

CHAPTER 4

Community Character



1. INTRODUCTION

The Community Character chapter is an optional element of the Comprehensive Plan, developed in accordance with Section 36.70A.070 of the Growth Management Act (GMA). It supports the GMA's thirteen specific goals, and most directly relates to:

- ◆ Urban growth - Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public services and facilities exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- ◆ Reduce sprawl - Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- ◆ Housing - Encourage the availability of affordable housing 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.
- ◆ Open space and recreation - Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
- ◆ Historic preservation - Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.

The Community Character element has been developed in accordance with King County and Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies, and has been integrated with all other planning elements to ensure consistency throughout the comprehensive plan.

This element supports all City of Pacific Framework Goals, but most particularly:

- ◆ Encourage changes that promote livability, pedestrian orientation, and high quality design, and that limit stress factors such as noise pollution and traffic congestion.

This chapter addresses urban design issues in the City of Pacific and the adjacent Urban Growth Areas. It represents the community's policy plan through the year 2025.

The Land Use element specifically considers the general distribution and location of land uses, the appropriate intensity and density of land uses given current development trends, the protection of the quality and quantity of water supply, the provision of public facilities and services, and the costs and benefits of growth. The Community Character element describes how the goals in the other plan elements will be implemented through design policies and regulations. Thus it is a key element in implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

2. INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

2.1 Physical Location and Natural Features

The City of Pacific is located in South Puget Sound. Most of its land is located on the White/Stuck River Valley floor. Wooded slopes rise up to the West Hill of Pacific in the north, and to the City of Edgewood in the southwest. Views of Mt. Rainier and its foothills can still be had from many vantage points. The White/Stuck River, associated wetlands and wildlife habitat are other dominant natural features.

Considerations for a generally mild, but fairly wet climate continue to effect the built environment.

2.2 Outside Influences

The steep slopes bracketing the City on the west and east are reinforced by the West Valley Highway, State Route 167, the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroads, and the White/Stuck River, all traveling through Pacific in a generally north-south direction.

The city’s location along SR 167 between Seattle and Tacoma has provided it with a largely residential population, and potential for more commercial and industrial growth.

The north 60% of Pacific lies in King County. This area contains steep wooded open space, the City/River Park along the White/Stuck River, all areas designated for residential use, commercial uses along Ellingson Road at the north, and some light industrial and commercial lands from there, south along SR 167 and the West Valley Highway. King County Metro provides transit and pumps sewage for the entire city.

The 40% of Pacific in Pierce County contains some residences that are being phased out to provide more land and facilities for commercial, office park, and light industrial uses. Stewart Road is undergoing extensive improvements to support these land uses and provide for additional through traffic and trail use. Valentine Avenue is also scheduled for improvements to support local businesses as well as additional traffic heading north from the 24th Street interchange in Sumner.

Special Purpose Districts:

The City must also work with the Auburn School District: Site development, design, and access, the Lakeland Water/Sewer District, which serves the West Hill, and the King and Pierce County Water Agencies that govern use of the White/Stuck River and its flood plain.

2.3 Zoning and Land Use

The land use pattern and to a large extent the zoning of the City of Pacific is reflective of its growth over the years. The northern portion, located north of the King/Pierce County line is the historic town site. It is predominately single-family uses and is intended to remain so. As the population grew and the SR-167 Freeway was built, new commercial and industrial development was established along both sides of the freeway and also along Ellingson Road. Some apartments were also developed along the eastern portion of Ellingson Road. In community visioning over the years, residents have reiterated their desire to protect single family neighborhoods.

In the mid 1990's, the City annexed a large area of Pierce County. This area, which abuts industrial areas in the City of Sumner, is zoned primarily for light industrial uses. The transition from residential to industrial in this area had started before the annexations and a small number of residences remain. Residential is a nonconforming use in the Light Industrial zone and it is intended that these remaining residences eventually will be replaced with industrial uses. In 2009, the City adopted the Manufacturing Industrial Center Overlay (MICO) for most of the area. This was a joint effort with the City of Sumner.

The City of Pacific has been coordinating its trail system with the cities of Sumner and Auburn, and will have to work closely with both jurisdictions in the design and creation of the proposed Pacific/Sumner Transit Station, and associated uses at common boundaries.

The City will work with the city of Algona toward compatible zoning both above and below Ellingson Road where the cities abut. The Commercial-Residential Mixed Use Zone (MC) is focused on the area at the intersection of Ellingson Road and Milwaukee Boulevard. These properties are largely undeveloped despite long standing Highway Commercial (HC) zoning. Note that the abutting Algona zoning is also Mixed Use. This zoning district may be appropriate for other areas.

