



GROWTH MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, Mayor Jon Nehring established and appointed the Mayor’s Growth Management Task Force to receive input from the community on the growth and future of Marysville. As the second largest city in Snohomish County, and one of the fastest growing cities in Washington state, Marysville expects continued growth. Consistent with Washington state’s Growth Management Act, the City is required to accommodate its share of Snohomish County’s growth. While growth is inevitable, the City’s leaders aim to preserve our community’s character, and the unique aspects of the City, while accommodating this growth in a manner that is respectful of existing neighborhoods.

TASK FORCE: COMPOSITION

The Growth Management Task Force was comprised of five citizens, three City Council members, a Planning Commissioner, and a representative from the Master Builders Association. The Mayor, City’s Chief Administrative Officer, Public Relations Administrator, and staff from Public Works, Community Development, and Parks, Culture and Recreation also participated in the Task Force. The citizen members came from varied backgrounds reflective of the growing diversity of the community and possessed a shared passion for the City.

TASK FORCE: TENURE & KEY ISSUES

Over the course of ten meetings, that began in February and concluded in December 2020, the Task Force discussed and provided input on the following topics:

- Washington State’s Growth Management Act;
- Community values and priorities;
- Economic recovery;
- Downtown Master Plan update;
- State Avenue Corridor Plan;
- Impact fee and capital improvement charges; and
- Cascade Industrial Center, Smokey Point Master Plan Area, and the potential rezoning of properties.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The kick-off Growth Management Task Force meeting provided a primer on the Growth Management Act (GMA) which is a series of State statutes, first adopted in 1990, that requires fast-growing cities and counties to develop a Comprehensive Plan to manage their population growth. The Comprehensive Plan is the foundation for local planning and articulates goals, policies, actions, and standards that are intended to guide growth within a community. The Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan specifically establishes the direction of future growth within a community. This future growth direction is depicted in a Comprehensive Plan map and an official zoning map. The State Office of Financial Management (OFM) develops population projections for the State and each county. Fully planning counties, such as Snohomish County, are then mandated to determine, in consultation with cities, where that growth should be directed to occur. The City’s Urban Growth Area (UGA) and zoning should be established to permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in the City for a 20 year period (Source: Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) website).

COMMUNITY IMPACTS OF STAY HOME, STAY HEALTHY ORDER

The third Task Force meeting took place in April 2020 shortly after the announcement of Governor Inslee’s Stay Home, Stay Healthy order. The Task Force shared their experiences with the pandemic and the effects of the Order on their lives. Task Force members shared their personal struggles along with challenges that their neighbors and community members were experiencing: lost livelihoods, business shut downs, and increased needs for food bank and rent assistance. Other Task Force members highlighted some silver linings of the pandemic that included more people out experiencing their neighborhoods; increased appreciation of community; and the community’s generosity. Mayor Nehring acknowledged the struggles of grocery store workers, the medical community, first responders, small business owners, and other community members, and expressed a commitment to finding ways the City can help and also inform citizens of relief programs. The feedback received at this and subsequent Task Force meetings, helped to inform certain city responses to the impacts of the state shutdowns due to Covid-19.

The City ultimately received a total of \$587,033.00 in CDBG CARES funding, known as CDBG-CV, which was a separate allocation from other CARES ACT funding the City received. A small business grant program was developed for microenterprises (businesses with five or fewer employees) whose owners met HUD’s low-

income limits. Through the small business grant program, a total of 27 small business grants were awarded (19 businesses). Of the total CDG-CV funds, \$236,590.00 was used for small business grants. The remaining balance was awarded to agencies to provide public services to those negatively impacted by the pandemic. Services included rent, mortgage, and utility assistance; providing services to assist people that lost their job with finding a new job and locating additional resources; providing 'care boxes' which contained basic hygiene and food items; and establishment of a Family Resource Center in North Marysville to assist families negatively impacted by the pandemic.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY DISCUSSION

At the fourth Task Force meeting, the Mayor initiated a conversation on promoting economic recovery. The Task Force expressed concerns regarding inconsistent state rules, and recommended measures to aid the business community. The City implemented several of the Task Force's recommendations. Specifically, the City assembled marketing materials and a personal protective equipment (PPE) kit program to enable businesses to reopen and to promote consumer confidence, and partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and the local food bank as well.

Action Items: The Task Force recommended encouraging the continued support of local and small businesses, and pursuing initiatives to show businesses and individuals that the community cares.

COMMUNITY VALUES, VISION AND PRIORITIES

The Community's Values and Vision were also discussed at the third and fourth Task Force meetings. Community Development Director Thomas went over the six priorities set forth in the Comprehensive Plan, and sought feedback on whether these priorities still reflect the desires of the community or whether different priorities were more reflective. Generally there was consensus among the Task Force that these priorities still reflect the community's overarching goals, and that substantial progress has been made towards these priorities. Among the six priorities, enhancing community image and identity ranked as the highest priorities followed by improving existing business opportunities, and expanding and diversifying the economic base through business attraction and retention efforts. Improving both transportation and infrastructure, and government and the regulatory environment were the third and fourth highest ranking priorities.

