

August, 2023: Comprehensive Plan Updates

https://cityoflakewood.us/longrange_planning/



What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The comprehensive plan is a high-level overview of the general planning direction of a government body. Comprehensive plans communicate the goals, objectives, policies, actions, and standards that guide the day-to-day operations of City staff. The comprehensive plan for a city also includes a summary of Land Use, Zoning, Capital Facilities, Transportation Networks, Utilities, Economic Development strategies, Climate Change policies and more. Cities are constantly looking toward the future to make decisions that will suit future development. Comprehensive plans are updated every ten years. Lakewood will update its comprehensive plan in 2024.

The State of Washington adopted the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990. The GMA requires cities and counties to develop and maintain comprehensive plans to ensure that local bodies of government are working together to produce desirable regional and statewide outcomes. The GMA cites 14 goals that should act as the basis of all comprehensive plans:

- **Urban growth:** Encourage development in urban areas.
- **Reduce Sprawl:** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land.
- **Transportation:** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems.
- **Housing:** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments.
- **Economic development:** Encourage economic development throughout the state.
- **Property rights.** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made.
- **Permits:** Applications should be processed in a timely and fair manner.
- **Natural resource industries:** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries.
- **Open space and recreation:** Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities.
- **Environment:** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- **Citizen participation and coordination:** Encourage the involvement of citizens.
- **Public facilities and services:** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate.
- **Historic Preservation:** Identify and encourage preservation.
- **Shoreline management:** Responsible management of shorelines

Planning Organizations

Organization	Role in Comprehensive Planning
Washington State Legislature	Sets statewide statutes for planning
Washington State Department of Commerce (DOC)	Oversees the GMA at the state level
Municipal Research and Services Center (MSRC)	Provides research and technical assistance to the DOC regarding comprehensive planning
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)	Provides regional planning and training materials for Economic and Transportation planning.
Pierce County	Performs comprehensive planning at the county level
Lakewood	Performs comprehensive planning at the city level
BERK Consulting	Provides support services to Lakewood staff

Plan Elements

Pierce County and the cities within it are required to “fully plan” under the GMA. This means that the Lakewood comprehensive plan must include all mandatory comprehensive plan elements set by the GMA. Lakewood includes all mandatory comprehensive plan elements as well as some optional comprehensive plan elements. Lakewood also chooses to include some elements that will be required in the near future to ‘future proof’ its comprehensive plan. An example of this is a Climate Change section that Lakewood will include in its 2024 comprehensive plan update.

Mandatory Comprehensive Plan Elements	Optional Comprehensive Plan Elements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land Use ● Housing ● Capital Facilities Plan ● Utilities ● Rural Development (counties only) ● Transportation ● Ports (mandatory for cities with annual maritime port revenues exceeding \$60 million, RCW 36.70A.085) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Economic Development* ● Parks and Recreation* ● Conservation (RCW 36.70A.080) ● Solar Energy (RCW 36.70A.080) ● Recreation (RCW 36.70A.080) ● Subarea Plans (neighborhoods, rural villages, urban growth areas, tribal areas, etc.) ● Ports (optional for cities with annual maritime port revenues of \$20 million to \$60 million, RCW 36.70A.085)
<p><i>*The elements with an asterisk are listed as mandatory in RCW 36.70A.070(7) and (8), but they are actually optional because funds have not been appropriated to help pay for preparing them, per RCW 36.70A.070(9).</i></p>	

Subarea Plans

Subarea Plans are long-range plans for relatively small geographic areas within a city. These plans allow for area-specific policies such as allowing higher density housing in the neighborhoods surrounding a major public transportation facility. Lakewood has three subarea plans:

- [Downtown Subarea Plan](#): includes the central business district of Lakewood, including Towne Center, Colonial Plaza, and a large section of Bridgeport Way.
- [Lakewood Station District Subarea](#): includes the area surrounding Lakewood Station, St. Clare Hospital, and a large section of Pacific Highway.
- [Tillicum Neighborhood Plan](#): includes the neighborhood of Tillicum, American Lake Park, and Union Ave.

Recent changes to GMA planning:

The Washington State Legislature has made several major changes to the GMA planning process in the past few years. The most significant changes to the planning process concentrate on Housing and Climate Change.

Housing

- [HB 1110](#) - Requires cities to: allow at least six of nine middle housing types in predominantly single-family zones; allow only administrative design review of objective standards; require between two and six middle housing units on each lot depending on city and county population thresholds; provide process and criteria for extensions of implementation; and the bill directs Commerce to provide technical assistance including rulemaking and certification authority. It also amends [RCW 43.21C](#) to exempt certain actions from environmental review.
- [HB 1337](#) - Requires that counties and cities allow two accessory dwelling units (ADU) on every lot in predominantly single-family zones within urban growth areas. It also limits parking requirements based on distance from transit and lot size and removes barriers to separate sale and ownership of ADUs.
- [HB 1293](#) - Requires counties and cities to apply only clear and objective design review standards to the exterior of new development. It clarifies project review provisions and encourages expedited review of project permit applications that include dwelling units that are affordable to low and moderate income households.
- [HB 1042](#) - Amends [RCW 36.70B](#) to allow conversion of existing commercial buildings to residential uses and offer increases in density.

Climate Change

- [HB 1181](#) - Requires consideration of Environmental Justice in GMA planning. In particular, climate change and transportation elements must prioritize actions to benefit vulnerable populations. It also directs Commerce to create a grant program to increase the capacity of community-based organizations in overburdened communities to enhance their participation in the climate planning process.
- [HB 1170](#) - Requires Ecology to update and publish a statewide climate resilience strategy by September 30, 2024. To produce the updated strategy, Ecology must coordinate with agencies, including Commerce, and engage with tribes, local governments, vulnerable and disadvantaged communities.

Public Engagement and Participation

Lakewood is looking for local citizens, businesses, and community groups to collaborate on the planning process. The City is especially looking for people to collaborate on subarea planning, as subarea plans can allow for major changes to an area. If you live or work in the Downtown Subarea, the Lakewood Station Subarea, or the Tillicum Neighborhood and you want to collaborate with planners to shape our comprehensive plan, please contact us!

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Important Links

[Municipal Research and Services Center \(MSRC\): Comprehensive Planning](#)

[Puget Sound Regional Council \(PSRC\): Vision 2050 Regional Planning Policy](#)

[Pierce County: Countywide Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Lakewood: Long-Range Planning & Citywide Comprehensive Plan](#)