Executive Summary

(Amended 2005, Ordinance 038/2005)
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About Monroe

Historic Perspective

Located in the southeastern portion of Snohomish County along the Skykomish River, Monroe was incorporated in 1902 with 325 citizens. The population swelled to nearly 2,000 over the next seven years, due in part to the location of two new employers in the Monroe area. With the encouragement and support of the newly formed Monroe Commercial Club, the Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Company (Carnation) and the new Washington State Reformatory opened for business. (The smokestack near Traveler’s Park is a remnant of the Carnation Plant).

These two companies, along with the booming growth of new businesses along Main Street, provided a solid economic base upon which to build a viable community and attract new residents. By 1910, a new brick building on East Main Street was completed to house City Hall, the Fire House, and the city’s new library (now the home of the Monroe Historical Society).

Between 1910 and 1980, the population of Monroe experienced little change. The completion of State Route (SR) 2 and SR 522 linked Monroe to the metropolitan areas of Everett and Seattle. Monroe is now experiencing a second period of rapid growth, which began in the 1990s. Like the early residents, people are drawn to Monroe because of its economic opportunities, natural beauty, and small-town atmosphere.

Community Profile

Monroe’s estimated population growth since 2000 has slowed in comparison to the 9 percent annual growth rate of the 1990s. The estimated city population on April 1, 2005, was 15,945: a 3.1 percent annual average increase (the equivalent of 2,150 people) since 2000. This increase represents a combination of new births and people moving into Monroe. Over the 20-year planning horizon of this plan, it is anticipated that Monroe’s population will grow to 26,590: 10,645 more than live in Monroe today.
The following table shows how Monroe’s population has grown over time and what the projected population is expected to be over the planning horizon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Population Increase</th>
<th>Department of Corrections Population(^1)</th>
<th>% Land Area Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>1,552</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>1,675</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>-6%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,556</td>
<td>-2%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>1,901</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>2,687</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>292%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2,869</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990(^1)</td>
<td>4,275</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>2,121</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>13,795</td>
<td>222%</td>
<td>1,920</td>
<td>47.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>19,937(^2)</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2025</td>
<td>26,590(^3)</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The City of Monroe annexed the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) site in 1997. Prior to the annexation, the city did not keep track of the DOC’s population figures.
3 City of Monroe population projection.

In 2000, the City of Monroe was the third fastest growing city in Snohomish County. According to the US Census, the city’s population grew by more 220 percent between 1990 and 2000.

### About the Comprehensive Plan

#### What is a Comprehensive Plan?

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) defines a comprehensive plan as a generalized coordinated land use policy statement for the governing body of the city that is adopted pursuant to the GMA. By recommending a well-defined purpose and direction for the community development through goals and policies, the plan serves as a guide for municipal action, such as the use of zoning powers, the design and installation of public roads, utilities, and other physical improvements, annexations, and amendments to the urban growth area boundaries. The plan also serves to coordinate the activities of public agencies (local, county, state, and federal) and the private sector, all of which ultimately affect local community development. As a result, the City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide future decisions related to land use, transportation, housing, parks and recreational facilities, capital facilities, utilities, economic development, and shoreline management.
The City of Monroe has been developing under various comprehensive plans since 1980. The Snohomish County Planning Department prepared a comprehensive plan for the Skykomish Valley Area in 1980. As part of this planning process, a City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan was developed and adopted by Monroe City Council. This plan established the city’s first future land use designations.

Since the 1980s the City of Monroe and the Puget Sound region have changed significantly. In 1990/91 the Washington State Legislature passed the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) in response to the negative impacts of uncoordinated and unplanned growth in Washington State. The GMA established 13 goal statements to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans. The goals include reducing urban sprawl, encouraging the availability of affordable housing, encouraging efficient multi-modal transportation systems, protecting the environment and enhancing the state's high quality of life, and ensuring 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.

The GMA also requires cities to review and, if necessary, amend their comprehensive plans and development regulations no later than December 1, 2004, and once every seven years thereafter to ensure compliance with the GMA. In addition to the seven-year review requirement, the GMA also requires counties, and their cities, to review and update their comprehensive plans at least once every ten years to incorporate new population and employment targets for the succeeding twenty-year planning period.

