

Chapter 1

Introduction



A Vision for Planning

We are a thriving community that promotes a vibrant economy, preserves natural beauty, and supports an exceptional quality of life for all.

Adopted by Lake Stevens City Council, September 2023

ABOUT LAKE STEVENS

The city of Lake Stevens is a rapidly growing community in central Snohomish County that surrounds the 1,000-acre Lake Stevens ("the lake"), the largest natural lake in the county. It is situated on a gently sloping terrace rising east from the flood plain of the Snohomish River to the foothills of the Cascade Mountains.

Upon incorporation in 1960, the city had a population of nearly 900 residents centered around its historic downtown in the northeast corner of the lake.

By 2002, Lake Stevens had seen modest residential growth and a series of small annexations of its urban growth area (UGA), which increased the population to just under 7,000 people across 1,500 acres. It was at this time that the city developed a goal of creating "*One Community Around the Lake*" via annexation.



Urban Growth Area (UGA): Areas designated to accommodate future growth and development. Areas must be within the UGA to be eligible for annexation.

Annexation: The act of bringing unincorporated (county) areas of the UGA into the city.

Rural Urban Transition Area (RUTA): Areas adjacent to the UGA set aside for possible future inclusion in UGA.

In 2006, the city began a series of larger annexations (Figure 1.1), gradually expanding its boundaries to the north, west, and south of the lake and adding commercial areas along State Route (SR) 9 and 20th St SE.

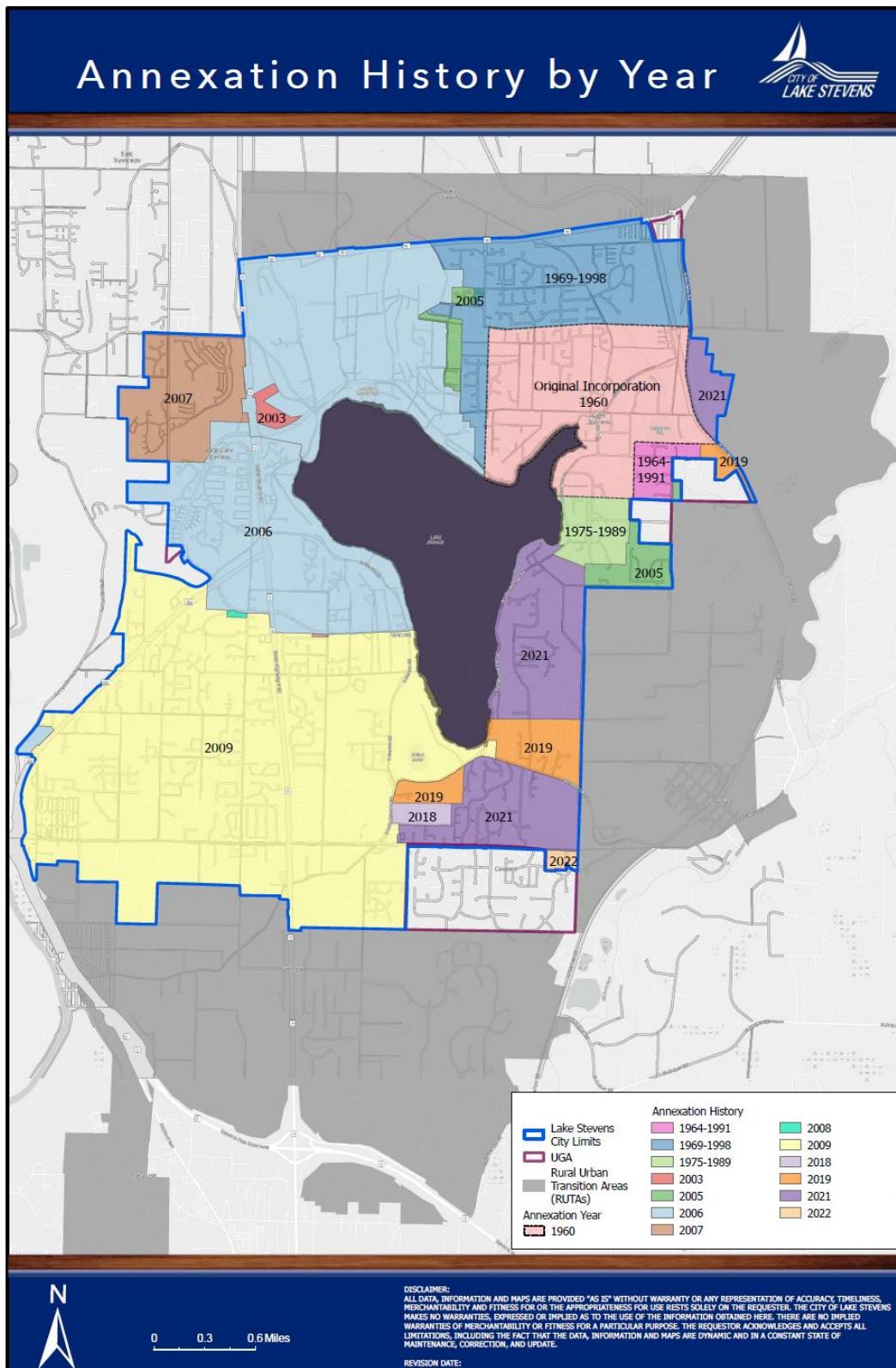


Figure 1.1 – Lake Stevens Annexation History

With the completion of the 2021 Southeast Interlocal Annexation, the city boundaries included all sides of the lake as well as the lake itself. As of 2024, the city covered approximately 7,550 acres (11.8 square miles) including the lake, with approximately 500 acres remaining within its unincorporated UGA.

