

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

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ABOUT UNIVERSITY PLACE

University Place, Washington, ironically, hosts no university within its borders. The City obtains its name from 19th century Methodists who hoped to locate the University of Puget Sound here. However, their dream of a university on the hillside overlooking the bay eventually became the University of Puget Sound located in neighboring Tacoma. The community retains some of the curving drives and odd intersections that reflect the original architectural plans for a university community. Fittingly, University Place Primary School occupies the original campus site.

As a city, University Place is young, incorporated in August 1995. The community, however, is long-standing. Ezra Meeker first surveyed University Place as a town site in 1870. University Place’s reputation as a close-knit community with good schools and neighborhoods attracts residents. It is a livable city with strong community bonds and a mix of affordable to expensive housing.

Geographically, University Place is located directly on Puget Sound just south of the two spans of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge. The City benefits from its location in the bustling Puget Sound region. Downtown Tacoma is less than ten minutes away, and Seattle is less than one hour away. The City’s proximity to the Narrows Bridge also facilitates access to the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. Freeway access to University Place is by way of the Jackson Avenue exit on Washington State Highway 16 in Tacoma. A few blocks south of the interchange, Jackson Avenue becomes Bridgeport Way, the primary arterial route and commercial business corridor in University Place.

University Place operates under the Council-Manager form of government. The City Council is the policy-making body and consists of seven members elected at large. The Mayor is

elected from within the Council. The City Manager, appointed by the Council, serves as the professional administrator.

The basic form of the City, including its arterial streets and predominant land uses, was established prior to incorporation. The community is now focused on transforming these arterials into *complete streets* and developing a vibrant mixed use town center centered on Bridgeport Way. The City is continuing to improve its local parks and open space areas to further enhance the quality of life. University Place's stunning setting on the bluffs overlooking Puget Sound provides great views of the Sound and the Olympic Mountains beyond and opportunities for the development of paths and walkways. Scenic territorial views of Mt. Rainier and the Cascade Range are visible from numerous locations within the community. The City is supportive of Pierce County's ongoing efforts to redevelop large portions of the former 900 acre Chambers Creek/Lone Star Northwest Gravel Mine site into a regional park with a wide variety of improvements including trails, shoreline access, playground and the Chambers Bay Golf Course – the site of the 2010 U.S. Amateur Championship and 2015 U.S. Open.

**Table 1.1
Profile of University Place**

Population	
2010 Population*	31,144
2014 Population Estimate**	33,310
Median Age*	37.4 years
Population Under 5	6.5%
Population Under 20*	19%
Population 55 and Older*	23.2%
Population 75 and Older	6.34%
Sex Female	53.3%
Sex Male	47.7%
Race / Ethnicity*	
White	69.2%
Black/African-America	6.8%
Asian	10.8%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.6%
Other	2.2%
Other – Two or More	9.8%
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	7%
Income***	
Median Household Income****	\$70,796
Median Family Income*****	\$78,577
Income Below Poverty Level – All Families	8.2%
Income Below Poverty Level – All People	11.4%
Housing Characteristics***	
Number of Dwelling Units	13,370
Single Family Units (attached and detached)	65.6%
Multifamily Units	34.4%
Owner Occupied Units	57.5%
Renter Occupied Units	42.5%
Average Household Size****	2.53 persons
Average Family Size*****	2.94 persons
Median Home Value	\$339,900
Geography	
Land Area in Square Miles	8.4
Park Acreage, excluding Chambers Creek Properties	130
Chambers Creek Properties Acreage within University Place,	700

* Washington State Office of Financial Management

** U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2018

*** A household consists of all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship. A household may consist of a person living alone or multiple unrelated individuals or families living together.

**** A family consists of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit.

CITY OF UNIVERSITY PLACE VISION

Adopted August 5, 1996

Revised July 6, 1998, May 1, 2000, March 18, 2002, October 4, 2004

University Place is a safe, attractive city that provides a supportive environment for all citizens to work, play, obtain an education and raise families. Children and youth are nurtured and encouraged to develop into competent, contributing citizens in a changing world. The physical and mental well-being and health of all individuals is valued. Violence is not tolerated. A cooperative community spirit and respect for each other – our commonalities and differences – foster a diverse cultural, spiritual and ethnic life and prepare us for future challenges.

Land Use and Environment

Residential areas and commercial corridors retain a green, partially wooded or landscaped character, although the City is almost fully developed. The public enjoys trail access to protected creek corridors, wetlands and greenbelts. People enjoy expansive views, access to Puget Sound, world-class golf facilities at Chambers Bay, and additional recreational opportunities at Chambers Creek Properties.

