

CHAPTER ONE - MAKING CONNECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

Every community is unique, but all communities have one characteristic in common: *Change*.

Wherever people gather to live and work, change is so inevitable that it could almost serve as the defining quality of a community. Unfortunately, change often arouses concern and anxiety. Thoughtfully directed change, however, should be welcomed. Like a freshly sown garden, positive change is a sign of life and potential growth.

What really matters is not if a community changes, but how it changes. Acceptance of change determines the fundamental character of that community in terms of its defining features, small town atmosphere and livability. “Character” is the direct product of accumulated changes -- some may be gradual, some sudden -- that happen over time in a community.

Dramatic change often occurs in the form of large, highly visible projects. Big projects are so visible that they are usually perceived -- and rightly so -- as character-defining moments in the life of a community. The majority of change, however, is less dramatic.

Most development occurs in small, incremental changes. These small changes are barely visible from day to day, yet their accumulated effects over time are profound. Small changes are often the most powerful of forces in the development of a community’s character because they are rarely evaluated for their cumulative effect until after they have altered a community.

Together, both dramatic and incremental changes endow a town or city with qualities that either enhance or detract from its quality of life. Planning only for large projects is haphazard at best and fails to address the majority of changes within a community.

In addition, planning exclusively for small changes is shortsighted. In order to maintain and improve the desirable qualities of a community, it is critical to plan for both kinds of change. To do so, the community must define long and short-term goals -- what it wants to keep, what it wants to change and what it wants to become – as a community.

Thus, as undeveloped land in the City begins to find new or denser uses, elements of the native landscape must be thoughtfully threaded contiguously throughout the City, preserving fingers and islands of open space. Such planning and development enhances the character of and the connections between neighborhoods, areas of commerce, areas of service and areas of recreational and cultural opportunities throughout our City.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

It is no easy task to balance the social, economic and environmental needs of the community, particularly one that is growing rapidly. A well planned and sustainable community adjusts to meet the social and economic needs of all of our residents while preserving our community's environment. Comprehensive Land Use Planning is a systematic process designed to elicit and implement a long-range community vision. The process unites a clear understanding of existing conditions within a community with the development and implementation of a community's Comprehensive Plan's Goals and Policies. These Goals and Policies then enable that community to make a multitude of decisions based on its long-range vision. The process creates a powerful tool for those "*small town atmosphere*" and "*rural character*" qualities so essential to what makes this a community.

Comprehensive planning enhances the community's ability to weigh competing needs and make judicious allowances for each. It establishes the opportunity to balance the demands of development with the benefits of open space. It provides economic development tools for supplying family wage jobs and affordable housing without losing our "*small town*" character.

Comprehensive planning also anticipates the current needs of the community before any new development begins. Then it guides the City as to how and where that growth should occur. It also ensures that the costs of future growth, including the impacts on levels of services (LOS) of the urban services, are borne by the related current and future development.

VISION STATEMENT

The City of Sequim's *Vision Statement* is a simple and direct declaration that was created in 1993 by the citizens of the Sequim community. They translated their dreams and desires for the nurturing of a thriving Town Center that encourages development in and near the downtown area, and advocates working with the County to maintain rural activities outside of the City and its Urban Growth Areas.

"Sequim will be the center of financial, commercial, retail, cultural, educational, recreational and medical services and activities on the northern Olympic Peninsula, while maintaining its friendly small town and rural atmosphere."

This Vision for the City, created by its citizens, has been translated into goals, policies and projects that are continuously described throughout this update of the *City of Sequim's Comprehensive Plan*. From this *Vision Statement* and the *Comprehensive Plan* the City's codes and regulations have been and will continue to be formed.

REGIONAL COMMERCIAL CENTER

The City of Sequim and its Urban Growth Area (UGA), as forecasted and intended nine years ago, has become the regional commercial and retail center for the entire north Olympic Peninsula; and, it has become the fastest growing urban area on the Olympic Peninsula.

These revisions and updates to the *City of Sequim's Comprehensive Plan* will continue to enable Sequim's city staff to implement growth in a manner that conforms to the community's *Vision Statement* while reinforcing the existing "rural character and small town atmosphere," that continues to shape the identity of the City.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

This updated *Comprehensive Plan* continues to address growth opportunities and challenges for the next twenty years. The State of Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) guides the development and periodic updates and amendments to the *Plan*.

