

## **INTRODUCTION COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

### **PURPOSE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The City of Kenmore Comprehensive Plan is the community’s 20-year vision of the City’s future and a statement of the City’s long-range goals and policies. The Plan serves as the guide for City staff and the City Council in making decisions regarding ordinances, regulations, and public facility investments to ensure that the overall goals and policies are furthered by those decisions. Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA) requires preparation of a Comprehensive Plan with mandatory elements (chapters) addressing land use, housing, economic development, parks and recreation, capital facilities, utilities, transportation and climate and resiliency issues. Certain topics such as open space corridors and essential public facilities must also be considered within Plan Elements. The goals and policies of a Shoreline Master Program are also required to be an element of the Comprehensive Plan. GMA does not limit optional topics and the City has chosen to include the following elements, downtown, community design, natural environment, surface water and public services.

The GMA mandates regular updates (every 10 years) of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that the Plan remains relevant and responsive to changing conditions. In addition to the 10-year updates, the City must provide a 5-year implementation progress report.

After adoption of the City’s original Comprehensive Plan in 2001, the City took the approach of regularly updating individual Elements of the Plan rather than letting the Plan lie static for several years until the next State-mandated update deadline. Each year, the City Council determines which portions of the Plan will be reviewed. For the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, background information in each Element has been refreshed, and goals, objectives and policies have been reconsidered in light of amendments to the GMA and new planning directions in the region, King County and the City.

### **PLANNING AREA**

The City of Kenmore is located in the northern portion of King County commonly known as the “Northshore” area. Kenmore is defined by its shoreline along Lake Washington as well as the hillsides and Sammamish River valley that ultimately drain to the Lake. State Route (SR) 522 is the main transportation corridor.

As incorporated in 1998, the City of Kenmore boundaries contain about 6.1 square miles of land (see Figure INT-1). The City is bounded by Bothell to the east, Kirkland to the south and Lake Forest Park to the west. The City of Brier in Snohomish County borders the City to the north, along with an area of unincorporated Snohomish County.

FIGURE INT-1  
CITY OF KENMORE



Source: City of Kenmore GIS

## **PLANNING PROCESS/CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT**

### **Planning Commission**

The City has a seven-member Planning Commission that meets regularly to review elements of the Comprehensive Plan as directed by the City Council. As each Element is considered, the Planning Commission conducts community outreach including workshops, open houses, hearings, surveys, mailings, website and social media posting or other community involvement techniques to engage community members.

In addition to soliciting community input towards the preparation of amendments to the Plan, the Commission:

- Revises the Vision Statement based upon input during the visioning process,
- Studies current conditions

### **City Council**

Along with assigning Comprehensive Plan updates to the Planning Commission, the City Council reviews the recommendations of the Planning Commission and provides final direction through adoption of an ordinance. In some cases, the City Council holds its own public hearing before making a final decision on recommended Plan amendments.

### **Regional Coordination**

The City works with representatives of special agencies and districts, including A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) and service and utility providers, as well as adjacent jurisdictions. The representatives provide input and perspectives about their responsibilities and their relationship to Kenmore, and they serve as contact points to obtain information.

A draft of the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element is provided to the Puget Sound Regional Council, as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO), for certification. Comments are received and changes are integrated into the final Element. Review by the Washington State Department of Commerce and the State agencies occurs with every amendment to the Comprehensive Plan.

## **PLAN ORGANIZATION**

### **Element Summaries**

The Kenmore Comprehensive Plan is divided into several chapters or “Elements” as characterized below.

### **Land Use Element**

The Land Use Element plays the central role of directing land use patterns and guiding land use decision-making. It provides the basis for housing, transportation, public service, utility, and capital facility plans and policies. The Land Use Element serves as a guide for future development, determining suitable locations for various land uses, setting intensity levels for

each use, and identifying areas for open space preservation. Key emphases include supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion, addressing housing and job needs in the broader Puget Sound Region, promoting affordable housing options, and enhancing public access while continuing to protect natural areas.

### **Downtown Element**

The Growth Management Act (GMA) does not require the creation or retention of a downtown area within communities. However, several GMA goals, as well as Countywide Planning Policies, address the containment of sprawl, and the provision of efficient services and utilities, which can be met through development of “regional growth centers” such as a downtown. Downtown areas also can function as a community-enhancing central place, particularly in a community like Kenmore dominated by regional traffic flows along Bothell Way/SR-522.

### **Community Design Element**

The purpose of the Community Design Element is to guide future development and redevelopment that creates the visual identity of Kenmore, while ensuring compatible surrounding development, protection of the natural environment and enhancing streetscape and landscaping.

