

Chapter 5

PLANNING PROCESS

5.1 PLAN UPDATE REQUIREMENT

The Town of Eatonville is required to update its Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations by December 31, 2005. The Washington State Legislature in the year 2002 amended RCW 36.70A.(130) by establishing the update deadline and further requiring that the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations be updated at a seven-year interval thereafter. The required amendment also mandates that the Comprehensive Plan contain an Economic Development Element and a Parks and Recreation Element. Previously, these two elements were optional elements to be included in the Comprehensive Plan at the discretion of the Town.

5.2 EXISTING PLAN

The Town of Eatonville began to prepare its Comprehensive Plan in 1991, shortly after the State Legislature adopted Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A, took affect. The Town Council assigned the task of preparing a draft Comprehensive Plan to the Eatonville Planning Commission. The Planning Commission, after extensive public review, presented a draft Comprehensive Plan to the Town Council. The Town Council, in turn, held public hearings on the draft Plan and on December 27, 1993, adopted the Eatonville Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan work was followed by updating the Town's Zoning Code. Upon the Planning Commission's recommendation, the Town Council on May 23, 1994 adopted the revised Zoning Code.

In 2001, the State Legislature mandated that Comprehensive Plans must be updated. The Legislature amended that mandate in 2002 and again in 2003. Eatonville's Comprehensive Plan must be updated by December 31, 2005. There is a good reason for updating the Comprehensive Plan. The Town has extended its corporate boundary by having annexed a number of significant properties. The population of the Town has grown from 1,374 persons in 1900 to 2,012 persons in 2000. As a result, a number of new housing units have been built in the Town. Municipal utility service areas have expanded beyond from what they were in 1993.

5.3 PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

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In general, the Growth Management Act requires a deliberate update process that includes three basic steps: 1) review of relevant plans and regulations; 2) analysis of need for revisions; and 3) adoption of appropriate resolutions and/or amendments. The Town of Eatonville began its Comprehensive Plan update process in 2002 and completed it in 2005.

5.3.1 Role of the Planning Commission. The Town Council assigned to the Planning Commission the responsibility to prepare and present to the Town Council and the public an updated draft Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations. The Planning Commission, in a methodical and deliberative way, has gone through each element of the existing Comprehensive Plan and has proposed amendments to bring the document up to date with changes in the man-made environment and changes in the regulations, particularly as they relate to the protection of the natural environment. The Planning Commission completed its work on updating the Comprehensive Plan in May 2005 and presented a draft to the Town Council and the citizens of Eatonville for their review and comment.

5.3.2 Role of the Town Council. The Town Council has the responsibility of adopting the updated Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations by ordinance. The Town Council action comes after the Planning Commission has completed its work and after the citizens of the Town of Eatonville have had an extended opportunity to review and comment on the draft documents. The Town Council's action is appealable to the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board and thereafter, to the courts.

5.3.3 Public Participation. The Growth Management Act stresses the importance of public participation or public involvement. It does not specify just how it is to be carried out, but calls for cities, towns and counties to "go the extra mile" in involving citizens in the planning process. The Town of Eatonville chose to conduct two public hearings after the Planning Commission finished a draft of the Comprehensive Plan. One public hearing was conducted on a weekday evening and the other on a Saturday. After the two public hearings, the Planning Commission made revisions to the draft Comprehensive Plan and submitted a revised draft to the Town Council for their review. The Town Council, in turn, conducted a public hearing on the Planning Commission submitted revised draft Plan. The Town Council ordered further adjustment to be made to the draft Plan by the Planning Commission, before final adoption of the updated Comprehensive Plan by the Town Council.

5.3.4 State Review. All locally adopted comprehensive plans and development regulations are sent to the Washington State Community Trade and Economic Development Department for their review. The Community Trade and Economic Development Department reviews submitted plans to assure their compliance

with the Growth Management Act. The 1993 Eatonville Comprehensive Plan received a favorable review by the State without requiring any adjustments or modifications. In 2005, the Community, Trade and Economic Development Department accepted the draft Comprehensive Plan Update Report as having met State Growth Management Act requirements, without prescribing any adjustments or revisions.

5.3.5 Appeals Process. The Town Council adopted Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations can be appealed to the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board. The Hearings Board can invalidate the Plan, reject the appeal, or issue directives to the Town to modify the Plan, to bring it into compliance with the Growth Management Act. The Hearings Board's decision is legally binding on the local government. The Hearings Board's decision can be appealed to a Superior Court.

5.4 PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

The Growth Management Act allows municipalities and counties to update their Comprehensive Plans once every year, unless there exists an emergency. The following is an amendment process with specific timelines. Development regulations may be amended anytime as need arises.

5.4.1 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

1. Urban Growth Area (UGA) amendments
2. Text amendments
3. Map amendments
 - Land use
 - Critical areas
 - Shorelines

5.4.2 Timing

1. Amendments can be filed with the Town Clerk anytime of the year
2. Planning Commission commences the review of the amendments that are on file with the Town Clerk on 31 December every year
3. Urban Growth Area amendments also need to be approved by the Pierce County Council. Pierce County entertains Urban Growth Area amendment applications every other even numbered year. Applications can be obtained from the Pierce County Council offices.
4. Only the Town Council can amend the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the Town Council approval is necessary before a Comprehensive Plan can be considered amended.

5.4.3 Standing

The following persons, businesses, and organizations can file Comprehensive Plan amendments by filing an application and paying an application fee. Town government officials initiated applications are exempt from fee payment.

1. Mayor and Town Councilpersons
2. Planning Commissioners
3. Town Attorney
4. Businesses and organizations within the Town limits and the Urban Growth Area
5. Residents within the Town Limits and the Urban Growth Area
6. Residents within 1,000 feet outside the Urban Growth Area or those being provided municipal services
7. Any other person, business or organization deemed eligible by the Planning Commission

5.4.4 Planning Commission Review

1. At the January meeting, the Planning Commission adopts a roster of amendment applications and submits them for Town Planner for written review and recommendation. The review includes a SEPA review
2. The Town Planner files his/her report in March
3. In March, the Planning Commission conducts a public hearing on the applications
4. In May, the Planning Commission adopts changes to the Comprehensive Plan and forwards its recommendation to the Town Council

5.4.5 Town Council Action

1. In July, the Town Council may act on the recommendation of the Planning Commission or may conduct a public hearing on their own on select or all proposed amendments
2. In August, the Town Council takes final action on amending the Comprehensive Plan
3. The Town Council approved Urban Growth Area amendments will proceed to be submitted to Pierce County as Town of Eatonville initiated Urban Growth Area amendments

5.4.6 Evaluation Criteria

1. Any proposed amendment shall seek to fulfill a goal or goals of the Growth Management Act
2. Any proposed amendment shall not be detrimental to health, safety and general welfare of the citizens of Eatonville and its surrounding area
3. Any proposed amendment shall seek to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Eatonville and its surrounding area
4. Any proposed amendment shall not violate the laws of the Town of Eatonville, Pierce County, the State of Washington or the United States of America
5. Any proposed amendment that has a probable significant adverse impact on the environment shall carry with it appropriate mitigating measures
6. Any proposed amendment shall not have a negative fiscal impact on the citizens of the Town unless the applicant agrees to mitigate the impact

5.4.7 Application Fees and Forms

The Town Council shall fix the fee of an application by adopting a fee resolution. The Town Planner shall prepare the appropriate application forms in accordance with the Planning Commission and Town Council adopted evaluation criteria and timing