

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

WHY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING?

Skagit County began Comprehensive Planning in 1965. The need sprang from the concern that development was occurring in a haphazard way, and the regulation of development was inconsistent. Since there were no overarching plans or visions of development, the communities did not have tools to establish consistent policies.

Following the Skagit County plan in 1965, LaConner established its first Comprehensive Plan in October 1969. The original Comprehensive Plan was only eleven pages, but did attempt to initiate policies to govern code implementation and development. The adopting ordinance specifically stated that “All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with any provision of this ordinance [Comprehensive Plan] are hereby repealed.”

The subsequent plan adopted in 1978 combined zoning codes with the comprehensive plan. This version lost its policy framework and became the development code standards.

It became evident that plans establishing the goals and policies must be separate from the codified development standards. The goals and policies of a community must be amended less frequently and provide long-term continuity. In contrast, development codes can be amended frequently to be responsive to the needs of development, but reflect the goal and policy agenda of the comprehensive plan.

WHAT’S THE CONNECTION TO GROWTH MANAGEMENT?

In the 1980’s, uncontrolled growth had become a major concern of Washington State citizens, which set the stage for the “Growth Management Act”. In 1990, the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA established the comprehensive plan as the cornerstone of the Growth Management Act. It gave comprehensive plans more legal weight, and is the instrument by which jurisdictions became accountable for consistent regulation of development.

It also required integration with other planning efforts such as shorelines, transportation and capital facilities. New terms entered into the language (i.e. consistency, concurrency) and invigorated old terms with new meaning (i.e.

classification, designation, protection and conservation). The GMA also provided an organizing structure beyond each jurisdiction. Local municipal comprehensive plans must be coordinated with county plans with regard to population growth and development planned allocations.

The legislature has amended the GMA several times to address issues that have arisen through the implementation, and this process continues. In 2002, the legislature established a 7-year update cycle to ensure that comprehensive plans reflect the most current requirements of GMA, and 2005 begins the update cycle for the Town of LaConner.

LACONNER VISION STATEMENT

The Town of LaConner is a waterfront village that seeks to preserve its rural flavor, small town liveability and historic authenticity while recognizing its status as a visitor destination. Keeping a balance between preservation and promotion is the key to maintaining a satisfactory quality of life in LaConner. The goals cited below provide direction toward that balance.

MISSION STATEMENT:

The mission of Town government is:

1. To deliver the basic services to its people and visitors; public safety, water, sewer, streets, and zoning, in an economical and efficient manner.
2. To promote a business climate that will maximize sales and use tax revenues while controlling expenditures.
3. To advance LaConner as a cultural center, to preserve its heritage, and to support the arts.
4. To maximize public access to, and enjoyment of, the water whenever possible.

GOALS:

1. Provide effective stewardship of the environment to protect critical areas, conserve land, air, water, and energy resources, and preserve the Town's historic heritage.
2. Encourage changes that promote livability, pedestrian orientation and high quality design, and limit stress factors such as noise pollution and traffic congestion.

3. Identify the responsibilities of public and private agents at the local and regional level for providing emergency and social services.
4. Use local resources whenever possible to encourage local involvement in community actions and to enhance community pride.
5. Encourage the local economy by providing a predictable development atmosphere through zoning ordinances.
6. Enhance opportunities for recreational and cultural activities for all ages by encouraging diversity in available choices.
7. Open space and public access to the waterfront are priorities, whenever possible.

