Countywide Planning Policies

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The Role of the Countywide Planning Policies

- These countywide planning policies shall be the foundation for the Mason County Comprehensive Plan.
- As required by RCW 36.70A.120, all elements of the Comprehensive Plan and implementing regulations, including zoning maps, zoning regulations, and any amendments, shall be consistent with and implement these policies.
- As required by RCW 36.70A.120, all planning, land use permitting actions, and capital budgeting decisions shall be made in conformity with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
- The Mason County Comprehensive Plan shall reference and be coordinated with the following functional plans: Shoreline Master Plan, Drainage, Floodplain, Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Transportation, Watershed, Hazard Mitigation Plan, Puget Sound Action Plan, the functional plans of Schools and Special Districts and any other functional or subarea plans adopted by Mason County. All disputes over the proper interpretation of other functional plans and all implementing regulations, including zoning maps and zoning regulations, shall be resolved in favor of the interpretation which most clearly achieves Countywide Planning Policies.

  A definition section will be incorporated into the final Comprehensive Plan document with definitions for technical terms that are clearly articulated in Mason County Code or state or federal statutes. If a specific term is not defined or referenced, it takes its normal and customary meaning within the context of how it is used.

Table 1. Crosswalk - Countywide Planning Policies and Comprehensive Plan Chapter

Comprehensive Plan Element	Development Regulations	Countywide Planning Policy	Policy Statement
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.07; 17.10-17.17; 17.20-17.35; 17.70	#1 URBAN GROWTH	Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist, or which can be provided in an efficient manner.
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.02; 17.05; 17.70; 17.90	#2 REDUCE SPRAWL	Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
Chapter 6 Transportation	MCC Title 12	#3 TRANSPORTATION	Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
Chapter 4 Housing	MCC 17.11; 17.90	#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.
Chapter 5 Economic Development	MCC 2.78; 17.07; 17.24	#5 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	Encourage economic development throughout the County that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all residents of this County, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, support safe and healthy working environments and living wages, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the County's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.01	#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.
Chapter 3 Land Use & Chapter 5 Economic Development	MCC 15.05	#7 PERMITS	Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
Chapter 7 Rural	MCC 8.52; 17.02	#8 NATURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIES	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.
Chapter 3 Land Use, Chapter 7 Rural, & Chapter 8 Parks	MCC 16.23; 17.07; 17.10; 17.26	#9 OPEN SPACE	Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water develop new parks and recreation facilities and maintain existing.
Chapter 3 Land Use & Chapter 7 Rural	MCC 8.52 Resource Ordinance/Shorelines	#10 ENVIRONMENT	Protect the environment and enhance the County's high quality of life, including, but not limited to, air and water quality, and the availability of water.
See Public Involvement Plan	MCC 15.09.060	#11 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	Encourage the involvement of residents, property owners, and business owners in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

Chapter 9 Utilities	MCC Title 13, Title 6	#12 PUBLIC FACITILES 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.
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.40	#13 HISTORIC PRESERVATION	Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
Chapter 11 Climate Resilience and Hazard Mitigation		#14 CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY	Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.
See Mason County Shoreline Master Program	MCC 17.50	#15 SHORELINES OF THE STATE	For shorelines of the state, the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 shall be considered an element of the county's or city's comprehensive plan.

Introduction

This chapter presents the Countywide Planning Policies used to develop Mason County's Comprehensive Plan. The policies in this document are organized and numbered based on the fifteen goals adopted in Washington's State's Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) to guide counties and cities in the development and adoption of comprehensive plans. Table 1 shows which Chapter of the County Comprehensive Plan provides additional information, statistics, maps, and other detail related to each policy.

Planning Policies

Mason County's Comprehensive Plan addresses each of the fifteen GMA goals according to the vision shared by County residents. The following discussion identifies the Countywide Planning Policies for Mason County organized by the GMA goal they address.

1: URBAN GROWTH

GMA encourages concentrating development where adequate public facilities and services exist, or which can be provided within a reasonable amount of time. In conjunction with the City of Shelton, Mason County has adopted County-Wide Planning Policies (CWPP), some of which deal specifically with the issue of urban growth and are designed to ensure growth can be supported by adequate public infrastructure and services.

1.1. Maintain Urban Growth Areas around the incorporated City of Shelton and two unincorporated areas of Belfair and Allyn. Prioritize urban growth where infrastructure exists or is planned, as identified in an approved Capital Facilities Plan, or services can be reasonably and economically extended; where development does not conflict with natural resource uses; where there is a sufficient supply of developable land to support urban densities and urban growth forecasted for the 20-year planning cycle; and where the community's vision has identified its area as an Urban Growth Area.

