



# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTRODUCTION

## STRUCTURE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Orting Comprehensive Plan (Plan) is composed of three basic parts:

- **Introduction**, including implementation and amendment policies and procedures;
- **Comprehensive Plan Elements**, including goals and policies; and
- **Appendices** for each of the Comprehensive Plan elements.

This Introduction section includes a description of the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the framework the Act established for planning in the State and Pierce County. The Implementation and Amendments section describes how the City is to implement and amend existing policies contained in the Comprehensive Plan. It also describes the requirements of the Regulatory Reform Act (ESHB 1724) as they relate to the Plan. This section also provides some important GMA language regarding concurrency.

The **Plan Elements (Goals and Policies)** include the following:

- Land Use (includes the Comprehensive Land Use Map and goals and policies from the Orting *Parks, Trails & Open Space Plan*)
- Housing
- Transportation (includes goals and policies from the Orting *Transportation Plan*)
- Utilities
- Capital Facilities (includes information and project needs identified in the *Parks, Trails & Open Space Plan*, the *Transportation Plan*, and the *Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Comprehensive Plans*)
- Shoreline Management (includes goals and policies from the *Shoreline Master Program*)
- Economic Development

Each element begins with a general introduction of the issues that were identified in the GMA; through public involvement; and from background information. Policies that address the issues follow.

The Land Use Element represents the basis for assumptions in all other elements. The Comprehensive Land Use Map gives geographic form to the Comprehensive Plan's land use policies by designating appropriate land use categories for the various areas within the City.

The **Plan Element Appendices** include current and forecast data, needs assessments or analyses, and conclusions and as appropriate, references to other source materials or policy documents.

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

In 1990, the Washington State Legislature adopted the Growth Management Act (GMA) to provide a basis for local, regional and state solutions to growth pressures. Since 1990, the GMA has been amended several times, including the 2003 amendment requiring jurisdictions to review and update their plans every 7 years. Orting is therefore required to review its Plan and update it as necessary in 2004, 2011, 2018, etc. at a minimum. More frequent (annual) reviews are allowed.

A Comprehensive Plan indicates how the community envisions the city's future, and sets forth strategies for achieving the desired vision. A plan has three characteristics. First, it is comprehensive: the plan encompasses all the geographic and functional elements that have a bearing on the community's physical development. Second, it is general: The plan summarizes the major policies and proposals of the City, but does not usually indicate specific locations or establish detailed regulations. Third, it is long range: the plan looks beyond the current pressing issues confronting the community, to the community's future. Although the planning time frame for this plan is twenty years, many of its policies and actions will affect the City of Orting well beyond that horizon.

## WHY IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN NEEDED?

Many of the day-to-day decisions made by City officials can have a significant impact on how the community develops and functions. A comprehensive plan coordinates and guides individual decisions in a manner that moves the community towards its overall goals.

RCW 36.70A.020 outlines the goals with which this plan must comply. They are as follows:

- 1. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.*
- 2. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.*
- 3. Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.*

4. *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. *Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for 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. *Private property 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. *Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.*
8. *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. *Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.*
10. *Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.*
11. *Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.*
12. *Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time of occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.*
13. *Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.*

In addition to the state goals, the Plan must also be consistent with the Pierce County-wide Planning Policies (CPPs), another GMA mandate. The CPPs provide the regional framework for population forecasting and allocation; maintaining an inventory of buildable lands; coordinating level of service standards; and considering how urban growth areas are sized, located, and developed.

## **Functions of a Comprehensive Plan**

A Comprehensive Plan serves many purposes, including policy determination, policy implementation, and communication/education.

- **Policy Determination** - First, it encourages City officials to look at the big picture, to step away from current pressing needs to develop overriding policy goals for their community. Second, it creates an environment for the City Council to guide its decision-making openly and democratically. The plan serves to focus, direct, and coordinate the efforts of the departments within City government by providing a general comprehensive statement of the City's goals and policies.
- **Policy Implementation** - A community can move more effectively toward its goals and implement its policies after they have been agreed to and formalized through the adoption of a Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is a basic source of reference for officials as they consider the enactment of ordinances or regulations affecting the community's physical development (such as a zoning ordinance or a particular rezone), and when they make decisions pertaining to public facility investments (such as capital improvement programming or construction of a specific public facility). This ensures that the community's overall goals and policies are accomplished, by those decisions.

The Plan also provides a practical guide to City officials as they administer City ordinances and programs. This ensures that the day-to-day decisions of City staff are consistent with the overall policy direction established by the Council.

