



Staff Report
City of Sequim 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments
City Council Public Hearing
3/28/22

Introduction

The Growth Management Act (GMA) provides two mechanisms by which comprehensive plans can be amended. The first is an optional annual amendment process that allows cities and counties, if desired, to amend their comprehensive plans no more than once per year.¹ The second method by which cities and counties fully planning under GMA may amend their comprehensive plans is during the required periodic amendment process which must include a complete review of a jurisdiction's comprehensive plan and development regulations. Although the optional amendment process may occur annually the periodic review is required to occur every 8-years. The purpose of the annual amendment process is to keep up with amendments handed down by the State Legislator or by the Courts and Hearings Boards and to make minor adjustments due to changes in local circumstances.

The periodic review, which entails a more comprehensive review of the City's land use plan, usually takes much more effort and is, therefore, required to occur in 8-year intervals. According to the State Department of Commerce the City's next required periodic review is due to be completed by 2025.

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan amendment process is consistent with the intent of the optional annual amendment process which according to Resolution 2018-08 should occur at two-year intervals. The city last amended the Comprehensive Plan in 2018. No amendments were requested by the public or staff in 2019 and in 2020 the worldwide COVID 19 health emergency required staff and the public to focus on more pressing needs other than amending the Comprehensive Plan.

Now that it appears that the worst of COVID has passed the city advertised that it would consider amendments to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan submitted by the public by the end of business on May 31, 2021.

¹ Amendments may occur more than once per year such as for the adoption of a sub area plan, for example.

The city received four requests from members of the public to amend the City’s Comprehensive Plan, one amendment request from City staff and one amendment request from the City Council². On July 26, 2021, the Council placed these amendment requests on the 2021 Comprehensive Plan Docket for further review. The amendment requests are summarized below.

Summary of Amendment Requests³

Amendment request CPA-21-01 is a proposed text and map amendment to change the Comprehensive Plan’s land use designation for property commonly known as the Heckman Subdivision located at the southwest corner of Silberhorn Road and South 7th Avenue (see Map #1 below) from low-density residential to multi-family.

Staff Discussion and Planning Commission recommendation regarding CPA-21-01

Staff proposes to address this amendment request through staff’s recommendation for CPA-21-05. Addressing CPA-21-01 through amendment CPA-21-05 avoids amending the Comprehensive Land Use



Map #1

Map during the annual review process.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission, with a vote of 4 in favor and 0 against, recommends CPA-21-01 be addressed through amendment CPA-21-05.

² The City Councils interest in encouraging development of affordable workforce housing required staff to identify and propose more than one text amendment to the comprehensive plan.

³ See attachments for copies of the applicant’s amendment requests.

Amendment request CPA-21-02 was not docketed by the City Council.

Amendment request CPA-21-03 was withdrawn by the applicant.

Amendment request CPA-21-04 is a text amendment to Transportation Policy 4.3.9, Private Streets. Whether private streets should be allowed in new developments has been actively debated by the City Council since review and approval of the Lavender Meadows Binding Site Plan. Although the Council's current policy is not supportive of private streets, staff has suggested that an outright prohibition on private streets in the Comprehensive Plan may be a policy that will not serve the city well in the future if a development opportunity arose that the City embraced but proposed a private street system. A Master Planned Resort may be such a development. The Planning Commission agrees with staff that the Council should at least amend the policy to allow consideration of private streets in the future under certain circumstances. To facilitate this flexible policy approach staff is proposing to amend Comprehensive Plan policy language that currently prohibits private streets anywhere in the City and, instead, allow private streets through City Council or other City action.

Staff Discussion and Planning Commission recommendation regarding CPA-21-04

On February 10, 2020, the Sequim City Council passed a moratorium prohibiting the application, processing, or approval of any new manufactured home parks. The moratorium provides the City time to develop new policy and land use regulations, which affect requirements for streets in manufactured home parks. The city held a public hearing within 60 days of the emergency action on March 23, 2020, per state law (RCW 36.70A.390).

On April 13, 2020, staff asked the Council for further direction regarding the Council's policy on manufactured home parks and private streets. The Council's directive extended the moratorium for an additional six months to allow staff to work with the Planning Commission on crafting proposed amendments to the City's manufactured home park street regulations.

