

# City of Lake Stevens

## 2015 - 2035 Comprehensive Plan

### Executive Summary

#### **2035 LAKE STEVENS VISION**

*As the city contemplates the next 20 years, it must embrace its position as a unified growing city. Lake Stevens will 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 manifested 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.*

#### **PLANNING CONTEXT**

Effective land use planning has become a common feature in statewide, regional and local governance since 1991 when the Washington State Legislature enacted the Growth Management Act (GMA) as Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The primary purpose of the GMA is to encourage appropriate levels of growth in urban and rural areas consistently across the state. The GMA identifies several mandatory planning elements that jurisdictions must incorporate into their individual comprehensive plans:



- |                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Land Use           | 5. Rural Element (counties) |
| 2. Housing            | 6. Transportation           |
| 3. Capital Facilities | 7. Economic Development     |
| 4. Utilities          | 8. Park and Recreation      |

The GMA also directs local jurisdictions to consider specific planning goals to facilitate population and employment growth when developing land use policy and regulations, including control of urban growth and sprawl, encouraging efficient transportation systems, promoting economic development, providing for predictable and timely permit review, maintaining the natural environment and natural resources industries, encouraging public participation, ensuring adequate public facilities, preserving cultural and historic lands and implementing the Shoreline Management Act.

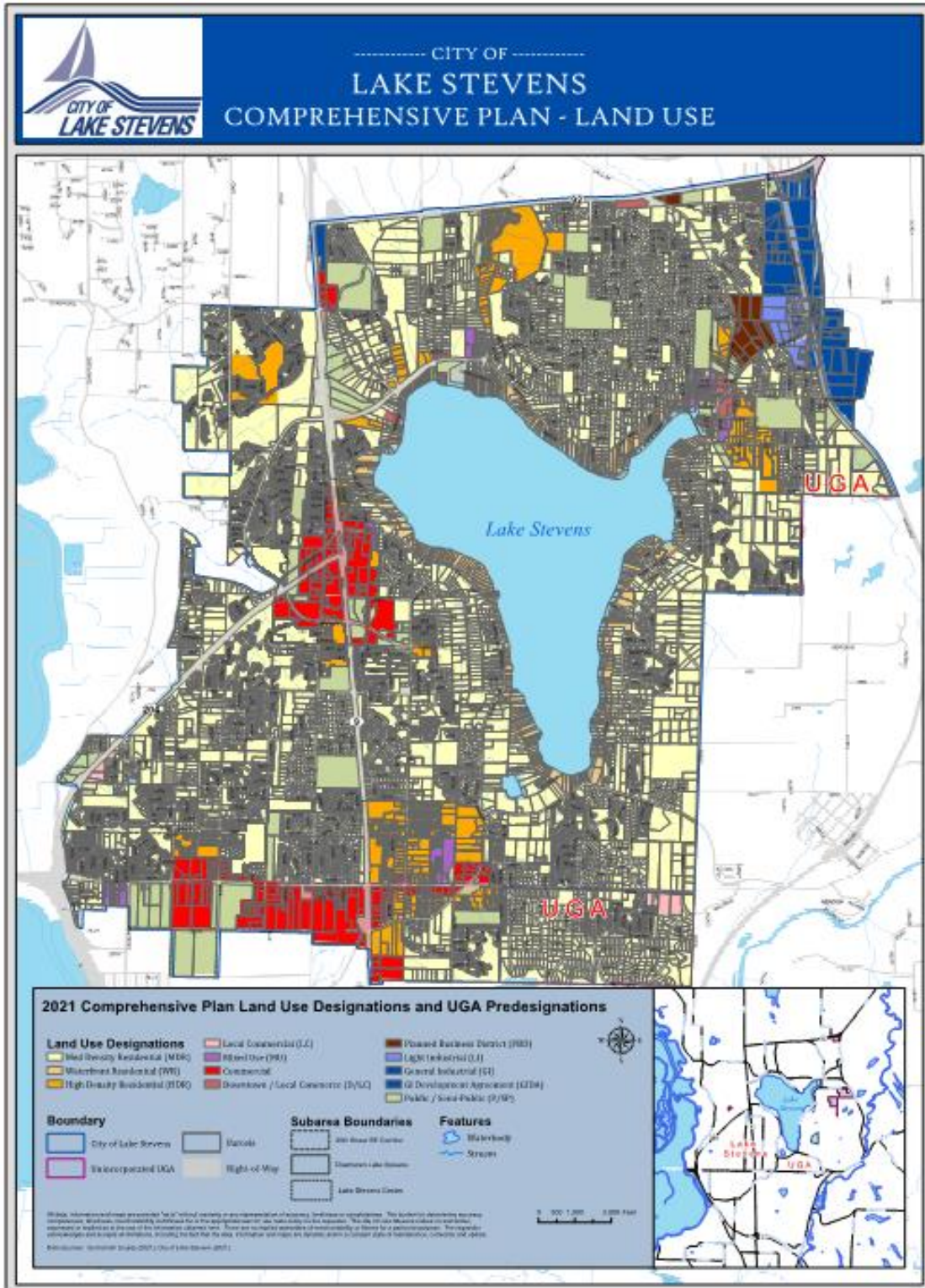
The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) comprised of agencies from the four-county central Puget Sound developed a regional approach, articulated in *VISION 2040 and Vision 2050*, to implement GMA requirements. VISION 2040 augmented GMA goals related to environmental protection, focused development patterns, housing affordability, sustainable regional economy, integrated transportation systems and adequate public services. VISION 2040 emphasized regional growth centers as areas to concentrate future employment and population growth, linking regional and local centers with efficient multimodal transportation system, promoting sustainability in decision-making and allocating population and employment growth within regional geographies based on community size.

