
PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

How the Comprehensive Plan Works

The Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan provides a legally recognized framework for making decisions about land use in the unincorporated areas of Jefferson County. The Plan manages growth by directing more intensive development to appropriate areas while protecting and conserving environmentally sensitive areas and natural resource, rural, and open space lands. It is also intended to aid as both an educational and a policy implementation tool for a broad range of public and private users, including community groups, Jefferson County officials, and other government agencies. The Plan helps these users in several ways:

- It guides the development of community plans and implementing regulations. This Plan is the framework for other plans and regulations that govern the location and intensity of land uses throughout unincorporated Jefferson County. The Plan's policies provide the basis for updating community plans (subarea, local, and functional), for evaluating proposed changes in zoning and in reviewing proposals for development projects such as land divisions. It also indicates to the public how Jefferson County would likely review and approve changes in plans, zoning, or other regulations that apply to an area or a specific parcel.
- It guides the provision of public facilities and services by integrating land use, infrastructure, and delivery of human services. The Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for decisions about public facilities and services (such as where facilities should be located to support planned growth). The Plan also directs public spending to areas where growth is targeted.
- It provides regional coordination and consistency with other jurisdictional planning efforts. It is intended that other public agencies (local, regional, state, federal, and tribal), in cooperation with Jefferson County, use the Comprehensive Plan in conjunction with the County-wide Planning Policy as regional perspectives or county-wide viewpoints when other plans and growth policies are developed and when making project decisions.
- It allows for citizen participation and involvement. Comprehensive planning is an evolving process which allows for periodic review and updates in response to changing community goals and vision as articulated by citizens, businesses, and interested organizations.

Components of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a legal document consisting of a map or series of maps and accompanying text and goals, policies and implementation strategies that is adopted by the Board of County Commissioners to guide public and private land use decisions. A comprehensive planning program (with its conforming implementing regulations) must constantly weigh the community's financial ability to support development against its minimum population obligations and need for environmental protection.

Comprehensive planning provides the public with opportunities to give direction to Jefferson County's anticipated growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides for an efficient and effective land use pattern that

respects community values by balancing land uses with natural systems and open spaces, by directing urban growth to Urban Growth Areas, and by protecting and conserving natural resource lands and rural areas. The Plan contains numerous goals, policies, and strategies to create a future in which most growth is directed to areas where services can be provided in the most effective and efficient manner, and away from areas where growth would threaten valued natural features.

Goals, Policies, and Strategies

Elements or chapters of the plan may include goals, policies, and strategies for the long-term development of the County.

A **goal** is a direction-setter. It is an ideal future end, condition or state related to the public health, safety or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, is abstract in nature. Consequently, a goal is generally not quantifiable, time-dependent or suggestive of specific actions for its achievement.

A **policy** is a specific statement that guides decision-making. It indicates a clear commitment of the local legislative body. A policy is based on 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.

A **strategy** is the means of implementation which will ensure that the goals are met. Strategies should be worded so that their progress or achievement can be monitored or measured. An implementation strategy may only pertain to one particular aspect of a goal or it may be one of several successive steps toward goal achievement. Consequently, there may be more than one strategy for each goal.

Designating Major Land Uses

The plan defines major land use categories, each of which has distinct and unique characteristics. These categories are:

Urban Growth Areas: This term refers to areas designated for growth that make intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, other agricultural products, fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources.

Rural Areas: This term refers to lands which are not within an Urban Growth Area and are not designated as natural resource lands having long-term commercial significance for production of agricultural products, timber, or the extraction of minerals. Rural areas may consist of a variety of uses and residential densities at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character.

Natural Resource Lands: This term refers to agriculture, aquaculture, forest and mineral resource lands which have long-term commercial significance.

Open Space: This term refers to any land area, the protection of which in its present use would conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources; protect streams or water supplies; promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes; enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, sanctuaries or other open space; enhance recreation opportunities; or preserve historic sites.

The Decision-Making Process

Planning decisions must be consistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is a legal, binding document and cannot be disregarded; it is also a document designed to adapt to changing trends and circumstances. The Plan serves as the basis for land use decisions. Over time the Plan's policies may change to ensure that the development pattern occurring in the County remains consistent with both the intent of the community's vision for the future, and the Plan's goals and objectives.

The Community Vision Statements found in Appendix C provide internal consistency within the Plan and create a foundation for land use decisions. This is especially important in cases where there are competing Comprehensive Plan policies and clarification as to the overall intent of the Plan is needed to assist decision-makers. This characteristic is especially noticeable when applying broad policy language to more detailed community plans, amendments to the Plan (site-specific or general), land use regulatory changes, or project-specific development proposals.