On January 11, 2021, the City Council adopted new street standards that prohibit the development of private streets in new developments throughout the city. This prohibition is consistent with Comprehensive Plan policy that also prohibits private streets.

Staff's opinion is that while the Council has the legislative authority to prohibit private streets the issue related to private streets is less to do with the ownership of streets (i.e., public versus private ownership) and more to do with the City's past implementation of policy related to private streets. Staff believes that private streets may be appropriate in certain circumstances such as manufactured home parks and Master Planned Resorts and, therefore, should be allowed at the discretion of the City Council.

The recommended policy language amendments are as follows.

TR 4.3.9 PRIVATE STREETS

Include public rather than private streets in the design of all new subdivisions for the citywide benefits that public streets afford and to reduce the potential long-term public liability of private streets. Private streets

may be allowed by City Council action in developments such as, but not limited to manufactured home parks and Master Planned & Resort Communities.

Discussion: Creating subdivisions that include only public streets enhances neighborhood and community connectivity, creates shared public spaces for neighbor interaction, increases routes for community walking, and affords greater dispersion and more route options for vehicles (which enhances safety). Streets are a primary structural element of community growth that determines the community's form, operation, and character, and if streets are not primarily public, the effectiveness of this role ~~is~~ maybe diminished.

Private streets may be included in a well-planned Citywide Street system that does not prevent public travel throughout the city. Much of the City's current difficulty with the existing private street system is the result of poor planning, poor implementation of local regulations and annexation of substandard unincorporated developments. None of these reasons should justify banning private streets in their entirety throughout the city.

Residents as well as visitors are confused by the distinction between public and private streets when, as is common, there is no visible distinction between the two. A requirement that all streets be public communicates to all citizens that they are welcome to move freely within as well as through their community. This quality ties to the community value of being friendly—residential streets are the most common opportunity to experience friendliness as the community grows.

The decision to create private streets within new subdivisions is usually one driven by developer cost. The public street design standards often require wider travel lanes, width for on-street parking, formal curbs and gutters, and sidewalks on both sides, sometimes with the added specification that sidewalks be separated from the curb by a pedestrian buffer strip (with street trees for comfort and safety). When there is no city standard for private streets, some or many of these features are ignored in the design of subdivisions. There is a public "cost" to these exclusions . . . reduced pedestrian safety and comfort, lower community visual quality, and higher levels of required street maintenance.

By 2015, 40% of streets in Sequim were private. Some of these posed significant maintenance liability due to inadequate construction. Understandably, when streets begin to fail, some homeowners look to the city to make repairs. Even when the city has no legal duty or even authority to maintain private streets, the burden felt by residents is significant.

This issue grows with the increasing age of the private street system, and lack of homeowner association reserves—if there even is an active association—and deferred maintenance add to the financial liability that homeowners face.



Private streets preclude neighborhood and community connectivity.

[The city's subdivision regulations are the instrument to instill the public streets requirement in all new developments.](#)

Planning Commission Recommendation

The Planning Commission, on a vote of 3 in favor and 1 against, recommends the City Council docket proposed text amendments to the Transportation Chapter of the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan addressing private street.

Amendment request CPA-21-05 consists of a variety of text amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Housing policies to allow more flexibility in housing opportunities throughout the R4-8 single-family zoning district by allowing multiplex housing and allowing multifamily housing without a commercial component in the Community Commercial zoning district. If the Council agrees to allowing multifamily housing without ground floor commercial uses staff and the Planning Commission recommend changing the zones title to Community Mixed-Use.

Staff Discussion and Planning Commission recommendation regarding CPA-21-05 (CPA-21-01 will be resolved if CPA-21-05 is approved)

The City Council has expressed interest in encouraging more opportunities to provide affordable housing throughout the City of Sequim and believes that allowing more opportunities to develop housing other than detached single-family residential development throughout a vast majority of the community's residential zoning districts will further this goal. Therefore, the Planning Commission is recommending the Council approve text amendments, as proposed by staff, to encourage more affordable housing opportunities within the City of Sequim.

The city can encourage housing that is affordable to local schoolteachers, public safety officers, service workers and health care professionals by supporting the development of more multiplex (duplex, triplex and fourplex) development.

