

How to Use the Plan

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

Portland's Comprehensive Plan guides land use development and public facility investment decisions between now and 2035. This guidance is intended to help make Portland more prosperous, healthy, equitable, and resilient. The Comprehensive Plan includes five elements that work together to accomplish this goal:

1. Vision and Guiding Principles
2. Goals and Policies
3. Comprehensive Plan Map
4. List of Significant Projects
5. Transportation policies, classifications, and street plans

What is the Plan based on?

The Comprehensive Plan is based on objective data and research into current conditions, issues, and trends. This information can found in the following supporting documents:

- Inventories and Analysis
- Transportation Systems Plan
- Citywide Systems Plan (for non-transportation infrastructure)
- School District Facility Plans

How is the Plan implemented?

The goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan are implemented through regulations, land use decisions, agreements, and community development programs including:

- Zoning Code
- Zoning Map
- Service Coordination Agreements
- Annexations
- Urban Renewal Areas
- Development Agreements

For more information about the plan elements, supporting documents, and implementing tools, see Chapter 1: The Plan.

When and how is the Comprehensive Plan used?

The Comprehensive Plan is used for making land use decisions, primarily legislatively, but sometimes quasi-judicially. This includes decisions about how land is used or developed, and public facility investment decisions related to those planned land uses or developments.

The Comprehensive Plan and these tools are not static, and they are expected to change over time. City Council will consider decisions to adopt, amend or repeal parts of the Comprehensive Plan or implementation tools in the future in response to changing conditions, needs, trends, and other information.

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Legislative and Quasi-judicial land use decisions

Land use decisions are generally made through one of two ways: legislatively or quasi-judicially. Some zoning- and development-related decisions are also made administratively.

Legislative process – Legislative decisions establish long-range land use plans, investments, policies, or regulations that can affect large parts of the city and many people. Legislative land use decisions can also be used to change any element of the Comprehensive Plan and change or create new related codes and area plans intended to implement the Plan. These changes are accomplished through adoption of an ordinance by City Council. Part of this process is the review and adoption of findings that the proposal is consistent with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan or with State and Metro rules. Legislative projects typically are:

- Initiated by City Council or City agencies;
- Reviewed by the Planning and Sustainability Commission, which transmits its recommendation to City Council.

Quasi-Judicial process – Quasi-judicial decisions are used for site-specific projects that affect one or a limited number of specific properties. They typically are initiated by an applicant, like a private property owner. They tend to impact fewer neighborhoods and people. Examples include site-specific amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Map or Zoning Map, proposals to demolish historic landmarks, Type IV Demolition Reviews, or requests for street vacations, among others.

- City staff or a Hearings Officer reviews and makes decisions on quasi-judicial proposals.
- There is often an opportunity for a public hearing.
- They are reviewed for compliance with specific approval criteria in the Zoning Code.
- In limited cases, the criteria may require findings of compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.

Administrative process – Administrative decisions are those made under clear and objective standards without exercise of discretion. An example includes application of numerical setback standards in the Zoning Code, or the determination of needed public improvements based on street classification maps in the Comprehensive Plan, and published engineering standards. Administrative decisions are typically made by City staff and are not individually reviewed against the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

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How are Comprehensive Plan policies weighed and balanced in decision-making?

With all Legislative changes and some Quasi-Judicial decisions, and the decision-maker must document how the proposed decision complies with the Comprehensive Plan's policies. A decision

“complies” if it can be found to be equally or more supportive of the existing Plan *as a whole*. If these findings cannot be made, City Council has two choices: to not make the change, or to amend the Plan to allow the change. However, the reverse is not true; Council is not compelled to make a decision just because it would meet Plan policy.

The Comprehensive Plan contains a broad range of policies for Council to consider. Each policy describes a desirable outcome. But it is unlikely that all policies are relevant to a particular decision and that a particular decision could be expected to advance all of the policies in the Plan equally well. For this reason, policies are examined for their applicability to the decision at hand, and only applicable policies are considered.

