

## SECTION I - INTRODUCTION AND PLAN BACKGROUND

### Executive Summary

The Comprehensive Plan for Stanwood is intended to guide future decisions related to land use, city development, transportation, housing, capital facilities and utilities through the year 2025. The plan was developed in compliance with the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA), which establishes planning goals to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans within the State. These goals include reducing urban sprawl, encouraging affordable housing, providing efficient multi-modal transportation systems, protecting the environment and enhancing the State's high quality of life. A further goal is to ensure that public facilities and services necessary to support future development shall be adequate and timely.

Because of the complexities of this document, it is important to provide the reader with a general framework, or guide, to detail the sequence of implementation procedures. This Plan will result in a major change in how the City implements the policies contained in this Plan, how the City manages its physical development and how the City monitors these changes.

In order to meet the spirit and the letter of the GMA, the 2004 Stanwood Comprehensive Plan contains seven elements. These elements include:

- The Land Use Element
- The Housing Element
- The Economic Development Element
- The Capital Facilities Element
- The Transportation Element
- The Utilities Element
- The Natural Features Element

Each of the above elements is comprised of the following sections:

- Introduction of the element
- Goals and Policies
- Inventory and Analysis
- Future Needs assessment
- Environmental Impacts, Mitigation Measures and Implementation

This Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as a general guide to coordinate a detailed sequence of policy and regulatory decisions. The goals and policies of this Plan are dependent upon actions that lead to a series of related elements which comprise the implementation process. These actions expand and develop the policies of this Plan. Actions in this Plan have different purposes; they can be divided into three general categories: (1) to expand and develop policies; (2) to provide the framework for regulatory policies that need to be adopted as ordinances, and (3) to serve as administrative guidelines. Only the actions that expand and develop policies are included in this Plan. The others may be described as policies but will be formulated in the regulations that serve as the technical implementation documents.

## **The Community Vision of Stanwood**

The people of Stanwood value specific characteristics that are unique to the City. Residents are very clear in stating that they would like to maintain the special qualities of the City. It is the City's intention to encourage an ongoing, long-term public involvement program. This program will involve Stanwood and surrounding jurisdictions.

The 1995 Community Vision of Stanwood was established through a multi-faceted approach. Comments and input on the City's Vision were collected from several different sources, including:

1. General discussion from the Comprehensive Plan Committee. There were 7 committee members, 2 staff members, and 2 professional consultants working together in structuring the 1995 Stanwood Comprehensive Plan.
2. Continuous input from the general public.
3. Two general surveys taken in Stanwood--the surveys of the Spring of 1986 and the Spring of 1992. Although these surveys are non-scientific, a number of similarities appear on both.

In 2002, the Vision Statement was updated based on input from the following:

1. Visioning Workshops - Two workshops were conducted by City Staff and the Planning Commission, one on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002 and the second on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002. The second visioning workshop focused on the "downtown" and economic development. Everyone in attendance at these

- workshops was asked to fill out a questionnaire and answer some general questions relating to Stanwood's future.
2. Citizen planning - a committee of 6 citizens, 2 members of the Economic Development Council, 2 City Council members, one staff member, and the Planning Commission (9 citizens total) who assisted the Planning Commission with the 2004 update.
  3. Continuous input from the general public.

In 2003, the City engaged in a professional design charrette over an intense three-day period ("Design Stanwood"). The Design Stanwood charrette resulted in many new ideas for downtown Stanwood and also confirmed some of the existing vision for downtown. During the 2004 update, the Planning Commission recommended incorporation of the results of the Design Stanwood charrette into the Comprehensive Plan. The concepts of Design Stanwood are incorporated accordingly into the Vision Statement.

Based on this input, certain characteristics are highly valued by local citizens, and are reflected in the following Vision Statement for this Plan.

## **Vision Statement**

### ***Small Town Character***

Stanwood residents want the City to retain its "small town" character. Surveys indicate that residents prefer to maintain the small town atmosphere and preserve historic resources, instead of undergoing a transformation to a larger, more developed city. Simply put, Stanwood is a nice place to live and visit and citizens of Stanwood would like to see it remain that way.

