
STAFF REPORT



Date: October 14, 2025

To: Planning Commission

From: Brad Medrud, Community Development Director; Dana Bowers, Associate Planner; and Erika Smith Erickson, Housing and Land Use Planner

2025 City of 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 until this year.

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

The intent of the Planning Commission meeting on Tuesday, October 14, 2025, is to present Ordinance No. O2025-010, which contains the updated Comprehensive Plan, its Elements, appendices, and maps and to discuss the schedule for adoption of the ordinance.

As part of our discussion with the Planning Commission, staff would like the Planning Commission to consider following questions:

- **Does the ordinance clearly lay out the process that was followed to develop, review and adopt the updated Comprehensive Plan?**
- **Do the Elements in the ordinance align with the overall Comprehensive Plan goals?**

1 – Summary

Ordinance No. O2025-010 is a ten-year periodic update to the City of 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

City staff have been working 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 the City's amended Comprehensive Plan following the approval of the Ordinance No. O2025-010.

Other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan were not included in the periodic update if they were not required to be updated at this time:

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

3 – Public Engagement

A summary of the periodic update's public 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 the City's Comprehensive Plan amendment process, as required by RCW 36.70A. If Ordinance No. O2025-010 for the periodic update 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is intended to support the growth and development of the City as outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

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

The proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with the goal as the proposed periodic update is intended to reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development and focus future growth in the City 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports urban level development in the City 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with the goal as the proposed 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 outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with the goal as the proposed periodic update supports development that provides economic development and allows more people to live closer to jobs and services as outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 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 proposed 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 proposed 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 proposed 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 proposed 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update protects the environment by directing future development towards urban rather than rural areas as outlined in the maps, goals, policies, and actions of the Comprehensive Plan.

- 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.*

City residents and all interested parties, agencies and jurisdictions were notified about the periodic update as part of the proposed 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is supported by the City'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 proposed 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update supports the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled and fosters resilience.

- 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 proposed 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 proposed 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 the City and state requirements have changed since the last periodic update, 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 7, 2025, under the State Environmental Policy Act (Chapter 43.21C RCW), pursuant to Chapter 197-11 WAC, and a Determination of Non-Significance is expected to be issued in October 2025.

The ordinance will be sent to the Washington State Department of Commerce on October 17, 2025, for their required 60-day review before the proposed periodic update is adopted, in accordance with RCW 36.70A.106.

The Planning Commission is expected to hold work sessions on the periodic update on October 28, 2025, and November 10, 2025, and a joint City Council and Planning Commission work session on November 25, 2025.

The Planning Commission is expected to hold a public hearing for the periodic update on December 9, 2025. Following the public hearing and deliberations, the Planning Commission is expected to make their recommendation on the proposed periodic update to the City Council.

A Joint City Council and Planning Commission work session is expected to review the Planning Commission's recommendation on the Comprehensive Plan periodic update in a briefing on January 23, 2026; the City Council is expected to hold a work session to discuss the recommendation on January 27, 2026; and the City Council is scheduled to consider the proposed periodic update at a meeting on February 17, 2026.

6 – Public Notification

A Notice of Public Hearing for the Planning Commission is expected to be issued on November 28, 2025. The notice will be published as a press release, distributed to interested individuals and entities that have requested such notices, and published in The Olympian.

7 – Staff Conclusions

1. The proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update meets the review and approval criteria found in TMC 18.60.025(B).
2. The proposed 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 proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update are internally consistent.
4. The proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with neighboring jurisdictions' plans.
5. The proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with the goals of the Land Use Element, the Lands for Public Purposes, and the Transportation Plan of the Comprehensive Plan.
6. Based on the above review and analysis, staff concludes that the proposed Comprehensive Plan periodic update is consistent with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Thurston County-Wide Planning Policies, and the Comprehensive Plan.

8 – Staff Recommendation

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

9 – Effect of the Proposed Periodic Update

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

10 – Staff Contacts

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