

THE CITY OF EVERSON



Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2004-2024

Adoption Date: December 14, 2004

2. Background

Summary of Plan Development

1996 Comprehensive Plan

Everson began the process of complying with the GMA in the winter of 1990. The first steps taken were to identify and protect critical areas including wetlands, frequently flooded areas, fish and wildlife habitats, geologically hazardous areas, and critical recharge areas. By winter of the following year an interim critical areas ordinance was in place.

In the fall of 1991 updating of the comprehensive plan was underway. The city was assisted by a land-use consultant. The process was directed by a Growth Management Steering Committee with membership from the Planning Agency, the City Council, city staff and citizens at large. The committee met twice a month reviewing information on population projections, existing land use and location of flood boundaries. A citizen survey was distributed in April of 1992 and a town meeting was held in May to present the results of the survey and initiate the goal setting process. The Committee incorporated information obtained in the survey and at the town meeting in the goals for the community. These goals then formed the basis for the land use plan. A first draft plan was published in September, 1992.

1992 GROWTH MANAGEMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

Matt Lagerwey Mayor	Pete Matheson Planning Agency	Sid Bouman Public Works Director
Geraldine Pogue Clerk/Treasurer	Jim Tjoelker Planning Agency	Bob Skillman City Council
Ron Knittel Citizen at Large	Jim Noteboom Citizen at Large	Linda Pettit Planning Agency

In late 1992 planning came to a halt for several months due to the departure of the consultant. The steering committee was disbanded, and the Planning Agency began to act in the role of an advisory committee. Adoption of county-wide planning policies occurred in the spring of 1993. A staff planner was hired in late 1993, and plan development proceeded. Identification of an urban growth area was a major task. The city's proposed growth area was submitted to the county in September, 1993. After hearings before the county planning commission and county council, a reduced UGA was adopted by the county council in May, 1994. In mid 1994 the staff planner left, and plan development stalled for a second time. A second consultant finished the plan in the spring of 1996.

Figure 2-1 shows a timeline of major events in development of the initial plan adopted in 1996. Figure 2-2 shows the steps taken during the 2004 comprehensive plan update process.

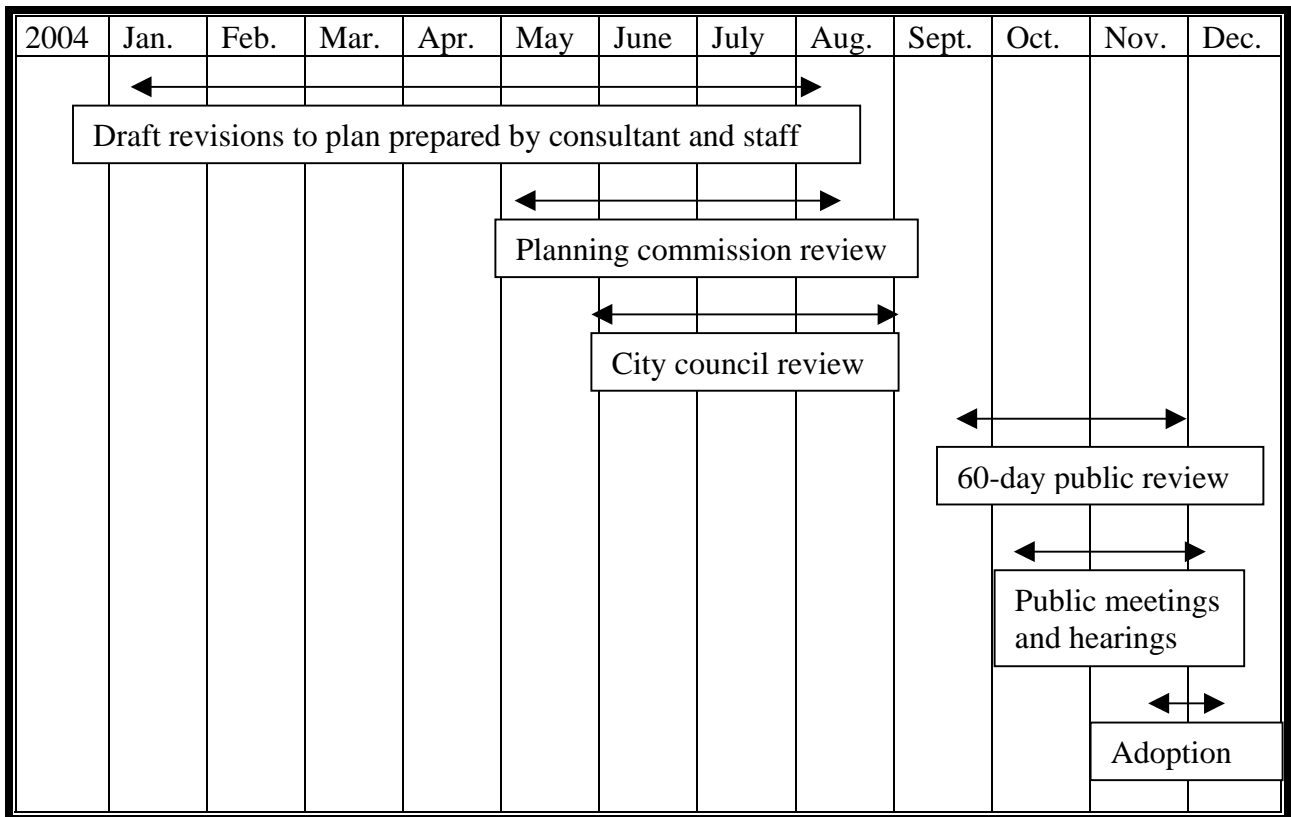
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Placeholder for Figure 2-1, generated from TIMELINE.XLS spreadsheet document