- **Communication/Education** - The Comprehensive Plan communicates to the public and to City staff the policy of the City Council. This allows the staff, the public, private developers, business people, financial institutions, and other interested parties to anticipate what the decisions of the City are likely to be on any particular issue. As such, the plan provides predictability. Everyone is better able to plan activities knowing the probable response to their proposals and to protect investments made on the basis of policy. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan can educate the public, the business community, the staff, and the City Council itself on the workings, conditions, and issues within their City. This can stimulate interest about the community affairs and increase the citizen participation in government.

## **PUBLIC PROCESS AND VISIONING**

Orting began planning under the GMA in 1992. The early process included a community workshop and survey that resulted in a vision statement. Then, as technical analyses were completed, the Planning Commission worked on goals and policies and incorporated implementation actions and strategies that came together in the Plan that was adopted January 11, 1996. Since then, annual updates have been made in which the process described later in this section has involved the public. The 2004 update also included open houses and workshops to solicit more public outreach and communication.

**The Orting Vision** - Orting is a cohesive rural community nestled in the Orting valley. Its distinctive natural features include two river corridors and a spectacular view of Mount Rainier. Orting's downtown is its historic center. It should be enhanced as a vital center where all residents come to transact daily commerce and to meet for social activities. Orting should expand its employment base so that young people can choose to live and work in the community. Orting should preserve its pastoral heritage which is rooted in its open spaces, undisturbed ridges, and small-scale agricultural establishments. It should preserve the distinctive qualities of its natural amenities, which should be linked through scenic corridors of green along its rivers. Foremost, Orting should preserve its small town character. It should remain a place that is free of urban pressures; where people know their neighbors, take time to tend a garden, and have mutual respect for their fellow citizens.

**Vision Goals** – The vision statement is amplified with the following over-arching goals that direct the more specific goals and policies of the plan elements.

- Preserve open space and the character of the rural landscape
- Preserve critical environmental resources
- Preserve important agricultural lands
- Encourage the retention & establishment of vital businesses within the downtown
- Provide a variety of housing choices for new residents
- Foster a financially sound development pattern
- Preserve a reasonable use of the land for all landowners
- Reduce reliance on the auto & encourage establishment of pedestrian and bicycle-oriented development
- Provide affordable housing
- Provide a place where citizens can both live and work



In 2008, the community engaged in a downtown visioning process to create more specific goals for increasing economic development opportunities and amenities. This is also intended to define public investment strategies for a new library, and possibly a new city hall and community center. The vision also addresses future street improvements and other amenities that will help to make the downtown a destination. Goals include:

- Develop a downtown center with public facilities, gathering places, and private retail attractions
- Locate new downtown parking facilities to support public and business uses

- Increase safe, attractive pedestrian ways linked to the Foothills Trail and parks
- Facilitate the development of new housing in mixed use projects
- Leverage Orting's historic character and tourism attractions to create opportunities for business

## PLAN SUMMARY

**Major Findings** - The Comprehensive Plan is based on these major findings:

- Orting residents want the city to retain its small rural town and rural character as it grows. Residential development should remain predominantly single-family, with some multi-family development in the mixed-use town center and in close proximity to services.
- The plan establishes the following development pattern: a central core of mixed use development in the downtown commercial area of Orting, surrounded by single-family residential development at moderate densities. Other commercial uses and light industrial development may be allowed or encouraged along major arterials and in future urban growth area(s).
- The mix of land uses in the town center includes small scale retail, restaurants, offices, community facilities and housing in a pedestrian friendly environment.
- The plan calls for a system of recreational trails and parks. A non-motorized system of trails is recommended which link the Foothills Trail in the center portion of the city with more local trails throughout town and along the Carbon and Puyallup Rivers.
- Transportation needs in Orting range from potential future traffic volumes on the existing roadways, to the configuration of the future roadway system, to the feasibility of transit in the Orting area. The transportation element addresses transportation issues and links them into a cohesive assessment of Orting's transportation options and future.
- To maintain the city's existing small town character, the plan adopts a level of service standard C/D for its roadway facilities and services.
- The plan promotes a diversity of housing options within the community, including single-family homes, mixed use housing, manufactured homes moderate to high priced homes. This diversity of housing types is intended to meet Orting's affordable housing needs.
- The plan recommends level of service standards for parks, transportation, water, stormwater, and sewer facilities. The plan also recommends service goals for police and fire protection. New development must be served by adequate public facilities and cannot cause the level of service to be degraded below these adopted standards.