Following a three-year planning process, in October 2020 PSRC adopted Vision 2050, the update to Vision 2040. The plan continues to focus on accommodating growth within urban areas and the preservation of rural areas and open space, as the region looks to accommodate an additional 1.8 million residents and 1.2 million new jobs by 2050.

The GMA requires counties to adopt countywide planning policies in cooperation with affected cities (RCW36.70A.210). Countywide planning policies provide a local planning framework to ensure consistency among cities and a regional vision. Snohomish County facilitates collaborative countywide planning through Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT), which is comprised of staff, local citizens and elected officials from every jurisdiction. The cities, towns, tribes and county have worked together through SCT since 1989 to address local planning issues. SCT provides a forum in which jurisdictions can address regional growth management issues such as transportation, utilities, housing, population and employment.

## **PLANNING IN LAKE STEVENS**

The city of Lake Stevens adopted its initial GMA Comprehensive Plan to address growth in the city and its Urban Growth Areas (UGA) in 1994. 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. The 2006 plan identified specific growth centers as the focus for the plan and recommended developing subarea plans for each growth center including Downtown Lake Stevens, 20<sup>th</sup> Street SE Corridor (AKA South Lake), Lake Stevens Center (AKA Frontier Village) and the Hartford Road Industrial Area.





The city adopted subarea plans for Lake Stevens Center and the 20<sup>th</sup> Street SE Corridor in 2012 as supplemental documents to the Comprehensive Plan, and in 2018 adopted a subarea plan for Downtown Lake Stevens. The three subarea plans contain a number of goals, policies, strategies, and development concepts for the areas, which will be integral in helping the city meet its long-term employment and housing needs.

As part of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, the city developed an annexation plan that called for eventually annexing the remainder of the unincorporated area within its unincorporated UGA. As of August 2021 the city has annexed the entirety of its UGA around the lake, as well as the lake itself. As shown on the land use map, the remaining UGA includes small areas east of downtown, north of the industrial area, and south of 20<sup>th</sup> SE..

Jurisdictions are required to update their comprehensive plans and development regulations periodically to remain compliant with GMA requirements. Through its annual docket cycle, Lake Stevens continues to refine its plan. For example, the city incorporated economic development data and strategies into goals and policies. The city adopted two subarea plans that considered land uses and housing in large portions of the city. The city continues to update its transportation element regularly, which contributed to the completion of a new concurrency-based impact fee system. The city adopted a revised Park, Recreation and Open Space Element with a new model for determining levels of service. Other minor changes occur as well – typically in the form of citizen-initiated land use map changes.

The GMA mandates jurisdictions complete thorough updates to comprehensive plans according to a predetermined schedule. Snohomish County cities, including Lake Stevens, were required to complete their major updates in 2015.