As of April 2024, the estimated city population is 41,540 people, a more than 600% increase over its 2000 population, which made it the fourth most populated city in the county. Between 2012 and 2023, the city grew by approximately 3.2% per year, which was double the county average. While the city remains primarily residential in nature, as of 2023 the city had more than 6,800 jobs. Most employment is located within the city's three adopted subareas: Lake Stevens Center, Downtown Lake Stevens, and the 20th St SE Corridor and in the emerging Lake Stevens Industrial Center (LSIC) east of downtown. These subareas are discussed in detail in the Land Use Element (Chapter 2) and Economic Development Element (Chapter 6). Beyond the UGA, the city and Snohomish County have established a Rural Urban Transition Area (RUTA) as a future planning area to accommodate growth beyond the 20-year planning horizon (2044).

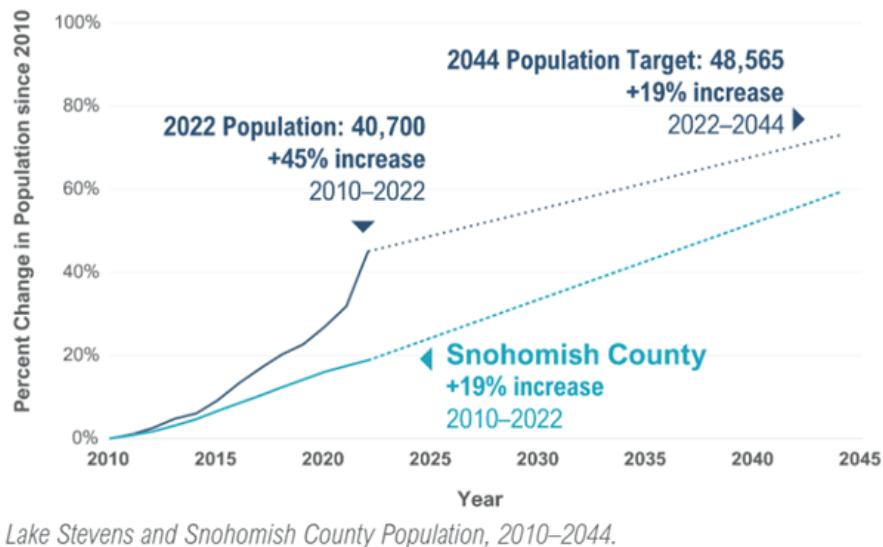
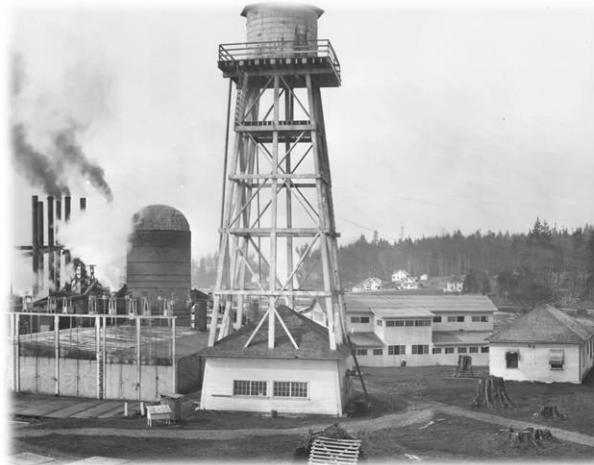


Figure 1.2: Lake Stevens Population Growth (Source: 2023 Lake Stevens Housing Action)

The city's primary development pattern remains that of a residential suburban community, which belies its roots as an early 20th century logging and mill town. Outside of the previously mentioned commercial and industrial areas within its subareas, most of the city is comprised of detached single-family residences, although the city has begun to see more multifamily and townhome residential development in recent years as the supply of buildable land continues to decrease. This dynamic will continue to evolve as the city's growth centers grow and develop. The city's housing stock is relatively new, with significant portions of the

housing inventory built in each decade since incorporation in 1960; a more detailed analysis is included in the Housing Element (Chapter 3).

Amidst the newer subdivisions, shopping centers, schools and state highways, there are a few clues remaining of the city's earlier form. At the south end of downtown where the Rucker Mill was in the first half of the 20th century are the remaining pilings that once supported the mill over the lake. Lakefront homes and public open space now cluster where the heavy industrial activity once occurred. Most of the historic downtown is now gone. Preserving and embracing the history and unique character of the area are identified as key policy and implementation objectives in the 2018 downtown plan, which identifies the downtown core as the "historic heart of the community". This sense of history has been incorporated into recent city projects such as the Mill at Lake Stevens multi-use building and Mill Spur festival street.



North Cove Then and Now: Rucker Mill (photo courtesy of Lake Stevens Historical Society) and North Cove Park today/City Hall/The Mill

PURPOSE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN – WHY PLAN?

State Planning Context

In 1990 and 1991, the Washington State Legislature enacted the Growth Management Act (GMA) to guide local planning. Primarily codified in Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the GMA was based on the concept that uncoordinated and unplanned growth would "pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of the state."

The GMA recognized the diversity of challenges facing local jurisdictions and established comprehensive plans as the primary land use document through which local jurisdictions

can manage growth and develop goals and policies to guide local decision-making for growth, development and necessary public services and facilities. The GMA has been amended several times since its original adoption, including prominent changes in 2021 related to housing (HB 1220) and in 2023 related to climate change (HB 1181).

Per RCW 36.70A.130, local jurisdictions are required to periodically update their comprehensive plans to ensure that they are consistent with GMA requirements and the city can accommodate projected population and employment growth over the next 20 years (2044). For Lake Stevens, this “periodic update” was required to be completed by December 31, 2024, with future updates required every 10 years. This process is discussed in more detail later in this chapter and in Chapter 2. The GMA also allows cities to update their comprehensive plans once per year through an annual docketing process, which is further described under the Lake Stevens Planning section.

