

Introduction to Community Planning

Pierce County Department of Planning and Land Services



INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to explain the inter-related nature of land use planning in Pierce County and the role that Washington State, surrounding counties, cities and towns and other agencies play in the development of a county-wide comprehensive plan and individual community plans. The following information should provide you with the basic knowledge you need to begin work on developing visions and policies to guide the future of your community and implementation steps to ensure those visions and policies become a reality.

GMA AND THE PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

INTRODUCTION

In 1990, the State Legislature enacted the Growth Management Act (GMA) which initiated and required the development of rational policies to manage growth in Washington State. All urban counties and their cities and towns were required to develop comprehensive plans and regulations to implement those plans. Plans must address issues in land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, utilities, and rural lands, and must guide development and accommodate the population growth forecast for the next 20 years.

The Pierce County Comprehensive Plan was produced by and for its citizens. The first draft was created by the Pierce County Citizens' Advisory Group in a thorough, grass-roots public process. Review and revision of the draft has involved the Pierce County Planning Commission, the County Council, and the County Executive, with much technical assistance from Planning and Land Services (PALS). The review has generated enormous public involvement, including television programs, public testimony, and letters. The Plan integrates citizens' ideas, concerns and preferences into statements of how the County should be developed, what development regulations should accomplish, what facilities and services levels are needed, and how publicly funded improvements should support these objectives. The policies of the Comprehensive Plan articulate a vision of Pierce County. Citizens and development interests will use the Plan to guide their design and location decisions as they plan for improvements. Although the Plan looks only 20 years into the future, the values and objectives expressed in the Plan extend beyond the 20-year planning horizon to future generations. The Plan is intended to be reviewed regularly to consider possible changes in conditions or the vision of the County's citizens.

WHY PLAN?

State law requires that Pierce County develop a Growth Management Plan, and includes enforcement provisions such as court orders and withholding of state funds to ensure the job is done. Without a growth management plan, Pierce County could be vulnerable to challenges from cities and towns, businesses, and a variety of citizens and groups, ranging from people who want certain development to those who want to prevent development. In any case, the public would pay the bill, either through taxes or by reduced levels of County services.

The dollar cost is significant, but only a fraction of what you lose if Pierce County doesn't plan. The real costs will fall on our children. We know that Pierce County population is going to grow and expect roughly 200,000 more people in the next 20 years. These people, some your own children and grandchildren, will require housing, jobs, and public services like roads, sewer, water, and police. Unless Pierce County can reasonably "manage" this growth, can coordinate it so all the needed services are in the right places at the right time, new development is likely to be haphazard, far below the quality of life we expect for ourselves.

Sure, some people fight growth management because they fear limits on what they can do with their own property, or they worry about changing existing procedures. Their concerns raise good discussions and help influence the Plan. But, what really happens to Pierce County if there is no growth management? With no growth management planning, you can anticipate that:

- A. Uncontrolled growth sprawls, engulfing rural fields and vistas. Building occurs "out" in rural areas where the property is cheaper. Because development is spread out, the resulting public costs of providing services like roads, transit, sewer, and police are extraordinarily high, and the taxpayer must fund the large projects.
- B. When our unique forests, streams, and farmland become dotted and then covered with development, they are gone, permanently. Those people who moved onto them to enjoy them have essentially eliminated them. Also, certain impacts to the environment continue to multiply over the years. For example, as more buildings and parking lots obstruct aquifer recharge, all those who rely on groundwater could face regular shortages.
- C. With no comprehensive plan, property owners may be quite free to decide what they want to do with their own property, but they are also susceptible to what other property owners do. Consequently, industrial or high density development may pop up next to residential areas. Farmers have to deal with nearby homeowners who don't like smelly farm practices. Too much building upstream augments flooding downstream. Schools are so busy trying to deal with rapid growth that children end up in makeshift, crowded classrooms.
- D. The development environment would be increasingly unpredictable. It becomes more difficult for citizens to plan for use of their land, make business and financial decisions, or to feel they are being treated fairly, since the availability of public services (when, where, and what cost) would be uncertain.