- The plan directs growth for the next twenty years to areas within the City Limits, to encourage the provision of adequate public facilities and services concurrent with development.
- The plan is intended to work consistently with the City's critical areas ordinance. If a conflict should arise, the most restrictive provisions shall prevail.

## **PLAN ELEMENTS**

### **Land Use Element**

The future land use policies establish the pattern of development in Orting for years to come. The city's overall planning goals provide guidance for the development of these policies. Specifically, the goals highlight preservation of open space and the character of the rural landscape, retention and expansion of the city's employment base, and protection of vital environmental resources.

By 2022, the City is projected to grow to 7,900. This population target may not be achievable without some expansion of the City land area. The Plan seeks to preserve the small rural town character of the city, while fostering the town center. In the areas within or adjacent to the town center, the element promotes pedestrian oriented, mixed use development that allows for a diversity of land uses including housing, small-scale shopping, civic facilities, recreation, and employment.

Surrounding the town center, the Plan designates neighborhoods that allow for a mix of less intense uses and accommodate a range of housing types and densities. They are predominantly composed of single family homes of mixed densities, and designate a small portion of the city in proximity to commercial services and transportation facilities for multi-family development.

Expanding opportunities for residents to work and live in the community is another principle of the land use plan.

The plan encourages Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), which use flexible lot sizes and development standards to encourage creativity and avoid cookie-cutter subdivisions that do not fit within the character of the landscape. With flexible lot sizes, common greens and active recreation areas could be set aside for the benefit of the residents of the development.

### **Housing Element**

As growth occurs within and around Orting, there will be an ever increasing need for more housing that is affordable and desirable. Remaining developable land within the City is slated for residential, mixed use, or public facilities development. The City's challenge will be to ensure that the pattern of development provides a diversity of housing options and economic development opportunities while maintaining the desired character of the community.

### **Transportation Element**

The transportation element uses a detailed assessment of current conditions, forecasts of future growth, and local and state standards to form a framework of policies and a determination of project needs. This complex picture includes facilities for which the City is responsible as well as county and state facilities. The analyses consider capacity, safety, and multi-modal performance as well as pedestrian, non-motorized, and public transportation. Orting's dependency upon SR 162 for regional connections is an over-riding problem that can only be solved by a coordinated partnership of the City, Pierce County and the state.

The Element seeks to maintain level of service (LOS) C/D. The community is accustomed to high service standards, but the travel forecasts indicate that service levels could drop significantly, depending on how the growth patterns and the transportation facilities are developed. With a standard ranging from LOS C to LOS D, the City has flexibility in meeting the high standards that the community's expectations while changing from a rural community to an suburban community.

### **Economic Development Element**

An economic "baseline" study (summarized in the Economic Development Appendix) assessed Orting's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Strengths include the recent strong population growth; Orting's physical setting; availability of underdeveloped land and utility capacity; and the established downtown. Weaknesses include Orting's isolation; and limited accessibility. Opportunities include increasing the mix of local-serving business to recapture retail sales "leakage"; increasing leverage of tourism; and increase in demand for shopping and services as the surrounding area grows. Threats include strong retail competition from Bonney Lake and Puyallup's South Hill as well as eventual economic development in Cascadia that could weaken Orting's ability to attract employers.

The Element contains goals and policies that provide a foundation for action to diminish the weaknesses and threats and take advantage of the strengths and opportunities.

### **Shoreline Element**

In response to state Department of Ecology changes to the Shoreline Master Program (SMP) guidelines, and GMA direction to coordinate comprehensive plans and shoreline plans, the City updated the SMP in 2007 including a significant inventory and characterization of the shoreline conditions along the Carbon and Puyallup Rivers. In particular, "opportunity sites" for potential shoreline restoration and increased public access were identified. The Shoreline Element includes the goals and policies of the SMP. There is no Shoreline Appendix, as the detailed analysis is found in the SMP. Shoreline development regulations are also included in the SMP. All of the shorelines within the City have been designated Urban Conservancy. No development except for limited public facilities is allowed within the first 150 feet of the shoreline jurisdiction along the Rivers.

### **Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements**

The two major issues addressed in the capital facilities and utilities elements are the implementation of the "concurrency" requirement and the status of the city's water and

sewer facilities. In compliance with state law, the Orting plan requires that adequate public facilities be in place concurrent with the impacts of new development. This concurrency requirement means that improvements or strategies must be in place at the time of the development or that a financial commitment must be in place to complete the improvements or strategies within six years.

