

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

**A Comprehensive Plan is the basic foundation for local planning. It lays out a community vision and priorities and describes where, how, and in some cases when development will occur. It is adopted by the city as flexible guidelines for policymakers, land managers, and land users about how to conserve, rehabilitate, or develop an area while addressing land use, transportation, economic development, parks and open space, urban design, and utilities.**

The City of Westport Comprehensive Plan represents the official statement by the city council to be used as a policy guide for the physical, economic and social development of the city. The comprehensive plan establishes goals, objectives, and policies for the city upon which future decisions should be evaluated. Among other items, the comprehensive plan should be seen as policy, that is, the communication of the long term values and aspirations.

#### **A. Authority**

**Washington State Law (RCW 35A.63) requires that a comprehensive plan with an element addressing land use and an element addressing circulation be required for every municipal code city. Chapter 2.24.030 (2) of the Westport Municipal Code states “The planning commission may prepare a comprehensive plan for the physical and other generally advantageous development of the town.” This comprehensive plan functions as the guide to decision making in accordance with the requirements of the state law and municipal code.**

#### **B. Relationship to the 1999 Comprehensive Plan**

**This plan reflects a significant update of the 1999 plan that has guided growth and development in the city for over a decade. Comprehensive Plans are designed to account for a planning horizon of around 20 years and are periodically updated.**

**This plan update was initiated by the changing economic conditions faced throughout the nation which have impacted the City and made it appropriate to reassess and update the City’s policies. While much of the content of this plan is the same or similar to the 1999 plan, there have been significant changes in language to both bring the plan in line with current conditions, and to update the vision for the future of the City.**

#### **C. Planning Process**

#### **TO BE DEVELOPED IN FINAL VERSION**

#### **D. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN:**

The comprehensive plan has three general characteristics: (1) Comprehensiveness, (2) Long

range, and (3) Flexibility.

1. Comprehensiveness

A comprehensive plan, by definition, should be comprehensive in both scope and purpose. The plan should coordinate policy on those geographical and functional elements which have a bearing on physical, social, and economic development.

2. Long Range

Another characteristic of a comprehensive plan is that it is long range and future oriented. It should look towards advancing the community beyond the immediate, to those concerns and possibilities 15 to 20 years in the future. In effect, the comprehensive plan is a long range guide to current, short-range decisions.

3. Flexibility

Because of the long range characteristic of the comprehensive plan, it should also be flexible and general to accommodate shifts in community preferences. The comprehensive plan is also flexible and general in that it only summarizes major policies, and does not in itself establish detailed regulatory conditions. The comprehensive plan, however, should not be so general as to lack meaningful direction or guidance to future decision-making.

B. PURPOSE

**The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for guiding growth, development, and public decision-making within the City.** The comprehensive plan is intended to serve a wide range of functions and purposes. The most critical of these are as follows:

1. General Welfare

The comprehensive plan serves to promote the general health, safety, welfare, and morals of the community. It does this by establishing guidelines for development and facilitating the adequate provision of public services.

2. Coordination

The comprehensive plan promotes and encourages rational, efficient, and coordinated developmental decision-making. Conversely, the comprehensive plan discourages piecemeal, incremental zoning, and subdivision actions. As a planning instrument, the comprehensive plan encourages anticipation rather than reaction, and coordination rather than competition. The comprehensive plan therefore anticipates and influences the coordinated development of land and buildings.

3. Policy Statement

The comprehensive plan also serves as the basis for municipal policy on development, and provides those guiding principles, objectives, and techniques upon which the development of regulations can be assessed and evaluated. The comprehensive plan, then, represents a long range policy statement by the city.

4. Communication

The comprehensive plan, as a statement of policy, represents the communication of values within the community. This communication provides all interested parties, whether other public institutions, private developers, businesses, and financial institutions with a general indication of the long range direction the legislative body has established for the community.

E. DEFINITIONS

In the context of this plan document, certain words take on more specific and more definite meanings. The following words are defined so that the reader of this plan may more exactly understand its intent.

1. May, Should, and Shall

- a. **May:** indicates that some action might be undertaken if the official body, after viewing the evidence, decides it is useful or desirable in keeping with this plan. It does not, however, confer any obligation upon the city to undertake, approve, or permit the action.
- b. **Should:** indicates that a particular action will take place unless the official body finds a compelling reason against it.
- c. **Shall:** indicates a mandate, i.e., the particular action must be done.

2. Goals, Objectives, Policies

- a. **Goals:** are the general statements outlining the desired long-term future state towards which the plan aims.
- b. **Objectives:** are the statements of the desired short-term aims of the plan, which reinforce and lend to the goals; the objectives should be taken to be more specific, clearly defined conditions which must be attained in order to accomplish the stated goals.
- c. **Policies:** outline and describe general directions for governmental action, both legislative and administrative, which would implement the preceding goals and objectives.

3. Appropriate: Refers to those actions, policies, locations, and other decisions which are in conformance with this plan.

#### D. IMPLEMENTATION

The success of this comprehensive plan will depend upon the city's commitment towards implementation. Specific steps which the city should take following adoption of the comprehensive plan are defined more fully in Chapter 10. Nonetheless, at the outset, it is important to emphasize that successful planning requires a continual, on-going process.

The successful implementation of this document will require continual monitoring of the citizen's needs and goals, the development or revision of necessary land use regulations to bring them in conformance with the goals of this plan, and the consistent referencing of this document whenever the legislative body engages in the decision-making process impacting the physical development of the city.