

Planning and Community Development Key Initiatives 2015

The Planning and Community Development Department is responsible for a wide range of functions related to community change, enhancement and preservation. Areas of responsibility include planning and zoning, building inspection and plan check services and economic development. Specific task areas include current and long-range planning, zoning administration, environmental review, historic preservation, code compliance, redevelopment and fostering appropriate economic growth. The Department strives to provide vision and leadership within the context of innovative, high quality, equitable and efficient services which encompass and reflect community values.

As we conduct our work, we strive to be:

- Efficient and effective in the provision of services for our City;
- Proactive, creative problem solvers;
- Responsible stewards of public resources;
- Strategic partners with enterprise, public and private entities; and
- Respectful public administrators who are responsive to the changing needs of our community.

Organizational Structure

PCD is organized into three divisions: Long Range Planning, Community and Economic Development and Current Planning and Permitting.

2015 Initiatives - Long-range Planning Division

Comprehensive Plan

Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendment Process. Every year, the City processes amendments to the comprehensive plan. Amendment requests may be initiated by Council, or submitted by property owners or City staff. There are 3 amendments that will be considered in 2014-15, all in the Samish Neighborhood

Comprehensive Plan/Urban Growth Area Update. The State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the City to periodically update the comprehensive plan. The current version of the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2006. The deadline for completing the next update is June 30, 2016. The Comprehensive Plan is a goal and policy document that guides the physical development of the city. It provides the framework for land use decisions that ultimately determine where and how the city will accommodate the forecasted population and employment growth. The Plan includes chapters on land use, transportation, housing, environment, capital facilities, economic development and parks and recreation. More information on the Plan update process can be found on-line at www.cob.org/services/planning/comprehensive/2016-update.aspx The GMA also requires that the City's Critical Area Ordinance (CAO) be updated and reviewed to ensure it meets Best Available Science. Additionally, the Department of Commerce has recommended clarification and simplification in both CAO language and process. The CAO review and update is being facilitated by the Current Planning Division.

Urban Growth Areas

Expanding the Boundaries of the City through Annexations. Certain areas adjacent to the current city limits have been designated by the City and County as "Urban Growth Areas" or "UGA's". These areas are eligible for annexation to the city. At this time, property owners in 2 portions of the UGA have petitioned for annexation and another petition is expected to be submitted soon. All of the application are in the northerly portions of the City. The City Council will make the final decision on annexation in 2015.

2015 Initiatives - Community and Economic Development Division

Implementing Urban Villages

Samish Way. The City is committed to implementing the vision and goals of the Samish Way Urban Village plan which will revitalize this area. Currently, the City is leading a coordinated strategy to address the increasing problems of criminal activity and inappropriate housing in the Samish Way corridor, particularly regarding activities occurring at or around several motels in the area, notably the Aloha Motel.

Incentives (Opportunity Zones). The City currently offers a number of tools to incentivize and remove barriers to redevelopment, primarily within urban villages. The City is currently evaluating if there are additional locations where these incentives could be employed and if they should be modified in order to encourage desired development. In addition, the City will evaluate employing additional incentives within the urban village districts and other geographical areas, as well as non-geographical incentives for certain desired types of development, including affordable housing.

Affordable Housing

Housing Production and Preservation. The City will utilize nearly \$5 Million in local and federal sources to finance the construction of new affordable rental housing projects, the preservation of existing aging housing stock and to provide assistance in the purchase of homes for first time homebuyers. This investment is conservatively expected to leverage \$40 Million and create or preserve 125 affordable housing units.

Economic Development

Redevelop City Properties. The City owns two properties in the Old Town District, the *Army Street* site (between Bay Street and Central Avenue) and *600 W Holly* (between Whatcom Creek and C Street). Both properties have been identified as strategic redevelopment opportunities connecting the community to the waterfront and spurring private investment in Old Town. The City will solicit Statements of Interest and/or Development Proposals from interested development partners and if viable, enter into negotiations during 2015. If the Aloha Motel is acquired through condemnation in the Samish Way Urban Village, the City will demolish the structures and make that site available for redevelopment as well.

2015 Initiatives - Current Planning and Permitting.

Current Planning

Subdivision Update. The city's subdivision code will be updated to reflect the goals and visions of the Comprehensive Plan, ensure efficient use of land, and provide clear and consistent review processes. The update includes stakeholder input, drafting new regulations, and ensuring public review through the legislative process.

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Update. ADU's help the City provide a range of housing choices for residents. The 1995 ADU ordinance requires review of the existing regulations upon issuance of the 200th ADU permit or before any specific neighborhood exceeds 20 ADU's. The South Hill Neighborhood is nearing this number and the update intends to analyze the current regulations and to recommend possible changes that will ensure implementation of the comprehensive plan, efficient use of land, and clear and consistent review processes.

Permitting

Permitting Software Replacement. The City's software for Planning and Permitting, Tidemark, is outdated and no longer meets the needs of the community. A new system is required that will meet the goals of providing the public with easier access to information and permitting while improving internal accuracy and efficiency. The City selected and signed contracts with CRW software in September 2014. Phased implementation of the new system will span 2014-2016.

Lean Process Improvements. Lean principles and methods both identify and then implement the most efficient, value added way to provide customer service. Through application of the Lean philosophy, the development review process will be analyzed in four phases (Pre-application, design review, public facility review and construction, and building permit review through occupancy). The first two phases are underway and have or will be implemented by early 2015. The last two phases will occur in 2015 with full implementation by 2016.



PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA 98225
Telephone: (360) 778-8300 Fax: (360) 778-8302 TTY: (360) 778-8382
www.cob.org/government/departments/pcd