

A. PREFACE

This Plan represents the vision of Medina residents on the City's development as a unique residential community and as part of the Seattle/Bellevue metropolitan region. If the Plan is carried out, the quality of life enjoyed by Medina's residents will be preserved for the future.

The preparation of the original plan began with the Growth Management Joint Workshop which was held in April 1991. Following the adoption of the Critical Areas Ordinance in 1992 and review of the City's zoning ordinance in 1993, the City of Medina adopted its first Comprehensive Plan in May 1994.

The Planning Commission has been responsible for assuring citizen involvement in updates of this Plan by holding both regular and special meetings during all their review processes. Community meetings and public hearings are typically posted in prominent locations in the community and are published in the monthly City newsletter. After the public hearings, the Planning Commission recommendations are sent to the City Council for review and adoption.

This Comprehensive Plan is supported by several documents. For detail on a particular issue, reference is best made to the appropriate supporting document. These include the Medina Municipal Code, the Shoreline Master Program (MMC Subtitle 16.6), Medina Tree Management Code (MMC Ch. 16.52), Critical Areas Regulations (MMC Ch. 16.50), Comprehensive Stormwater Management Plan (1993, updated 2019), and the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (updated annually).

This Plan is not intended to be static; it will be periodically reviewed and revised as necessary. The Planning Commission will carry out a review of this Plan at least once ten eight years, in accordance with RCW 36.70A.130, as amended.

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B. INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive plan is a collective vision about how a community perceives itself and a statement about the kind of place the residents want it to become. The plan is an opportunity for articulating what needs to be preserved and enhanced and, conversely, what the community wishes to avoid. It is a document that functions as a guide for instituting land use regulations and making public decisions concerning individual development proposals.

The comprehensive plan must periodically be updated to respond to changing conditions and attitudes, both within and outside of the community. These updates reflect the trend of the current times and the collective vision for the City's future. This update to the Comprehensive Plan incorporates local, regional, and state level priorities that include new recent legislation on affordable and emergency housing, social equity and health, and environmental resiliency and sustainability.

In 1990 and 1991, the state legislature passed two Acts regarding growth management. The first, SHB (Senate House Bill) 2929, required that all communities within King County must inventory critical areas, update their comprehensive plans to include a number of specific elements, and adopt regulations to implement the plan. The second, HB (House Bill) 1025, required that King County countywide planning policies (CPPs) be developed and adopted to address issues of a regional nature. Each city and town within the county must also respond to these issues within their comprehensive plan. Since that time, Medina's Comprehensive Plan has been updated seven times: in 1994, 1999, 2005, 2012 (twice), 2014, and 2015.

In 2021 and 2023, the state legislature passed several Acts impacting local planning and development requirements for housing. HB 1220, passed in 2021, expanded requirements for the provision of affordable housing and introduced new requirements for the provision of emergency housing and restrictions on development-limiting regulations. HB 1110, passed in 2023, introduced requirements for expanded housing options to provide "middle housing" (such as townhomes and duplexes) in traditionally single-family detached housing areas. Finally, HB 1337, passed in 2023, introduced requirements for expanded development opportunities for ADUs and established restrictions on local regulation of ADUs. HB 2321, passed in 2024, made future modifications to text drafted in HB 1110 to clarify the application of this legislation at the local level. These recent changes to state regulations impacted the 2023 comprehensive plan update; changes were incorporated along with the consideration of local goals and attitudes.

STATE PLANNING GOALS

The Growth Management Act (GMA) sets out fifteen statutory goals. The GMA legislation mandates inclusion of five basic plan elements and associated information requirements that are to guide development of comprehensive plans. For a community's plan to be valid, it must be consistent with the requirements of the GMA, which means that a plan must not conflict with the state statutory goals or countywide policies.

The fifteen statutory state goals are as follows:

1. Guide urban growth to areas where urban services can be adequately provided;
2. Reduce urban sprawl;
3. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems;
4. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population;
5. Encourage economic development throughout the state;
6. Assure private property is not taken for public use without just compensation;
7. Encourage predictable and timely permit processing;
8. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries;
9. Encourage retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities;
10. Protect the environment and enhance the quality of life for Washington residents;
11. Encourage the participation of citizens in the land use planning process;
12. Ensure adequate public facilities and services necessary to support development;
13. Identify and preserve lands and sites of historic and archaeological significance;
14. Ensure that development regulations, plans, policies, and strategies adapt to and mitigate effects of a changing climate¹;
15. Shoreline Management².