Community character has been enhanced by fair and consistent enforcement of land use regulations. Buffering and landscaping separate incompatible uses, support the integrity of residential neighborhoods, and create more attractive business/industrial developments.

Housing

University Place has a mix of housing densities and maintains a friendly neighborhood and community atmosphere. The proportion of residents who own their homes has increased. A mix of housing styles and types is affordable to households at various income levels.

Transportation, Capital Facilities, and Utilities

Street lighting, sidewalks, curbs/gutters and bicycle lanes on all arterial streets have improved safety and created better connections between residential and business areas. Sanitary sewer services are available city-wide.

Community and Economic Development

The City Hall complex has contributed to the development of a thriving commercial and civic area. This pedestrian-friendly town center and community focal point offers civic activities, convenient shopping, and a welcoming downtown park. Residents and visitors enjoy a walk along shaded trails, a place to sit and relax on a sunny day, an active play area for children and a gathering place for community events.

Partnerships between the City and business sector have resulted in a viable, economically stable business community. Compact commercial and light industrial developments have attracted new investment and brought additional goods, services, and jobs to the community. Public street improvements and new infill developments contribute to the vitality of the core business areas. University Place has established itself as a destination for regional shopping, arts, recreation, and special community events and festivals.

Parks and Recreation

Expansion of parks and recreation services has been achieved through cooperative efforts of the City, Pierce County, school districts and many citizen volunteers. Residents enjoy more neighborhood parks and public spaces, a community and civic center, public access to the shoreline, and a variety of recreation programs and activities for children, youth, adults, and senior citizens.

Governance and Community Services

Open communication between citizens, business, industry and government has strengthened community ties and created an environment of trust, listening, and responsive, fair governance. Information is readily available to citizens and issues are fully discussed. The result has been quality, cost-effective services.

While not always a direct provider of services, the City assists residents in gaining access to needed community services through partnerships and contracts with other agencies.

Coordination with human service agencies results in the delivery (and outcome) of human services that promote(s) empowerment and self-determination for individuals in need.

Local government, school districts and private schools work together in planning for quality education. The City has increased public safety by partnering with the Fire District and by implementing a community-policing program, which maintains a partnership between community and the police, promotes respect for neighbors, and encourages individual responsibility.

PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Growth Management Act

In 1990 Washington's Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA), which established 13 planning goals and a system of planning for cities and counties that have experienced rapid growth. A 14th goal, *shorelines of the state*, was subsequently added. These goals, which guide development of the City's Comprehensive Plan, are:

- **Urban Growth** - Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- **Reduce Sprawl** - Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- **Transportation** - Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- **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.
- **Economic Development** - Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capabilities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- **Property Rights** - Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
- **Permits** - Applications for both state and local governmental permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- **Natural Resource Industries** - Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
- **Open Space and Recreation** - Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.
- **Environment** - Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- **Citizen Participation and Coordination** - Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- **Public Facilities and Services** - Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development, at the time the development is available for occupancy and use, without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
- **Historic Preservation** - Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.

- **Shorelines of the State.** The goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act as set forth in RCW 98.58.020.

Vision 2040 Multicounty Planning Policies (MPP)

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the designated forum for collaborative work on regional growth management and transportation planning in Pierce, King, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties. VISION 2040, adopted in 2008 by the PSRC, promotes an environmentally friendly growth pattern that will contain the expansion of urban growth areas, conserve farm and forest lands, support compact communities where people may both live and work, and focus new employment and housing in vibrant urban centers.

VISION 2040 includes a set of multicounty planning policies (MPPs) that provide an integrated framework for addressing land use, economic development, transportation, public facilities, and environmental issues. Under the GMA, consistency between regional transportation plans, countywide planning policies and the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans is required. MPPs serve as the regional guidelines and principles used for the Regional Council's consistency certification of policies and plans within the four-county area.

VISION 2040 provides clear and specific guidance for the distribution of population and employment growth into types of places defined as "regional geographies." University Place is assigned to the *large cities* geography, which obligates the City to accommodate an assigned share of regional growth envisioned for this particular geography. Population, housing and employment targets for individual cities within each geography are set by Pierce County in consultation with municipalities.

Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP)

Also, in accordance with the GMA, Pierce County adopted, and the cities within the County endorsed, the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP). The CPP addresses issues that transcend city boundaries, such as setting Urban Growth Areas, accommodating housing and job demand, supporting health and wellness, and addressing capital facilities that are regional in nature. The CPP provides a framework to promote consistency among a multitude of municipal comprehensive plans within Pierce County.

Cities and counties are required to periodically update their plans to comply with updates in regional and state requirements, as well as changes in local conditions. The University Place Comprehensive Plan satisfies the 2015 GMA Periodic Update requirement.

