

Plan Background

Introduction

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared by the citizens and elected officials of Granite Falls in compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA) and to be consistent with Snohomish County and surrounding jurisdictions. In addition to the conventional items addressed in every municipal comprehensive plan, this Plan takes particular care to address the community “pioneer personality” (instilled by a unique history of mining, logging, railroading, and milling), and the community “open hospitality” offered to hundreds of thousands of annual visitors who enjoy the adjacent scenic natural forest lands to which Granite Falls is the major gateway. The process of amending the 2005 plan spanned three years and involved public workshops and meetings. The Citizens of Granite Falls are proud to present this vision of the City's future.

Purpose and Relationship to GMA Planning Process

The GMA does not specifically require a section describing the implementation procedures for the Comprehensive Plan. However, because of the complexities of this document, it is important to provide the reader with a general framework, or guide, to detail the sequence of implementation procedures. This Plan establishes how the City implements the policies contained in this Plan, how the City manages its physical development, and how the City monitors these changes.

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a general guide to coordinate a more detailed sequence of policy and regulatory decisions. The goals and policies of this Plan are dependent upon actions that lead to a series of related steps that are considered implementation procedures. These actions expand and develop policies of this Plan. Actions in this Plan have different purposes. They can be divided into three general categories: (1) to expand and develop policies in this Plan; (2) to provide the framework for regulatory policies that need to be adopted as legal instruments in the form of ordinances and; (3) to serve as administrative procedures.

Only the actions that expand and develop policies need to be included in this Plan. The others may be described as policies but will be formulated in the regulations that serve as the technical implementation documents.

The GMA requires that, upon adoption of the final Comprehensive Plan, local governments enact land development regulations that are consistent with and implement the Comprehensive Plan. The City should perform a comprehensive review of its existing regulations related to land development and compare those regulations, through a matrix, with the goals and policies set forth in the new Comprehensive Plan. This procedure will allow the City to amend existing regulations or add new regulations to achieve consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

The City's land use regulations and zoning map must be amended to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and policies established in the Plan. The Future Land Use Map included in the Comprehensive Plan describes the 20-year physical development pattern of the City, showing land use types and intensities. The amended land use regulations and zoning map will reflect only the areas within City jurisdiction. The GMA requires that cities develop a six-year capital facilities plan and allow development when the City can afford to provide urban services. Therefore, the process will be one of determining the ability of the City to service a specific area, the development of the zoning map describing the land use types and ultimate densities in that area, and the allowance of development to occur. As the City is able to afford to develop more areas based on subsequent capital facilities planning and concurrency management, additional areas within the urban growth area will be annexed and the zoning maps will be revised. This growth plan is only a guide and is subject to change as the concurrency management process re-evaluates the initial projections.

Pursuant to the Washington State Shoreline Management Act, RCW 90.58.080 and WAC 173-26-090 require cities and counties to adopt and periodically update Shoreline Master Programs that provide policies and regulations governing "shorelines of the state" as a part of each municipality's comprehensive plan and land use regulations. The City complied with this requirement in 2012 with adoption of an updated Shoreline Master Program (SMP) that had been approved by the Department of Ecology. This Plan incorporates by reference the City of Granite Falls Shoreline Master Program (Ordinance No. 844-2013) and subsequent amendments thereto.

Relationship to Snohomish County Planning Policies

The 2015 Comprehensive Plan makes every attempt to comply with the goals of the GMA and the Snohomish County County-Wide Planning Policies (CWPP) and the Snohomish County General Policy Plan. The CWPPs were used in developing the goals and policies in this Plan. The Planning Commission compared each CWPP with the policies and direction in this Plan. Consistency was built into the process. This planning process involved negotiations with Snohomish County regarding growth targets and the expansion of the Urban Growth Area to include City-owned park property. The conclusions in this Plan are based on this cooperative planning process.

Population and Employment Growth

The City of Granite Falls is required by the GMA to take reasonable measures to provide sufficient land capacity to achieve the population and employment growth allocations specified by Snohomish County. This Comprehensive Plan and its implementing regulations are consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies. The population and employment growth targets prescribed by Appendix B of the Countywide Planning Policies allocates the City of Granite Falls a 2035 population target of 7,842 and a 2035 employment target of 2,275. The methodology for calculating these targets utilizes the City's corporate limits as of December 2012. See the Land Use Element and the Countywide Planning Policies for additional information regarding population and employment growth.

SEPA Compliance

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared and issued for the City's initial GMA-based Comprehensive Plan in 1994. A Supplemental EIS was prepared and issued for the 2005-2025 Comprehensive Plan Update in 2005. Threshold determinations have been issued for annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

The Granite Falls Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with regional plans that were the subject of extensive environmental review. Environmental impact statements were prepared for regional plans such as the Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan, and PSRC's VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040.