The City of Monroe adopted its first GMA-compliant comprehensive plan in 1994. The 1994 plan built on and incorporated many of the principles of the 1980 plan, incorporated the Currie Road Sub-Area Plan, and included the required elements of the GMA: land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, and transportation. The plan also included several elective elements: natural environment, economic development, and parks and recreation. The economic development and parks and recreation elements are now mandatory elements in accordance with the 2003 amendments to the GMA.

The 1994–2012 Comprehensive Plan was significantly updated in 1998, with the adoption of the North Area Community Plan. This update not only revised the Land Use Element, but also included significant revisions to the Economic Development, Parks and Recreation, Utilities, Housing, and Transportation Elements, and included the adoption of a new Shoreline Management Element. The plan has been updated on an annual basis since 1998.

In 2004, the city completed a review of the Monroe Comprehensive Plan and development regulations in accordance with the GMA. Several of the anticipated amendments to the comprehensive plan were combined with the ten-year update, which occurred in 2005.

The ten-year update, in compliance with the GMA, focuses on necessary amendments to the entire comprehensive plan to incorporate the 2025 population and employment targets. Issues
that required review included the city’s existing urban growth area boundaries, current land use designations, and a review of the city’s various capital facilities.

How Was the Comprehensive Plan Updated?

Planning and preparation for this plan update began in 2003, when the Monroe City Council accepted preliminary population and employment targets for 2025 and forwarded them to the Snohomish County Tomorrow Steering Committee. Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT) is the county’s collaborative planning process, established in 1989, which is comprised of local citizens and elected officials from every jurisdiction in Snohomish County.

Between 2003 and 2005, the city began revising various elements of the comprehensive plan as part of the ten-year update. In 2003, in addition to establishing the 2025 population and employment targets, the city replaced its Parks and Recreation Element. The new element was developed with extensive public participation; completed in accordance with and accepted by the Washington State Interagency Committee on Outdoor Recreation; updated the existing facilities inventory, needs assessment, and included a new capital facilities component for the financing of future parks. In 2004, the city replaced the Natural Environment Element to reflect the city’s adoption of new critical areas regulations, consistent with the GMA, and updated background information, goal and policy statements, and various critical areas maps. In 2005, the city updated the remaining elements of the comprehensive plan, with the exception of the Economic Development Element. The Transportation Element update will continue through 2006.

In addition to reviewing and updating the background information for the various elements, the city completed concurrent environmental review of the proposed amendments. The 2005 amendment process included the development of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement to evaluate three potential land use alternatives to accommodate the projected growth over the next twenty years. This process was also used to develop the preferred land use alternative, which is the basis for revisions to the Land Use Element.

Guide to the Comprehensive Plan

The City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan is to be used by a broad range of public and private entities, including elected officials, staff, citizen groups, developers, and other governmental agencies. Accordingly, the plan will be used in many ways. The plan will provide a framework for all future land use decisions including urban growth boundaries, city limits, and sub-area plans. The plan will also provide the basis for making decisions regarding funding of capital improvements and projects such as streets, parks, and water/sewer facilities. Subsequent changes to the city’s implementation regulations, which guide development, such as subdivisions, zoning, and environmental codes, will be based on the policies outlined in this plan.

The comprehensive plan includes a vision of Monroe's future, providing overall guidance for subsequent portions of the plan and nine plan elements, comprising an inventory and analysis, a needs assessment, goals, policies and recommended actions for implementation. The elements include:
Vision Statement

Monroe is a community in transition, changing from a small rural town into a city of regional significance with sustained population and economic growth. As the city accommodates more people and employment opportunities within the city and urban growth area (UGA), the Monroe of tomorrow will be a higher density city than the Monroe of today. To maintain the character of the community, the city must take advantage of growth as a tool to reshape the community into a more sustainable form. Growth and density must be accompanied by improved amenities for urban life through the development of sub-area and/or neighborhood plans and design standards for commercial and residential development.