In addition to encouraging more multiplex development, additional housing options could be created by the city allowing the construction of multifamily (more than four units) structures in more zoning districts and without requiring commercial uses on the ground floor. Multifamily development allows builders to provide more affordable housing options within the city by capturing economies of scale in the construction process. A main deterrent to developers who would be interested in building multifamily structures is the current requirement to include ground floor commercial uses for which there is little demand.

The process by which the city can encourage more multiplexes and multifamily housing to be built remains open for discussion and can range from allowing such residential uses outright, similar to the process for single-family residences, or through a more rigorous permitting process such as a special or conditional use process. If this amendment passes, the Planning Commission recommends that the name

of the Community Commercial zoning district be changed to the Community Mixed Use District to reflect its departure from a primarily commercial zoning district

Amendments to Land Use Chapter as Recommended by the Planning Commission

VISION

Parts of the Vision guide the city’s future Land Use patterns:

- New homes will fill in undeveloped residential lands to strengthen neighborhoods by enhancing safety, creating more livable streets, providing opportunities for mutual support, and promoting a social fabric where “small-town friendliness” is experienced every day.
- Downtown will grow in activity and purpose not only to serve as the heart of the city and surrounding Valley but also to function as the core of a residential neighborhood that is the setting of most multi-family development.
- Greater diversity in age, household type, ethnicity, income, lifestyle, housing, mobility, and economic activity will increase community opportunities, variety, and interest.
- A wide variety of housing types will be encouraged throughout the city to serve all lifestyles. Housing will, ranging range from single-family homes on large lots to cottage housing, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, assisted living and Downtown apartments, multiplexes, and condominiums; and
- Higher density housing will be directed to locations where services, convenience, and amenities make it an attractive lifestyle choice.
- To foster affordable housing opportunities and create neighborhoods marked by diversity the city will seek ways to mix small multiplex housing into traditional single-family neighborhoods and to allow multifamily housing without a commercial component in the city’s Community new Mixed-Use District.

FUTURE LAND USE PLAN DESIGNATIONS, USES, DENSITIES AND PROBABLE ZONES

Land Use Designation	Typical Land Uses	Planned Density Range
<u>Single-Family Low Density Residential (SFR_LDR)</u>	Single-family homes; by CUP: neighborhood parks, schools, public services, special needs housing <u>and multi-family consisting of fourplexes or smaller units.</u>	min. plat avg. of 4 du/ac.
Lifestyle District (LD)	Housing of all varieties and density; neighborhood retail. health-care <u>offices</u> , clinics, hospitals; congregate care and assisted living; public services and facilities.	Only limited by height, bulk, and site requirements
Neighborhood Center (NC)	Neighborhood retail and services; multi-family housing in integrated, planned MU developments; public facilities.	Only limited by height and site requirements
Community <u>Business-Mixed Use (CBMU)</u>	Community retail and services; public facilities <u>and</u> standalone <u>affordable multifamily</u> projects.	NA

Regional Commercial (RC)	Regional retail and services	NA
Highway Commercial (HC)	Visitor and tourist retail, service, and lodging.	NA
Heavy Comm. / Warehouse (HC/W)	Contractor yard; wholesale; warehouse; light product assembly and finishing	NA
High Tech Light-Industrial (HTLI)	Research, design, manufacturing, and assembly of high-value products in indoor facilities with office like exteriors	NA
Economic Opportunity Area (EOA)	High-tech light industrial, institutional, regional retail, mix of residential / retail / employment/educational.	Only limited by height, bulk, and site requirements.
Downtown District (DD)	As per 2011 Downtown Plan: full range of community-serving uses with specified exceptions.	Determined by FAR and max. height
Planned Resort Community (PRC)	Residential of varying densities and types, local retail and services, tourism activities (by master plan).	As adopted in master plan.
Agriculture Conservancy (AC)	Low-intensity agriculture; open space	NA
Neighborhood Park (NP)	Active sports and passive neighborhood recreation	NA
Major Park / Open Space (P/OS)	Community-wide sports and passive recreation; preservation of natural areas, habitat, ecology	NA
Schools (SCH)	Public schools	NA

Fig 3.B Future Land use Plan Designations, Uses, Densities and Probable Zones

RESIDENTIAL USES

LU goal 3.2 low-density residential: Maintain Sequim’s “friendly, small-town” qualities by fostering the growth of low-density neighborhoods consisting of, single and small multifamily-family neighborhoods that are social, walkable, and safe and provide a variety of housing types.

