



Port Townsend 2036 Comp Plan

WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

City of Port Townsend Comprehensive Plan 2016 – 2036 (GMA Periodic Update)

Welcome to the City of Port Townsend Comprehensive Plan Update Website. We want you to participate in the process of updating the city's blueprint for the future. To help you participate effectively, this website provides an overview of the plan, the update, and the public process. As we progress, there will be opportunities for input. Please visit again and should you have any questions, our project team will be happy to contact you.

BACKGROUND

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The comprehensive plan is the centerpiece of local planning in Washington State. Like business plans, comprehensive plans provide the framework for how our communities will grow. Plans help us to organize our time and to work toward our goals in a step-by-step fashion that saves time, money and effort. Planning simply makes good sense. City planning is very similar to personal planning, but it involves more factors, more resources, and is intended to serve the broader interests of the community rather than the individual.

In Washington State, Comprehensive Plans are required by the Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1990. The Comprehensive Plan consists of a Land Use Map designating the desired use of lands for various activities, and goals and policies organized in chapters or "elements." The Plan reflects the results of citizen involvement, technical analysis, and the judgment of the Port Townsend City Council. The Plan anticipates change and provides specific guidance for growth and development in the City over the next 20 years by projecting:

- o How much population and job growth are expected to occur, and where;

- o What type of transportation, utilities and public facilities will be needed;
- o Where people will live and what type of housing they will need; and
- o How to pay for the utilities and public facilities needed to carry out the community's vision.

When was the Comprehensive Plan adopted?

The city's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in July of 1996 and has been subject to a number of amendments since then. Before adoption of the 1996 Plan, Port Townsend's Comprehensive Plan had not been updated since 1981.

Who was involved in developing the 1996 Comprehensive Plan?

Public participation was vital to the success of Port Townsend's Comprehensive Planning process. As a means to encourage public awareness of the comprehensive planning process and invite comments from citizens, public input was received through a number of informal meetings, workshops and hearings including the PT 2020 Coffee Hour project, where over 80 citizens volunteered to host coffee hours, five active Comprehensive Plan Development Committees, as well as planning commission and council workshops and hearings. Public outreach included, but was not limited to, a series of televised workshops, direct mailings to City Utility customers and individuals on the City's Comprehensive Plan Mailing List, columns, advertisements, display boards, presentations at service clubs, and announcements broadcast on Port Townsend's cable television station. The feedback from the public enabled the Planning Commission and City Council to reach decisions on key policy issues for the final plan and implementing programs that had wide public support.

What's in the plan?

At its core, the Plan contains four fundamental concepts which are highlighted below.

1. *Maintaining our small town character:* The overriding objective of the Plan is to maintain and enhance Port Townsend's special character and small town atmosphere. The Plan contains two very important areas of policy direction designed to preserve the community's essential character while planning for inevitable growth and development. First, the Plan encourages the development of "**mixed use centers.**" These centers are intended to serve as focal points for new or emerging neighborhoods and to help promote pedestrian friendly areas with small scale neighborhood shopping and services. Second, the Plan includes policies which would lead to the creation of a City-wide interconnected system of open spaces and trails. These green spaces would help to protect the small town atmosphere of Port Townsend while providing other benefits, including stormwater control and linking key wildlife areas.

2. *Providing public facilities within the City's financial resources:* The Comprehensive Plan was designed to balance the need for additional public facilities and services with the City's ability to pay for them. The Plan sets measurable standards for public facilities and services (*i.e.*, level of service standards), states what specific capital projects will be constructed, and identifies the sources of revenue which will be used to fund the necessary improvements.

3. *Achieving a better balance between jobs and housing:* Another major objective of the Plan is to help address the "jobs/housing imbalance." There are many more people living in Port Townsend than there are good jobs. Because good jobs are hard to find, many Port Townsend residents pay more than they can really afford for housing. The Plan seeks to remedy this imbalance in two important ways. First, the Plan contains an economic development strategy that is designed to encourage businesses which provide "family wage" jobs - jobs that pay good money. It seeks to balance economic vitality with environmental protection and preservation of small town atmosphere. Second, the Plan contains an affordable housing strategy which provides more land for higher density development, intended to allow more creative housing types, and increase the housing choices available to City residents.
4. *Accommodating Port Townsend's Share of County-wide Growth:* One of the purposes of the GMA is to limit sprawling urban density development in rural and resource lands. To accomplish this goal, the GMA makes clear that cities and urban growth areas (UGAs) have a responsibility to accommodate the lion's share of growth, and to do it in a compact, urban manner. By mutual agreement, and based upon recent demographic data, Jefferson County and the City will determine Port Townsend's share of County-wide growth.