Council must then weigh and balance applicable policies to determine whether a particular decision would “on the whole” comply with the Comprehensive Plan. In virtually all decisions, some applicable policies will weigh — or matter — more than others. For example, a policy that specifically addresses the topic or location of the change being made would probably outweigh a policy that applies to a wide variety of topics or to the city as a whole. Most policies begin with a verb, and some verbs establish stronger imperatives than others. Accordingly, a policy to “require” something may outweigh a policy to “encourage” something else.

But even the strongest policies do not automatically trump other policies. Every decision is different, with different facts. The particular policies that matter more will change from one decision to another. There is no set formula — no particular number of “heavier” policies equals a larger set of “lighter” policies. In cases where there are competing directions embodied by different policies, City Council may choose the direction they believe best embodies the plan as a whole. The Vision and Guiding Principles in this Comprehensive Plan help to provide additional guidance when policies are balanced. Council ordinances do, however, contain a “conclusion on law” explaining how complementary and competing policies have been weighed and balanced in determining whether the proposed decision complies with the Comprehensive Plan.

HOW TO USE THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is also used in other ways.

City of Portland

The City of Portland uses its Comprehensive Plan more broadly than the State of Oregon requires. The City also refers to the Plan to inform non-land use decisions, to scope projects and assess alternatives, to guide public facility investment choices, and to support grant applications, among other things.

Other public agencies

Other public agencies, like the State of Oregon or Metro, may refer to the Plan when determining if a project is consistent with the City of Portland's local Comprehensive Plan.

Community members

The Comprehensive Plan is a community tool that is often used for advocacy and to track accountability. Community members are also encouraged to use the Plan to monitor City projects and decisions. Community members may choose to use the Comprehensive Plan to:

- Advocate for projects and programs to be included in the annual City budget.
- Review, evaluate, and comment on proposed legislative projects.
- Review, evaluate, and comment on Comprehensive Plan-related projects and programs.
- Review, evaluate, and comment on site-specific land use reviews that are subject to Comprehensive Plan review.
- Support or appeal approved land use reviews and legislative projects.
- Apply for a change to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map designation for a property they own, apply for a street vacation, or apply for any other land use approval for which a project must be reviewed for compliance with the Comprehensive Plan.
- Serve as background information when applying for grants, funding, or other programs.

ABOUT THE PLAN

How does the Comprehensive Plan relate to other plans?

The Comprehensive Plan is part of a family of state, regional, and local plans. Some, like Oregon's Statewide Planning Goals and Metro 2040, set the overall planning framework and guide the content of the Plan. Others, like topic- and area-specific plans, provide more detailed information about individual topics or smaller parts of the city.

Oregon's Statewide Planning Program

Oregon has had a statewide planning program since 1973. This program is built on a set of 19 Statewide Planning Goals that cover a wide range of topics. Portland is required to adopt a Comprehensive Plan that implements the applicable statewide goals at a local level. The state's Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) reviews and approves each local jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plan to ensure compliance with these goals.

The LCDC notifies local jurisdictions when it is time to update all or part of a Comprehensive Plan. This notification is called "Periodic Review." According to the State, the purpose of Periodic Review is to ensure that local comprehensive plans are:

- Updated to respond to changes in local, regional, and state conditions.
- Coordinated with other comprehensive plans and investments.
- In compliance with the statewide planning goals, statutes, and rules.

Statewide Planning Goals

1. Citizen Involvement
2. Land Use Planning
3. Agricultural Lands
4. Forest Lands
5. Natural Resources, Scenic and Historic Areas, and Open Spaces
6. Air, Water and Land Resources Quality
7. Areas Subject to Natural Hazards
8. Recreational Needs
9. Economic Development
10. Housing
11. Public Facilities and Services
12. Transportation
13. Energy Conservation
14. Urbanization
15. Willamette River Greenway
16. Estuarine Resources
17. Coastal Shorelands
18. Beaches and Dunes
19. Ocean Resources

The City of Portland is subject to all goals, except 3, 4, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The City's Comprehensive Plan must demonstrate compliance with all remaining goals. During this Comprehensive Plan update, the City was specifically required to, at a minimum, address goals 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, and 14 and was directed to address goals 5 and 7 during the research and inventory phase of the plan update process.