### **Natural Environment Element**

The purpose of the Natural Environment Element is to clarify the relationship between Kenmore’s natural and built environments, to include policies that support the City’s commitment to preserving and enhancing the natural environment, and to encourage a balanced approach to support Kenmore’s vision of an equitable, inclusive, sustainable, and resilient community. Natural environment systems include Lake Washington, Sammamish River, Swamp Creek, plus smaller rivers/creeks and their associated wetlands which all provide open space and important fish and wildlife habitat. Other natural areas, such as land prone to flooding and geologically hazardous areas (e.g. steep slopes and landslide hazards) are important because of the risk to lives and property posed by developing them. Citywide tree canopy, native vegetation within natural areas, and water quality treatment are all important to support fish and wildlife habitat, and to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### **Shoreline Element**

The Shoreline Element addresses and manages land use activities along shorelines including Lake Washington, the Sammamish River, Swamp Creek and associated wetlands. The Shoreline Element is implemented through the Shoreline Master Program (SMP), adopted in Title 16 Kenmore Municipal Code (KMC).

### **Economic Development Element**

The Economic Development Element is to articulate how the City of Kenmore will support local businesses, stimulate job growth, broaden the City’s tax base, and improve the economic well-being of Kenmore residents. The purpose of this Element is to provide economic development

policies for the City of Kenmore, as the community's economic base changes over time in response to market forces and in response to the vision of the Kenmore community.

### **Climate Action Element**

The purpose of the Climate Action Element (CAE) is to provide strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and respond to the impacts of climate change in our community, as outlined in the Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CAE provides an actionable framework to guide the long-term implementation of mitigation and resilience actions. The CAE also identifies needs and opportunities for ongoing community engagement, education, and dialogue around climate action.

### **Housing Element**

The Housing Element recognizes the vitality of existing neighborhoods, inventories existing and projected housing needs, identifies sufficient land for a variety of housing types and needs, and makes adequate provision for housing needs for all economic segments of the community. The Housing Element is intended to promote and maintain residential neighborhoods, ensure a range of densities and housing types for all incomes, address special needs housing, and the quality of the residential environment.

### **Transportation Element**

The Transportation Element addresses street classifications, levels of service, travel forecasts, travel improvements, alternative modes, funding strategies, and concurrency management. It is based upon current and projected land use and travel patterns. Both local and State transportation facilities are addressed.

### **Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element**

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element provide policies addressing open space and parks; priorities for park maintenance and acquisition; and coordination and improvement of recreation programs.

### **Surface Water Element**

A separate Surface Water Element is an optional item under the Growth Management Act, although the Act calls for adequate public facilities and services to serve development. The Surface Water Element addresses management of the City's municipal separate storm sewer system, private surface water systems and natural surface water systems.

### **Public Services Element**

An element addressing public services is not directly required by the Growth Management Act, but the Act's goals address providing adequate public services to serve development. The Public Services Element focuses upon citizen participation and communication, efficient municipal services, emergency services, education, and human services.

### **Utilities Element**

The Growth Management Act requires that a utility element address the location and capacity of existing and proposed utilities including electric, telecommunication, and natural gas lines. The Utilities Element addresses electric, communication, and natural gas services as well as water, wastewater, and solid waste services, and conservation.

### **Capital Facilities Element**

The Growth Management Act requires that comprehensive plans include a Capital Facilities Element which addresses capital facility needs sufficient to support the designated land use intensities. The element establishes the levels of service for the necessary capital facilities. The Element includes goals, objectives, and policies which outline level of service standards, infrastructure provided concurrent with development, preparation of capital facility plans, facility funding, and essential public facilities.

### **Format of Goals, Objectives and Policies**

A comprehensive plan is a statement of policy identifying environmental, social, and economic desires, and its accompanying maps are a reflection of stated policies. This means that the goals, objectives and policies play a central role in the plan. The following definitions have guided the preparation of the goals, policies and objectives as used in the plan:

- Goals: Goals are broad, general statements of the desired long-term future state towards which the Plan aims. They indicate what ought to exist in a community or what is desired to be achieved in the future.
- Objectives: Objectives are statements of the desired short-term and more measurable aims of the Plan; the objectives show how a goal will be pursued.
- Policies: A policy describes a particular course or method of action to accomplish the purposes of the comprehensive plan. Policies are decision-oriented statements which guide the legislative or administrative body while evaluating a new project or proposed change in ordinance.

In sum, goals are value-based statements that are hard to measure. Objectives state more specifically how a particular goal will be pursued. Policies help guide the review of development applications, and also help guide the City Council in adopting ordinances or preparing budgets.

For the purposes of the Kenmore Comprehensive Plan, the policies often use “should” rather than shall. The approach is to use “should” in the Comprehensive Plan. The word “shall” would then be used in implementing ordinances or codes.

### **Implementation Strategies**

Each Element contains more specific implementation strategies to move the City closer to achievement of the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. These strategies identify approaches to regulations, educational or incentive programs, and/or coordination with agencies, service providers, or adjacent jurisdictions.