The comprehensive character of the Plan brings with it an inherent nature to address a wide variety of community issues. The public participated in developing and defining Jefferson County's vision for the future. The primary community concerns and goals are reflected in the following non-prioritized list:

Community Vision Statements

- Preserve the high quality of life.
- Strive for government efficiency.
- Support economic opportunities.
- Increase housing choices for all residents.
- Ensure that necessary transportation facilities and services are available to serve development at the time of occupancy and use.
- Balance urban uses and environmental protection.
- Protect and retain rural lifestyles.
- Protect and conserve agriculture, forest and mineral resource lands.
- Protect and conserve the environment, ecologically sensitive areas, and preclude development and land uses which are incompatible with critical areas.
- Respect property rights.
- Encourage citizen participation and involvement.

Community Vision Statements reflect the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and should be considered collectively when making land use decisions. Community Vision Statements provide a decision-making framework that can be referenced when considering the merits of a land use issue--particularly where there are numerous competing goals, policies, or strategies. Appendix C contains charts that summarize the community's vision statements for each element.

Amending the Comprehensive Plan

The Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan addresses long-range and County-wide issues that are beyond the scope of decisions on subarea, local or functional plans or individual development proposals. The Plan serves as a vital guide to the future and provides a framework for managing change. It is important that amendments to the Comprehensive Plan retain the broad perspectives articulated in the community vision statements, satisfy the goals, policies, and strategies of the Plan, and remain consistent with the intent of the Growth Management Act.

Amendments are to be justified through findings from monitoring of “growth management indicators” (i.e., population growth [actual v. projected], land capacity [actual v. projected], economic indicators [property values/comparative sales compared to statewide averages and local trends], changes in technology, omissions or errors, or a declared emergency).

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must conform to the following:

- a. The requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Chapter RCW 36.70A and the State Planning Enabling Act, Chapter RCW 36.70.
- b. Any proposed amendments to the Plan must be submitted by the County to the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development at least 60 days prior to final adoption by the Board of County Commissioners (RCW 36.70A.106).
- c. Proposed amendments must be consistent with Federal and State laws, the Comprehensive Plan, the County-wide Planning Policy, related plans, and the comprehensive plans of other counties or cities with which the County has, in part, common borders or regulated regional issues (WAC 365-195-630[1]).
- d. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan will be considered on an annual basis (no more frequently than once per year), except when the following circumstances apply: (i) the initial adoption of a subarea plan that does not modify the comprehensive plan policies and designations applicable to the subarea, and (ii) the adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program pursuant to RCW 90.58. All proposals will be considered concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained (WAC 365-195-630[2]). The County may consider adopting amendments more frequently than once per year if a declared emergency exists.
- e. Consistent with the timelines contained in the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A), the County must review all Urban Growth Area boundaries, as well as the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of each Urban Growth Area. If necessary, the Urban Growth Area boundaries will be revised to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the County for the succeeding 20-year period.
- f. Amendments or changes to natural resource lands and critical area designations should be based on consistency with one or more of the following criteria:
 - Change in circumstances pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan or public policy.
 - A change in circumstances beyond the control of the landowner pertaining to the subject property.
 - An error in designation.
 - New information on natural resource land or critical area status (WAC 365-190-040[2][g]).

Comprehensive Plan Policy Amendments

Policy amendments may be initiated by the County, or by other entities, organizations, or individuals through a petition submitted on forms provided by the County and subject to fees as determined by the BOCC. The merits of proposed policy amendments shall be measured against the petition submittal requirements contained in Jefferson County's adopted development regulations to ensure consistency in the review and decision-making process. In general, these requirements will address the following:

- a. A detailed statement of what is proposed to be changed and why.
- b. A statement of anticipated impacts to be caused by the change, including geographic area affected and issues presented.
- c. A demonstration of why existing Comprehensive Plan policies should not continue to be in effect or why existing policies no longer apply.
- d. A statement of how the amendment complies with the Comprehensive Plan's community vision statements, goals, policy and strategy directives.
- e. A statement of how functional plans and Capital Improvement Plans support the change.
- f. A statement of how the change affects implementing land use regulations (i.e., zoning) and the necessary changes to bring the implementing land use regulations into compliance with the Plan.
- g. A demonstration of public review of the recommended change.

Comprehensive Plan Map Amendments

Comprehensive Plan Map amendments may be initiated by the County, or by other entities, organizations, or individuals through petitions. The boundaries separating the Urban Growth Area, Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands designations are intended to be long-term and unchanging. Land use designations may be subject to minor refinements, but only after full public participation, notice, environmental review, and an official assessment of planning growth management indicators.

Amendments must comply with the same petition submittal requirements as policy amendments (see a-g above which are incorporated herein as a-g) and the additional following items:

- a. A detailed statement describing how the map amendment complies with Comprehensive Plan land use designation criteria.
- b. Urban Growth Area boundary changes shall be supported by and dependent on population forecasts and allocated urban population distributions, existing urban densities and infill opportunities, phasing and availability of adequate services, proximity to designated natural resource lands and the presence of critical areas.
- c. Rural Areas and Natural Resource Land map designation changes shall be supported by and dependent on Growth Management Act criteria, population forecasts and allocated non-urban populations distributions, existing rural area and natural resource land densities, and/or infill opportunities. Natural Resource Land designations should also satisfy the criteria in Section 1 (f) above (WAC 365-190-040 [2][g]).

