



Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 VISION

The City of Poulsbo Comprehensive Plan reflects the wide variety of individual and community desires, needs and aspirations, all within the context of the goals and requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). Poulsbo's heritage is a quality of life that is unique and highly valued by its people. The continued welfare of current and future residents is the paramount goal of the City of Poulsbo leaders. Poulsbo is known as a community with beautiful views, a vibrant downtown, and healthy neighborhoods. Poulsbo's success isn't a fluke. It stems from decades of community work, foresight, and planning. Looking forward, Poulsbo will continue to change, and change will present both opportunities and challenges. In the face of that change, the city seeks to shape its future in ways that will maintain the quality of life that makes Poulsbo a special place to live, work, shop, visit and recreate.

The Comprehensive Plan is a set of guidelines, goals, policies, and strategies to give growth and development both context and direction. To guide the city in its decisions is its vision of the future – which is shared by residents and elected officials:

Poulsbo is a vibrant community distinguished by its unique location on the shore of Liberty Bay, with access to natural beauty and urban amenities, and historic, small-town quaint character. Situated at the cross-roads of Puget Sound, Poulsbo recognizes that our past and future are connected to the natural resources and systems we depend on and enjoy, as well as the local and regional cultural and economic relationships that have developed over time. We envision a future in which our fiscal and environmental health are in balance and wisely stewarded. Poulsbo is an inclusive community, aware of our connections to each other and respectful of our differences, where civic groups, local government, families, and neighbors work collaboratively to continually maintain and improve quality of life for all.

This Vision Statement has guided development of this Comprehensive Plan and expresses residents' wishes for the future in a general sense. It is the basis for all that follows. Further, Poulsbo's ten guiding principles are integral to supporting Poulsbo's vision. These guiding principles are the foundation for the other goals and policies enumerated throughout the plan.



Poulsbo's Guiding Principles

- *Respect the historic small-town feel of downtown and existing neighborhoods and districts with the energy and vitality of a growing and changing community.*
- *Recognize, celebrate, and promote the cultural and social diversity of the city.*
- *Create opportunities for the market to provide a diversity of housing types, sizes, densities, and prices to serve all economic segments and households.*
- *Connect the City, neighborhoods, and neighbors through Complete Streets to improve safety and connectivity for people of all ages and abilities and enhance the City's streetscape for all users.*
- *Provide residents of all ages with diverse and accessible recreational and cultural opportunities, including active recreation and social and educational activities that change with trends in the city's demographics.*
- *Improve and sustain the beauty and health of the surrounding natural environment while adapting to impacts from climate change.*
- *Develop an economically sustainable balance of services, amenities, and infrastructure that accommodate anticipated levels of growth, protect public health and safety, and enhance the quality of life.*
- *Support a business-friendly environment that retains small and locally owned businesses, attracts large internationally recognized businesses, expands the jobs and tax base, and encourages innovation and creative partnerships.*
- *Support inclusive, accessible, and high-quality education to empower every resident to thrive and contribute to the community's collective advancement.*
- *Establish processes that engage residents and community partners and implement policies that reflect the desires and concerns of all community members.*

1.2 PLANNING CONTEXT

Poulsbo's Comprehensive Plan ("The Plan") is a legal and policy document that serves as the vehicle to achieve the City's vision of the future. In short, it's a blueprint for building upon the existing character, physical development, and infrastructure provision of the city. The Plan takes a long-range perspective on topics that address the physical, social, and economic health of the city. Guidance is intentionally general, providing broad policy direction that will be translated into action through specific implementation programs or regulatory actions developed by the City. The Plan is a living document, adaptable to evolving conditions, and offering a framework for the consideration of policy changes. The Plan has these characteristics:

- Long Range – Based on a 20-year vision of the city;
- Predictable – Site specific and clearly states how properties will be zoned and used in the future;
- Consistent – Internally consistent and is consistent with regional and sub area plans;
- Flexible – Will continue to evolve through its annual amendments and updates and the required 10-year review and five-year check in, The Plan will be adjusted to changing needs, unforeseen circumstances and new local or regional trends;
- and as the name implies, Comprehensive – Organizes and coordinates the complex interrelationships among people, land, resources, natural environmental systems, and public facilities in such a way as to protect the future health, safety, and welfare of the residents.



The Growth Management Act

The passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990 fundamentally changed the way comprehensive planning is carried out in Washington State. 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.

The GMA requires state and local governments to manage 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 built on Washington's strong traditions of local government control and regional diversity. The GMA established state goals, set deadlines, offered direction on how to prepare local comprehensive plans and regulations, and set forth requirements for early and continuous public participation. Within the framework provided by the mandates of the GMA, local governments have choices regarding the specific content of comprehensive plans and implementing development regulations.

GMA identifies fifteen planning goals that are intended to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and the development regulations that support the plans. Local plans must implement these goals in a balanced manner:

- **Urban Growth:** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- **Reduce Sprawl:** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- **Transportation:** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city Comprehensive Plans.
- **Housing:** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable 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.
- **Economic Development:** Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans. Promote economic development opportunity for all residents of the state, especially for unemployed and disadvantaged persons and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.