The GMA directs local jurisdictions to consider specific planning goals (RCW 36.70A.020) to guide policy development and the implementation of development regulations. Starting with 13 goals in 1990, the GMA now includes the following 15 planning goals:

1. Guide **urban growth** to areas with adequate public services.
2. **Reduce sprawl.**
3. Encourage efficient multi-modal **transportation** systems.
4. Plan for and accommodate **housing** affordable to all economic segments of the population (*Revised in 2021*).
5. Encourage **economic development** throughout the state.
6. Ensure private **property rights** by not taking private property for public use without just compensation.
7. Encourage predictable and timely **permit** processing.
8. Maintain and enhance **natural resource**-based **industries**.
9. Encourage retention of **open space and** development of **recreational** opportunities.
10. Protect the **environment** and enhance the State's quality of life.
11. Encourage **citizen participation and coordination** in the planning process, including vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.
12. Ensure adequate **public facilities and services** necessary to support development.
13. Identify and encourage the **historic preservation** of lands and sites of historic and archaeological significance.

14. Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, plans and strategies address **climate change and resiliency** (Added in 2023)
15. Incorporate into local comprehensive plans the goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 for **Shorelines of the state** (Added in 2003).

These planning goals provide the basis for the city's comprehensive planning process and development regulations and are incorporated into local comprehensive plans through the following mandatory planning elements (RCW 36.70A.070):

1. Land Use	6. Transportation
2. Housing	7. Economic Development
3. Capital Facilities	8. Park and Recreation
4. Utilities	9. Climate Change and Resiliency
5. Rural Element (counties only)	(added in 2023)

This plan addresses the mandatory and optional elements as individual chapters (Chapters 2 through 9), each of which includes background information, and a series of goals and policies related to that topic. The one exception is the Climate Change and Resiliency Element, which the city is not required to adopt as a standalone element until 2029. However, the city did adopt a Climate Sustainability Plan in 2023 (Appendix I) which identified numerous potential climate-related goals and policies for each mandatory element, which have been incorporated into Chapters 2 through 9.

The GMA (RCW 36.70A.080) also allows jurisdictions to include optional comprehensive plan elements related to conservation, solar energy, and recreation as well as adopt specific subarea plans that affect the physical development within its jurisdiction. The city has incorporated conservation and sustainability goals within Chapters 2 through 9 as part of its climate change and resiliency planning, while recreation goals and policies are provided within Chapter 5. The city has also adopted three subarea plans – Lake Stevens Center and the 20th St SE Corridor in 2012 and Downtown Lake Stevens in 2018 – and completed an analysis of the Lake Stevens Industrial Center in 2023. These four areas are identified as growth centers and discussed in more detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 6.

The GMA requires cities to coordinate planning efforts with other jurisdictions and agencies. This is especially important for Lake Stevens because there are many special purpose districts serving the city and its UGA, unincorporated UGA pockets and transitional areas

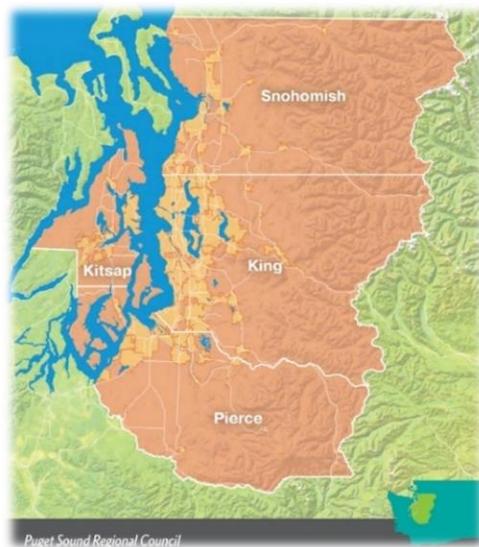
that remain under Snohomish County authority, along with neighboring cities to the northwest and south. Long-term planning for the city is coordinated with Snohomish County, the Lake Stevens and Snohomish School Districts, Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue, the Lake Stevens Sewer District, Snohomish County PUD, neighboring cities and others.

The updated Lake Stevens Comprehensive Plan meets the consistency requirements under GMA – future decision-making and interpretations of city policies will adhere to these consistency requirements.

Regional Planning

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is an association of cities, towns, counties, ports, and state agencies that serves as a forum for developing policies and making decisions about regional growth and transportation issues in the central Puget Sound region (Snohomish, King, Pierce and Kitsap). PSRC administers distribution of transportation funds, develops a regional transportation plan, coordinates economic development activities, provides data and forecasting information, helps ensure coordination between jurisdictions' land use and transportation plans, and provides technical assistance to its members. City staff and elected officials participate in the regional planning process through various PSRC boards and committees.

The primary coordination tool PSRC uses to implement the GMA in the central Puget Sound is the regional planning document, VISION 2050. VISION 2050 was adopted in 2020 and establishes the regional vision for the Puget Sound to augment GMA goals related to environmental protection, focused development patterns, housing affordability, sustainable regional economy, integrated transportation systems and adequate public services. It includes multicounty planning policies (MPPs), which countywide planning policies (discussed below) and local comprehensive plans must demonstrate consistency with VISION 2050 emphasizes growth centers as areas to concentrate future employment and population growth, linking regional and local centers with efficient multi-modal transportation system, promoting sustainability in decision-making and allocating population and employment



growth within regional geographies based on community size. The PSRC strategy reinforces GMA goals to contain sprawl and encourage development where public facilities and services exist or can be provided efficiently.

Countywide Planning

The GMA requires counties to adopt countywide planning policies (CPPs) in cooperation with affected cities (RCW36.70A.210). CPPs provide a local planning framework to ensure consistency among cities and a regional vision and must be consistent with the GMA and the Vision 2050 MPPs, as shown in the graphic below. The GMA also requires each local comprehensive plan to demonstrate consistency with the CPPs.

