

# CHAPTER 2

## GENERAL APPROACH TO PLANNING

### Introduction

Planning infers the development of a strategy or program to reach a desired outcome. The nature of planning can vary considerably in focus, substance and style depending on the type of community or area being planned. A framework is provided for these jurisdictions through the Growth Management Act, the Multi-County Policies and the County-wide Policies, but the issues facing each jurisdiction are different and each jurisdiction will address them in its own way. How Auburn addresses these issues is dependent upon its general approach to planning. The policies in this section provide the framework for how Auburn will address future development and growth, work with other jurisdictions within the region and shape the development and character of the City and the region.

### Issues and Background

**Planning Approach** The development of this Comprehensive Plan involves preparing the City for addressing future development so that the end result moves the City closer to accomplishing its goals. Several approaches or "styles" of planning can be used to accomplish this :

1. **reactive** - accent flexibility in responding to changing conditions and to individual situations problems and issues as they arise;
2. **predictive** - anticipate future needs and plan to meet them; or
3. **proactive** - seek to influence future events to achieve community objectives.

The approach used establishes a key element of the City's basic philosophy regarding land use management and planning. The proactive approach blended with the predictive approach will assure that basic community values and aspirations are reflected in the City's planning

program as the City responds to existing and future pressure for growth and change.

**Growth**

The City of Auburn faces the potential for significant growth in the upcoming decades with as many as 6,000 new households and 6,000 new jobs in the King County portion of the City (based on year 2005 City limits) to the year 2022 and achieve a population of almost 10,500 people in the Pierce County portion of the City limits (based on year 2005 City limits). Much of this growth is due to basic factors beyond the City's control; however, other aspects of growth can be appropriately managed. Therefore, it will be through the implementation of strong policies that will enable the City to influence patterns of desired future growth.

**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.

Policies:

- GP-1 The City should strive to assure that basic community values and aspirations are reflected in all City plans and programs, while recognizing the rights of individuals to use and develop private property in a manner that is consistent with City codes and regulations.
- GP-2 The City should develop its plans and programs after thorough analysis of community problems, potentials and needs.
- GP-3 The Planning Department will develop an annual work program that includes work elements directed toward studying basic community needs, policy development, and code administration.

**Objective 1.1**

To provide a policy framework to support growth management.

Policies:

- GP-4 The City shall seek to influence both rates and patterns of future growth to achieve the goals of the Comprehensive Plan in all of its land use and facility and service decisions.
- GP-5 The City shall resist growth pressures which could adversely affect community values and amenities, but will seek and support development when it will further the goals of the community.

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Objective 1.2 To establish a procedure to assess the growth impacts of major development proposals.

Policies:

GP-6 The growth impacts of major private or public development which place significant service demands on community facilities, amenities and services, and impacts on the City's general quality of life shall be carefully studied under the provisions of SEPA prior to development approval. Siting of any major development (including public facilities such as, but not limited to, solid waste processing facilities and landfills) shall be carefully and thoroughly evaluated through provisions of SEPA prior to project approval, conditional approval, or denial. Appropriate mitigating measures to ensure conformance with this Plan shall be required.

GP-7 Regional scale development shall be encouraged to provide a balance between regional service demands and impacts placed on the City's quality of life versus the local benefits derived from such development.

Objective 1.3. To establish and support an effective regional system of growth management, based on an efficient system of urban service delivery and appropriate development of unincorporated areas.

Policies:

GP-8 Auburn designates 15th Street NW and 15 Street SW as activity areas as defined in the King County Countywide Planning Policies.

GP-8A Auburn designates downtown Auburn, as defined in the Auburn Downtown Plan, as an urban center in accordance with the King County Countywide Planning Policies. Auburn's downtown area is also designated as a Regional Growth Center by Puget Sound Regional Council.

GP-9 Provision of urban level services by the City of Auburn or a special district should be a prerequisite for development within Auburn's potential annexation area. Annexation should be required as a condition of the provision of utility services by the City of Auburn. Development should look to Auburn as the ultimate service provider.

GP-10 The cities and counties in the region should coordinate planning and infrastructure development to meet regional goals and policies as outlined in the King and Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies and in the Multi-county Policies.

