Draft Comprehensive Plan Frequently Asked Questions

What's Going On?

The City of Sequim is undertaking a periodic review and update of its Comprehensive Plan, as required by the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A.130(5).

The GMA sets forth that Clallam County and its cities should review and revise, if needed, their Comprehensive Plans to ensure the plan complies with GMA requirements. The GMA requires state and local governments to manage Washington's growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth areas, preparing comprehensive plans, and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations.

This approach to growth management is unique among states. Rather than centralize planning and decision-making at the state level, the GMA is built on Washington's strong traditions of local government control and regional diversity. The GMA establishes state goals, sets deadlines, and offers direction on how to prepare local Comprehensive Plans, and sets forth requirements for early and continuous public participation.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Comprehensive plans are the centerpiece of local planning efforts. A Comprehensive Plan articulates a series of goals and policies intended to guide the decisions of elected officials and local government staff. The Comprehensive Plan provides long-range policy direction for land use, transportation, economic development, housing, capital facilities, utilities, parks and recreation, and natural environment. It lays out a community vision and priorities and describes where, how, and in some cases when development should occur.

What is the Growth Management Act?

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is a State law that requires state and local governments to manage Washington's growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth areas, preparing Comprehensive Plans and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations. This approach to growth management is unique among states. GMA was adopted by the Legislature in 1990 (Chapter 36.70A RCW). The GMA was adopted because the Washington State Legislature found that uncoordinated and

unplanned growth posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development and the quality of life in Washington. The central premise of the GMA is that spontaneous and unstructured growth and development is wasteful of our natural resource base and costly to the provision of public services and facilities. By managing growth and development, the negative effects can be minimized, and the benefits can be maximized.

Why do We Need a Comprehensive Plan?

Cities need a Comprehensive Plan to ensure that decisions made today will result in efficient and sustainable growth in the future. Policies contained in comprehensive plans are meant to ensure orderly growth and protect the public's best interests. As cities grow, having a Comprehensive Plan in place enables local governments to identify and respond to changing community needs and desires in a thoughtful rather than reactive way.

Why are We Doing an Update?

The Growth Management Act requires that cities and counties update their Comprehensive Plans on a periodic schedule. This is an opportunity to revise population and employment growth forecasts with the most up-to-date data, review existing policies to ensure they make sense for the communities they serve, write new policies that reflect the priorities of the community, and confirm that all federal, state, and local requirements are met. The 2025 Update will plan for the next 20 years of population and employment growth through the year 2045.

Does the Comprehensive Plan Address Transportation, Water and Sewer Infrastructure?

Yes. The process of identifying current capital facility needs, future needs to serve the growth anticipated in the comprehensive plan, and how to fund them, is an important aspect of planning under the Growth Management Act. The capital facilities plan (CFP) includes a six-year capital improvement plan (CIP) which should align with the jurisdiction's budget, and a longer-range (20-year) CFP of capital projects, with estimated costs and proposed methods of financing. The CFP provides for the full implementation of the land use plan by showing how public facilities and services will be provided for in the community, at the population and intensities of development envisioned in the plan, and at adopted levels of service.

Why Should I be Aware of the Comprehensive Plan Update?

The Comprehensive Plan is the fundamental document in which the City relies on to guide land use decisions. The Comprehensive Plan includes designations describing the type of development expected in certain areas. These designations are the basis of all Zoning Districts and form the set of regulations with which all land use applications must comply. Simply put, the Comprehensive Plan is the blueprint for how the community of Sequim will grow.

Can a Comprehensive Plan be Changed Once it is Adopted?

Yes. Per State law, proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan can be considered once per year. All proposals are considered at the same time so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be determined.

What is the Difference Between the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance?

The Comprehensive Plan is a policy document that guides general land use patterns. The Zoning Ordinance is part of the Sequim Municipal Code and regulates the type, scale and intensity of development which may occur in the specific zoning districts.