

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN: “The Planning Framework”



This Comprehensive Plan is the umbrella policy document that guides virtually all decisions made by City government and, in many cases, by local organizations and individual citizens. It seeks to assure that each community decision, expenditure, and action is consistent with our shared vision, values, and goals.

What makes Bremerton a special place – a place that attaches itself to the hearts of its citizens?

What makes people want to become part of this community?

What attracts new vigor and activity to this community?

What are the qualities that make Bremerton unique in the world and special to its citizens – both new and old?

Although the answers to these questions are, in many ways, unique for each individual, there is evidence that core values are held by most community members. These values provide a sense of membership in a stable, supportive community – a sense that is absolutely necessary for a satisfying life. Local core values define the positive community we see about us today and the community that we wish to preserve and enhance for the future. Our collective vision for the future, built on these values, ensures that every decision we make brings us closer to that future – not farther away. Comprehensive planning is about identifying such community values and agreeing on strategies to maintain them, improve them, and adjust them to the new realities of the future. Following an overarching plan ensures efficiencies, reduces steps in the wrong direction, and aligns decision-makers with the community’s desired outcomes.

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Making Vision Into Reality: Comprehensive Planning

The construction of this plan is hierarchical – each layer linked to and directly related to the previous layer. One way to understand a Comprehensive Plan is to see it in the form of an inverted pyramid.

Planning's Inverted Pyramid



At the top of the pyramid is the statement of community values contained in a vision statement. The vision statement expresses citizens’ wishes for the future in a general sense. It is the basis for all that follows.

Moving down the pyramid, one finds a set of related long-term community goals. These goals give additional focus to the vision. For example, if the vision is for convenient neighborhoods, a goal might be to encourage shopping and services within easy walking distance of residences.

Farther down in the inverted pyramid model, there are more specific statements called policies. Policies detail the kind of actions that it will take to accomplish the goal, essentially providing the “means” for the “ends” suggested in goal statements. For example, the goal to encourage services near neighborhoods might be implemented by policies to require

pedestrian linkages between housing and shopping areas, specific types of pedestrian features, or architectural compatibility to blend commercial buildings with surrounding uses.

At the very bottom of the inverted pyramid are the regulations, budget decisions, and programs that the City adopts and employs in daily operations. Continuing the example, this level might include the adopted zoning provisions for commercial uses within each neighborhood, City budget items for pathway improvements within the new mixed use neighborhood, or design review standards that ensure compatibility of commercial uses in a residential area.

The pyramidal organization communicates the essential, democratic nature of planning. The pyramid describes a public process in which community members define their vision in increasing detail to the point that policy guidelines are provided to public officials. Each policy is based on community goals, and each community goal is based on community vision. The Inverted Pyramid Model demonstrates two very important things: 1) how the community’s vision is translated to action, and 2) the basis for the regulations, budget decisions, and programs that the City should implement.

The Comprehensive Plan completes the first three levels of the Inverted Planning Pyramid. It is based on community vision statements that grew out of intense participation by a wide-range of community members. A working committee of citizens developed planning goals. Finally, committee leaders provided detailed policies to aid Plan implementation.

The Plan sets the stage for the final, most detailed, level of community work depicted in the pyramid. This final stage is the adoption of regulatory, budgetary, and programmatic tools that fully implement the Plan. This final stage is on-going, to follow adoption of the Plan.

The Format of the Comprehensive Plan

In addition to the primary task of implementing the community's vision for the future, the Comprehensive Plan must respond to the real challenges facing a community. In other words, the goals and policies must address the conditions (current and projected) that the community faces as it attempts to move toward its desired future. How many people will live in the community? What will traffic be like? What types and amounts of housing will be required? What services will be needed? How will the costs of development be covered? The goals and policies contained in this plan respond to these challenges.

