

Chapter 1. Introduction



1.1. Vision

The City of Poulsbo Comprehensive Plan is a reflection of the wide variety of individual and community desires, needs and aspirations, all within the context of the goals and requirements of the 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. In the face of continued growth, the City seeks to shape its future in ways that will maintain the quality of life that makes Poulsbo a special place to live and work. 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 citizens and elected officials:

Poulsbo is a vibrant community distinguished by its unique location on Liberty Bay, access to natural beauty and urban amenities, and historic, small-town character. Environmentally and economically healthy, Poulsbo is an inclusive and diverse city with a livable and picturesque downtown core that connects the City’s neighborhoods and communities. The Citizens of Poulsbo are civically engaged, local government responds to public needs, and civic groups and neighbors work collaboratively to continually improve quality of life.

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

Poulsbo’s Guiding Principles

1. Respect Poulsbo’s identity, including the historic downtown and existing neighborhoods and districts, while allowing new areas to develop.

2. Improve and sustain the beauty and health of the surrounding natural environment.
3. Develop an economically sustainable balance of services, amenities and infrastructure for a diverse population.
4. Promote community interaction by supporting gathering places, open spaces, and parks and recreation.
5. Support community members of all ages in their efforts to promote active lifestyle choices.
6. Connect the City, neighborhoods, and neighbors through mobility options.
7. Establish processes that engage citizens and community partners and implement policies that reflect the desires and concerns of community members.

Poulsbo's Community Key Goals

These Community Key Goals are crafted as an extension and refinement of the City's Vision Statement and Guiding Principles and provide a framework for each of the Comprehensive Plan's Chapters. Therefore, these Community Key Goals are presented at the beginning of each applicable Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan.

LAND USE



Single family home in Old Town Poulsbo residential neighborhood.

- Achieve a mix of commercial land uses that serve the needs of the City's residents, businesses and visitors.
- Plan for residential development that compliments the built environment and the city's neighborhoods, while we change and grow.
- Plan and provide for public utilities and infrastructure to support the geographic and population growth of the City.

- Plan for mixed-use to encourage proximity and diversity in living and working options and decrease transportation challenges.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Improve quality of life and create places where both adults and youth can live, work, learn, shop and play.



Public plaza at Downtown Poulsbo.

- Maintain the positive identifiable images and features that make Poulsbo memorable.
- Encourage community cohesion by providing a range of spaces and places for civic functions, such as public meetings, ceremonial events, and community festivals.
- Provide a well-designed, pedestrian friendly, and community oriented downtown center.
- Respect the character of the City’s downtown, waterfront, and residential areas, while allowing for new development, expansion, and renovation that considers the scale and character of the area.
- Accommodate infill development and redevelopment that enhances the quality of city neighborhoods and business areas.

TRANSPORTATION

- Promote alternative mobility options and modes of transportation to reduce reliance on cars, including infrastructure for public transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
- Develop standards to improve the function, safety, and appearance of the City’s street system.
- Maintain a consistent level of service on the City’s street system that is appropriate for existing and future growth to improve traffic flow.
- Participate in efforts to enhance the City’s connectivity to the region, including telecommuting.



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NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- Support standards that maintain or improve environmental quality.
- Preserve the City’s natural systems to protect public health, safety and welfare, and to maintain the integrity of the natural environment.
- Support regulation of activities in sensitive and hazardous areas to ensure high environmental quality and to avoid risks actual damage to life and property.

CAPITAL FACILITIES

- Proactively plan and provide for critical public facilities, such as water, storm water, and sanitary sewers, and infrastructure to meet the needs of existing population and future growth.
- Provide the necessary public facilities identified through Capital Facility Plans within the City’s ability to fund or within the City’s authority to require others to pay, or fundable through

strategic partnerships.

- Provide leadership for cooperative solutions for downtown traffic circulation and parking challenges for residents, businesses, and tourists.

HOUSING

- Achieve a mix of housing types to meet the needs of owners and renters at various income levels and ages.
- Achieve a mix of housing types and densities while maintaining healthy neighborhoods, and guide new housing development into appropriate areas.



Poulsbo Place

PARKS, RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE

- Develop active and passive parks, recreation



Raab Park

programs and

facilities, and an open space system that benefits citizens of all ages, incomes and physical abilities.

