

# JEFFERSON COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR GROWTH MANAGEMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

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Jefferson County is located in the north-central portion of Washington's Olympic Peninsula. The County is bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean, and on the east by the waters of the Admiralty Inlet and Hood Canal. Clallam County and the Strait of Juan de Fuca define the northern border, while the southern boundaries are defined by Mason and Grays Harbor Counties. Jefferson County comprises 1,808 square miles, and is the eighteenth largest of the State's thirty-nine counties. The Olympic National Park and National Forest, which bisect the County into western and eastern halves, comprise approximately 65 percent of the County's 1.16 million acres of land. The majority of the County's population, nearly 96 percent, resides in eastern Jefferson County. A map of the entire County is shown on page 3.

Jefferson County is largely a rural County with one incorporated city, Port Townsend, and one Master Planned Resort, Port Ludlow. The County's population is located primarily in the northeast portion of the County, in the communities of Port Townsend, Tri-Area, and Port Ludlow. Quilcene and Brinnon are the largest communities in the southern portion of the County. Port Townsend is the largest community.

The County is comprised primarily of agricultural and forest lands. Seventy-five percent of Jefferson County is within the boundaries of Olympic National Park, Olympic National Forest, and State Forest land, this leaves very little land for development. Dotted among the County are clusters of small residential developments. This rural quality of life is what attracts many residents and tourists to the County and is what most residents have expressed a desire to protect.

The Comprehensive Plan outlines goals and policies that help define, direct and guide future growth and development throughout the County.

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a legal document that serves as a decision-making guide for both officials and citizens, and is intended to serve as a tool for making decisions about future growth and development in the County over the next 20 years.

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

To date, Jefferson County's comprehensive planning process can be characterized as one of conflict and challenges. Yet out of this charged environment has emerged a unique opportunity to direct the participation of the community into a meaningful and enduring vision that is pragmatic and responsible. This Comprehensive Plan has been crafted to incorporate the lessons learned in a difficult planning process. It is the intent of this Plan to accept and build on the difficulties of the past; identify appropriate solutions consistent with

relevant laws, decisions, adopted policies, and community involvement; and propose a responsible strategy with which the County can effectively face the future.

## **COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLANNING**

Comprehensive land use planning is a systematic process designed to define a long-range community vision. The process unites a clear understanding of existing conditions within a community with the development of goals and policies that enable that community to make decisions from which its long-range vision will be addressed. The process is a powerful tool for turning promising possibilities into long-term realities.

Planning enhances our ability to weigh competing needs in our community and make judicious allowances for each. It affords us the opportunity to balance the demands of development with benefits of economic development and environmental protection. It provides us with tools for supplying family wage jobs and affordable housing without compromising our rural character. In addition, it prepares us to harness the rewards of a growing population while simultaneously meeting the challenge of providing safe, healthy, and convenient community services for everyone. Planning enables us to address the current needs of the community before development begins and then directs how and where that growth should occur.

The Comprehensive Plan includes assessments of existing conditions containing baseline data for key areas. The data provide a “snapshot” of Jefferson County including:

- Existing land use patterns;
- Population projections and distribution trends;
- Inventories of historical and cultural resources;
- Housing supply, conditions and affordability; and
- Critical areas located within the unincorporated portions of the County.

A more complete analysis of existing conditions and land use needs and demands are included in the March, 1995 Existing Conditions Report Alternatives<sup>1</sup> and the February 24, 1997 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)<sup>2</sup> for the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan. This Draft Environment Impact Statement was prepared to assist citizens and decision-makers in formulating a new long-range Comprehensive Plan for Jefferson County as required by the Growth Management Act (GMA). The DEIS is prepared according to the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

The purpose of the DEIS is to compare and analyze the possible environmental impacts of the plan alternatives which have been prepared by the planning staff and Planning Commission with input from the County’s community groups and residents. The alternatives include a Preferred Alternative as well as three (3) other alternative means of distributing future growth throughout the County. The “No Action” Alternative is the existing Comprehensive Plan which must be included in the SEPA review but which is not consistent with the provisions of the GMA. The four alternative “Growth Scenarios” that are presented and analyzed in the DEIS are:

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<sup>1</sup> Berryman and Henigar, *Existing Conditions Report Alternatives, Staff Drafts*, Jefferson County, WA, March 1, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> *Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan Draft Environmental Impact Statement*, Jefferson County, WA, February 24, 1997, 164 pages plus maps and bibliography.

- The Focused Growth Alternative
- The Dispersed Growth Alternative
- The Moderate Growth Alternative
- The Preferred Growth Alternative

The GMA requires that Jefferson County and the cities within it prepare comprehensive plans to manage population and employment growth for the next 20 years (1998-2018). The County has worked to meet this mandate with extensive public involvement and community outreach, including work with 14 community planning areas covering the County.

The DEIS evaluates environmental impacts that may result from the implementation of the proposed alternative plans. Adoption of a plan is a programmatic or non-project action and SEPA requires that the analysis of non-project actions, therefore, be general in nature in order to address the broad implications of the alternatives.

In addition to the discussion of potential impacts, the environmental analysis is also intended to provide for public review and comment, to assist the elected officials in making decisions, and to provide a framework for subsequent environmental review that will be associated with implementation measures such as development regulations and projects.

