

**Planning Commission Review:**  
Goals and Policies 6/28/22 and 7/12/22  
Full Chapter 5/9/23 and 6/13/23

**City Council Review:**  
4/10/24



# Chapter 3. Community Character

### 3.1 PLAN CONTEXT

The character of a community is influenced by a variety of factors, including its residents, social network, schools, community and business organizations, history, built environment, and natural resources. Although it is not possible to legislate a strong community, public policy can provide a framework that supports desirable characteristics. Community cohesiveness develops in many ways. It can come from a shared vision for the community. It can be nurtured by community events. It can be developed through the use of public places for interaction.

The Community Character Chapter provides a framework for shaping the future form and character of Poulsbo. This chapter focuses on placemaking and on those physical features which shape the setting for life in the community. It addresses the building and site design, public spaces and landscapes, streetscapes and other physical features.

The Community Character Chapter is not a required Comprehensive Plan element under state law; however, because of the value Poulsbo places on character, the City has chosen to include it as an additional chapter in the Comprehensive Plan. This chapter plays a critical role in maintaining and improving the physical quality of the environments that define the City's identity and give character to its commercial districts and residential neighborhoods.



## 3.2 GOALS AND POLICIES

This chapter is complimentary to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, and many of the policies identified in this chapter may be included or further refined in other chapters. This chapter considers the following aspects of Community Character:

- People and Public Places
- Entrances, Gateways, Landmarks and Wayfinding
- Building and Site Review
- Streets and Pathways
- Downtown Poulsbo
- Districts and Neighborhoods
- Historic Resources and Landmarks

### People and Public Places

The best public places appeal to the broadest number of people: young and old, residents and visitors, workers and shoppers. Public places should draw people because they are comfortable, attractive, and convenient. Public art and cultural activities also draw people together and express the diversity of a community's character.

#### **GOAL CC-1**

**Provide well-designed and interesting public places that foster community cohesiveness and interaction while showcasing surrounding natural features.**

##### **Policy CC-1.1**

*Continue to support traditional and non-traditional community festivals and events that reflect the diversity, heritage, and cultural traditions of the community. Emphasize events that are important to Poulsbo's diversity, history, and heritage.*

##### **Policy CC-1.2**

*Support the development of a diverse set of inter-generational recreational and cultural programs that celebrate Poulsbo's heritage and cultural diversity.*

##### **Policy CC-1.3**

*Preserve, develop, and enhance community gathering places throughout the city.*

##### **Policy CC-1.4**

*Design and build Poulsbo's public buildings with quality sustainable materials and construction techniques to serve as a model to the community, and to enhance their function as community gathering places.*

##### **Policy CC-1.5**

*Incorporate and provide a display opportunity for art in and outside of public buildings and provide opportunities for artists to contribute to public art within city-owned parks, bridges, or other public facilities.*

##### **Policy CC-1.6**

*Explore the creation of an arts committee to review and make recommendations on public art, secure funding, and identify locations suitable for art installations.*

##### **Policy CC-1.7**

*Support the provision and expansion of educational opportunities, including education that goes beyond textbooks to cultivate a skilled and well-educated community.*



## Entrances, Gateways, Landmarks, and Wayfinding

People orient themselves in their community by remembering certain features that include unique public views, defined entries and landmarks. These features also can set apart one community from another and are part of what defines the unique character of a place. Preserving key features and creating new ones can help define and enhance Poulsbo's character.

### **GOAL CC-2**

**Provide residents and visitors with positive identifiable images that reflect Poulsbo's unique characteristics and create a sense of place and belonging.**

#### ***Policy CC-2.1***

*Identify and support the establishment of gateways into the city and individual neighborhoods and emphasize these entrances with distinctive design elements such as symbolic markers, signage, monuments, landscaping, or other design features.*

#### ***Policy CC-2.2***

*Enhance the visual appeal of the city by developing a signage and wayfinding program that identifies Poulsbo, is cohesive throughout the city, and links the community's resources to its residents and visitors.*

#### ***Policy CC-2.3***

*Identify public view opportunities unique to Poulsbo such as those of the Olympic Mountains and Liberty Bay, and community landmarks, such as the Muriel Iverson Williams Waterfront Park, Marinas, and First Lutheran Church, and when feasible, preserve and enhance those views through means such as:*

- Properly pruning trees and brush;
- Framing views with structural elements; and
- Aligning paths to create focal points.

#### ***Policy CC-2.4***

*Encourage schools, religious facilities, library and other public or semi-public buildings to locate and design facilities that reflect Poulsbo's unique characteristics and serve as community landmarks.*



## Building and Site Review

Quality and pleasing design is as important in the details of a building and site as a development's contribution is to the urban character of the city. As Poulsbo continues to grow, the quality of buildings, sidewalks and vegetation are important. These elements involve a consideration of building bulk and character, lighting, planting, signs and other elements that compose the built environment.