- E. When an efficient transit system and road system is impossible, we are left with traffic jams. People might need to allow hours to commute to and from work or shopping.
- F. When business and industry can't find property with the services they need at a cost they can afford, they simply go to other areas where their needs are better met. With the loss of such businesses, we miss out on good-paying jobs, leaving fast food and convenience stores as perhaps the best career opportunities in Pierce County. Low incomes thwart people's ability to build a comfortable life.
- G. The quality of life that we treasure and seek is gone. Frustration with government increases.

Why do we need to do a growth management plan? Although there are roughly 200,000 new residents expected in the next two decades, there are over 700,000 of us here today. The Plan must preserve and provide a basis for improving the quality of our lives as well as accommodating new residents. We, as citizens, need a Plan to protect and improve our lives, today and tomorrow. Pierce County government is responsible for regulating land use, levying taxes, and cooperating with other governments; consequently, the County must develop, adopt, and implement a growth management plan. To do any less would be irresponsible, not to mention outside the law. With no Plan, the County essentially encumbers enormous costs in the future, and also destroys the best thing we have going for us -- the fact that the Northwest, with many amenities, is a good place to live.

LEGISLATION THAT INFLUENCES THE PLAN

Some of the elements of the Plan must be developed within the parameters of existing state and federal laws. The plans and laws most significantly affecting policy recommendations are described below.

- A. **Growth Management Act.** The GMA (RCW 36.70A) and related state planning guidelines (WAC 365-195) have guided the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. The GMA outlined 13 goals for the development of a comprehensive plan. Each goal, viewed as equally important in Pierce County, must be furthered by the growth management strategies in the Plan. Since strict interpretation of some goals would appear to create conflict, the process of reviewing and debating the County's Plan has allowed Pierce County citizens to evaluate how they want to balance and obtain these goals. The 13 GMA planning goals include:
 - 1. **Urban Growth.** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
 - 2. **Reduce Sprawl.** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
 - 3. **Transportation.** Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

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.
 5. **Economic Development.** 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. **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.
 7. **Permits.** Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
 8. **Natural Resources Industries.** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
 9. **Open Space and Recreation.** Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.
 10. **Environment.** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
 11. **Citizen Participation and Coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
 12. **Public Facilities 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.
 13. **Historic Preservation.** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- B. County-Wide Planning Policies.** The Growth Management Act of 1990 (GMA) mandated consistency between the County Comprehensive Plan and the comprehensive plans of all the municipalities within the County, without stating how consistency was to be achieved. In 1991, the State legislature amended the GMA (RESHB 1025) to require that the legislative body of the County adopt county-wide planning policies in cooperation with all cities and towns in the County. County-wide planning policies establish guidelines and a framework from which county and municipal comprehensive plans are to be developed and adopted, though they are not substitutes for objectives, policies and standards.

Eleven policy areas are covered by the County-Wide Planning Policies: affordable housing; agricultural lands; economic development; education; historic, archaeological and cultural preservation; natural resources, open space and protection of environmentally sensitive lands; siting of public capital facilities of a county-wide or state-wide nature; transportation facilities and strategies; urban growth areas; and amendments and transition. The development of the County-Wide Planning Policies, through the Pierce County Steering Committee, which evolved into the Pierce County Regional Council, was an historic effort involving cooperation among the County and its 18 incorporated towns and cities. The *County-Wide Planning Policies for Pierce County* was adopted in June of 1992 by the Pierce County Council and by the cities and towns. The County-Wide Planning Policies were amended in April 1996, to establish minimum urban standards for urban development (e.g., sidewalks, streetlights, etc.), in December 1996 to establish criteria for designating centers, and in April 2004 to update the centers.

- C. Multi-County Planning Policies.** The GMA also required the development of multi-county planning policies for the Central Puget Sound Region of King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. The *Multi-County Planning Policies*, developed as part of *VISION 2020*, describe regional objectives for issues that cross county boundaries and need to be met to achieve inter-jurisdictional consistency. The *Multi-County Planning Policies* were adopted in March of 1993 by the General Assembly of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) as an amendment to *VISION 2020*.