All land development and new construction must comply with adopted environmental regulations. The City's critical area regulations protect environmentally-sensitive areas such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes, and aquifer recharge areas. Changes to streets and sidewalks must be consistent with adopted design standards and the requirements of the Granite Falls National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit as approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). New buildings must contain energy conservation features specified by the International Energy Conservation. Street and utility infrastructure improvements in the City are guided by detailed facility plans that adhere to adopted levels of service (LOS) and applicable environmental controls. For larger developments, an environmental checklist and threshold determination are required.

This Comprehensive Plan was prepared consistent with SEPA requirements. Given: a) the relatively minor extent of substantive change set forth in this iteration of the Comprehensive Plan; and b) the extensive mitigation that is integrated into already-adopted plans and regulations, the SEPA Responsible Official concluded that a new EIS was not warranted and issued a Mitigated Declaration of Non-Significance on May 6, 2015.

Coordination with Snohomish County and Cities

During the development of this Plan, the City participated with Snohomish County Tomorrow in developing policies that are consistent with the surrounding jurisdictions. Snohomish County, Snohomish County Public Utility District #1 (PUD), Snohomish County Fire District No. 17, and the City of Lake Stevens were the primary jurisdictions of importance.

Concurrency Management

The Plan requires that adequate public facilities must be in place to serve new development. The Plan also adopts level of service standards that must be maintained. A Concurrency Management System is a tool that allows jurisdictions to monitor the level of services provided and determine when additional services are necessary based on growth and existing deficiencies. The effect is to tie growth both in quantity and physical locale with the availability of public services to serve new growth (i.e., to ensure that public facilities are available concurrent with the impacts of growth). In this way, the quality of life factors represented by the applicable facilities and services are the overriding determinant to maintaining an orderly, safe and efficient land use pattern.

Implementation

This Plan can be amended once a year with the exception of proposals defined as emergencies in GMA. In the case of an emergency, a proposal can be reviewed anytime. A citizen can submit a docketing proposal no later than October 31st of each year. The City will review the proposals and hold hearings the following year.

Description of Planning Area

The Granite Falls 2015-2035 Comprehensive Plan Urban Growth Area (UGA) encompasses approximately 1,823 acres or 2.85 square miles inclusive of the City of Granite Falls. This 2.9 square mile area is approximately 30 acres larger than the 2005 Comprehensive Plan UGA. The additional 30 acres came about through the action of the Snohomish County Council expanding the UGA in order to allow the City to annex City-owned park property. The Granite Falls UGA boundary and City limits are depicted on Figure I-1 at the conclusion of this chapter.

Visioning and Public Participation

Role of the Planning Commission

The Planning Commission was designated by the City Council as the City's advisory body for the GMA planning process. The Planning Commission worked with consultants to guide the development of the draft Comprehensive Plan. The Commission met with consultants to help flesh out the draft plan based on the requirements of GMA, the relevant information in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, and an understanding of what works and what is lacking in the City's current planning process. The Planning Commission met twice a month over a three-year period to develop this Plan.

Role of the Parks and Recreation Commission

This Plan includes a new element (chapter), the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element (PRO). The PRO Element was drafted by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Role of the City Council

Members of the City Council were active participants at workshops and joint meetings with the Planning Commission. The City Council and Planning Commission both held a community workshop. Both also conducted public hearings on the draft Plan.

Public Participation

The public was invited to participate at every Comprehensive Plan Meeting. At these meetings, citizen input was documented and their concerns and questions were answered.

Vision

Granite Falls is the gateway to the historical Mountain Loop Outdoor Recreation Area and is nestled at the base of Mount Pilchuck, the westernmost peak of the Cascade Mountain Range. Our vibrant City is committed to achieving balance between community expectations and attainable resources by satisfying the needs of visitors and residents alike. Our City expresses the history of the turn of the century mining and logging operations, the adventure associated with outdoor recreation, and the subtle pleasure that comes from living in a northwest town.

Our unique location, historical relevance, and accessibility to outdoor recreation “attract” thousands of tourists, while our services, accommodations and hospitality cultivate in those visitors a year-around desire to “return”.

All essential needs for goods, services, health and wellness are met within the City, but those who choose to commute to work or shop are supported by well-planned transportation elements. Having a traditional small-town Americana appearance, Granite Falls has a nationally-recognized school system, a vibrant commercial district, well-connected neighborhoods, and

parks and open areas. All of these qualities are combined within a compact Urban Growth Area, to provide an enviable family environment that fosters among residents of all ages the life-long desire to "stay".

Granite Falls is "open for business" attracting companies that provide living wage jobs. These companies operate in harmony with the City, allowing employees to work within walking or bike riding distance of where they want to live. By maintaining a strong local economy based on a balance of tourism, commerce and industry, Granite Falls attracts and supports new businesses and citizens to help shape the future we collectively desire to "build".

As the gateway to the Mountain Loop Recreation Area, one of the top tourist attractions in the region, Granite Falls has the air of excitement, the elements of adventure, and the friendliness one associates with a small mountain village. Granite Falls is a jewel in the crown that Snohomish County has as a place that is "Close to everything, far from ordinary."