### ***Sense of Community***

The City's sense of community is highly valued and residents would like to retain this character at all costs.

### ***Livability and Convenience***

Stanwood is considered to be very livable because many residents are within a safe walking distance or a short drive to stores, restaurants or services that they utilize. There are many goods and services that can be obtained within this City.

### ***Transportation and Mobility***

Residents like to be able to move about freely and safely. Continual improvements to City sidewalks are desired. A system of walkways, trails and bikepaths between schools, parks and natural open spaces would ease the conflict between pedestrians, bicyclists and the automobile. Stanwood should be a hub for all forms of transportation to and from surrounding areas.

### ***Growth Patterns***

People would like to avoid suburban sprawl. This threatens Stanwood's City center and sense of community. Sprawl would also create a greater dependence on the automobile. Accommodate growth with low or moderate rates (2-5 percent).

### ***Economic Development***

Continued economic development is very important to the City, particularly in downtown. As such, the City should actively plan for the downtown, and work with the Chamber of Commerce to promote businesses that fit into the downtown plan. An improved job base in Stanwood's economy is highly desired.

### ***Value of the Environment***

There is overwhelming support from the community to protect the local environment, and to promote access and tourism to local natural features.

### ***Surrounding Land Use Valued***

Residents generally value the agricultural land use surrounding Stanwood. Stanwood's identity associated with the agricultural and rural environment is very important.

## **Planning Framework (GMA)**

The Washington State Legislature recognized that uncoordinated and unplanned growth poses a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety and welfare of Washington State residents. In adopting GMA in 1990, the legislature mandated that cities and counties use a specific framework and include specific elements that must be addressed in all Comprehensive plans. This is perhaps the greatest contribution of the GMA. These mandatory elements include land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, and utilities. GMA requires internal consistency among these elements. The act recognizes the critical importance between the three main elements – the land use, transportation, and capital facilities elements. These three are inter-related to the degree that changes in one will necessarily influence changes in the others. The act also includes mandatory and continuous public involvement.

GMA has been amended several times. The 2004 update responds to many of the later amendments, including the inclusion of best available science (see the Natural Features Element).

The planning process for the City of Stanwood is a multi-phase, on-going process. Applicable information from past comprehensive plans has been referenced throughout this document where relevant. New data has been collected and analyzed. Updated plans are researched and developed based on new information and planning techniques.

## **The Planning Area**

The Comprehensive Plan's study area is the designated Urban Growth Area and the land within the corporate limits of Stanwood (see Figure LU-1).

The original Urban Growth Area (UGA) for Stanwood in 1994 was proposed through a series of meetings with the Growth Management Coordinating Committee (GMCC). This Committee was comprised of private citizens and government representatives from Stanwood and Snohomish County. The GMCC recommended a UGA to the Snohomish County Council, who, in turn made the final decision on the UGA.

For the 2004 update, the Urban Growth Area has been sized based on the County's population forecast made by the State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and

includes areas and densities sufficient to accommodate the growth expected through the year 2025. The Urban Growth Area has been located in areas already characterized by urban growth which can be served by a combination of existing and new public facilities and services.

## **The Consistency between the Stanwood Comprehensive Plan and the Snohomish Countywide Planning Policies**

The Growth Management Act stipulates that there must be cooperation and coordination of services between city and county jurisdictions. Counties are regional providers within their boundaries and cities are primary providers of urban services within the designated urban growth areas. To effectively balance land use, infrastructure and finance throughout a region, the GMA requires that an overall vision for growth and general county-wide planning policies to implement this vision be established via a collaborative process between the county and city representatives (Snohomish County Tomorrow). It is intended that the county-wide policies will serve as a guide for the development of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, ensuring consistency between city and county plans throughout the county and compliance with the requirements of GMA.

Based on the GMA, Snohomish County has organized its County-wide policies in a format that meets the requirements of the State mandate. Stanwood follows a similar pattern, but only as it relates to the State requirements for cities. The City of Stanwood has taken into account the goals and policies of Snohomish County.