The analysis and findings resulting from the environmental review are based on technical studies which were completed in the planning process. The DEIS and the Draft Comprehensive Plan are, therefore, companion documents which together were considered in the public review and adoption process. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) of May 27, 1998 includes additional analysis and findings resulting from public comments on the DEIS. The FEIS includes all comments received in writing along with County responses to the comments.

This Comprehensive Plan includes goals, policies, and strategies which, when implemented, will assist the County in achieving its desired land uses, which are depicted on the Land Use Map.

Individual "elements" of this Comprehensive Plan describe goals and policies that have been developed to provide clear policy direction for land use decision-making in the future. Each element also includes strategies that implement the goals and policies. The Unified Development Code (UDC) provides detailed regulations for implementation of these goals and policies.

The Plan includes provisions for:

- Monitoring the effectiveness of the Plan in achieving goals.
- An amendment process which allows yearly review and analysis of the Plan.
- Implementing strategies or "tasks" which will ensure that the goals are met.

## **THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT**

Through the Growth Management Act, the State of Washington provides a new framework for land use planning and the regulation of development in response to challenges posed to the quality of life by rapid growth.

Within the framework established by the Act, a wide diversity of local visions for the future can be accommodated; however, certain procedural criteria must be met. Recognition of

the variations and diversity in local communities is implicit in the framework of Growth Management. A "Bottoms Up" approach to planning is recommended. "Bottoms Up" planning originates at the community level with the articulation of a vision statement, which encompasses the values of as many different community members as possible. The vision is then translated into goals and policies, and eventually regulations. The main requirement is that the vision is consistent with the goals and intent of the Growth Management Act.

It is important to note that a "Bottoms Up" approach does not mean that procedural and regulatory constraints may be ignored. Successful "Bottoms Up" planning is predicated on allowing a community to choose the appropriate "tools" for the job, provided that those selected are located entirely within a "tool box" defined by the Growth Management Act. It is critical in the planning process for a jurisdiction to provide sufficient guidance so that a community understands the need to avoid selecting "tools" which are found outside of the "GMA toolbox." Failure to provide adequate guidance will likely result in inappropriate choices being made.

The Growth Management Act establishes a number of requirements for local comprehensive planning. The Act identifies specific goals for all Comprehensive Plans, prescribes the elements each plan is to contain, provides requirements for interim regulations, mandates the establishment of "Urban Growth Areas," requires local governments to demonstrate how they will pay for the improvements and facilities called for in their plans, and mandates extensive public participation in the planning process.

The Growth Management Act changed the process for developing Comprehensive Plans in a number of important ways:

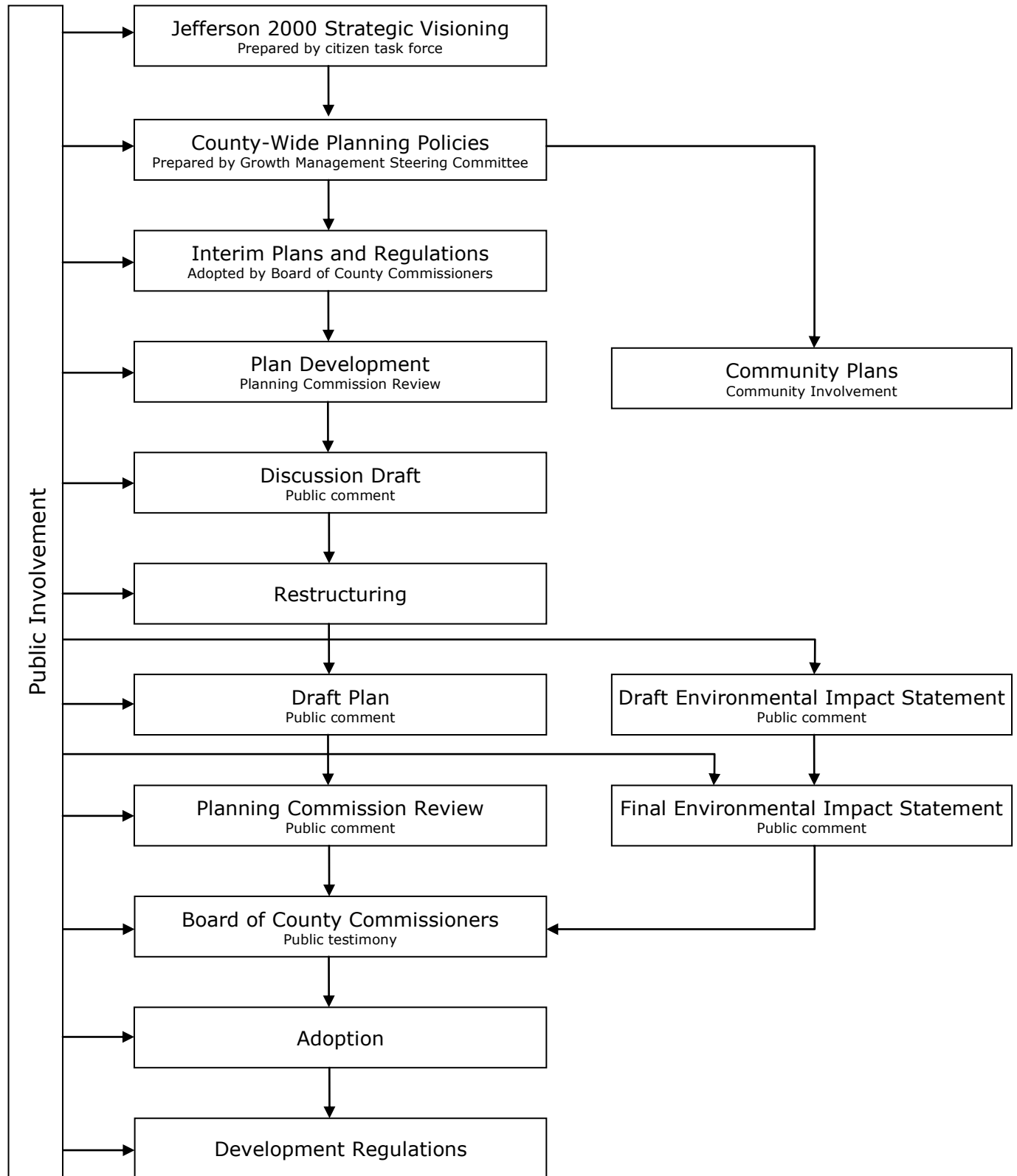
- It established 13 statewide goals with which local Comprehensive Plans and regulations must be consistent.
- In addition to the mandated goals, local Comprehensive Plans must contain the following elements:
  - Land Use Element
  - Rural Element for rural counties
  - Housing Element
  - Capital Facilities Element
  - Utilities Element
  - Transportation Element
- Local governments were required to adopt interim regulations to protect critical areas and natural resource lands.
- Local governments must demonstrate how the capital facilities necessary to support the development envisioned by their Comprehensive Plan will be provided and paid for as development occurs, or within a specified time thereafter.
- The Comprehensive Plans of counties, and cities or towns within those counties, must be consistent with one another.
- Counties and cities or towns must agree on Urban Growth Areas "within which urban growth shall be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature." The Urban Growth Area must be able to accommodate growth that is expected to occur over 20 years.