The GMA requires that the periodic updates to the *Comprehensive Plan* include revised community profiles containing baseline data for key areas. These data that provide a "snapshot" of Sequim include the changes to:

- Existing land use patterns
- Population projections
- Inventories of historical and cultural resources
- Housing supply
- Critical or environmentally sensitive areas located within the City and its UGA

This updated *Comprehensive Plan* contains information on every parcel within the City and its UGA, which information has been updated on the latest *Optimum Land Use Map* (Map 1-1). The data relating to the individual parcels can be found in the *City of Sequim's Land Use and Zoning District Catalogs (2005)*. This information is used to describe and identify desired land uses throughout the community; and it is the foundation for the revisions to the city's Development Regulations found in the Sequim Municipal Code.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT "ELEMENTS"

Individual "Elements" of this *Comprehensive Plan* list Goals and Policies developed and updated from extensive citizen input to provide a clear direction for the growth of the community in the future. It also includes lists of Projects that are expected to be carried out based on these updated Goals and Policies.

The Growth Management Act, as amended, has identified specific goals that community comprehensive plans were to acknowledge, prescribed the "Elements" each plan was to contain, provided requirements for regulations, mandated the establishment of "urban growth areas," required local governments to demonstrate how they would pay for the improvements and facilities called for in their plans, and mandated extensive public participation in the planning process.

The Growth Management Act, as amended, changed the process for developing comprehensive plans in a number of important ways. It established 14 statewide goals with which local comprehensive plans and regulations must be consistent. And, it proscribed how cities and counties were to work together through the use of inter-local agreements, such as

the County-Wide Planning Policies that Clallam County and the City of Sequim cooperatively use.

These following goals as mandated by the GMA, continue to require communities to address the following issues:

- Urban Growth
- Sprawl
- Transportation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Property Rights
- Permits
- Natural Resource Industries
- Open Space and Recreation
- Environment
- Citizen Participation and Coordination
- Public Facilities and Services
- Historic Preservation
- Shorelines Management

In addition to these mandated goals, local comprehensive plans must contain the following elements:

- Land Use Element
- Housing Element
- Capital Facilities Element
- Utilities Element
- Transportation Element
- Environment Element

ADDITIONAL GMA REQUIREMENTS

- Local governments were required to adopt interim regulations to protect critical areas and natural resource lands.
- Local governments must demonstrate how the capital facilities necessary to support the development envisioned by their Comprehensive Plan will be provided and paid for as development occurs, or within a specified time thereafter.
- Comprehensive Plans of counties, and cities or towns within those counties, must be consistent with one another.
- Counties and cities or towns must agree on Urban Growth Areas "...within which urban growth shall be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if

it is not urban in nature." The Urban Growth Area must be able to accommodate growth that is expected to occur over 20 years.

- Counties and cities or towns must jointly adopt "County-Wide Planning Policies," which establish guidelines on how their comprehensive plans will be developed in order to be consistent.

COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Growth Management Act required development and adoption of County-Wide Planning Policies (CWPP) for all counties planning under the Act. Cities and counties were to then develop and adopt written policy statements (joint policies) that would promote consistency between their comprehensive plans and coordination of their planning efforts.

The current CWPP provide guidance to direct the cooperative planning process for Sequim and Clallam County, when and where feasible. Specifically, it provides for guidelines for the following issues:

1. Urban growth area designations and land distribution based on population forecasts.
2. Contiguous and orderly development and provision of urban services into the Urban Growth Areas.
3. Siting of Public Facilities of county or statewide significance.
4. Developing requisite Transportation facilities and strategies.
5. Establishing incentives and strategies to create "Affordable" housing.
6. Planning procedures for any annexations within urban growth areas.
7. Establishing methods for implementing Economic Development strategies.
8. Requiring periodic analysis of fiscal impacts.
9. Encouraging the continued involvement of citizens in the periodic plan updates and amendment processes.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MAPS

There is a series of maps incorporated in the Appendices (see Appendix 25) that supports the various Elements, particularly the Land Use, Urban Growth Area, Environment & Open Space, Shorelines, Transportation, Utilities, Parks & Recreation and the Public Facilities Elements. These maps are based on information that has been updated through March 2006, and reflects the most current knowledge the City has on current and projected developments and related urban services.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PROJECTS

In Appendix 4, there is a list of Projects that are based on the Policies and Goals found in Elements Three through Fourteen. There is not a Project Timeline assigned to any of these Projects because that has been done in their Capital Improvement Plans. For those that do not have Capital Improvement Plans, there will be recommendations forwarded by Staff each year as to those Projects that need to be added to the current year's Budget.

"Benchmarking," a means of measuring the progress of the City's ability to complete its Projects, will be given a very high priority each year. The purpose is to assess how well the City has been able to meet and complete its Projects for a given period; as well as to see how the City has evolved based on the *Comprehensive Plan's* Goals and Policies. Some of the tools that will be used [or continue to be used] include digital photographs that can be included into the electronic records of the City, as well as the geographic information systems (GIS) maps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Citizens' Ad hoc Subcommittee who helped in developing the 2006 update and revisions to the *Comprehensive Plan* reviewed the *Vision Statement* and agreed to keep it intact because they believe that it is true testament to the visionary task force that wrote it in 1993. It continues today, and will into the next 10 years, as the single most important guiding principle for the City and its growth.