According to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and recent census data, growth has slowed significantly. Revised draft projections anticipate a smaller population (**12,165**) for 2036 than was anticipated for the year 2024 under the currently adopted projection (13,329). Furthermore, Port Townsend's Comprehensive Plan was originally drafted during a period of rapid growth and thus was designed to accommodate a population of **13,876** by the year 2016. *The proposed new 2036 projection would be some 1,711 fewer people than were anticipated by the year 2016.*

What is a "periodic update" and why should we do it?

The state Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties and cities to periodically conduct a thorough review of their Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to bring them up to date with any relevant changes in the GMA and to respond to changes in land use and population growth. This mandatory "periodic update" takes place for most communities at least once every eight years. The City is required to complete this process by June 2016. Missing the periodic update deadline will have immediate financial consequences. A county or city that has not completed the basic actions described above by the deadline set in the GMA will be ineligible to receive funds from the Public Works Trust Fund or the Centennial Clean Water account or to receive preference for other state grants and loans.

SCOPE OF THE UPDATE

A Work Program is being developed to provide Council with an initial list of "Must, Should, Could" amendments.

The GMA calls out a number of specific items that *must* be reviewed (and amended if needed) as part of the periodic update. In addition, the State *recommends* review of additional items and still

other issues will arise through the local process. Given limited resources, City Council will need to weigh carefully whether “recommended items” and locally identified issues merit the allocation of additional resources. The Update is expected to build on the current Community Direction Statement (Vision Statement) for the City which was adopted in 1996 through an extensive community involvement process. In 2008, Port Townsend conducted a series of public Open Houses which confirmed the Vision Statement. The Plan Update will focus on policy changes needed to build on the Vision. Inclusion of new policies addressing changed circumstances may also be considered.”

How do we identify essential optional amendments? The Port Townsend Planning Commission is tasked with completing an assessment of the Comprehensive Plan and recommending a work program which includes a list of “Must, Should, Could” amendments. The Commission is guided in the assessment by the criteria set forth in Port Townsend Municipal Code Section 20.04.050(A)). To assist in development of the work program, Planning Commission held a series of three joint informational workshops with the County Planning Commissions in 2014 (See Agendas, Meetings, and Documents) and has formed several workgroups to convene in the first quarter of 2015):

- A Technical Committee – will “*truth the snapshot of our community’s current socio-economic profile.*”
- Five Workgroups (Land Use, Housing, transportation, Economic Development, Capital Facilities/Utilities) will assist in “*Developing a realistic scope*”

What must be reviewed?

The GMA calls out a number of specific items that *must* be reviewed (and amended if needed) as part of the periodic update:

1. Amendments to the GMA

The primary purpose of the periodic update is to ensure local plans and regulations comply with all current requirements. Although the basic structure of the GMA has remained intact over the years, the state legislature has amended it frequently.

2. UGAs and population projections

Urban growth areas (UGAs), which by definition include all cities, must allow development densities sufficient to accommodate the next twenty years of projected population and employment growth. If zoning regulations don’t authorize the densities to accommodate this growth, jurisdictions need to increase allowed densities, expand the size of the UGA, or both.

3. Critical areas ordinances

One of the initial requirements of the GMA was to designate and protect critical areas. The GMA requires all counties and cities to review and evaluate these critical areas ordinances during the periodic update. The GMA requires that “best available science” (BAS) be included in developing regulations to protect critical area functions and values.

4. Mineral resource lands designations and development regulations

Another significant requirement of the initial GMA was for all counties and cities to designate mineral lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals. As Port Townsend does not contain any designated resources lands, this requirement is moot.

