

Comprehensive Plan

Introduction

Executive Summary

The purpose of the City of Newcastle's Comprehensive Plan is to provide a comprehensive statement of City goals and policies to focus, direct and coordinate the efforts of the departments within the City government. It is a basic source of reference for officials as they consider enactment of ordinances or regulations affecting the community's physical and economic development. The Comprehensive Plan communicates to the public and the City staff the policies of the City Council. It provides predictability to public and private sectors interested in the City of Newcastle.

In addition, the Comprehensive Plan provides an educative tool for the City Council, City Staff, the community and business interested in the visions, conditions and community affairs of the City of Newcastle. Although the planning time frame for this plan is twenty years, many of its policies and actions will affect the City of Newcastle well into the future.

The Comprehensive Plan has been designed to meet the following characteristics.

Comprehensive: *The Comprehensive Plan encompasses all the geographic and functional elements that have a bearing on the community's physical development.*

General: *The Comprehensive Plan summarizes the major policies and proposals of the City, but does not indicate specific locations or establish detailed regulation.*

Long Range: *The Comprehensive Plan looks beyond current pressing issues confronting the community, towards the community's future.*

One of the most important characteristics of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Comprehensive Plan is concurrency. Concurrency is the requirement that a jurisdiction must have infrastructure and facilities (i.e. transportation, sewer, water, police, fire, stormwater, schools, and parks and recreation) in place at the time or within six years of a development.

This requirement has more impact on the pace and type of development than any other requirement in City of Newcastle's Comprehensive Plan. If the City or a developer cannot provide adequate facilities as described, then the development cannot take place and the Comprehensive Plan must be reassessed. For its own expenditures for capital facilities over the next six years, the City must identify sources of funding and commit those funds to the projects for which they are intended.

Relationship to the Growth Management Act

Many of the day-to-day decisions made by City officials can have a significant impact on how the community develops and functions. A Comprehensive Plan coordinates and guides individual decisions in a manner that moves the community towards its overall goals.

RCW 36.70A.020 outlines the GMA goals with which the Comprehensive Plan must comply. They are as follows:

1. *Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.*
2. *Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.*
3. *Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city Comprehensive Plans.*
4. *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. *Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted Comprehensive Plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for 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. *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. *Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.*
8. *Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.*
9. *Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.*
10. *Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.*
11. *Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.*
12. *Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time of occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.*
13. *Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.*

Organization of the Comprehensive Plan

The City of Newcastle Comprehensive Plan (the Plan) is composed of three sections:

Section 1. Comprehensive Plan Introduction. This section includes a brief profile of the City of Newcastle, the City's visions for the future, an overview of each element and methods for implementing and amending the Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2. Comprehensive Plan Elements. This section includes seven elements each with a series of goals and policies that encompass the future visions for the City of Newcastle.

Section 3. Comprehensive Plan Appendix. This is a separate document that includes supporting data, maps and figures for each element identified in Section 2. The appendices are hereby adopted by reference.

Introduction

Community Profile

The City of Newcastle is located in the Puget Sound region of Washington State on the east side of Lake Washington. The City of Newcastle incorporated from King County in 1994. The City abuts Bellevue to the north and Renton to the south. The City straddles a steep-sided valley with two major drainage basins, Coal Creek and May Creek.

The City of Newcastle is home to approximately 8,205 residents. Based on many factors, including the type of residential development that may occur, the City has the physical capacity to accommodate around 15,000 residents. The land use plan anticipates a net increase of approximately 863 dwelling units, or 2,200 new residents within the twenty-year horizon of 2022.

The City of Newcastle's municipal boundaries and the City's minor potential annexation area (Urban Growth Boundary) are shown on the figures in the Land Use Appendix. The City's UGA has been designated in compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act and the King County Countywide Planning Policies.

History

The history of Newcastle is as rich as the veins of black coal and mines that lay beneath the City's ground. These mines, which were Seattle and King County's earliest large industry, formed the basis for transforming Seattle from a small but ambitious village in the 1860s into the dominant port city on Puget Sound by the 1880s. Prospectors and coal-miners worked the Newcastle Hills for 100 years, mining nearly 11 million tons of coal from under the surface of Cougar Mountain.

