

HANDOUT

Comprehensive Plan Amendment

PERMITS+PLUS ZONE

Washoe County
Permits Plus Zone
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What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The Washoe County Comprehensive Plan is a document that describes the physical character of the County. The plan contains information, policies, goals, and a series of maps, including land use, streets and highways, public facilities, and development suitability. The Washoe County Board of Commissioners, the Washoe County Planning Commission, and the community use the plan to help guide decisions about growth and development issues. The Comprehensive Plan consists of five elements and twelve area plans. Each area plan recognizes critical conservation areas, establishes existing and future land use and transportation patterns, and identifies current and future public services and facilities needs. The Comprehensive Plan provides the essential framework for creating a healthy community system. Any action by the community or private developer relating to the subdivision or development of land, public facility improvements, and similar activities must conform to the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The five elements of the Comprehensive Plan include:

1. **Population Element.** This element provides a method to identify the projected growth in population and to set forth plans and action programs through which the needs of the projected population will be met.
2. **Conservation Element.** This element outlines policies and action programs for the protection and conservation of the County's cultural resources, scenic areas, and water, air and land resources as growth and development occur between now and the year 2020.
3. **Land Use and Transportation Element.** This element outlines policies and action programs to establish an integrated arrangement of existing and future land use and transportation facilities for the year 2020.
4. **Public Services and Facilities Element.** This element effectively manages existing and planned land uses that include public safety, general government, libraries, schools, parks and recreation, water supply, wastewater treatment, flood control, and transportation. Improvements and new programs are forecast and timed through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which identifies priorities and funding for each capital improvements project.
5. **Housing Element.** This element identifies housing resources, characteristics and availability and provides plans, policies and action programs to maintain and develop affordable housing. The element provides a long-term plan to assure the housing needs of the projected population will be met.

The twelve area plans provide more detailed information concerning conservation, land use and transportation, public facilities, and policies and action programs, and include the following geographical areas:

Forest Area Plan	Spanish Springs Area Plan
High Desert Area Plan	Sun Valley Area Plan
North Valleys Area Plan	Tahoe Area Plan
South Valleys Area Plan	Truckee Canyon Area Plan
Southeast Truckee Meadows Area Plan	Verdi Area Plan
Southwest Truckee Meadows Area Plan	Warm Springs Area Plan

Requirements for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment

In order to modify the policies contained in the five elements or twelve area plans of the Comprehensive Plan or to change a land use designation for a parcel of land, a comprehensive plan amendment must be requested. The first step is to discuss your proposal informally with Community Development staff. If what you propose requires a comprehensive plan amendment, you will be provided with the necessary information and application forms to process your proposal. Applications can only be submitted by the property owner or the owner's authorized agent. In every case, the application must be signed by the property owner. All information necessary to review and decide upon the proposed amendment must be submitted with the application and deemed complete by the Director of Community Development.

Timing of Amendments

Each component of the Comprehensive Plan may be amended by the Board of County Commissioners no more than four times per year. Applications for comprehensive plan amendments are processed in one of the four cycles beginning on the 15th of January, April, July and October (or the first working day thereafter if it falls on a weekend or holiday).

Review Procedures and Findings

The neighborhood must have the first opportunity to provide input prior to the Planning Commission meeting. Washoe County utilizes the Citizen Advisory Board venue for this first public noticed meeting. The Planning Commission must conduct at least one public hearing for the purpose of receiving oral and written evidence relative to the application. The evidence shall be reviewed to determine if the proposed amendment is consistent with existing policies and standards of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission shall recommend approval, modification, or denial of the application to the Board of County Commissioners based on the results of this review. Public hearings conducted by the Planning Commission shall be held within 125 days from the date the application was accepted. The Planning Commission may take action on the proposed comprehensive plan amendment at the conclusion of the public hearing, but must take action no later than 180 days after the application was accepted. An extension of time for the Planning Commission may be granted if mutually agreed upon between the applicant and the Director of Community Development.

When making its recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners for approval, modification of an amendment, or denial, the Planning Commission shall, at a minimum, make at least one of the following findings of fact:

1. **Consistency.** The proposed amendment is in substantial compliance with the policies and action programs of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. **Compatible Land Uses.** The proposed amendment will provide for land uses compatible with (existing or planned) adjacent land uses, and will not adversely impact the public health, safety or welfare.
3. **Response to Changed Conditions.** The proposed amendment responds to changed conditions or further studies that have occurred since the plan was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners, and the requested amendment represents a more desirable utilization of land.

4. **No Adverse Effects.** The proposed amendment will not adversely affect the implementation of the policies and action programs of the Conservation Element or the Population Element of the Washoe County Comprehensive Plan.
5. **Desired Pattern of Growth.** The proposed amendment will promote the desired pattern for the orderly physical growth of the County and guide development of the County based on the projected population growth with the least amount of natural resources impairment and the efficient expenditure of funds for public services.

In addition to the findings provided in the Development Code, certain area plans have been undated and have a series of additional findings found in the "Goals" of the area plan under "Plan Maintenance." Applicants are invited to visit with staff to ascertain if the area plan they are interested in qualifies for these additional Plan Maintenance findings.

In the event the Planning Commission denies a comprehensive plan amendment application, that action is final unless appealed to the Board of County Commissioners

When taking final action on the Planning Commission's recommendation, the Board of County Commissioners shall make part of the record their affirmation, modification, or rejection of the findings of fact provided in the Planning Commission's final recommendation, as well as any of the findings of fact that the Board of County Commissioners deems to be relevant.

Whether or not an application is approved depends primarily on the merits of the application and its compliance with findings as listed above.

If an Amendment of the Comprehensive Plan is denied, typically a year is required until a new request may be processed.

Noticing Requirements

Notice for all comprehensive plan amendments setting forth the time, place, purpose of hearing, and map or physical description of the land involved shall be sent by mail at least 10 days before the meeting to the following persons:

1. All owners of real property that is the subject of the comprehensive plan amendment.
2. Citizen Advisory Boards (CABs) created by the Board of County Commissioners for the area in which the property that is the subject of the comprehensive plan amendment is located.
3. All owners of real property within 750 feet of the property which is the subject of the comprehensive plan amendment.
4. All tenants of any mobile home park that is located within 750 feet of the property which is the subject of the comprehensive plan amendment.
5. All general improvement districts (GIDs) for the area in which the property that is the subject of the comprehensive plan amendment is located.

If the number of notices pursuant to this section does not total 30 or more, the County shall send out additional notices to make the total number at least 30 separate property owners.

Additionally, a notice will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in Washoe County not less than 10 days prior to the public hearing date.

How Much Does it Cost?

A current fee schedule may be obtained:

- From the Department of Community Development at Building A, second floor, Washoe County Administration Complex.
- By calling (775) 328-6100, or
- By accessing our web site at www.washoecounty.us.

The submitted fee is 50% refundable after distribution to the agencies for review and is nonrefundable once the written analysis by Community Development staff has commenced.

More Information

The Washoe County Development Code and Comprehensive Plan are available on line at www.washoecounty.us. Comprehensive Plan Amendment procedures are found under Division Eight, Article 820, of the Development Code.

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