1.2. Coordinate planning, zoning, and development standards in the Shelton Urban Growth Area with the City of Shelton to ensure consistency in development patterns, logical transition from urban to rural uses, adequate provision of infrastructure and services, and to facilitate annexation as envisioned in the Growth Management Act.

1.3. Mixed-use developments, multi-family developments, employment centers, and other urban land uses are encouraged within designated Urban Growth Areas to make efficient use of urban-level infrastructure and services and to protect rural character in the remainder of the County.

1.4. Encourage development in Urban Growth Areas where:

- infrastructure exists or is planned; or

- infrastructure is provided by the developer according to locally established minimum urban standards.

1.5. Encourage development in Urban Growth Areas where:

- services, such as public transit, emergency response, fire protection, schools, and other public services, have adequate capacity; or
- services can be expanded through County action or via private investment from the developer.

2: REDUCE SPRAWL

GMA discourages the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low density development. Several of Mason County's CWPPs are designed to reduce the impacts of growth, including sprawl, in areas outside of Urban Growth Areas. Rural areas now exist throughout Mason County and contribute to a large measure of the quality of life enjoyed by residents. These areas are characterized by low housing densities, wilderness and recreational living opportunities, and open space. Other rural qualities include tranquility, low traffic volumes, natural views, privacy, and rural enterprise.

2.1. Designate rural areas in Mason County. Rural areas include those portions of the County that lie outside designated growth areas, master planned communities, homeowner's associations, and destination resorts, and may have lower standards of infrastructure and service that reflect and maintain this rural character. Intensive development is discouraged in these rural areas due to the difficulty of providing cost-effective services and because rural areas are character-defining features of Mason County.

2.2. Rural development and accompanying water availability, including permit exempt wells, shall be consistent with protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater recharge.

2.3. Protect the County's rural character, lifestyles, and values.

2.4. Establish Level of Service standards, timely development of essential infrastructure and provision of services, and adherence to design standards for rural and urban areas.

2.5. Establish a rural land use system that provides for continued vitality of activity centers that may become Urban Growth Areas or incorporated communities. The categories of these areas include rural activity centers, hamlets, commercial centers, industrial areas, and tourist and recreational areas.

3: TRANSPORTATION

GMA encourages the development of efficient, multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and are coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

3.1. Coordinate multimodal transportation systems with neighboring counties, Tribes, and the City of Shelton to encourage efficiency and align transportation with regional priorities.

3.2. Establish Level of Service standards that encourage densities in Urban Growth Areas where services such as public transit, sidewalks, car-pooling, etc., are available.

3.3. Establish multimodal Level of Service standards, timely development of essential infrastructure, and adherence to design standards for rural and Urban Growth Areas.

3.4. Protect functions of designated high-volume corridors by restricting individual access points.

3.5. Promote safety and security for the multimodal transportation system.

3.6. Promote interconnecting street networks which provide alternative efficient routes.

3.7. Develop policies and encourage use of varied multi-modal transportation alternatives that support health and wellbeing through physical activity by providing bikeways, sidewalks, trails, public transit, and system connectivity as appropriate to location and terrain, especially in Urban Growth Areas, and accommodating the young, aging, and disabled.

3.8. Ensure that cooperative planning efforts continue with the Peninsula Regional Transportation Policy Organization and the County's Citizen Advisory Panel on the Transportation Improvement Program, and that policies of the County and the organization are consistent and coordinated, with the Comprehensive Plan as the guiding document for Mason County.

3.9. The County and the City and Urban Growth Area should work cooperatively with the Mason County Transit Authority (MCTA) to provide equitable public transit throughout the County.

3.10. Local and County transportation plans should consider non-motorized methods of transportation, in addition to rail, marine, and aviation transportation as an integral part of the area's transportation system.

3.11. Incorporate technological advances into transportation systems planning by encouraging coordination among jurisdictions and Mason County Transit where feasible and applicable.

3.12. Encourage the development of transportation funding resources that support land use goals and strategies.

3.13. Protect transportation assets through proper operations, maintenance, and preservation activities to provide safe, efficient, and reliable movement of people, goods, and services.

4: HOUSING

GMA requires the County to make adequate provision for affordable housing to all economic segments of the population, promotes a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourages the preservation of existing housing stock.

4.1. Incentivize affordable housing, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, with a diversity of both rental and homeownership options, and encourage the preservation of existing housing stock.

4.2. Coordinate processes for supporting affordable housing between Mason County and the City of Shelton. Define and establish the need for affordable housing countywide through creation of a collaborative City/County Housing Plan that provides for a mix of housing types for housing at all income levels.