As a result, two mining towns grew from rural, agricultural villages to bustling company towns almost overnight: Old Newcastle and Coal Creek. The present City of Newcastle sits directly on the site of Old Newcastle. Between 1880 and 1890, the economy of Newcastle went the way of its mineral resource. The coal was relatively low quality compared with other coal producing areas of the United States and the Newcastle mines operated on a marginal economic basis throughout their history.

Union confrontations between 1880 and 1890 and the breaking of the unions later resulted in the deterioration of the coal mining industry. When the Pacific Coast Coal Company left in 1929, the coal dependent towns disappeared too. Except for abandoned mines and one miner's residence that is in near-original condition, little evidence remains of the two colorful communities, which once had as many as 600 houses between them

The City of Newcastle's Vision

The City of Newcastle's Comprehensive Plan responds to several layers of background data, policies, and plans. While the GMA, Vision 2020, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies provide an overall framework for the Comprehensive Plan, the foundation exists in the hopes and visions of the people whom it will directly affect.

Beginning in August of 1995, the City sponsored a public involvement process to insure that the City's Comprehensive Plan reflected a broad consensus of citizen input. A Steering Committee made up of members of the Planning Commission, City staff, and consultants met on a monthly basis to develop the visions, which reflected the characteristics and qualities distinctive to the City of Newcastle. The meetings were open to the public and input was sought from the citizens who attended the meetings. This process culminated the adoption of the original City of Newcastle Comprehensive Plan on June 16, 1997.

Discovered in the public "Visioning Process" were the characteristics of the City of Newcastle that its citizens hold dear. This vision forms the guiding principles for all of the policies contained in the original Plan. The City of Newcastle's vision remained unchanged during the 2002 Comprehensive Plan Update. The original City of Newcastle's vision is as follows:

- **The Setting:** The City of Newcastle is situated in the hills with distinct neighborhoods and a concentrated commercial center. The City's history of pioneering and coal mining is frequently reflected in architecture and art, as well as in social and community functions. These are qualities that have been preserved. The City has the feel of a small, healthy community, primarily single-family in nature, with an abundance of greenbelts and open space and a community center located in the new town square.
- **The Economy:** The City of Newcastle is a community offering its citizens a balance of local services from a wide variety of small businesses. The residents of Newcastle value the services offered within the commercial center for their routine needs and recreation. Although tax base and employment are important in a viable community, these factors alone have not driven the development of the economic sector. The citizens understand that to maintain the quality of a small town, some have to travel to nearby cities for work and the purchase of major goods.
- **The Social Fabric:** The City of Newcastle has striven towards diversity of people and an appreciation of the cultural backgrounds of its residents. The City has maintained distinct neighborhoods without exclusivity. A town square is located in the heart of the City, at the "crossroads," to serve as a focal point for community festivals, farmers' markets, and fairs. The community center forms the heart of this area, which is connected to the residential neighborhoods by a network of trails and parks.
- **Mobility:** The City of Newcastle has a transportation network that emphasizes pedestrian and bicycle trails connecting its neighborhoods, a small bus and taxi service providing public transportation within the City and a transit center providing access to the regional transit system. The transit center, located at the town square, serves as the hub of the City's transportation network. The City has reduced the congestion on Coal Creek Parkway through a combination of emphasizing alternative modes of transport and physical improvements to the streets.
- **Housing:** The City of Newcastle's housing provides a mix of housing types to serve a range of income and age groups. The quality of existing single-family neighborhoods has not been sacrificed as new growth occurred.
- **Heritage/Identity:** The City of Newcastle's residents are aware of their city's past and how important it is to their future. Design standards are established to ensure that new commercial development reflects the character and history of the

City of Newcastle. A museum at the community center informs people of the “original Newcastle”.