In order to determine whether or not public services are adequate to serve the forecasted population growth for the City (and its future UGA), the capital facilities element establishes level of service standards for water, sewer, police, and fire. New development must demonstrate that its impact will not degrade these facilities below the level of service standards adopted in the plan.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Purpose and Relationship to GMA** - A comprehensive plan is implemented through the goals and policies it identifies to guide and coordinate local decision making. The plan's policies shape the course of action taken by the community as it begins to implement the plan. The Growth Management Act encourages innovative implementation methods that are both regulatory and non-regulatory. Regulatory actions may include the adoption of a zoning ordinance or other land use regulations, while non-regulatory actions include implementation of the capital facilities plan, economic development strategies, and promotion of affordable housing development. Some actions may involve a complicated series of related steps which themselves may need to be carefully planned (for example, improvements made to a major utility system). This section will describe these actions, plans, and measures necessary to implement this Plan.

**Regulatory Measures** - The Growth Management Act requires that local governments enact land development regulations that are consistent with, and implement the Comprehensive Plan. In order to accomplish this, the development regulations should be regularly reviewed to ensure consistency with the comprehensive plan in order to identify the need for amendments.

In particular, the zoning code and zoning map must be consistent with the future land use map and policies established in the plan. The future land use map and land use policies in the Comprehensive Plan establish the use, density, and intensity of future development within the City. As part of the update of the land use regulations, Orting is also obligated by ESHB 1724 adopted by the 1995 Legislature to combine project permitting and environmental reviews; consolidate appeals processes; and clarify the timing of the development of the review process.

**Concurrency Management** - Comprehensive plan policies also meet the GMA requirements for concurrency by establishing level of service (LOS) standards for capital facilities. The concurrency management system sets forth the procedures to be used to determine whether public facilities have adequate capacity to accommodate a proposed development. And, the concurrency management system also identifies the responses to be made by the City when it is determined that the proposal will exceed the level of service established, and therefore exceed the defined capacity, failing to

maintain concurrency. The includes the criteria the City uses to determine whether development proposals are served by adequate public facilities, and establishes monitoring procedures to enable periodic updates of public facilities and services capacities.

Under the GMA, concurrency management must be established for transportation and capital facilities; however, jurisdictions may establish concurrency for any public facilities for which they have established level of service standards in their comprehensive plan. Level of service standards may be established for fire and emergency facilities, police, schools, sewer and water, transportation, and parks and recreational facilities and services.

**Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan** - Another major implementation tool of the Plan is the six-year schedule of capital improvements. The Capital Improvements Plan, or CIP, sets out the capital projects that the City must undertake within the next six years in order to implement the Plan. The six-year schedule is updated annually, with the first year of the schedule acting as the capital budget for the fiscal year. During the annual updating of the six-year schedule, the cost estimates and funding sources listed are updated and revised to reflect any additional information that the City has received. The CIP schedule is also be revised to include any additional capital projects that are needed to maintain the City's adopted level of service standards.

**Coordination with Pierce County** - Through the County-wide Planning Policies (CPPs), the City is a partner with Pierce County and the other cities in shaping regional policies and actions. This includes updating the CPPs; discussing methods for maintaining the record of buildable lands; and evaluating UGA issues. More specifically, Orting and the County have a discrete set of common interests including future land use controls in the rural portions of the Orting Valley; transportation; shoreline management; hazard mitigation and the provision of services. Orting's lack of annexation area and environmental growth constraints will limit the city's abilities to be a significant participant in county-wide plans for accommodating future residential growth and low-income housing.

**Administrative Actions** - The Plan includes a number of policies that should be carried out through administrative actions, such as interlocal agreements, revised development and review procedures, and public involvement programs. Development and review procedures must be revised to implement concurrency and to ensure that new development complies with the performance standards established.

**Public Involvement** - In order for the plan to remain alive, the citizens of the community must remain in touch with its implementation. As the plan is tested by development, there will be the need for ongoing amendments to respond to changing conditions. As the community matures, the vision of the future will change and new needs and priorities will emerge. The City is obligated to coordinate many aspects of the plan with adjacent jurisdictions, which will also generate changes. Continued public involvement and communication is crucial to keeping the process fresh and engaging so that the planning "wheel" does not have to be reinvented every few years.

## AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

**Purpose and Relationship to GMA** - For the Plan to function as an effective decision making document, it must be flexible enough to accommodate changes in public attitudes, developmental technologies, economic forces and legislative policy, yet focused enough to insure consistent application of development principles. The Growth Management Act requires that the City establish a public participation program that identifies the procedures and schedules to be used to update or amendments the comprehensive plan.