Multi-County Planning Policies cover the same topics required of the county-wide planning policies. Open space linkages, resource protection, and critical areas, identified as important issues in the GMA, were also included because of their regional importance and the impossibility of achieving them without the inter-county collaboration.

- D. Other Regional Considerations.** Pierce County has adopted or endorsed other regional planning efforts with the intent that they would impact the content of the County's Comprehensive Plan. The Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), completed with local military facilities and the Nisqually River Management Plan (NRMP) include policies that affect County planning.

CENTRAL PUGET SOUND GROWTH MANAGEMENT HEARINGS BOARD (CPSGMHB)

The Washington State legislature created the three independent boards in 1991 to “hear and determine” allegations that a city, county, or state agency has not complied with the goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act, related provisions of the Shoreline Management Act, and the State Environmental Policy Act. Because disputes often center on conflicting views of the meaning of various GMA provisions, a board may need to interpret the Act, clarifying ambiguities and reconciling apparent internal conflicts. In the past ten years the CPSGMHB has

decided various cases which involve appropriate urban and rural densities and the sizing of urban growth areas.

THE PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Pierce County Comprehensive Plan was written to be readable, show a logical connection between problems, facts, and recommended solutions, and to comply with the Growth Management Act by:

- A. Being consistent with the goals and mandates of the Act and procedural criteria of Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 365-195;
- B. Being internally consistent; and
- C. Being consistent with the County-Wide Planning Policies, Multi-County Planning Policies, state goals, and state mandates.

ORGANIZATION

- A. The Plan consists of a total of nine elements. The GMA prescribes six specific elements that must be contained in a comprehensive plan:
 - 1. Land Use;
 - 2. Rural Lands;
 - 3. Housing;
 - 4. Transportation;
 - 5. Utilities; and
 - 6. Capital Facilities.
- B. In addition, in the interest of the County, the Pierce County Council added three important elements:
 - 1. Economic Development;
 - 2. Environment, including Historic Preservation; and
 - 3. Community Plans.
- C. Finally, a section on Essential Public Facilities is included as required by the GMA.
- D. The policies contained within each element are the heart of the Plan. Each element presents part of the picture for guiding Pierce County's growth. However, the Land Use Element contains pieces of all the elements, providing the overall picture and the interconnections among the other elements.

E. Each element is organized as follows:

1. **Introduction and Background Information:** Specific conditions, history and issues.
2. **State Goals and Mandates:** The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) and associated state regulations (WAC 365-195).
3. **County Mandates:** Policy directives mandated for inclusion in the Plan by Pierce County ordinance or resolution. Specific policy documents include: County-Wide Planning Policies, Multi-County Planning Policies of *VISION 2020*, Nisqually River Management Plan, and Joint Land Use Study.
4. **Policies:** Policy statements upon which future development regulations will be based. Policies can be distinguished as objectives, principles and standards. **Objectives** are statements of what is desired to be achieved in the future or statements of what conditions should exist in the community. **Principles** set a particular course of action to accomplish objectives. **Standards**, quantitative or qualitative, are specific benchmarks or targets to be accomplished in the ongoing development of the County. All of the policy statements were developed through citizen comment and represent the will of people translated into decision oriented statements.

Objectives, principles and standards are identified first by a notation showing the element associated with them, followed by a number corresponding to the objective and the place of the principle or standard in supporting the objective.

PLAN AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the Plan will be necessary, from time to time, in response to monitoring and evaluation and/or changing conditions or needs of Pierce County citizens. The process for initiating amendments will follow statutory requirements expressed in the Planning Enabling Act (RCW 36.70 and 36.70A) and the State Environmental Policy Act, SEPA (RCW 43.21), which is the same process used in adopting the Plan itself. Proposed amendments to the Plan will receive, at a minimum, public review by the Planning Commission and the County Council. At both the Council and Planning Commission levels, review of proposed amendments requires adequate public notice and a public hearing for public comments. Proposed amendments must be adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan and may require corresponding changes to development regulations.