Snohomish County facilitates a collaborative countywide planning process through Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT), which is comprised of staff, local citizens and elected officials from each jurisdiction in the county. SCT has been in place since 1989 to address local planning issues. SCT provides a forum in which jurisdictions can address growth management issues best suited for multi-jurisdictional coordination in such functional areas as transportation, utilities, housing and population and employment distribution.



Source: Snohomish County

2044 GROWTH TARGETS FOR LAKE STEVENS

In 2021, the SCT Planning Advisory Committee (PAC) forwarded proposed amendments to the CPPs to the SCT Steering Committee, which is comprised of elected officials. The Steering Committee subsequently recommended approval of the policies to the County Council, which adopted the updated CPPs in September 2021. The County Council has since adopted 2044 population, housing and employment growth targets for the county and individual jurisdictions, which provide the foundation for how cities such as Lake Stevens must plan for growth over the next twenty years. These growth targets are summarized in the table below and discussed in more detail in Chapters 2, 3 and 6.

Growth Targets	2019/2020 Estimate	2044 Target	2020-2044 Increase
Population	38,951	48,565	9,614 people (25%)
Employment	5,675	8,894	3,219 jobs (57%)
Housing Units	13,473	18,388	4,915 units (36.5%)

Table 1.1 – 2044 Growth Targets (Source: Snohomish County)

The county's plan addresses many issues in the Lake Stevens UGA that are like those addressed in the city's updated plan.

Lake Stevens Planning

Under the GMA, jurisdictions are required to develop comprehensive plans as a framework to manage localized growth over the next 20 years. All mandatory elements discussed above must be integrated into a single, internally consistent plan, which balances the goals in each element and considers regional and countywide planning strategies and policies. Done correctly, the Comprehensive Plan should be an effective tool in implementing state, regional and countywide regulations and goals while achieving the community's vision.

The city of Lake Stevens adopted its initial GMA Comprehensive Plan in 1994 to address growth in the city and its UGA. In the initial adoption of this plan in the mid 1990's, the city held numerous public "visioning" exercises within the city and the UGA for the purpose of obtaining input from the community, public meetings, resident mail in survey and public hearings.

The first major update to the Lake Stevens Comprehensive Plan occurred in 2006, which highlighted the city's changing status from small community to a growing city. This plan introduced and described specific growth centers as the focus for the plan following workshops and meetings by the Planning Commission and direct contact with affected property owners.

The 2006 plan recommended developing subareas plans for the defined growth centers including the Downtown, South Lake (AKA 20th Street SE Corridor), Frontier Village (AKA Lake Stevens Center) and the Hartford Road Industrial Area (now known as the Lake Stevens Industrial Center). Each subarea plan was intended to focus on a mix of uses to enhance the character and economic quality of those areas.

In 2012, the city adopted subarea plans for Lake Stevens Center and the 20th St SE Corridor. In 2018, the city adopted a subarea plan for Downtown Lake Stevens. Each subarea plan identifies preferred land uses, development strategies and design guidelines and went through significant public outreach prior to their adoption. In 2023, the city conducted an industrial lands analysis for the Lake Stevens Industrial Center (LSIC), which is projected to accommodate much of the city's future employment growth and is discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 6.

As part of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan process, the city developed an annexation plan that called for eventually annexing the remainder of the unincorporated area within its UGA. The annexation plan was updated in 2016, and since 2006 the city has annexed all but approximately 500 acres of its remaining UGA, as shown in Figure 1.1. The city intends to annex the remainder of its existing UGA as well as any areas that are added to the UGA through the county's 2024 periodic update.

A VISION FOR LAKE STEVENS

As part of the 2015 periodic update, the city developed a community vision statement for the year 2035, the full version of which is included at the beginning of the Executive Summary to this plan. Based on community feedback received from surveys and other outreach conducted for this plan, the city has chosen to maintain that vision statement for the year 2044 with minor changes, as it still reflects community ideals and priorities and a roadmap for desired growth.

A clear community vision, consistent with state and local planning policies, will be essential to ensure population and employment growth occurs successfully over the next 20 years. In



September 2023, the Lake Stevens City Council adopted an abbreviated version of the Vision Statement to guide the city.

As the city contemplates the next 20 years, it must embrace its position as a unified growing city. Lake Stevens aims to be a vibrant sustainable community that provides a positive development atmosphere and maintains a strong community image with excellent schools and neighborhoods. Sustainability will be achieved through environmental protection, conscientious community development and sound economic policy. The city will continue emphasizing the role of local growth centers and subarea planning as the primary locations for new development – specifically as essential pockets for economic development and focal points for new neighborhood and commercial areas.

The city will ensure that the city's infrastructure and public services will meet the demands of the community as it grows in an economically feasible manner. Development will be sensitive to the lake, environment, and existing neighborhoods. The community will become a balanced community with sufficient and affordable housing, family-wage jobs and a variety of shopping and service options to meet the needs of Lake Stevens' residents.

At the beginning of each element in Chapters 2 through 9 of this plan, the city has developed a topic-specific vision statement that guides the development of the goals and policies to achieve the city's community vision, which are summarized below.

PLANNING CONTEXT

The city will integrate GMA principles as an essential planning framework to help direct community, regional, and statewide efforts to enhance quality of life, environmental protection, and economic vitality for the city, its residents and its interests in and around the Lake Stevens Urban Growth Area and Rural Transition Area.

Environment

The city of Lake Stevens will provide effective and ongoing investment to ensure water quality and continued environmental stewardship for current and future generations by protecting fish and wildlife habitat, critical areas and open space corridors; conserving land, air, water and energy resources; addressing and planning for climate change adaptation and mitigation; and integrating the shoreline management of Lake Stevens into land use decisions.

Land Use

As Lake Stevens continues to grow in population and area, the city will strive to create balanced opportunities for residential growth, expanded employment, increased commercial and retail services, high quality public services, and open space and recreational spaces that allow all people to live, work, learn and play throughout the community.