- Counties and cities or towns must jointly adopt County-wide Planning Policies which establish guidelines on how their Comprehensive Plans will be developed in order to be consistent.

## **THE PLANNING PROCESS/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Figure 1-1 on the following page describes how the various pieces of the planning process fit together. Concurrent with environmental review, public hearings and workshop meetings have been held by both the Jefferson County Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners.

**Figure 1-1  
Comprehensive Planning Process Diagram**



## **The Comprehensive Planning Process**

The State legislature, responding to the Growth Strategies Commission Report on Long-Range Planning in the State of Washington, adopted the Growth Management Act in 1990.

Jefferson County Commissioners voted to “opt-in” to the Growth Management Act in late 1991. Public involvement in the planning process began immediately with the formation of citizen task forces to develop Interim Critical Area, Mineral Land and Forest Resource Land Ordinances.

Concurrently, the County developed a questionnaire, titled Jefferson 2000, which surveyed County residents’ opinions about their vision for the future. Jefferson 2000 also asked residents to rank “values,” such as economic growth, environmental protection, visual beauty, and the accessibility of services.

The County convened the Jefferson 2000 Strategic Planning process, which involved 26 separate taxing districts and service providers responsible for water, fire protection, libraries, and similar services to County residents. Jefferson 2000 Strategic Planning used information generated by the Jefferson 2000 questionnaire and analysis of existing services, facilities, and long-range plans of the service providers to begin capital facilities planning required by the GMA.

The Joint Growth Management Steering Committee was created in 1991 to oversee the development of GMA planning in Jefferson County. The Steering Committee consisted of three representatives from the City of Port Townsend, the only incorporated city in Jefferson County, and the three County Commissioners. The Steering Committee was formed with a provision that, should additional Urban Growth Areas be designated, the Steering Committee would be expanded to accommodate representation from the newly designated UGA.

The County-wide Planning Policy (CWPP) was developed cooperatively between City and County staff consistent with the requirements and procedural criteria of the Growth Management Act, and was reviewed by the Joint Growth Management Steering Committee. Public hearings were held on the CWPP, and both City and County government adopted these policies by resolution on December 21, 1992.

## **Planning Under GMA: Community Planning**

The intent of the Community Involvement Process was to recognize the diversity of communities, life- styles and interests found in Jefferson County. It afforded citizens a more direct, hands-on influence in the planning process for their particular community. Some communities had existing plans adopted consistent with the 1979 Comprehensive Plan. For other communities, this was the first experience with community plans.

Communities with existing adopted plans:

- Brinnon (1982)
- Coyle Area (1977)
- Gardiner (1989)
- Marrowstone Island (1978)
- Tri-Area (1982)

Communities which were identified in the Community Involvement Plan but which did not have formally adopted plans:

- Discovery Bay
- West End
- Quilcene
- Shine
- Quimper
- Port Ludlow
- Paradise Bay

Additional Communities which requested permission to develop community plans:

- North Port Ludlow
- Lake Leland

Draft Community Plans were reviewed by both Planning Commission and staff. The results of the Community Planning Process and the Draft Community Plans have been integral to the identification of goals and policies included in this Plan.

### **Jefferson County's Compliance Strategy**

This Comprehensive Plan has been crafted based on four fundamental sources of support and guidance. Together, they provide the framework for a Comprehensive Plan which is responsive to local needs and regionally unique land use patterns, and is in compliance with the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act.

