

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Why Plan?

Planning is intended to:

- avert problems by making efficient use of scarce resources;
- improve the physical environment of the community as a setting for human activities - to make it more functional, beautiful, decent, healthful, interesting, and efficient;
- ensure tax dollars invested in public roads, water and sewer systems, fire stations, parks and other public services are spent wisely;
- incorporate long-range considerations into decisions on short-range actions;
- promote the public interest, the interest of the community at large, rather than the interests of individuals or special groups;
- protect the rights and interests of property owners

The analysis of existing conditions, issues, facilities, population projections, and other factors within the City of Electric City Comprehensive Plan (referred to throughout this document as the “Plan”) will aid City staff and elected officials in their decision-making role. It will help with long-term planning efforts and in the coordination of these efforts with Grant County and the City of Coulee Dam. Such coordinated planning will enable more efficient use of public funds and human resources. The Plan is also intended to maintain reasonable continuity in future decision-making as turnover occurs within the City Council and staff. However, the Plan must be periodically be reviewed and updated to reflect technological, social, economic and political change that may invalidate certain plans and policies.

The Plan will be available to the public as a reference guide and is intended to notify citizens, the development community, and government agencies of how the City is directing its energies and resources to manage its growth and establish a clear intent and policy base which can be used to develop and interpret municipal regulations.

This Plan will also help Electric City in its attempts to secure funding for development and capital improvement projects. Outside funding sources must be presented with a clear picture of existing conditions, needs, and goals. This Plan will provide this information as well as details on how individual projects fit into and support the City's overall vision for its future.

What Is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is an official document adopted by local government as a guide to making decisions about the future physical development of the community. It indicates, in a general way, how residents feel about their community. Until passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990, a unifying theme and coordinated process on managing growth did not exist. At the local level, the fundamental purpose of the Plan is to manage growth so that it sustains and enhances the quality of life for community residents, as that quality is defined by the residents themselves through a public process. The Plan seeks to preserve those elements of the natural environment and the local custom and culture that are the essence of the quality of life for present and future residents of Electric City. Simultaneously, the Plan seeks to encourage economically productive use of the land and resource base in order to provide community prosperity.

The Plan provides a legally recognized framework for making decisions about land use and other planning and policy decisions. However, it is fundamentally a policy document. The policies are required by the GMA to be implemented through the use of such regulatory tools as zoning and subdivision ordinances, as well as other innovative techniques. These regulations must be developed and maintained in accordance with the goals and policies of this comprehensive plan.

This Plan is a legal document with a map or series of maps and accompanying text and goals and policies that is adopted by the City Council to guide public and private land use decisions. The Plan must strive to balance the community's financial ability to support development against its projected growth in population, enjoyment, and housing with the need for environmental protection.

The Plan directs the City's future physical growth through several mechanisms. It provides guidance for development regulations, such as a zoning ordinance, and for other community plans such as water, sewer, or capital facilities. Such plans must include the public facilities needed to accommodate the population growth anticipated in the Comprehensive Plan. They also must ensure that levels of service adopted within the Plan can be maintained.

Authority to Plan

In the 1980s, unprecedented population growth and suburban sprawl, especially in western Washington, threatened the state's forest and agricultural lands, critical wetlands, and wildlife habitat areas. Traffic congestion and air pollution had become major problems, and many sources of drinking water were at risk of becoming polluted. The Washington State Legislature responded to these trends by enacting the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990, and mandating that certain cities and counties prepare comprehensive

plans. The GMA also provided that counties could voluntarily “opt-in” and thus be eligible for grants to defray the cost of required planning.

Passage of the GMA significantly changed the requirements for local planning. The law requires that each county in consultation with its cities and towns:

- *Plan for a 20-year population forecast as provided by the State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and distribute this forecast equitably and realistically throughout the county;*
- *Collectively identify urban growth areas for each city and town using service standards and land development suitability as measures; and*
- *Draft plans that, at a minimum, include land use, transportation, housing, utilities, capital facilities, and rural elements.*

With Grant County's decision to "opt-in" to planning under the GMA, the City was also required to prepare plans and implementing regulations in compliance with the GMA. The City, in cooperation with and the support of Grant County, prepared the required plans and regulations under the authority of the Washington State Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A.

