
STAFF REPORT

Date: November 10, 2025

To: Planning Commission

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2025 Tumwater Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Ordinance No. O2025-010

On a ten-year cycle, Tumwater is required to conduct a Growth Management Act periodic update of its Comprehensive Plan and related development regulations. For the current cycle, Tumwater is required to complete work on the periodic update by December 31, 2025. Work on the periodic update started in October 2022 and continued through this year.

The updated Comprehensive Plan addresses diversity and equity throughout the Plan and incorporates the State required changes addressing housing, climate change, and other topics.

The Planning Commission will be asked to conduct a public hearing, take public testimony, and forward a recommendation of approval to the City Council on Ordinance No. O2025-010.

1 – Summary

Ordinance No. O2025-010 is a ten-year periodic update to Tumwater's Comprehensive Plan, to reflect current population, housing, and employment forecasts, updated State regulations and guidance, and new community priorities. Comprehensive Plan went through its last periodic update process in 2016.

The Plan serves as Tumwater's road map for accommodating growth in the City and its urban growth area from 2026 to 2045. The Plan was prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW) and adopted Thurston County County-Wide Planning Policies.

2 – Background

Staff have been working with stakeholders and the community on the Comprehensive Plan periodic update since the fall of 2022. The periodic update included the following state required Elements, with their associated maps and appendices:

- Climate Element (New in 2025)

- Conservation Element
- Housing Element
- Land Use Element
- Lands for Public Purposes Element
- Transportation Plan
- Utilities Element

A Plan Introduction was prepared containing the overall Plan goals, as well as public participation, intergovernmental coordination, plan review, and plan update and amendment requirements.

The Tumwater Thurston County Joint Plan will be updated to reflect Tumwater's amended Comprehensive Plan following the approval of the Ordinance No. O2025-010.

The following Elements of the Comprehensive Plan were not required to be updated by the state and were included in the periodic update:

- Economic Development Plan (Update expected 2026)
- Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan (Update expected 2026)
- Shoreline Master Program (Next state required update due 2030)

3 – Community Engagement

Guided by the Community Engagement Plan, a summary of the periodic update's community engagement opportunities is included as Appendix C of the Plan Introduction.

4 – Review and Approval Criteria

The periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan is subject to the Plan amendment criteria below from TMC 18.60.025(B):

- 1) *All amendments to the comprehensive plan must conform with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Chapter 36.70A RCW, and all amendments for permanent changes to the comprehensive plan must be submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce, pursuant to RCW 36.70A.106.*

The periodic update being considered is in accordance with Tumwater's Comprehensive Plan amendment process, as required by RCW 36.70A. After Ordinance No. O2025-010 is approved by the City Council, the Plan will be submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce pursuant to RCW 36.70A.106.

The periodic update meets the goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act as follows:

- 1) **Urban growth.** *Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update is intended to support the growth and development of the Tumwater and its urban growth area as outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and implementation actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 2) ***Reduce sprawl.*** *Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update is intended to reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development and focus future growth in the Tumwater and its urban growth area as outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 3) ***Transportation.*** *Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled, and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports urban level development Tumwater and its urban growth area that would provide for efficient multimodal transportation systems as outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 4) ***Housing.*** *Plan for and accommodate housing affordable 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.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports the provision of a range of residential development in the City, including middle housing and other types of affordable housing for all income groups as found in the Housing and Land Use Elements.

- 5) ***Economic development.*** *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.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports development that provides economic development and allows more people to live closer to jobs and services.

- 6) ***Property rights.*** *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.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update does not require any taking of private property without compensation.

- 7) **Permits.** *Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update and concurrent development code amendments support this goal.

- 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.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update does not affect rural natural resource industries.

- 9) **Open space and recreation.** *Retain open space and green space, enhance recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports the goals, policies, and actions for open space and recreation as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan

- 10) **Environment.** *Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update protects the environment by directing future development towards urban rather than rural areas.

- 11) **Citizen participation and coordination.** *Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.*

Tumwater and its urban growth area residents and all interested parties, agencies and jurisdictions were notified about the periodic update as part of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process.

- 12) **Public facilities and services.** *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.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update is supported by Tumwater's provision of sewer and water service in the urban area.

- 13) **Historic preservation.** *Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports historic preservation. As future development occurs, it would need to comply with all the applicable historical or archaeological regulations.

- 14) *Climate change and resiliency.*** *Ensure that the City's Comprehensive Plans and development regulations adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled and fosters resilience through the new Climate Element.

- 15) *Shorelines of the state.*** *For shorelines of the state, the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 shall be considered an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan.*

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update does not affect the shorelines of the state. As future development occurs, it would need to comply with the City's Shoreline Management Program, as required.

- 2) *Amendments and site-specific rezone applications should be evaluated for internal consistency with the comprehensive plan, and for consistency with the county-wide planning policies, related plans, and the comprehensive plan of Thurston County or cities which have common borders with Tumwater.***

The Elements of the Comprehensive Plan periodic update are internally consistent. The Comprehensive Plan is consistent with the Thurston County-Wide Planning Policies and the plans of neighboring jurisdictions.

- 3) *Whether conditions in the area for which comprehensive plan change/zoning amendment is requested have changed or are changing to such a degree that it is in the public interest to encourage a change in land use for the area.***

Conditions in Tumwater and its urban growth area and state requirements have changed since the last periodic update in 2016, which require changes to land use to accommodate required future housing.

- 4) *Whether the proposed comprehensive plan zoning amendment is necessary in order to provide land for a community-related use which was not anticipated at the time of adoption of the comprehensive plan.***

The criterion does not apply.

5 – Public Approval Process

An Environmental Checklist for a non-project action was prepared on October 10, 2025, under the State Environmental Policy Act (Chapter 43.21C RCW), pursuant to Chapter 197-11 WAC, and a Determination of Non-Significance was issued on October 17, 2025. The comment period for the Determination of Non-Significance ended October 31, 2025, and the appeal period for the Determination ended November 6, 2025.

The ordinance was sent to the Washington State Department of Commerce on October 13, 2025, for the required 60-day Notice of Intent process before the periodic update is adopted, in accordance with RCW 36.70A.106. The comment period on the Notice of Intent will end December 12, 2025.

The Planning Commission was briefed on the ordinance October 14, 2025, and held a work session on October 28, 2025. Following the public hearing and deliberation on November 10, 2025, the Planning Commission is expected to make their recommendation on the periodic update to the City Council.

A Joint City Council and Planning Commission work session will review the Planning Commission's recommendation on the Comprehensive Plan periodic update on December 9, 2025; and the City Council is scheduled to consider the periodic update on December 16, 2025.

6 – Public Notification

A Notice of Public Hearing for the Planning Commission hearing on the ordinance was issued on October 31, 2025. The notice was posted, distributed to interested individuals and entities that have requested such notices, and published in The Olympian.

7 – Staff Conclusions

1. The Comprehensive Plan periodic update meets the review and approval criteria found in TMC 18.60.025(B).
2. The Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with the goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act and the Thurston County County-Wide Planning Policies.
3. All the Elements of the Comprehensive Plan periodic update are internally consistent.
4. The Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with neighboring jurisdictions' plans.

8 – Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the Comprehensive Plan periodic update by Ordinance No. O2025-0010 to reflect current information and requirements.

9 – Effect of the Periodic Update

The proposal amends the Comprehensive Plan as shown in Ordinance No. O2025-010.