- Compliance with the goals and procedural criteria of the Growth Management Act and its accompanying legislation.
- Compliance with County-wide Planning Policy (CWPP), adopted jointly by the City of Port Townsend and Jefferson County, to ensure that local plans are consistent with each other and with the GMA.
- Continuous, open public participation in the planning process.
- Analysis and compliance with the Growth Hearings Board decisions and decisions made by Washington State courts.

The GMA goals and procedural criteria, and analysis of the Growth Hearings Board decisions, set the State-wide framework. The County-wide Planning Policy and public participation supply local detail for realizing the broader GMA goals within Jefferson County.

Discussions related to each of the four criteria in relation to each of the Plan elements are included as appendices to the Plan.

### **Requirements of the Growth Management Act**

The opening section of the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) sets forth the following legislative finding:



*"...uncoordinated and unplanned growth together with a lack of common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and the wise use of our lands, pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by the residents of the state."*

Local plans must implement these goals in a balanced manner. The goals are:

1. Urban Growth: Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
2. Reduce Sprawl: Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
3. Transportation: Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with County and City Comprehensive Plans.
4. 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 existing housing stock.
5. Economic Development: Encourage economic development throughout the State that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans. Promote economic opportunity for all citizens of the State, especially for unemployed and 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.
6. 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.
7. Permits: Applications for both state and local governmental permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
8. Natural Resource Industries: Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
9. Open Space and Recreation: Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.
10. Environment: Protect the environment and enhance the State's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
11. Citizen Participation and Coordination: Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
12. 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.

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

The discussion of the requirements of the Growth Management Act related to each of the Plan elements are contained in Appendix A.

### ***The County-wide Planning Policy***

On December 21, 1992, Jefferson County and the City of Port Townsend adopted a joint resolution establishing the County-wide Planning Policy (CWPP) as a policy framework to guide the development of comprehensive plans.

The goal of the adopted County-wide Planning Policy is to ensure that local planning efforts will be consistent with one another and consistent with regional growth management planning. According to the Growth Management Act, each local Comprehensive Plan should demonstrate that such policies have been followed in its development.

The County-wide Planning Policy recognized the need for counties, cities, special purpose districts, and those agencies and jurisdictions involved in the delivery of public services, to coordinate the independent development of local Comprehensive Plans. The implementing legislation to the Growth Management Act required that counties and cities agree upon policy statements in eight subject areas, including:

1. The designation of Urban Growth Areas;
2. The promotion of contiguous and orderly development and the provision of urban services to such development;
3. Joint county, non-municipal UGA, and/or city planning within Urban Growth Areas;
4. The siting of essential public facilities of county or state-wide significance;
5. The need to develop county-wide transportation facilities and strategies;
6. The need for affordable housing for all economic segments of the population;
7. County-wide development and employment; and
8. Rural Areas.

In addition, the City of Port Townsend and Jefferson County agreed to include policies pertaining to:

9. The requirements to analyze fiscal impacts associated with the impacts of growth; and
10. The context within which the County-wide Planning Policy is to be used.

The following table offers a guide to the relationship between the County-wide Planning Policy and the Comprehensive Plan Elements. Compliance with the County-wide Planning Policy has been integral to the development of individual elements of this Plan. A detailed analysis of relevant CWPPs has been included for each element in Appendix B.

**Table 1-1  
Relationship Between County-wide Planning Policies and Plan Elements**

<b>COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICY</b>	<b>COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENT</b>
1. Policy to Implement RCW 36.70A.110 Urban Growth Areas	Urban Growth Area Element
2. Contiguous and Orderly Development and Provision of Urban Services	Utilities Element Capital Facilities Urban Growth Area Element
3. Joint County and UGA Representation Planning within Urban Growth Areas	Land Use/Rural Element Urban Growth Area Element
4. The Siting of Essential Public Facilities of County or Statewide Significance	Essential Public Facilities Element
5. County-wide Transportation Facilities and Strategies;	Transportation Element Essential Public Facilities Element
6. Affordable Housing	Housing Element
7. County-wide Development and Employment	Economic Development Element
8. Rural Areas	Land Use/Rural Element
9. Fiscal Impacts Analysis	Capital Facilities Element Transportation Element All elements
10. County-wide Planning Policy: Use and Amendment	Plan Implementation and Monitoring

Compliance with the County-wide Planning Policy ensures that Jefferson County's Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the plans of other jurisdictions and service providers within the County, and that future plans proposed by service providers or jurisdictions will be consistent with the County's Plan.

### ***Public Involvement***

Public involvement is the cornerstone of long-range comprehensive planning for any community. Complying with the requirements of the Growth Management Act in Jefferson County has engaged community leaders, interested citizens, developers, property rights advocates, environmentalists, and neighborhoods in a dynamic, active public process.

Public participation has occurred not only through citizen participation in task forces and goals-setting workshops, but also under the auspices of the Planning Commission. Consistent with the Planning Enabling Act, the Planning Commission has been actively involved in comprehensive planning in Jefferson County. The Planning Commission has advertised its activities in the local newspapers and held open houses on a variety of issues.

Public involvement in comprehensive planning is required for compliance with the GMA and has been identified by the Hearings Board as essential to proper development and adoption of plans. In addition, public participation is essential in adopting a Plan which preserves the character of Jefferson County as envisioned by community residents.