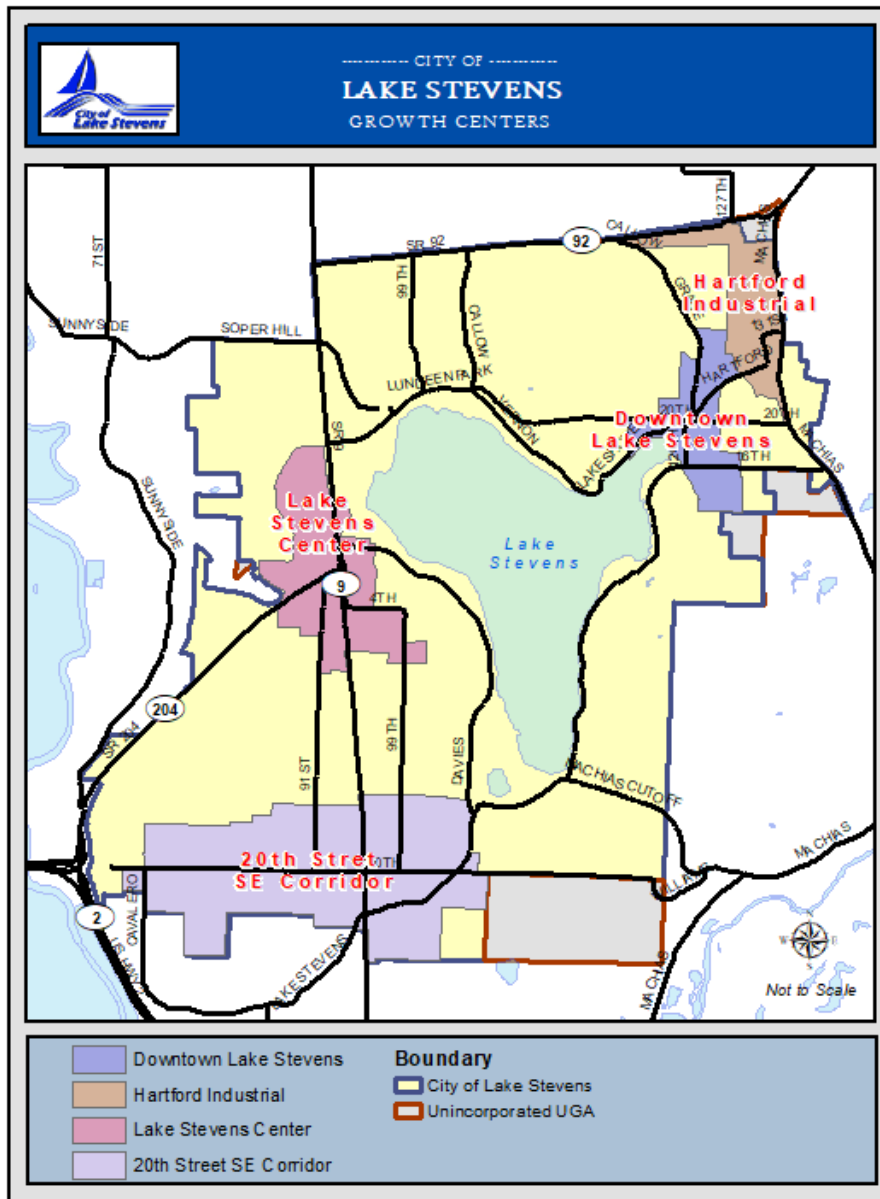
As the city began its comprehensive plan update process for 2015 staff identified several tasks that would need to take place to ensure compliance with GMA, PSRC and countywide policies. To date, staff has prepared a self-audit of its comprehensive plan and development regulations to identify any state, regional or countywide inconsistencies. The city has engaged the community in a public participation program that has included public open houses, surveys, social media, outreach to service groups, and meetings with the Planning Commission and City Council. The plan addresses many technical issues:

1. What has changed since the last time we adopted our comprehensive plan (e.g., boundaries, population and infrastructure)?
2. How has demand for various land uses changed?
3. What has been implemented?
4. Are we using all of our planning tools (e.g., subarea planning, innovative codes, continuous public participation, etc.)
5. Does the comprehensive plan accurately reflect the city's community vision?