POLICIES

LU 3.2.1 SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

Support the character and lifestyle of existing single-family residential neighborhoods by limiting multi-family housing to fourplexes or smaller units and special housing populations such as low-income or subsidized senior housing as conditional uses and /or through innovative zoning techniques such as a planned residential development process (PRD).

LU 3.2.2 RESIDENTIAL INFILL DEVELOPMENT

Encourage residential infill development – through new single-family and small multifamily (fourplexes of smaller) new housing that fills the “voids” in the fabric of existing residential districts – both to preserve surrounding rural lands from sprawling development and to increase the efficiency (and, thus, affordability) of providing the full range of desired urban services.

Discussion: Infill development accomplishes two of the “higher-level” ambitions of citizens as they experience the City’s growth: accommodating new residents that might otherwise seek housing outside the UGA which consumes the rural landscape that is the reason for Sequim’s being, and to avoid the higher cost associated with the extension and maintenance of utility systems and road networks and the provision of urban services that are reflected in tax rates or lower levels of service. The UGA has the capacity to absorb twenty years of population growth with new housing filling in (“infill”) the many voids of undeveloped land within residential areas. without changing the character of these places.

LU 3.3.1 MARKET-RATE MULTI-FAMILY

Focus market-rate higher-density multi-family development to locate with-in Downtown and in the existing Lifestyle District. Consider higher density housing for inclusion in the community business zone east of the downtown core.

LU 3.3.4 DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD

Attract higher-density multi-family housing to Downtown to increase its social vitality, economic growth, and identity as a lifestyle neighborhood as well as heart of the Valley.

LU 3.5.1 NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS

Protect locations that have future potential for Neighborhood Business centers that not only provide shopping, eating and entertainment convenience to neighborhood residents, but also to the greater Sequim community. but also serve as venues for spontaneous social encounters among local residents where “small town friendliness” is experienced.

LU 3.5.2 COMMUNITY BUSINESS

Provide for the major retail ~~and~~, service and high-density residential needs of the community and Valley in locations outside the district directly accessible from Washington Street. Higher density multifamily development is not required to have commercial uses on the ground floor.

Amendments to Housing Chapter as Recommended by the Planning Commission

VISION

Parts of the Vision guide the city's response to meeting the Housing needs of the community:

- Greater diversity in age, household type, ethnicity, income, lifestyle, housing, mobility, and economic activity will increase community opportunities, variety, and interest.
- Downtown will grow in activity and purpose not only to serve as the heart of the city and surrounding Valley but also to function as the core of a residential neighborhood that is ~~the a~~ setting of ~~most~~ multifamily development.
- a wide variety of housing types will serve all lifestyles, ranging from single-family homes on large lots to cottage housing, townhomes, accessory dwelling units, multiplexes, assisted living and ~~Downtown~~ apartments and condominiums.
- higher density housing will be directed-encouraged to ~~locations~~ where services, convenience and amenities make it an attractive lifestyle choice; and
- Sequim will grow as a community of all ages, from families with children, to young adults, to singles of all ages, to empty-nesters, to active seniors, to those needing specialized care, and to those nearing end-of-life.

H 6.1.1 VARIETY OF HOUSING OPTIONS

Promote a variety of housing types ~~to serve~~ affordable to all segments of the population.

H 6.1.6 TOWNHOMES

Encourage townhomes in the Downtown District, the Lifestyle District and in other areas surrounding near Sequim's Downtown such as the downtown mixed-use districts and the community mixed use district.

H 6.1.7 LOW-RISE MULTI-FAMILY

Promote low-rise apartments in the Downtown District ~~and in,~~ the Lifestyle District and the Community Commercial District to provide access to services, shopping, and transit.