2.4 Built Features

The City Hall Complex, which also includes the Community Center/Gymnasium, Senior Center and Volunteer Park, is centrally located in the King County portion of Pacific at the intersection of Milwaukee Boulevard and 3rd Avenue. The Complex forms the core of a developing Neighborhood Center. A local market, shop and post office, the Police and Fire Station, and new senior apartments all lay within the Neighborhood Center. A new Neighborhood Center Overlay Zoning for this area is intended to facilitate a gradual transition to a mixed use center of an appropriate scale. It provides alternative regulations that allow low intensity commercial along both 3rd Avenue and Milwaukee Boulevard, including mixed used development.

2.5 Local Issues

The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) of King County conducts periodic housing surveys. The 2002 Housing Survey focused on numerous issues deemed critical in meeting the needs of King County citizens. The issues that are applicable to the City of Pacific are:

- ◆ Accessory Dwelling Units
- ◆ Affordable Housing Preservation
- ◆ Capacity for a Diversity of Housing Choices
- ◆ Cottage Housing
- ◆ Design Standards
- ◆ Impact Fees
- ◆ Incentive Programs
- ◆ Infrastructure and Concurrency
- ◆ Jobs/Housing Distribution
- ◆ Permitting Processes
- ◆ SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act)
- ◆ Transit Oriented Development

The Community Character element provides guidelines for preserving and enhancing the City of Pacific’s quality of life. The character of the City has historically been residential with areas of commercial and industrial uses. Many of the above issues affect efforts to balance the needs and desires of citizens and businesses with GMA mandates and other outside influences, to achieve a healthy, vibrant and economically stable community.

Efforts to support housing affordability and/or production are discussed in more detail in the Housing element.

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3. FUTURE ALTERNATIVES

3.1 Preserving and Developing Community Character

Design Themes

The recent revisions to the Pacific Municipal Code (PMC) to encourage gable or hip roofs in the Neighborhood Center that is in the 3rd Avenue and Milwaukee Boulevard, is an example of character development.

The City Hall Complex of converted school buildings presents a good example of hip and gable roofs that provide a theme that can well be reproduced to form a character element. The nearby development of the Rainier Vista Senior Housing precipitated revisions to the height code for this area, and resulted in a similar roof construction to the City Hall Complex.

A motel constructed several years earlier was constrained by height regulations which resulted in a flat roof design. With the amended codes, future structures of three stories will be able to emanate the more pleasant roof design that contributes to community character.

Pedestrian Orientation

Maintaining and increasing pedestrian orientation for a community experiencing much of its residential growth through subdivision and infill on long, narrow lots. The City is re-evaluating existing roads and planning for future growth by evaluating new development with regard to connectivity with the fabric of the community.

Pedestrian safety and accessibility, within residential and commercial neighborhoods; and to schools, parks, trails are an important part of this fabric.

Mixed Use Centers

Two mixed use centers have been designated. The first is the Neighborhood center, located in the vicinity of 3rd Avenue and Milwaukee Boulevard. While this center has been described in the Comprehensive Plan since 2004, a new Neighborhood Center (NC) Overlay Zone is intended to set forth a regulatory scheme to build on the existing mix of uses and attract more uses to the planned center.

The second center is located at Ellingson Road and Milwaukee Boulevard. Commercial-Residential Mixed Use (MC) zoning replaces the Highway Commercial (HC) zoning. The two mixed use centers are unique in that they are the only zoning districts other than Planned Unit Development as provided for in Section 20.69 of the Pacific Municipal Code that allow both residential and commercial uses. Both districts allow residential units above non-residential first-floor uses. Other types of multiple family uses in these districts would require a Conditional Use Permit with strict criteria to prevent large scale apartments from overwhelming either district.

4. GOALS AND POLICIES

GENERAL

GOAL CC-1: Maintain and enrich Pacific’s quality of life which encompasses its:

- ◆ friendly, small town atmosphere;
- ◆ dynamically growing regional employment center; and,
- ◆ natural open space, parks, recreational areas, and trails.

POLICIES

Policy CC 1.1 In concert with Pacific’s citizens and business community, prepare and implement design guidelines and a design code, as appropriate, which address streetscape, landscape, and building design.

