

Proposed Revisions to Comprehensive Plan

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Summary of Plan Elements

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Land Use

Most of Steilacoom’s land has been developed in one way or another. Previous plans have stressed the importance of preservation of open space as new development takes place. While open space continues to be a focus of this comprehensive plan, recent acquisitions of large areas of open space have lessened the urgency. Instead, redevelopment of existing properties is anticipated to emerge as the primary form of development as fewer parcels of undeveloped land remain.

The proposed land uses illustrated and discussed in the land use element will look familiar to today’s residents -- a testimony that they value the vision and foresight of those who have worked to make Steilacoom what it is today.

Found in the land use element, Figure 3.1 summarizes proposed land use for housing, commerce, ~~industry~~ multiple use, open space, recreation, public utilities, and public facilities. The general pattern of land use is essentially unchanged from current land use. The biggest change since the 2004 update concerns the School District properties. The School District realigned the parcels at both the elementary schools and sold the excess lands under the Pierce County Conservation Futures program. As a result, almost 23 acres of open space property have been preserved and are now under Town control. Also 13 acres of the former industrial area were added to the high school property to allow future expansion of that campus.

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Current Land Uses

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Figure 1.4 Acres of Vacant and Underutilized Commercial and Industrial Lands (Source 2014 Pierce County Buildable Lands Report)

| Zone | Acres |
|----------------------|-------|
| Commercial General | 2.6 |
| Commercial Shoreline | .93 |
| Former Industrial | 29.86 |
| Total | 33.39 |

Commercial land uses are limited to the entrance to Town along Steilacoom Boulevard; the downtown core between Main, Pierce, Commercial and Rainier Streets; around the intersection of Union Avenue and Rainier Street; the ferry landing area along Commercial Street between Seventh and Wilkes Streets; and along Chambers Creek Road next to the mouth of Chambers Creek. ~~Industrial land uses are confined to an area bordering Chambers Bay. The paper mill that operated at this site closed in 2000, and has yet to be replaced with any new use. The buildings and structures of the old mill are being removed for scrap. In the 2014 Buildable Lands Report, half of the Industrial zone is estimated to be unavailable for development due to steep slopes and other natural features. The 2014 Buildable Lands Report identified this area as vacant and underutilized. The 2014 Buildable Lands Report also noted that development constraints in the area due to the presence of critical areas including steep slopes, making it suitable for master planning.~~ Other land uses represented in Steilacoom include recreation, public structures and related improvements.

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Quality of Life Goals and Policies

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Quality of Life Goal 3: Historic Preservation

The Town should seek ways to preserve and maintain its historic resources.

Policy QL 3.1 Continue a Preservation and Review Board as the monitoring agent for compatible architecture in the historic district.

Policy QL 3.2 The Town's preservation programs and policies should be reviewed and enhanced where necessary. Of particular interest is the development of an active preservation program which emphasizes community outreach and involvement.

Policy QL 3.3 Efforts to publicize new development proposals within the historic district shall continue to promote community awareness and participation.

Policy QL 3.4 The Town's preservation program shall honor and reflect the Town's historic character and encourage more community education relating to historic preservation.

Policy QL 3.5 The Town shall support programs to protect its historic resources. Examples include protection against "demolition by neglect", education and referral, a special valuation (tax deferment) program, and voluntary designation of homes outside the district.

Policy QL 3.6 The Town shall consider the impacts of new development and redevelopment on historic and archaeological resources and sites as part of the Town's State Environmental Policy Act review process and require appropriate mitigating measures.

Policy QL 3.7 The Town should encourage coordinated efforts between the Pierce County Landmark Commission, area colleges, Indian tribes, state agencies, and non-profit organizations, such as the Steilacoom Historical Museum Association and the Steilacoom Tribal Museum, to protect historic and archaeological resources.

Policy QL 3.8 The Town will seek to protect the central historic district by maximizing use of the former industrial site (*Master Planned Development site*) to achieve growth targets.

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Land Use Element

Introduction

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Steilacoom's vision of land use incorporates the Town's history as well as its future. General patterns of land use in Steilacoom during the next 20 years will be influenced significantly by the Town's development history.

As of 2012, only about 6% of the land in Steilacoom is vacant, not counting the old paper mill site. According to the 2014 Buildable Lands Report, about 13% of the Town is “underutilized”, that is developed at less than the density permitted by the zoning ordinance.