Housing

The city will provide a regulatory framework that supports the creation of high-quality housing (e.g., single-family houses, townhomes and apartments) with a range of densities, which implement community design preferences and are affordable to all community members across the city.

Parks and Recreation

The city of Lake Stevens will create diverse recreational opportunities for all ages to enjoy parks, trails and activities and local events throughout the community and with expanded access to Lake Stevens.

Capital Facilities

The city will develop a realistic and achievable capital facilities plan that ensures an effective use of taxpayer and ratepayer dollars that prioritizes capital investments to maintain adopted levels of service; responds to project urgency and feasibility; and provides a clear community benefit.

Public Utilities and Services

Lake Stevens will strive to provide excellent public utilities & services to meet the health and safety needs of the community in proportion to future population growth and will continue to coordinate with local service providers such as the Lake Stevens Sewer District, Snohomish PUD, Puget Sound Energy, Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue, and the Lake Stevens and Snohomish School Districts to ensure service continuity as the community grows.

Transportation

The city will develop an effective multimodal transportation system that emphasizes access, direct circulation and safety for vehicles, freight, public transportation, cyclists and pedestrians locally and to the region.

Economic Development

Lake Stevens will support a sustainable local economy by supporting a varied job sector for residents, promoting excellent shopping and service options, providing a stable and predictable permitting process, and fostering accountable oversight of public funds.

The city also recognizes that it must anticipate growth in the UGA and RUTA and plan jointly with Snohomish County to ensure that these transitional areas can responsibly accommodate urban capacities in the future. Therefore, the city's vision should cover the lands bordering the city and consider these areas in future planning studies. It has also become apparent that the city and adjacent unincorporated areas function as a larger community and should work towards common goals to maintain and improve the quality of life as a single entity.

To keep pace with growth and to respond to changing conditions, the city has incorporated annual changes to the plan through the docketing process identified above. Annual updates can be either city-initiated or citizen-initiated, including amendments to the plan's future land use map. They may address specific concerns, clarify inconsistencies identified during the previous year, review the adequacy of the adopted level of service standards, and update any environmental information and capital facilities lists. Annual updates to the plan include public involvement through a variety of advertised public meetings and public hearings.

This periodic update constitutes the third significant GMA plan update for the city. This planning cycle focuses on significant accomplishments since implementation of the last plan, changes in land use status and patterns, and new state legislation, which have resulted in several new and revised goals and policies in each chapter. After adoption, a process will begin to implement specific city code updates to meet the plan's goals and policies.

The overall objectives of the 2024 periodic update for the Comprehensive Plan is as follows:

- 1. Staying current with state law and best planning practices and strategies** – Integrate revised state regulations (most notably related to climate change and equity) and updates to regional and countywide strategies and policies into the city's plan.

2. **Implementing the Growth Management Act** – Through its plan, the city of Lake Stevens establishes a vision for the community; prioritizes goals and policies to achieve this vision; and defines clear policy to administer local regulations based on defined GMA plan elements and planning goals.
3. **Maintaining local decision-making** – The city of Lake Stevens continues to experience growth within and around its boundaries, which results in increasing demand for public facilities such as sewer, roads, police and fire protection. The Comprehensive Plan and implementing regulations allow the city to assert local control over regional issues with the assurance that state agencies will respect their decisions and will direct growth in a manner, which will reinforce the existing character, scale and identity of the city. A clearly articulated plan will define direction for future development, ensure demands for infrastructure and services are met in an economically responsible and timely manner and inform city residents and elected officials about the implications of its policy decisions.
4. **Promoting desired change** – Specific development regulations and standards will enable the city to guide development and make consistent land use decisions, throughout the community, to meet its vision. These regulations include zoning, subdivision, building and environmental codes, historic preservation and design review guidelines and standards. The city will strive to provide a predictable, efficient and expeditious review process to attract development that meets the community's design, land use and environmental standards.
5. **Addressing changes in the community** – Regular updates to the Comprehensive Plan enable the city to keep pace with the changing nature of the community, remain current and ensure that the positive elements of growth outweigh any negatives. Changes come in many forms such as land use patterns, population growth, household characteristics, environmental concerns, economic needs and fiscal considerations.
6. **Involving Citizens and Stakeholders** – The GMA requires local jurisdictions to provide significant opportunities for public involvement when developing a comprehensive plan. As part of the current review cycle the city distributed a community preference survey, hosted public open houses, and held public hearings with the Planning Commission and City Council.

The city will make every effort to continue involving citizens in the processes to develop and update the comprehensive plan, including those that have been historically excluded from or underrepresented in the planning process. As part of the current update, staff

solicited direct feedback from the Youth Advisory Committee and the Mayor's Citizen Advisory Committee in addition we hosted a tent at citywide events to ensure we have heard diverse perspectives. Broad community support for the plan is crucial for effective implementation. Following any amendments to the plan, city staff will review the city's development regulations for consistency with the plan and updated state regulations and revise as necessary.

INTEGRATING GMA AND SEPA

This periodic update integrates requirements of the GMA and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). SEPA (Chapter 197-11 of the Washington Administrative Code) defines the environmental review process for evaluating the potential impacts of projects and agency regulations. SEPA requires all state and local agencies to use an interdisciplinary, integrated approach to consider environmental factors (natural and built) in both planning and decision-making. Conducting the environmental review at the planning stage (such as the adoption of a comprehensive plan) allows the city of Lake Stevens to effectively integrate the goals and requirements of SEPA and GMA, while contributing to public knowledge, environmental protection, and the fiscal efficiency of local government.

In accordance with SEPA, an environmental impact statement (EIS) must be prepared if it is determined that a proposal, such as a comprehensive plan, is likely to have significant adverse environmental impacts. An EIS provides an impartial discussion of significant environmental impacts, reasonable alternatives, and mitigation measures designed to avoid or minimize adverse impacts.

