

Chapter 31.01 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OVERVIEW

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SOURCE: ADOPTED:

Ord. [573](#) 06/27/95

AMENDED ADOPTED:
SOURCE:

Ord. [968](#) 11/10/20

31.01.100 Authority for planning.

This Comprehensive Plan and any ordinances intended to implement this Plan are adopted under the authority of the Clallam County Charter, the Growth Management Act of 1990 (Chapter [36.70A](#) RCW), and the Planning Enabling Act (Chapter [36.70](#) RCW), as now or hereafter amended.

It is the purpose and intent of this Comprehensive Plan to provide a guide for coordinated and orderly growth and development of the land and physical improvements in the unincorporated areas of Clallam County, including State lands. This Plan does not guide physical improvements on tribal trust lands. The County and various tribes are encouraged to work together to coordinate development plans and provide for orderly growth. Together with common goals expressing the public’s interest in the conservation and wise use of our lands, this Plan provides for the orderly growth of all the various uses of land; these common goals promote the public

health, safety and welfare, and encourage economic development and efficient provision of public services and facilities.

31.01.200 Growth management goals.

The Growth Management Act identified the following goals to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations. The goals are not listed in order of priority and shall be used exclusively for the purpose of guiding the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations.

(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 multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled, and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with County and city comprehensive plans.

Commented [MC1]: Changed to account for update to transportation goal language in RCW 36.70A.020(3).

(4) *Housing.* Plan for and accommodate ~~Encourage the availability of affordable~~ housing affordable 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.

Commented [MC2]: Revised to account for change to RCW 36.70A.020 in 2021 in HB 1220.

(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 Resource Industries.* Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, mineral extraction 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.

(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; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; 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.

(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.

Commented [MC3]: Added to account for new planning goals added in 2023 in HB 1181.

31.01.300 Overview of Plan objective.

Clallam County adopted its first comprehensive land use plan in 1967. With the significant growth that the County experienced in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the County updated the Comprehensive Plan, and for the first time adopted zoning and land division controls.

Regulation of private property, however, did not receive immediate widespread support. Community opposition and court challenges resulted in limited land use controls until a new Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance were adopted in 1982.

The 1982 Comprehensive Plan provided planning objectives similar to this new Comprehensive Plan. Urban areas were designated around the three cities and around the principal rural community centers. Forestry zoning worked towards protecting forest lands from conversion to residential development. Rural policies identified appropriate densities and services to be expected within those areas.

The 1982 Comprehensive Plan, however, did not achieve many of the objectives that the Growth Management Act of 1990 intended to address. Some of the issues that ~~the current Plan tries to address~~ subsequent Comprehensive Plan amendments addressed include:

- Setting larger parcel sizes for commercial forest areas to provide even greater protection to this resource base (80-acre lots vs. 20-acre lots);
- Limiting the size of urban areas to reasonable growth projections and planning for urban services to be provided to those areas in an efficient manner;
- Encouraging growth within urban growth areas as a priority over growth into rural areas;
- Conserving agricultural lands;
- Adopting a transportation plan that ties land use densities to transportation needs;
- Ensuring that capital facilities are planned to be provided at the time of development, or a financial commitment is in place to ensure they are provided in a timely manner;
- Adopting affordable housing goals and strategies;
- Adopting economic development goals and objectives;

Commented [MC4]: Added proposed language in this section to reflect changes in the GMA and address the focus areas required in this update.

- Reducing sprawling low-density development in rural areas and conserving the rural character of our rural areas;
- Recognizing and acknowledging the presence of tribal governments and their influence;
- Setting specific criteria for land use designations and specific criteria for amendment of the Plan; and
- Setting specific land use policies based on regional comprehensive plans developed from the regional setting, rather than from a centralized planning function.

This Comprehensive Plan periodic update, based on the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA), establishes a framework for coordinated and comprehensive planning which will help Clallam County and its cities to manage growth in a manner which best fits Clallam County.

The GMA calls for urban growth areas where urban development will be encouraged and can be supported with adequate public facilities and services. At the same time, the GMA discourages the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development and encourages conservation of rural character and resource lands. These four general land uses (urban, rural, industrial and natural resource) form the framework for more specific land use designations, which are found in one of four regional subarea plans.