Future land use planning is guided by a vision in which all uses--housing, open space, recreation, commerce, public facilities, ~~industry~~, multiple-use and transportation--are carefully integrated to maintain and enhance the Town's small town atmosphere. A balance of land uses that approximates the current balance dominates the vision. Land use planning must facilitate the best use of all lands, developed and undeveloped, in light of this vision.

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Planning Assumptions

The Town made the following assumptions in creating this plan:

Redevelopment of the Industrial area will not disrupt the established land use pattern

The 2015 Comprehensive Plan acknowledged that the one area that might change use is the former Industrial area. The use designation for that area is now Master Planned Development. Until a site plan and development agreement is submitted for redevelopment, the Town cannot analyze the impacts of redevelopment. However, given the geographic isolation of the Industrial area, its redevelopment will have limited impact on the rest of the Town, except for possible traffic impacts as noted below.

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The Town's street system will be able to accommodate increased traffic

The Town's well-established street system will not be overwhelmed by the projected increases in use due to natural increase in population and the limited increase of commercial activity. The redevelopment of the ~~Industrial~~ Master Planned Development area may require upgrades to Chambers Creek Road, but until a development is proposed, the nature of any upgrade is unknown.

Proposed Land Use

General Pattern

The Figure 3.1 summarizes proposed land use for housing, commerce, ~~industry~~, ~~multiple-use~~, open space, recreation, public utilities, and public facilities. The general pattern of proposed land use is essentially unchanged from current land use. Permissible uses in each type of land use area are discussed in the following paragraphs.

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Open Space Areas

~~Several different~~ Two categories of open space are designated by this plan. Open Space and Recreation ~~and Housing and Open Space, and Industrial and Open Space areas~~ all share some common qualities that should be retained. Open space qualities include mature or dense native vegetation, and shoreline or wetland features. Open space areas often provide functions such as wildlife habitat, drainage or stormwater retention and natural areas that provide a visual break from surrounding urban development.

Staff suggestion:

Open space within the Master Planned Development area will be determined in a development agreement approved by the Town Council. Open space should include areas of dense native vegetation, shoreline and other natural features, including critical areas (geologic hazards, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and waterways). The uses allowed under the development agreement should preserve the existing natural features and vegetation to the extent possible, and be compatible with and support the continuity of the open space corridor listed on Figure 3.4. The Madrona/Chambers Creek corridor includes the creek's water and intertidal water flowing through the creek and Chambers Bay, the land beneath the water, the beach and marshy land surrounding the creek and bay, and vegetation buffering the creek and bay from developed areas.

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Subdivision of parcels and subsequent development of the Housing and Open Space ~~and Industrial and Open Space~~ Master Planned Development areas should be sensitive to the open space and natural qualities of the property. Efforts should be made to design and site development to preserve some of the natural features and vegetation of these areas. The preservation and continuance of open space corridors depicted on Figure 3.4 should be of particular concern.

The majority of the shoreline is proposed to be open space integrated with small areas of commerce, mixed-use development and with existing public, railroad, and industrial facilities. These other uses occur within a shoreline/intertidal corridor for which the dominant use is open space and recreation.

This corridor is also listed on Figure 3.4. The corridor includes intertidal water and the land beneath, the beach, and vegetation buffering the beach from developed areas. Additional development of other uses along the shoreline must be compatible with the corridor and must support its continuity. The Town's *Shoreline Master Program* is consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

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Industrial and Open Space

A small area near Chambers Creek is currently zoned for industry and is surrounded by open space. The open space provides a natural buffer between the industrial use and surrounding residences. In addition, much of the open space is designated as a critical area with geologic hazards, wildlife habitat, wetlands, and waterways. Although additional industrial uses are not precluded in this area, such uses must preserve the existing natural features and vegetation must be compatible with and support the continuity of the open space corridor listed on Figure 3.4, and must retain a natural vegetative buffer between the industrial use and surrounding residences. The Madrona/Chambers Creek corridor includes the creek's water and intertidal water flowing through the creek and Chambers Bay, the land beneath the water, the beach and marshy land surrounding the creek and bay, and vegetation buffering the creek and bay from developed areas.

