

Comprehensive Plan Vision

Background and History

From the shores of the Pacific Ocean to the tranquil waters of Puget Sound and Hood Canal, the area now referred to as Jefferson County has been an inspiration to the generations who have called it home. The stories and legends of native tribes who inhabited the area speak eloquently of the spirit of this land; and the journals of the early explorers are replete with descriptions of the awesome beauty and bountiful natural resources found here.

First explored by Spaniards in 1775, it was several decades after Capt. George Vancouver's extensive exploration of the inland waters of Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan De Fuca in 1792 that settlers began to arrive. Coming by land and by sea, these early settlers found refuge in the harbors and bays that today bear the names of Discovery Bay, Port Townsend, Port Hadlock, and Port Ludlow. Soon shipbuilding, logging, sawmills, farming and canneries became the mainstay of the economy. The harbors were filled with sailing vessels representing nearly every maritime nation in the world. The more adventurous settlers moved farther out from population centers. Many of the rural communities of Jefferson County, such as Nordland, Brinnon, Gardiner and Discovery Bay, have their names and roots tied to these early settlers.

The native people who inhabited this area long before the arrival of the first explorers and settlers, were integrally linked to the land, its bounty and its beauty. Through the signing of the Point No Point Treaty with the United States in 1855, followed by the Quinault Treaty, local Indian tribes ceded their lands and waters to the United States, reserving the right to continue fishing, hunting, and gathering activities in the ceded territories. In addition, the tribes reserved lands for their people represented today by the reservations of the Skokomish in Mason County, and the Hoh and the Quinault. Following the signing of these treaties, non-Indian settlement proceeded rapidly.

Jefferson County's economic history reflects the enthusiasm and disappointment of the events of the day. The excitement of positioning itself to be the terminus of the transcontinental railroad in the 1870's became an economic disaster when the railroad stopped on the eastern shores of Puget Sound. Then, after the economy was buoyed by the military build-up of World War I and II, the post-war decommissioning of coastal defense system at Forts Worden, Townsend, and Flagler dismantled dreams of a strong economic base.

While many people chose to leave this area to pursue a more stable economic future, some remained. Their love for the area and its resources and their commitment to the community overcame the unknowns presented by a changing world.

The qualities that brought the early settlers to Jefferson County continue to attract new immigrants with the beauty, resources, people, and unique way of life offered here. Unguided and undirected, however, the growth and development necessary to accommodate these new residents may unknowingly alter the very qualities that attracted them in the first place.

In 1990 the Legislature of the State of Washington determined that statewide assets and community qualities were becoming increasingly at risk as more and more people were attracted to the resources and lifestyles offered. To address these issues, the Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA), which established a statewide land use planning framework for individual communities, regional bodies and state agencies. For the first time, efforts at all levels of government were to be coordinated and conducted in a manner that minimizes impacts on the natural environment and preserves the natural resource base of the State, while accommodating anticipated growth and development.

The Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan is a reflection of the wide variety of individual and community desires, needs, aspirations, short-comings, and accomplishments, all of which are tempered by the parameters established by the GMA. The Plan is a set of guidelines; goals, policies, and strategies to give growth and development both context and direction, aimed at promoting the best environmental, social and economic future for Jefferson County citizens.

The Comprehensive Plan and its promise:

The Comprehensive Plan as presented herein has been eight years in the making. Discussed, debated, revisited and revised, it represents the time and energy of hundreds of citizens contributing thousands of hours. It also represents a fundamental restructuring of the delivery of community services by prioritizing public expenditures to areas designated to accommodate new population growth, and requiring the coordination of services to maintain stated service levels.

While the Plan will impact the future delivery of services, its purposes go well beyond how public funds are to be spent and services delivered. The Plan, in a very real sense, is a statement about Jefferson County as a community, and how it will be in the future as a

place to work and play, to raise a family or retire, to get an education or start a business. To this end, the Plan represents a statement of basic principles. And it is these principles by which its success will be judged:

- Maintain and preserve the natural beauty, rural character, and variety of life styles that make up the intrinsic character of this community.
- Support a healthy, diversified, and sustainable local and regional economy by recognizing existing local businesses, making prudent and appropriate infrastructure investments, and encouraging new business start-ups and recruitment which are compatible with and complementary to the community.
- Protect and conserve the local natural resource base, balancing both habitat and economic values.
- Reinforce and enhance the historic sense of "place" or "community" around traditional population centers.
- Prevent the inappropriate or premature conversion of undeveloped land in favor of infill and the strengthening of local communities.
- Provide a degree of flexibility and autonomy for local communities to address their own unique needs.
- Encourage yet unrealized opportunities in community education, technology, transportation alternatives, habitat restoration and economic diversification.

To accomplish the above principles, our decision-making must take into account the need for local communities to shape their own sense of the future within the guidelines contained in this Plan. We must work together, tapping the strengths and diversity of the citizens of the community. We must clearly understand the fiscal impacts of our decision making and create opportunities for those who have less or are just starting out to be able to participate fully in all aspects of the community. And finally, we must be consistent, coordinated, and flexible in the delivery of community services.

The Comprehensive Plan as a living document:

The Comprehensive Plan is a living document and will change as circumstances, challenges and outside influences change. Remaining to be answered are a number of questions such as classification and designation of the Port Hadlock and Glen Cove areas; the designation of the airport and surrounding area; the potential listing of a number of salmon species as endangered; and the availability of ground and surface water resources. As issues are reviewed and the Plan is revised, the foundational principles that guided the development of this document will in turn be applied to any change. For the Plan to accomplish its stated goals it must be reflective of the values which make up the community. To this end, the Plan must ultimately support a community and a future that is livable, affordable, and sustainable. This is no small task, but neither is it an impossible task. The ingredients necessary for the promise of this plan to be realized are an active and informed citizenry and an understanding and responsive government.

The Comprehensive Plan and our vision:

The Comprehensive Plan which follows is a statement about the future. We, the Board of Commissioners, in adopting this Plan, are projecting a future in which the essence of the rural nature and character of Jefferson County is retained, while accommodating new growth and development in traditional community settings and specific designated areas. We see a future where new development actively supports the public services and community assets necessary to accommodate the development. We see the retention of our traditional natural resource industries, while providing opportunities for private sector diversification of our economic base. We see active participation in the balancing of competing uses for community resources, and the restoration of critical habitats and environmentally sensitive areas. And we see a future that embraces options and opportunities for all citizens to fully participate in a healthy economy and a clean environment within their local community.

To accomplish the above, the rules, regulations and requirements which will implement the provisions contained in this Plan must: a) balance the needs of the community with the rights of individuals; b) recognize and reflect the diversity of landscape and traditions found in various parts of the County; and, c) provide for both consistency and flexibility in their application.

The development of the Comprehensive Plan has been a significant community undertaking. With continued cooperative support of the community and its government, the qualities reflected in this Plan which first brought people to this area and are cherished by those living here today, will be passed on to future generations who will call this place home.

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