

CHAPTER 12 - IMPLEMENTATION





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I. Introduction

The Mason County Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for a wide variety of public decisions affecting growth, development, community character, and public expenditures. Without an implementation process, the County may not achieve its adopted goals and objectives or fail to realize opportunities for improvement in time to take advantage of them.

Implementation of the Mason County Comprehensive Plan is carried out through a process that assures the land use plan and implementing zoning provide reasonable use of private properties.

This implementation process ensures protection of citizen property rights while achieving countywide goals and policies. A permit process system implements the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that there is consideration of applications in a timely manner. Comment and appeal procedures are included as appropriate to provide avenues for public and property owner input.

The County's role in regional growth management includes:

- Coordination with other jurisdictions.
- Regional economic development in partnership with the Economic Development Council.
- Community Planning and Design for Mason County.
- Regional transportation planning through the Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization.
- Comprehensive Plan implementation

KEY ISSUES

How can Mason County make sure its Comprehensive Plan achieves measurable results?

- Update Ordinances as required by State law
- Update Ordinances consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies
- Use the County's full range of planning tools and authorities to implement the Plan
- Report annually on key performance measures and revise as needed
- Coordinate with all jurisdictions within Mason County to ensure consistency and reduce redundancy

II. Plan Implementation Tools and Authorities

Capital Facilities Planning (CFP)

Capital projects are major projects that benefit the County, including the construction of new roads and sidewalks, the purchase of new firefighting equipment, the repair of sewer and water mains, as well as many more public improvements. The CFP (see Chapter 6 of the Comprehensive Plan) outlines County expenditures for the upcoming six and twenty year planning periods. It also outlines ways to finance the proposed expenditures, including the sale of Bonds or user fees from Enterprise Funds. The Mason County Board of County Commissioners updates and approves the CFP annually.

To achieve the goals and objectives described in the Comprehensive Plan, the Mason County has established regulations for zoning, subdivision of land, master planned development, and shoreline management. All are administered through the County Planning Office.

Zoning

County zoning codes regulate land use to promote the health, safety, order, convenience, and general welfare of all citizens. Zoning codes regulate location, size, use and height of buildings, the arrangement of buildings on lots, and the density of population within the Urban Growth Areas and the rural county. The County zoning districts effectively guide development throughout the County.

Subdivision of Land

County controls to regulate subdivision of land include an application process, public notice and informal public hearing, Planning Commission review, legal notice and public hearing by the Board of County Commissioners. After applicants submit completed subdivision paperwork to the Planning Office, staff schedule an informal public hearing by the Planning Commission within 30 days of application acceptance. Before the Planning Commission hearing date, the County mails notice of the hearing to owners of all property within 500 feet of the subject property. The Planning Commission considers various conditions of the application and makes a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to approve or deny the proposed subdivision or consolidation.

Master Planned Developments

A Master Planned Development provides an optional method of regulating land use that permits flexibility from the other provisions of County Code, including flexibility in uses allowed, setbacks, height, parking requirements, number of buildings on a lot, and similar regulations.

Applicants must submit a preliminary plan of the proposed development that illustrates its nature and type. The Master Plan must also identify all land uses and proposed square footage:

- the location of buildings
- existing and proposed roadways and accesses
- pedestrian ways and sidewalks
- proposed parking areas
- preliminary traffic volume projections
- areas to be preserved
- public and common areas
- preliminary building elevations, including height and materials
- preliminary utilities plan
- the location of the parcel's boundaries
- the net and gross density of the development
- the total area occupied by the development
- lot coverage
- development schedule

The Planning Commission will then hold an informal public hearing and consider the application for consistency with various County guidelines and other requirements. The Planning Commission's report to the Board of County Commissioners will include recommended changes, conditions, or modifications. The County Commission will then hold a public hearing, take action on the application, and make findings on the proposal. This may include a request for plan amendments, approval, denial, or other action deemed appropriate by the Council, such as referral back to the Planning Commission.

Following Commission approval of a Final Master Plan, the County issues an agreement that references all applicable plans and specifies permitted uses, allowable densities, development phasing, required improvements, completion dates for improvements, and additional requirements for each Master Planned Development, in accordance with the conditions established in the County Commission approval of the Final Master Plan and ordinance.

Shoreline Management

The Washington State Legislature has delegated to municipalities the responsibility to regulate the subdivision, use, and development of shorelines of public waters. The goal is to preserve and enhance the quality of surface waters, preserve the economic and natural environmental values of shoreline, and provide for the wise use of waters and related land resources. Mason County accomplishes these goals through the Mason County Code Chapters 8.52, Resource Ordinance and Title 17, Zoning.

Other Land Use Tools

Opportunities exist for Mason County to raise awareness and expand use of other land use tools provided under state law and also incorporated into the Mason County Development Regulations including:

- **Planned Action Environmental Impact Statements** – The County conducts the required environmental analysis before development is proposed to streamline and incentivize development in desired locations. (RCW 43.21C.031)
- **State Environmental Policy Act Mitigation Fees** – Fees collected to mitigate impacts under SEPA can be used to offset infrastructure costs and develop shovel ready sites. (RCW 43.21C)
- **Transfer Development Rights** - voluntary, incentive-based program that allows landowners to sell development rights from their agricultural lands to a developer or other interested party who then can use these rights to increase the density of development at another designated location. (MCC 17.03.037)
- **Clustering** - Clustering development allows grouping of residential structures on a portion of the available land while reserving a significant amount of the site as undeveloped open space. (MCC 16.23)
- **Restoration Planning** - Provides the option to develop a plan, tailored to a specific property, as an alternative to strict adherence to development regulations. Modification of buffers, a streamlined permit process and/or other departures from standards may be permitted on properties that provide a plan of alternative actions that will protect environmental resources and avoid environmental harm. (MCC 8.52.275)
- **Design Guidelines** – Specify that the design, shape, size, and orientation of lots shall be appropriate to the use for which the lots are intended and the character of the area and consistent with the policies of the county comprehensive plan and other land control ordinances. Lot areas in excess of minimum standards may be required for reasons of sanitation, steep slopes, slide hazards, poor drainage, flood hazards, or other unique conditions or features which may warrant protection of the public interest. (MCC 16.38)