Policy CC 1.2 Develop specific design standards that promote the City’s function as the “Hub” of White River Valley by creating a friendly welcoming atmosphere to all segments of the community including:

- ◆ Single-family neighborhoods
- ◆ Neighborhood Center
- ◆ Highway Commercial Center
- ◆ Regional Industrial Employment Center
- ◆ Focus on trails and parks

LAND USE

GOAL CC-2: Pacific should be designed so that housing, jobs, daily needs, sports and recreation, and other activities are within easy walking distance of each other.

POLICIES

Policy CC-2.1 Encourage a mix of residential-scale civic, commercial, and service uses in neighborhood centers. Small neighborhood parks or greens shall be established where appropriate.

Discussion: The Neighborhood Center (NC) Overlay zone and the Commercial-Residential Mixed Use (MC) zone provide new opportunities and incentives for such complementary activities.

Policy CC-2.2 In recognition of the need for a variety of housing, allow, through the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, a mix of residential uses as appropriate to the neighborhood character.

Discussion: The Neighborhood Center (NC) Overlay zone and the Commercial-Residential Mixed Use (MC) zone provide opportunities for a new type of housing in the City of Pacific namely dwellings above or behind commercial. These centers can increase the supply of housing without adverse impacts to the single family neighborhoods.

Policy CC-2.3 In conjunction with the Auburn, Dieringer, Fife, and Sumner School Districts, encourage the location of schools within walking distance of a majority of the population they are intending to serve.

Policy CC-2.4 Through the Land Use Plan and Community Character element, strive to balance residential, commercial, industrial and public land uses.

Policy CC-2.5 Review development regulations to remove unnecessary requirements and to balance environmental protection, public participation, and housing and economic development goals.

Policy CC-2.6 Plan for a high density Urban Transit Center adjacent to Sumner-Pacific Station which includes a mixture of urban transportation modes to create a Transportation Hub. Area plans shall be prepared to indicate in more detail allowable uses, design themes, buffering, public spaces, etc.

Policy CC-2.7 Together with Metro and Pierce Transit and other agencies, establish a network of transit stops, park and ride lots, and a transit system in the neighborhoods and districts connecting to the adjacent cities' commuter rail stations until the Pacific/Sumner Station becomes a reality.

URBAN FORM

GOAL CC-3: Establish an orderly urban form which separates uses on the basis of their functional relationship to the city, and which reinforces the identity of the city.

POLICIES

Policy CC-3.1 Implement design guidelines and ordinances to achieve compatible and attractive new residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

~~**Policy CC-3.2** Ensure that more intensive developments do not adversely impact adjacent uses.~~

~~**Policy CC-3.3** Review and amend zoning and subdivision regulations to ensure adequate setbacks, landscaping, and buffering are required where land use conflicts may occur.~~

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

GOAL CC-4: Redevelopment of underutilized areas to reduce sprawl and take full advantage of the City's investment in existing infrastructure.

POLICIES

Policy CC-4.1 Create incentives to encourage well designed infill and redevelopment projects to fully utilize previous investment in existing infrastructure and reduce the consumption of undeveloped lands.

Discussion: The Commercial Residential Mixed Use (MC) District at Ellingson Road and Milwaukee Boulevard and the Neighborhood Center Overlay (NC) District at 3rd Avenue and

Milwaukee Boulevard are intended to provide incentives for development and/or redevelopment at these important commercial nodes. The regulations allow mixed use with slightly lower parking requirements and relaxed setbacks to encourage more compact, walkable areas with a mix of residential with commercial and other non-residential uses.

SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN

GOAL CC-5: Encourage designs of major private and public buildings to create distinctive reference points in the community.

POLICIES

Policy CC-5.1 Adopt design criteria for development proposals so new projects contribute to the community, enhance public safety, and complement adjacent development.

Discussion: Design criteria should address public benefits, consistency with adjacent development, quality of construction and design, and preservation of trees, views, and natural areas. The City shall encourage designs that convey quality architecture, workmanship, and clustering.

Policy CC-5.2 Ensure that development relates, connects, and continues the design quality and site functions from site to site in residential, public facility, and commercial areas.

Plans shall specify in more detail the allowable uses, design themes, buffering, and protection of sensitive areas and resources.

Policy CC-5.3 Encourage small blocks of 660 feet by 330 feet in the “Neighborhood Center” to promote small-scale development and pedestrian movement.

Discussion: Small blocks facilitate pedestrian movement, encourage appropriately sized complexes, and enhance access to businesses.

Policy CC-5.4 Encourage development in the Neighborhood Center and adjacent to public places surrounding the Center. Enrich those places and encourage people to use them through enhanced architectural elements and building materials.