The State recommends that counties and cities *should* consider addressing the following in their periodic update:

1. Land use element

The Land Use Element describes the “big picture” of how a community chooses to balance the goals of the GMA. Key components of the land use plan are maps showing the future shape of the community and how its essential components will be distributed. Resource lands, critical areas, open space corridors, mixed use areas, residential, commercial, industrial, and major public and private facilities should all be addressed. Because the Land Use Element is tied to other elements in the comprehensive plan, many periodic updates include amendments to the Land Use Element. Recent amendments to the GMA now require communities to consider urban planning approaches that promote physical activity as part of the land use element wherever possible.

2. Capital facilities and transportation elements

When a community is planning for population increases, this usually triggers the need for more or larger infrastructure, such as roads, utilities, and sewer and water facilities.

3. Internal and external consistency

Whenever a plan is being amended it is important to verify that it is “internally consistent” (e.g., that the Land Use and Transportation elements support each other) and that the development regulations are consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan. Also verify that the comprehensive plan is “externally consistent,” as changes to comprehensive plans and development regulations in adjacent jurisdictions, special purpose districts, or state plans may create an inconsistency with the county or city's comprehensive plan or development regulations.

4. Inventories

Counties and cities **should review existing inventories** and analyze new inventory data that supports the comprehensive plan. The GMA specifically requires the following:

A. Housing: Inventory and analyze existing and projected housing needs, identifying the number of housing units necessary to serve projected growth.

B. Capital Facilities: Inventory existing capital facilities owned by public entities, showing the locations and capacities of the capital facilities, and forecast future needs and proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new facilities.

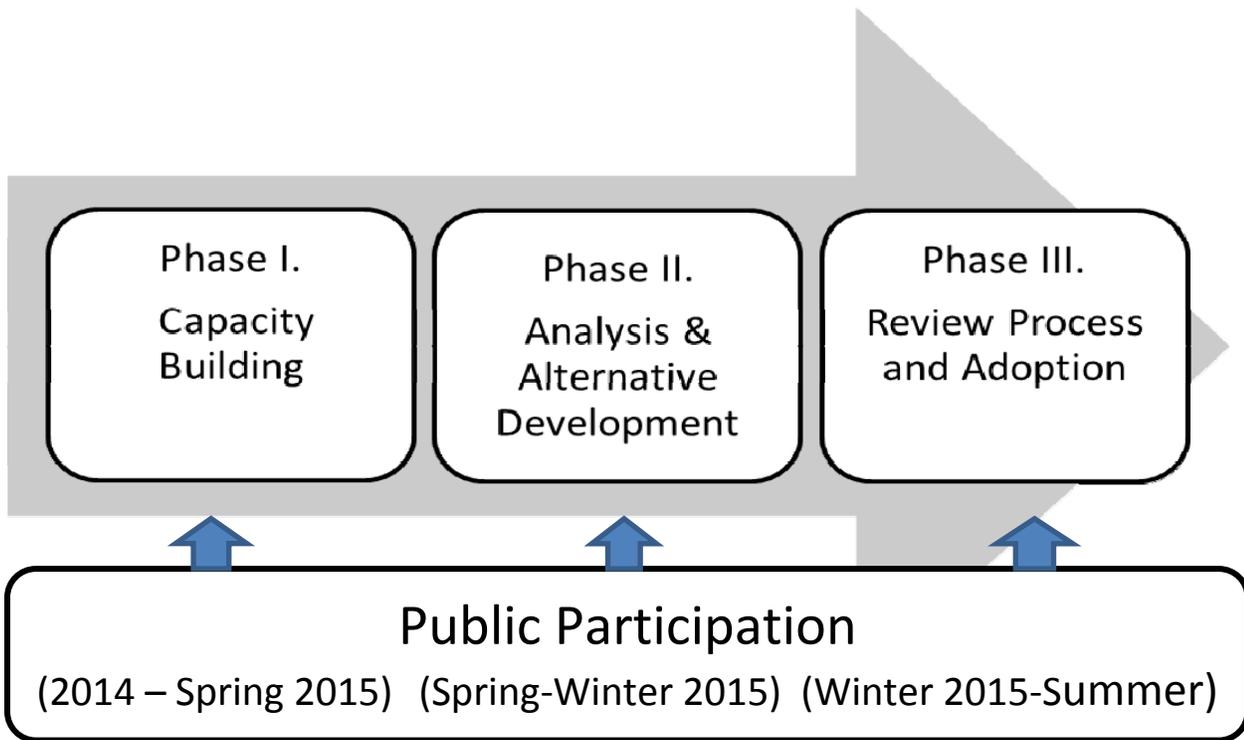
C. Transportation: An inventory of air, water and ground transportation facilities and services, including transit alignments and general aviation airport facilities, to define existing capital facilities and travel levels and a basis for future planning. This inventory must include state-owned transportation facilities within the city or county boundaries.