Another requirement of the GMA is that jurisdictions must periodically review and update adopted plans and regulations, thus the City is preparing this updated Comprehensive Plan.

County-Wide Planning Policies

Growth management planning is a cooperative process involving the City, Grant County and adjacent communities. In order to effectively balance land use, infrastructure, and finance throughout a region, the GMA requires that an overall vision for growth, plus general county-wide planning policies to implement this vision be established via a collaborative process between County and city/town representatives. It is intended that the county-wide policies serve as a framework for the development of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, ensuring consistency between city and county plans, and compliance with the requirements of the GMA.

At a minimum, the GMA requires the county-wide planning policies to address:

- implementation of RCW 36.70A.110 (urban growth areas);
- Promotion of contiguous and orderly development and provision of urban services;
- Siting of public capital facilities;
- Transportation facilities and strategies;
- Affordable housing;
- Joint county and city planning within urban growth areas;

- County-wide economic development and employment; and
- Analysis of fiscal impact.

The Grant County Planned Growth Committee, which included representatives of the county and each city/town, prepared county-wide planning policies (CWPPs) in 1993, which were subsequently adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and used to guide development of Electric City's first comprehensive plan.

RCW 36.70A.210 defines a "county-wide planning policy" as a "written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a county-wide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted pursuant to this chapter." Indeed, the CWPPs themselves recognize that flexibility in applying the policies is essential. Policy 14 states that "these policies are meant as general framework guidelines for the county and each municipality, however flexibility must be maintained in order to adapt to different needs and conditions.

Since adoption of the CWPPs in 1993, the Washington State Legislature has revised the Growth Management Act during every legislative session. Significant revisions to the GMA since the CWPPs were developed include provisions for (1) limited areas of more intensive rural development (ESB 6094) and (2) two master planned locations for major industrial development outside of UGAs. These and other legislative changes governing rural development were not anticipated during the preparation of the CWPPs. Furthermore, CWPPs include a population forecast and distribution based on 1992 data, which was updated for 1998 data for the Comprehensive Plan. The population allocation methodology included in the CWPPs was considered in the final allocation incorporated Electric City's first comprehensive plan as well as the Grant County Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1999.

Grant County has recently amended the CWPPs based on a ruling from the Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board. The original CWPP's were appealed to the Hearings Board by the cities of Moses Lake and Ephrata. This plan reflects the newly amended CWPPs.

The CWPPs, taken together with the thirteen goals of the GMA, have been used to guide the development of this updated Comprehensive Plan. Where the CWPPs clearly conflict with the most current goals or requirements of the GMA, the Comprehensive Plan follows the GMA.

During the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan, City staff and consultants have coordinated with Grant County and Grand Coulee such that each was informed and allowed opportunity to comment on inconsistencies between the Plan and the CWPPs regarding population projections and allocation as well as issues related to development within the adopted Urban Growth Area.

The Comprehensive Plan is consistent with and has been coordinated with the planning documents of regional planning bodies and local jurisdictions within Grant County. The Comprehensive Plan: (1) conforms with the Quad County Regional Transportation Plan, (2) is internally consistent and (3) is, to the greatest extent practicable without compromising the requirements of the GMA consistent with the county-wide planning policies adopted by the Grant County. The Plan meets the mandatory requirements of the GMA and furthers all of the goals of the GMA.

Comprehensive Plans of Grant County and Other Incorporated Cities and Towns

This Comprehensive Plan serves as the plan for the City of Electric City and areas within the community's urban growth boundary. The County's comprehensive plan serves as the plan for the unincorporated areas surrounding the City and its UGA. The City's plan and those of other incorporated municipalities in the County are integral parts of the County's Plan, although they appear in separate documents. In fact, the original plan was largely based on the Grant County Comprehensive Plan. The goal of such cooperation is to achieve compatibility along jurisdictional boundaries and also to give more stability to planning and zoning as County lands are annexed into the cities.