**Predictability  
and Flexibility:**

Predictability in land use regulation fosters confidence in land and improvement investments (both private development and public facilities), and can have a positive effect on long term property values. It also fosters fairness and consistency, and eases administration. It has the disadvantage of not dealing well with changing conditions (e.g. new manufacturing technologies), unique circumstances or when someone simply comes forward with a "better" idea. Flexible regulations can deal with such conditions and circumstances, but may require a large commitment of time, expertise and other resources to manage. Auburn's policy will be mixed; stressing predictability in single family neighborhoods, while allowing flexibility in areas committed to industrial or commercial uses where performance standards are usually more important than specific use restrictions.

**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 and critical lands in overall compliance with this comprehensive plan.

Objective 2.1.

To provide assurance that residential areas will be protected from intrusions by incompatible land uses.

Policies:

GP-11 Ordinance provisions designed to protect residential areas shall give priority to providing predictability and stability to the neighborhood.

GP-12 Adequate buffering shall be required whenever new commercial or industrial uses abut areas designated for residential uses.

Objective 2.2.

To provide flexibility for major new commercial or industrial developments to respond to changing market conditions without threatening the purposes of this Comprehensive Plan.

Policies:

- GP-13 Ordinances regulating developing commercial or industrial areas should be based on performance standards which provide flexibility to respond to market conditions while ensuring compatibility with the Comprehensive Plan, and with present and potential adjacent uses.
- GP-14 Review procedures for all new development should be integrated or coordinated with SEPA as much as possible.
- GP-15 In interpreting plan provisions or in considering a plan amendment, plan designations in the Region Serving Area should be treated in a more flexible manner than in the Community Serving Area (see Map 3.2.).

Objective 2.3. To provide flexibility in areas where a transition from existing uses to planned uses is appropriate.

Policies:

- GP-16 Contract zoning can be used to manage the transition between existing uses and future uses. Contract zoning allows new uses to be conditioned in a manner which controls potential conflicts during such transition. Contract zoning may be particularly useful as a timing device to ensure that the necessary public facilities are available to support new development.

Objective 2.4. To provide for the development of innovative land management techniques to implement this Comprehensive Plan.

Policies:

- GP-17 Flexible land development techniques including, but not limited to, clustering and planned unit developments (PUDs) for the development of residential, commercial, and industrial properties shall be considered to implement this comprehensive plan.
- GP-18 Flexibility should be provided to encourage compact urban development, to protect critical areas and resource lands, to facilitate the use of transit or non-motorized transportation, and to encourage the redevelopment of underutilized or deteriorated property.
- GP-19 Any flexibility should be easy to administer and should provide the community with an adequate level of predictability.

- GP-20 Within single family neighborhoods, flexibility should be limited to ensure that the neighborhood retains a conventional single family character.
- GP-21 Flexibility to allow the maintenance, expansion, or redevelopment of historic structures or features should also be considered. The goal of this flexibility should be to retain the historic character of the structure, feature, or property while at the same time ensuring protection of the public health and safety.
- GP-22 Innovative techniques that lead to the development of multifamily housing that is sensitive to the needs of children and seniors shall be considered to implement this comprehensive plan. Techniques that consider recreation, safety, aesthetic, privacy, and transportation needs should be emphasized.

### **Jurisdictional Coordination**

While most aspects of land use and community development are managed locally (by the City), other important aspects of community development are significantly influenced or even controlled by other governmental entities (regional, state, federal, and tribal). It is therefore important that the City monitor and, when necessary, influence the decisions of those governmental bodies. To this end, the City should actively develop working relationships with these units of government and, whenever possible, be directly represented in their decision making process.

### **Auburn's Regional Role**

Auburn has historically been treated as a relatively minor player in the Puget Sound 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.

Recent years have seen a marked shift in Auburn's role in the region. A number of facilities of regional significance have located in the area including: Green River Community College, Auburn Regional Medical Center, Auburn Municipal Airport, the SuperMall of the Great Northwest, the Emerald Downs Racetrack. In addition, Auburn functions as a station on the regional Commuter Rail system. Taken as a whole, these facilities greatly increase Auburn's significance in the region.

The City of Auburn has chosen to designate its Downtown Area as an "urban center" as defined by the King County Countywide Planning Policies. The formal ratification of Auburn's Downtown as an urban

center occurred in 2004. 15th Street SW and 15th Street NW meet the criteria for designation as activity areas under the County wide policies. Activity areas will serve as a focus for new transit investments.