For the 2025 periodic update as required by the GMA, major focus areas include housing, as Clallam County must now lead the countywide planning for housing allocations by income band and make land use and capital facilities changes to accommodate the allocated housing units, and climate change, as Clallam County must now adopt a Climate Element and Resiliency Sub-Element and implement regulations and programs that support this.

The objective of the County-wide Comprehensive Plan is to identify the goals and policies for those issues that are of a County-wide nature, and provide the framework for adoption of regional comprehensive plans. Those issues that are of a County-wide nature are: forest and mineral lands, urban growth and sprawl, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, natural, historical and cultural resources, utilities and capital facilities.

The objective of regional comprehensive plans is to provide specific means to implement the general plan objectives of the County. Rural and urban land use policies should provide specific maps and strategies to implement the plan. Specific ways to implement transportation,

Commented [MC5]: Suggest removing word "affordable" here to reflect that the housing element addresses housing that is affordable to ALL economic segments of the community and that "affordable housing" means something more specific.

housing, economic development, or public facility and service objectives should be sought in the regional plans.

The Comprehensive Plan should be a dynamic tool to address ongoing concerns, new information or new issues. Although this Plan seeks to achieve stability in land use regulations, it is expected that the Plan will need to be reviewed periodically to ensure it is meeting growth management objectives. Also, as new information might become available, such as water and sewage disposal studies, it might be necessary to amend this Plan.

The County will support business and industrial development which strengthens and diversifies the economic base, creates family wage jobs, develops and operates in a manner that promotes and protects the environment and efficiently uses our natural resources. Efforts should be focused on small- to medium-sized industries. The County should continue to be marketed for tourism and retirement. Infrastructure should be in place in order to attract industrial and commercial operations. Regulations should be consistent, fair, and timely.

31.01.400 Plan consistency.

In order to have a comprehensive plan that provides clear direction, it is necessary that the Plan be both internally and externally consistent. Although the 1982 Comprehensive Plan generally achieved this objective, the Growth Management Act of 1990 now requires this consistency.

First, the Comprehensive Plan is adopted based on the State goals and guidelines of the Growth Management Act. One of the requirements of the Act was for the County and cities to adopt a County-wide planning policy that formed the framework for adoption of County and city comprehensive plans. The County-wide Planning Policies ensure that the County and city comprehensive plans achieve consistency between jurisdictions. It is imperative that the County-wide Planning Policies be reviewed prior to adoption or amendment of the Comprehensive Plan, and that the Plan is determined to be consistent with the County-wide Planning Policies.

The County Comprehensive Plan also includes four regional subarea comprehensive plans: Sequim-Dungeness, Port Angeles, Straits and Forks-West End. Similar to the relationship of the County-wide Planning Policy to the County-wide Comprehensive Plan, regional comprehensive plans must be determined to be consistent with the County-wide Plan. For example, the

County-wide Plan identifies forest lands of long-term commercial significance to be a County-wide issue; policies and criteria within that section of the Plan ensure that these lands are conserved. Therefore, for example, it would be inconsistent to have regional plans adopt conflicting strategies for conservation of forest lands.

An issue that needs careful consideration in the adoption of the four regional subarea comprehensive plans is consistency between regions. It is possible that the four regional plans could have widely varying land use classifications and development standards. This could result in the County adopting four different sets of development regulations. This approach could be an administrative nightmare, but does reflect the different visions and values of the very different regions. Where possible, the regional subarea plans should strive to find consistency between the plans.

A comprehensive plan must also be internally consistent. The transportation element must be consistent with the land use element. Rural land use densities must be consistent with the need to protect environmental quality and encourage growth into urban areas. Making this internal consistency test requires that the framework of the Plan and any amendments to it are adopted with a comprehensive analysis of one section's impact on other sections.

Finally, any ordinance which regulates development of property requires consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Prior to passage of the Growth Management Act, the Comprehensive Plan was only a "guide" to the physical development of the County. Land use ordinances, such as zoning, took precedence over the Comprehensive Plan where conflicts existed. Any ordinances now adopted to implement this Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with the Plan. The following figure identifies the relationship of development regulations and capital budget decisions which must be consistent with the Plan.

Commented [MC6]: There is no such figure in section 31.01.400. Consider removing.