Part of this transition into a city of regional significance within southeastern Snohomish County includes the development of a new commercial center to provide shopping, commercial services, and business facilities to serve the surrounding market areas. This new commercial area is also designed to reduce the need for Monroe residents to travel out of the area for goods and services not currently available.

Through good planning for both employment and housing opportunities, the city will strive to have a large portion of the work force living in the city and using forms of transportation other than the single-occupancy vehicle. Good planning will also protect the natural and agricultural amenities within the Skykomish River Valley, which surrounds the city, for future generations to enjoy by reducing sprawl into the rural and agricultural areas and directing urban development into urban areas.

General Goal Statements

Natural Environment – Protect critical areas and wildlife habitat, preserve open spaces and natural resources, and encourage development to be designed around the natural landscape while protecting private property rights.

Land Use – Create a balance between single-family, multi-family, professional office, commercial, and industrial land uses to create a vibrant and diverse living environment within the Monroe UGA. Continue to separate incompatible land uses through the Comprehensive
Land Use Plan and zoning regulations, and promote mixed-use developments where appropriate. Encourage infill development within the UGA before developing “vacant areas” that lack public facilities and services.

Housing – Provide a variety of housing types and density choices, including an adequate supply of affordable housing for all economic segments of the population, and coordinate with housing authorities and organizations to provide low-income housing within the City of Monroe while recognizing and maintaining the character and vitality of existing residential neighborhoods.

Capital Facilities – Provide public facilities and services at an acceptable level-of-service, approved by the city, in a fiscally responsible manner by anticipating the impacts of future growth and development on potable water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater management systems; police, fire, and emergency services; parks and recreation facilities; schools; and the transportation system.

Utilities – Provide for the extension of public utilities (such as electricity, natural gas, communication systems and infrastructure, solid waste and recycling services) to new development in a timely manner, encourage upgrades of existing utilities within the entire Monroe UGA when financially feasible, and ensure that utility extensions are consistent with the Monroe Comprehensive Land Use Plan and coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions to minimize service interruptions to customers.

Transportation – Provide a safe, financially sound, multi-modal transportation system for the citizens of Monroe and those who travel through the community on their way to another destination.

Economic Development – Promote a healthy economy by supporting local businesses, ensuring adequate land is designated for commercial and industrial development, and working with local, county and state economic development offices to encourage new businesses to locate within the community to guarantee long-term fiscal stability and a variety of employment opportunities within the Monroe urban growth area.

Parks and Recreation – Maintain, enhance, and expand parks and recreation opportunities within the Monroe UGA by providing ongoing renovation and maintenance of existing facilities, acquiring and developing additional park land in areas of the city that are deficient in recreational facilities, and requiring new development to contribute its fair share towards maintaining the established level of service standard for parks, recreation, and open space facilities.

Shoreline Management – Manage and protect the state’s shoreline resources by planning their reasonable and appropriate use, ensure that development occurs in a manner that maximizes the rights of the public navigable water, and promote and enhance the public interests, and increase public access and recreational opportunities to publicly owned areas of the shoreline.
Plan Applicability and Consistency

One of the central requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) is consistency in planning. Consistency is determined in a number of ways. The following represent those areas where “consistency” shall be achieved:

- The comprehensive plan must comply with the GMA.
- The plan must be consistent with the regional plan – the Puget Sound Regional Council Planning Policies.
- It must be consistent with the adopted Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County.
- The various elements of the comprehensive plan must be internally consistent.

The city’s legislative and administrative actions and decisions must be in compliance with the adopted comprehensive plan. This may require revisions to some development regulations in the Monroe Municipal Code Titles 17 – 20: Subdivisions, Zoning, Shoreline Management, and Environment. Additionally, the zoning map should be amended to reflect changes to the various land use designations identified in the comprehensive plan and to correct previous inconsistencies.

The comprehensive plan will also be used to guide the city in the development of and revisions to its various capital improvement programs.

Finally, the comprehensive plan is intended to apply to the entire Monroe planning area, which also establishes the future land use designations for the unincorporated areas of the Monroe urban growth area (UGA).