This Plan is organized into seven chapters called "elements". This organization responds to the requirements of the State of Washington's Growth Management Act ("GMA" or "the Act") to distinctly address the subjects of Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Utilities, Economic Development and Capital Facilities. The "Shaping Bremerton" public update process generally produced corresponding elements but combined the subjects of Utilities and Capital Facilities in an element entitled "City Services." Additionally, the Plan includes an "Environment" element with a focus on Bremerton's natural resources. Finally, to summarize the direction set by the Plan and to set urban design goals, Shaping Bremerton participants crafted a seventh element called "Community Character" element, which contains the overarching vision statement for the Plan, just after the Introduction section.

A community vision statement, drawing on both the wide public participation and input from multiple jurisdictions and organizations, precedes each element chapter. Each element also includes discussion of current conditions, anticipated changes, needs, and projections. This information helps frame the challenges ahead in growing towards the community vision through the each element's goals and policies.



The Growth Management Act

In 1990, the Washington State Legislature passed the Growth Management Act, largely as a response to the realization that "business as usual" was leading to significant, costly problems. The GMA provides a framework for communities to address the challenges of growth in a more coordinated and sustainable way. It recognizes that central issues exist for all communities and that these issues have implications for the State as a whole. At the heart of the GMA is a requirement that each community deal with the trend of sprawling development patterns. It recognizes that urban sprawl is central to the problems facing Washington's communities, including rising traffic congestion, environmental degradation, loss of natural resource lands, and costly regulatory/property rights conflicts.

The Act further encourages local plans to address key goals of the people of the State as a whole (see next page), with coordination from one jurisdiction to the next. Much of this coordination is accomplished through the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council and the work towards County-wide Planning Policies. Finally, most critically, the Act empowers each community to respond to such issues in a way that is consistent with its unique needs, community vision, values, and goals.

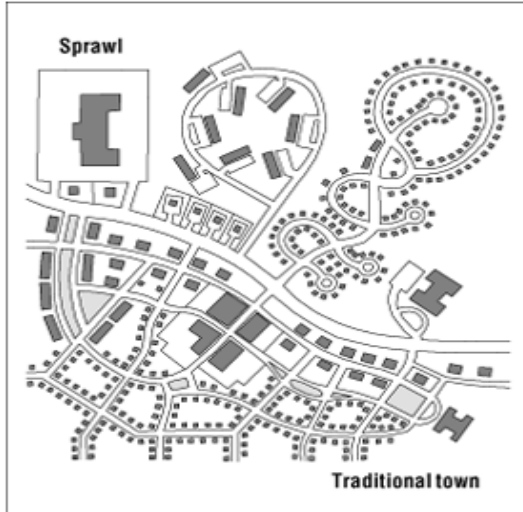
An important measure to assure this planning approach is the requirement that all plans constructed under GMA address the following 13 basic planning goals.

The Thirteen Basic Goals of GMA

Hereby endorsed by the Plan

Urban Growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

Reduce Sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low density development.



Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

Housing. 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 the housing stock.

Economic Development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic development opportunity for all citizens of the 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.

Property Rights. 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.

Permits. Applications for both state and local permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

Natural Resource Industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource based industries, including timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands; discourage incompatible uses.

Open Space and Recreation. Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreation opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.

Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality and the availability of water.

Citizen Participation and Coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

Public Facilities and Services. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use, without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

Historic Preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical/archaeological significance.

Additional Core Issues to Address:

In addition to responding to these thirteen goals, the GMA asks that each community address certain additional core issues. These issues are addressed throughout the Plan, referenced or discussed below.

Citizen Participation

Protection of Natural Resources and Critical Areas (addressed in the Environment Element)

Urban Growth Areas (addressed in the Land Use Element and at end of this Introduction chapter)

Coordinated Policies

Concurrency and Levels of Service

Agency Compliance

Relationship to Regulations

Periodic Review and Update of the Plan

Citizen Participation

The Act requires "early and continuous" citizen participation throughout the planning process. The first Comprehensive Plan developed in response to the Act in April, 1995, was adopted through an intensive citizen committee process.