As part of the 2006 update, the city issued an EIS and considered a range of alternatives for the plan. After the adoption of this EIS, the city has adopted addenda to the 2006 EIS, both for annual amendments to the plan and the 2015 periodic update. The city also adopted an EIS for each of the city's three subareas.

The SEPA review of the Plan is a "planning level" analysis as opposed to a "project level" analysis; the latter is done for specific projects on specific sites and is much more detailed. A planning-level analysis is more general in nature. Because the Comprehensive Plan is more general in its discussion of topics, the analysis will be more general than what might be found in a project-level SEPA review. It is assumed that as specific projects or decisions are made in the future, more detailed information will be provided, and that the policies of this Plan will be considered in decision making.

For the 2024 periodic update, the city prepared a SEPA environmental checklist, which determined that necessary changes to accommodate projected growth through 2044 are not anticipated to result in significant environmental impacts, so long as existing local, state and federal regulations are followed. A Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS) was issued on September 23, 2024, with a subsequent addendum on January 24, 2025.

The city has determined that previous environmental analysis, including the Planned Action EIS's for the city's three adopted subareas, has adequately addressed the potential impacts of, and proposed appropriate mitigation for, potential environmental impacts from projected growth through 2044. As such, an EIS was not required, and the city adopted a Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS). The DNS and environmental checklist can be found in Appendix A of this plan.

Integration Principles

The integration of SEPA and GMA results in improved planning and project decisions from the environmental perspective. Just as GMA goals cannot be addressed without consideration of environmental factors, the goals of SEPA are benefited by the examination of the "big picture" and identification of mitigation to address cumulative impacts of development that occur during GMA planning.

When planning under the GMA, the city of Lake Stevens uses the following principles:

1. Consider environmental quality as each community charts its future by involving diverse sectors of the public and incorporating early and informal environmental analysis into GMA planning and decision-making.
2. Utilize SEPA review in conjunction with other analyses and public involvement to produce better planning decisions.
3. Combine to the extent possible the processes, analyses, and documents required under GMA and SEPA, so that GMA planning decisions and subsequent implementation will incorporate measures to promote the goals of GMA and SEPA.
4. Recognize that different questions will need to be answered and different levels of detail will be required at each phase of GMA planning, from the initial development of plan concepts or elements to the creation of implementation programs.

5. Focus environmental review and the level of detail needed for different stages of plan and project decisions on the environmental choices most relevant to that stage of the process, while not duplicating review that occurred for previous decisions.
6. Use environmental review on projects to help: 1) review and document consistency with GMA plans and regulations; 2) identify any impacts and mitigation needs that had not been considered and addressed at the plan level; and 3) provide the opportunity for review by agencies, tribes, and the public.
7. Continue to maintain or improve the quality of environmental analyses for both plan and project decisions, while integrating these analyses with improved state and local planning and permitting processes.
8. Address changes to statewide planning goals and other components of the GMA, including policies and strategies that 1) address climate change adaptation and mitigation and 2) increase participation in, and provide more equitable access to, the planning process, especially for historically underrepresented participants and communities.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Planning is an on-going process; improved data or changing circumstances will require amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, the city will continue to review its plan annually to address minor changes, to adjust to changes in the city's population counts and to add projects listed in the Capital Facilities Plan. The annual update can also address specific concerns, clarify inconsistencies identified during the previous year, review the adequacy of the adopted level of service standards, and update any environmental information. It is the city's intent to use the annual review to keep the data up to date and address relatively minor policy issues, so that when the five-year review comes due, the community can focus its' attention on policy issues.

PLAN ADMINISTRATION GOALS AND POLICIES

GOAL 1.1 PROVIDE FOR A CONSISTENT REVIEW AND REVISION PROCESS FOR AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Policies

- 1.1.1 Periodically review the Comprehensive plan to determine if it is effectively implementing the vision of the community.

- 1.1.2 Changes to the Comprehensive Plan should be carefully considered, responsive to the changing needs of the community, and in the best long-term interest of the entire community.
- 1.1.3 Discourage piecemeal amendments to the Comprehensive Plan by considering amendments in context with each other.
- 1.1.4 Monitor state and federal regulations and planning best practices to ensure that the plan stays current and relevant.
- 1.1.5 Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including vulnerable populations and overburdened communities that have been historically underrepresented in the planning process.
- 1.1.6 Develop and implement a growth management monitoring program designed to measure and evaluate progress towards achieving the goals and policies of its Comprehensive Plan, consistent with WAC 365-196-660.

REVISIONS AND AMENDMENTS TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

A. General

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a guide for the public, elected officials, Planning Commission, and city staff when making decisions concerning community growth, land use and development decisions, capital improvements, and other programs. However, it should not be so rigid as to be inflexible or unresponsive to changing circumstances. The policies of the plan should be reviewed from time to time to ensure the plan keeps up with legal requirements, community needs and changing circumstances.

The city of Lake Stevens is committed to following its adopted Comprehensive Plan and will allow for an adequate time for policies and actions to take effect prior to considering changes to it. The city is also committed to working with the county and other relevant jurisdictions to coordinate and resolve regional issues. The policies and financial plans demonstrate how the city intends to resolve problems, and thus can be used to inform residents and businesses.

The community's vision and quality of life goals provide long-range guidance for the city. To maintain consistency and allow sufficient time for decisions to take effect these general guidelines should not be changed except during the five-year UGA boundary

review or the ten-year Comprehensive Plan review allowed by the Growth Management Act.

B. Annual Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is a document which guides the nature and intensity of development in the city. An amendment to the Plan is a mechanism by which the city may modify its land use, development or growth policies. Any amendment of this Plan is a legislative act requiring City Council approval and must be done in compliance with the statutory requirements of the Growth Management Act for amending plans (RCW 36.70A.130). As such, except where allowed by the GMA, amendments of the Plan may not be considered more frequently than once per year and must be done so according to the procedure outlined below. The revisions will be reviewed as a comprehensive package of amendments, so the cumulative effect of all proposed amendments is fully understood.

Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket

2024 Comprehensive Plan Docket Applications Being Accepted through January 31, 2024

Every year, citizens have the opportunity to request amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and its implementing ordinances through a process known as "docketing", which is outlined in [RCW 36.70A.470\(2\)](#). As outlined in the city's [Comprehensive Plan Introduction](#) (pages I-14 through I-20), docket proposals are accepted through January 31st of each year for consideration during the current year and provide citizens with the opportunity to voice their opinion on how the city should take shape.

The city is currently undertaking a [Periodic Update](#) to its Comprehensive Plan. Per [WAC 365-196-610\(3\)\(a\)](#), any 2024 docket proposals that are accepted by the City Council will be reviewed concurrently with the Periodic Update.

The city website provides additional information on the annual docketing process

Annual amendments shall not include significant policy changes, which would be found inconsistent with the adopted Vision Goals (VG-1 through VG-8); rather, they are intended to address the following:

- Major or minor land use and road classification changes
- Amendments to Plan text including support data and implementation
- Changes to Element maps
- Minor changes to policies or clarification
- Other minor text changes

C. Exceptions to the Annual Amendment Process

The city may consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan outside of the annual amendment process under one or more of the following circumstances:

- Emergency amendments as defined in RCW 36.70A.130(2)(b) and RCW 36.70A.390. Per WAC 365-196-640(4), emergency amendments shall require public notice and an opportunity for public comment and shall be detailed in an implementation strategy.
- The initial adoption of a subarea plan that clarifies, supplements, or implements jurisdiction-wide comprehensive plan policies, and may only be adopted if the cumulative impacts of the proposed plan are addressed by appropriate environmental review under Chapter 43.21C RCW;
- The development of an initial subarea plan for economic development located outside of the one-hundred-year floodplain in a county that has completed a state-funded pilot project that is based on watershed characterization and local habitat assessment;
- The adoption of amendment of a shoreline master program under the procedures set forth in Chapter 90.58 RCW;
- The amendment of the capital facilities element of the Plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of the city's budget; or
- The adoption of comprehensive plan amendments necessary to enact a planned action under RCW 43.21C.031(2), if amendments are considered in accordance with the public participation program established by the city under RCW 36.70A.130(2)(a) and all persons who have requested notice of a comprehensive plan update are given notice of the amendments and an opportunity to comment.

D. Who May Initiate Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan?

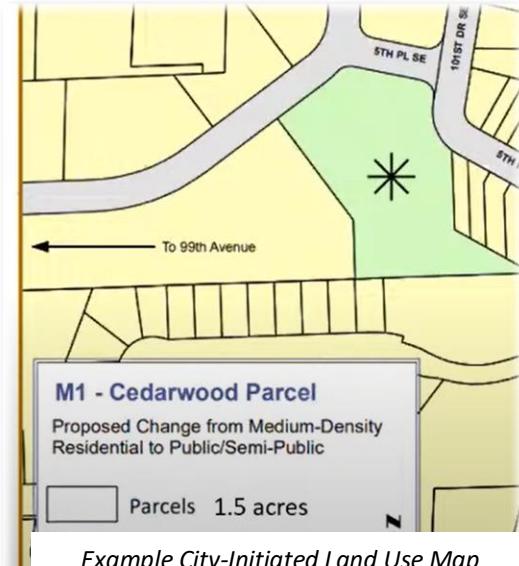
Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan can be requested by the City Council, Planning Commission, city staff, or by any private party including any Lake Stevens resident, property owner or other person with an interest in the city's Comprehensive Plan. Because the Plan may not be amended more than once a year, multiple requests for amendment must be consolidated into a single review process or Docket. The Docket is a compilation of proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan.

E. Application Deadline

All applications for Comprehensive Plan amendments must be received in the Planning and Community Development Department by January 31st of any calendar year to be considered during the next amendment cycle.

The various types of applications for amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are subject to the following time considerations:

- Amendments shall be considered annually. In addition, the city shall undertake a comprehensive review of land use, densities, urban growth areas, and potential annexation areas at least every 10 years after the date of the last periodic update.
- Major changes to the Comprehensive Plan's goals and policies may only be considered every five years after the date of adoption of the most recent periodic update, unless otherwise allowed by state law.
- Changes to any other text of the Comprehensive Plan may be made annually as necessary to reflect changes to population growth, other State laws, errors, or refinement of community goals and needs.
- The addition or deletion of a new or old element or subarea plan shall be considered annually.



Example City-Initiated Land Use Map
Amendment from 2023 Annual Docket

F. Process

Proposals to amend the Comprehensive Plan undergo a two-step review: a threshold review and a final review, as described below:

1. **Threshold Review.** The threshold review process will determine those proposals that will be included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program and will determine their geographic scope.
 - a. **Planning Commission Review.** Complete applications to propose an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan submitted during the time set forth in subsection E of this section will be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to the City Council, using the criteria set forth in subsections G and H, as to which amendment proposals initiated by the public should be included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Work Program.
 - b. **Consideration of Geographic Scope.** Prior to the public hearing, the Planning Commission shall review the geographic scope of any proposed amendments. Expansion of the geographic scope may be recommended if nearby, similarly situated property shares the characteristics of the proposed amendment's site. Expansion shall be the minimum necessary to include properties with shared characteristics, and the city shall reach out to affected property owners to discuss the proposed expansion. If expansion is recommended, the notice for the public hearing shall describe the geographic scope of the proposed amendments and notice shall be expanded to include each owner of real property within 500 feet of any boundary of the originally proposed area and of the recommended expansion.
 - c. **City Council Review.** The City Council will review the Planning Commission recommendations and the criteria set forth in subsections G and H. and determine which amendment proposals will be included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket and their geographic scope. **Those** proposals included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket will then be referred back to the Planning Commission for further proceedings.
 - d. **Alternative Disposition.** Proposals not included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket may, at the city's discretion, be considered as part of the department's ongoing work program or a Comprehensive Plan Update.

