

Amendment Element

Amending the Comprehensive Plan

King County and the City of Newcastle are required to review their Comprehensive Plans and development regulations at a minimum of every ten years. In addition, the GMA establishes that a governing body is generally not permitted to amend the Comprehensive Plan any more frequently than once a calendar year, except in cases of emergency

Proposed amendments must be consistent with the GMA and King County Countywide Planning Policies. In addition, proposed amendments must be reviewed relative to the plans of adjacent jurisdictions, and all proposed amendments proposed in any one year must be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of the various proposals can be determined. Under certain circumstances, amendments may be considered more frequently than once per year, such as:

The initial adoption of a subarea plan;

The adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program;

The amendment of the capital facilities element of the plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of the city budget;

To resolve an appeal of a Comprehensive Plan filed with a Growth Management Hearings Board or with the court.

Types of Amendments

For the Comprehensive Plan to function as an effective decision making document, it must be flexible enough to accommodate changes in public attitudes, developmental technologies, economic forces and legislative policy, yet focused enough to insure consistent application of development principals. The City of Newcastle allows consideration of three types of plan amendments:

Comprehensive Plan Review and Amendment: The Comprehensive Plan review is the conducted no less than every seven years. This review is conducted in response to the GMA requirement that the King County review its designated urban growth areas, and the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of each urban growth area. The Comprehensive Plan review examines the entire Plan, including a re-evaluation of goals, population projections, and land densities, and a review of land use, transportation, environmental, open space and parks, and community facility policies and proposals.

Annual Plan Review and Amendment: The second type of Comprehensive Plan review and amendment relates to site-specific requests and minor policy changes. In some cases, amendments to the Plan may be necessitated by amendments to the GMA or King County Countywide Planning Policies or changes in federal or state legislation. These types of plan amendments or development regulations may be undertaken once a year, and may be recommended by the City Council, Planning Commission, City staff, or citizen.

Emergency Plan Amendment Consideration: The Comprehensive Plan may be amended outside the normal schedule if findings are adopted (by City Council resolution) to show that the amendment was necessary, due to an emergency of a neighborhood or citywide significance. Plan and zoning amendments related to annexations may be considered during the normal annexation process and need not necessarily be coordinated with the annual plan amendment schedule. The nature of the emergency shall be explained to the City Council, which shall decide whether or not to allow the proposal to proceed ahead of the normal amendment schedule

The City requests that Comprehensive Plan amendment proponents provide the following information in their application for amendment:

- A statement of what is proposed to be changed and why.
- A statement of the anticipated impacts of the change, including geographic area affected and issues presented.
- A description of any changes to development regulations, modifications to capital improvement programs, subarea, neighborhood, and functional plans required for implementation so that regulations will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Review and Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

The review and Comprehensive Plan amendment process is developed to meet the requirements of ESHB 1724 and any revisions to RCW 36.70A. The annual review and amendment process provides an opportunity to refine and update the Comprehensive Plan and to monitor and evaluate the progress of the implementation strategies and policies incorporated therein. It directs the method by which the City, private property owners, developers, community groups, or individual citizens may request changes to the planned land uses on property or propose changes to the goals and polices of the Plan.

During the review and amendment process, the Planning Commission and City Council shall consider current development trends to determine the City's progress in achieving the goals established in the Comprehensive Plan. Information to be considered may include vacant land absorption, residential and economic development, number and types of housing units authorized by building permit, the affect of changes to adopted functional plans in the community, and activity levels in subdivision approvals, annexations, and building permits.

Other information that may be relevant to consider includes the current capacity status of major infrastructure systems for which levels of service have been adopted in the Comprehensive Plan and the levels of police and fire services being provided by the City. The process may also include monitoring of overall population growth and relative comparison with the forecast growth projections contained in the Comprehensive Plan.

Public Involvement

The annual review and amendment process requires public participation, both through community meetings to familiarize the public with the amendment proposals, as well as a formal public hearing before the City Council. Proposed plan amendments must be submitted to the State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (CTED) for review at least 60 days prior to final City Council adoption.

Implementation and Amendment Policies

The following policies are recommended to reflect the annual plan review and amendment process:

- IA-P1 The City of Newcastle's Community Development Department shall schedule annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, to consider the need for amendments. At that time, both City-initiated, and private party or developer-initiated amendment requests will be considered.
- IA-P2 All Comprehensive Plan amendments shall be processed together with any necessary zoning, subdivision or other ordinance amendment, to ensure consistency.
- IA-P3 Amendment procedures shall be fully outlined in the City of Newcastle's land development regulations.

Plan Review and Amendment Schedule

The plan amendment process is designated to be flexible and accommodate unique conditions. Comprehensive plan amendments submittals from the public are accepted throughout the year. Requests will be processed in accordance with the adopted regulations. The timing of the process is intended to conform to the following generalized schedule:

- June 1st City solicits public requests for Comprehensive Plan amendments.
- July 15th Deadline for submitting proposed amendments to the Department of Community Development.
- August Planning Commission culls the docket and forwards their recommendations to the City Council for their consideration.
- Oct/Dec City Council decides which proposed amendments should be considered and establishes a plan amendment schedule.
- Jan/Feb Planning Commission evaluates the proposed amendments and forwards their final recommendation to the City Council.
- March/April City Council reviews the recommendation, holds a public hearing, and decides on adoption of the proposed amendments.

The Planning Commission and the City Council shall consider all amendment proposals concurrently so that cumulative impacts can be determined.