

# Introduction

## Background Discussion

**Buckley is believed to be on the verge of significant population growth. As Buckley looks ahead to its future in the upcoming years, it needs to accommodate this anticipated growth in a manner that is economically viable and environmentally sustainable, all while preserving its existing small town and historical character. Buckley can meet the challenge of maintaining its character through thoughtful and intelligent planning, which can be directed through a comprehensive plan.**

**Buckley, Washington (population 4,040) is located in the southern Puget Sound region, thirty miles east of Tacoma and near the foothills of Mt. Rainier. It is situated in a pristine, picturesque valley and enjoys breathtaking mountain views. The city is, as the motto aptly states, *Above the Fog and Below the Clouds*.**

## Visioning and Plan Process

*Buckley's Comprehensive Plan.* **A comprehensive plan is a broad statement of community goals and policies that direct the orderly and coordinated physical development of a city into the future. Plans anticipate change and provide specific guidance for future legislative and administrative actions. The comprehensive plan is the result of citizen involvement, technical analysis, and the judgment of decision-makers.**

**In compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), Buckley drafted a mandatory comprehensive plan in 1995, which was updated in 2004. The maps, goals, and policies of the plan provide the basis for the adoption of regulations, programs, and services, which implement the plan. The City Council is ultimately responsible for adopting the Comprehensive Plan.**

*Contents and Structure.* **The comprehensive plan is designed to be a readable, functional document that will guide Buckley's future development over the next twenty years. It is divided into the following elements:**

- Land Use
- Housing
- Capital Facilities
- Utilities
- Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Economic Development
- Urban Design

Three elements, Capital Facilities, Utilities, and Parks and Recreation, were written by the city staff. Transportation was written with the assistance of Gray and Osborn. The remaining elements, Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, and Urban Design, were written with the assistance of graduate students from the University of Washington, Department of Urban Design and Planning. For these elements, the students researched the existing conditions of the town and held a public visioning meeting at the Multipurpose Center in March 2004 to gather input from Buckley residents. After feedback was received, the planning students drafted goals based on the community responses, and presented the draft goals at a second community meeting held in April 2004. The students wrote draft policies and projects after the draft goals had been reviewed and discussed by the community. In June 2004, the students then presented the draft comprehensive plan to the Planning Commission for their input and review. The plan was then sent to the Buckley City Council for the final adoption.

Each element includes an introduction with a discussion of existing conditions and future trends and strategies. Following the introduction are the goals, policies and projects for each element. The division of each element in this manner allows it to be considered separately and thoroughly. At the same time, the elements are interrelated and are meant to work together in a balanced way to direct the City's future.

*Language used in the Comprehensive Plan.* When a goal, objective or policy states that the City "shall" or "will" do something, such language requires that the City take measurable steps to accomplish the purpose of the original policy. When a goal, objective or policy states that the City "should", "may", or "encourage" to do something, such language requires that the City make an effort to accomplish the purpose of the original

**policy. Additional review or financial constraints may cause a different interpretation or intent of the original policy, and therefore, such a policy may not be accomplished to the degree that it was originally intended.**

***Internal Consistency.* The Comprehensive Plan serves as the guiding policy document to attain the City's vision of the future over the next 20 years or longer. This means that decisions and actions will be based upon the adopted plan. One of the central tenets of the Growth Management Act is to require consistency in planning across multiple levels of government and policy-making bodies. Consistency is determined in a number of ways. The following levels of "consistency" must be achieved:**

- **The Comprehensive Plan must comply with the Growth Management Act.**
- **The Plan is to be consistent with the regional plan of the Puget Sound Regional Council**
- **It must be consistent with the adopted County-wide Planning Policies for Pierce County, as well as, the Comprehensive Plans of adjacent jurisdictions.**
- **State agencies and local governments must comply with the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **The various elements of the Comprehensive Plan must be internally consistent.**

***County-wide Planning Policies.* The Growth Management Act requires counties and the cities to coordinate, develop and adopt a set of mutually agreed upon planning policies to guide the development of local comprehensive plans. In response to this requirement, elected officials representing Pierce County, and the cities and towns located within it, joined together to cooperatively develop and adopt the County-wide Planning Policies for Pierce County. The County-wide Planning Policies provide a framework from which the comprehensive plans of the local jurisdictions within Pierce County are to be developed. This common framework provides for consistency among the comprehensive land use plans. The policies address issues that uniformly affect the county as a whole, including:**

- **Affordable housing**
- **Agricultural lands**
- **Economic development**
- **Education**

- **Fiscal impact**
- **Historic, archaeological and cultural preservation;**
- **Natural resources, open spaces and protection of environmentally-sensitive lands;**
- **Siting of public facilities;**
- **Transportation**
- **Urban growth areas.**

**Local jurisdictions must develop their comprehensive plans in accordance with these policies. Buckley’s future planning must be accomplished within the context of its role in the State of Washington, Puget Sound region, and Pierce County. Decisions made at other levels of government influence the choices made at the local level.**

### **Vision Statement**

**At the opening of the 21st Century, Buckley has a unique opportunity to become a more vibrant and attractive place to live, work, and play. Bringing a prosperous future to Buckley will involve preserving and leveraging its existing qualities while creatively responding to the demands brought on by societal change and urban growth.**

**Buckley’s key strengths are its small town character and its location in a pristine natural setting. The primary challenges facing Buckley are economic revitalization and accommodation of residential growth in an economically viable and environmentally sensitive manner. To address these challenges in the context of these strengths and weaknesses, the Buckley Comprehensive Plan will focus on three areas:**

- 1. Economic development of the downtown core and State Highway 410 interface.**
- 2. Promotion of outdoor recreational activities.**
- 3. Preservation of town identity and character.**

**Buckley’s downtown core has a historic urban form that has great potential for economic development based on small-scale retail, buttressed with new multi-family housing. Creating an attractive Hwy 410 interface that can provide target amenities to commuters will aid in promoting the niche services and opportunities that the City has to offer. Buckley’s location invites investment and promotion as a “gateway” to Mt. Rainier and**

surrounding outdoor recreation areas. Local investment in this outdoor recreational infrastructure will also allow Buckley to become the staging grounds for the niche markets accommodating the outdoor enthusiast. While Buckley's population is projected to roughly double in the next 15 years, this growth can be accommodated while preserving Buckley's identity and charm.

These three focus areas, while distinct, also have significant interdependencies, and thus, potential for mutual, positive reinforcement. For example:

- Buckley's downtown commerce could be supported by recreational visitors.
- New housing centered around downtown would bring more residents to downtown businesses while helping to preserve rural character outside the center.
- Recreational facilities could be shared between residents and tourists.
- Small-town character could be enhanced through a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented downtown in which people meet face-to-face.
- A charming small-town atmosphere would serve as an additional magnet for recreational tourists.

Overall, Buckley has the chance to be a prime example of how an historic American small town can thrive in the 21st Century. If Buckley grows in a manner desired by its residents, prevailing economic and social trends such as the shift to a service economy, shrinking household size, and an aging population, could become assets rather than threats. Meanwhile, all the benefits of a tightly knit small community remain and are likely enhanced. With smart planning, Buckley is poised to have it all: a vibrant local economy based in a compact, friendly downtown, surrounded by a relatively undisturbed rural landscape and the great outdoors beyond; a place where all are invited to experience fresh air and familiar faces.