

CHAPTER 2

POLICIES & REGULATIONS

Land use planning is now heavily regulated in certain counties of Washington State because of past rapid growth. The most significant change brought about by the Washington State *Growth Management Act* was the requirement that adequate public facilities and services be in place prior to, or concurrent with, new development. In short, this effectively requires that previously ‘hidden’ costs of development—the need for more schools, roads, traffic signals, etc.—be paid for by those who benefit, instead of the general taxpayer.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

The Washington State *Growth Management Act* (RCW 36.70A) was adopted in 1991 because uncoordinated and unplanned growth posed a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the quality of life in Washington.

Rather than centralize planning and decision-making at the state level, the GMA built on Washington’s strong traditions of local government control and regional diversity. The GMA established state goals, set deadlines for compliance, offered direction on how to prepare local comprehensive plans and regulations and set forth requirements for early and continuous public participation. Within the framework provided by the mandates of the Act, local governments have many choices regarding the specific content of comprehensive plans and implementing development regulations.

The Act’s goals discourage sprawling development, encourage development in urban areas with adequate public facilities, encourage economic development throughout the state consistent with comprehensive plans, encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems, provide for the protection of property rights, and require that adequate public facilities and services necessary to support development be available when new development is ready for occupancy. Many of these planning goals directly relate to specific planning requirements in the act. In 1995, a 14th goal on shoreline management was added to the GMA. A 15th goal, addressing climate change, may be adopted in the near future.

GMA goals guide local jurisdictions in determining their vision for the future and in developing plans and regulations that provide for growth without sacrificing the livability of communities in the future.

Under the law, La Center may make minor amendments to its comprehensive plan no more frequently than once a year. Major updates, when population projections and urban growth boundaries are established, are restricted to every five to seven years.

COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES

In order to achieve the preferred vision of Clark County as a collection of distinct communities surrounded by open space, agriculture, and forest uses, Clark County and each of its cities adopted general framework policies. These process-oriented county-wide planning policies were originally adopted by the county in August 1992, and have been regularly amended. The policies provide a framework within which the county can bridge the gap between the general land use concepts presented in the Community Framework Plan and the detailed (parcel level) 20-Year Plan required by the State Growth Management Act.

A complete listing of the relevant countywide planning policies, along with pertinent city comprehensive plan policies can be found in Appendix A.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN GOALS & POLICIES

The following partial list of comprehensive plan policies specifically address development of the I-5 Junction. A complete listing of pertinent comprehensive plan policies can be found in Appendix A.

LAND USE

- 1.4.1 The La Center Junction, the intersection of the La Center Road and Interstate-5 (I-5), should become an employment area for the benefit of the citizens of La Center and north Clark County. Annexation of the La Center Junction is the primary land use objective of this policy.
- 1.4.2 The City shall consult with Clark County, Ridgefield and interested property owners, parties and agencies in the process of developing adequate capital facilities for the Junction.
- 1.4.3 Planning for the I-5 Interchange area should address the following objectives:
 - a) The plan should encompass lands on both sides of I-5 south to NE 299th Street and north to the Lewis River.
 - b) Employment activity at the La Center Junction should be dedicated to Employment Campus and or Light Industrial

- use with limited commercial activity. Heavy industrial uses are disfavored.
- c) Preference shall be given to developments which provide jobs, goods or services primarily for the local area.
 - d) Transportation, utility, or other improvements required for initial development at the junction should be paid for by public and private funds.
 - e) Development at the Junction which may adversely impact the commercial viability and survival of downtown La Center is discouraged.
 - f) Development at the junction which provides low levels of employment (fewer than 9 employees per acre) shall be discouraged.
 - g) Development at the Junction should be consistent with minimum design standards, including signage which should be limited to 30 feet in height; outdoor storage areas, if any, shall be fully screened from surrounding uses and rights-of-way; and landscaping shall be provided along commercial and industrial property lines, as necessary, to provide a visual buffer of structures from public rights-of-way, including the I-5 freeway.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

5.1.7 The City's long term goal is for the La Center Junction to provide an employment area, for the benefit of the citizens of La Center and north Clark County, at the intersection of the La Center Road and Interstate-5 (I-5), hereinafter called the La Center Junction. (See Policy 1.4.)