General Comprehensive Plan Amendments

A general Comprehensive Plan amendment is a policy or land use designation which is applied to a broad class of situations and to a large number of parcels and persons that are not readily identifiable.

Petitions for a general amendment proposal are to be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners (Board) for consideration. The Board may or may not act on the proposal (petition) to amend the Comprehensive Plan. The Board is not required to take any action on such amendment proposals. A decision by the Board to initiate the plan amendment process is procedural only, and does not constitute a decision by the Board on whether the amendment will ultimately be approved.

Site-Specific Comprehensive Plan Amendments

A site-specific comprehensive plan amendment is a policy or land use designation that is applied to a specific number of parcels which are in readily identifiable ownership. A proposal which formulates policy yet affects relatively few individuals will generally be characterized as a site-specific action.

Comprehensive Plan amendment proposals (petitions) which apply to a specific site, frequently in conjunction with an identifiable development proposal, may be initiated by a petitioner through the following amendment process:

General requirements for a site-specific amendment include:

- a. **Fees.** The petitioner shall pay to the Department of Community Development the application fee prescribed by the approved fee schedule as now or hereafter amended. Fees for amendments to correct mapping errors may be waived by the Administrator.
- b. **Petition.** The petitioner must submit to the Department of Community Development a written application, on forms provided by the Department, containing appropriate amendatory language and, if applicable, a map drawn to scale, showing the proposed change. The petition shall also address policy or map evaluation criteria as described above. Incomplete petitions shall not be accepted. Depending on the nature of the application, the petitioner may be required to attend a meeting to discuss the petition with Department staff.
- c. **Timing.** Petitions shall be submitted to the Department of Community Development by the application deadline established through Jefferson County's adopted development regulations. Late or incomplete applications shall not be accepted.
- d. **Approval for Consideration.** When a petition application is considered complete the Department of Community Development shall submit it to the Board, with a recommendation as to whether the Board should consider or reject the proposed petition. After receiving the Department's recommendation, the Board, in a public meeting, shall determine whether to consider or reject the proposed petition. A decision by the Board to initiate the plan amendment process is procedural only and does not constitute a decision by the Board as to whether the amendment will ultimately be approved.
- e. **Environmental Review.** If the Board approves consideration of the amendment, the petitioner shall submit to the Department of Community Development an environmental checklist. Upon receipt of the environmental checklist and supporting documentation, the Department shall issue an environmental threshold determination on the proposed

amendment. If necessary, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be published. (State Environmental Policy Act Rules [Chapter 197-11 WAC]).

- f. **Process.** The Department of Community Development will process the amendment pursuant to the procedures contained within Chapter 36.70 RCW and the Jefferson County development regulations, this process shall include at least one public hearing before the Planning Commission and one public hearing before the Board of County Commissioners.

Emergency Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Emergency amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are allowed pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130(2)(b): “Except as otherwise provided in (a) of this subsection, all proposals shall be considered by the governing body concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. However, after appropriate public participation a county or city may adopt amendments or revisions to its comprehensive plan that conform with this chapter whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with a growth management hearings board or with the court.”

Future Subarea Plans as Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan

Subarea plans refine Comprehensive Plan countywide policies for application to specific sub-regions or communities within the county. Subarea plans may reflect differences between local circumstances and values and those generally found countywide, but they must also be “consistent” with the Comprehensive Plan pursuant to the Growth Management Act. Because of changes to land use districts and policies as a result of the adoption of subarea plans, the reader must take care when interpreting tables and analysis within the Comprehensive Plan to note whether the particular page has been amended. Amended pages contain a notation in the page footer. If a particular page has not been amended, the contents reflect analysis at the time of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Analysis specific to subarea planning is generally contained within the adopted subarea plan itself.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Appeals

Growth Management Hearings Board Review

Challenges to amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or related plans that are within the jurisdiction of the Growth Management Hearings Board shall be processed according to the law governing such challenges.

Judicial Review

Any judicial action to review any decision concerning the amendment of the Comprehensive Plan, including related plans, shall be commenced within twenty-one (21) days from the date of the decision. The plaintiff bringing any such action shall pay the full cost of transcription of the record prepared for judicial review and other costs as may be imposed.

MONITORING PLAN EFFECTIVENESS

The monitoring of growth management indicators such as population growth, land capacity, economic factors, natural resource consumption, and public health and safety improves the effectiveness of public policy and allows progress in achieving the goals and objectives behind that policy to be measured. Use

of growth management indicators assures accountability to the public. It demonstrates how effectively the County is moving toward identified goals. Ongoing monitoring allows public resources to be prioritized in order to meet goals and, if the desired outcome is not achieved, to consider modifying the goals or implementing regulations. Growth management indicators work well with the public participation process of the planning cycle. Through the use of growth management indicators, citizens and decision-makers can review growth management policy and make changes that reflect present day realities.