At a minimum, the legislation requires the policies to address:

- Implementation of RCW 36.70A.110 (Urban Growth Areas);
- Promotion of contiguous and orderly development and provision of urban services;
- Siting of public capital facilities;
- Transportation facilities and strategies;
- Affordable housing;
- Joint county and city planning within UGAs;
- Countywide economic development and employment; and
- Analysis of fiscal impacts.

For a comparison of the City's policies and their consistency with Countywide Planning Policies, please see Appendix B.

## **Implementation**

### **Regulatory Measures**

The Growth Management Act requires that, upon adoption of the final Comprehensive Plan, local governments enact land development regulations that are consistent with and implement the Comprehensive Plan. The City will perform a comprehensive review of its existing regulations related to land development and compare those regulations with the goals and policies set forth in the new Comprehensive Plan. This procedure will allow the City to amend existing regulations or add new regulations to achieve consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Zoning**

The zoning ordinance and map will be amended to be consistent with the future Comprehensive Land Use Map and policies established in the Plan. The Land Use Map included in the Comprehensive Plan describes the 20-year physical development pattern of the City, showing land use types and projected densities (see Figure LU-1). The Growth Management Act requires that cities develop a six-year capital facilities plan and allow development when the City can provide urban services to these developments. Annexed areas within the urban growth area will be provided with urban services and zoning maps and ordinances will be revised. Areas will continue to develop as services can be provided based on LOS standards. The long-range plan is based on a general annexation plan developed in this comprehensive planning process. The growth plan is only a guide and is subject to change as the concurrency management process re-evaluates the initial projections.

### **Concurrency Management**

The GMA requires that adequate public facilities must be in place to serve new development. Level of service standards that are adopted must be continually reevaluated. A Concurrency Management System is a tool that allows jurisdictions to monitor the level of service provided and determine when additional services are necessary based on growth and existing deficiencies. The effect is to allow growth as public services are available to serve new growth (i.e., to ensure that public facilities are available concurrent with the impacts of growth). In this way, the quality of life factors represented by the applicable facilities and services are the overriding determinant to maintaining an orderly, safe and efficient development pattern. These services include fire and emergency facilities, police, schools, wastewater treatment, water and drainage,

transportation, and parks and recreational facilities and services. The concurrency management process establishes an objective approach to assess the impacts of growth and the jurisdiction's ability to fund the improvements necessary to maintain desired levels of service.

### **Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan**

The six-year schedule of capital improvements is another major implementation tool of the Plan. It sets out the capital projects that the City must undertake in the next six years in order to implement the 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 should be revised to reflect any additional information that the City has received. In addition, the schedule should be revised to include any additional capital projects that are needed to maintain the City's adopted LOS standards. Please see the Capital Facilities Element for the six-year Capital Improvement Plan.

### **Administrative Actions**

The Plan includes a number of policies that should be carried out through administrative actions. These would include interlocal agreements, revised development and review procedures, and public involvement programs. For example, the Plan includes goals and policies relating to the annexation of unincorporated areas within the urban growth boundary. These policies may be implemented through an interlocal agreement with the County which establishes the terms of such annexations. Development and review procedures must be revised to implement concurrency and to ensure that new development complies with the performance standards established. The Plan also calls for the City to publicize County and State initiatives, such as affordable housing programs, so that Stanwood 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.

### **Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan can be amended by the City Council in March of every year. Proponents of amending the Comprehensive Plan must submit all information relevant to the amendment to the City by October 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous calendar year. The Planning Commission sets the docket for each year's amendments. Staff will review the amendment proposal and make recommendations to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will initiate discussion of proposals by the first meeting in

February. The City Council will accept, reject or amend the proposal. Amendments to the proposal can only be made in consultation with staff and proponents of the Comprehensive Plan amendment.

Partial information list required to amend the Comprehensive Plan:

- a. SEPA Threshold determination and EIS if DS is issued.
- b. Comp Plan amendment report specifying the costs and benefits to the City.
- c. Drawings, maps, etc.
- d. Please reference existing development standards.