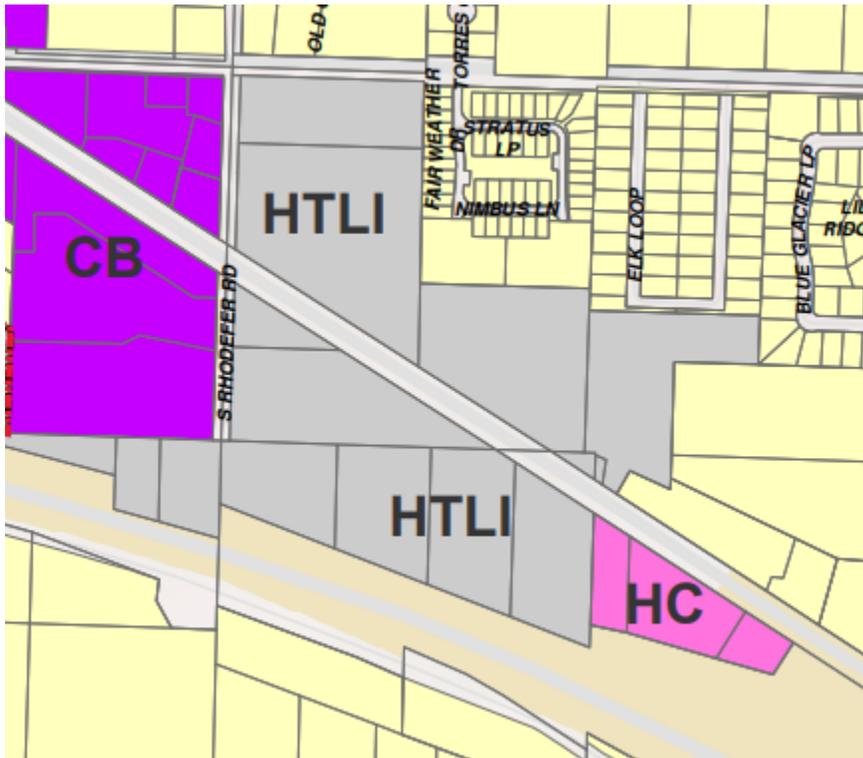
H 6.2.4 SITING SUBSIDIZED LOW-INCOME AND SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING

Establish, define, and follow criteria for siting housing for low income and special needs populations to minimize the concentration of projects in one neighborhood or area of the City.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission, on a vote of 4 in favor and 0 against, recommends the City Council approve text amendments as proposed by staff, and contained in this staff report, to the Land Use and Housing Chapters of the City's Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Amendment request CPA-21-06 is a map amendment to redesignate approximately 4.0 acres from High Tech Light Industrial (HTLI) to Low density residential (R4-8). The Planning Commission recommends this amendment request be considered during the State required periodic review of the City's comprehensive plan. Staff plans to initiate the periodic review later this year.



Map #2

While CPA-21-01 also requested a map amendment to the Comprehensive Plan that applicant's goal can be achieved through staff's proposed amendments supporting the City Council's goal of providing more affordable housing opportunities throughout the city as addressed in CPA-21-05. CPA-21-06 will not benefit from staff's suggested amendments contained in CPA-21-05.

Staff Discussion and Planning Commission recommendation regarding CPA-21-06: The Planning Commission, based on staff's recommendation, is recommending this request be docketed for consideration during the City's required periodic review of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The periodic review is required to occur no later than June 2025 and it is anticipated that this comprehensive review of the Comprehensive Plan will require assistance

from consultants and take between 12 to 18 months to complete. Staff has opined on numerous occasions that the annual Comprehensive Plan review process is not the appropriate process to change land use designations.

According to the 2015 Comprehensive Plan the HTLI area was designated to “[i]ncrease opportunities for new primary employment and local economic diversity by creating new districts for High-Tech Light Industrial use within the existing urban fabric where services and transportation are available.” (LU 3.6.2).

The Planning Commission agrees with staff’s position that the city should avoid changing land use designations without a process in place that ensures the opportunity for robust public involvement by community members. The annual review process does not provide an opportunity for adequate public participation.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission, on a vote of 3 in favor and 1 against, recommends the City Council docket CPA-21-06 for consideration during the State mandated periodic review of the City’s Comprehensive Land Use Plan that is expected to commence in 2022.

MOTIONS

MOTION #1

I move to recommend **(APPROVAL), (APPOVAL WITH MODIFICATIONS), (DENIAL)** of CPA-21-01, CPA-21-05 & CPA-21-06 as presented in the staff report dated 3/28/22 and as recommended by the Planning Commission.

MOTION #2

I move to recommend the City Council **DOCKET** CPA-21-04 for consideration during the City’s required periodic review commencing in 2022.