

## **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 2035. 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.

The 2004 Stanwood Comprehensive Plan as amended through 2015 contains nine elements. These elements include:

- The Land Use Element (Section II)
- The Housing Element (Section III)
- The Economic Development Element (Section IV)
- The Capital Facilities Element (Section V)
- The Transportation Element (Section VI)
- The Utilities Element (Section VII)
- The Natural Features Element (Section VIII)
- The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element (Section IX)
- The Shoreline Element (Section X)

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

- Introduction of the element
- Goals and Policies
- Inventory and Analysis
- Future Needs Assessment

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 implemented by a series of related documents and decisions which comprise the implementation process. Actions in this Plan have different purposes; they can be divided into three general categories: (1) to establish adopted policies; (2) to provide the framework for regulations that need to be adopted as ordinances, and (3) to serve as administrative guidelines.

## **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 charette over an intense three-day period (“Design Stanwood”). The Design Stanwood charette 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 charette into the Comprehensive Plan. The concepts of Design Stanwood are incorporated accordingly into the Vision Statement.

In 2008 the Vision was again reviewed in the context of developing an Economic Development Strategic Plan. A community stakeholder group provided input to the Economic Development Element and Downtown Plan goals and strategies in the context of a future action plan. The future Vision and adopted policies of the Comprehensive Plan were renewed and affirmed through this process. Several policy refinement amendments were made in the Land Use and Economic Development Elements as well as the Downtown Plan.

In 2012 the Plan was amended by two major initiatives.

1. A community wide Sustainable Design Assessment Team charette resulted in refinement of the future Vision. Similar to the 2003 DAT, this visioning session refined ideas for downtown Stanwood and again confirmed the existing vision for downtown. This charrette was attended by over 200 citizens and business groups over a three day period.

2. A Parks Plan update resulting in the incorporation of parks plan policies into a new Parks Recreation and Open Space Element. The Parks Recreation and Open Space Plan changes were made after an online survey with over 70 responses, an Open House with 20 attendees and a public hearing before the Planning Commission.

In 2014 through 2015 the Plan was updated in accordance with the required Growth Management Act update and the adoption of the Shoreline Master Program.

1. A comprehensive Shoreline Management Program Update resulting in adoption of the Shoreline Management Element. The Shoreline Master Program update was the accumulation of three and a half years of study and public process consisting of over ten Planning Commission and City Council meetings, workshops and public hearings.
2. A review and update of all the elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan to ensure compliance with the Growth Management Act during the mandatory update process.

Based on this input, the major components of the Vision were re-affirmed and updated, and are reflected in the following Vision Statement for this Plan.

## **Vision Statement**

The City of Stanwood is the commercial and cultural center of the Greater Stanwood/Camano region and is self sufficient - providing employment, access to locally grown food, community activities, and a full range of goods and services for its residents and surrounding rural communities.

Surveys indicate that residents and members of the business community both support preservation of existing structures and seek new development that enhances the existing small town character which gives the community its distinctive identity. Simply put, Stanwood is a nice place to live, work, shop and visit and citizens of Stanwood would like to see it remain that way.

Over 200 community members participated in the 2012 community Sustainable Design Assistance Team charette. The strong consensus was to continue building on the assets currently in Stanwood, engage in more economic development to diversify the City's employment base, and support the existing business community.

The assets needed to achieve the City's long-range vision include:

***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. The scale and design quality of historic downtown, new commercial areas and residential neighborhoods combine to create an aesthetically pleasing community character. Many residents are within a safe and convenient 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 and trails are desired. A system of walkways, trails and bike paths 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. The importance of trails, both within the existing City and as connectors to the region, are emphasized.

***Growth Patterns***

The City envisions continued growth at low to moderate rates (2-5 percent per year). 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.

***Economic Development***

The City will focus on retaining its role as the center of the Greater Stanwood area by pursuing new endeavors that support the downtown and employment diversification and leverage Stanwood's location as an urban center surrounded by world class agricultural land. These efforts include the following initiatives:

- A successful year around farmers market and support of local food distribution.
- Special events, festivals, and sports tournaments to attract additional foot traffic into the downtown.
- Pursuing more effective means to address the flooding issues inherent in its location along the Stillaguamish River.
- Promoting businesses that fit into the downtown plan through incentives.