Aside from meeting technical and procedural requirements the update has allowed city staff to pose fundamental questions to the community about their vision for Lake Stevens over the next 5, 10 and 20 years.

- Will you be in Lake Stevens in 2035?
- Where will you live?
- Where will you work?
- How will you get there?
- What will you do for recreation?
- Where will you shop?





At the first open house, city staff and board members had breakout sessions with the public to discuss the mandatory comprehensive plan elements. Based on the public comments received, fresh vision statements emerged for each plan element. The next important avenue to receive public outreach was an opinion survey. The survey was posted electronically on the city's website and administered at city events. Through this survey, community members were asked a series of questions to determine public concerns and preferences for growth over the next 20 years.

- Cottage housing and townhouses were identified as the most popular non-single-family housing options;
- The preferred location for residential growth was southwest Lake Stevens followed by Northeast Lake Stevens and the Soper Hill area;
- Retail, High-tech industry and professional offices were identified as the most important employment sectors for Lake Stevens;
- The preferred location for employment growth was the 20th Street SE Corridor, followed by Lake Stevens Center and the Hartford Industrial Area;
- A sense of community and residential opportunities were identified as the most positive changes over the last 10 years, increased traffic was identified as the greatest challenge;
- Participants identified schools and neighborhoods as the city's greatest strength;
- 30% of participants are attracted to other cities for shopping and dining;
- 25% of participants felt economic development (increased shopping and jobs) should be a priority, followed by public services over the next 20 years;
- Over 38% of participants identified adding more sidewalks and pedestrian paths as the most important transportation improvement followed by increased vehicle capacity; and
- 37% of participants indicated parks and open spaces are the most important public facilities followed closely by roads and sidewalks.

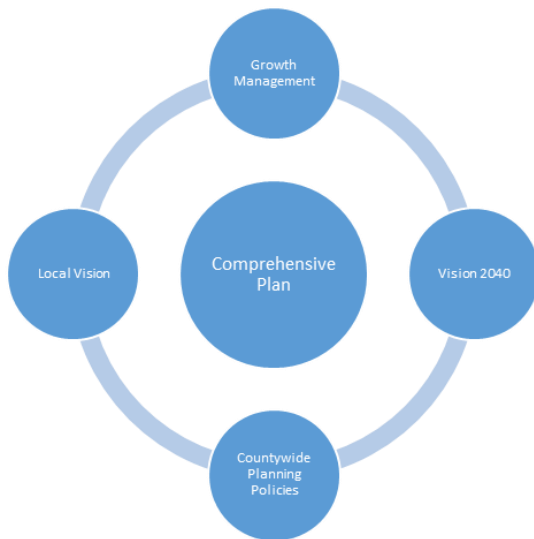
These responses provided a valuable framework for re-evaluating individual plan elements and updating goals and policies to reflect community preferences.

The 2035 Lake Stevens Comprehensive Plan update addresses the applicable GMA elements as specific chapters and considers optional elements related to conservation, solar energy, recreation and subarea plans in individual chapters. The plan incorporates and responds to community preferences and concerns. It also considers the role of regional planning under VISION 2040 and countywide planning in the development of specific goals and policies. The following sections will identify the vision and primary revisions for each element.



## INTRODUCTION

**A Vision for Planning** – the city will integrate the Growth Management Act (GMA), defined in Chapter 36.70A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), as an essential planning framework for the Lake Stevens Comprehensive Plan. The GMA principles will help direct community, regional, and statewide efforts to enhance the 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 as a unique lakeside community.