### **GOAL CC-3**

**Require high-quality, attractive human-scaled design and development that respects the surrounding built environment, promotes variety of building types and architectural interest, and builds on the character of the existing architectural fabric of the community, while allowing for the addition of complementary new urban design elements in the City's commercial, business employment, and residential multi-family zones, in addition to planned residential developments and infill projects areas.**



**Policy CC-3.1**

Utilize design standards and design review to accomplish the following for new commercial and mixed-use development:

- Include architectural features that create visual interest;
- Use of high-quality, durable, and sustainable materials;
- Architectural elements that provide protection from the weather;
- The height and bulk of buildings are proportional and appropriate to the site and surrounding natural and built environment;
- Roof forms include visual focal points and variation in detail including pitch, terraced and cornice roof forms;
- Rooftop equipment is creatively concealed; and
- Landscaping that unifies site design and creates character.

**Policy CC-3.2**

Design standards for commercially zoned areas shall be enhanced to continue the northwestern architectural style of the existing commercial areas, and the Scandinavian small fishing village scale architectural style of downtown Poulsbo. The city should review its building design standards every five years to ensure it remains relevant and reflects the desires of the community.

**Policy CC-3.3**

For large buildings or development with multiple buildings, similar design features and characteristics shall be included in all buildings to create continuity, while also allowing individual architectural designs.

**Policy CC-3.4**

Encourage new development to incorporate art in building and site design that reinforces community identity, creates unique places, and provides a basis for community pride and ownership. Encourage diversity in content, media, and siting to reflect an array of cultural influences.

**Policy CC-3.5**

Require landscaping that contributes to and is an integral part of how a site interacts with the built and natural environment, and:

- Retains, enhances, and creates character and a sense of place;
- Utilizes native trees and plants, when feasible;
- Enhances water and air quality;
- Minimizes water consumption;
- Provides aesthetic value;
- Softens or disguises less aesthetically pleasing features of a site; and
- Provides buffers for transitions between uses or helps protect natural features.

**Policy CC-3.6**

Encourage Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles when developing industrial, mixed-use, commercial, high-density residential uses, and parks and open space.



## Streets and Pathways

Streets and pathways can be more than just a means of getting from one point to another. They can define how the city is viewed as one passes through it and create a sense of unique character. Elements of design, such as width, provisions for different users, material treatments, and vegetation, affect the quality of a traveler's trip and the sense of place. Attracting people into the public realm means supporting them with safe street crossings, sidewalks, walkways, and bicycle routes as important connections between different places in the city. Street corridors and pathways tie different parts of Poulsbo together and should instill public pride through their design.

### **GOAL CC-4**

**Provide connectivity and attractive streets that enhance the City's aesthetics and sense of place.**

#### **Policy CC-4.1**

*Design and create sidewalks, bikeways, and paths to increase connectivity for people by providing safe and direct, or convenient links throughout the city.*

#### **Policy CC-4.2**

*Identify streets in the city that could be considered for special treatment due to their importance, location, activity, and connection to public spaces. Such treatments could include elements such as:*

- Specially designed landscaped island(s);
- Unique crosswalk treatments;
- Unique and interesting street lighting;
- Sidewalk furniture;
- Street landscaping and sidewalk planters; and
- Low Impact Development (LID) features.



#### **Policy CC-4.3**

*Promote the planting of low maintenance landscaping and street trees to enhance City rights-of-way and improve the pedestrian environment.*

## Downtown Poulsbo

Downtown Poulsbo is a center for recreation, shopping, dining and a boating destination. One of the main reasons people are drawn to Poulsbo is its charming small-scale downtown. Residents can stop by and buy a coffee with their neighbor, have dinner with friends, or take an evening walk along the boardwalk. Tourists love to stroll along Front Street and enjoy Poulsbo's Norwegian heritage, unique shops, restaurants, artisanal beverage venues, and art galleries.

Downtown Poulsbo is a special hub that draws local residents, tourists, boaters and employers/employees all together. It is an important component of the city's identity. The City is committed to preserving and enhancing the distinctiveness and vitality of Downtown Poulsbo.