### *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. The updated policy framework for the shorelines emphasizes shoreline access and future trail development within the Stillaguamish River shoreline area. In addition, the lower reaches of Church Creek are recognized for their high quality natural habitat which will be retained.

### *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.

### *Parks Recreation and Open Space*

The vision for the Stanwood parks system includes developing a new park that connects the downtown to the Stillaguamish River, developing neighborhood parks in the downtown and the north portion of the residential area, and expanding trails to provide a loop route within the City while providing trail and bicycle access to the region. The parks system also continues to be envisioned as providing regional facilities at Heritage Park to serve the needs of the Greater Stanwood area.

## **Downtown Plan**

In the fall of 2002, the City held a three-day brainstorming event including three members from the volunteer Design Assistance Team sponsored by the American Institute of Architects, business owners, citizens, and other interested parties. Eight of the 30 interested citizens acted as a steering committee of a new non-profit organization called Design Stanwood. The group worked to synthesize the information from the initial public meeting into a problem statement, defining the mission and goal of the process. The result of this cooperative effort was a common vision for Downtown Stanwood. This process is known as the DAT and was completed with a report issued in May 2003.

In December of 2011, the Greater Stanwood/Camano Region of Washington submitted a proposal to the American Institute of Architects (AIA) for a Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) to assist the community and its citizens in addressing key issues facing the community. The issues included downtown revitalization, water management, transportation, and economic development. The AIA accepted the proposal and, after a preliminary visit by a small group in March 2012, recruited a multi-disciplinary team of volunteers to serve on the SDAT Team. In July 2012, the

SDAT Team members worked closely with local officials, community leaders, technical experts, non-profit organizations and citizens to study the community and its concerns.

The purpose of the SDAT process was to 1) evaluate the successes of the 2003 local design charette, refreshing and updating the approach; 2) expand review throughout the 532 Corridor; and 3) consider possible sustainable initiatives affecting businesses and residents throughout the area. Accordingly, the AIA put together a team to address the following issues:

- Water Management and Flooding Mitigation
- Downtown & Village Revitalization
- Economic Development Strategies
- Sustainable Urban Design
- Transportation and Connectivity

The SDAT project was designed to engage the whole community and build collective ownership of an action plan for the future of the region that could produce immediate results. In July 2012, the SDAT Team shared its main recommendations in its final presentation to the community. The final document, *Destiny by Design*, includes the group's recommendations with additional detail and offers resources and information to help the community with its implementation of the plan. The report outlines both long term goals and near term strategies.

The Downtown Plan (Appendix F) is drawn from the results of the DAT and the SDAT processes.

## **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 2015 update, the current UGA boundary is sized to accommodate the County's population forecast for growth expected through the year 2035. However, the City has proposed to Snohomish County to reduce the UGA boundary in the northwest corner north of 292<sup>nd</sup> Street NW and south of 300<sup>th</sup> Street NW by approximately 112.8 acres. In exchange for this reduction the City is proposing to increase the UGA in two areas. The first area is in the southeast corner of the UGA north of Pioneer Highway and east of 64<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW by 69.77 acres (include Stanwood Camano Fair Grounds). The second area is generally in the northeast corner of the UGA east of 68<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW and north of Jensen Road by 53.31 acres. It is not anticipated that these changes will be approved by Snohomish County until approximately June of 2015. The Urban Growth Area is

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.

To review the Countywide Planning Policies, please see Appendix B.

## **PSRC Vision 2040 – Statement of Conformity**

In addition, Stanwood’s Plan is guided by the multi-county policies of Vision 2040, the regional plan developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council. Vision 2040 is an integrated, long-range vision for maintaining a healthy region – promoting the well-being of people and communities, economic vitality, and a healthy environment. It contains an environmental framework, a numeric regional growth strategy, policy sections guided by overarching goals, implementation actions, and measures to monitor progress.