- Establish a network of trails, pedestrian linkages and open spaces throughout the Poulsbo community.
- Provide more opportunities for indoor and outdoor recreational activities and team sports in City of Poulsbo parks.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

• Promote a strong, diversified, and sustainable local economy, incorporating new technologies and facilities.

- Attract appropriate businesses and foster local entrepreneurship that serves residents' and non-residents' needs.
- Support the provision of education and training opportunities to maintain a skilled workforce.
- Help facilitate the retention and attraction of community-based, living wage jobs for people living in Poulsbo.
- Encourage business activity that takes advantage of technology and promotes alternatives to commuting.



*Olympic College Campus
at College MarketPlace*

1.2. The Planning Context

Poulsbo's Comprehensive Plan is a legal and policy document that serves as the vehicle to achieve the City's vision of the future. The Plan has these characteristics:

- *Long Range* – The plan is based on a 20-year vision of the City;
- *Predictable* – The plan is site specific and clearly states how properties will be zoned and used in the future;
- *Consistent* – The plan is internally consistent and is consistent with the Poulsbo Sub Area Plan;
- *Flexible* - The plan will continue to evolve through its annual amendments and updates and the required 7-year review, the plan will be adjusted to changing needs, unforeseen circumstances and new local or regional trends;
- *and as the name implies, Comprehensive* – The plan 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 citizens.

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 Growth Management Act 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 Washington's 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 Act, local governments have many choices regarding the specific content of comprehensive plans and implementing development regulations.

GMA enumerated thirteen planning goals that are to be used 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:

1. **Urban Growth:** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
2. **Reduce Sprawl:** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
3. **Transportation:** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city Comprehensive Plans.
4. **Housing:** Encourage the availability of affordable housing 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.
5. **Economic Development:** Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans. Promote economic development opportunity for all citizens 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.
6. **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.
7. **Permits:** Applications for both state and local governmental permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
8. **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.
9. **Open Space and Recreation:** Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water and develop parks.
10. **Environment:** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality and the availability of water.
11. **Citizen Participation and Coordination:** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process to ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
12. **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.
13. **Historic Preservation:** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.

In 1991, the state legislature amended the GMA to create the Growth Management Hearings Boards to hear and determine allegations of non-compliance with the GMA. Three Boards were established based on geographic locations, to hear Petitions for Review to local governments' compliance with the GMA. Poulsbo is within the Central Puget Sound Growth Hearings Board's (CPSGMHB) authority.

The role of the Board, whose three members are appointed by the Governor, is that of a quasi-judicial panel. The Board reviews local actions only when a petition is filed, and determines if

the local policy choice or action complies with the goals and requirements of the GMA. The decisions of the Board are binding to local governments (unless appealed and overturned by higher court authority); it is for this reason that prudent local governments review and ensure compliance not only with the requirements of the GMA, but also the multitude of Board rulings and decisions further refining the GMA's intent, meaning and requirements. Throughout this document, references to relevant CPSGMHB's rulings are included to give further context to the standards and requirements of the GMA.

The County-wide Planning Policy

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

The implementing legislation of the Growth Management Act required that counties and cities agree upon policy statements in eight subject areas, including:

1. The designation of Urban Growth Areas;
2. The promotion of contiguous and orderly development and the provision of urban services to such development;
3. Joint county and city planning within Urban Growth Areas;
4. The siting of essential public facilities of county or state-wide significance;
5. The need to develop county-wide transportation facilities and strategies;
6. The need for affordable housing for all economic segments of the population;
7. County-wide development and employment; and
8. Rural areas.

The Kitsap Countywide Planning Policy (CPPs) and its subsequent amendments were developed through a collaborative process between Kitsap County, its cities, tribes, Port of Bremerton, and the U.S. Navy. Through an intensive technical review process, and the ultimate adoption by the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council, compliance with the county-wide policy ensures that comprehensive plans are consistent, coordinated, and fit the regional vision of Kitsap County.