THE UNIVERSITY PLACE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a broad statement of the community's vision for the future and contains policies primarily to guide the physical development of the City, as well as certain aspects of its social and economic character. The Plan directs regulations, implementation actions and services that support the vision. The Plan reflects the long-term values and aspirations of the community as a whole and shows how various aspects, such as land use, housing, transportation, capital facilities and services, work together to achieve the desired vision.

While the Comprehensive Plan is meant to provide a strong and constant vision for the future, it is also a living document that must be able to accommodate change, such as a new technology, an unforeseen impact or an innovative method of achieving a component of the vision. It is therefore regularly updated to account for changing issues or opportunities facing University Place, while still maintaining the core values of the community.

University Place's Comprehensive Plan was initially developed and then updated through public involvement processes conducted by the Planning Commission. The Plan reflects a community vision of how University Place should grow and develop over a 20 year planning horizon. The Plan aims to protect residents' high quality of life and equitably share the public and private costs and benefits of growth. The Plan establishes overall direction for residential, commercial and industrial growth in a pattern that maintains and enhances the character of single family neighborhoods.

The Plan comprehensively integrates "health and well-being" into its goals and policies. Examples include: (1) improving opportunities for easy, everyday physical activity by providing outlets for physical activity, such as open spaces, parks and plazas; (2) increasing access to nutritious food choices; and (3) encouraging the increased availability and integration of housing and transportation to support flexibility, mobility, independent living, and services for all age groups and those with special needs.

The Plan protects public health and safety, while enhancing community character, natural beauty, environmental quality and economic vitality. The Plan guides University Place's efforts to achieve these ends by directing a large share of future growth towards the City's regional growth center -- where adequate public facilities and services can be provided in a timely and cost-effective manner. Finally, the Plan conserves open space, protects wildlife habitat and sensitive areas, supports public shoreline access, and maintains and improves the quality of air, water, and land resources.

Citizen Involvement – Who Plans And How?

City of University Place residents, business owners, employees of businesses located in University Place, owners of property in University Place, or just about anyone who is affected by the Plan is invited to help develop and update the Comprehensive Plan.

Generally, planning begins with identification of the issues and of the stakeholders. Planning may be focused on refining the overall vision of the City, for subareas, or for neighborhoods, or may be related to particular subjects such as housing choice or shoreline management. Participants may vary depending upon the scope of the particular issue. The City Council established a Planning Commission and charged this body with the

responsibility for initially developing, and then reviewing proposed changes to, the Comprehensive Plan – taking into account the community vision. The Commission meets regularly and addresses planning issues on an ongoing basis. It is the Planning Commission’s job to hold public hearings, discuss updates and make recommendations to the Council. At times, Council has established ad hoc advisory committees to focus on specific topics within a limited scope or time frame. These temporary committees typically provide recommendations on planning matters to the Planning Commission.

Over the years, the City has used a number of methods to encourage community participation in planning. These methods have included community meetings for citywide visioning, neighborhood meetings for smaller planning areas, and stakeholder meetings for topical interests. Community forums, open houses and design charrettes have been held to present ideas and to discover new ones. City newsletters, newspaper articles, surveys and questionnaires have been used to reach those who may not be able to make meetings.

University Place’s website and a variety of communication technologies provide a way to advertise meetings and also to seek ideas on planning questions. Ultimately, all major planning decisions fall to the City Council, which is responsible for establishing regulations, programs and planning policies, and also for adopting the City budget.

**Table 1-2
Planning for University Place – Major Highlights**

1995	Incorporation of City of University Place
1995	Adoption of Interim Comprehensive Plan, Interim Shoreline Master Program, and Interim Development Regulations (Zoning, Critical Areas, etc.). Interim Plan based largely on the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, but included modifications to make it more relevant to University Place.
1995	Establishment of Interim Planning Commission, charged with developing a permanent Comprehensive Plan and development regulations in compliance with the Growth Management Act
1996	Formulation of Community Vision Statement; Planning Commission-sponsored Community Vision Forum held; adoption of Vision Statement by City Council.
1996	Adoption of Amendments to Interim Comprehensive Plan relating to establishment of Urban Growth Area/Urban Service Area
1996	Adoption of ESHB 1724 Compliance Regulations pertaining to timely permit processing
1997	Annexation of West End Addition
1997	Establishment of Planning Commission
1997	Publication of Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Comprehensive Plan
1998	Publication of Final Environmental Impact Statement for Comprehensive Plan
1998	Adoption of first Comprehensive Plan (non-interim) and major Amendments to Zoning Regulations
1999	Annexation of Fircrest Acres

