



Mason County Plan 2036

Growth and Opportunity:

Planning for sustainable community and economic development

Chapter 1: Citizen's Guide

This guide is intended to help you understand Mason County long-range planning and growth policy processes, make it easier to navigate the planning documents, and provide you with a snap shot of trends we expect to see over the next 20 years.



Why do we need a long-range plan for Mason County?

All communities in Washington engage in long range planning whether they do so as part of the state's Growth Management Act requirements or not. Each time a county decides to commit money to the building of infrastructure such as water mains, streets and roads, schools or the provision of public health, law enforcement or fire services, it is shaping the community's future. When a community chooses to maintain their public facilities or provide certain services, they are affecting the desirability and livability of the community.

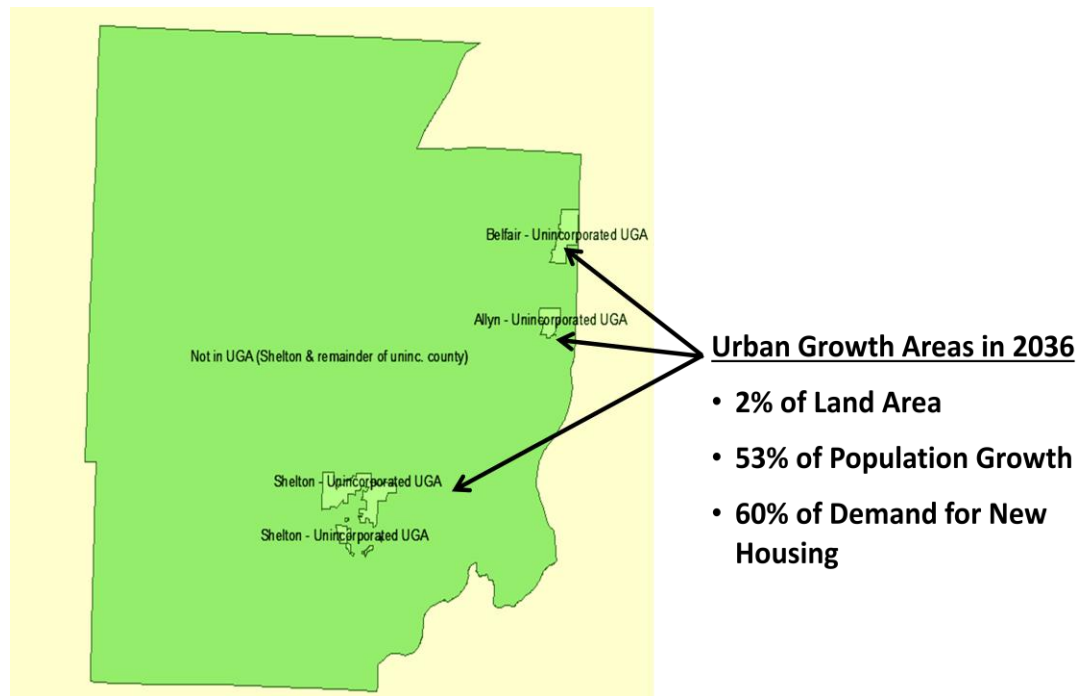
“COMPREHENSIVE PLAN” REFERS TO A LONG-RANGE PLAN MEANT TO GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS THAT WILL SHAPE MASON COUNTY IN THE COMING DECADES.”

*--Mason County Commission
Chairman, Kevin Shetty*

VISION...

“MASON COUNTY WILL REMAIN A PRIMARILY RURAL COUNTY, CHARACTERIZED BY QUIET TRANQUILITY, PRIVACY, NATURAL VIEWS, AND RURAL ENTERPRISE. ALTHOUGH RURAL CHARACTER MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE, ASPECTS OF IT INCLUDE: NATURAL VISTAS, FISH, SHELLFISH, WILDLIFE, AND NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS; FEWER RESTRICTIONS AND MORE PRIVACY THAN IN AN URBAN AREA; URBAN GROWTH AREAS THAT ARE VIBRANT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CENTERS, THE RESPONSIBLE OPERATION OF RESOURCE BASED INDUSTRIES SUCH AS TIMBER, MINING, AGRICULTURE, AND AQUACULTURE; AND THE CLOSE TIES OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY TO THE LAND.

THE URBAN GROWTH AREAS OF SHELTON, BELFAIR, AND ALLYN AS WELL AS RURAL ACTIVITY CENTERS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY WILL SERVE AS THE PRINCIPAL HOUSING, ECONOMIC, CIVIC, AND SOCIAL CENTERS INCLUDING COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, AND AIRPORT AND BUSINESS HUBS. EACH WILL HAVE A COMPACT CORE AREA ANCHORED BY RETAIL, SERVICE INDUSTRIES, GOVERNMENT, HOUSING AND EDUCATION FACILITIES. SHELTON WILL SERVE AS A REGIONAL HEALTH CENTER FOR THE OLYMPIC PENINSULA, AND REGIONAL RETAIL WILL BE CENTERED IN THE CITY'S OLYMPIC HIGHWAY NORTH AREA. THE THREE URBAN GROWTH AREAS WILL PROVIDE A STRONG EMPLOYMENT AND TAX BASE.”



Mason County's Projected Growth in Urban Growth Areas

Why do we need a long-range plan?

1. Mason County is Growing

Population in Mason County is projected to grow by about 21,500 people, a 34% increase over the next 20 years. Through long range planning, we are working to maintain the County’s vision.

Mason County Population Growth Projection 2016-2036				
	2016	2036	Population Increase	Percent Increase 2016-2036
Mason County Total	62,320	83,800	21,480	34%
City of Shelton	10,070	16,200	6,130	61%
Shelton UGA	3,740	7,220	3,480	93%
Urban Growth Areas (Allyn, Belfair)	2,990	4,720	1,730	58%
Rural County	45,520	55,660	10,140	22%

Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management and City of Shelton

URBAN AND RURAL LAND AREA IN MASON COUNTY		
Area	Total Acres	Percent of Total Acres
Rural Lands	387,300	63%
Olympic National Forest	154,080	25%
Waters	57,600	9%
Tribal Nations	8,180	1%
Shelton Urban Growth Area	5,500	.9%
City of Shelton	3,900	.6%
Belfair Urban Growth Area	2,500	.4%
Allyn Urban Growth Area	1,000	.1%
Total County	620,060	100%

Source: Mason County GIS Data

The tables and figures in this Chapter provide a snapshot of growth expected in Mason County in the next 20 years and a picture of urban and rural lands.



Mt. Ellinor, Olympic National Forest

2. Mason County is a Safe Place to Live, Work, Play

Mason County is improving safety and security of residents and visitors. Violent Crime per 100,000 people reported in 2015 showed improvement from 336/100,000 reported in 2013 to 285/100,000 in 2015. This is a testament to the excellent law enforcement and fire services in Mason County. Planning ensures these services continue to meet the needs of a growing population.

opportunities for walking, hiking and biking...

Favorite hikes and bikes include:

- Shelton to Belfair Trail (Planned)
- Shelton to MCRA Park Trail
- North Bay Trail – Allyn to tip of Case Inlet (Planned)
- Theler Wildlife Refuge Trail
- Kennedy Creek Salmon Trail Extension
- Harstine Island Loop (9.4 miles)
- Mason Lake Loop (24 miles)
- Skokomish Valley Road (11 miles)
- Kamilche-Bloomfield-Old Olympic Highway Loop (12 miles)

3. Mason County is Working to be Washington’s Most Welcoming County

Air Quality in Mason County is better than most parts of the state; we have more parks and recreation areas than most counties (1.5 acres/per person); and we boast over 700 miles some of the most beautiful and accessible coastline in the state that is protected by our Shoreline Master Program. Traffic congestion is rare, and our roads and bridges are well maintained. Our existing and planned trails in Mason County are some of the most beautiful in the state and increasingly popular with visitors and residents alike looking for



Jarrell’s Cove, Harstine Island



Theler Wildlife Refuge Trail



Olympic College – Mason County, Wa

4. Mason County is Innovating and Expanding Economic Opportunity

With over 7,000 acres of working forest land, Mason County continues to build on a strong timber heritage. Mason County’s employment has rebounded to pre-recession rates.

We are expanding and innovating in new areas of agriculture including organic farming and our nationally recognized Christmas tree farming, and continuing to support tribal fisheries.

Mason County also supports the Washington State University Extension’s Small Farms Program providing technical assistance, educational opportunities, economic opportunities, and a direct link to state and federal resources available to family farmers.