Kitsap CPPs and the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council play important roles in Kitsap County and its cities' mandates under the GMA. Important regional policies, such as how the OFM population allocation is to be distributed to the Kitsap County jurisdictions, and the designations of urban growth areas are identified in the CPPs. The regional approach and perspective are mandated by the GMA. Again, as set forth by CPSGMHB: "*The Board has held, and the Supreme Court has affirmed, that CPPs have a binding and substantive effect on local government's comprehensive plan. [CTED, 03317, FDO, at 13-14].*"

1.3. Public Engagement and Involvement

As required by the Growth Management Act, the City of Poulsbo adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in 1994. While the Plan was kept compliant with GMA through annual updates, the City Council initiated a comprehensive update to the Plan in Fall 2006.



*Community Conversation
at Poulsbo Elementary*

As the basis for this initiation, the City Council recognized not only the physical changes the City had undergone in the past ten years, but also the changing demographics and new citizenry that the past decade had brought as well. The Mayor and Council were unanimous in their desire to start the Comprehensive Plan Update

with a proactive engagement of the community through an extensive visioning and community input effort. The City Council strongly believes a high level of citizen

involvement is essential to the successful preparation and eventual adoption of a Comprehensive Plan. A phased public engagement and involvement program was designed to ensure that every person in the city of Poulsbo who wishes to express an opinion has the ability to do so. The following discussion summarizes the public engagement activities completed during the Plan development:

First Phase – January through June 2007

Engaging the Community

- **Short Course on Local Planning.** The City began its Comprehensive Plan update by hosting a Short Course on Local Planning, presented by Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, in January 2007 for the City Council and Planning Commission, as well as interested residents and citizens. This course outlined the history of planning in the State of Washington, legal requirements and court case decision, and specifically the requirements of the Growth Management Act as it pertains to local governments and cities like Poulsbo.
- **Project Poulsbo web page.** In May 2007, a web page link from the City's home web page, was created as the online repository of all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan's update. Meeting dates, published documents and analyses, contact people and other key information were provided and frequently updated on this page. Sign up for an e-notice mailing list for future meetings and updates on the process was also included on the web page. Results from the community conversations and the community questionnaire were posted and continuously available on the web page.

- **Project Poulsbo Informational Materials.** Informational materials on comprehensive planning, opportunities for comment/participation, frequently asked questions, and visioning were prepared and posted on the Project Poulsbo web page, available at public buildings and at the community conversations.

- **Community Conversations.** In May 2007, two community conversations were sponsored for residents to provide early feedback to the City. The meetings were advertised on the City’s website, in utility bills, on posters and flyers distributed throughout the community, through a press release to all local papers, and through local organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, Sons of Norway, Rotary, and the North Kitsap School District. Approximately 80 people participated in the two conversations. Key themes identified by participants include:
 - Strong sense of pride in their community.
 - Enjoy small town feel, geographic location, and natural environment.
 - Concerned about the impacts GMA will have on their community, overdevelopment and traffic congestion.
 - Desire more living wage jobs, environmental and economic sustainability, and availability of programs for youth and seniors, balancing local resident needs with tourist culture.
 - Planning for growth must include ensuring a strong infrastructure is in place during the predicted growth.
 - Poulsbo’s future should retain the sense of closeness as well as its idiosyncratic characteristics (including the Norwegian history and style reflected in architecture, festivals and local businesses).
 - Downtown Poulsbo should reflect the city’s natural beauty, pride in its Norwegian heritage, and should be deliberately preserved as the City’s core by continuing to serve tourists and the local population.



*Community Conversation
at Poulsbo Elementary*

- **Community Questionnaire.** The City of Poulsbo distributed a community questionnaire to solicit more specific feedback from residents whose responses would influence the development of the City’s Vision Statement and guiding principles. The questionnaire was made available for over a month from May-June 2007. The questionnaire was hosted on the Project Poulsbo’s website, and hard copies were also available at public buildings throughout the community. The Questionnaire was advertised through the same means as the community conversations. Approximately 200 people completed the community questionnaire. Key themes identified by participants include:

- Respondents were attracted to, and have stayed in, Poulsbo because of its small-town atmosphere (83%) and beautiful natural surroundings (79%). Respondents also felt the city was safe (67%) and had a strong sense of community (52%).
 - Respondents are satisfied with most aspects of Poulsbo's neighborhoods, including access to services and neighborhood appearance and character. However, affordability and access to public transit are a concern.
 - Respondents' qualitative feedback focused on dealing with growth in an attractive, sustainable way that maintains Poulsbo's character.
 - Nearly 80% of respondents strongly support or support special standards for Old Town that limit the size and height of new development.
 - Nearly 50% of respondents think it is important or very important for the City to offer affordable housing options; over three-quarters think it is at least somewhat important.
 - Most respondents, 83%, predominantly travel in their car and more than 55% are mainly traveling on minor arterials and residential streets.
 - Transportation is a major concern for Poulsbo residents – 63% are dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with traffic flow.
 - Respondents would like to see the City invest more in transportation improvements, especially sidewalks and street improvements. With regard to street improvements, 88% and 80% of respondents respectively felt sidewalks and street improvements were important or very important investments. Respondents are generally supportive of all improvements that connect neighborhoods.
 - Respondents are generally satisfied with the mix of businesses and services in Poulsbo, with 65% of respondents satisfied or very satisfied and only 17% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.
 - Respondents are satisfied with the parks and recreation opportunities in Poulsbo. Respondents use Liberty Bay Waterfront Park most frequently, 62%, but also rely on the North Kitsap School District facilities for recreation opportunities, 50%.
 - Respondents would like to see the City invest in a citywide trail system.
- **Visioning Workshop.** Phase 1 concluded with a joint workshop with the City Council and Planning Commission in July 2007, where the key themes from the community conversations and community questionnaire were discussed. Based upon the key themes identified, a vision statement, guiding principles and community key goals were presented and discussed in the context of the community input received to date and the desires of the two collective bodies. Based upon the input from this workshop, the final vision statement, guiding principles and key goals were refined, are set forth in the Introduction Section 1.1, and have served as the foundation of this plan.

Second Phase – January through June 2009

Draft Comprehensive Plan Public Review

Opportunities for public involvement was provided through the 2009 Comprehensive Plan update to encourage early and continuous public participation. The goal was to provide the public with timely information, an understanding of the process, opportunities to review and

comment on the draft comprehensive plan, and to have these comments forwarded to the City's decision makers.

The City of Poulsbo "Project Poulsbo" website was the main clearinghouse for all draft comprehensive plan documents, meeting announcements, minutes and other project information. Written comments were welcomed and encouraged throughout the 2009 Comprehensive Plan update process, and were made through the Project Poulsbo website or by providing comments to the City Planning Department. The City also maintained a mailing list of interested citizens, where periodic updates and meeting announcements were distributed.

The Planning Commission served as the central advisory committee for the public review of the draft comprehensive plan. Joint workshops with the City Council were also incorporated into the review process to ensure policy direction and priorities are made through a collaborative and cooperative partnership. Public comment was taken at the beginning and end of each Planning Commission meeting and City Council joint workshop. At the end of the second phase, a Planning Commission recommended draft comprehensive plan was forwarded for review under the formal public hearing process.