Regional Plans

Metro is the Portland metropolitan area's regional government. Portland's Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with three regional plans and implementing regulations established by Metro:

The Urban Growth Management Functional Plan – This Plan, along with the Metro Regional Framework Plan and the 2040 Urban Growth Concept, provide the Portland metropolitan region with a coordinated growth management plan and preferred regional urban form. The preferred regional urban form is to contain growth within a carefully managed Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) where growth occurs inside the UGB in the form of infill and redevelopment with higher density developed in areas where it is appropriate.

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) – The RTP guides and coordinates investments in the regional transportation system, which serves Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties.

Urban Growth Management Functional Plan – Cities and counties within Metro's boundaries must be consistent with Metro's adopted Urban Growth Management Functional Plans and the Regional Framework Plan, per Metro's Charter and state law. However, these plans do not dictate how cities accommodate growth and development. It is the responsibility of Portland to figure out where to locate housing and how to create a fertile and sustainable economy, while protecting natural resources. It is Portland's responsibility to guide the city's shape and development. The Comprehensive Plan is one way that the City of Portland is complying with the applicable Metro plans.

Local Plans

In addition to the Statewide Planning Program and the regional planning program, Portland develops and adopts many plans of its own.

Area-specific Plans – The Comprehensive Plan is a plan for the whole city; area-specific planning efforts take place for a smaller part of the city. Planning for smaller geographies — like a district of the city or the neighborhoods along a transit line — provides an opportunity to explore issues at a finer scale and with the local community. This level of planning is often called community or neighborhood planning.

Area-specific plans contain many components, such as information about the area's history and community, vision statements, policies, code amendments, land use or Zoning Map changes, and action plans. All of these components must comply with the Comprehensive Plan in effect at the time the plan is developed. The components of area-specific plans either can be adopted by ordinance or resolution. They can also result in an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan or its implementation tools.

Topic-Specific Plans – The City of Portland and other government agencies also adopt plans that are topic-specific or infrastructure-specific, such as the Climate Action Plan, the Consolidated Housing Plan, and Stormwater Management Plan. These plans should follow the ethos of the Comprehensive Plan and should not contradict the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. In general, they are not adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Like the area-specific plans, topic- or infrastructure-specific plans may necessitate an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and/or its implementation tools to ensure that they stay current over time.

How do area-specific plans relate to the Comprehensive Plan?

Plans adopted from 1980 to 2015 – Over 60 area-specific plans were adopted between the day Portland's first Comprehensive Plan went into effect (January 1, 1981) and the adoption and

effective date of this 2035 Comprehensive Plan. These plans are listed in Figure 1-2 in Chapter 1: The Plan. These area-specific plans may or may not comply with the new 2035 Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. If there is a conflict between a policy in the 2035 Comprehensive Plan and a policy in a previously adopted area-specific plan, the new 2035 Comprehensive Plan supersedes.

2016 and later –The City will adopt new area-specific plans, such as the Central City 2035 Plan, after the 2035 Comprehensive Plan goes into effect. These plans will address local issues, using the 2035 Comprehensive Plan as a starting point for more detailed policies, maps, and actions. These area-specific plans may result in amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and/or its implementation tools and will help the Comprehensive Plan stay current over time

How is a Comprehensive Plan developed and approved?

Under state-mandated Periodic Review, there are several steps that must be taken to update a Comprehensive Plan. Below is a summary of Portland's process for updating the Comprehensive Plan, approved by the State of Oregon.

Assessment

The first step of Periodic Review is assessing the adequacy of the existing plan and background data to determine if conditions have changed enough to require the development of a new Comprehensive Plan or updates to portions of the Comprehensive Plan. The 2008 assessment showed that a significant update to the City's Comprehensive Plan, including new background information, was needed. This direction ultimately resulted in the development of new Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies, and a substantial update to the Comprehensive Plan Map.

Periodic Review Work Plan

The next step in Periodic Review is the development of a work plan. As part of periodic review, the City is required to develop and adopt a work plan to guide the update of the Comprehensive Plan. In 2008, after review and recommendations by the Planning and Sustainability Commission, the Portland City Council adopted a work plan by Resolution No. 36626. This document includes the Council-approved Periodic Review Work Program & Public Involvement Plan (August 6, 2008).