In considering proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, any proposals will be evaluated for intent and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, the Pierce County County-Wide Planning Policies, the Multi-County Planning Policies expressed in *VISION 2020*, adopted implementation measures, and the capacity within urban growth areas to adequately meet projected County needs. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan may be considered no more than once each year. All proposed amendments must be considered concurrently so that

the cumulative effect of various proposals can be ascertained.

POLICIES THAT ENCOMPASS THE ENTIRE PLAN

Each element of the Plan contains the policies that will guide Pierce County's development in regard to that aspect of growth. However, in the final review and consideration of the County Plan, it became apparent that there are County policies integral to Pierce County's entire planning effort -- general policies that are a foundation for the policies enumerated throughout the Plan. This Chapter describes these policies.

- A. Pierce County shall plan for efficient and cost effective delivery of services. The County strategy for efficient services over the 20-year Plan horizon is to concentrate infrastructure investments in employment centers to compensate for an existing low job base.
- B. Pierce County's planning should strengthen all communities and cities and towns by holistically addressing the issues, resources, and needs that make a community a satisfying place to live and work. Topics addressed include land use, transit, health, human services, natural environment, and the provision of infrastructure and other services.
- C. Pierce County shall promote a strong and diverse economy for Pierce County residents through policies and programs that provide employment centers with all necessary services and promote new business opportunities, increase family wage jobs, and create a predictable regulatory environment for businesses and citizens. Sustainable economic development efforts will focus on providing all communities with a balance of jobs and housing, helping communities with redevelopment or new economic initiatives, and exploring public and private partnerships.
- D. Pierce County should recognize and protect local neighborhood character and values.
- E. Pierce County shall actively inform and involve citizens in all stages of Plan development, implementation, monitoring, and revision.
- F. Pierce County's planning shall be conducted at several levels, including multi-county, county-wide, subarea, and local. Working with cities and towns and special districts as planning partners, the County shall strive to balance the differing needs identified across or within plans at these different levels.
- G. Pierce County shall rely primarily upon cities and towns and special purpose districts as providers of local facilities and services appropriate to serve those local needs, except where the County is the local service provider.
- H. During the development of regulations to support the Comprehensive Plan, Pierce County, in conjunction and discussion with cities and towns, shall develop a variety of incentives and strategies to attract development to urban areas.
- I. Pierce County shall identify quantifiable goals to measure the outcomes of the County Comprehensive Plan and will monitor progress toward achieving these goals. For example, measuring the amount of vacant land used for new growth each year and how

dense the growth is on this land affords a picture of how quickly and efficiently that vacant land supply is being used.

PLAN OVERVIEW

The Plan guides Pierce County's efforts to protect public health and safety while maintaining a high quality of life and enhancing community character, natural beauty and environmental quality. This is accomplished by indicating where new housing, shopping, and economic development should be encouraged and where open space, rural areas, farmlands, and forested lands should be protected. It distinguishes urban areas from rural areas and places the emphasis for growth in geographic areas where adequate public facilities and services can be provided in an efficient and economic manner. It attempts to ensure an adequate supply of land to meet immediate and future urban needs, as well as provide for an orderly and efficient transition from low-intensity land use to urban land use over time. The plan concept also provides the framework for protecting and preserving forested lands and agricultural uses. It creates the conditions which further the possible growth and expansion of these and other industries, and the income and employment associated with them. Finally, the Plan attempts to conserve open space, protect wildlife habitat and sensitive areas, maintain and improve the quality of air, water, and land resources, as well as preserve the character of both urban and rural areas.

Urban Growth Areas

An Urban Growth Area (UGA) is defined by a boundary which is intended to graphically show the separation of lands expected to be urban from those lands expected to be rural or devoted to mining, forestry, or agriculture. Each city and town within the County must fall within an urban growth area. Additionally, local jurisdictions or residents cannot initiate an annexation proposal unless the area is within a designated urban growth area. The Pierce County Council has sole authority to designate an urban growth area(s) for cities and towns.