The preparation of this 2003 Plan Update was again guided by community participation, following a City Council-approved Public Participation Program for the process, found in Appendices. The vision statements, goals, and policies of each element were developed by open-membership citizen committees, following general workshops held around the city. Moreover, numerous public events, including open houses and a design charette to gather mapping ideas, were held throughout the update process to allow the broader community to comment on the work of the citizen committees. Over a dozen public hearings were held by the City of Bremerton Planning Commission before it was adopted by the City Council in their own public hearing process.



Coordinated Policies

Cities and counties are required to work together to establish County-wide Planning Policies, which provide a regional policy framework. By working to ensure that their plans address a common framework, neighboring jurisdictions create consistency between their plans. This inter-jurisdictional consistency meets the requirement of the Growth Management Act and also provides benefits to each community. These benefits include less conflict between jurisdictions, more predictable regulatory environments across political boundaries, and a more coherent and understandable growth strategy.

The County-wide Planning Policies for Kitsap County are developed with both staff and elected official participation from the City of Bremerton. They are regularly reviewed and endorsed by the City of Bremerton before adoption or amendment by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners.

Concurrency and Levels of Service

Plans must be realistic and workable. Providing for new development, the Plan must indicate how the needed public services and utilities will be provided within a reasonable amount of time. If adequate public resources are not identified in the Plan, development can not be allowed.

In order to deal with traffic and congestion which results from new development, transportation planning requirements now include the measuring of Levels of Service (LOS). The Level of Service measurement requires an account of the current, expected, and acceptable levels of congestion and service qualities for the local community. There must be discussion within the community that leads to adoption of future standards, and a plan that assures that – as development occurs –the adopted standard will not be violated. This is called the concurrency requirement. Plans may also require that other urban services, such as police protection, water and sewer service, library services, etc., be maintained at a LOS set by the community, “concurrent” with growth.



“If adequate public resources are not identified in the Plan, development can not be allowed.”

Agency Compliance

Not only are local plans required to be consistent with each other, but State agencies are also required to comply with local plans and development regulations.

Relationship to Regulations

Land use regulations, such as Zoning provisions, are the primary tools that implement the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore they must be consistent with the Plan. If the Plan shows high-density residential development in a particular location, the Zoning Map should also reflect such. If the Plan calls for street development standards within low-density neighborhoods, these standards must be crafted, adopted, and applied as new development occurs.

Periodic Review and Update of the Comprehensive Plan

Following adoption of the updated Comprehensive Plan and related development regulations, the City will continually monitor their effectiveness and document needed amendments. A major review of the Plan is anticipated at five-year intervals while amendments to Plan will only be considered during biannual reviews.

Meeting the Challenge of Growth

The following sections discuss the expected population increases that this Plan proposes to accommodate as well as the methodology employed to calculate the size of that increase.

By state law, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) is tasked with providing a population allocation for each county in the State. It is left to the County, and the jurisdictions within it, to cooperatively decide where and how the population growth will be accommodated. This leads to questions about the portion of growth to be directed to cities and the capacity of urban services to accept growth. It should be understood from the outset, however, that the OFM allocation - while mandated by State law - is really a broad range of potential growth numbers, allowing for flexibility in establishing local growth projections.

Kitsap County and its jurisdictions, including the City of Bremerton, agreed to each conduct a community dialogue about the desired future - how it wants to grow and accommodate a portion of the State's population allocation to the County. Bremerton has conducted just such a process through this Plan's update, resulting in a citizen-driven vision for growth. (See "The Vision for Bremerton's Future" in the Community Character Element.) Citizens spoke clearly to the type of future community they envision. The City employs that vision to determine locations for new growth and to set development intensities. The resultant land use map and policies accommodate new population growth and endeavor to attract new commercial and industrial activity. The following population projections grow out of that design.