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Industrial

The Town's industrial area is surrounded by open space, as shown on Figure 3.1, to ensure adequate buffers between the industrial use and lands dedicated to other uses. Industrial uses that occupy some portion of the surrounding open space area must preserve the existing natural features and vegetation, must be compatible with and support the continuity of a natural open space corridor, and must retain a natural vegetative buffer between the industrial use and surrounding residences.

Environmental impacts should be evaluated whenever changes to existing industrial uses are proposed. Only industrial uses for which environmental impacts can be mitigated will be allowed.

Following closure of the paper mill in 2000, the future of this area has been the subject of much discussion. No definite plans for the site have been proposed, but future use may include non-industrial uses. Any request for re-designation and rezoning will require a careful public review.

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Master Planned Development

The Master Planned Development designation recognizes that development of larger parcels provides a unique opportunity for creative mixed-use development that provides opportunity for greater density, preservation of open space and protection of critical areas. Development in an area designated as Master Planned Development is implemented by approval of a general site plan and approval of a development agreement that establishes zoning regulations and sets specific goals that will advance the public interest and are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

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Similarly, the 2014 Pierce County Buildable Lands Report determined that the Town requires an additional 135 new jobs to meet the 2030 employment target. The number of new jobs created has been negligible since 2010. No new commercial building development has been applied for since 2010. ~~The Town has the capacity for 388 new jobs, primarily in the Industrial area.~~ The Town has capacity for new job development, including in the Master Planned Development area.

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Housing Intensity

In housing areas, the building intensity goal is to reach a Town-wide average of 4 dwelling units per acre. Housing patterns will be dominated largely by previous development and platting. Density in the multifamily areas, the Master Planned Development area, and the Old Town and Saltar's Point areas will be greater than 4 dwelling units. In contrast, the natural constraints to development in critical areas may result in below-average building intensity regardless of the maximum allowable density per acre.

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As part of the 2004 update, the Town eliminated zoning designations requiring development at less than four dwelling units per acre. In 2021, the former mill site was re-designated to permit a master planned development that encourages mixed-use, high density residential development. All the Town's residential zones allow densities at urban levels of density as required by the ~~Central Puget Sound~~ Growth Management Hearings Board decisions. *(The strike through is a staff suggestion)*

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Commercial Building Intensity

Commercial uses are allowed in approximately 20 of the Town's 1400 acres, not including the Master Planned Development area. Lot coverage is not restricted in the commercial zones, but height is restricted to 26 feet to maintain view corridors and the look and feel of the Town. Side yard setbacks are only required where commercial zones adjoin residential zones. Commercial development within the Master Planned Development area may deviate from these policies.

Industrial Building Intensity

~~Industrial uses are allowed in a small area near Chambers Creek. Much of this contains critical areas. Some of the area is designated as open space in the land use map. Development in this area is subject to the natural constraints of the land, to the critical areas ordinance, and to the development requirements described for open space. Building intensity and other development requirements for open space areas allowing industrial use are set out in the zoning ordinance.~~

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Land Use Goal 1: Neighborhood Character

The land use element will maintain a strong sense of community identity through proactive land use planning that addresses the unique characteristics of each neighborhood area.

Policy LU 1.1. The current ratio of single family to multifamily housing should be maintained or increased to preserve the predominantly single family character of the Town provided, however, multi-family housing should be encouraged in the Master Planned Development area.

Policy LU 1.2. Neighborhoods with significant multifamily housing areas should incorporate open space, natural buffers, public facilities, and recreational facilities with sufficient capacity to serve a dense population and designed to fill the needs of all types of households residing in those neighborhoods.

Policy LU 1.3. Home occupations should conform to the character of existing residential neighborhoods. Short term lodging businesses, such as Bed and Breakfasts, should be allowed within residential neighborhoods.

Policy LU 1.4 The Town supports the restoration and maintenance of historic buildings in the Historic District and throughout Town. New construction within the Historic District should enhance the qualities of the historic area.

Policy LU 1.5. The Town shall encourage physical activity through the installation of walking paths, sidewalks, and bicycle paths in residential neighborhoods.

Redevelopment of the Industrial Master Planned Development area into mixed-use commercial and residential area could occur. ~~which could significantly increase the amount of area available for use as housing.~~ This Comprehensive Plan does not include the Industrial Master Planned Development area in its residential calculations. ~~No plan for redeveloping the Industrial area has been submitted to the Town, and redevelopment would require a Comprehensive Plan amendment and much study prior to becoming reality.~~ Development of this area requires submission and Town approval of a site plan and development agreement before development could occur.