Action Items: An increased emphasis on promoting multi-modal transportation and moving people within the community, as opposed to through it, was a recommended amendment to Priority 4 that should occur with the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. Sustainability and promoting better educational opportunities were recommended as potential new priorities. The following additional action items were identified to further the City's community values, vision and priorities:

- Enhance the images of the schools and promote programs that can be upgraded;
- Provide interpretive signage for the numerous creeks and natural areas within the community;
- Continue support of community facilities like the Baxter Community Center and their programming;
- Promote different neighborhoods and districts;
- Promote and advance the image of Strawberry Festival, Handmade & Homegrown, etc., and consider fairs to celebrate diversity and small businesses;
- Complete missing sidewalk segments, continue to enhance walking and biking friendly planning and infrastructure, and bring parks to underserved areas;
- When approving franchise agreements, ensure gaps in coverage are addressed;
- Improve community outreach to get engagement earlier on, and ensure inclusion;
- Retain the services of an urban planner with comprehensive long-range planning experience;
- Implement uniform City branding and gateway approach. This may inspire businesses to follow suit; and
- Establish an identity of the City as innovative.

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

The Task Force discussed the pending update to the Downtown Master Plan at several meetings. The Downtown Master Plan was adopted in October 2009, and has standards that pertain to streets, landscaping, architecture, and site design, and included a Planned Action Ordinance. The primary purpose of the Downtown Master Plan was to contemplate infrastructure and other improvements needed in the Downtown, and establish architectural and site design standards.

Since 2009, the City has tackled several initiatives to catalyze development within the Downtown including, but not limited to, the First and Third Street Low Impact Development and Beautification Improvements; the construction of the Ebey Waterfront Park, Ebey Waterfront Trail, and the Comeford Spray Park; acquisition of the Opera House; funding and beginning construction of the Civic Campus; completion of the First Street Bypass; and acquiring and marketing several key properties for redevelopment. Pipeline developments include the SR529 – I-5 Interchange, Downtown Stormwater Treatment Facility, and Second Street and Cedar Avenue improvements.

Despite these investments, private development has been limited, with Coastal Community Bank/MOD Pizza, Walgreens, and Verizon buildings among the most notable projects. In order to spur additional development within the Downtown, the City pursued and was awarded a \$125,000.00 grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce, and hired MAKERS to lead an update of the Downtown Master Plan. With the update, the City's focus will be on expanding the boundaries of the Downtown Master Plan Area; streamlining regulations through a form-based code¹; and encouraging middle housing². The Task Force was asked to provide input on a variety of aspects of the Downtown Master Plan update including: public outreach strategy; whether the Downtown Master Plan boundaries should be expanded; opportunities and barriers to development; and types of development to encourage.

Task Force members expressed support for encouraging commercial development and employment opportunities within the Downtown, and missing middle housing in surrounding areas. Survey respondents identified economic development as the highest priority within the Downtown, and an increased focus on community diversity and transit services. Better and more varied retail and restaurant options, a focus on residential and mixed use development, parks and recreation, and green infrastructure were highlighted by both Task Force members and survey respondents. Maintaining the existing character of Third and Second Streets, and preserving and supporting local, small businesses were also identified as important goals.

Action Items: While there was a desire to increase the boundaries for the Downtown Master Plan Area, several Task Force members emphasized the importance of continuing to pursue a strong, central commercial core, and establishing a clear Downtown with a strong identity. Other key action items pertaining to the Downtown Master Plan update include, but are not limited to:

- Use Civic Center as a catalyst for economic investment;
- Consider locating southern Downtown SWIFT Station at Comeford Park.
- Create additional north-south, and east-west bike routes within the Downtown;
- Promote redevelopment of the Town Center, and conversion of surplus parking areas to productive uses;
- Encourage more variety in retail, restaurants, and services;
- Encourage improvements to Asbury Field, and the Water Tower;
- Expand Planned Action Ordinance for the Downtown to facilitate redevelopment/promote predictability;
- Continue to pursue waterfront redevelopment and beautification. Potentially partner with the University of Washington to pursue an aquatic research center;
- Pursue public-private partnerships to facilitate development Downtown;
- Consider reduced parking standards in Downtown and along SWIFT corridor/transit;
- Consider expanding the Downtown Multi-family Property Tax Exemption; and
- Pursue railroad 'quiet zone', and rebrand the railway as an asset not a detriment

IMPACT FEES, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT CHARGES, AND DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

The City plans under the Growth Management Act which allows the City to collect impact fees for traffic, schools, and parks. These impact fees help to mitigate the impacts of development by helping to fund school capacity needs, transportation and park improvements. The City operates water, sewer, and stormwater facilities within the City. Capital improvement charges are imposed on new development; these fees contribute towards construction of water treatment facilities, increased sewage treatment capacity, and new trunk lines.

¹ Form based codes require buildings to need to meet a certain form. They are more picture-based, and help the developer understand what needs to occur in order to develop.