The Parameters of Change: Population and Employment Growth Projections

In projecting the City of Bremerton's growth, there must be consideration of past trends which show negligible population growth over several decades. However, historical growth patterns are not consistent with local, regional, or State goals that include increasing the proportion of growth in existing urban areas. Under the Growth Management Act, as well as the regional strategy agreed to within the Kitsap County County-wide Planning Policies, stagnant population levels within Bremerton will be broken. This plan proposes changes in the community design ethic, as well as emphasis on regulatory incentives. Thus, Bremerton will attract a larger percentage of the projected population growth than in the past.

The Plan's key urban design concept is "The Centers Concept", detailed in the Land Use Element. Population growth for the City is largely calculated on the ability of the strategically-placed, mixed-use activity centers to attract new residential, commercial, and industrial uses, (partially demonstrated in the photo below.)



Growth Projection Summary

The Land Use (LU) Appendix includes five tables that detail specifically the population and employment projections behind this plan. The following is a summary, only.

Background

Population and employment projections were analyzed for 125 different zones in the City. For convenience and consistency, Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) used by Kitsap County were also employed for the City's projections. Existing 2000 statistics for each TAZ were projected forward to the year 2023 – the end of the 20 year planning horizon of this plan. That projection was made by assuming that the rate of residential development in most TAZs would continue at approximately the same rate as reflected by the 1995-99 growth. The viability of this growth was checked by referring to the 2002 Kitsap County Buildable Lands Analysis. That analysis confirmed more than sufficient developable property exists to accommodate this level of “background” growth throughout the City of Bremerton and its Urban Growth Area. In addition to this “background” growth, new employment and residential uses expected in “centers”, were appropriated to the TAZs.

Population Projection

Population projections for Neighborhood and District Centers were based on commonly accepted models for the size and proportion of residential uses in centers. Multiplying each center's residential acres by assumed residential densities and household sizes yielded a potential population within the center at full build-out. The full build-out was then

reduced to correspond to the expected population growth within the 20-year planning time frame. This step was accomplished through a Geographic Information System-based analysis of the proportion of land within the center that was undeveloped or significantly underdeveloped. The analysis then looked at the relative availability of key services such as water, sanitary sewer, storm sewer, and transportation at each proposed center location. The proposed Centers were “rated” (See Appendix) by the proportion of the full build-out expected within the next 20 years. These calculations are reflected in Tables 1, 2, and 3 of LU Appendix.

Population projections for the Employment Centers were based on discussions with the owners of the sites. A modest twenty-year buildout of 750 persons is expected for each of the 3 Employment Centers. That number was then assigned to the appropriate TAZ. However, these calculations assumed no population growth in the Employment Centers within the first six years of the planning period. As a result, 6-year capital facility finance planning, especially transportation and growth impacts, do not include any portion of the 2,250 population expected for Employment Centers.

Twenty-year center population was disaggregated to the appropriate TAZs and added to the non-Center population projections. This resulted in the final year 2023 population projections for each TAZ, as listed within Table 4 of the Land Use Appendix. Total projected City population in 2023 was projected at just over 50,000 (Table 4, column 10). This is an increase of approximately 13,000 over the 2000 census figure of 37,165 for the City. Of this increase 7,574 people, or approximately 58% of the growth, occurs in the new Neighborhood or District Centers (See Table 4, column 8). Population in the City's current UGA is projected to be 58,500, compared to an estimated 2000 UGA population of 44,815.

Employment Projections

Total employment was calculated in essentially the same manner. Year 2000 Kitsap County TAZ employment data was used to make projections of year 2023 employment by applying the growth rate data from the Washington State Department of Employment Security. Employment forecasts for each center were added to the corresponding TAZ. The LU Appendix provides the resultant projection for each TAZ.

In sum, employment forecasts indicate that overall employment in the City will rise from its current level of approximately 45,000 to approximately 54,000 jobs over the next twenty years. Of that total growth of 9,000 jobs, about 4,000 (45%) will be in the Centers. Significant developable land area within the City is provided for new employment-generating activities.