### ***The Decisions of the Growth Management Hearings Boards***

The Growth Management Hearings Boards, which are comprised of three-member panels appointed by the Governor, were created to review comprehensive plans and associated development regulations for compliance with the goals and procedural criteria of the Growth Management Act.

The Growth Management Hearings Boards' decisions provide not only legal guidance for Jefferson County, but also a solid framework for preparation of the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Individual Elements in this Comprehensive Plan have been crafted after review of applicable Growth Hearings Board's decisions. To the extent that decisions of our regional Hearings Board may be inconsistent or contradictory, the County understands that the State Legislature intended to have our regional Hearings Board show deference to a decision made by a local government such as this County in an effort to reconcile or remedy those inconsistencies or contradictions. A discussion of relevant decisions applicable to compliance for each of the Plan's elements is contained in Appendix D of this Plan.

Compliance with Hearings Board and court decisions also ensures that the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan is consistent with both the requirements of the State Growth Management Act and with other communities within the State, and forms the final leg of the "table."

### **Organizing Principles: Planning Objectives**

This Comprehensive Plan represents a synthesis between a thorough analysis of existing conditions, the history of development patterns, anticipated population growth, the requirements of the Growth Management Act, the opportunities for new land uses, and the planning objectives which were identified by the community. These planning objectives or principles are the heart of the Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan and represent the connection between community vision, existing land uses, and the goals of the Growth Management Act.

#### ***Planning Objective I - Preserving Rural Character***

The criteria contained within the GMA and the Growth Management Hearings Board decisions as they relate to rural areas clearly indicates that the preservation and enhancement of rural character is a desired outcome of the planning process. The GMA and the decisions of the Hearings Board originally approached the definition of rural character somewhat indirectly by providing guidance largely on what is detrimental to the preservation of rural character. In 1997, the State legislature amended the GMA to provide a definition of rural character. This important amendment to the GMA afforded greater latitude to rural counties through recognition of local discretion in the planning process. The amendment enacted through ESB 6094 is discussed in further detail in the Land Use/Rural Element.

#### ***Planning Objective II - Patterns of Existing Development***

Current development patterns were identified through the analysis of aerial photographs, Assessor's records, environmental mapping, and field inventories. Tables were prepared which illustrated the relative development density throughout the County, the type of development, and the potential for additional development. Review of these areas indicated those portions of the County which are fully "built-out," as well as identifying those areas where new development and/or infill development might occur. The results of the

environmental analysis were used to identify appropriate strategies for preserving rural character while accommodating anticipated rural population growth.

***Planning Objective III - Enhancement of the Rural Economy***

To ensure that Jefferson County can accommodate new economic development opportunities, policies are contained within this plan which: encourage developing the necessary land base and rural infrastructure and services to accommodate modern economic activities; promote the County's natural environment as a basis of economic activities that are tourist or recreation-oriented; encourage and provide incentives for businesses to create "family wage" employment opportunities; and ensure that the County's quality of life is preserved as it is enhanced.

Restructuring the local economy is a process that is dependent on both the public and private sectors. Efforts to strengthen communication and cooperation between these two sectors can provide a strong foundation upon which a more diversified and flexible economy may emerge. The Comprehensive Plan is the necessary foundation upon which this communication and cooperation will develop more fully.

***Planning Objective IV - Allocation of Land to Meet Anticipated Needs***

Jefferson County has identified commercial and industrial land based on the 1997 amendments to the GMA allowing rural counties to recognize "existing areas and uses". The County has also identified Irondale and Hadlock as an Urban Growth Area (UGA). Counties may designate UGAs to recognize areas beyond existing uses to accommodate housing growth and meet future demand for commercial and industrial land. This Plan includes strategies to ensure a land supply that is adequate to meet future economic development by inventorying available commercial and industrial lands.

Because the County recognizes existing legal lots of record, the County has included policies to consider for the intensification of development of some existing areas of more intensive rural residential development if environmental and health standards can be achieved. These areas constitute a relatively small proportion of the County's rural residential lands. In all other areas, the County has substantially downzoned rural residential land.

Associated with ensuring adequate lands for different land uses is the need to ensure that appropriate services and infrastructure can be provided in a timely and cost effective manner. This Plan contains policies which support development where services and infrastructure exists.

***Planning Objective V - Continuous and Ongoing Public Involvement***

Opportunities for meaningful public involvement are key to successful comprehensive planning. Jefferson County is committed to bringing community leaders, interested citizens, property rights activists, environmentalists, and neighborhood groups together in a public process that resolves issues and makes choices in the implementation and future amendments to develop this Comprehensive Plan.

***Planning Objective VI - Compliance with the Requirements of the Growth Management Act***

Consistency with the thirteen goals of the Growth Management Act, the decisions of the Growth Management Hearings Boards, and the County-wide Planning Policy were used as a framework to develop a comprehensive compliance strategy.

**PLAN OVERVIEW**

In order to reduce the size of the Plan, much of the background information in earlier drafts used to educate and inform the public has been relocated to separate appendices to the Final Plan.