2004 Comprehensive Plan

Everson began the process of updating its comprehensive plan in 2001. The GMA requires that the comprehensive plan be updated by December 1, 2004. City staff worked on draft revisions to the original plan from 2001 through 2003. A consultant prepared additional draft revisions during the first half of 2004 and presented these to the planning commission. The planning commission reviewed draft revisions to each element of the plan from May through August and provided recommendations to the city council. During the months of June through September of 2004 the city council met at regularly scheduled council meetings and reviewed draft revision to the comprehensive plans, including the recommendations from the planning commission. The city council provided direction to staff regarding the need for additional revisions.

In October of 2004 the city of Everson formally submitted draft revisions to the comprehensive plan to the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development and other State agencies for the mandatory 60-day review as required by RCW 36.70A.106. The proposed plan revisions were also made available to the public at that time. Written and oral comments were received during the comment period and at public meetings and hearings. The city council held public hearings in November and December of 2004 at which time all comments were considered and final action was taken to adopt the 2004 update of the comprehensive plan. Following plan adoption, the revised plan was forwarded to the State.

Figure 2-2: 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update Timeline



Survey of Public Opinion

In the spring of 1992 a resident survey was conducted to identify the needs of the community. A copy of the text of the survey is included in Appendix III.

Generally, the results of the survey indicated that Everson is perceived as a friendly town where the quality of life is rated very highly. Some growth could be encouraged to the south of the city but infilling within the city limits should occur first. Growth should occur at a steady rate, maybe even a little slower, than the past few years. Most people were satisfied with the quality of new housing and perceived a need for more single family housing. There is a great deal of support for bringing in new business and industry and to improve the appearance of the community. Water quality was the service rated as most important to improve. Fire, library and police were ranked as the highest quality services. Underground utilities, sidewalks and water pressure were the services people were most willing to pay for. Most people did not perceive a downtown parking problem.

The following three community goals were ranked with the highest priority:

1. Maintain the relaxed atmosphere of a friendly town.
2. Provide adequate law enforcement for the protection of the residents of the City.
3. Upgrade utilities to facilitate better drainage and sewer disposal and to provide for an expansion of the water supply to meet future needs.