One of the basic assumptions here is that such predictions will need constant monitoring, reassessment, and recalculation. The projections employed by this Plan are based on key measures of the scale and scope of future growth. They are the result of employing the best available base data sources, which often does not address the City's specific interests. The model ultimately encompasses multiple steps that, in turn, rely on the estimates and projections available. Finally, they are an attempt to make predictions in a world that will be affected political and societal changes of the future.

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“... overall employment in the City will rise from its current level of approximately 45,000 to approximately 54,000 jobs over the next twenty years.”

Eventual Growth Intent



There is a broadly accepted notion – although a greatly misplaced one – that the growth of cities is fueled by their “greed” for land and tax revenues. Geography and money do figure into the growth equation, but not in the way that many observers may appreciate.

There are two prime reasons why cities may need to expand their city limits: 1) more land is needed for new people or businesses moving to the city and there is little available land for development, and 2) the tax base of adjacent urbanizing areas that generate increasing demand on City services may be needed to pay for those services. This second reason – the need for financial ability to deliver urban services to expanding urban areas – is perhaps the more significant of the two. A city’s financial capacity is driven by efficiency. Efficiency determines the cost of services to users and taxpayers, determines the level and quality of services delivered, and influences growth patterns and quality of life interests of the entire region. Bremerton’s decision about growing into unincorporated areas is primarily one of cost-efficiency.

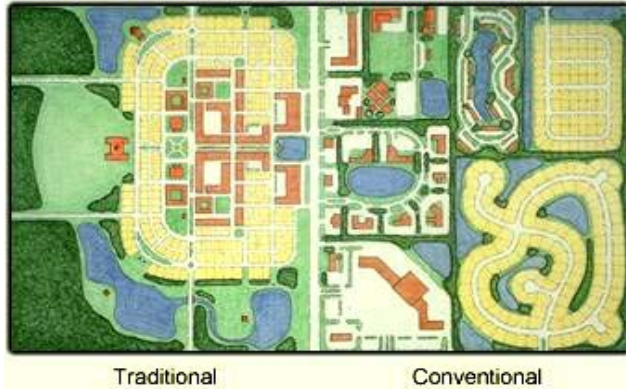
Bremerton did not grow in population for several decades, and the loss of significant retail activity was a part of this stagnation. The City’s physical expansion could not be justified by past growth trends. However, changing demographics, downtown revitalization, and

regional growth policies suggest a much different growth future for the community. The City has a legitimate interest in land to grow – the future will not be a continuation of the past.

Initially, growth will continue to focus on the urbanizing neighborhoods at the edges of the City, and these areas will put increasing demands on City services. This pattern is most evident along the Highway 303 corridor from East Bremerton to Silverdale where the capacity and inertia for growth are greatest. Most of this large area was designated for urban growth in the County’s 1998 Comprehensive Plan – some of it in the East Bremerton Urban Growth Area (UGA) south of Riddell Road that was “assigned” to Bremerton, some of it in the Silverdale UGA, and much of it in a “non-associated” UGA. The question that the “non-associated” UGA designation did not answer in that plan is, “What urban jurisdiction should be both responsible and accountable for the delivery of required urban services to this urbanizing area?”

For many years, Bremerton will be affected more by urban growth levels outside its City limits than within them. With the continuing urbanization outside the City, there is increased demand for urban services. This demand will be met somewhere, sometime, by someone. If not met locally, the demand for services such as neighborhood parks, schools and libraries will be satisfied by driving (or busing) to other communities. Bremerton can influence whether growth has positive or negative effects. The degree of influence that can be exercised is largely linked to who ultimately assumes responsibility to plan for and provide the urban services.

The Plan goals, policies, and land use model for future growth are intended to guide the future both within current City limits and into a larger area-of-interest surrounding the City.



If land use patterns and intensity of development are not planned to promote efficient delivery of urban services, either of two things happens: 1) levels of service decline, or 2) taxes increase. How does Bremerton ensure efficiency if the City is not in control of the land use patterns in the areas it is assigned to serve?