Medina is a small residential community with limited development capacity. The City strives to prioritize the vitality and character of its neighborhoods while meeting the goals and requirements of the GMA. Like all communities, Medina will grow and change to meet the needs of its residents and future generations; this is represented in the City's adopted housing target of 19 new housing units by the year 2044. The population increase will be progressively accommodated through development of remaining vacant lots and in-fill development on redevelopable lots or developed lots, such as by adding accessory dwelling units (ADUs). City Development Services Department project review will ensure adequate urban facilities and services are in place to meet the needs of the City's residents.

The City must comply with portions of the GMA relating to land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, transportation, and park and recreation. To comply with these, the City has coordinated this comprehensive plan with state and regional jurisdictions, as well as its city councilors, commissioners, and residents.

¹ Per [RCW 36.70A.095](#), Medina is not required to adopt a climate change or resiliency element in its comprehensive plan; climate change and resiliency concerns are addressed through policies in the existing elements.

² Shoreline management is addressed in the City of Medina's Shoreline Master Program as adopted in [Municipal Code Subtitle 16.6](#).

COUNTYWIDE PLANNING GOALS

The King County countywide planning policies (CPP), adopted by the Growth Management Planning Commission (GMPC) and ratified by King County cities, are aimed at more effective use of existing land through a policy framework prioritizing social equity and health. The goal is to establish higher density centers within the County and promote infill development to accommodate new growth so that remaining rural and resource lands may be preserved.

In 2021, the CPPs were revised to address changes to the GMA and reflect the regional direction established in VISION 2050. VISION 2050 was adopted in 2020 by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), an association of cities, towns, ports, tribes, and state agencies that serves as a forum for making decisions about regional growth management in the central Puget Sound region of Washington. VISION 2050's regional growth strategy outlines how the central Puget Sound region should plan for additional population and employment growth. All jurisdictions in King County have a role in accommodating this growth, and the 2021 CPPs provide direction for local comprehensive plans and regulations.

The 2021 CPPs are designed to achieve six overarching goals:

1. Restore and protect the quality of the natural environment for future generations;
2. Direct growth in a compact, centers-focused pattern that uses land and infrastructure efficiently and that protects rural and resource lands;
3. Provide a full range of accessible and safe housing options to meet the needs of all economic and demographic groups within all jurisdictions;
4. For people throughout King County, provide opportunities that allow prosperity and enjoyment of a high quality of life through economic growth and job creation;
5. Serve the region well with an integrated, multi-modal transportation system that supports the regional vision for growth, efficiently moves people and goods, and is environmentally and functionally sustainable over the long term; and
6. Provide access for residents in both urban and rural areas to necessary public services in order to advance public health and safety, protect the environment, and carry out the Regional Growth Strategy.

The City's Comprehensive Plan has been updated to address each of these policy areas, including housing, transportation, and the environment. The plan has been updated based on residential targets that align with VISION 2050. Through a Land Capacity Analysis (LCA), the City determined that additional measures were necessary, to support and enable the production and preservation of affordable housing, to meet the City's assigned housing target for the year 2044.

To help ensure that there are housing opportunities, the City allows development of undersized lots and reasonable improvements of nonconforming structures. The City also allows ADUs and has taken steps to support and promote their development to accommodate increased population demands. Additionally, the City participates in ARCH, A Regional Coalition for Housing, a program in which provides both rental and ownership opportunities below market rate in order to bring affordable housing to the greater King County community.

Medina does not contribute a significant amount of traffic to the regional transportation system

because there are no major employers or commercial districts and a relatively small population size. Medina supports development of an improved regional transportation system and encourages residents to utilize the public transit that is available to the community.

The Comprehensive Plan includes a Natural Environment element that contains policies to restore, protect, preserve, and enhance the natural environment and high quality of life, for now and future generations, including water quality and salmon habitat. The Natural Environment element calls for coordination with other local, regional, state, and federal entities on environmental issues.

Medina's land use pattern is consistent with that of its neighboring jurisdictions. There is a high degree of cooperation and sharing of information between the City and its neighbors. This high level of communication ensures consistency between each jurisdiction's plans and capital projects. Medina recognizes its place in a larger regional community where collective decisions are necessary to protect and enhance the quality of life we all enjoy. The City will continue to involve itself in regional issues and, to the extent possible, participate in their resolution.

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C. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

And now the sturdy ferries no longer ply from Leschi to Medina; the axe blade has given way to the bulldozer; nor do strawberries grow on the land. Yet there is a spark, a feeling which unites today with yesterday - and augurs well for tomorrow.