Most new housing and jobs will locate within the Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) in the County, and most public spending for facilities, services, and open space is to be focused there to promote efficient use of public improvements and services and to enhance community diversity and livability. The UGAs include incorporated cities and towns and contain most of Pierce County's population and economic base.

The growth pattern envisioned within the UGAs consists of Commercial and Employment Centers and a diversity of residential areas. In order to support efficient urban services and provide affordable housing choices, higher density residential development is encouraged in portions of the UGAs with vacant, buildable land and adequate facilities and services.

- Areas planned for growth at a range of urban residential densities, where urban public facilities and services are, or will be available, are designated Urban.

- Most new population and employment growth will locate within the UGAs.
- Residential development in the UGAs will include a full range of single and multi-family housing types.
- The overall density of the UGAs will be high enough to support efficient urban services and provide affordable housing choices at a variety of densities based on landform, environmental suitability, and the availability or planned availability of facilities and services.

While the Growth Management Act was silent on the details of urban density, and sizing and analyzing the sufficiency of urban growth areas, local planning policies and decisions by the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) have established specific guidance on some of these issues. A few of their conclusions as related to urban growth areas and urban densities include:

- Counties must “show their work” when designating urban growth areas. The urban growth areas are required to accommodate only the projected urban population with the 20 year planning horizon. Jurisdictions should conduct a residential population capacity analysis to show the correlation between the size of their urban growth area and respective 20-year urban population project.
- An oversupply (safety factor) of developable land within an urban growth area is reasonable. A safety factor helps maintain real estate sales competition and is intended to assure continued affordability of land. If a safety factor exceeds 25 percent of the needed capacity and is brought before the CPSHB, the CPSHB will scrutinize the justification in its decision.
- Lands within urban growth areas are to be developed as compact, urban communities. Residential densities of four dwelling units per acre (du/acre) or greater are considered compact urban development. Densities below four du/acre, absent a clear and compelling reason, would result in sprawl. The most common justification for a lower density is to protect the function and values of a complex system of critical areas.
- Just because unincorporated lands today contain urban growth on them does not necessarily mean that they should be included within a UGA. Instead counties must examine how a UGA designation for such lands would achieve the transformation of local governance within the UGA such that cities are, in general, the primary providers of urban governmental services, and will achieve compact urban development.

Pierce County and its cities and towns documented its residential capacity information in the *Pierce County Buildable Lands Report* which was released in September 2002. Within this

report it was determined that the unincorporated urban growth areas had an excess supply of urban land for residential purposes.

Rural Areas

Within Rural Areas, low to moderate densities that require rural service levels will be allowed; rural activities such as farming, forestry and other appropriate industries will be encouraged; and rural character will be preserved. Designating Rural Areas will conserve the County's capital facility expenditures, maintain a pastoral character as a valued part of Pierce County's diversity, provide choice in living environments, and retain a link to Pierce County's history. Rural Areas are to contain diverse housing opportunities, through a mix of large lots and clustering. Rural Centers will provide for commercial growth in Rural Areas and senior or group homes which could provide assisted living for persons who are elderly or disabled.

Land outside of an Urban Growth Area will remain in rural land uses, where rural public facility and service standards apply.

- Long-term Rural Areas with low residential densities and appropriate public improvements and services to provide for a rural lifestyle and protect rural character will be maintained.
- The primary use in Rural Areas will be low density residential development, except in Rural Centers.
- Rural Areas also may accommodate resource-based economic uses compatible with a rural character and a rural level of public facilities and services, such as farming, forestry, extractive industries, recreation, and tourism.

While the Growth Management Act was silent on the details of rural density, local planning policies and decisions by the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) have established specific guidance on some of these issues. A few of their conclusions as related to rural densities and development:

- A pattern of 10 acre lots is clearly rural and, as a general rule, a new land use pattern that consists of between 5- and 10-acre lots is an appropriate rural use.
- A pattern of 1- and 2.5-acre lots meets the Act's (GMA) definition of urban...However, a pattern of 1- or 2.5-acre lots is not an appropriate urban density either...An urban land use pattern of 1-or 2.5-acre parcels would constitute sprawl; such a development pattern within the rural area would also constitute sprawl.
- A well designed compact rural development containing a small number of homes that would not look urban in character, not require urban governmental services, nor have

undue growth-inducing or adverse environmental impacts on surrounding properties may constitute a "compact rural development" rather than "urban growth."