Development Regulations

Under the GMA, "development regulations" means "the controls placed on development or land use activities by a county, including, but not limited to, zoning ordinances, critical areas ordinances, shoreline master programs, planned development ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and binding site plan ordinances." "Official controls" are "legislatively defined and enacted policies, standards, precise detailed maps and other criteria, all of which control the physical development of a county or any part thereof or any detail thereof, and are the means of translating into regulations and ordinances all or any part of the general objectives of the comprehensive plan." Such official controls may include, but are not limited to, ordinances establishing zoning, subdivision control, platting, and adoption of detailed maps.

Simply put, a zoning ordinance and similar development regulations are intended to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Under the GMA, zoning maps and other official controls may be adopted only for areas covered by a comprehensive plan. Upon adoption of the Plan, Electric City assumes a responsibility to effectuate the Plan and to conform the zoning ordinance, development regulations, and other official controls to it.

Shoreline Master Program

RCW 36.70A.480 states that goals and policies of a shoreline master program for a county shall be considered an element of the county's comprehensive plan. Electric City adopted a Shoreline Master Program in 2014 to address shoreline areas within the City and its UGA that are owned and managed by the federal government in compliance with state law (RCW 90.58) which requires that development activities on land leased to private parties comply with the guidelines of the Shoreline Management Act.

PLAN ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT

Plan Organization

This Plan is organized into three parts:

- 1. Part I: Policy Plan.** This part is comprised of four chapters (Chapters 1 through 4), and provides background information, including an overview of the planning process under the GMA, an overview of the plan development process, a demographic profile of Electric City, and a statement of the goals and policies for all Plan Elements.
- 2. Part II: Plan Elements.** This part is comprised of eight chapters (Chapters 5 through 13), referred to as "Elements". This part includes the five mandatory elements required by the GMA: land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities and transportation elements. With the exception of the rural element, each of these mandatory elements is included in a separate chapter. The Land Use chapter includes two sub-elements: urban growth area and resource lands. One optional element, Economic Development, is included as a separate chapter. Also included in this Part are a Natural Setting element, a glossary and several appendices, including a chronology of the preparation of the Plan and the adopting or enabling ordinance for the Plan.
- 3. Part III: Environmental Review.** This part is comprised of one chapter (Chapter 14) that constitutes the environmental review required under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) for the Comprehensive Plan. Chapter 14 Environmental Review evaluates the environmental impacts of the proposed "non-project" action contemplated by this Plan. This chapter also identifies potential mitigation measures for and unavoidable adverse impacts of the actions of this Plan.

Summary of Chapters

A brief summary of each of the Plan chapters is as follows:

Part I: Policy Plan

Chapter 1 introduction. This chapter provides a brief discussion of the purpose of a comprehensive plan and its relationship to other plans and regulations, a description of plan organization and format, establishes guidelines for interpretation of the Plan, and provides a summary of conditions in Electric City.

Chapter 2 Plan Development. This chapter provides a summary of the process of development of the Plan, including a brief history of planning in Electric City, a discussion of the community involvement leading to development of the Plan, defines procedures for amending the Plan, and defines Plan implementation and monitoring procedures.

Chapter 3 Electric City Profile: This chapter includes information on Electric City's past and present population and future forecasts, an overview of City demographics and economy, and data on housing costs and availability throughout the County.

Chapter 4 Policy Plan: This chapter serves as a framework for City decision-makers, the development industry, and the public covering a broad array of issues of both short and long-term importance. The Policy Plan also provides goals and policies for each Plan Element with actions or strategies required to implement the Plan contained in each Element.

Part II: Plan Elements

Chapter 5 Land Use Element: This chapter addresses the general distribution and location of land uses, and the appropriate intensity and density of land uses given development trends. The element also provides policy guidance for land uses within the Urban Growth Area. The major land use classifications discussed in this chapter include residential, commercial and industrial land uses as well as resource lands, critical areas and open space.

Urban Growth Area Sub-Element: This sub-element of Chapter 5 Land Use includes information regarding UGA designation criteria, identifies City/county joint planning issues, policies for providing and coordinating urban public facilities and services, and policies directed at minimizing sprawl.

Resource Lands Sub-Element: This sub-element of Chapter 5 Land Use assesses three natural resources: agriculture, forest, and mineral. This section defines the purpose and intent of land use policies for each resource land designation.