URBAN GROWTH & ANNEXATION

8.3.7 Development of the I-5 Junction and the Timmen Road /La Center Road intersection is a priority for the City of La Center. Development in these areas concurrent with or after annexation shall be undertaken with careful planning to efficiently use available land to best serve the La Center and general north county area.

MUNICIPAL CODE

The following zoning districts are found within the subarea. Uses indicated with an asterisk* deserve additional scrutiny.

ZONING (TITLE 18, LCMC)

COMMUNITY COMMERCIAL (C-2)

This is a more land-extensive, auto-oriented commercial area intended to provide for the regular shopping and service needs for the community as a whole and adjacent service areas.

Most commercial developments are approved through a 'site plan review' process. Buildings may be up to 60 feet tall. The minimum lot size is 10,000 square feet. Commercial developments must provide screening and buffering when abutting residential districts. Maximum lot coverage is determined by compliance with screening and buffering standards contained in municipal code.

Examples of currently permissible uses include:

- Lumber and other building materials stores and yards, with only incidental cutting and planting of products sold
- Markets < 15,000 square feet of gross floor area (SF GFA)
- Professional offices < 10,000 SF GFA
- Restaurants
- Single purpose/specialty retailers < 10,000 SF GFA

The following may currently be permitted through a conditional use permit:

- Adult Entertainment
- Drive-through, drive-in, or drive-up facilities
- Freight transportation terminals
- General retailer, 25,000 to 200,000 SF GFA
- Hardware, home repair and supply stores > 100,000 SF GFA
- Hotels/motels
- Motor vehicle dealers, new and used, including auto, truck trailer, boat, recreational vehicles and equipment
- Yard and garden supplies, including nurseries

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL / EMPLOYMENT CAMPUS (LI/EC)

It is the city's intent that industrial uses be encouraged as an essential element for a vital economic base for the population of La Center and to provide suitable areas for a variety of industrial uses including manufacturing, wholesale trade and distribution activities. The industries located in this district can be characterized as clean, or not involving heavy industrial or manufacturing activities, and are generally compatible with surrounding uses.

It is the intent of the City to segregate the current LI/EC zoning into separate districts.

LIGHT INDUSTRIAL (LI)

The light industrial districts are intended to contain uses that will not generate excessive noise, pollution, vibration, smoke, dust, gas, fumes, odors, radiation and other nuisance characteristics. Conditional uses are those which may have some nuisance characteristics that may be mitigated and where such uses may be appropriately sited in La Center. Light industrial districts are only intended to be located in areas with relatively level topography, adequate water and sewerage facilities, and access to arterial streets and highways.

Examples of currently permissible uses include:

- Automobile, boat, truck, tractor, motorcycle, recreational vehicle, manufactured home and other vehicle service, rental and leasing, new and/or used
- Cold storage plants, frozen food lockers and ice manufacture
- Commercial recreation facilities, enclosed only
- Distribution facilities (without a square footage cap)*
- Machine shops
- Manufacturing, fabrication, assembling, processing, canning, packaging, compounding, storage and treatment activities

The following may currently be permitted through a conditional use permit:

- Bulk gasoline storage and fuel oil distributors
- Churches, including cemeteries and customary accessory buildings and uses subject to municipal code.*

EMPLOYMENT CAMPUS (EC)

Employment campus districts are intended to provide primarily office and research and development uses in park-like setting emphasizing aesthetics and compatibility. This district includes opportunities for flex office space and areas that emphasize office uses over manufacturing uses.