Service efficiency is determined by revenues and service costs. Service costs are a reflection of what types of service and how much of those services are provided (commonly referred to as “level of service” or LOS). Setting level of service is one side of a policy decision: “What LOS does the community expect for its desired quality of life?” This is answered by the public stating expectations in the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. The other side is, “How does the City afford to provide that desired LOS?” This is answered by the City promoting economic growth and development – setting land use patterns, intensities and densities in the Comprehensive Plan that allow service efficiencies and produce adequate City revenues to maintain services at the desired LOS.

This discussion of the City’s eventual growth intent recognizes that the entire urban area in central Kitsap County has a shared future. Routes of travel, responsiveness of emergency services, disposal of waste, opportunity for recreation, access to goods and services and all other urban functions are common to the entire East Bremerton area. Eventual addition of these areas to Bremerton’s UGA and the incremental incorporation into the City will help the City recoup some of the retail activity that “bled” to the

unincorporated suburbs, beginning in the early 1980’s. It is the higher tax base - both in property and sales tax – of these commercial uses that helps pay for the urban services residents require.

In addition to the City’s existing Urban Growth Area, discussed in the Land Use Element, the City of Bremerton recognizes that its long-term health is tied to a larger area of interest, such as the Rocky Point Peninsula in West Bremerton. The Eventual Growth Intent Map on page 13 depicts the City’s area of long-term interest. The City recognizes the need for more detailed planning in such areas, and for more coordination with Kitsap County. In addition, detailed analysis regarding the provision of urban services in the City’s UGA will be accomplished in the near future. In the interim, this Eventual Growth discussion section recognizes that the already urban or urbanizing areas in the County should, under growth management precepts, be associated with a city. The existing Bremerton-associated Gorst UGA sets the example with its inclusion in the City of Bremerton’s proposed Urban Growth Boundaries.



The Barker Creek drainage area (pictured above), just west of the County Fairgrounds in East Bremerton, is designated as a non-urban environment that could separate Bremerton and Silverdale’s long-term growth areas. This drainage feature is a valuable ecological resource, as it retains a vestige of the natural systems that prevailed across East Bremerton until suburbanization took hold in the 1970s. It also provides open space as a balance to the expanding urban areas, as specified by the GMA.

Bremerton's interface with Port Orchard reflects the natural separation created by Sinclair Inlet and the experience that visitors have approaching Bremerton by car from the south. At Gorst, where two State highways meet, Port Orchard is behind the traveler and the focus is ahead to Bremerton. Gorst is the real entry to Bremerton.



As Sinclair Inlet ends in the shallows of the Gorst Creek inlet, (pictured above) the landscape continues south as a wide valley with an undulating floor along Highway 3. The existing Bremerton City Limits follow the west side of the highway for several miles. The industrial lands in this area provide some of the prime venues for the City's economic growth. They have excellent transportation access, can be linked by transit to nearby residential growth areas, and are largely free of critical area lands.

Between this area and urbanizing lands outside of Port Orchard, the Sunnyslope rural area provides a beneficial separator between the two cities. By agreement among Bremerton, Port Orchard, and Kitsap County, the Sunnyslope separator provides long-term certainty about each community's ultimate growth, without the need for either city to "push" its respective UGAs in the short term to protect future interests.

Over time, unincorporated land between Gorst and Bremerton will be added to the City's UGA as that land is needed for additional growth. Depending on rates of growth, these conversions may or may not happen within the current 20-year GMA planning horizon. The City of Bremerton believes that such urbanizing areas around the City should be associated with the City's growth future, and will work toward demonstrating the capacity to be the provider of urban services in these areas.

Eventually, Bremerton's ability to provide urban services will answer questions left unsettled in the designation of UGAs surrounding Bremerton in Kitsap County's 1998 Comprehensive Plan. These questions include: "To whom is the future development of this area tied?" and, "Who will provide the required urban services?"