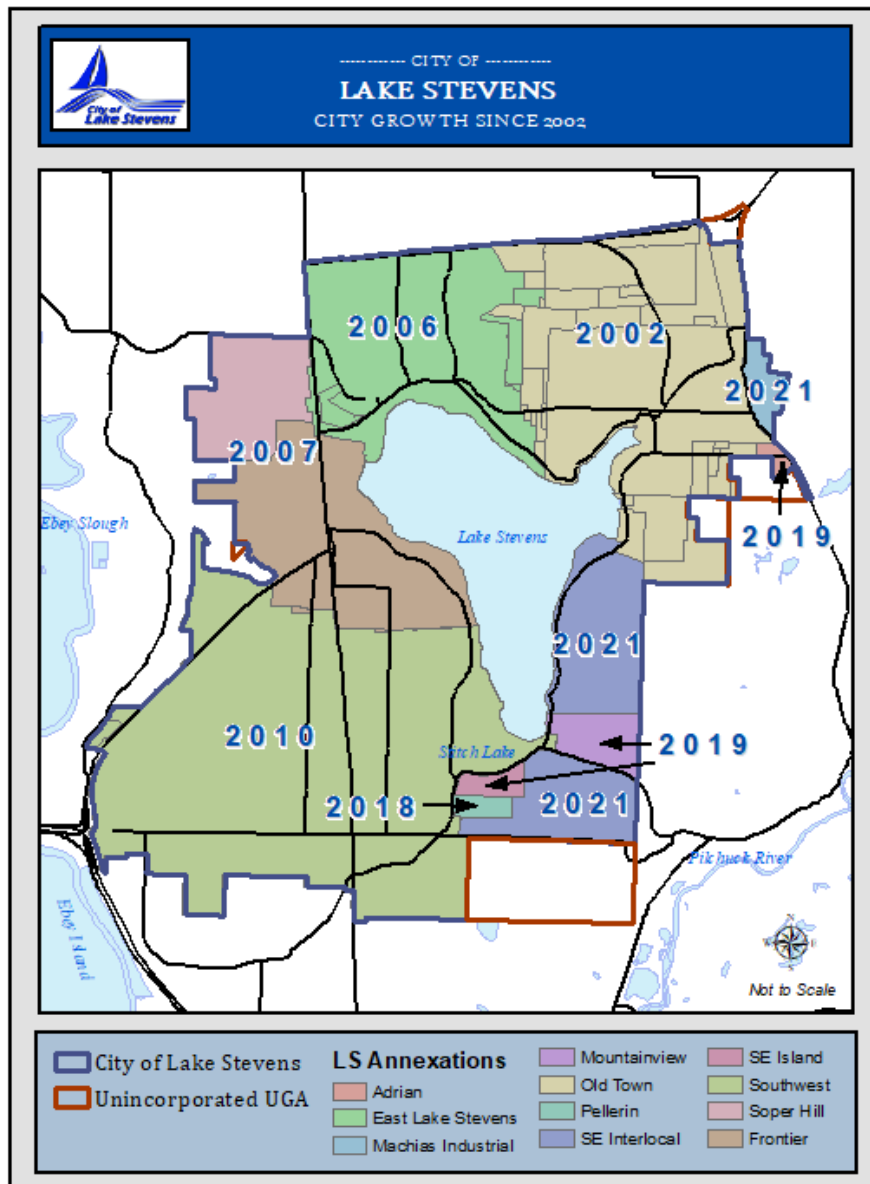


The Introduction describes the planning context for the Growth Management Act, PSRC VISION 2040 and Snohomish County as these relate to coordinated local planning; it provides a basic description of the planning area including the UGA and Rural Transition Area (RUTA); and describe the city’s vision statement and individual element visions. This chapter also describes the public process and environmental review for this update and contains revised goals and policies for administering the annual Comprehensive Plan process.

## Land Use Element

**A Vision for Land Use** – As Lake Stevens continues to grow in population and area, the city will strive to create balanced opportunities for residential growth, varied housing types, employment, commercial endeavors and public services for all people to live, work, learn and play throughout the community.

The city's Land Use Element considers anticipated land use forecasts and growth targets for the next 20 years. The largest single change to the Land Use Element is accounting for areas annexed into the city since 2006. Through a series of annexations the city population grew from 6,361 to 26,670 in 2010 to an estimated 38,951 in August 2021. The current city boundaries encompass an area of approximately 7,275 acres (11.4 square miles), including the 1,000-acre lake, which was annexed in August 2021. Small pockets of unincorporated areas comprise the remaining 675 acres (1.1 square miles) of the Lake Stevens Urban Growth Area (UGA).