Please see Chapter 17.157 of the Stanwood Municipal Code for a detailed list of required information and materials for submittal of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment request.

## **Environmental Review**

The 1995 Legislature adopted "regulatory reform" legislation (ESHB 1724) for the purpose of simplifying and integrating the various state land use and environmental regulations. Most of this legislation is embodied in chapter 36.70B RCW. All of this legislation's requirements apply to cities and counties planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA), while only part of its requirements apply to non-GMA cities and counties. Originally, cities and counties were required to implement locally the requirements that apply to them by March 31, 1996.

As such, the City of Stanwood Comprehensive Plan is an "integrated SEPA/GMA document" that combines the planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and the environmental review requirements of the State Environmental Policy Acts of Washington. This document also contains relevant environmental review for the adoption of accompanying development regulations.

The 2004 City of Stanwood Comprehensive Plan incorporates by reference the previous environmental analysis contained in the following documents:

- Environmental Impact Statement for the 1979 City of Stanwood Comprehensive Plan.
- Environmental Impact Statement for the 1984 Stanwood Area Comprehensive Plan.
- Environmental Impact Statement for the 1995 City of Stanwood Comprehensive Plan.

## **SEPA Requirements**

The State Environmental Policy Act or SEPA (RCW 43.21C) requires government officials to consider the environmental consequences of actions they are about to take and seek better or less damaging ways to accomplish those proposed actions. They must consider whether the proposed action will have a probable, significant, adverse environmental impact on elements of the natural and built environment. SEPA grants each agency the authority to protect environmental quality, and it requires state and local officials to make decisions consistent with the policy set forth in the act. When necessary, it can be used to supplement agencies' authority to address gaps in laws affecting environmental quality. Policies, plans and regulations adopted under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), such as proposed in the City of Stanwood Comprehensive Plan 2004 Update, are considered non-project actions subject to SEPA review.

## **SEPA/GMA Integration**

Sound planning requires establishing objectives, analyzing alternatives, selecting a preferred alternative, and implementing the adopted plan. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is part of the planning process since it analyzes and documents the environmental impacts and tradeoffs of a proposed action or alternatives. Ideally, environmental analysis is continuous throughout the planning process. Discussion of policies and specific land use designations is informed by analyses of the environmental consequences of those choices.

SEPA and GMA requirements are similar in many ways. Integration of SEPA with GMA eliminates duplication of effort and assures consistency between SEPA and GMA requirements. The planning processes for SEPA and GMA come together at several points:

### **Public Participation**

Both SEPA and GMA recognize public participation and governmental agency coordination as critical to the planning process.

### **Documents**

Both SEPA and GMA require preparation of documents for the public participation and decision-making process, but they each have specific guidelines on the information and analysis that must or should be included.

### **Visioning**

The City of Stanwood conducted a formal EIS scoping process for the Comprehensive Plan in February of 2002. In addition, two “Visioning Workshops” were held by City Staff and the Planning Commission, one on January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002 and the second on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002. The second visioning workshop focused on the “downtown” and economic development.

These public workshops elicited many public comments and some general guiding principals. This Visioning effort helped identify the issues of concern to residents, including environmental issues, forming the basis for proposed objectives and policies and alternative land use maps. The “visioning process” and other public participation efforts leading to development of the plan’s goals and policies have been considered part of the scoping process, in that they address both the natural and built environment and must be internally consistent.

### **Existing Conditions**

Both SEPA and GMA require collection and analysis of information regarding existing conditions.

### **Goals, Objectives, and Policies**

Planning goals, objectives and policies play an important role in the development of the GMA Comprehensive Plan, and the SEPA evaluation of plan alternatives.

### **Impact Analysis**

GMA requires collection and analysis of data for the Comprehensive Plan topics (e.g. land use, housing, transportation, utilities, critical areas and capital facilities). SEPA requires the lead agency analyze the significant adverse impacts to elements of the natural and built environment that are identified during scoping.

### **Mitigation**

GMA requires strategies to reduce the impacts of growth on the natural and built environment. The same strategies should satisfy SEPA requirements for identifying ways to mitigate the significant adverse impacts identified during environmental review.