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3. Facilities and Service Needs

Inventory of Existing Transportation Facilities and Services

Figure 5.1 Summary of Inventory

| Facility or Service | Description |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Airports | None |
| Water: | |
| Port | None |
| Ferries: Pierce County DOC | Anderson & Ketron Islands McNeil Island facilities |
| Marinas | 1 Private facility |
| Surface: | |
| Freeway | None |
| State Highway | None |
| Town Streets | 32 miles of improved streets |
| HOV | None |
| Rail: | |
| Passenger | Amtrak (corridor only; no stops) |
| Freight | BNSF (corridor only; no stops) |
| Other | Private spur to <u>former</u> Industrial Area |

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Sanitary Sewer System

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The system also serves two elementary schools, Steilacoom High School, Western Washington State Hospital, the Industrial Master Planned Development area, and several small retail and food service establishments in the downtown commercial district.

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Introduction

This element represents the Town's policy plan for economic development for the next 20 years. Land determined to be appropriate for commercial and ~~industrial~~ mixed commercial-residential use has been identified on the land use maps adopted under the Land Use Element. Available public utilities and capital facilities are addressed in the Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements.

Steilacoom is a predominantly residential community with small areas set aside for local commerce, and a large former industrial area at the Town's northern border. The intent of these policies is to 1) retain existing businesses, 2) encourage business that promotes and enhances Steilacoom's small town atmosphere, and 3) encourages the best use of the ~~industrial~~ Master Planned Development area.

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Land Use Assumptions

As set forth in the Land Use Element, the Town assumes that commercial activity will gradually infill into the existing commercially zoned areas over the next 20 years. The ~~Industrial~~ Master Planned Development area may redevelop with commercial activity, but until the owners of the property produce a plan for the property, the impact will be unknown. The Town's target of 138 new jobs by 2035 in part depends on new commercial activity at the ~~Industrial~~ Master Planned Development site.

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The Town has a large former industrial area on its northern edge, the site of a former paper mill. The mill, closed in December 2000, once provided a large portion of the tax base for the Town. The old mill buildings have been mostly demolished, but the current owners have not announced plans for reusing the property.

Steilacoom's economic development is dependent on four factors: the continued success of the existing businesses, recruitment of new businesses that complement the Town, development or redevelopment of the vacant or underused commercial properties, and redevelopment of the ~~industrial~~ Master Planned Development area.

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In addition to the commercial properties, there is a large 80+ acre former industrial area available for use. The site has several buildings, high voltage power connections and a railroad spur.

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The Town is not without its challenges. The Town is mainly a residential area. There are conflicting visions for commercial development among the Town’s residents. The Town is not on a major highway or road. Outside of the ~~industrial Master Planned Development~~ area, there are few lots left zoned for commercial development. New development will consist of infill or redevelopment. All commercial buildings are subject to architectural review by the Preservation and Review Board, which adds additional time, costs and challenges to the permitting process.

Table 8.3 Vacant and Underutilized Commercial Land Adjusted for Undevelopable Areas
 Source: 2014 Buildable Lands Report

| Zoning Designation | Vacant | Underutilized |
|----------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Commercial General | .69 acres | 1.91 acres |
| Commercial Shoreline | .19 acres | .74 acres |
| Former Industrial | | 29.86 acres |
| Total | .88 acres | 32.51.acres |

~~The industrial site is not well situated, as it is several miles from Interstate 5. Residential development and Chambers Creek, both factors that may inhibit new industrial uses, surround the site. Redevelopment as a commercial site would require changes to the Comprehensive Plan and zoning designations depending on the use proposed.~~

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Economic Development Goal 3. The Town shall encourage appropriate use of the ~~industrial Master Planned Development~~ area

Policy Econ 3.1. The Town shall consider redevelopment of the ~~industrial Master Planned Development~~ area that is economically viable and maximizes the benefit to the Town.

Policy Econ 3.2. Future development of the ~~industrial Master Planned Development~~ area shall be compatible with surrounding uses. Industrial uses shall maintain a buffer from residential development.

Policy Econ 3.3. ~~The Town shall adopt regulations allowing business park-style developments within the industrial zone.~~ The Town shall adopt development regulations requiring submission of site plan and development agreement prior to development of the Master Planned Development area.