Discussion: Development should provide public amenities, such as public and pedestrian access, pedestrian-oriented building design, mid-block connections, public spaces, community or city sponsored activities, openness, sunlight, and view preservation. The City should also provide incentives for developers to incorporate artwork into the design of their projects.

Policy CC-5.5 Use building and site design, landscaping, and shielded lighting to buffer the visual impact of development.

Policy CC-5.6 Incorporate pedestrian amenities into the design of public, commercial and industrial areas.

Discussion: Walkways should connect parking areas to building entrances and provide connection within and between developments, and encourage structures that provide appropriate lighting and rain cover for pedestrians.

PEDESTRIAN LINKAGES

GOAL CC-6: Seek to complete the City's sidewalk system and pursue development of a network of off-road facilities for non-motorized travel.

POLICIES

Policy CC-6.1 Provide clear and identifiable systems of sidewalks, walkways, and trails.

Discussion: Develop a system of linear paths connecting parks, open spaces, recreation areas, trails, rollerblading and skate parks, schools, employment centers, and shopping for pedestrians and bicyclists. Amenities for non-motorized transportation include pedestrian-scale lighting and signage, landscaping, public art, bike racks, railings, newspaper boxes, and trash receptacles.

Policy CC-6.2 Strive for continuity in the sidewalk system that links new development to the existing sidewalk network. This may include pedestrian routes through a development for more direct access to transit stops.

Policy CC-6.3 Encourage commercial buildings to be sited at or near public walkways without diminishing safe access or space for improvements, such as benches or lighting.

Discussion: Commercial Residential Mixed Use (MC) and Neighborhood Center (NC) encourage more dense development and buildings near the sidewalks through increased height limits, relaxed setbacks and reduced off street parking requirements.

STREET CORRIDORS

GOAL CC-7: Enhance the identity and appearance of residential, commercial and industrial neighborhoods.

POLICIES

Policy CC-7.2 Streets should be designed to include amenities to enhance community character along with the functional needs of the adjoining properties.

Discussion: Amenities should include street trees and landscaping, special lighting, setback sidewalks, signs, street names, flower displays, public art, kiosks, crosswalks, or decorative paving.

Policy CC-7.3 Streets should be designed to safely accommodate motor vehicles, non-motorized vehicles, pedestrians, and emergency access.

Discussion: The best available design and safety standards shall be applied. Community streets, pedestrian paths, and bike paths should contribute to a system of fully-connected and interesting routes to all destinations. Their design should encourage pedestrian and bicycle use and discourage high speed traffic. The commuter traffic network should be focused around regional transit and freeway travel.

Policy CC-7.4 Work cooperatively with businesses and property owners along Ellingson Road to preserve and enhance the economic viability and visual quality of the commercial corridor.

Policy CC-7.5: Work cooperatively with the businesses and property owners in the specialty manufacturing and artisan district within the Sumner-Pacific MIC to enhance the visual quality of the district, by developing zoning-based incentives to promote increased development intensity, reduced setbacks, and flexible landscaping standards to encourage on-site retail uses and enhanced building and site design.

ROADWAYS

GOAL CC-8 Establish a community entry statement into and out of Pacific.

POLICIES

Policy CC-8.1 Designate and develop City gateways.

Discussion: A City gateway marks an entrance to a city. It promotes community character through special signage, community themes, or landscaping designed to catch the eye. A gateway should be dramatic and obvious and include a combination of buildings, structures, landscaping, signs, lighting, and public art.

Policy CC-8.2 Encourage pedestrian-scale streetscape improvements and promote pedestrian and bicycle oriented centers at existing civic and community uses.

Policy CC-8.3 The City should establish a City-wide street tree planting plan in conjunction with its development of arterial roadways.

Policy CC-8.4 Enhance Ellingson and Stewart roads to include safe pedestrian amenities, landscaping, cohesive frontage improvements, and other design features that consider safe use of these routes.

Policy CC-8.5 Support and implement an interconnected system of highways, public streets, and mass transit to serve employees, citizens, visitors, and the delivery and shipment of goods and materials.

Policy CC-8.6 A minimum employment density shall be established at key locations in the southern portion of Pacific to support transit service, and the area as a manufacturing center. Pedestrian-friendly streets with shade trees, as well as landscaped boulevard medians, shall be included in new street standards.

CULTURAL, SCENIC, HISTORICAL & NATURAL ATTRIBUTES

Goal CC-9: Protect and enhance Pacific’s cultural, scenic, historical and natural attributes.