## **Scope of Environmental Review**

The City of Stanwood intends to adopt the Comprehensive Plan and amendments to the Development Regulations in accordance with Growth Management Act and State Department of Ecology requirements. The City of Stanwood has determined that this non-project action is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment, requiring that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) be prepared in accordance with SEPA [RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)]. A Determination of Significance and Request for comments on the Scope of an EIS was issued by the City on February 2, 2002.

The scope of the SEIS was established through a scoping process which included publication in a local newspaper, notification of affected agencies, a public meeting and request for comments on which issues should be addressed in the SEIS. No public comments were received in response to the scoping notice.

The City of Stanwood, as Lead Agency, has identified the following areas for discussion in the Draft SEIS:

### ***Water***

- Surface water – movement / quantity / quality
- Runoff - absorption, flooding
- Ground water - movement / quantity / quality
- Public water supplies

### ***Plants and Animals***

- Habitat for and numbers or diversity of species of plants, fish or other wildlife
- Fish or wildlife Migration Routes

### ***Land and Shoreline Use***

- Relationship of existing land use plans to estimated population
- Housing

### ***Transportation***

- Transportation systems
- Vehicular traffic
- Movement - circulation of people or goods

### ***Public services and utilities***

- Fire
- Police
- Schools
- Parks and other recreational facilities

- Water - storm water
- Sewer and solid waste
- Other governmental services or utilities

*Economy*

This Draft SEIS provides qualitative and quantitative analysis of environmental impacts as appropriate to the general nature of the Comprehensive Plan adoption. Impacts to most all of the above listed elements of the environment will be negligible as a result of the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. Where resulting impacts have been determined to be of a non-significant nature, it will be noted and no further analysis will be conducted. The adoption of a comprehensive plan is classified by SEPA as a non-project (i.e. programmatic) action. A non-project action is defined as an action that is broader than a single site-specific project, and involves decisions on policies, plans or programs. An EIS for a non-project proposal does not require site-specific analyses; instead, the EIS discusses impacts and alternatives appropriate to the scope of the non-project proposal and to the level of planning for the proposal. (WAC 197-11-442)

SEPA encourages the use of phased environmental review to focus on issues that are ready for decision, and to exclude from consideration issues already decided or not yet ready for decision-making [WAC 197-11-060(5)]. Phased review is appropriate where the sequence of a proposal is from a programmatic document, such as an EIS addressing comprehensive plan amendments, to other documents that are narrower in scope, such as for a site-specific, project-level analysis.

The City of Stanwood is using phased review in its environmental review of growth management planning actions. The analysis in this Draft SEIS will be used to review the environmental impacts of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Alternatives and the proposed development regulations. Additional environmental review of the physical development proposals will occur as specific projects are proposed (e.g., road improvements, or land development). This will result in an additional incremental level of review when subsequent implementing actions require a more detailed evaluation and as additional information becomes available. Future environmental review could occur in the form of supplemental EIS's, SEPA addenda, or Determination(s) of Non-Significance.

## **Public Participation**

Public participation was a critical element throughout the development of the original Comprehensive Plan in 1995 and its update in 2004. Opportunities for public input have included public meetings, workshops, public hearings, design charettes, comment periods, and intense participation on citizen committees intimately involved in the preparation and update of the plan. The City has maintained and continually updated hand-outs to public meetings to ensure early and continuous public comment.

As part of the Comprehensive plan update, there have been several public workshops, meetings and activities with the community at various points throughout 2002, 2003 and 2004. In accordance with SEPA (WAC 197-11-232), The City of Stanwood solicited agency and public comments on the scope of the Draft Supplemental EIS through a Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice. No comments were received during the 14-day comment period, which initiated February 14<sup>th</sup> 2002 and concluded on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2002.

In addition, a 30-day comment period has been established for this Integrated Comprehensive Plan/Draft SEIS. Comments received will be considered and responses prepared in the Final Supplemental EIS. Please refer to the Fact Sheet for the comment period, and address to submit comments.