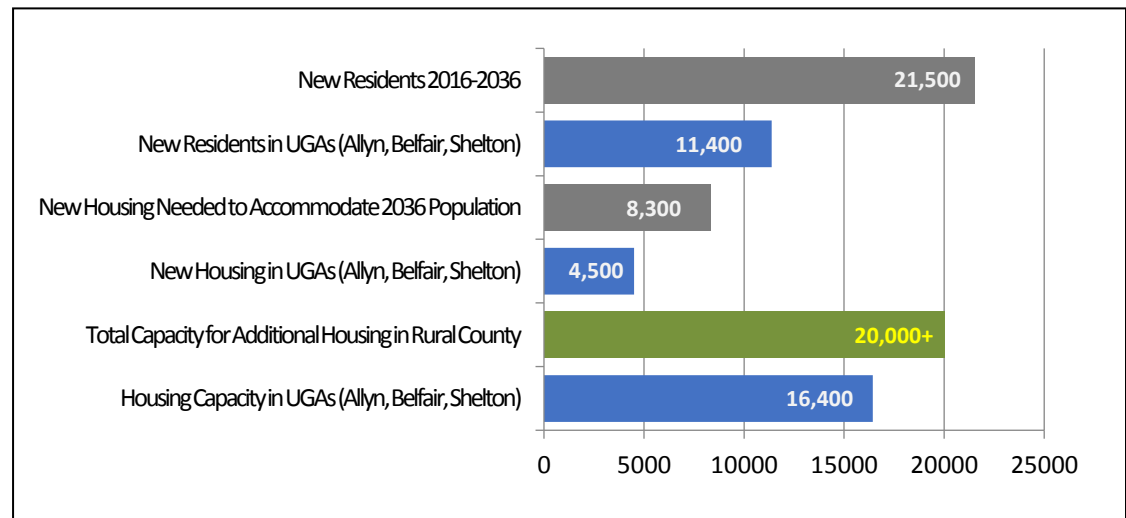
We support a growing higher education system through the Olympic College and world class aquaculture industry in Mason County supplying sought after shellfish worldwide.

We are also taking steps to support our cottage and local business growth as well as supporting growth of the “gig” economy in our region with technology investments and partnerships to enable more people to work remotely. We support growth and expansion of our Airport through implementation of the Airport Overlay Zone.

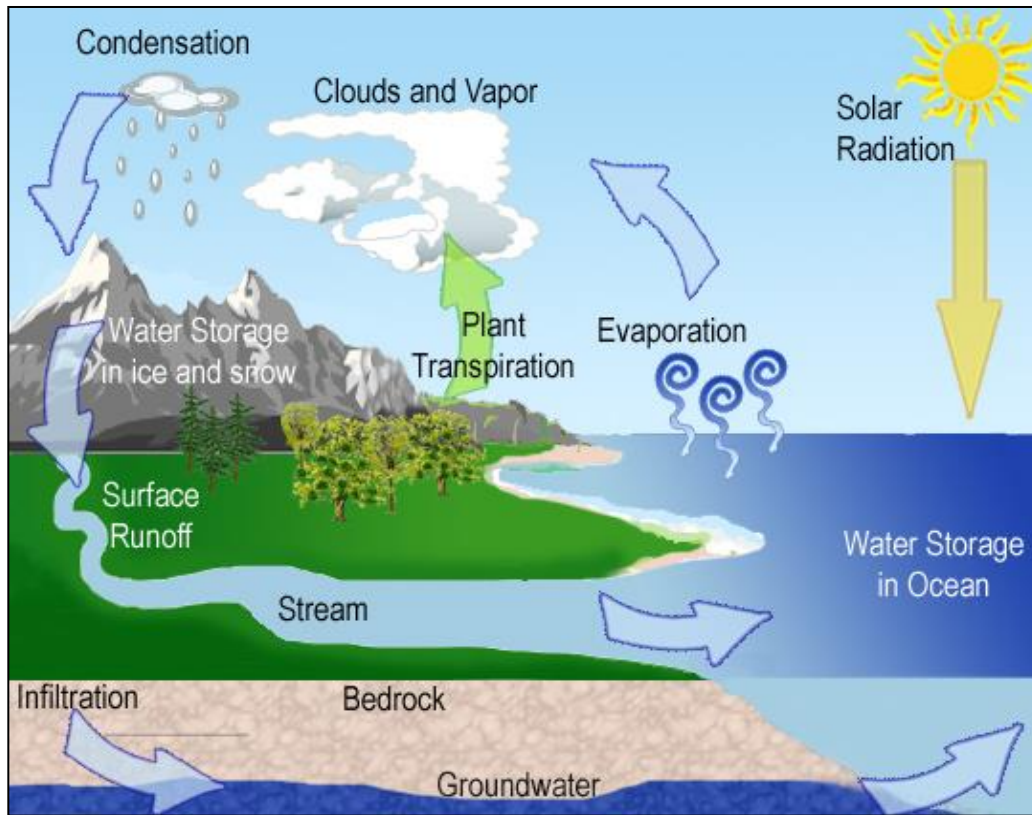
In compliance with the State’s requirements for planning, Mason County is supporting economic development by including policies in our long-range plan that continue to strengthen both our urban and rural based economies.

5. Mason County is Increasing Housing Options

Housing needs continue to shift with the changing population in Mason County. The rental market is expected to continue to increase along with internet rental providers (VRBO, Air B&B, etc). Demands continue to increase for a wider range of housing types.