Major changes to the Land Use Element include an enhanced discussion of state, regional and countywide planning policies and updated statistical data and analysis, along with revised goals and policies. This section includes significant updates to the building lands data between 2007 and 2012. The *2012 Buildable Lands Report (BLR)* and the *Snohomish County Growth Monitoring Report* set the tone for evaluating the Land Use Element (updated in late-2021). Significant land use trends are highlighted below, as well as more recent population estimates.

- The *Snohomish County Growth Monitoring Report* indicates the Lake Stevens population grew by over 341% between 2000 and 2010 (approximately 16% annually), largely due to annexations. Between 2010 and 2020, annual population growth was approximately 2%, with an estimated 2020 population of 34,150.





- The Growth Monitoring Report established a 2035 population target of 46,380 for the UGA, much of which has since been annexed by the city.
  - The city's portion would be 39,340 or an increase of 11,130 people by 2035.
  - There will be an estimated 509 person surplus.
- The Growth Monitoring Report established a 2035 jobs target of 7,821 for the UGA
  - The city's portion would be 7,412 or an increase of 3,818 jobs by 2035.

Through a review of recent permit data, remaining buildable land supply was identified for employment and population growth based on growth from mid-2012 to 2020. The city has worked directly with Snohomish County and other cities to update the BLR in late 2021.

At the present rate of development, the city remains on track to meet growth targets.

The Land Use Element provides updates to the city's growth center strategy with discussions of progress and next steps. The city's ultimate goal for each center, based on the economic and demographic assessments, is to develop a unique subarea plan with distinguishing characteristics that serve slightly different markets, thus ensuring economic diversity and vitality. As noted, the city adopted subarea plans for the Lake Stevens Center and 20<sup>th</sup> Street SE Corridor in 2012 and for Downtown Lake Stevens in 2018.

In addition, this chapter continues to emphasize the city's interest in coordinated planning of transitional areas including unincorporated portions of the UGA and RUTA where future annexations and development will occur over the next 20 years. The city will annex the remaining unincorporated UGA throughout the 2035 planning horizon. Additionally, the city of Lake Stevens remains interested in development outside its borders given the impact that is felt on the entire Lake Stevens community, in preparation for future UGA expansions following build out.

## **Housing Element**

***A Vision for 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.

The Housing Element includes updated statistical and demographic information based on the *2013 Housing Characteristics and Needs in Snohomish County Report*, prepared by the Planning Advisory Committee of Snohomish County Tomorrow and the *Affordable Housing Profile* for the city of Lake Stevens, prepared by the Alliance for Housing Affordability. This information is used to describe current population and housing trends in the city. Specific attention is given to discussion of housing distribution, household makeup and affordability. City information is compared to trends in Snohomish County and the other larger cities in the county. Significant population and housing trends are highlighted below, and will be updated during the next periodic update.



- Since 2000, larger cities manifest the greatest population growth in Snohomish County, with Lake Stevens experiencing one the highest population increases since the last census.
  - The city population of 29,170 represented an increase of 350% over the 2000 population, which was 6,361. The population has since increased to an estimated 38,951 in August 2021.
- Lake Stevens had the youngest median age at 32.1, while the median age in Snohomish County is 37.3.
- About 7% (1,951 people) of the Lake Stevens population was over 65 which is projected to increase over the next decade.
- There were 9,550 households in the city – approximately 74% of those were family households.
  - The combined, average household size in Lake Stevens is 2.87 persons, while the average county household size is 2.65 persons.
- The Growth Monitoring Report established a 2035 new housing unit target of 4,413 for Lake Stevens.
- In 2012, there were an estimated 10,414 dwelling units in Lake Stevens and 237,899 dwelling units in Snohomish County.
  - Lake Stevens ranked fourth (80%) for the highest ratio of single-family dwellings in the county.
  - The average house size for new construction between May 2013 and May 2015 was just under 2,400 square feet.
- The 2011 area median income (AMI) in Lake Stevens was \$73,000, which is slightly higher than the AMI for other larger cities at \$72,000 and Snohomish County, which is nearly \$68,000. By 2019, AMI was estimated to be \$93,000.
- Approximately 47% of the occupied housing units in the Lake Stevens and Snohomish County were cost-burdened.
- The 2011 unemployment rate in the city was 5.5% compared to 5.7% for the county.
- The 2013 median home price in Lake Stevens was \$246,900, which rose to an estimated \$357,000 in 2019.
  - Owner occupancy increased from 75% in 2000 to 78.2% in 2010, and was estimated at 74.5% in 2019.
- The average monthly rent in 2000 was \$716, which increased to \$1,254 in 2010 and \$1,671 in 2019.
  - Rental unit vacancy increased from 5.4% in 2001 to 9.1% in 2010.
- In 2011 the special needs population within the county was over 110,000.
  - 43,600 residing in the unincorporated areas