Town Meeting Results

A town meeting was held shortly after completion of the survey. People met in small group forum to discuss what they liked and disliked about their community. Then they were asked to talk about what they would like to see for the future of Everson. A summary of comments follows.

Most Liked Features:

Small town atmosphere
Quiet, friendly people
Rural, agricultural influence - diversity of people
Security - knowing your neighbor and living with people who care
View (location, rural, small town feeling)
Public services (library, schools, parks, senior center)
Size
Flag display
Existing businesses
Library
River

No traffic lights
Smoke stack
Schools
Fire protection
Family generations
Services (grocery, banking)
Parks
Churches

Least Liked Features:

River flooding
Potholes in streets
Appearance
Water
Lack of community services
Manure sprayers
Farm services lacking in town
Hardware - fixing supplies needed
High percentage of rentals
Lack of evening activities
Library hours too short
Dogs not leashed
Streets and sidewalks need upgrading
Speed limit south of bridge
Traffic/safety
No department store
Not enough for kids to do
Entrance to town - needs definition

Visions of the Future:

More light industry
More homeowners
Youth services
Bike paths/walking trails
Neighborhood stores
Maintain affordable housing
Increase baseball and soccer fields
Reclaim gravel pits
Buffer zones
Fix up smoke stack
Theme for Everson
Combine Everson and Nooksack
Senior housing
Orderly growth through zoning (utility growth)

Better quality single family homes
Good quality apartments
Overpass between Everson and Nooksack
New bridge [Completed in 1994]
Proper road construction with drainage, curbs, underground utilities.
More business and services
Industry that fits in with the community
Service station
Hardware appliance store
Flood free
Debt free
Library expansion [Completed in 1996]
More local jobs and local owned business
No Hwy 9 truck route
Additional bridge on Nooksack
Use recycled water
Dredge the river
Clean and neat community appearance, no particular theme
Mix of housing quality and affordable
Bikes and walking trail along river

Vision and Goals

The Growth Management Steering Committee relied heavily on information generated from the survey and the town meeting to identify goals and policies for the city of Everson. In light of citizen input, natural limitations, and existing available land, Everson adopts the following vision, goals, and policies for this comprehensive plan.

Community vision

The vision for Everson is a community which provides a variety of commercial services with a vibrant downtown, quiet residential neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing opportunities, excellent schools, a strong tax base, a range of natural recreational amenities and a healthy environment.

Goals and policies

General Land Use

Goal: Land use should be distributed in a way which maintains the friendly atmosphere of the community, supports the tax base, provides jobs and services for residents and protects the natural environment.

Policy: The city shall require appropriate mitigation measures where zoning boundaries create a significant conflict in permitted uses. Examples include boundaries between residential and industrial zones and boundaries between residential and agricultural or mineral resource lands. Mitigation measures shall include a physical buffer appropriate to the potential conflict.

Residential

Goal: A range of residential uses should be provided which enhances the friendly, quiet atmosphere of the community and discourages the continued development of Everson as a bedroom community for the County.

Policy: A diverse range of single family development should be encouraged. More high end housing is needed to facilitate diversity while maintaining the affordability for the majority of housing in the community.

Policy: Multi-family development should be encouraged which is well-designed and is sensitive to the character of the community. Design criteria should be developed which encourages quality by using techniques such as innovative use of open space, creative ownership patterns and clustering patterns.

Policy: Quality neighborhoods should be encouraged by requiring curbs, gutters, sidewalks and street trees.

Commercial

Goal: Commercial uses which serve the local and surrounding Community should be encouraged and balanced with commercial uses which take advantage of tourist opportunities and telecommunications.

Policy: Existing vacant commercial buildings should be upgraded in appearance and should be encouraged to attract new businesses.

Policy: The downtown area should be encouraged to infill before new commercial areas are developed. Subsequent commercial development should include a district in south Everson to provide convenient service to residents of that area.

Policy: Adequate land area to attract new commercial development should be provided outside areas which are subject to flooding.

