

I. Introduction

The Comprehensive Plan Context

In the early 1990's, the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed in response to rapid and sprawling growth in many parts of the state that many perceived was causing a large decrease in quality of life, was negatively impacting our natural areas, and was overwhelming local and regional infrastructure (water and sewer systems, roads, schools, etc.). The Act requires Cities to prepare Comprehensive Plans to provide a framework as to how they will manage growth as urban areas (such as Cities) are expected to absorb more of the State's population growth than rural areas which will aid in preserving what Washingtonians value so much such as rivers, streams, wetlands, mountains, and other important lands. Focusing this growth in Cities, where utilities and services exist, will lessen the impact on these valuable natural areas.

The GMA requires that each community create a Comprehensive Plan based on thirteen basic goals. Those are as follows:

1. Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
2. Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
3. Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
4. Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
5. Economic development. 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, promote the retention and

expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

6. Property rights. 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.

7. Permits. Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

8. Natural resource industries. 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.

9. Open space and recreation. Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.

10. Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

11. Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

12. Public facilities and services. 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.

13. Historic preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.

Public Participation

In 1992, due to the enactment of the GMA, a comprehensive plan was prepared by the Shelton Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), for review and approval by the City Commissioners. That plan established policies to guide decision making in the community for the next twenty years. The plan set a framework assuring that day-to-day decisions about land use, roads, utility extensions, and a variety of other community concerns consistently moved Shelton toward the future desired by its citizens.

As a foundation for that plan, the PAC set out to write a vision statement. That vision statement described a Shelton of the future that was consistent with the community's wishes — its values. It provided a target, toward which all decisions should steer the community. The PAC drew from a number of town workshops, surveys, and processes wherein the citizens discussed what they liked, disliked, valued, and wanted to see in the future for their community. As the Committee later stated, "...we have found a remarkable consensus between various efforts, such as *the AIA "Imagine Shelton!"* and the *Citizens' Town Assessment*, which hopefully reflects community consensus regarding our future direction." From these various efforts, "Basic Tenets" arose and form the basis of the City's Vision Statement.

In 2002, the City Commissioners initiated a process to update the City's Comprehensive Plan. As a part of this process the Commission reviewed the Vision Statement and reaffirmed the basic tenants on which it was based. The Vision Statement was revised to be more contemporary, but it remains essentially the same as it was first articulated in 1992.

In 2007 the City Commissioners again initiated a process to update the Comprehensive Plan and the Vision Statement was largely reaffirmed.

With this 2017 Update of the Comprehensive Plan the Vision Statement is largely reaffirmed once again though attention has been given to acknowledge changed realities and emerging opportunities in specific elements of the plan.

The Vision Statement 2036

As we look into the future twenty years from now, we see Shelton as a place that residents, businesses, and visitors continue to find special with welcoming, courteous people, offering a high quality of life as a place to live, raise children, shop, work, recreate and socialize. In 2036, we see Shelton as...

- A community that **preserved its rural, small town atmosphere** as characterized by welcoming business districts and neighborhoods that foster and encourage community pride.
- A community that **protected and enhances its natural setting** of forested hillsides, natural valley landscape, streams, wetlands, waterfront, and mountains for the common benefit.
- A community that **instilled a sense of place** by physically defining city entrances, edges, neighborhoods and business districts.
- A community with **balanced neighborhoods and vital business districts** that encourage job retention and growth.
- A community that **expanded learning opportunities and nurtures educational achievement.**
- A community that **built employment opportunity** through economic diversification.
- A community with a living/working downtown that is the **regional focus for business, government, arts, culture, and tourism.**
- A community with a sense of **community pride** evidenced by well-maintained streets, buildings, parks, houses, and yards.
- A community with **design standards that reflect town character**, and conserves historic landmarks.
- A community with an **open space network** linking neighborhoods, business districts, civic landmarks, and recreational opportunities with trails, sidewalks, bike paths and natural features.
- A community that **fostered broad-based citizen/business action groups** by maintaining a tradition of public participation.

Community Direction

The Vision Statement provides many broad statements that essentially paint a picture of Shelton as a growing and vibrant community that provides the amenities expected in larger, urbanized, environments but also retains its small town character. Recent community visioning efforts, focused primarily on the Downtown Core, solidified that belief with the general consensus reflecting a community desire to have more flexible regulations that encourage new development and redevelopment of existing areas while acknowledging, improving, and enhancing the character and viability of existing neighborhoods and business districts. There is a largely

unified public opinion that the City should provide for these while fostering a larger emphasis on community atmosphere and mobility by linking greenspaces, parks, trails, and sidewalks throughout town and not simply emphasizing the automobile over other modes of transport (bikes, walking, transit).

The Population Forecast

The GMA requires not only that the City of Shelton coordinate with Mason County but that we also plan appropriately for projected growth. The population projections used by Mason County are in the range of the State Office of Financial Management projection ranges, which for the intermediate series projected growth of 19,354 persons between 2016 and 2036. Mason County has estimated that 49.6% of this future growth in population will be located within the Shelton UGA, which includes land within the Shelton city limits. Therefore, by 2036, 9,600 new people are expected located in the Shelton UGA including the City. Table I-1 summarizes the population projections for the Comprehensive Plan through the year 2036. The City’s population projections have been projected to 2036 to maintain consistency with Mason County’s Comprehensive Plan (through 2036) which the County updated in 2017.

Table I-1: Summary of Population Forecast

2016 Mason County Population Estimate	62,320
2036 Mason County Growth Projection	83,800
Net Countywide Growth 2016- 2036	21,480
Share to Shelton	49.6%
Shelton City and UGA Allocation	9,600

As detailed in the Land Use Element, this projection is the foundation on which the sizing of the Urban Growth Area is based. It also drives goals and policies set forth in all of the elements of this comprehensive plan.

Coordination with Adjacent Jurisdictions

Shelton is the only incorporated city in Mason County. The GMA requires that jurisdictions coordinate planning across jurisdictional lines. Shelton takes part in this coordination by participating with other Mason County stakeholders in the development and implementation of the Countywide Planning Policies. The City also is part of the Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization.

Mason County in conjunction with the City of Shelton adopted County-wide Planning Policies (CWPP's) in 1992, which were updated in 2016. The policies provide a framework for planning that includes designation of an urban growth area, provision of urban services in the UGA concurrent with growth, coordinated transportation systems, coordinated policies for housing, creation of joint planning within the UGA, and consistent economic development policies. The County-wide policies also directly address the GMA's goals that: a) private property rights be considered, b) that development permits be processed in a fair and timely manner, and c) that citizen participation be the foundation of all planning efforts. The CWPP's are included as an Appendix.

Organization of this Comprehensive Plan

The specific goals that the community has established to create or preserve the Vision Statement are highlighted in this Comprehensive Plan. Even more specific decision making policies appear next to the goals. These goals and policies form the heart of the Comprehensive Plan. Along with analysis of existing conditions, predicted future conditions, establishment of standards for future development and services provision, they create a road map that will guide the City toward the future described in the Vision Statement. The goals and policies, along with related analyses, are organized into separate elements. The Growth Management Act requires that the plan contain a Land Use Element, Transportation Element, Housing Element, Utilities Element, Economic Development Element, Parks and Recreation Element, and a Capital Facilities Element. In addition to these required elements, the City has elected to include a Historic Preservation Element.

How Will the Plan be Implemented?

The goals in this Comprehensive Plan identify what we hope to achieve as a community. The general goals stated are following by a series of policies that describe, in general terms, how the City will achieve these goals. Some policies take a prescriptive approach by outlining what the City will require to achieve a goal while other policies present a more flexible approach whereby the City will “encourage” or “support” an action. An example of a prescriptive approach is a policy within the Parks and Recreation element that requires that the City provide for picnic facilities for use by large groups. An example of a more flexible, or supportive, goal to encourage actions is a policy within the City’s Transportation Element which promotes the use of bicycle and pedestrian transportation as viable alternatives to vehicle use. The use of flexibility, rather than a prescriptive approach, allows for developers and the City to respond to changing conditions. Also, there may be policies within the plan that conflict with one another (e.g. a policy which encourages retention of large trees and another policy that encourages increased access to solar energy). This requires flexibility in the City’s regulations to balance the two to provide the best outcome to the City as a whole.

The Growth Management Act contains requirements that communities take real steps to assure that the goals and policies are not ignored as decisions occur and are, in fact, implemented by day-to-day decisions. In order to make goals and policies actually affect what happens in the real world, several things must happen. To assure that all government decisions made after its adoption are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, City codes, procedures and regulations must be amended to be consistent with The Plan. Primary implementation tools include the Shelton Municipal Code, the Six Year Transportation Improvement Programs, State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the Shoreline Master Program, utility plans, and many other city codes and programs. The implementation phase of the planning process may require that these codes and programs be amended to implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan as it is amended. In the period immediately after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan a series of such amendments will be placed before the City Commission. Each change or new ordinance will be discussed in a public hearing and must be based on citizen involvement just as surely as the writing of the Plan. In this way, it can be assured that the specific steps taken are as consistent with community desires as the initial goals and policies.