Examples of currently permissible uses include:

- Day care centers
- Offices
- Printing, publishing, bookbinding and blueprinting establishments
- Research and scientific laboratories
- Restaurants*
- Services, business, health, miscellaneous and personal
- Warehouses, wholesale and storage establishments, mail order houses and distribution facilities ≤ 50,000 SF GFA

The following may currently be permitted through a conditional use permit:

- Retail trade establishments ≤ 15,000 SF GFA
- Churches, including cemeteries and customary accessory buildings and uses subject to municipal code.*

MIXED USE (MX)

This district is currently tailored to the Timmen Road Mixed-Use area. The district is intended to provide the community with a mix of mutually-supporting retail, service, office and medium or high density residential uses. Developments typically include a mix of residential, office and commercial uses within a single structure. The residential component is required to provide an average of 8 to 18 dwelling units per acre. Buildings may be up to 60 feet tall, excluding architectural features such as steeples, chimneys, flagpoles, etc.

Examples of currently permissible uses include:

- General services such as branch banks, printing, professional offices, and outpatient clinics
- Markets < 35,000 SF GFA
- Medium density residential (Integrated multi-family/commercial or mixed use structures, townhouse, or condominiums, from 8 to 18 residential units per net acre)
- Nursery schools and daycare facilities
- Single-family detached and single-family attached
- Personal services such as laundries, barbers and beauty shops

The following may currently be permitted through a conditional use permit:

- Markets- Greater than 35,000 square feet of gross floor area
- Retail sales > 5,000 SF GFA*
- Sanitaria, convalescent and rest homes
- Vocational schools
- Yard and garden supplies, including nurseries*

MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (MDR-16)

This zoning district is intended to provide for higher density residential development opportunities with a minimum density of 8 to 16 dwelling units per net acre. It also serves to satisfy *Growth Management Act* requirements for diversity in housing stock.

Allowable products include attached single-family dwellings (such as townhouse, duplexes, and triplexes) and detached multi-family dwellings such as apartments or condominiums. Small lot detached

single-family residences (known locally as ‘patio’ homes) are also permitted within this district.

LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL (LDR-7.5)

This is the city’s typical single-family detached housing with a minimum allowable density of 4 dwelling units per acre. Minimum lot size is 7,500 square feet.

TRANSPORTATION STANDARDS (TITLE 12, LCMC)

STREETS

In general, developers must provide all streets internal to a development and ‘half’ of those streets the development fronts onto. In special cases, developers must also improve off-site streets if those streets are substandard. Neighborhood streets are typically 32 to 36 feet wide. Cross circulation—intersections with other local streets—must be provided every 800 feet.

ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Access management is a practice of improving the design and placement of driveways and medians along a publicly funded arterial street. The goal is to limit traffic conflicts, improve safety, and preserve the street’s capacity. The city currently has no need for access management standards.

TRAFFIC CALMING

Traffic calming seeks to reduce excessive vehicle speeds, improve safety, and enhance the quality of life within an area. The most efficient and cost-effective traffic calming measures are often incorporated into the original design of neighborhood streets. Most common 32 to 36 feet wide street designs are only effective when on-street parking is commonplace. If the parking areas are not used, the effective travel lane widths equal that of freeway lanes—often with commensurate speeds. The city currently has a limited traffic calming program.

PARKING

The city currently requires a minimum number of parking spaces with all new developments. This is typical for a small city such as La Center. However, as urban areas become denser, jurisdictions typically flip the requirement and impose parking maximums.

Parking in downtown La Center is perceived to be relatively scarce even though there are approximately 700 off-street parking spaces available. Over half of this supply is associated with the City’s four non-tribal card rooms. The city is currently investigating how to increase on-street parking.

BICYCLE & PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES

The city currently has limited on-street bicycle lanes, but bicycle lanes are planned for all arterial streets.

There are numerous streets in the downtown area without sidewalks. The city is retrofitting some existing sidewalks with ADA ramps at intersections. All new urban streets are required to have sidewalks on both sides--except where terrain is particularly challenging.

The city continues the practice of acquiring parks and trails as development occurs. The current parks master plan calls for some 22 miles of trails throughout the community.

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