



STAFF REPORT

DATE: May 25, 2023
TO: Coupeville Planning Commission Members
FM: Donna Keeler, Planning Director
RE: Draft Comprehensive Plan Update (Volumes I and II)

This agenda item introduces Volumes I and II of the Draft Coupeville Comprehensive Plan Update for consideration by the Planning Commission in a public hearing. The current draft Plan is considered a “major update” to the current version of the Plan which was originally adopted in 1994. The Draft Plan and Future Land Use Map are products of numerous public meetings starting in late 2021, two joint meetings with the Town Council, two public workshops, stakeholder interviews, a community survey and extensive public input.

BACKGROUND: Growth Management Act and Comprehensive Plan Requirements

A comprehensive plan is a foundational policy document that guides land use and development and associated infrastructure and services necessary to serve planned growth. Comprehensive Planning in Washington State must follow the requirements and structure set forth in the Growth Management Act or “GMA” (Chapter 36.70A RCW), enacted in 1990 and subsequently amended many times. In passing GMA, the legislature made the following findings:

“The legislature finds that 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 residents of this state. It is the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive planning. Further the legislature finds that it is in the public interest that economic development programs be shared with communities experiencing insufficient economic growth.”

Under GMA, the comprehensive plans of each jurisdiction must show sufficient zoned capacity to serve the UGA’s (The Town’s) 20-year increment of growth based on a “buildable lands analysis” and demonstrate sufficient infrastructure and service capacity, current or planned, to serve the jurisdiction’s growth target. Policy “level of service” (LOS) standards are used as measures to determine the adequacy of and future needs for service provision. As an example, on a scale from A to F, the Town has adopted an LOS C for roadways. An LOS A is free-flowing traffic and an LOS F is essentially gridlock. Where the policy LOS falls on this spectrum will dictate the level of improvements necessary to maintain the LOS as traffic volumes increase. LOS standards are often applied to transportation and parks

facilities but may have other applications as well. In staff's view, LOS standards are not necessary for utility infrastructure, as such facilities are generally subject to non-policy standards.

To support preparation of the Town of Coupeville's Comprehensive Plan Update, the Town's lead consultant, MAKERS architecture and Urban Design, contracted with BERK Consulting to prepare a residential Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) to assess the Town's supply of land available for residential development and ability to meet its forecasted population growth. A memorandum provided to the Planning Commission in April of 2022 describes the analysis methodology, documents key assumptions, and presents BERK's findings regarding 2045 population projections, available capacity, and long-term planning implications for the Town of Coupeville.

Key Findings and Implications of the residential land capacity analysis prepared by BERK include the following:

- Coupeville's projected 2045 population is between 2,160 – 2,252 depending on the projection method used, an increase of 210-302 people over the 2021 population of 1,950. BERK recommends planning for a projected population of 2,175 for consistency with Island County's 2016 Buildable Lands Analysis and recent population trends. This is 225 more people than the current population and would require approximately 111 new housing units.
- Coupeville has remaining capacity to accommodate approximately 231 housing units or 469 new residents within town limits under current zoning if utility services are available. This is enough capacity to accommodate projected 2045 population under any of the population projections methods used.
- Without additional investment or incentives to extend the Town's sewer service in eastern Coupeville, remaining capacity is less likely to accommodate future population growth. About half of the vacant or redevelopable parcels are located in eastern Coupeville outside the Town's current sewer service area. This means they are less likely to redevelop during the planning period because of the added cost to developers. If these parcels are considered undevelopable, housing capacity is reduced to 143 units or 290 new residents.

Irrespective of Coupeville's allowances under GMA, growth targets for population and employment, whatever their origin, serve as the basis for comprehensive planning. Within the capacity limitations established according to the community's values and vision for itself and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve, growth targets are necessary to understand and describe how growth will be directed and served.

GMA is prescriptive in the topic areas that must be addressed in a comprehensive plan. RCW 36.70A.070 lists the **mandatory elements**, which include the following.

- Land use element (including the Future Land Use Map);
- Housing element;
- Capital facilities element;
- Utilities element;
- Transportation element;
- Economic development element; and

- Park and recreation element

The current adopted Comprehensive Plan also includes the following **optional elements**:

- Natural systems element;
- Historic Preservation element;
- Shoreline element;
- Government economy and services element;

The **new** draft Comprehensive Plan recommends replacing the above non-mandatory/optional elements with the following:

- Historic Preservation element
- Natural Systems Element (Combines Shorelines, “Green Communities”, Critical Areas, Natural Systems, Trees and Vegetation into one element). *The Shoreline Master Program will continue existing as a stand-alone document.*

Note: The Draft Comprehensive Plan folded goals and policies from the Government economy and services elements into the Economic Stability element.