While much of the technical information has been relocated to the Appendices, the Plan, as a comprehensive policy document guiding future land use decisions, must contain sufficient detail and discussion to provide clear and reasonable interpretation of the included policies and strategies. This can only be provided through information and analysis. For this reason and in an attempt to make the Plan more manageable, we have bound the Transportation, Utilities, and Capital Facilities Elements in a separate volume.

The Plan provides brief narratives or abbreviated requisite background material necessary to the understanding of the goals, policies and strategies of each element. Certain Plan elements, such as Land Use/Rural, Economic Development and Housing are more detailed than others owing to the need to identify existing resources and make assumptions regarding future trends. The remaining element narratives have been reduced in size from previous drafts.

## **PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING**

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### ***THE PLANNING FRAMEWORK***

#### **How the Comprehensive Plan Works**

The Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan provides a legally recognized framework for making decisions about land use in the unincorporated areas of Jefferson County. The Plan manages growth by directing more intensive development to appropriate areas while protecting and conserving environmentally sensitive areas and natural resource, rural, and open space lands. It is also intended to aid as both an educational and a policy implementation tool for a broad range of public and private users, including community groups, Jefferson County officials, and other government agencies. The Plan helps these users in several ways:

- It guides the development of community plans and implementing regulations. This Plan is the framework for other plans and regulations that govern the location and intensity of land uses throughout unincorporated Jefferson County. The Plan's policies provide the basis for updating community plans (subarea, local, and functional), for evaluating proposed changes in zoning and in reviewing proposals for development projects such as land divisions. It also indicates to the public how Jefferson County would likely review and approve changes in plans, zoning, or other regulations that apply to an area or a specific parcel.
- It guides the provision of public facilities and services by integrating land use, infrastructure, and delivery of human services. The Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for decisions about public facilities and services (such as where facilities should be located to support planned growth). The Plan also directs public spending to areas where growth is targeted.
- It provides regional coordination and consistency with other jurisdictional planning efforts. It is intended that other public agencies (local, regional, state, federal, and tribal), in cooperation with Jefferson County, use the Comprehensive Plan in conjunction with the County-wide Planning Policy as regional perspectives or county-wide viewpoints when other plans and growth policies are developed and when making project decisions.
- It allows for citizen participation and involvement. Comprehensive planning is an evolving process which allows for periodic review and updates in response to changing community goals and vision as articulated by citizens, businesses, and interested organizations.

#### **Components of the Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan is a legal document consisting of a map or series of maps and accompanying text and goals, policies and implementation strategies that is adopted by the Board of County Commissioners to guide public and private land use decisions. A comprehensive planning program (with its conforming implementing regulations) must constantly weigh the community's financial ability to support development against its minimum population obligations and need for environmental protection.

Comprehensive planning provides the public with opportunities to give direction to Jefferson County's anticipated growth. The Comprehensive Plan provides for an efficient and effective land use pattern that respects community values by balancing land uses with natural systems and open spaces, by directing urban growth to Urban Growth Areas, and by protecting and conserving natural resource lands and rural areas. The Plan contains numerous goals, policies, and strategies to create a future in which most growth is directed to areas where services can be provided in the most effective and efficient manner.

### **Goals, Policies, and Strategies**

Elements or chapters of the plan may include goals, policies, and strategies for the long-term development of the County.

A **goal** is a direction-setter. It is an ideal future end, condition or state related to the public health, safety or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, is abstract in nature. Consequently, a goal is generally not quantifiable, time-dependent or suggestive of specific actions for its achievement.

A **policy** is a specific statement that guides decision-making. It indicates a clear commitment of the local legislative body. A policy is based on a comprehensive plan's goals and the analysis of the data. A policy is put into effect through implementation measures such as zoning, land division, and environmental ordinances.

A **strategy** is the means of implementation which will ensure that the goals are met. Strategies should be worded so that their progress or achievement can be monitored or measured. An implementation strategy may only pertain to one particular aspect of a goal or it may be one of several successive steps toward goal achievement. Consequently, there may be more than one strategy for each goal.

### **Designating Major Land Uses**

The plan defines major land use categories, each of which has distinct and unique characteristics. These categories are:

**Urban Growth Areas:** This term refers to areas designated for growth that make intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, other agricultural products, fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources.

**Rural Areas:** This term refers to lands which are not within an Urban Growth Area and are not designated as natural resource lands having long-term commercial significance for production of agricultural products, timber, or the extraction of minerals. Rural areas may consist of a variety of uses and residential densities at levels that are consistent with the preservation of rural character.

**Natural Resource Lands:** This term refers to agriculture, aquaculture, forest and mineral resource lands which have long-term commercial significance.

**Open Space:** This term refers to any land area, the protection of which in its present use would conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources; protect



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streams or water supplies; promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes; enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations, sanctuaries or other open space; enhance recreation opportunities; or preserve historic sites.

### **The Decision-Making Process**

Planning decisions must be consistent with the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is a legal, binding document and cannot be disregarded; it is also a document designed to adapt to changing trends and circumstances. The Plan serves as the basis for land use decisions. Over time the Plan's policies may change to ensure that the development pattern occurring in the County remains consistent with both the intent of the community's vision for the future, and the Plan's goals and objectives.

The Community Vision Statements found in Appendix C provide internal consistency within the Plan and create a foundation for land use decisions. This is especially important in cases where there are competing Comprehensive Plan policies and clarification as to the overall intent of the Plan is needed to assist decision-makers. This characteristic is especially noticeable when applying broad policy language to more detailed community plans, amendments to the Plan (site-specific or general), land use regulatory changes, or project-specific development proposals.