- **Property Rights:** Private property rights 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.
- **Permits:** Applications for both state and local governmental permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- **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.
- **Open Space and Recreation:** Retain recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
- **Environment:** Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality and the availability of water.
- **Participation and Coordination:** Encourage the involvement of residents in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, to ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- **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.
- **Historic Preservation:** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- **Climate Change and Resiliency:** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.
- **Shorelines of the State:** The goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020.

Since its passage, the GMA has responded to ambiguities through Growth Management Hearings Board interpretations resulting from resident or governmental petition. Also, as Washington's population increases and funding priorities change, the GMA responds through new legislative mandates and amendments.



Vision 2050

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the designated forum for collaborative work on regional growth management, economic development, and transportation planning in Pierce, King, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties. VISION 2050 is PSRC's vision for accommodating the 5.8 million people and 3.4 million jobs that are expected to be living in the Puget Sound region by 2050.

VISION 2050 includes Multicounty Planning Policies (MCPs) that provide an integrated regional framework for addressing land use, economic development, transportation, public services, and environmental planning. Under the GMA, the City's comprehensive plan is required to be consistent with the MCPs in Vision 2050.

Poulsbo is designated as a High-Capacity Transit (HCT) community which "... include cities connected to existing or planned light rail, commuter rail, ferry, streetcar, and bus rapid transit facilities. High-Capacity Transit Communities also includes urban unincorporated areas planned for annexation or incorporation and with existing or planned access to high-capacity transit. As the region's transit system grows, these 34 communities play an increasingly important role as hubs to accommodate regional employment and population growth. Targeting growth within these transit-rich communities helps to support mobility and reduces the number and length of vehicle trips. The Regional Growth Strategy calls for the 34 High-Capacity Transit Communities to accommodate 24% of the region's population growth and 13% of its employment growth by the year 2050."

The Countywide Planning Policies

To achieve coordinated regional planning efforts, the GMA requires that counties and the cities therein develop policy framework to guide development of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. Each local comprehensive plan must demonstrate that such policies have been followed in its development.

The Kitsap Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) address issues that transcend city boundaries, such as setting Urban Growth Areas, accommodating housing and job demand, natural systems protection, siting of essential public facilities, accommodating affordable housing, promotion of contiguous and orderly development, and addressing transportation and capital facilities. The CPPs provide a framework to promote consistency among comprehensive plans within Kitsap County.

The CPPs and its subsequent amendments were developed in 2021-2023 in preparation of the 2024 periodic updates through a collaborative process between Kitsap County, the City of Bremerton, the City of Port Orchard, the City of Poulsbo, the City of Bainbridge Island, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the Suquamish Tribe, the U.S. Navy, and Kitsap Transit. Through an intensive technical review process, and the ultimate adoption by the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council (KRCC), compliance with the county-wide policy ensures that comprehensive plans are consistent, coordinated, and fit the regional vision of Kitsap County.



1.3 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT

The GMA places a high degree of importance on participation and establishes early and continual participation as the basis for the community's comprehensive planning process. The importance of participation is reflected in Statewide Planning Goal 11 which states,

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

Community involvement has been, and will continue to be, an important component of comprehensive planning. Without the community's participation any plan developed regardless of its technical caliber or literary quality will prove meaningless and ineffectual. Many of the proposed Plan updates were identified from the feedback received through community engagement as well as policy direction from the Mayor and City Council. The public engagement and involvement program provided opportunities to ensure that every interested person who wishes to express an opinion had the ability to do so.

The Public Participation Plan (Appendix C) specified how the city will engage and inform the community during efforts to update The Plan and included the following goals:

- *To provide the public with timely information, an understanding of the process, and opportunities to review and comment, and to have those comments forwarded to the City's decision makers.*
- *Ensure that information about the process is provided to the public early in the process and at regular intervals thereafter, to maximize public awareness and participation in the process.*
- *Actively solicit information from residents, property owners, and stakeholders about their concerns, questions, and priorities for the future of Poulsbo land uses and the City's Comprehensive Plan.*
- *Encourage the public to informally review and comment on the update throughout the process.*
- *Incorporate public comment into the review process prior to significant milestones or decision making.*
- *Provide forums for formal public input at milestones prior to decision making by local officials.*
- *Consult and consider recommendations from neighboring jurisdictions, federal and state agencies, and Native American tribes.*
- *Engage populations that are traditionally under-represented in planning processes (e.g., people of color, lower-income residents, working adults, youth, older adults, and non-English speaking residents).*