² Middle housing include housing types such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and accessory dwelling units.

Action Items: The City presently offers several incentives to encourage development, and solicited input from the Task Force on expansion of existing incentives, and consideration of new incentives. Potential incentives proposed by the Task Force include:

- Job tax credit program/B&O tax reduction for new businesses that locate in the City;
- Expand parking reductions within the Downtown particularly for projects near future SWIFT Stations;
- Affordable and supportive housing sales tax credit fund;
- Consider a Downtown utility service area to potentially allow for reduced utility rates for multi-family;
- Incentives for student housing due to proximity to Everett university and college campuses; and
- Expand boundaries for the Downtown multi-family property tax exemption, or reduce unit threshold.

STATE AVENUE SUBAREA PLAN

The Task Force was briefed on the State Avenue Corridor Plan. State Avenue is the most challenging corridor within the City to improve based on its length, existing land uses, transportation functions and aesthetics. The City is committed to improving the quality of life, encouraging economic growth, enhancing the image of the community, and accommodating growth and redevelopment along the corridor. The purpose of the State Avenue Plan is to beautify the corridor; identify future Community Transit SWIFT BRT (bus rapid transit) locations and right-of-way needs; and consider recommendations for potential zoning changes in the vicinity of the two SWIFT BRT stations proposed Downtown (generally south of Grove Street).

Action Items: The Task Force discussed pursuing beautification and landscaping along State Avenue, and potentially reducing parking standards and increasing zoning near future Downtown SWIFT stations.

CASCADE INDUSTRIAL CENTER

The Cascade Industrial Center was the final topic addressed by the Task Force. The Cascade Industrial Center has been designated for many years as an industrial job creation area. It has taken 20 plus years of planning to see it begin. Years ago the City worked on legislation to allow a property tax exemption for industrial uses within this area. This provision allows a property tax exemption on the market improvement (structure value) when 25 plus living wage jobs are created on a site; the land value is still taxed. At the time, \$18 per hour was selected as the living wage. The City has engaged with developers and discussed increasing the wage requirement to \$25 per hour; however, has received pushback on that. The Mayor's perspective is that when you're offering a tax break, you want to incentivize something that offers a good value for the taxpayer. The City wants to create living, family wage jobs in our community, and believes that \$25 may be more appropriate today. The City desires job intensify uses rather than warehousing which generally has lower wages; a low density of jobs per site; are land intensive; and result in high truck traffic wear and tear on city roads.

Action Items: When the discussion with the Task Force took place, the property tax exemption legislation was set to expire in 2022. The Task Force expressed a desire that the City continue to pursue an extension to this legislation which focuses on an increased living wage. Lowering the number of jobs that are required in order to pursue this tax exemption was also recommended for consideration. Since the Task Force's discussion took place, the State legislature extended the tax exemption legislation. Communities throughout the State may now offer this tax exemption to employers that create 25 of more family living wage jobs that pay at least \$23 per hour and offer 2,080 hours of work per year.

Economic development and job recruitment; promoting the Cascade Industrial Center (CIC) as a technological center; attracting longer range and green industries; clustering different businesses with similar interests and missions together; and providing adequate housing to support the CIC jobs were other recommended action items.

GENERAL COMMERCIAL TO LIGHT INDUSTRIAL REZONING ALONG SMOKEY POINT BOULEVARD

In recent years, the City has received numerous inquiries and development proposals for light industrial and storage type uses along Smokey Point Boulevard north of 136th Street NE which is zoned General Commercial. The light industrial type uses that have been proposed and pursued do not always lend themselves well to the standards that apply to the General Commercial zone. The City also has more General Commercial zoning than the City can support for office and retail development given recent trends. Staff has contemplated retaining General Commercial zoning along Smokey Point Boulevard, and rezoning lands lacking Smokey Point Boulevard frontage to Light Industrial. The Task Force was asked whether architectural and site design standards should be extended to properties along Smokey Point Boulevard if they were re-designated from General Commercial to Light Industrial. For example, the City's Smokey Point Master Plan allows for industrial

development, but has architectural and site design standards which result in a higher quality, campus like industrial center.

Action Items: The Task Force was generally supportive of requiring design standards for industrial properties; however, a desire was expressed to exempt industrial infill lots located south of 136th Street NE. Rezoning the properties along Smokey Point Boulevard, north of 136th Street to Light Industrial was generally supported. The Task Force recommended that a General Commercial overlay be considered to allow the greatest flexibility for development.

SUMMARY

The Mayor's Growth Management Task Force was comprised of a passionate group of citizens and community members from diverse backgrounds. During their tenure, the Task Force provided invaluable insights into the Marysville community and the direction that growth should take. The Task Force provided feedback on current initiatives, pending plans and code work, and recommended new initiatives and policies that the City should consider pursuing. Some of these insights have already been put into action. Others may be used in policies and plans that further the City's goals of promoting economic growth, and encouraging development in a manner that is respectful of the existing community and preserves the City's unique character.