Factual Basis

After the work plan is adopted, the next step is the development of a factual basis, as required by ORS 197.625 and OAR 660-0025. The purpose of this work is to provide a thorough and current analysis of existing conditions in Portland on which to base the content of the Comprehensive Plan. The factual basis includes the following documents:

- Economic Opportunities Analysis
- Housing Needs Analysis
- Natural Resource Inventory
- Infrastructure Condition and Capacity

Buildable Lands Inventory

The factual basis was adopted by the City Council in October 2012, and all but one of the reports was acknowledged by the State in May 2014. The Economic Opportunities Analysis is being revised by the City and will be re-submitted in 2015.

Growth Scenarios and Alternatives Analysis

In the Buildable Lands Inventory Report, published in 2012, the City analyzed existing development patterns and intensity, land and development values, and existing land use designations and zoning to determine where there is vacant land and land that is likely to be redeveloped. The report identifies constraints, such as inadequate infrastructure services or natural hazards. The Growth Scenarios Report offers a basis for making informed decisions about which investments and growth patterns will bring the greatest benefit to the most Portlanders while moving the city closer to meeting performance goals. Performance goals include things such as reducing carbon emissions, improving access to living-wage jobs, and providing safe and convenient access to goods and services within walking distance of where people live.

The Growth Scenarios Report uses information from the Buildable Lands Inventory and measures the performance of different possible growth alternatives, and how those choices may impact our ability to meet the Measures of Success adopted with the Portland Plan. Based on analysis in the Growth Scenarios Report, a "preferred scenario" was developed. The proposed Comprehensive Plan Map implements that preferred scenario.

Working Draft (Part 1 and Part 2)

A Working Draft of the Comprehensive Plan was prepared by staff in 2013, in consultation with a group of advisory committees (known as Policy Expert Groups, or PEGs). In total, more than 60 volunteers participated in this process, including business and neighborhood leaders, and a variety of other topic experts and community representatives. The Working Draft was shared with the general public at meetings and events and online. The Working Draft Part 1, which included the Urban Design Framework and the Goals and Policies, was released for public review in January 2013. The Working Draft Part 2, which included the Comprehensive Plan Map and the Citywide Systems Plan, was released for public review in October 2013.

Proposed Draft

The Proposed Draft was developed by staff, informed by public feedback and additional analysis. This draft was published in July 2014 and circulated for broad public review. Formal testimony was invited for a 9-month period, July 2014 through March 2015. Testimony occurred in person (at public hearings), in writing (via email and letters), and through an interactive online map application (the Map App). Over 4,000 comments were received and considered by staff and the Planning and Sustainability Commission.

Recommended Draft

The Recommended Draft includes all changes to the Proposed Draft approved and recommended by the Planning and Sustainability Commission between July 2014 and June 2015. It will be forwarded to the City Council for consideration, public hearings, and adoption.

Adopted Plan

The Adopted Plan will be the final version of the Plan that is adopted by the City Council by ordinance. It includes all changes directed by Council, following an additional round of hearings and City Council deliberation and testimony.

Early Implementation

The final step in the state-required Periodic Review process is updating city codes and zoning maps to be consistent with the new Comprehensive Plan. These updates do not go into effect until the Comprehensive Plan is acknowledged.

State Acknowledgment

After the City Council adopts the Comprehensive Plan, the City of Portland sends the City's Adopted Plan to the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC). LCDC must review and acknowledge that the Comprehensive Plan adopted by the City meets all applicable State of Oregon requirements. Once the plan is approved by LCDC, it is considered an acknowledged Comprehensive Plan and becomes effective.

Future updates

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range plan to guide land use decisions for a generation. Given the breadth of the plan, its long-term planning horizon, and the amount of work required to update the Plan's components, the full Comprehensive Plan is only updated periodically.

However, it is often necessary to update portions of the plan or to create more focused area plans. When smaller updates are completed or area plans like the Central City 2035 Plan are completed, they must be adopted as "post-acknowledgment plan amendments."