William Parks, Mayor 1955

HISTORY

Once inhabited by several Native American tribes, including the Duwamish, Snoqualmie, and Suquamish, the place we call Medina today began as a collection of farms and orchards on the shore of Lake Washington across from Seattle. During the late 1880s, wealthy area residents began purchasing waterfront land from these homesteaders. By the 1890s these lands were being converted into broad lakefront estates. In 1913 the Medina ferry terminal was constructed, and in 1914 the town was formally platted. Medina grew slowly until 1941, when the first floating bridge was constructed. With the increased accessibility to Seattle, more people began to settle permanently on the east side of the lake, and the residents of Medina began to feel the pressures of growth.

Plans for a second floating bridge that would have the east terminus in Medina and bring the town within minutes of Seattle's population caused residents to begin considering incorporation. Three alternatives were debated over several years: incorporation with Bellevue, incorporation with the other "Points" communities, and separate incorporation. Residents voted to incorporate separately in July 1955, and in August 1955 Medina officially became a city of 1,525 people. In 1964 a perimeter portion of Medina Heights was annexed to the City, with the remainder of this neighborhood added in 1967. From 1959 to 1971 Medina acquired and developed Fairweather Nature Preserve, Medina Park, and Medina Beach Park. Another seven residential parcels located on the east side of Lake Washington Boulevard adjacent to Clyde Hill were annexed in 1987. With these acquisitions, the land use pattern and mix was established.

At the time of incorporation there were five major objectives:

1. To maintain the residential character of the area,
2. To place zoning and planning under local control,
3. To spend a greater share of taxes locally,
4. To institute a small government under full local control, and
5. To maintain the maximum freedom of choice for change.

SETTING AND CHARACTER

Medina occupies a large peninsula projecting into the central portion of Lake Washington on the lake's east shore. The lake separates Medina from Seattle, with the SR 520 floating bridge, which enters Medina at the base of Evergreen Point, bringing Seattle's downtown to within nine miles of Medina. Medina is bordered on the northeast by the Town of Hunts Point and on the east by the City of Clyde Hill, both all-residential communities. On the southeast, Medina is bordered by a relatively low-density, residential section of the City of Bellevue.

The downtown commercial center of Bellevue has grown rapidly and is approximately one and one-half miles to the east. More industrial sections of Bellevue are located near Interstate 405, which runs north-south, intersecting SR 520 approximately three miles to the east of Medina.

The commercial center of Bellevue provides Medina residents with ready access to a wide variety of stores, restaurants, and other commercial establishments, including Bellevue Square and Lincoln Square. Additionally, Bellevue has developed into a technological hub that provides a high degree of skilled employment. Bellevue has zoned the areas abutting the commercial core for high-density residential development, which allows apartments and townhouses. Consequently, there is a full range of residential opportunities near Medina available for people who choose this kind of environment and wish to live in close proximity to commercial amenities.

Certain limited non-residential development exists in Medina, such as the Wells Medina Nursery, gas station, Medina grocery store, the post office, Medina Elementary School, St. Thomas Church, St. Thomas School, Bellevue Christian School, and City Hall, which provide services to the City's residents. The City Hall building, which is the former ferry terminal, and the Medina grocery store, which is the former telephone exchange, were originally constructed when Medina was served by ferry from Seattle. Although these structures have been put to different uses, they continue to serve as important reminders of the City's cultural past.

Medina finds itself in the center of an increasingly urban metropolitan area. The City is attempting to maintain its identity in the face of exploding growth that has been occurring all through King County. Medina's unique character is due in part to its lake front location. With approximately five miles of waterfront, the City is graced by premium single-family residential development along the lakeshore, and a mixture of modest homes in the north-central portion of the City, establishing the character of the City as a high-quality residential community.

Medina also has a distinctive and sylvan quality that is typified by semi-wooded and heavily landscaped lots that provide visual and acoustic privacy between neighbors and abutting city streets. Many of the residences are situated in open settings, which take advantage of the attractive lake and territorial views. Additional contributing factors are elaborately landscaped lots as well as the large tracts of open space, which can be seen from city streets. The more significant of these open spaces are the City's two interior parks, Fairweather Nature Preserve and Medina Park, and the Overlake Golf & Country Club. Overlake's golf course is an attractive, open green space located in a shallow valley, which runs through the center of the City. The golf course serves as a visual amenity for surrounding homes, passers-by who view it from city streets, and residents of Clyde Hill.

The City will encourage development within the community that is compatible in scale with the surrounding housing, while meeting the requirements of the GMA, and progressing on its adopted housing targets. Minimizing changes to existing zoning and land use patterns and integrating development organically with the surrounding community are seen as important to protecting the City's character. It is felt that the City should take steps to preserve the natural amenities and other characteristics which contribute to the quality of life for the benefit of its residents of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels.