

CHAPTER 2

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The Town of LaConner actively encouraged public participation in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan update process by hosting a series of workshops to discuss the various elements. A variety of media sources were targeted to advertise each meeting, and residents were encouraged to attend the workshops and/or offer written comments. The Town also invited representatives from organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Port of Skagit County and LaConner School District to participate as well.

Public participation meetings were held on the following dates:

- November 30, 2004
- December 8, 2004
- December 15, 2004
- December 22, 2004
- January 5, 2005
- January 12, 2005
- January 19, 2005
- January 26, 2005
- February 10, 2005
- February 16, 2005
- July 27, 2005

The week prior to each meeting, workshop agendas were published in the Channel Town Press, the Town's local newspaper, the Skagit Valley Herald, a countywide newspaper, and were also broadcast on local access Channel 3. In addition, meeting notices were posted on the town's website, at Town Hall, Maple Hall, and on the local community bulletin board. Informational articles outlining the Comprehensive Plan public process were written by a reporter from the Channel Town Press, and published in the November 24, 2004, December 22, 2004, January 5, 2005, and July 20, 2005 editions.

The average attendance at the public workshops was five people. While the turnout was modest, the discussions were very fruitful and informative. This

provided important comment and feedback to the Planning Commissioners and Planning Department.

Additionally, the Town encouraged public participation through a public outreach announcement mailed to all town residents and business owners on December 1, 2004 with the utility bills. The invitation explained the Comprehensive Plan process, outlined the schedule for element review, and welcomed community participation.

The community will have an additional opportunity to comment on the Comprehensive Plan update through the public hearing process to be held during the adoption process.

Components of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is the unifying document that outlines how a community will direct development and retain certain qualities of the Vision Statement. With the Growth Management Act (GMA) the Comprehensive Plan gained significant weight in decision-making and code development.

GMA requires that the development code directly implement the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The primary elements are:

- Economic
- Land Use
- Housing
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Capital Facilities
- Essential Facilities

These elements are both a summary and a directive to other plans essential to the Town's development. For instance:

- The Transportation Element enlists the findings and recommendations of the Parking Plan.
- The Utilities Element summarizes the utility plans for water, stormwater and wastewater.
- The Capital Facilities Element reflects the primary projects identified in the Six-Year Capital Facilities Plan.

All of these elements support both the development of new codes as well as assist in the interpretation of codes and permit requests.

Policies

The policies under each of the goals specify actions that are either represented in code or through interpretation of the code during land use permitting. These policies are essential to attain consistency throughout the Comprehensive Plan and Uniform Development Code.

The Decision-Making Process

Either the Town Council, Administration, Planning Commission or individual citizens may propose amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Town Council has the final authority to adopt all amendments to the Comprehensive Plan after recommendations from the Planning Commission.

In addition to the public hearing process before the Planning Commission and Town Council, the public has the opportunity to participate and provide comments during the numerous workshops that are advertised at the regular meetings of the Planning Commission.

Amending the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan may be amended once per year. All citizen requests for amendments must be filed by January 15 to be considered in that calendar year.

Every seven years, beginning in 2005, the Comprehensive Plan must be amended to include updated demographics, economic data, analysis, legislative mandates and Growth Management Hearings Board Decisions.

The amendment process begins with the planning department. The application is made along with a SEPA checklist to address potential environmental concerns.

The Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing on the proposed amendments and review based on:

- (a) The proposal demonstrates that the requested amendment is timely and meets at least one of the criteria in LCMC 15.125.090(3);
- (b) The proposed amendment is consistent with the goals and policies of the comprehensive plan;
- (c) The proposed amendment will not adversely impact the general health, safety, and welfare of the community;
- (d) Recommendations of staff and public input.

The Planning Commission will then make findings and recommendations that:

- (a) Identifies any provisions of this code, comprehensive plan, or other law relating to the proposed change and describes how the proposal relates to them;
- (b) States factual and policy considerations pertaining to the recommendation;

(c) Includes written comments, if any, received from the public.

Following a 60-day review by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED), the Town Council will conduct a public hearing to review the record and adopt, amend or reject the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Appeals

Comprehensive Plan amendments adopted by the Town Council may be appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board.