Chapter 6 Economic Development Element: This chapter describes policies relating to economic needs and opportunities in Electric City, such as the creation and maintenance of diverse employment opportunities, protection of natural resource utilization, increasing of non-resource industrial development, promotion of commercial retail and service businesses, and promotion of tourism.

Chapter 7 Housing Element: This chapter includes policies that promote suitable living conditions at all income levels and encourage housing maintenance, redevelopment, and safety.

Chapter 8 Transportation Element: This chapter describes the transportation goals and policies that establish the adopted Level of Service (LOS) standards for Electric City.

Chapter 9 Capital Facilities Element: This chapter focuses on planning and provision of needed public facilities in the community, and includes goals and policies addressing capital costs, financing, and LOS standards.

Chapter 10 Utilities Element: This chapter discusses both public and private utilities and special services, including natural gas, telecommunications, electrical power, solid waste and recycling, sewer, water, drainage and stormwater, cable television, and telephone.

Chapter 11 Essential Public Facilities Element: This chapter outlines a process for designation and siting of essential public facilities, such as airports, state educational facilities, regional transportation facilities, correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and similar facilities.

Chapter 12 Intergovernmental Coordination Element: This chapter defines the roles of local jurisdictions in coordinating intergovernmental services.

Chapter 13 Natural Setting: This chapter focuses on the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment of Electric City. Topics discussed include wetlands, frequently flooded areas, geologic hazards, fish and wildlife habitat conservation, and aquifer recharge

areas.

Critical Areas Sub-Element: This sub-element of Chapter 13 Natural Setting addresses the five critical areas: aquifer recharge, fish and wildlife habitat, frequently flooded; geologically hazardous, and wetlands.

Part III: Environmental Review

Chapter 14 Environmental Review: This chapter includes the SEPA Checklist prepared for this update of the City of Electric City Comprehensive Plan.

Plan Format

The format of each of the Plan chapters is similar. The progression of each chapter flows toward the future and is organized in the following order:

- ***Introduction***: a description of the purpose of the element.
- ***Relationship of Element to Other Plans***: a description of the "link" between the element and the GMA, County-wide Planning Policies, the City's vision of growth, and any special studies conducted in preparing the element.
- ***Major Issues***: a description of the major issues present in Electric City that the element intends to address. These major issues also form the basis of the environmental review of Chapter 14.
- ***Existing Conditions***: an inventory of existing conditions related to the chapter topic within the City and UGA.
- ***Needs and Opportunities***: an assessment of needs and evaluation of alternatives for meeting those needs.
- ***Goals and Policies***: a listing of goals, policies, and actions that follow the shared vision for the future of Grant County for sustaining and improving our quality of life.

PLAN INTERPRETATION

This Comprehensive Plan provides a guide and regulatory framework for development in Electric City that reflects the community's collective vision of the attributes of a desirable community. The various elements of the Plan are intended to be internally consistent and integrated into a whole. However, due to the general nature of this Plan, conflicts and discrepancies between elements may exist, just as apparent conflicts exist within the goals of the GMA. This section defines the relationship between the components of the plan and provides guidance in resolving conflicts between components.

Goals and Policies

The goals and policies of the plan are presented within each chapter (so that they can be understood within the context of the major issues, existing conditions, and needs and opportunities discussed in the chapter) and excerpted to a single chapter for ready reference. Goals and policies follow the shared vision for the future of Electric City for sustaining and improving our quality of life. Goals and policies are also intended to be consistent with the Planning Goals of the Growth Management Act.

The goals and policies are the primary directives for land use decision-making and long-range planning. They are also the primary directives to county decision-makers and staff relative to the planning and public works actions, studies, and projects to be undertaken during the planning period in order to address current and future growth and development.

In order to understand the relationships between plan components, it is necessary to understand the meaning and differences between goals, policies and actions.

Goals are broad statements of a community's aspirations. Goals tell us where we want to go. Goals are "milestones" or achievements that we must attain to reach our vision.

Policies express a commitment to a course of action. Policies provide overall direction for implementation of a strategy. Policies provide clear guidance for decision-making and form the basis for revised development regulations, such as zoning and subdivision ordinances.