- **Voluntary Stewardship Program** - This program is intended to promote local plans that protect and enhance critical areas within areas where agricultural activities are conducted, while maintaining and improving the long-term viability of agriculture in the state of Washington and reducing the conversion of farmland to other uses. These plans establish voluntary incentive programs that encourage good riparian and ecosystem stewardship, protect water quality and fish habitat, and discourage the cessation of agricultural activities.
- **Conservation Easements** – Establish rights in perpetuity to future development which may be acquired by the county on any open space land, farm and agricultural land, and timberland. (Chapter 84.34 RCW)

III. Establishing Annual Progress Reporting

To fulfill Mason County's role in regional growth management and ensure success of the Comprehensive Plan, Mason County will report annually as part of the required periodic review of Mason County's Comprehensive Plan.

The Annual Progress Report will include the collection and evaluation of land use development trends. Certain data, such as population, age, family size, cost and number of housing units, school enrollments, building permits, and others, contribute to an understanding of how these factors relate to public policies and programs. Regular collection, evaluation, and reporting of data assists County policy- and decision-makers, and the public, in identifying whether the Plan's policies are furthering their intended goals, and whether programs and public services are meeting the public's needs. This regular reporting can also streamline and simplify the Comprehensive Plan Update process.

Comprehensive Plan Amendments

The Comprehensive Plan may be amended once annually (with some exceptions under RCW 36.70A) to ensure consistency with population projections, development regulations, and other functional plans.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must be supported by findings from monitoring economic indicators, changes in law, omissions or errors, population changes or declared emergency. Comprehensive Plan amendments may be initiated by the County or by other entities, organizations, or individuals according to the process and procedures specified in Mason County Code 15.09.060.

The docketing cycle for these amendments submitted by both the public and the County is initiated annually by an official notice that specifies the requirements and the process. According to procedures and timelines in Mason County Code, the County Planning Office will evaluate each complete amendment proposal to determine whether it would:

- adversely affect the County's budget;
- meet the State Environmental Policy Act requirements;
- require additional amendments to policies or regulations;
- be more appropriately addressed as part of a different code revision or action;
- be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals and other state and local requirements.

After receiving staff recommendations, the Board of County Commissioners conducts a public meeting to consider including each amendment in the annual docket of proposed amendments.

A decision by the Board to include or exclude an amendment from the annual docket is final, procedural only, and does not constitute a decision by the Board as to whether the amendment will ultimately be approved. Applicants whose proposals were not included in the docket are free to resubmit the same or modified proposal in a future year's amendment cycle.

An emergency amendment can be considered any time and may only be adopted if the Board of County Commissioners finds that the amendment is necessary to address an immediate situation of federal, state, countywide, or local concern.

Periodic Urban Growth Area Review

Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) in Mason County includes the incorporated City of Shelton and unincorporated communities of Allyn and Belfair, combined with whatever surrounding unincorporated area is necessary to accommodate urban growth projected to occur over 20 years. The County is required to periodically assess the Urban Growth Area boundaries and densities, and revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations as necessary to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in Mason County for the 20-year planning period.

The update of the Comprehensive Plan, land use maps and development regulations is made official through legislative action of the Board of County Commissioners. However, the planning process is actually ongoing.

The boundaries separating the Urban Growth Area, Rural and Natural Resource Lands designations are intended to be long-term and unchanging. Amendments or changes to Rural Natural Resource lands and critical area designations should be based on changes in law or local circumstances, errors in designation, or revised when new information on natural resource lands or critical areas becomes available.

Comprehensive Plan policies guide the establishment of more functional plans, regulations, and programs. For example, functional plans would include the Comprehensive Solid Waste Plan, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Utility Plans, etc. These plans must use the policies and population projections adopted through the County Comprehensive Plan to develop their preferred alternatives. Amendments that occur between the periodic updates of the Comprehensive Plan keep the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations continuously up to date. At the end of the periodic update cycle, these various amendments and other required updates are reviewed and incorporated into the official action by the Board of County Commissioners to affirm that the Plan and regulations are updated.

IV. Coordination with other Plans

During the development of Mason County's Comprehensive Plan, some residents expressed an interest in developing sub-area plans and discussed the need for more functional plans. This section outlines the administrative processes for initiation and development of subarea and functional plans and the relationship between these plans and the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is based on public input and seeks to assure affordable growth and development. It is required by state law (RCW 36.70A) and serves as an umbrella for coordinated and unified planning within Mason County. Subarea and functional plans result from partnerships uniting the County, other jurisdictions and organizations inside and outside the County, and citizens of a specific area like an Urban Growth Area or community.

Subarea and functional plans take a more detailed approach to planning for public infrastructure and services in an area or for a specific public service or facility type while still maintaining consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and its foundational assumptions and policies as required. These plans focus on enhancing specific subareas of the County in a manner that benefits the entire county.

They should clearly demonstrate consistency with the Countywide Planning Policies and Capital Facilities Plans, as well as identifying ways they support and utilize the implementation tools and authorities of the County outlined in this Chapter.