4.3. Encourage affordable housing through innovation including infill housing incentives, variety of lot sizes, mixed use, multifamily units, and density bonuses for affordable units. Selecting innovative techniques to support affordable housing should meet other Countywide Planning Policies for urban and rural development.

4.4. Encourage affordable housing in rural areas by utilizing the supply of existing smaller lots which can meet applicable development regulations; by ensuring the lots retain their conforming status, and by allowing manufactured housing, mobile homes, micro or tiny homes and other options in both urban and rural areas.

4.5. Encourage the preservation of historic structures for use as, or conversion to, single or multi-family housing.

4.6. As part of a comprehensive program to address affordability, eliminate barriers to construction of affordable housing in local regulations and policies. Prior to adoption of any new ordinance or regulation affecting homebuilding, evaluate the impact on the provision of affordable housing options.

4.7. Affordable housing for households making below 80 percent of the Area Median Income should be focused within the City of Shelton and unincorporated Urban Growth Areas with convenient access to public transportation, major employment centers, and public services.

4.8. Assess affordable housing needs in both urban and rural contexts and develop strategies to address housing affordability that reflect local definitions of affordable housing, urban and rural values, cost and availability of land, infrastructure cost and availability, the capacity of public services, private property rights, and broad-based public involvement.

4.9. Housing plans and policies should prevent or mitigate the physical, economic, and cultural displacement of low-income households due to planning, public investments, private development, and market pressures.

5: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GMA encourages economic development that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promotes economic opportunity for all residents of the County, especially for unemployed and disadvantaged persons, promotes safe and healthy working conditions for all, and encourages growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the County's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

5.1. Encourage economic development throughout the County that is consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan and promote economic opportunity for all residents of the County, especially for unemployed and disadvantaged persons, including encouraging investment in areas experiencing slower economic growth, all within the capacities of Mason County's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

5.2. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries including productive timber, agriculture, aquaculture, mining, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive natural resources or potentially productive natural resources and discourage incompatible uses. Assure that adjacent land uses do not contribute to the demise of the long-

term commercially productive resource extraction and agricultural lands and the resource-based industries associated with these areas. Support natural resource-based industries to shift towards more sustainable and regenerative practices in the context of a changing climate.

5.3. Establish coordinated incentives to promote economic development consistent with Vision Statements and Goals for each Urban Growth Area.

5.4. Promote economic development activities where services needed by such activities already exist or can be easily and economically provided. Coordinate with service providers to review economic development activities as early as possible.

5.5. Promote economic development where off-site impacts, such as transportation, can be effectively managed.

5.6. In environmentally sensitive areas, ensure land use permit processes control activities that may have a detrimental effect on public health, safety, or the environment, consistent with state and federal requirements.

5.7. Increase economic vitality in Mason County by stimulating the creation of jobs in tourism, trades, and other areas that provide livable wages in safe and healthy work environments and that promote economic diversity, stabilization, and maintenance of a high-quality environment.

5.8. Support school district, post-secondary, and higher education efforts including vocational education training, and education of a highly trained, technically skilled, multilingual population that aligns with key economic development opportunities and industry sectors.

5.9. Facilitate investment in tourism by prioritizing establishment of hotels, event centers, and other tourist facilities within the Urban Growth Areas.

6: PROPERTY RIGHTS

GMA states, "Property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions. Further, private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made."

6.1. Non-conforming uses, structures, and parcels shall be allowed alterations and expansions when appropriate.

6.2 If private property must be acquired for public purposes, provide fair and market-based compensation negotiated during the acquisition process.

7: PERMITS

Both GMA and Mason County express that applications for land use and planning permits be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

7.1. Applications for permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

8: RESOURCE INDUSTRIES

GMA recommends Counties maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries including productive timber, agriculture, aquaculture, mining, and fisheries industries, and encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and provide mitigation opportunities for incompatible uses.

8.1. Maintain an inventory of productive or potentially productive natural resource and agricultural lands and ensure ongoing regulatory protections for those lands.

8.2. Discourage the siting of incompatible land uses near natural resources, agricultural lands, and aquaculture farms.

8.3. Provide mitigation for incompatible land uses sited near natural resources and agricultural lands.

9: OPEN SPACE

GMA encourages the retention of open space and the development of recreational opportunities. GMA further encourages conservation of fish and wildlife habitat, and increased access to natural resource lands, water, and developed parks. GMA also requires mapping of open space corridors, with consideration given to habitat connectivity across jurisdictions.

9.1. Designate and map open space areas in coordination with the City of Shelton and unincorporated Urban Growth Areas. Criteria for designation shall include:

- provides multiple use open space
- environmentally unique and/or fragile
- separates incompatible land uses
- consistency with the UGA's vision statement
- traditional cultural places and landscapes

9.2. Provide accessible public open space and protect environmentally important areas without compromising private property rights and treaty rights.