Stanwood’s comprehensive plan advances a sustainable approach to growth and future development. We have incorporated a systems approach to planning and decision-making that addresses protection of the natural environment. The Plan commits to maintaining and restoring ecosystems, through steps to conserve key habitats, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Plan includes provisions that ensure a healthy environment remains available for future generations.

Stanwood’s comprehensive plan has been updated based on residential and employment targets that align with VISION 2040. Through the targeting process we have identified the number of housing units in the city for the year 2035. We have also established an affordable housing goal for this planning period. Residential and employment targets have also been identified for our designated regional growth center.

The comprehensive plan addresses each of the policy areas in VISION 2040. We have policies that address habitat protection, water conservation, air quality, and climate change. Our plan calls for more compact urban development and includes design guidelines for mixed-use and transit-oriented development. There are directives to prioritize funding and investments to our regional growth center. The Housing Element commits to expanding housing production at all income levels to meet the diverse needs of both current and future residents. Our Economic Development Element in the plan supports creating jobs, investing in all people, creating great communities, and maintaining a high quality of life. Our Transportation Element advances cleaner and more sustainable mobility, with provisions for complete streets, and context-sensitive design. We have programs and strategies that advance alternatives to driving alone. We coordinate our transportation planning with neighboring jurisdictions, including our

level-of-service standards and concurrency provisions. We commit to conservation methods in the provision of public services.

The comprehensive plan also addresses local implementation actions in VISION 2040, including identification of underused lands, mode-split goals for our designed center, and housing targets.

## **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. Over the last ten years the City has also amended existing regulations and added new regulations to achieve consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Zoning**

The zoning ordinance and map is 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 level of service (LOS) standards. The long-range plan is based on a general annexation plan developed in this comprehensive planning process.

### **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. Stanwood monitors the level of service provided and determines when additional services are necessary based on growth and existing deficiencies. The effect is to allow development as public services are available to serve new growth (i.e., to ensure that public facilities are available concurrent with the impacts of growth). These services include fire and emergency facilities, wastewater treatment, water and

drainage, transportation, and parks and recreational facilities and services. Stanwood's concurrency management system addresses transportation, water and sewer systems. Evaluation of level of service is provided for parks, drainage and emergency service in the Capital Facilities Element. The City adopts user fees for the utilities services to ensure that developed properties contribute to the operating and capital cost of providing urban levels of service. In addition, standards in the development code requiring new development projects to provide recreation areas. The City has adopted traffic, parks, schools and fire impact fees.

### **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 by the City.

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

The Comprehensive Plan can be amended by the City Council in every year. Proponents of amending the Comprehensive Plan must submit all information relevant to the amendment to the City by August 30<sup>th</sup> of the previous calendar year. The City Council shall approve the preliminary docket work program and refer it to the Planning

Commission for detailed review and recommendation. The Planning Commission will initiate discussion of proposals in the first quarter of the year. 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.

## **Environmental Review**

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 Draft SEIS 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.
- Environmental Impact Statement Addendum for the 2015 City of Stanwood Comprehensive Plan.

## **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 efforts help identify issues of concern to residents, including environmental issues, forming the basis for proposed objectives and policies and alternative land use maps.

### **Public Participation**

Public participation was a critical element throughout the development of the original Comprehensive Plan in 1995 and its update in 2004, as well as 2015 and further amendments through the annual Docket process.

As part of the Comprehensive plan update, public workshops, meetings and activities with the community at various points throughout 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2015 occurred. In accordance with SEPA (WAC 197-11-232), in 2004 the City of Stanwood solicited agency and public comments on the scope of the Draft Supplemental EIS through a Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice.

A community wide Sustainable Design Assessment Team charette held in July 2012 resulted in refinement of the future Vision. Similar to the 2003 DAT, this visioning session refined ideas for downtown Stanwood and again confirmed the existing vision

for downtown.

The 2011-2012 annual Docket included an online public opinion survey of parks issues, an open house and public hearing. The recently updated Shoreline Management included numerous workshops at the Planning Commission and public hearings at both the Planning Commission and City Council.

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.