**GOAL CC-5**

**Promote an economically healthy Downtown that is unique, attractive and offers a variety of retail, office, service, residential, cultural, and recreational opportunities.**

**Policy CC-5.1**

*Preserve and enhance the existing character and scale of downtown through control of height, scale, and design while reinforcing the area as a primary identifying feature of Poulsbo, setting it apart from the rest of the city.*

**Policy CC-5.2**

*Preserve the existing eclectic character of Front Street with its individual small storefronts located at the sidewalk, street-facing building facades, awnings, unique design elements, and up to 35 feet height limit.*

**Policy CC-5.3**

*Identify and improve walking, rolling and biking routes to Downtown Poulsbo as a pedestrian and biking-friendly destination. Provide safe methods such as textured crosswalk paths and pedestrian islands where people can cross major streets at regular and convenient intervals.*

**Policy CC-5.4**

*Update and implement the Downtown Parking Management Strategy, which identifies short and long-term strategies and alternatives for providing additional downtown public parking. Strategies should consider nonmotorized access and enhanced transit service downtown.*

**Districts and Neighborhoods**

Many residents identify where they live, work, or spend their free time as a particular neighborhood. Neighborhoods have differing characteristics and often specific identities. Someone who lives in Old Town experiences a different flavor of the city compared to one who lives off Viking Ave on the north edge of town, and different still from one living in a subdivision on Noll Rd. It is important that each of these neighborhoods be recognized and appreciated for the unique qualities that they add to the overall character of Poulsbo.

**GOAL CC-6**

**Establish and enhance the character and diversity of existing commercial and employment districts and residential neighborhoods in order to attract long-term residents and businesses and to ensure the city's residential quality, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality.**

**Policy CC-6.1**

*Promote the revitalization of existing commercial centers by encouraging property owners to maintain and improve the appearance of individual buildings and commercial centers through building façade improvements, landscaping, and pedestrian improvements.*



**Policy CC-6.2**

*Encourage walkable, rollable, and bikeable commercial areas that are strategically located to provide adjacent neighborhoods with goods and services.*

**Policy CC-6.3**

*Provide a variety of attractive, well-designed housing choices that reinforce the character of established neighborhoods and meet the needs of existing and future residents.*

**Policy CC-6.4**

*Support contextually appropriate residential infill development and redevelopment that is sensitive to surrounding residential areas, and that supports community character goals.*

**Policy CC-6.5**

*Encourage a variety of uses and mixed-use development within buildings, or sites. Ensure that mixed-use development complements and enhances the character of the surrounding residential and commercial areas.*

**Policy CC-6.6**

*Continue to improve and enhance code enforcement functions by identifying and evaluating best practices and providing resources for program administration.*

**Historic Resources and Landmarks**

Historic resources and landmarks offer a way to connect with the city’s past and provide a sense of continuity and permanence. Those resources represent development patterns and places associated with Poulsbo’s notable persons and community events. The historic fabric together with unique qualities of new development patterns define the character of a city. It is essential to preserve some historic resources to maintain the character of Poulsbo and to continue to honor its past.

Most people are familiar with many visible historic landmarks in Poulsbo, such as First Lutheran Church. There are other places throughout the city that are reminders of the past as well. For example, in 1930 a brick North Kitsap High School was constructed along Front Street. It is now the Poulsbo Parks and Recreation building. Moe, Bjermeland, Eliason, Hostmark, and Iverson Streets were all named after the first Mayor (Andrew Moe) and some of his council members. And church services were first held in 1888 at Fordefjord Lutheran Church, known today as First Lutheran Church.

The City can enrich the lives of its citizens and its appeal to visitors by commemorating its past. In some cases, this may mean active involvement in the preservation of landmarks, or continued support of the efforts of the Poulsbo Historical Society’s important task of retaining the link with previous generations.

**GOAL CC-7**

**Protect, conserve, celebrate, and enhance historical, archaeological, and cultural resources throughout the City of Poulsbo.**





**Policy CC-7.1**

*Cooperate with the Poulsbo Historical Society, Suquamish Tribe, other organizations and interested citizens in identifying historical, archaeological, and cultural resources that provide unique insights into the history and the development of the city.*

**Policy CC-7.2**

*Cooperate with the Poulsbo Historical Society to identify Poulsbo's heritage residences and buildings. Where feasible, install historic signs/markers for Poulsbo's heritage residences and buildings.*

**Policy CC-7.3**

*Incentivize the protection and conservation of designated historical, archaeological, and cultural sites and resources by allowing for adaptive reuse and providing incentives for historic preservation.*

**Policy CC-7.4**

*Acquire historical or cultural resources when feasible. Consider cost sharing for acquisition, lease, or maintenance with other public or private agencies or governments.*

**Policy CC-7.5**

*Incorporate interpretative signage, historic street names, and features reflecting original historic designs into park projects, transportation projects, and buildings when feasible, as a means of commemorating past events, persons of note, and City history.*

**Policy CC-7.6**

*Assist developers, landowners, and interested citizens in obtaining grants and tax incentives for the reuse and rehabilitation of designated historic sites and buildings.*