Resource Lands

The Resource Lands designation indicates areas where Pierce County land use plans, regulations and incentives will promote long-term commercially significant resource use. These natural resources are an important part of the regional economy, providing jobs, tax revenue, and valuable products and raw materials for local use and export. Farmlands and forested lands also provide aesthetic, recreational, and environmental benefits to the public while contributing to the diverse character of Pierce County.

- Agricultural, forested lands and mineral resource lands protected by resource land regulations will be designated as Resource Lands.
- Long-term conservation of Resource Lands for productive agriculture, forestry, and mineral extraction activities will be encouraged.
- Land use regulations will encourage continued farming, logging and mining of Resource Lands.

Open Space and Greenbelts

The Open Space and Greenbelts designation includes public parks and recreational areas, valuable scenic areas, and critical areas throughout Pierce County. These areas are intended to provide for recreation and natural processes.

- Existing public park and recreation areas, and natural features protected by environmental regulations will be designated as Open Space.
- A system of permanent Open Space will be maintained to preserve the region's beauty and provide for continuing enjoyment of its natural features and to meet the outdoor recreational needs of a growing population.
- Pierce County's Open Space system will meet the following needs:
 - a. Preserve physical and visual buffers within and between areas of urban and rural development;
 - b. Provide for visual enjoyment and outdoor recreation; and
 - c. Preserve natural areas and environmental features with significant educational, scientific, wildlife habitat, historic or scenic values.

Joint Planning Areas

Designation of Urban Growth Areas requires extensive coordination between the cities and towns and the County. Though UGAs remain under the County's jurisdiction, it is beneficial to both the cities and towns and the County to jointly plan for them. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the significant role of cities and towns in land use decision-making and encourages joint planning to achieve the desired pattern of growth and land uses.

Cities and towns are concerned about the type of land use activities and design standards which are permitted outside of their municipal limits, since they have a direct impact on the city or town. Many of the cities and towns have developed land use plans which address areas currently under the County's jurisdiction. For the cities and towns to effectively reach their goals after an annexation, they need to ensure the County does not permit activity which would be inconsistent with their future plans.

The Pierce County Council passed Resolution #R93-96 which supports a Joint Planning Framework recommended by the Pierce County Regional Council. The strategy of the Joint Planning Framework is to encourage appropriate jurisdictions to enter into interlocal agreements to facilitate and accomplish joint planning in areas of mutual concern. The interlocal agreement enables the involved jurisdictions and citizenry to work together to review and consider issues of mutual concern. Each agreement may cover one or several issues.

COMMUNITY PLANS

INTRODUCTION

The Community Plans Element envisions a local voice in how the Comprehensive Plan and its development regulations will be carried out in communities. Community plans will exemplify how the objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan play out when applied to detailed and specific conditions. They will indicate specific land use designations, appropriate densities, and the design standards that should apply in community planning areas. Preserving and building community character while ensuring an efficient and predictable development approval process is a central theme.

Although the Growth Management Act (GMA) does not require comprehensive plans to provide for community plans, Pierce County Ordinance 90-47S directs County officials to prepare a Community Plans Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The majority of unincorporated County population resides in community plan areas. The Community Plans Element spells out how to coordinate consistency between community plans and the Comprehensive Plan. Unique among the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, policies within this element relate to administrative processes: initiation, development, update of community plans; and the relationship between community plans. The Element begins with a description of how

community plans function and identifies current community planning areas, then discusses the issues: Autonomy of Communities; Community Character; Retaining Community Plans; and, Consistency Between the Comprehensive Plan and Community Plans.

Refer to Pierce County Code 19.90 (background information) and 19A.110 (objectives and policies) for additional detail. (See attachment)