However, it is also intended to be an organic policy that can be changed and adjusted through time with procedures described herein. The regulatory framework implementing this Plan also needs to recognize State legal principles.

While every effort should be made to identify potential conflicts or inconsistencies when considering new planning elements, the latest formally adopted plan should rule. This policy provides maximum

currency for the planning framework established herein. In conformance with State judicial rulings, specific ordinance provisions supersede Plan policies. However, care will be used to incorporate deference to Plan policies within the ordinances themselves in order to avoid potential conflicts. Where such deference is provided, the Plan policies shall govern. Except for ordinances or State law, formally adopted plans and policies will supersede other implementing measures.

In interpreting and applying City code provisions, the City administrative personnel, including the hearing examiner, should be primarily guided by the policies of this Plan.

## **Public Participation**

Statewide Planning Goal 11 of the GMA calls for encouraging the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

The Comprehensive Plan embodies the City of Auburn's vision. The City recognizes that the management of growth, as guided by this plan and implementing development regulations, affect our citizens and that public input prior to the adoption of a plan or development regulation amendments is essential.

With its focus on coordinated planning and project review, the GMA placed increased emphasis on decision-making at the planning stage, rather than at the individual project level. Because of this, early and continuous public participation at the planning stage is important.

The City will encourage and facilitate public participation in the planning process. Public participation techniques that are transparent and open to the public are desired. Techniques to solicit public participation will also vary depending on the proposal's complexity.

In addition to conducting public hearings as required by law and in addition to public participation invited through the SEPA process, the City of Auburn has and will continue to use the following methods to promote citizen participation and solicit public input.

- Posting the property for site-specific proposals in accordance with the City of Auburn's city code requirements;
- Publishing legal notices in a newspaper of general circulation for public hearings;
- Mailing notice to property owners and residents within a certain radius of a sites specific proposals;
- Posting of public notices in general locations;
- Publishing display advertisements local newspapers;

- Providing notice on the cable access channel;
- Maintaining mailing lists of public or private groups with known interest in a certain proposal or in the type of proposal being considered and providing notice;
- Publishing notices in the City's newsletter;
- Publicizing planning activities, agendas and public hearing notices on the city's website;
- Establishing citizen advisory committees;
- Coordinating with the media to obtain media coverage;
- Holding neighborhood meetings, open houses, and public workshops.

Since the time of the GMA initial adoption, there has been increased use of new public participation techniques. The expanded use of websites and cable access television by local jurisdictions are examples. As with the advent of websites and Cable TV, it is likely additional techniques and methods of advancing public participation a may present themselves in the future. The City will, as it has in the past, take advantage of using these opportunities.