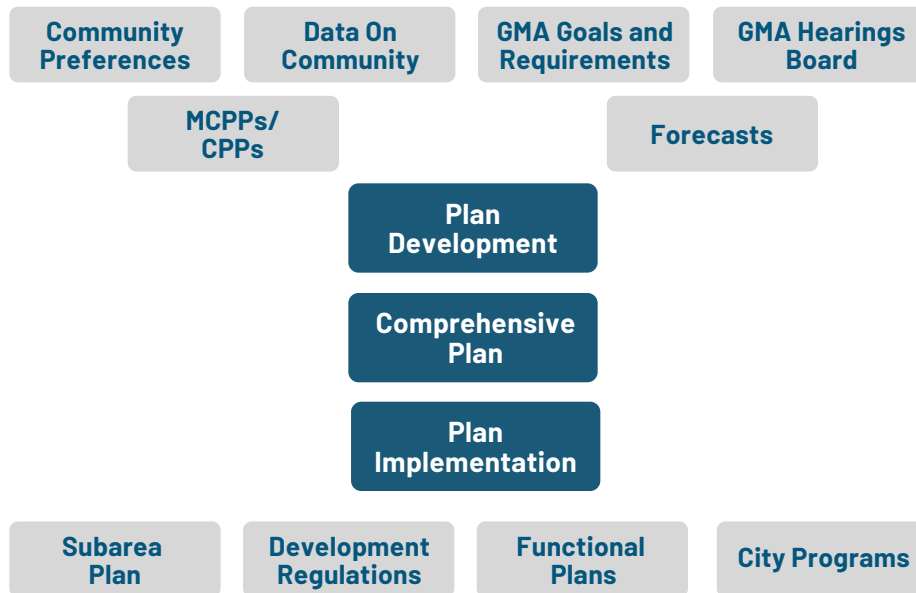
Public participation is an integral part of the planning process. Early and continuous public participation brings diverse viewpoints and values into the decision-making process and enables the city to make more informed decisions. These collaborative efforts build mutual understanding and trust between the city and the public they serve. The goal of Public Participation Plan was to provide all residents, property owners, business owners, and other stakeholders, an opportunity to understand and participate in the Comprehensive Plan update process. A summary of public participation for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update is provided in Appendix C.



1.4 HOW THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED

There are a number of tools used to implement The Plan. The main methods are through development regulations, such as zoning and critical area ordinances – and second through capital improvement plans, such as sewer, water, parks, and transportation. These two tools constantly weigh the City's financial ability to support development against its minimum population obligations and environmental protection. It is The Plan goals and policies that the development regulations and capital improvement plans are based upon.

Development and Implementation of a Comprehensive Plan



Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Amendments to The Plan are necessary from time to time to respond to changing conditions and needs. The GMA requires that amendments to a comprehensive plan be considered no more frequently than once per year (except for years where comprehensive plans are updated). Proposed amendments to The Plan shall be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of various proposals can be ascertained. In considering proposed amendments to The Plan, proposals will be evaluated for intent and consistency with The Plan, and whether a change in conditions or circumstances from the initial adoption, or new information is present which was not available at the time of the initial adoption of The Plan. The Planning Commission reviews proposed amendments to The Plan and forwards recommendations to the City Council.

Updates to the Comprehensive Plan

The GMA requires that comprehensive plans be reviewed and updated as necessary, at least every 10 years, outside of the optional annual review process, with a 5-year check-in. Further, Kitsap County must review, at least every 10-years, its designated urban growth areas. Kitsap County reviews the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the County for the Buildable Lands Report prior to the 10 year periodic update cycle. In conjunction with this review by the county, each city located within an urban growth area shall review the densities permitted within its boundaries, and the extent to which the growth occurring has located within a city or within the unincorporated portions of urban growth areas.



1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a legal document consisting of text, goals and policies that are adopted by the City Council to guide public and private land use decisions, and a series of maps.

- Section 1 is The Plan's policy document, which contains all goals and policies.
- Section 2 is the City's Capital Facility Plan.
- Section 3 includes Appendices, such as the background technical data, housing needs assessment, evaluation of the city's available land capacity, and the City's Functional Plans.

The Plan consists of twelve chapters. The GMA prescribes seven specific chapters that must be contained in a city comprehensive plan. The city has added four optional chapters:

Required:

- Land Use
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Capital Facilities
- Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Economic Development

Optional:

- Natural Environment
- Community Character
- Health and Human Services
- Participation, Implementation and Evaluation

The goals and policies contained within each of the chapters of Section 1 are the heart of The Plan, and present direction for guiding Poulsbo's growth. A goal is a direction-setter. It is an ideal future end, condition or statement related to the public health, safety, or general welfare towards which planning, and implementation measures are directed. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, is abstract in nature.

A policy is a specific statement that guides decision-making. It indicates a clear commitment of the local legislative body. A policy is based upon a comprehensive plan's goals and the analysis of the data. A policy is put into effect through implementation measures such as zoning, land division, and environmental ordinances.

Plan Interpretation

This Plan provides a guide and framework for regulatory and non-regulatory actions for growth that express the vision of Poulsbo residents. In order to maintain internal consistency between the general Plan policies, the following general rules of construction are intended to be used for interpreting The Plan:

- Policies are intended to be mutually supportive and are to be read collectively, not individually.
- More specific policies shall control over more general policies.
- Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map re-designation proposals should reflect and be based on the policies of The Plan. Any amendment of the Comprehensive Plan Land Use map is subject to the annual amendment process, the Poulsbo Subarea Plan amendment process, or the 10-year Comprehensive Plan review, as applicable.

