CITY OF SEQUIM

FACT SHEET

Management of Growth and Development

SUMMARY

The City of Sequim remains committed to managing growth responsibly and sustainably, to ensure that our community continues to thrive in a well-planned manner and follows Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA). This commitment includes creating long-term plans for land use, zoning, and infrastructure that support future needs, like streets, water, and sewer. Major project applications are reviewed by an independent Hearing Examiner to make sure developers are following Washington State and City codes, standards, and processes. If the applicant meets these codes, standards, and processes, the application is approved. See Sequim Municipal Code 20.01.030 for more detail on permit processing.

BACKGROUND

The City of Sequim is mandated under the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) to accommodate growth. Accommodation of growth is done through the Comprehensive Planning process. When complete, this process results in a document called the Comprehensive Plan. It is through this Plan that the City establishes policy that directs 1) the intensity and type of land uses that may occur within the Sequim city limits and 2) the transportation, parks, housing, utility, and other infrastructure needs and priorities throughout the City. The guiding policies in the Comprehensive Plan are used to develop the City's development regulations and Transportation, Parks, utilities, and other master planning documents.

CURRENT STATUS

Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A)

The Washington State Growth Management Act requires urban growth to occur in cities. The GMA also requires most cities, including the City of Sequim, to conduct Comprehensive Planning to determine how it will accomplish and accommodate that growth. Comprehensive Planning involves creating a 20-year growth and development plan that includes:

1) Reducing urban sprawl by reducing plot sizes and in filling
2) Encouraging development within city limits
3) Determining land use, and
4) Ensuring adequate public facilities

Sequim's Comprehensive Plan projects future growth (including population increases), assesses the City's capacity to accommodate growth, and outlines utility and infrastructure projects needed to support that growth, including increases in water storage and sewer capacity.

State law mandates that cities review their comprehensive plans every ten years and other planning documents every six years. The City of Sequim works with independent expert consultants during these review processes to ensure the City can continue to provide essential services (including water and sewer) throughout growth and development projections in accordance with State law. As a result of this planning, the Sequim City Council approves and adopts the City of Sequim's Comprehensive Plan, which serves as the City's guiding policy document for growth and development. Once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted, other planning documents are updated to provide further operational guidance for City staff.

Implementing The Comprehensive Plan and Adopting Planning Documents

Implementing the Comprehensive Plan also involves updating development regulations in the Municipal Code, such as zoning designations. Zoning designations, such as Residential, Planned Resort Communities, Commercial, and Downtown, are a critical aspect of the City's planning process. New zoning designations and development regulations are adopted and applied to guide future growth. These zoning designations allow the City to plan for infrastructure needs, such as expanding streets and critical utilities (water lines, wells, sewer lines, lift stations, etc.), in alignment with new development. These designations then help to inform the transportation, utility, parks, capital improvement, and other plans and programs needed to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation Improvement Program, Capital Improvement Program, and other master plans and programs are developed under the framework established in Sequim's Comprehensive Plan's Elements.

All these elements combined – Comprehensive Plan, development regulations, transportation/utility/parks master plans, and capital improvement plans - inform and guide City Staff, developers, and the public as to what is required for future development. Developers generally bear the cost of infrastructure improvements for the impacts directly associated with their development.

Development Process – Overview

An applicant applies to City Staff, who then reviews the proposed development in conjunction with the applicable development regulations and associated master plans. Only a small portion of development is administratively approved, such as right of way permits, boundary line adjustments, and home occupations. Major Development applications, such as variances, new land division, and site specific rezones are addressed through a quasi-judicial process, in which case an independent hearing examiner – usually a land use attorney and *not* City of Sequim Staff – will make final determinations.

The Hearing Examiner determines if projects meet the applicable State and City codes and regulations, the City's guiding plans (see above), and whether the City has the capacity in its transportation, water, and sewer systems to support the project. City staff engage with developers throughout the application, planning, and construction process, as 'Process Supervisors' to ensure developer compliance with City codes and Washington State standards. The Sequim City Council and the Sequim Planning Commission do not have the authority to approve or deny Development projects.

More detailed information can be found under Sequim Municipal Code (SMC) Chapter 20.01 for differences between permit types under the GMA and how they are processed in Sequim.

SOURCES

RCW 36.70A

SMC 20.01