- 32,000 in larger cities
- 3,009 in Lake Stevens
- In Lake Stevens, approximately 3% of households received some sort of assistance; while in Snohomish County 3.8% of households received assistance.
- 97,000 additional housing units would need to be constructed in the county by 2035
  - Larger and small cities have about 60% of the available residential capacity for single-family and 40% for multifamily.
  - Lake Stevens needs to accommodate an additional 4,469 housing units.
  - The projected city share of affordable units would be 984 affordable housing units for households making less than 50% of AMI.



Other changes to this section include an updated discussion of state, regional and countywide planning policies and updated strategies to promote housing affordability, along with updated goals and policies.

## **Environment and Natural Resources**



***A Vision for the Environment and Natural Resources*** – 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; and integrating the shoreline management of Lake Stevens into land use decisions.

The city is committed to providing ongoing environmental stewardship of our shared shorelines, open spaces, critical areas, and wildlife habitats. Updates to the Environment and Natural Resources chapter of the Comprehensive Plan include the integration of the state, regional, county and local planning contexts, providing a description of local geology, soil profiles, drainage, and surface and ground water resources, a discussion of the city's coordination with other state and regional agencies to improve air quality and mitigate the effects of climate change by encouraging sustainable development, and a consolidation and reorganization of the Goals and Policies section to eliminate redundancy, contradictory policies and reflect updated code requirements.

## **Parks Element**

***A Vision for 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.*

The Parks Element includes an inventory of parks, recreation and open spaces, describes the unique park classifications, establishes levels of service for each park type, and provides a needs assessment and capital facilities plan. Only minor changes are proposed to the Parks Element including updated references in the capital projects list and updated narrative and maps to reflect recent property acquisitions and projects.

## **Economic Development**



**A Vision for Economic Development** – Lake Stevens will embrace 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 government oversight of public funds.

The Economic Development Element describes the city's economic development strategy in terms of growth patterns and fiscal conditions. Changes to the Economic Development Element include updated goals and policies to reflect the city's focus, efforts and progress toward the economic strategy plan adopted by the city in 2010. Updates also include market and demographic data used as economic indicators that will guide further emphasis on specific strategies supporting economic growth in the areas of job sector diversification, retail and personal services industry growth to serve the community's needs. This data is ever changing and will be used as a "snapshot" in time. Therefore, the Chapter further provides for updating, monitoring data and analyzing results as an on-



going activity to ensure city resources are used for the best possible yield and in a responsible manner. The changes are supported in the Land Use Element and other Comprehensive Plan elements by directing retail and employment growth into the city's growth centers.

## **Public Services and Utilities Element**

***A Vision for 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, Lake Stevens Fire, and the Lake Stevens School District to ensure service continuity as the community grows.*

This element provides a descriptive inventory of, and considers the general location and capacity of, all existing and proposed public utilities, facilities and services in the city of Lake Stevens in relation to levels of service for current and future residents and businesses. In the preparation of this element, city staff met with other departments, public agencies and special purpose districts (e.g., Lake Stevens and Snohomish School Districts, the Snohomish County Public Utilities District (PUD), Lake Stevens Sewer District, Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue (previously Lake Stevens Fire District) and Lake Stevens Police Department) to identify the current status of facilities and services provided by these agencies to incorporate. Significant trends are highlighted below.