Goals and Policies

Each element includes goals and policies that are intended to be consistent with GMA and with the values and priorities of Coupeville. It is important to understand the function of the goals and policies. Goals and policies are not regulation but statements of the vision and values of the community. In general, specific standards, such as density or setbacks, are regulatory and should not be included with the policies. Regulations implement the policies. For instance, a policy stating “sidewalks should be provided along each street” may be implemented with street standards identifying sidewalks as part of the required street section. The policy establishes the vision and the code creates the requirement. Commissioners will recall that certain land use reviews include a criterion that the proposal must be found consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. In such cases, the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan clarify the intent of the regulations and provide a land use context, but do not substitute for the regulations.

It is also important to understand the difference between a goal and policy, since the Comprehensive Plan contains both. *Goals* are long-term outcomes the Town hopes to achieve by implementing the Comprehensive Plan. They are aspirational, expressing the community’s collective vision and values, often in terms of a condition or circumstance to be achieved. *Policies* set a preferred direction and describe what must be done to achieve these broad goals. They are sufficiently specific to help determine whether a proposed project, program, or regulation would advance the values expressed in the goals. Policies are the first step in the development of a solution by forming the basis of development standards.

Introduction of New Features

The new Draft Comprehensive has quite a different look than the original 1994 version. In addition to being more reader friendly, other notable changes include:

- Land Acknowledgement
- New Vision statement
- New/revised policies and goals (also maintained many of the old ones)
- Background reports and data moved to volume II.
- New introduction to climate change/sustainability (theme throughout)
- New “Plan at a Glance” Section
- More photos, figures and “call outs” throughout
- New Island-wide map with urban growth areas

As discussed during the March Planning Commission meeting, the primary changes to note for each element/chapter from earlier draft versions are noted below.

Land Use Element

- Maintained densities as they currently are (no rezones). A few properties noted below would have the ability to apply for a rezone.
- Added an 11 x 17 size draft future land use designation map.
- Added language directing the Town to develop a housing needs assessment and action plan to include updated data and strategies for addressing housing needs.
- Added a new policy addressing zoning within the most intense OLF noise zone. Includes an updated map of noise zones for the entire town for reference.
- Added a new policy acknowledging the forecasted population growth for the planning period.
- Added a policy restricting rezones to low density residential in the Rural Reserve Zoning District until sewer can be provided.
- Added a new policy on small homes.
- Added a new policy ensuring development regulations provide adequate landscaping/screening in developments adjacent to SR 20.
- Added a new policy encouraging home gardens for food production and composting.
- Added a new policy facilitating the placement of electric vehicle charging stations.

Future Land Use Designation Map *(Note: This map does not change the current underlying zoning. In order to change zoning, property owners will need to apply for a rezone if they qualify.)*

Revised the Future Land Use Map to be consistent with the “hybrid” map presented during the November 8, 2022 workshop as follows: *Refer to Draft Map in Volume 1.*

- Rural Reserve (RR) designation on NE Parker Road is maintained for properties without sewer. Future rezones to Low Density Residential (LDR) would only be allowed upon sewer availability and compliance with the Town Code.
- The number of properties originally proposed for future land use designation changes have been dramatically reduced. For the remaining limited properties recommended for revisions, it is important to note that such changes would not automatically change

zoning status. These properties would need to apply for a rezone at a future time and would go through a separate public review process.