The comprehensive character of the Plan brings with it an inherent nature to address a wide variety of community issues. The public participated in developing and defining Jefferson County's vision for the future. The primary community concerns and goals are reflected in the following non-prioritized list:

### **Community Vision Statements**

- Preserve the high quality of life.
- Strive for government efficiency.
- Support and encourage economic opportunities.
- Increase housing choices for all residents.
- Ensure that necessary transportation facilities and services are available to serve development at the time of occupancy and use.
- Balance urban uses and environmental protection.
- Protect and retain rural lifestyles.
- Protect and conserve agriculture, forest and mineral resource lands.
- Protect and conserve the environment, ecologically sensitive areas, and preclude development and land uses which are incompatible with critical areas.
- Respect property rights.
- Encourage citizen participation and involvement.

Community Vision Statements reflect the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and should be considered collectively when making land use decisions. Community Vision Statements provide a decision-making framework that can be referenced when considering the merits of a land use issue--particularly where there are numerous competing goals, policies, or strategies. Appendix C contains charts that summarize the community's vision statements for each element.

## **Amending the Comprehensive Plan**

The Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan addresses long-range and County-wide issues that are beyond the scope of decisions on subarea, local or functional plans or individual development proposals. The Plan serves as a vital guide to the future and provides a framework for managing change. It is important that amendments to the Comprehensive Plan retain the broad perspectives articulated in the community vision statements, satisfy the goals, policies, and strategies of the Plan, and remain consistent with the intent of the Growth Management Act.

Amendments are to be justified through findings from monitoring of “growth management indicators” (i.e., population growth [actual v. projected], land capacity [actual v. projected], economic indicators [property values/comparative sales compared to statewide averages and local trends], changes in technology, needs, omissions or errors, or a declared emergency).

### ***Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must conform to the following:***

- a. The requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Chapter RCW 36.70A and the State Planning Enabling Act, Chapter RCW 36.70.
- b. Any proposed amendments to the Plan must be submitted by the County to the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development at least 60 days prior to final adoption by the Board of County Commissioners (RCW 36.70A.106).
- c. Proposed amendments must be consistent with Federal and State laws, the Comprehensive Plan, the County-wide Planning Policy, related plans, and the comprehensive plans of other counties or cities with which the County has, in part, common borders or regulated regional issues (WAC 365-195-630[1]).
- d. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan will be considered on an annual basis (no more frequently than once per year), except when the following circumstances apply: (i) the initial adoption of a subarea plan that does not modify the comprehensive plan policies and designations applicable to the subarea, and (ii) the adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program pursuant to RCW 90.58. All proposals will be considered concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained (WAC 365-195-630[2]). The County may consider adopting amendments more frequently than once per year if a declared emergency exists.
- e. Consistent with the timelines contained in the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A), the County must review all Urban Growth Area boundaries, as well as the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of each Urban Growth Area. If necessary, the Urban Growth Area boundaries will be revised to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the County for the succeeding 20-year period.

- f. Amendments or changes to natural resource lands and critical area designations should be based on consistency with one or more of the following criteria:
- Change in circumstances pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan or public policy.
  - A change in circumstances beyond the control of the landowner pertaining to the subject property.
  - An error in designation.
  - New information on natural resource land or critical area status (WAC 365-190-040[2][g]).

### **Comprehensive Plan Policy Amendments**

Policy amendments may be initiated by the County, or by other entities, organizations, or individuals through a petition submitted on forms provided by the County and subject to fees as determined by the BOCC. The merits of proposed policy amendments shall be measured against the petition submittal requirements contained in Jefferson County's adopted development regulations to ensure consistency in the review and decision-making process. In general, these requirements will address the following:

- a. A detailed statement of what is proposed to be changed and why.
- b. A statement of anticipated impacts to be caused by the change, including geographic area affected and issues presented.
- c. A demonstration of why existing Comprehensive Plan policies should not continue to be in effect or why existing policies no longer apply.
- d. A statement of how the amendment complies with the Comprehensive Plan's community vision statements, goals, policy and strategy directives.
- e. A statement of how functional plans and Capital Improvement Plans support the change.
- f. A statement of how the change affects implementing land use regulations (i.e., zoning) and the necessary changes to bring the implementing land use regulations into compliance with the Plan.
- g. A demonstration of public review of the recommended change.

### **Comprehensive Plan Map Amendments**

Comprehensive Plan Map amendments may be initiated by the County, or by other entities, organizations, or individuals through petitions. The boundaries separating the Urban Growth Area, Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands designations are intended to be long-term and unchanging. Land use designations may be subject to minor refinements, but only after full public participation, notice, environmental review, and an official assessment of planning growth management indicators.

Amendments must comply with the same petition submittal requirements as policy amendments (see a-g above which are incorporated herein as a-g) and the additional following items:

- a. A detailed statement describing how the map amendment complies with Comprehensive Plan land use designation criteria.
- b. Urban Growth Area boundary changes shall be supported by and dependent on population forecasts and allocated urban population distributions, existing urban densities and infill opportunities, phasing and availability of adequate services, proximity to designated natural resource lands and the presence of critical areas.
- c. Rural Areas and Natural Resource Land map designation changes shall be supported by and dependent on Growth Management Act criteria, population forecasts and allocated non-urban populations distributions, existing rural area and natural resource land densities, and/or infill opportunities. Natural Resource Land designations should also satisfy the criteria in Section 1 (f) above (WAC 365-190-040 [2][g]).