9.3. Identify and prioritize open space areas, both urban and rural, for protection through acquisition, conservation easements, life estates, conveyance to a land trust, and/or another method of conservation. Assure that private property rights and treaty rights are protected.

9.4. Encourage increased access to publicly owned natural resource lands. Protect existing public access to shorelines and water. Encourage acquisition of lands to provide additional public shoreline and water access, especially in underserved areas.

9.5. Encourage retention/maintenance of open space and the development of recreational opportunities like parks and public-use recreation areas.

9.6. Create public and community access to land for the purpose of growing food.

10: ENVIRONMENT

GMA strives to protect the environment and enhance the quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

10.1. To protect public health and water quality, septic systems and/or appropriate alternative disposal systems will be installed where appropriate in rural areas, according to adopted County health codes. Alternative sewage collection and treatment systems should be considered as an option when public health is in jeopardy, and/or to correct environmental damage and when consistent with land use designations in the Comprehensive Plan. Development permits and/or franchises for sewage treatment systems should be granted when consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

10.2. Mason County and the City of Shelton shall protect drinking water supplies from contamination, ensure that water for development is both legally and physically available, and identify and reserve future supplies.

10.3. In environmentally sensitive areas, ensure land use permit processes control activities that may have a detrimental effect on public health, safety, environment, and physical integrity of the area consistent with state and federal requirements.

10.4. Encourage water reuse and reclamation for large-scale potable water users, such as golf courses, parks, and schools.

10.5. Consider the use of low impact development management strategies for land use and stormwater management for protecting water quality.

10.6. Discourage the siting of incompatible land uses in and near natural resources and critical areas as defined by WAC 365-190-030 as well as agriculture lands defined by RCW 84.34.

10.7. Plan for and implement clean up of Mason County's contaminated sites.

11: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

GMA encourages the involvement of residents, property owners, and business owners in the planning process and coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

11.1. Encourage the widespread community involvement in the planning process and coordinate between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

11.2. Mason County and the City of Shelton will maintain joint procedures for review of land development activities within the City's Urban Growth Area.

11.3. Ensure public participation is widespread to community members.

12: FACILITIES/SERVICES

GMA strives to ensure that public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time of occupancy without decreasing the level of service provided.

12.1. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development are adequate to serve the development at the time of occupancy without decreasing current levels below locally established minimum standards. Consider assessing development fees in the form of environmental mitigation fees or impact fees for public services.

12.2. Mason County and the City of Shelton, shall maintain a cooperative regional process to site essential public facilities of regional and statewide importance. Such facilities will be located to protect environmental quality, optimize access and usefulness to all jurisdictions, and equitably distribute benefits and burdens throughout the region or county.

12.3. Major public facilities that generate substantial travel demand should be sited along or near major transportation and public transit corridors.

12.4. Sharing of corridors for major utilities, trails, and other transportation rights of way is encouraged.

12.5. Advance waste reduction efforts through support of state and federal programs, public information and education programs, and other available, appropriate methods.

13: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

GMA states that jurisdictions should, "identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical, cultural, or archeological significance".

13.1. Support the efforts of the Mason County Historic Preservation Commission created to identify and actively encourage the conservation of Mason County's historic resources (MCC 17.40).

13.2. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archeological significance through enforcement of regulations that implement the State's goals and objectives for historic preservation at the local level.

13.3. Consult with Tribes and other government entities to ensure the protection of archeologically and culturally significant lands, sites, and structures.

14: CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESILIENCY

GMA requires jurisdictions to ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies and plans address climate change and natural hazards, foster resiliency, advance environmental justice, and protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health in the face of a changing climate.

14.1. Continue coordinated hazard mitigation and community resilience planning efforts with the City of Shelton, Public Utility Districts 1 and 3, all fire districts serving Mason County and other interested agencies.

14.2. Plan for and consider the impacts of climate change on communities and industries in Mason County, including sea level rise, flooding, wildfires, and extreme weather events, on both existing and new development. Prioritize mitigating the impacts on vulnerable populations and overburdened communities within the planning period.

14.3. Support efforts to increase the resilience of public services and infrastructure, including transportation, utilities, emergency response, and others, by preparing for disasters and coordinating planning for continuity of operations, infrastructure and system recovery.

15: SHORELINES OF THE STATE

GMA strives to implement the Shoreline Management Act through consistency with a local Shoreline Master Program.

15.1. Implement the Mason County or City Shoreline Master Program, as necessary.