- Properties proposed for changes in Future Land Use Designation Include:
 - Properties zoned Rural Reserve (RR): Current zoning would remain but the future land use designation would change to low density residential (LDR). *Note: Only RR properties with the ability to connect to sewer would be eligible for a future rezone to LDR.*
 - 1207 and 1305 NE Parker Road: From low density to medium density. These lots are about a ¼ acre each and cannot meet many of the standards for low density due to their size. They are also adjacent to medium density parcels.
 - Two side by side parcels across from the Coupeville Methodist Church parking lot, each approximately .25 acres in size, are proposed to be changed from medium density to high density. Both parcels are owned by the Methodist Church.
 - 105 NW Broadway Street (Foursquare Gospel Church): Medium density to Civic.
 - 502 NE Otis St. (Coupeville Community Bible Church): Medium density to Civic.
 - Memorandum of Agreement Area (Peaceful Valley): MOA to Medium Density (RM-9600). *Note: Under the MOA, the RM-9600 development regulations already apply to this area. Stipulations under the MOA would not change.*
 - 114 NW Wilkes St. Townhouses and vacant 1 acre parcel to the east: MOA to High Density. *Note: Stipulations under the MOA would not change.*
 - Three parcels with two zones (known as “split zoned”): Assigned one of the zones it currently has, either high density or commercial on the entire parcel.
 - 206 S. Main St.: Medium density to Commercial.
 - Vacant parcel immediately south of 206 S. Main St: Medium density to Commercial.
 - Open space on NW Broadway and Highway 20 (community garden location and forested area): Civic (formerly public/quasi-public) to Parks.

Historic Preservation Element

- Moved this element up to be second behind the Land Use Element.
- Revised the introduction based on public comment and public input.
- Added a new policy supporting the maintenance of a database of historic structures.
- Added a sidebar highlighting the benefits of small homes as a way to preserve Coupeville’s historic character.

Housing Element

- Expanded the policy on the need for a housing needs assessment.
- Added a new policy enacting regulations discouraging the redevelopment of existing mobile home parks to preserve the existing housing stock.

Economic Stability Element

- Included and “existing conditions” summary.
- Added a new policy encouraging “green” businesses that are less resource intensive.

Parks Recreation and Open Space Element

- Reinserted policy from the current (adopted) Comprehensive Plan to prioritize acquisition of park land and open space.
- Added a policy to explore opportunities to enhance non-motorized marine activities and infrastructure such as boat storage.
- Added a policy supporting a seasonal Island Transit shuttle in the Reserve.

Natural Systems

- Added a policy on measures to minimize conflicts between humans and wildlife, particularly deer.
- Added a group of new policies considering biophillic or green community planning approaches in Town Planning and design, including providing open space corridors and investments in nature-based infrastructure to address climate change, stormwater and other environmental and social challenges.
- Added a new goal and policies on tree and vegetation protection.
- Added a new policy on groundwater and surface water resources.
- Added a new policy on designating critical areas using performance standards and updated maps.

Transportation Element

- Added a new policy supporting the continued operation and expansion of Washington State Ferries to provide sustainable service to the island.
- Added a new policy to develop an ADA transition plan as required by local agencies.
- Added a new policy providing for safe and convenient non-motorized crossings along SR 20 on the eastern and western edges of Town to connect with regional trails.

Capital Facilities Element

- Added a new goal emphasizing coordination with other capital facility providers.
- Moved *Essential Public Facilities* discussion, goals and policies from the Land Use Element to the Capital Facilities Element.

Utilities Element

- Added a new section with background information on water and sewer.
- Added a policy to digitize/map the Town's inventory of existing utilities
- Added a policy to explore reduced utility connection fees for low income households and small infill development.

Volume II

Volume II comprises the appendices for Volume 1; mainly background information and back-up data intended to support the policies and goals in each element, including a review of public facilities needed to serve the community presently and in to the future, consistent with land use, transportation, parks, capital facilities and utilities elements. The list of appendices is comprised of the following:

- Appendix A: Land Use
- Appendix B: Historic Preservation and Community Design
- Appendix C: Housing

- Appendix D: Economic Stability
- Appendix E: Parks, Recreation and Open Space
- Appendix F: Natural Systems
- Appendix G: Transportation
- Appendix H: Capital Facilities
- Appendix I: Utilities

Options for the Planning Commission

The role of the Planning Commission is to take public input on the Draft Comprehensive Plan and to forward a recommendation to the Town Council. Staff recommends opening the public hearing on May 30th and keeping it open until June 27th to allow enough time for the following actions to occur:

- a. Completion and issuance of the environmental review checklist required under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).
- b. Completion of legal review by the Town's Attorney.
- c. More time for public to review the current version of the Draft Comprehensive Plan.

Upon closing the public hearing, the Planning Commission has the option to remand the document back to staff for further changes or to recommend approval with the suggested motion below.

Recommended Motion

Move to recommend to the Town Council to approve Ordinance No. 786 adopting the amended Coupeville Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Designation Map.

Note: The Town Council may choose to hold their own public hearing if desired.

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Draft Ordinance No. 786

Exhibit B: Draft Comprehensive Plan Update (Volumes I and II)

Exhibit C: Draft Future Land Use Map