Policy: Commercial zoning regulations should encourage commercial development which provide services to local residents and the surrounding agricultural market.

Policy: Telecommunication infrastructure should be encouraged to provide what is necessary to encourage new telecommunication commercial development as well as making it available to existing businesses.

Industrial

Goal: Industrial uses which enhance the tax base and provide job opportunities for local citizens should be encouraged.

Policy: Adequate land area to attract industrial development should be provided.

Policy: Industrial development should be located in areas that take advantage of the local transportation network including Highway 9 and rail transport.

Policy: Zoning regulations should be designed to attract industries which provide local jobs and take advantage of the City's location near the Canadian border.

Policy: Telecommunication infrastructure should be designed to attract industries which provide local jobs and take advantage of the rural character of the city and the beauty of the surrounding areas.

Environmental

Policy: Maintain and enhance renewable natural resource-based industries, encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and agricultural lands, and discourage land uses which are incompatible with these goals.

Policy: Encourage agricultural uses within the city where appropriate, such as flood-prone areas, and support continued agricultural uses of land in the county.

Policy: Recognize adjacent mineral resource lands as potential urban development areas and work with Whatcom County and land owners to develop an environmentally safe plan to facilitate this conversion.

Policy: Recognize the beneficial uses, functions and values of wetlands by finding that a use resulting in a net loss of wetland function and values is incompatible with other goals of this plan.

Policy: Recognize the values of protecting water quality and quantity for all waterways within the city. Maintain water quality by implementing recommendations made in the 1999 and Addendum 1, 2001 Stormwater Management Plan.

Policy: Recognize the value of critical recharge areas for aquifers and protect the quantity and quality of the ground water resource. Maintain the integrity of the aquifer recharge zone by implementing recommendations made in the 1995 Wellhead Protection Plan.

Policy: Recognize and respond to the need for flood control and flood sensitive building practices within frequently flooded areas.

Policy: Protect historic stream meander patterns and channel migration zones and avoid hardening of stream banks.

Policy: Preserve the hydrologic capacity of any intermittent stream or permanent stream to pass peak flows.

Policy: Protect the general public health and safety through the use of land use regulations in areas which due to geological hazards are either not suited or have probable significant limitations to building siting, road construction or disturbance.

Policy: Protect the habitat value of those areas providing critical habitat for threatened, endangered or sensitive wildlife species.

Policy: Avoid stream crossings by roads wherever possible, and where one must be provided, minimize impacts through choice of mode, sizing and placement.

Policy: Landscape to reduce need for watering and application of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizer.

Demographic Trends

Accommodating population growth in a way which preserves natural amenities and quality of life is the reason for land use planning. The need to anticipate and plan for a variable influx of people demands that land be preserved for the future. With more people comes more demands upon the city's infrastructure: more schools, more water, bigger sewer treatment facilities, more extensive transportation facilities and more land all accompany growth. By correctly and appropriately identifying how and where Everson as a community wants to grow, and the magnitude of that growth over the span of the comprehensive plan, the greater likelihood Everson has of moving towards the collective ideal of its citizens.

Because population forecasting is an extremely complex problem, accuracy is difficult to achieve. With so many variables entering into the equation, the magnitude of error for long-range forecasts is often large. Events and the underlying structural relations change to reduce the probability of future reality matching the forecasts. Nonetheless, forecasting is a valuable exercise as it requires forethought regarding the future of the community, and the effects of growth on the type of community the future may hold. Furthermore, the comprehensive plan is not intended as a static document, but rather as one which will be monitored on an ongoing basis, and up-dated at regular intervals.