1999	Adoption of Town Center Plan
1999	Adoption of Design Standards for Town Center, Mixed Use, Mixed Use – Office, and Commercial zones
2000	Adoption of new Shoreline Master Program and Amendments to Comprehensive Plan
2001	Adoption of new Zoning Regulations
2002	Adoption of new Critical Areas Regulations
2003	Adoption of Joint Procedural Agreement and Design Standards and Guidelines for Chambers Creek Properties
2004	Adoption of Comprehensive Plan Update
2006	Adoption of Interim Zoning for Town Center
2009	Adoption of Housing Choice (Small Lot, Multifamily and Streetscape) Design Standards and Guidelines
2010	Adoption of Comprehensive Plan Amendments designating Regional Growth Center
2013	Adoption of amendments to Comprehensive Plan, and Zoning and Critical Areas Regulations, related to new Shoreline Master Program
2014	Adoption of Amendments to Design Standards and Guidelines for Chambers Creek Properties
2014	Puget Sound Regional Council Certification of Regional Growth Center
2015	Adoption of 2015 GMA Periodic Update Amendments to Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations
2020	Adoption of Amendments Implementing the Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan

Policies That Encompass The Entire Plan

Each element of the Comprehensive Plan contains policies that guide University Place's development in regard to that aspect of growth. However, there are a few general policies that are integral to University Place's entire comprehensive planning effort. These policies are a foundation for the other policies enumerated throughout the Plan.

- University Place's planning shall address the issues, resources, and needs that make a community a satisfying place to live and work.
- University Place shall recognize, protect and enhance local neighborhood character and values.
- University Place shall actively inform and involve citizens in all stages of plan development, implementation, monitoring, and revision.
- University Place shall participate in coordinated and joint planning efforts with the County and neighboring jurisdictions to achieve desired patterns of growth, capital improvements, and protection of natural areas, greenbelts and open space. The City also shall pursue contracts, franchises and interlocal agreements with other jurisdictions to provide quality and cost-effective services to citizens.

Organization Of Plan

The Comprehensive Plan consists of nine elements. The GMA prescribes five specific elements that must be contained in a city comprehensive plan – land use, housing, transportation, utilities, and capital facilities. The City has added three optional elements: parks, recreation and open space; environmental management; and community character. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan includes a shoreline management element that references policies contained in the City’s Shoreline Master Program. The nine elements and introduction chapter are summarized below:

Each element typically contains goals, policies, explanatory text and, in some cases, charts, tables and maps. The goals and policies are the guiding principles – the heart of the Plan; however, they are often preceded by explanatory text that describes the context of the goal or policy, or the reasoning behind it. Each element presents part of the picture for managing change and guiding University Place’s growth. The Land Use Element provides the overall community vision and interconnections among the other elements. Certain planning objectives, such as health and well-being, are addressed in the goals and policies of multiple elements. Elements typically include the following components, subject to variation as appropriate:

**Table 1-3
Summary of Chapter and Elements**

Element or Chapter	Goal /Policy Abbreviation	Primary Function
Introduction		Provides overview of the purpose of the document, its organization, and an explanation of how it was developed
Community Character	CC	Defines how University Place views its character
Land Use	LU	Guides physical placement of land uses
Housing	HS	Addresses needs and strategies for supporting the provision of a variety of types of housing
Environmental Management	EN	Addresses stewardship of the natural setting
Transportation	TR	Addresses the movement of people and goods
Capital Facilities	CF	Describes how the City plans for and finances capital infrastructure
Utilities	UT	Addresses utility infrastructure needs and design
Parks, Recreation, and Open Space	PRO	Addresses parks, recreational facilities, design of facilities and program objectives, and conservation of land through open space
Shoreline Management	SH	Addresses planning issues and challenges affecting certain shorelines designated by the State per the City’s Shoreline Master Program

**Table 1-4
Element Components**

Components	Intent and Purpose
Introduction	Provides an overview of the planning issues and challenges to be addressed in each element.
State and Regional Planning Context	Provides an overview of Growth Management Act, Puget Sound Regional Council, and Pierce County Regional Council goals, policies and objectives as they relate to University Place.
Local Planning Context	Looking ahead 20 years, illustrates a vision of where the community would like to be positioned in responding to major planning issues and challenges.
Goals and Policies	Goals define what the community wishes to achieve over a 20-year planning horizon while policies provide guidance for creating and implementing development regulations and taking other actions to achieve the goals.
Background Information	Provides factual data that help inform the statements, goals and policies

Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are necessary, from time to time, to respond to changing conditions and needs of University Place citizens. The Growth Management Act requires that amendments to a comprehensive plan be considered no more frequently than once per year. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan shall be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of various proposals can be ascertained. In considering proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, proposals will be evaluated for the extent to which they support the public interest, their intent and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, the need for particular land uses, and the availability of land for specific uses. Amendments to the Plan are reviewed by the Planning Commission, which makes recommendations to the City Council.