Actions are work tasks, projects, studies, and similar efforts to be undertaken in implementing the Plan. An action may be necessary to advance a goal or to carry out a policy. Unless an action is accompanied by a specific date for initiation or completion, it carries no specific schedule and may be accomplished based on priorities determined by the City anywhere within the planning period. Of course, the implementation of any action is always dependent upon the availability and allocation of staff and budget resources.

Major Land Use Classifications

The Plan defines six major land use classifications, most of which contain several land use designations with distinct and unique characteristics. The major land use classifications in this Plan are:

- **Residential.** This classification includes single-family and multi-family structures, including manufactured housing developments, supported living arrangements, foster

care facilities, group homes and cooperative housing. Other land uses found within areas designated as residential areas include public uses (e.g. roadways, parks, etc...) setback buffers, and undeveloped platted lands. This classification does not include transient housing such as campgrounds, hotels, motels, shelters and time-share developments. This category also excludes farm residences on operating farms. The types of uses excluded in the residential land use classification are generally found in other land use classifications such as commercial, agriculture, or recreation.

- **Commercial.** This classification includes land use for retail and wholesale trade, offices, hotels, motels, restaurants, service outlets, automobile service stations and repair facilities and other business-related uses.
- **Industrial.** This classification includes land used for light manufacturing, processing, warehousing, salvage yards and outdoor storage. Heavy industrial types of uses do not exist within Electric City. In all cases, industrial land uses have been defined as intensive land uses. Such land uses often have a significant impact on the environmental quality and economic vitality of the community.
- **Resource Lands.** Those agricultural, timber, or mineral resource lands designated as having long-term commercial significance. The community and its urban growth area do not contain any mineral or forest lands of long-term commercial significance.
- **Critical Areas.** The critical areas classification applies to those lands that, using best available science, have been identified as aquifer recharge, frequently flooded, fish and wildlife habitat, geologically hazardous or wetlands.
- **Public Use/Recreation.** This classification includes both public and private lands used for activity-based community parks, golf courses and spectator sports facilities. Facilities that are part of educational institutions are not included in this classification. Public Use and Recreational lands often serve as buffers between residential and commercial and industrial land uses. Lands in this classification provide excellent opportunities for multiple uses such as ball fields and play areas which can also serve as stormwater collection and retention areas.

Relationship Between Plan Components

There exists a linear relationship between the Plan's goals, policies and actions, and the text and mapping contained in the various elements as the connection progresses from the broad goal, through its legitimizing policy and then to specific actions, specificity emerges. The maps of the plan augment both the text and even the goals and policies.

For example, the land use map included in Chapter 5 Land Use is, in essence, a graphic policy statement regarding future land development in Electric City. As such, the land use policy serves, and is served by, the transportation, housing, utilities, and capital facilities elements. Based upon the land use designations on the Future Land Use Map, private and public sector service providers can project future demands for water, sewer, natural gas, electrical power, roads, fire protection, transit, emergency response, communications and other services. Using this information, service providers can, with a relative degree of certainty, invest their resources to plan and implement infrastructure to serve the future land use demands.

Though all of the Plan Elements are intended as integrated, functional components, some have a greater effect and are more essential to the implementation of the Plan than others. The six mandatory elements certainly have greater relative importance than other elements.

Internal Conflicts and Discrepancies Between Plan Components and Other Plans

The following general rules of construction are intended to be used in interpreting the Plan and resolving conflicts and discrepancies:

- Policies should be interpreted as mutually supportive, and all are intended to be read together such that each has meaning. When conflicts arise between policies, the policy that is more specific shall prevail.
- The *Future Land Use Map* (See Map 1.1 in the Map Appendix), and future proposals to amend the *Future Land Use Map*, should reflect and be based upon the goals, policies and land use designation assessment criteria included in the *Comprehensive Plan*. When conflicts arise between the *Future Land Use Map* and the *Comprehensive Plan* text, the *Comprehensive Plan* text shall prevail.
- The *Comprehensive Plan* includes *actions* or *strategies* intended to carry out Plan

policies. In contrast to policies, actions or strategies are not intended to be directive, but are suggested as a means to implement Plan policies. Other actions or strategies may be equally effective to carry out the policies, and should be interpreted as acceptable approaches.