- **Public Facilities and Services:** The City of Newcastle has not overreached its ability to provide quality facilities, adequate City offices, and services to its citizens. This has required prudent fiscal management, efficient development and many compromises. The City competitively contracts for many of its services unless the City can provide them on a less costly basis. Because it has a limited tax base, a community center, transportation improvements and a trail system connecting parks and neighborhoods has been the primary focus of the capital facilities program. Volunteerism in a full array of programs helps the City cope with its public needs.

2002 Comprehensive Plan Update

The City began work on the current Comprehensive Plan Update in 2001. Over a two-year period, the Planning Commission, staff, consultant team and community members updated the data upon which the 1997 Comprehensive Plan was based, and incorporated new King County Buildable Lands data that became available. The Planning Commission reviewed the policy basis for the 1997 plan relative to the new information and made adjustments as necessary.

Several public open houses were held to inform the citizens of Newcastle about the Comprehensive Plan Update process and encouraged their participation. The overall vision identified was presumed to be valid, since the Comprehensive Plan process that produced the original plan was only five years old.

Comprehensive Plan Elements

The City of Newcastle’s Comprehensive Plan contains eight elements, which incorporate the Visions of Newcastle and specific issues relevant to future growth and development of the City. Each element begins with a general introduction and purpose for establishing goals and policies. The following descriptions are a brief overview of the information provided in each element.

The **Amendment Element** identifies the process and requirements for amending the Comprehensive Plan. 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 policies of the Plan.

The **Land Use Element** is the Comprehensive Plan’s guiding principle. This Element provides a long-term vision for the City of Newcastle based upon a strong family community with distinct neighborhoods, a diversity of housing types, a mixture of connecting trails and parks, and a small, thriving downtown. The Land Use Element also provides for the protection, enhancement and restoration of natural features that are distinctive of the City.

The Land Use Element also emphasizes several other themes:

Historic Preservation: The City of Newcastle’s history is unique and colorful. The Comprehensive Plan contains policies that focus on the development of an historic plan for the City. The Old Newcastle Townsite has been identified for protection. Criteria for the identification and designation of other historic and cultural sites have been included.

Community Business Center/Lake Boren Corridor: The Community Business Center/Lake Boren Corridor Master Plan (CBC/LBC) was adopted April 27, 2002. The Plan encourages the integration of Lake Boren, the Community Business Center and the high-density housing areas that surround these areas. The Land Use Element also includes policies that encourage more affordable, multifamily housing that will support transit and local businesses as well as various regulatory techniques and incentives to achieve affordable housing goals.

The **Housing Element** promotes the need for diverse and affordable housing, now and in the future. This Element designates appropriate areas for the location of multifamily housing, and promotes accessory housing density averaging, and other incentives to encourage infill. The Housing Element provides innovative policies for housing to meet the needs of residents over the next twenty years. All of the proposed multifamily housing will be located near the Community Business Center and on Coal Creek Parkway.

The **Transportation Element** describes the need for improvements to existing facilities and new facilities over the next twenty years. It encourages efficient land use and the use of transit facilities, trails, and sidewalks as alternatives to the automobile. The Transportation Element requires the majority of the City's future capital facilities expenditures. Coal Creek Parkway and other improvements represent a majority of these expenditures.

The **Parks, Trails, and Recreation Element** is an updated, expanded version of the Parks and Trails Plan first adopted in 1998. This element contains goals and policies that reflect the community's expectations for levels of service provided by the full range of park sizes, configurations, locations and improvements as well as similar standards for trails and recreation services. The Parks, Trails, and Recreation Element also contains implementation strategies in the form of future land acquisition, capital improvements, and interjurisdictional cooperation.

The **Economic Development Element** is a blueprint for actions that will stimulate business expansion and job creation opportunities within the City of Newcastle. This Element provides a framework for improving the City's future financial well being. This is in response to the anticipated adoption of the King County Countywide Planning Policies setting an employment target for the City as well the requirements of the 2002 GMA amendments.

The **Utilities Element** addresses utilities not owned or operated by the City of Newcastle. The goal and supporting policies emphasize coordinated utility planning, including co-location of utility lines in shared utility corridors. The City of Newcastle recommends that the aesthetics and safety of utility corridors be considered in their design and maintenance.