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management and City of Shelton Forecast



6. Mason County is Working to Conserve Water and Improve Water Quality

As population grows, water consumption grows with it, even with some conservation strategies in place.

Beautiful coastal areas, lakes, rivers and streams with outstanding water quality are a hallmark of Mason County. We are working to find new ways to conserve, reuse and recycle water through building, on-site septic, and development planning innovations that will protect fisheries and

wildlife and ensure wise and sustainable water use into the future. Water conservation, wastewater recycling, and reuse is becoming more important due to increases in:

- Demand on potable or drinkable water resources,
- The cost of treating wastewater,
- Regulations requiring greater flows for streams and rivers, and
- The demand for sustainable building options.

To ensure water is available for domestic use under the State’s Groundwater Permit Exemption (RCW 90.44.050) for new year-round water supply, Mason County is proactively planning using best available science and proven mitigation strategies, working with partner agencies and organizations, to allow development to occur while protecting water quality and in-stream flows.

By design, on-site sewage systems, also known as septic systems, naturally recycle wastewater by recharging ground water. To ensure on-site sewage systems are treating waste effectively and not polluting the ground water, there must be a strong commitment to regular and ongoing monitoring to ensure these systems are working properly.

Under existing Washington State Law, several types of water conservation, recycling and reuse are currently permitted and regulated. However, additional State policy innovation and flexibility for Washington Counties promoting access to water for rural development, conservation, recycling and reuse will be critical over the 20-year planning horizon in order to support projected growth and development in the way Mason County envisions, a way that maintains rural character, quality of life, and unique natural environment.



“Coffee Talk” at Skookum Hall – Summer 2017

Why do we need public involvement in the County’s 20-year planning?

- Encourage efficiency in government by establishing coordinated policies and programs.
- Improve the community – to make it more beautiful, healthy, interesting, and efficient.
- Help us think longer term.
- Provide an economic development tool to prospective employers, business interests and residents.

What’s the process for developing the Mason County 2016-2035 Plan?

The County Comprehensive Plan is a broad picture of a community’s desired development and growth. The goals that are included in the plan may in some cases envision sweeping changes or they may contemplate preservation of existing situations.

Regardless of the particular goals a community chooses to pursue, the goals provide direction and a framework for the community as it chooses actions.

Since 2015, Mason County has conducted 44 public meetings to discuss all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan from the long-range capital investments to population and housing growth in the urban and rural areas of the county to economic development.

In mid-2017, Mason County conducted a public opinion poll to collect input from residents across the county.

We have taken in hundreds of comments and made an effort to address each one. We have kept interested citizens from across the County informed of revisions and additions to the plan along the way through our website, ‘coffee talks’, news and social media, and community posts.

Along with the Plan, implementing regulations are adopted as part of the County Municipal Code. State law requires that the Municipal Code including zoning and subdivision regulations be written and implemented in compliance with the adopted Comprehensive Plan. Zoning and development regulations contain a level of detail that is applied to individual parcels of land.

Examples of ways the plan is implemented include: funding of public capital facilities such as streets, incentive programs, health and education programs, and public-private partnerships; objectives and tasks listed in Chapter 2 of the plan; and public and private partnerships.

What information is in the Full Plan?

Each chapter contains narrative description of the intent, context, or history related to the goals and policies. Following the narrative, each chapter recites the underlying Growth Management Act goals and Countywide Planning Policies, followed by the Comprehensive Plan’s binding goals and policies. The plan is organized into twelve chapters based on the requirements and guidance in the State of Washington’s Growth Management Act (36.70A).

CROSSWALK - Comprehensive Plan Chapter, Development Regulations & Countywide Planning Policies		
Comprehensive Plan Element	Development Regulations	Countywide Planning Policy Statement
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.07; 17.10-17.17; 17.20-17.35; 17.70	1) Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.02; 17.05; 17.70; 17.90	2) Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
Chapter 8 Transportation	MCC Title 12	3) Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
Chapter 5 Housing	MCC 17.11; 17.90	4) Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
Chapter 10 Economic Development	MCC 2.78; 17.07; 17.24	5) Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.01	6) Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
Chapters 3 Land Use & 10 Economic Development	MCC 15.05	7) Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
Chapter 4 Rural	MCC 8.52; 17.02	8) Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
Chapter 3 Land Use, 4 Rural, 9 Parks	MCC 16.23; 17.07; 17.10; 17.26	9) Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
Chapters 3 Land Use & 4 Rural	MCC 8.52 Resource Ordinance/Shorelines	10) Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
See Public Involvement Plan	MCC 15.09.060	11) Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
Chapter 7 Utilities	MCC Title 13, Title 6	12) Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
Chapter 3 Land Use	MCC 17.40	13) Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.