**Types of Amendments** – Other than the 7-year review and update process, the GMA limits comprehensive amendment cycles to no more frequently than annually. In addition, proposed amendments must be reviewed relative to the plans of adjacent jurisdictions, and all proposed amendments proposed in any one year must be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be determined. Under certain circumstances, the following types of amendments may be considered more frequently than once per year:

- the initial adoption of a subarea plan;
- the adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program;
- the amendment of the capital facilities element of the plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of the city budget; and
- to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with a Growth Management Hearings Board or with the court.

**Annual Plan Review and Amendment** - This process addresses site-specific requests and minor policy changes. In some cases, amendments to the Plan may be necessitated by amendments to the GMA or Countywide Planning Policies or changes in federal or state legislation. These types of plan amendments or development regulations may be undertaken once a year, and may be recommended by the City Council, Planning Commission, City Staff, or any citizen.

The City requests that Comprehensive Plan amendment proponents provide the following information in their application for amendment:

- A statement of what is proposed to be changed and why;
- A statement of the anticipated impacts of the change, including geographic area affected and issues presented;
- A description of any changes to development regulations, modifications to capital improvement programs, subarea, neighborhood, and functional plans required for implementation so that regulations will be consistent with the Plan.

**Review and Plan Amendment Process** - The annual review and plan amendment process provides an opportunity to refine and update the Comprehensive Plan and to monitor and evaluate the progress of the implementation strategies and policies incorporated therein. During the review and amendment process, the Planning Commission and City Council shall consider current development trends to determine the City's progress in achieving the economic, land use, and housing goals established in the Plan.

Information to be considered may include vacant land absorption, residential versus economic development, amounts and values of non-residential construction, number and types of housing units authorized by building permit, the affect of changes to adopted functional plans in the community, as well as activity levels in such processes as subdivision approvals, annexations, and building permits. Other information that may be relevant to consider includes the current capacity status of major infrastructure systems for which levels of service have been adopted in the Plan (transportation, and parks and trails) and the levels of police and fire services being provided by the City.

The process may also include monitoring of overall population growth and relative comparison with the forecast growth projections contained in the Plan (and the inclusion of updated projections where appropriate).

The annual review and amendment process requires public participation, both through community meetings to familiarize the public with the amendment proposals, as well as a formal public hearing before the City Council. Proposed plan amendments must be submitted to the State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) for review at least 60 days prior to final City Council adoption.

**Policies** - The following policies guide the annual plan review and amendment process:

- IA-P1 - The City shall schedule an annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, to consider the need for amendments. At that time, both City-initiated, and private party or developer-initiated amendment requests will be considered.
- IA-P2 - All Comprehensive Plan amendments shall be processed together with any necessary zoning, subdivision or other ordinance amendment, to ensure consistency.
- IA-P3 - Amendment procedures shall be fully outlined in the City's land development regulations.

**Annual Plan Review and Amendment Schedule** - The plan amendment process is designated to be flexible to accommodate unique conditions such as the nature, complexity, or amount of plan amendment requests in a single year. The annual "window" of plan amendment submittals from the public will be open throughout the year, (that is, the public can submit requests for amendments at any time) however, they will only be "processed" in accordance with the adopted regulations. The timing of the annual update process is represented by the following generalized schedule:

First Quarter	City accepts initial public requests for comprehensive plan amendments (docket).
Second Quarter	Planning Commission reviews the docket and forwards its recommendations to the City Council for consideration. City Council decides which proposed amendments should be considered and establishes a plan amendment schedule.
Third Quarter	Planning Commission evaluates the proposed amendments and forwards its final recommendation to the City Council. Environmental and state agency review is conducted.
Fourth Quarter	City Council reviews the recommendation, holds a public hearing, and decides on adoption of the proposed amendments.

All amendment proposals shall be considered concurrently by the Planning Commission and the City Council so that their cumulative impacts can be determined.

**Emergency Plan Amendment Consideration** - The Comprehensive Plan may be amended outside the normal schedule if findings are adopted (by City Council resolution) to show that the amendment was necessary, due to an emergency of a neighborhood or citywide significance. Plan and zoning amendments related to annexations may be considered during the normal annexation process and need not necessarily be coordinated with the annual plan amendment schedule. The nature of the emergency shall be explained to the City Council, which shall decide whether or not to allow the proposal to proceed ahead of the normal amendment schedule.