POLICIES

Policy CC-9.1 Recognize the heritage of the community by naming parks, new streets, and other public places ~~after and~~ in honor of major City figures and events.

Discussion: The City will implement this policy through citizen involvement.

Policy CC-9.2 Designate and inventory historic landmark sites and structures.

~~**Policy CC-9.3** Work jointly with other jurisdictions, agencies, organizations, and property owners to preserve historic resources.~~

~~*Discussion:* The City may wish to adopt the State Historic Building Code, as an additional guideline or alternative to the Uniform International Building Code.~~

SIGNAGE

GOAL CC-10: Encourage sign design and placement appropriate to the land use and character of the neighborhood.

POLICIES

Policy CC-10.1 Discourage the use of large signs and prohibit billboards.

Discussion: Large signs and billboards detract from Pacific’s community character by cluttering, dominating, and distracting from the visual ambiance along SR167 and Ellingson Road. The City ~~will can implement this policy by~~ initiateing a gradual removal of billboards and continuing to prohibit new billboards. This can be implemented through the City’s Sign Code. Pacific’s sign code will establish size limitations.

Policy CC-10.2 Encourage consolidation of signs on a single structure where a commercial development contains multiple businesses.

Discussion: The City can implement this policy through design review.

VEGETATION AND LANDSCAPING

GOAL CC-11: Encourage the retention of as much natural vegetation as possible where land use changes occur, creating a balance between the existing vegetation and soils.

Discussion: See the Natural Environment element, vegetation preservation and enhancement.

Policy CC-11.1 Encourage consolidation of landscaped areas in commercial development.

Discussion: Landscape consolidation enhances site frontage for small businesses and reduces the costs of landscaping. This would promote the economic viability of small businesses.

OPEN SPACE

GOAL CC-12 Preserve and encourage open space as a significant element of the community’s character through parks, trails, water features, open space preservations, and other significant properties that provide public benefit.

Discussion: See the *Parks, Open Space, Recreation, and Trails* chapter.
Public Places

GOAL CC-13: Maintain and improve the highly visible public realm to maintain community character and increase public safety.

POLICIES

Policy CC-13.1 Ensure that public places are designed to provide pedestrian amenities, including, but not limited to seating, landscaping, kiosks, walkways, pavilions, canopies, and awnings ~~and~~ appropriate to the size and scale of the public use.

Policy CC-13.2 Consider the edges of public places that abut residential property for special design treatment to create a buffer effect.

Policy CC-13.3 Maximize solar exposure to public open space and parks by appropriately placing adjacent structures.

PUBLIC ARTS

GOAL CC-14: Explore the creation of a community Arts Commission.

Discussion: Community arts commissions are usually non-profit organizations established to fund and promote art within their cities. They can promote activities and artwork in places that are accessible to the public. Arts commissions can fund activities and programs through 1% funds for public art and through private donations.

INNOVATIVE IDEAS

GOAL CC-15: Provide land use incentives for uses that enhance the City’s vitality through a variety of financial and regulatory strategies.

Discussion: This policy can be implemented through priority permit review, tax abatement, or other measures. The City can also allow flexibility in site and building design if development meets specific performance standards that give equal or better design and protection to that zone.

POLICIES

Policy 15.1 To the extent possible, direct public investment toward physical improvements that support existing development and promote well managed, focused growth; serve population concentrations; and promote targeted changes in land use densities.

Policy 15.2 To enhance and protect sensitive areas, incorporate provisions for cluster development into existing regulations and apply them throughout the City, subject to specific regulatory standards.

Discussion: Clustering development on one portion of a larger parcel reduces costs to both homeowners and the community as a whole. It promotes a more efficient, and therefore less costly, provision of utility services, such as water, electrical and surface water management. It

also results in a smaller percentage of impervious surfaces on parcels and helps preserve natural areas while still allowing development.

Policy 15.3 Support commercial areas by providing incentives for residential development in limited commercial zones.

Discussion: Residential development in mixed- use zones provides a lifestyle some people find desirable. By residing in areas near services and employment, one can reduce transportation costs. Businesses also benefit from consumers who live in the immediate vicinity and who may frequent their establishment during slower hours. These residences could absorb some of the City’s anticipated population growth, resulting in less pressure for multi-family development in single-family areas.

Policy CC-15.4 Allow small-scale home occupations in residential areas.

Discussion: Home occupations allow small businesses to operate in a cost efficient manner. These types of businesses can be compatible within residential neighborhoods if they have few employees, are incidental to residential use, will result in no negative traffic or environmental impacts, and retain residential character.