The **Capital Facilities Element** identifies the projected needs and costs for sewer, water, police, fire, and stormwater facilities in the Twenty-Year Capital Improvement Program. The City of Newcastle has made a commitment to minimize cost burden on the residents by contracting these public services to outside providers when economically advantageous. The Capital Facilities Element also includes the City's policies pertaining to the development of regional "essential public facilities" within the City.

Each Comprehensive Plan Element, with the exception of the Amendment Element, has a separate appendix that includes supporting data inventory, analysis, maps and figures. Additional information regarding related studies, surveys and the correlation of

each element to the King County Countywide Planning Policies can also be found in the Comprehensive Plan Appendix. The Appendices provide strategies for implementing the goals and policies of each element.

Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is implemented through the goals and policies it identifies to guide and coordinate local decision making. The GMA encourages innovative implementation methods that are both regulatory and nonregulatory. Regulatory actions may include the adoption of a zoning ordinance or other land use regulations, while nonregulatory actions include such methods as the adoption of a capital facilities plan. Some actions may involve a complicated series of related steps which themselves may need to be carefully planned (for example, improvements made to a major utility system). This section will describe these actions, plans, and measures necessary to implement this Plan.

Regulatory Measures

The GMA requires that local governments enact land development regulations that are consistent with and implement the Comprehensive Plan. In order to accomplish this, the existing development regulations should be reviewed for their consistency in order to identify where regulations must be amended or removed, or where new regulations should be drafted.

The zoning ordinance and zoning map must be consistent with the land use map and policies established in the plan. The land use map and land use policies in the Comprehensive Plan establish the use, density, and intensity of future development within the City.

As part of the update of the land use regulations, The City of Newcastle is obligated by ESHB 1724 adopted by the 1995 Legislature to combine project permitting and environmental reviews; consolidate appeals processes; and clarify the timing of the development of the review process.

Concurrency Management

A concurrency management system is a regulatory scheme that sets forth the procedures and processes used to determine whether public facilities have adequate capacity to accommodate a proposed development. The process also includes establishing the criteria by which the City determines whether individual development proposals are served by adequate public facilities, and establishing monitoring procedures to enable periodic updates of public facilities and services capacities. A concurrency management system also identifies the responses to be made by the City when it is determined that the proposal will exceed the level of service established, exceed the defined capacity, and fail to maintain concurrency.

Under the GMA, concurrency management must be established for transportation and capital facilities; however, jurisdictions may establish concurrency for any public facilities for which they have established level of service standards in their Comprehensive Plan. Level of service standards may be established for fire and emergency facilities, police, schools, sewer and water, transportation, and parks and recreational facilities and services. Following adoption of the City's 1997 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Newcastle adopted a concurrency management ordinance to address transportation concurrency.

Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan

The Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) sets out the capital projects that the City must undertake within the next six years in order to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The six-year schedule should be updated annually, with the first year of the schedule acting as the capital budget for the fiscal year. During the annual updating of the six-year schedule, the cost estimates and funding sources listed should be updated and revised to reflect any additional information that the City has received. The CIP and the twenty-year Capital Facilities Plan should also be revised to include any additional capital projects that are needed to maintain the City's adopted level of service standards.

Administrative Actions

The Comprehensive Plan includes policies that should be carried out through administrative actions, such as interlocal agreements, revised development and review procedures, and public involvement programs. Development and review procedures must be revised to implement concurrency and to ensure that new development complies with the performance standards established.

The Comprehensive Plan directs the City to publicize County and State initiatives, such as affordable housing programs, so that the City of Newcastle residents are able to take advantage of them. The City should establish a work program that prioritizes each of the Plan policies that must be implemented through administrative actions.

Public Involvement

As the City of Newcastle matures, the vision of the future will change and new needs and priorities will emerge. Continued public involvement and communication is crucial to keeping the process fresh and engaging so that the planning "wheel" does not have to be reinvented every few years. The City is obligated to coordinate many aspects of the plan with adjacent jurisdictions, which will also generate changes. The citizens of Newcastle must remain in touch with its implementation process.