As it relates to urban centers, the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP's) envision urban centers as areas of concentrated employment and housing with direct service by high capacity transit and a range of land uses such as retail, recreational, public facilities, parks and open space. Urban centers are intended to strengthen existing communities by promoting housing opportunities close to employment, supporting the development of an extensive transportation system to reduce dependency on automobiles, consume less land with urban development and maximize the benefit of public investments in infrastructure and services. The King County CPP's generally define urban centers as concentrated mixed-use areas with a maximum size of 960 acres and oriented around a high capacity transit station.

The urban center concept is part of a larger regional growth management strategy. *Vision 2040*, envisions a multi-county (Pierce, Snohomish, Kitsap and King) growth management strategy comprised of a hierarchy of "centers" connected by a multi-modal transportation system. Auburn has also been recognized as a "Regional Growth Center" by the Puget Sound Regional Council, further emphasizing its importance to the region. These centers are areas intended to accommodate a significant portion of additional new development the Puget Sound region.

In May 2001, the City of Auburn City Council adopted the Auburn Downtown Plan.

Overall, the Downtown Plan sees the Auburn Downtown as a central gathering place for the community. High quality design is expected of all development including streets, buildings and landscaping. In addition to general services to draw people from outside of the region such as retail and office uses, the Auburn Downtown is also a principal commercial center providing local goods and services to surrounding neighborhoods and to residents and employees within the downtown area.

To this end, the Auburn Downtown Plan specifically addresses the principles, criteria and incentives required of urban centers pursuant to the King County Countywide Planning Policies and the Multi-county growth management strategy. The urban centers concept is evolving, and it is in the City's interest to stay engaged in efforts that affect the regional growth management strategy.

**GOAL 3.**

**COORDINATION**

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

Objective 3.1.

To ensure that the concerns of the City are reflected in the affairs of other agencies whose decisions and activities affect the development of the Auburn community and its environs.

Policies:

GP-23 The City should continue its participation in various State and Federal agencies and organizations concerned with land use planning and development and the protection of natural and cultural resources and critical areas.

GP-24 The City should maintain an active role in regional planning agencies and organizations.

GP-25 The City should support interjurisdictional programs to address problems or issues that affect the City and larger geographic areas.

GP-26 The City shall seek to be involved in county land use planning programs.

GP-27 The City should seek, where appropriate, to coordinate its planning with the Muckleshoot Tribe, King and Pierce Counties, Federal Way, Kent and other adjacent jurisdictions.

**Character of the  
Community**

Communities are often associated with a particular character. This character should not only be reflected in the comprehensive plan but the plan can also aid in the development or reinforcement of desirable characteristics. A distinct character for a community also aids in establishing the community's identity both to itself and its region. Auburn's flavor and values as a family community should be protected and enhanced. This should be the priority basis of City policy. A community, however, does not consist solely of residential neighborhoods. A healthy community needs expanding employment, convenient shopping areas and a strong fiscal base to support the services needed by growing families. Consequently, a balanced policy which appropriately nurtures and manages all these roles is needed.



**GOAL 4.**

**COMMUNITY CHARACTER**

To maintain and enhance Auburn's character as a family 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 human services and opportunities for housing to a wide array of household types and sizes. Objective 4.1. To strike a balance between the need to protect Auburn's residential qualities, sustainability in the community and the need to ensure an adequate economy for the area.

Policies:

GP-28 Auburn's character as a "family" community will be a priority consideration in the City's land use management decisions. This priority must be balanced, however, with the following:

a. City policy will address various related community needs. This includes nurturing and managing the other roles necessary for maintaining a healthy community, recognizing the importance of sustainability in the City and responding to regional needs. Such roles include ensuring the expansion of employment opportunities, providing a full range of commercial, retail and service opportunities, providing recreational and cultural opportunities, managing traffic, encouraging energy and resource efficiency and maintaining a balance with the natural environment.

b. The City needs to develop a strong fiscal base to support the services required for a growing community of maturing lower and middle income families, while coping with regional problems.

c. The City should also respond to the needs of a relatively high share of the community's families and single residents who cannot afford, or do not choose to live in traditional single family structures.

GP-29 Within areas designated for economic development, the City shall actively promote desired types of development to assure an expanding range of employment opportunities and to build the City's fiscal base.

GP-30 The City should seek to establish and maintain an image appropriate for the community to assist in most effectively attracting the types of economic activities which best meet the needs and desires of the community.