County trends

Whatcom County's population grew significantly from 106,701 in 1980 to 127,780 in 1990, nearly a 20 percent increase. This growth trend continued through the 1990s, with the county's 2000 population estimated to be 166,814 (source: *U.S. Census 2000*), an increase of over 30 percent. The 30-year pattern prior to 1990 of the unincorporated areas growing more rapidly than the incorporated cities reversed itself during the first decade following enactment of the GMA. Between 1990 and 2000 the cities grew at an average annual rate of 3.0 percent while the unincorporated areas grew at a rate of 1.7 percent. Since 2000 the rate of growth in the County as a whole has slowed somewhat due to the economic slowdown throughout Washington State, but the pattern of more rapid growth in the cities appears to be continuing.

Whatcom County's population edged up slightly as a share of the state total over the 1970-1990 period. In 1970, it accounted for 2.4 percent of the State's population. By 1990, its share was up to 2.6 percent. This trend continued through the 1990s. According to the 2000 Census, Whatcom County accounted for 2.8 percent of the State's population. As a result, Whatcom County ranked as the ninth most populous county in the State. The kind of people moving in and out of Whatcom County during the 1980s and 1990s was probably related to the educational institutions in Bellingham and retirement plans. The percentages of college-aged and retirement-aged people in the county continued to increase through the 1990s.

Everson trends

Since 1960 Everson has grown both more rapidly and more erratically than Whatcom County as a whole. This was particularly true during the 1980s, when the County's population increased by 20 percent while Everson's population grew by over 70 percent. This pattern continued during the 1990s when the County population grew by 30 percent and Everson's population grew by about 37 percent.

According to the 2000 Census, the population composition is different as well. There are higher percentages of married-couple families and of persons under 18 years, and a lower percentage of persons over 65 years than is found in the County. There is also a higher percentage of owner-occupied housing in Everson, 67 percent compared to the County's 63 percent. The percentage of owner-occupied housing in the city increased by 10 percent during the 1990s. Median rent in Everson is lower than the County's level, with the County average at \$622 per month and the average in Everson at \$550 per month. House values were markedly lower in Everson, with the average value of a house in Everson in 2000 was \$122,500 compared to \$155,700 for the County as a whole.

These statistics paint a picture of a community which is very responsive to the influences around it, particularly housing costs in other parts of the County. The availability of affordable housing in Everson has attracted young families with children and has spurred growth, particularly in the late 1980s. The trend toward increased development in Everson has continued through the 1990s and appears to be increasing through the first part of this decade.

Population projections

Whatcom County's population in the year 2000 of 166,814 is projected to grow by between 1 and 2 percent annually through the year 2022 according to a report prepared by ECONorthwest in May of 2002. The same report predicts a growth rate of between 2.5 and 3.5 percent per year for the city of Everson. The actual trend in Everson prior to and following the issuance of the ECONorthwest report supports a projection of relatively rapid growth for Everson. Between 1990 and 1995, Everson grew from a population of 1,490 to 1,800 people, an annual growth rate of 3.8 percent. From 1995 to 2000 Everson grew from 1,800 to 2,035, an annual growth rate of 2.5 percent. While the city does not anticipate continued growth at the pace that occurred in the early 1990s, it does project--and desire--a growth rate of approximately 3.6 percent per year over the twenty year period of the comprehensive plan. Table 2-1 shows population projections at certain key planning horizons according to the 3.6 percent average annual growth rate as provided in the ECONorthwest report and as adopted in the Whatcom County comprehensive plan. As shown in Table 2-1, the population in the city of Everson is projected to increase to 3,912 by the year 2022. This is the population figure adopted by Whatcom County for the city of Everson. The 3.6 percent average annual growth rate has been carried forward through the end of the 20-year planning period to yield a 2024 population of 4,202. This is the population figure that has been used for planning purposes throughout the remainder of the plan.

Table 2-1. Population Projections, 2000-2024

Year	Population Projection
2000 Census (within city liits)	2,035
2003 OFM	2,030
2004 OFM	2,055
2010 6-year horizon (from plan adoption in 2004)	2,547
2014 Plan midpoint	2,939
2022 County plan period	3,912
2024 20-year planning period	4,202

(Sources: U.S. Census; OFM Forecasting, State of Washington; ECONorthwest; Whatcom County.