2. **Final Review.** The final review process will evaluate the proposed amendments included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket and culminate in Council action on the proposed amendments.

- a. **Planning Commission Review.** The Planning Commission will review the proposed amendments included in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket, hold a public hearing, and make a recommendation to the City Council as to each proposed amendment, using the criteria set forth in subsection I.
- b. **City Council Action.** The City Council will review the Planning Commission recommendations, and the criteria set forth in subsection I and act on each proposed amendment in the Annual Comprehensive Plan Docket.

All amendments require a public hearing by the Planning Commission who shall make recommendations to the City Council. In addition to the Commission's recommendations, the Council shall also solicit input through a public hearing prior to amending the Plan.

All privately initiated rezones related to a requested plan revision are considered a quasi-judicial action allowing for only one open-record hearing. The rezone request will not be discussed during the authorization hearing process but will be noted in the staff reports and hearing records. The open-record hearing may be held by the Planning Commission or the City Council in a separate rezone public hearing held after the associated adoption hearing by either body.

G. Submittal Requirements

Any complete application for an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan shall contain all the information as required in the Comprehensive Plan amendment submittal requirement checklist and provide responses to the appropriate questions and issues listed below. The burden of proof is upon the proponent to demonstrate the long-term benefit to the city.

All applicants for Plan amendments are responsible for providing any environmental information necessary to process the request per the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and update the Comprehensive Plan Master Environmental Document.

Reasonable fees and deposits for processing Plan amendments shall be charged to the applicant. Such fees and deposits are specified in the city's Fee Schedule Resolution.

The factors listed below should be considered in reviewing map amendment requests:

- How is the proposed land use designation supported by or consistent with the existing policies of the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan? If it isn't, the

development should demonstrate how the change is in the best long-term interest of the city.

- How does the proposed land use designation promote a more desirable land use pattern for the community? If so, a detailed description of the qualities of the proposed land use designation that make the land use pattern for the community more desirable should be provided to enable the Planning Commission and City Council to find that the proposed land use designation is in the community's best interest.
- What impacts would the proposed change of land use designation have on the current use of other properties in the vicinity, and what measures should be taken to ensure compatibility with the uses of other properties in the vicinity?
- Have comments been received from affected property owners and residents, and are they supportive of the proposed amendment?

The foundation for the Plan policies should be grounded in legal requirements, such as the Growth Management Act, sound planning and land use principles, the community's vision and values, and the community's anticipated future growth needs. Policy amendments should include a discussion of how the proposal is related to:

- Changing laws, economic conditions or social values,
- Changed socioeconomic conditions,
- Shifts in land use needs due to growth trends,
- Shifts in community opinion and priorities, or
- Significant changes to the amount and characteristics of anticipated future growth.

H. Ratification of Docket and Authorization Hearing

All amendment requests will require an authorization hearing before the Planning Commission and a recommendation shall be forwarded to the City Council for consideration before a docket is ratified by the City Council. The purpose of the authorization hearing is to determine whether a proposal merits consideration.

The city shall use the following decision criteria in selecting proposals for further analysis and consideration. Proposals must meet subsections 1 through 4 below and either subsection 5 or 6 below.

1. Is the proposed amendment appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan, or better implemented as a development regulation or program?
2. Is the proposed amendment legal? Does the proposed amendment meet existing state and local laws?
3. Is it practical to consider the proposed amendment? Reapplications for reclassification of property reviewed as part of a previous proposal are prohibited unless the applicant establishes there has been a substantial change of circumstances and support a plan or regulation change at this time.
4. Does the city have the resources, including staff and budget, necessary to review the proposed amendment?
5. Does the proposed amendment correct an inconsistency within or make a clarification to a provision of the Plan? OR
6. All the following:
 - a. The proposed amendment demonstrates a strong potential to serve the public interest by implementing specifically identified goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan; and
 - b. The public interest would best be served by considering the proposal in the current year, rather than delaying consideration to a later subarea plan review or plan amendment process.

I. Granting or Denial of Amendments

For both city and privately initiated amendments, the city shall take into consideration, but is not limited to, the following factors when considering approval of a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan:

1. The effect upon the physical, natural, economic, and/or social environments.
2. The compatibility with and impact on adjacent land uses and surrounding neighborhoods including whether the amendment would create pressure to change the land use designation of other properties in the vicinity.
3. The adequacy of and impact on public facilities and services, including utilities, roads, public transportation, parks, recreation, and schools.
4. The quantity and location of land planned for the proposed land use type and density.
5. The effect, if any, upon other aspects of the Comprehensive Plan.

The city may amend the Comprehensive Plan only if it finds the amendment meets all the following:

1. The amendment must be consistent with the Growth Management Act and other applicable State laws;
2. The amendment must be consistent with the applicable Countywide Planning Policies;
3. The amendment must not conflict with the Community Vision or other goals, policies, and provisions of the Comprehensive Plan;
4. The amendment can be accommodated by all applicable public services and facilities, including transportation;
5. The amendment will change the development or use potential of a site or area without creating significant adverse impacts on existing sensitive land uses, businesses, or residents; and
6. The amendment will result in long-term benefits to the community as a whole and is in the best interest of the community.

J. Public Notice of Hearings

Since public involvement is critical regarding plan amendments, notice of the date, location, and time of the Planning Commission's and City Council's hearings must be published in the city's designated newspaper and on the city website. In addition to publication, notice of hearing date, place and time shall be posted on or near properties proposed for a plan change. Notice of public hearings for properties to be rezoned shall comply with the noticing requirements for Type VI review in Chapter 14.16B LSMC

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