31.01.500 Public participation.

The County established procedures for early and continuous public participation soon after passage of the Growth Management Act. Consistent with the phasing of plans required by the Act, the County first concentrated on measures to conserve resource lands and protect critical areas, then focused on County-wide Planning Policies, urban growth areas, and finally comprehensive plans. The development of proposals and opportunity for comment followed this sequence.

Many of the County's plan elements have been developed through ~~citizen~~ advisory committees, either special task forces or standing committees like the County Planning Commission and Shorelines and Sensitive Areas Committee. In the western parts of the County, a new regional planning commission was appointed jointly with the City of Forks and community councils in Joyce and Clallam Bay-Sekiu were established.

Commented [MC7]: The term "citizen" is used in the GMA, but since being a citizen is not a requirement to participate in the planning process, we suggest removing the word where appropriate and changing to "resident" where appropriate - see this and below.

The County has reached out to ~~citizens-residents~~ and landowners through various means to ensure that proposals and alternatives reach the affected parties. Prior to any work getting accomplished, the County held public workshops in all three cities to outline the requirements of the Growth Management Act and the ways in which the County proposed to solicit feedback. Workshops and early neighborhood meetings have been regularly scheduled on plan proposals and development regulations prior to public hearings and adoption.

The County has used the various news media to also reach audiences. Television, newspaper and radio spots have been continuous throughout the process. One regional plan used live television for getting the information out. The County has prepared brochures for handing out to the public, published a regular newsletter identifying issues and opportunities for input, and delivered direct mailings on proposed growth management elements.

The Comprehensive Plan has also been developed on two tiers: County-wide and regionally. This approach was chosen not only because the land use issues varied so greatly between the regions, but also because the plans and opportunities for open discussion of the issues would be more detailed. This approach has been very successful, as the regional comprehensive plans have received considerable attention from the citizens within that region.

The citizens of Clallam County recognize mining as an important part of the local and regional economy. In recognition of its importance, and in order to modernize those sections of the Comprehensive Plan and the related development regulations relating to the extraction of mineral resources as well as comply with a Growth Board remand, Community Development ("DCD") proposed and the County Commissioners approved a seven-step Public Participation Plan or "PPP" in mid-2019. To implement the PPP, staff created a Mineral Resource Lands website containing a survey for citizens to complete. Notice of four regional meetings was mailed to more than 1,000 landowners, primarily anyone who owns land within 1,000 feet of an existing surface mine. Those meetings were advertised some 10 to 14 days before their scheduled date in local newspapers such as the Forks Forum. DCD then conducted those regional meetings, each lasting two hours, in Forks, Port Angeles, Sequim and Clallam Bay.

These workshops were attended by approximately 80 individuals. The County received some 30 comments during the time when the proposal was before the Planning Commission. In addition, from June 2019 to July 2020, the Planning Commission held approximately 15 public meetings where MRL was discussed and public comments were received. Some of the edits and additions suggested by the public were included in the proposed text sent to the County Commission. A list of “interested parties,” some 25 in all, received notice of every Planning Commission meeting and the related proposals. This public outreach process included having Rian Skov, a geologist with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Geology and Earth Resources Section, attend the Planning Commission meeting on February 5, 2020. The County learned its existing text regarding mineral resource lands needed augmentation and intends to adopt more thorough text on this topic into its Comprehensive Plan and development regulations by the end of 2020. The Planning Commission discussed and reviewed proposed changes to the development regulations and the Comprehensive Plan in its April and May 2020 meetings. A public hearing, properly noticed, was held before the Planning Commission on July 1, 2020, and on July 20, 2020, the Planning Commission sent the proposed text to the County Commission recommending approval. The County Commission held two work sessions on the proposed text in August 2020 and held a properly noticed public hearing on September 29, 2020, which was extended to October 13, 2020. Adoption of the changes by the County Commission occurred on November 10, 2020.

Commented [MC8]: This section will need to be re-written and updated with public engagement the County has conducted and will conduct as part of the 2025 update.

The Clallam County Code is current through Ordinance 1021, passed July 9, 2024.

Disclaimer: The Commissioner’s Office has the official version of the Clallam County Code. Users should contact the Commissioner’s Office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

[County Website: www.clallam.net](http://www.clallam.net)

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