

CPA #2009-T-04 INITIATE 2011 CHANGES

Initiated by: City of Renton

Applicant: City of Renton

General Description

Every seven years, the City is mandated by state law to update and re-adopt its Comprehensive Plan. Although Renton adopts amendments annually, the last major update of the Plan occurred in 2004. Update of the Comprehensive Plan will go beyond housekeeping measures such as the correction of facts, figures, and statistics. Each Element of the Comprehensive Plan will need to be reviewed for compliance with the principles of the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A), consistency with the City's Vision, and the ability to accommodate projected growth in an equitable and responsible manner. Major re-organization of the Land Use and Community Design Elements was already accomplished under CPA #2008-T-02, the Capital Facilities Element will be reviewed under CPA #2009-T-01, and the Community Planning Element will be reviewed under CPA #2009-T-02. Over the next three years, amendments to the Vision, Economic Development, Housing, Human Services, Parks-Recreation-Open Space and Trails, Transportation, and Utilities Elements will be considered. During this cycle, the Environmental Element will be re-written overall, and policies related to tree retention and urban forestry, climate change, and green building will be added.

Text Amendment

This amendment reformats the Environmental Element. Similar to the reformat of the Land Use Element last year, this amendment proposes to eliminate duplicative policies, update outdated or ambiguous language, and re-organize the policies into a more coherent form. Language is also proposed to be added to include City policies on urban forestry, climate change, and green building. In the proposed Element there are three sections: *Resource Protection*, *Hazards*, and *Sustainable Development*. *Resource Protection* includes policies that cover the protection of surface water, groundwater, wetlands, and wildlife habitat. *Hazards* section policies discuss a number of environmental hazards in the City, including flooding, geologic hazards (erosion, landslides, seismic events, steep slopes), and coal mine hazards. *Sustainable Development* is a section that integrates existing City policy with current thought in environmental protection. This section provides policies on clean air, stormwater management (including low impact development), the integration of other City plans and policies to the benefit of the environment, public education and awareness, and working with other agencies to solve larger environmental issues.

Impact Analysis

Effect on rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan

Amendments to the Environmental Element will not affect the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan because it will only represent further consolidation and streamlining of policy directives, without altering the underlying policy ideas. Changes proposed to the Environmental Element include adding new policies on tree retention and urban forestry, climate change, and green building that emphasize environmental protection. These will be new policies that are necessarily consistent with the

Comprehensive Plan policies on growth and development, but are intended to affect the character of the conversion of land.

Effect on the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities

Amendments to the Environmental Element will not affect the City's capacity to provide adequate public facilities because there is no intention to alter the underlying policy ideas of this Element.

Effect on the rate of population and employment growth

This amendment will not affect the rate of population and employment growth.

Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable

Amendments to the Environmental Element are needed to bring the Comprehensive Plan up to date with contemporary initiatives in environmental protection, the sound management of growth, and the creation of healthy and livable communities. Changes are not intended to invalidate any of the existing policies in the Environmental Element, only to enhance this section with additional policies.

Effect on general land values or housing costs

There is great debate over the effect of increased environmental protection on land values and housing costs. Changes will be proposed to the Environmental Element that introduce policies intended to provide additional environmental protection. Once such policies are implemented in the Renton Municipal Code and projects are built subject to them, there may be some increase in land values and housing costs. However, both at the implementation and the project level, there are actions the City may be able to take to mitigate any negative impacts.

Whether capital improvements or expenditures are being made or completed as expected

Not applicable.

Consistency with GMA, the Plan, and Countywide Planning Policies

Environmental Element changes support the GMA goal to protect the environment to enhance the state's quality of life. Similarly, the amendments will support the general environmental policy of the Countywide Planning Policies including FW-4 which directs Comprehensive Plans to enhance and protect natural systems with the idea of managing natural resources and the built environment to produce a high quality living environment at minimal cost. Adding policies to the Environmental Element to further protect and enhance the environment of the City also supports the goal of the Element, which is continued protection of Renton's natural systems, natural beauty, and environmental quality.

Effect on critical areas and natural resource lands

Amendment to the Environmental Element will not affect critical areas and natural resource lands because there is no intention of altering the underlying ideas of these plans. Adding policies related to tree retention and urban forestry, climate change, and green building will likely not directly affect critical areas or natural resource lands. However, the purpose of

adding these policies is to enhance environmental protection of natural systems and improve the quality of life within the City. Such improvements may have indirect positive effects on critical areas and natural resource lands.

Effect on other considerations

Not applicable.

Review Criteria

RMC 4-9-020G states that the proposal shall demonstrate that the requested amendment is timely and meets at least one of the following criteria:

1. The request supports the Vision embodied in the Comprehensive Plan, or
2. The request supports the adopted business plan goals established by the City Council, or
3. The request eliminates conflicts with existing elements or policies, or
4. The request amends the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate new policy directives of the City Council.

This amendment meets Criteria #2 and #3. One of the Business Plan Goals for 2009-2014 is to “Plan, develop, and maintain quality services, infrastructure and amenities” to contribute to the livability of the community. Adding policies to the Environmental Element on tree retention and urban forestry, green building, and climate change reflect contemporary thought on what constitutes quality infrastructure, quality amenities, and a livable community.

Staff Recommendation

Amend the Environmental Element in line with current thinking on environmental protection, to include new policies on subjects such as tree retention and urban forestry, green building, and climate change.

Implementation Requirements

Not applicable.