Third Phase –July through October 2009

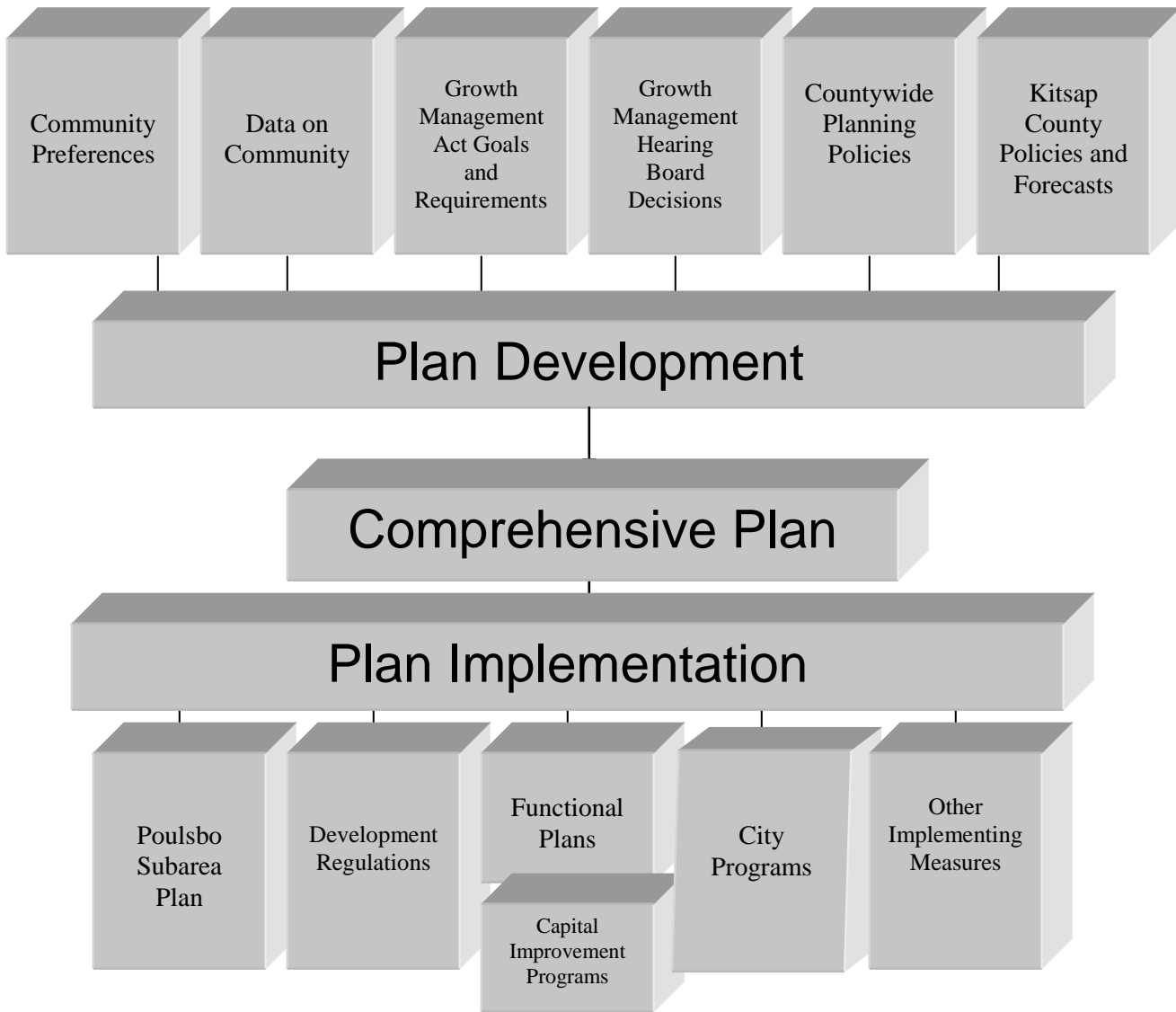
Public Hearing Process

The Planning Commission and City Council conducted public hearings to gather and consider public testimony on the Draft July 2009 Comprehensive Plan. The hearings were held July-October 2009. Public notice of the hearings stated explicitly the date/time, review body and location of the public hearing.

1.4. How the Comprehensive Plan is Implemented

There are a number of tools used to implement the comprehensive 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 traffic. These two tools constantly weigh the City's financial ability to support development against its minimum population obligations and environmental protection. It is the Comprehensive 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 Comprehensive Plan are necessary from time to time to respond to changing conditions and needs of Poulsbo citizens. The Growth Management Act requires that amendments to a comprehensive plan be considered no more frequently than once per year. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan shall be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of various proposals can be ascertained. In considering proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, proposals will be evaluated for intent and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and whether a change in conditions or circumstances from the initial adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, or new information is present which was not available at the time of the initial adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Proposed the Planning Commission reviews amendments to the plan, which forwards recommendations to the City Council.

Updates to the Comprehensive Plan

The Growth Management Act requires that comprehensive plans be reviewed and updated as necessary, at least every 7 years, outside of the optional annual review process. Further, Kitsap County must review, at least every ten years, its designated urban growth areas. And every five years, Kitsap County is required to review the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of the County for the Buildable Lands Report. 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 of the Comprehensive Plan is the plan's policy document, which contains all goals, policies and implementation strategies.

Section 2 of the Comprehensive Plan is the City's Capital Facility Plan; Section 3 is an extensive review of past development trends and an evaluation of the city's available land capacity. Section 4 includes the Comprehensive Plan's References and Appendices including background technical data and the City's Functional Plans, which are included to support the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan consists of ten elements. The GMA prescribes seven specific elements that must be contained in a city comprehensive plan. The City has added three optional elements:

Required

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

Optional

Natural Environment
Community Character
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 Plan amendment process, the Poulsbo Subarea Plan amendment process, or the 7-year Comprehensive Plan review, as applicable.