### **General Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

A general Comprehensive Plan amendment is a policy or land use designation which is applied to a broad class of situations and to a large number of parcels and persons that are not readily identifiable.

Petitions for a general amendment proposal are to be submitted to the Board of County Commissioners (Board) for consideration. The Board may or may not act on the proposal (petition) to amend the Comprehensive Plan. The Board is not required to take any action on such amendment proposals. A decision by the Board to initiate the plan amendment process is procedural only, and does not constitute a decision by the Board on whether the amendment will ultimately be approved.

### ***Site-Specific Comprehensive Plan Amendments***

A site-specific comprehensive plan amendment is a policy or land use designation that is applied to a specific number of parcels which are in readily identifiable ownership. A proposal which formulates policy yet affects relatively few individuals will generally be characterized as a site-specific action.

Comprehensive Plan amendment proposals (petitions) which apply to a specific site, frequently in conjunction with an identifiable development proposal, may be initiated by a petitioner through the following amendment process:

General requirements for a site-specific amendment include:

- a. **Fees.** The petitioner shall pay to the Department of Community Development the application fee prescribed by the approved fee schedule as now or hereafter amended. Fees for amendments to correct mapping errors may be waived by the Administrator.
- b. **Petition.** The petitioner must submit to the Department of Community Development a written application, on forms provided by the Department, containing appropriate amendatory language and, if applicable, a map drawn to scale, showing the proposed change. The petition shall also address policy or map evaluation criteria as described above. Incomplete petitions shall not

be accepted. Depending on the nature of the application, the petitioner may be required to attend a meeting to discuss the petition with Department staff.

- c. **Timing.** Petitions shall be submitted to the Department of Community Development by the application deadline established through Jefferson County's adopted development regulations. Late or incomplete applications shall not be accepted.
- d. **Approval for Consideration.** When a petition application is considered complete the Department of Community Development shall submit it to the Board, with a recommendation as to whether the Board should consider or reject the proposed petition. After receiving the Department's recommendation, the Board, in a public meeting, shall determine whether to consider or reject the proposed petition. A decision by the Board to initiate the plan amendment process is procedural only and does not constitute a decision by the Board as to whether the amendment will ultimately be approved.
- e. **Environmental Review.** If the Board approves consideration of the amendment, the petitioner shall submit to the Department of Community Development an environmental checklist. Upon receipt of the environmental checklist and supporting documentation, the Department shall issue an environmental threshold determination on the proposed amendment. If necessary, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement should be published. (State Environmental Policy Act Rules [Chapter 197-11 WAC]).
- f. **Process.** The Department of Community Development will process the amendment pursuant to the procedures contained within Chapter 36.70 RCW and the Jefferson County development regulations, this process shall include at least one public hearing before the Planning Commission and one public hearing before the Board of County Commissioners.

### **Emergency Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

Emergency amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are allowed pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130(2)(b): "Except as otherwise provided in (a) of this subsection, all proposals shall be considered by the governing body concurrently so the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be ascertained. However, after appropriate public participation a county or city may adopt amendments or revisions to its comprehensive plan that conform with this chapter whenever an emergency exists or to resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with a growth management hearings board or with the court."

### ***Future Subarea Plans as Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan***

Subarea plans refine Comprehensive Plan countywide policies for application to specific sub-regions or communities within the county. Subarea plans may reflect differences between local circumstances and values and those generally found countywide, but they must also be "consistent" with the Comprehensive Plan pursuant to the Growth Management Act. Because of changes to land use districts and policies as a result of the adoption of subarea plans, the reader must take care when interpreting tables and analysis within the Comprehensive Plan to note whether the particular page has been amended. Amended pages contain a notation in the page footer. If a particular page has not been amended, the

contents reflect analysis at the time of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Analysis specific to subarea planning is generally contained within the adopted subarea plan itself.

### **Comprehensive Plan Amendment Appeals**

#### **Growth Management Hearings Board Review**

Challenges to amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or related plans that are within the jurisdiction of the Growth Management Hearings Board shall be processed according to the law governing such challenges.

#### **Judicial Review**

Any judicial action to review any decision concerning the amendment of the Comprehensive Plan, including related plans, shall be commenced within twenty-one (21) days from the date of the decision. The plaintiff bringing any such action shall pay the full cost of transcription of the record prepared for judicial review and other costs as may be imposed.

### **MONITORING PLAN EFFECTIVENESS**

The monitoring of growth management indicators such as population growth, land capacity, economic factors, natural resource consumption, and public health and safety improves the effectiveness of public policy and allows progress in achieving the goals and objectives behind that policy to be measured. Use of growth management indicators assures accountability to the public. It demonstrates how effectively the County is moving toward identified goals. Ongoing monitoring allows public resources to be prioritized in order to meet goals and, if the desired outcome is not achieved, to consider modifying the goals or implementing regulations. Growth management indicators work well with the public participation process of the planning cycle. Through the use of growth management indicators, citizens and decision-makers can review growth management policy and make changes that reflect present day realities.