And finally, staff views this is an opportunity to “refresh” the Plan: The current plan contains substantial background information and a number of policies dating back to the original 1996 version of the Plan. Many of the policies now appear obsolete, either because they refer to projects that have been completed or because the policy language has been superseded by local or state regulation. Time permitting; we intend to work with a consultant to identify policy statements that are obsolete, redundant, provided background not intended as policy, or those that are regulatory language too specific for a general guiding document.

PROCESS AND SCHEDULE

The schedule for the 2016 GMA Review and Update consists of three basic Phases. Public participation evolves as the update progresses (see the matrix below). There are several audiences – individuals and agencies that will participate in the Port Townsend Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code Update, and each will become engaged in the process in different ways:

- **General Public:** Port Townsend residents, property owners, and business owners
- **Elected and Appointed Officials:** City Councilmembers, Planning Commissioners, Advisory Board Members
- **Service Providers/ Special districts:** School, electric, fire, hospital, housing
- **Non-government Organizations:** Economic Development Council (Team Jefferson), Jefferson Land Trust, Port Townsend Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, and other service clubs.
- **State, Regional and Other Local Government Entities:** Jefferson County, Washington State (DOT, WSF, WSP)



Get Involved!

There are many ways to track our progress and get involved in the project, please consider using one or more ways listed below:

Visit the Library Resource Center: Copies of the current Comprehensive Plan, functional plans (e.g., Transportation, Parks) and other relevant documents will be made readily accessible. *Library staff is happy to assist you in navigating the City’s website and locating the information you need.*
<http://www.codepublishing.com/WA/porttownsendplans.html>

Track Our On-line Tools: The City provides the greatest possible transparency to citizens through documents on-line, meeting web streaming on demand, published agendas packet materials, and global word search capability. Recently, the City added “eComment: A form integrated with the published agendas that allow citizens to provide feedback on agenda items on any internet-connected device. <http://cityofpt.us/video.htm>

In the first half of 2015, the City will activate Granicus; an easy-to-use on-line tool for citizen’s to submit ideas and feedback.

Opportunities for Oral Testimony: Public comment periods will be provided before the City of Port Townsend Planning Commission and City Council. Standing advisory groups and/or subcommittees *may* be engaged on specific topics. Meeting times are posted on the City website and published in the Port Townsend Leader.

Press Releases and Media Advertisements: We will issue news releases to local media and/or place advertisements announcing public meetings or other key events or information updates during the review process. Media contacts include but are not limited to:

The Port Townsend Leader, Peninsula Daily News

Surveys: Informational surveys will be conducted during town meetings. Resources permitting, additional surveys may be conducted online.

Town Meetings: At least two town meetings intended for broad public engagement will be held (one early in the process to “check in” with the public on key issues and a second in conjunction with release of the Draft Plan/Code and environmental review (SEPA). Notice of the date, time and location of public meetings will be published through standard notice procedures (i.e., City website and Port Townsend Leader). Additional postings *may* be provided (e.g., flyers, utility bill notices).

Written Comments: Opportunity for written comments will be provided throughout the process. Comment forms will be available at town meeting events. Opportunity for written comment will be provided during the SEPA review process.

Contact us directly! Judy Surber, Senior Planner/Planning Manager jsurber@cityofpt.us

“Our challenge will be to successfully identify and address those key issues which are essential to the continued success and viability of our community. Unfortunately, there are many more issues than we can address with the resources at hand – and clearly, the City would like to address them all. However, we as a community need to choose wisely where to place our focus and effort.”