- The Lake Stevens Police Department continues to provide a variety of services including marine and road patrol, crime and accident investigation, traffic enforcement, crime prevention, School Resource Officer Program, concealed weapons permits, passports, records and evidence keeping and animal control.
- Within the city's stormwater system there are approximately 68 city-owned or operated facilities, 4,562 catch basins, 13.5 miles of road side ditches, 66.2 miles of pipe and 22,942 feet of culverts.
- The sewer system includes a network of trunk and collector lines, a flow telemetry system, manholes, and pump/lift stations and a treatment plant operated by the Lake Stevens Sewer District.
  - Since the last update the new Sunnyside Treatment Plant and Southwest Interceptor have been completed, providing additional capacity for development.
  - The Sewer District has completed the 2016 update to their Sanitary Sewer Comprehensive Plan
- Snohomish Regional Fire and Rescue serves an area of about 140 square miles, including the 46 square miles and 3 stations of the previous Lake Stevens Fire District, which merged with District 7 on January 1, 2020.
  - The Fire District performs fire code compliance activities, inspects commercial and public buildings for the city of Lake Stevens (381 in 2013) and reviews land use and building permits through the Fire Marshal's office.



- In 2013, the Fire District responded to 4,659 calls. The newly combined district responded to over 17,000 calls in 2019.
- Over the past 5 years, the Fire District has experienced an annual increase in call volume of 1.5%.
- The Fire District plans to increase the daily staffing level to 14 firefighters by year 2017 and build a new station by 2022.
- The Lake Stevens School District covers approximately 37 square miles including the majority of the city and its UGA
  - The District currently serves a student population of 9,200 with seven elementary schools, two middle schools, one mid-high school, one high school and one homeschool partnership program (HomeLink). The District estimates the enrollment will total 10,776 students in 2025. The District has projected permanent capacity shortfall by 2025 for K-5 of 1,581 students (with no improvements).
  - Currently five of the seven elementary schools are above their design capacity.
  - The city adopted the 2020-2025 School District Capital Facilities Plan in November 2020.
- Following annexations in 2019 and 2021, the Snohomish School District now serves a small area in the southeast corner of the City and UGA.
  - The district serves a population of 9,585 students with ten elementary schools, two middle schools, two high schools, one alternative school, and a Parent Partnership Program. None of the schools are located in the city or UGA.
  - The district estimates that enrollment will decrease by 192 students by 2025 (for a total of 9,393 students).
  - The city adopted the 2020-2025 School District Capital Facilities Plan in December 2021.
- The city coordinates with the Snohomish County Health District for public health services, specifically the review of septic systems and food service inspections.
- Waste Management Northwest provides solid waste services within the city under a 10-year contract through March 2031
- Puget Sound Energy provides natural gas service through a city franchise.
- The Public Utility District No. 1 of Snohomish County (PUD), serves the city of Lake Stevens
  - 80% of its power comes from the Bonneville Power Administration, with the remainder provided from a mix of renewable resources.
  - The PUD operates 3 distribution substations within the city and multiple transmission lines.
- The PUD also manages the city's water system, which includes 8 reservoirs and 330 miles of pipe.



- The primary water supply to the Lake Stevens Water System comes from Spada Lake and is purchased from the city of Everett.
- Former emergency wells in the northeast corner of the city have been converted to full-time use to supplement the water supply.

## **Transportation**

***A Vision for 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.

The Transportation Element contains updated information related to road classifications, level of service standards, street inventory, multi-modal planning, and mass transit. The chapter includes required GMA, PSRC and county-required goals and policies. Analysis of future roadway, safety and pedestrian and bicycle needs have also been reviewed and updated. The goals and policies have been revised as needed to ensure required elements are included for consistency with other plan elements.

## **Capital Facilities**

***A Vision for 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, is consistent with the city's growth strategy, and provides a clear community benefit.

The Capital Facilities Element was substantially changed in 2012 and 2013 as a result of the newly adopted Subarea Plans for Lake Stevens Center and 20th Street SE Corridor. The primary modifications to the Capital Facilities Element in 2016 included updates of financial data, inventory, funding mechanisms and clarification of the 6-year Capital Improvement Plan. The Goals and Policies were updated to reflect the city's desire to be a sustainable community around the Lake with unsurpassed infrastructure supporting an exceptional quality of life. The city expects to accomplish these goals by ensuring good fiscal stewardship, using smart growth principles to understand how the city's planned growth pattern affects the investments that will be needed and investing in where new growth should occur. The changes in this Element also provide for the short- and long-term cost planning to support infrastructure expenditures.



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