Intergovernmental Coordination

The Growth Management Act requires that the comprehensive plan of each city is coordinated and consistent with the surrounding jurisdictions. This is achieved through consistency with the Countywide Planning Policies for Snohomish County.

How does this Plan relate to the Countywide Planning Policies?

Growth management planning is a cooperative process that must occur between the county and cities: counties are regional governments within their boundaries, and cities are primary providers of urban services within the designated urban growth areas. In order to effectively balance land use, infrastructure and finance throughout a region, the Growth Management Act requires an overall vision for growth, plus general countywide planning policies to implement this vision by establishing a collaborative process between the county and city representatives. It is intended that the countywide policies will serve as a framework for the development of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, ensuring consistency between city and county plans, and compliance with the requirements of the growth management legislation.
A “countywide planning policy” is a written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted pursuant to the GMA. Adopted countywide planning policies are designed to ensure that city and county comprehensive plans are consistent. Each local comprehensive plan should demonstrate that such policies have been followed in its development (WAC 365.195.520).

The Snohomish County Tomorrow Steering Committee used the Snohomish Tomorrow Goals as a basis for establishing the countywide policies required by the GMA. The county and the cities represented on the Steering Committee also adopted the Snohomish County Tomorrow process as the legitimate process to fulfill the requirements of the Growth Management Act and, in particular, those set forth in RCW 36.70A.210. Planners and other public officials from cities, towns, the county and other public agencies worked over a period of months to draft these policies.

The Snohomish Countywide Policies address:

- Implementation of RCW 36.70A.110 (Urban Growth Areas);
- Promotion of contiguous and orderly development and provisions of urban services;
- Siting of public capital facilities;
- Transportation facilities and strategies;
- Affordable housing;
- Joint county and city planning within urban growth areas;
- Countywide economic development and employment;
- Analysis of fiscal impact;
- Protecting the natural environment; and
- Parks, recreation, and open space.

The Monroe Comprehensive Plan has taken these policies into consideration in the development of its goals and policies.

**Citizen Participation**

Throughout the planning process, the city actively encouraged and facilitated public participation. In addition to the actual amendment proceedings, the city also revised its comprehensive plan amendment procedures in 2005. The revisions reflect recent amendments to the Growth Management Act and actual review processes that the city has followed between 2000 and 2005.

The comprehensive plan amendment procedures outline when citizens and other governmental agencies can submit comprehensive plan amendment applications. The procedures also outline
the docketing and final amendment process as well as establish the tentative timeline followed by the city when reviewing amendment requests.

The City of Monroe Planning Commission is the lead organization that reviews comprehensive plan amendment applications. During its review process, the Commission holds public open houses, and reviews all proposed element revisions at its regular meetings, which are published in the local paper and open to the public.

During the 2005 comprehensive plan update the city also used new techniques to involve the public in the review and amendment proceedings and advised interested parties of open houses and Planning Commission meeting dates. The city created a page dedicated to the comprehensive plan update process on its website and advertised meetings on the local access channel, in addition to the standard noticing procedures.

**Implementation**

This comprehensive plan is intended to serve as a general guide to coordinate a more detailed sequence of policy and regulatory decisions. The goals and policies of this plan are dependent upon actions that lead to a series of related steps that are considered implementation procedures. These actions expand and develop policies of this plan.

It is the responsibility of the city to put in place the mechanisms that will promote the actions needed for implementation. Listed below are the methods that will be used to implement this plan over the next 20 years.

**Annual Plan Review**

To keep the plan current, it is necessary to review and possibly update it on a regular basis. At the very least, it will be necessary to annually consider amendments to the six-year project lists in the Capital Facilities and Transportation Elements.

**New or Revised Elements**

As amendments are made to the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the needs of the community change, additional elements and extensive revisions to existing elements may be necessary. Examples of this include the complete rewrite of the Parks and Recreation and Transportation Elements in previous years to meet the changing needs of the community and to create the ability for the city to collect impact fees under the GMA, and the rewrite of the Housing Element for clarity and the substantial updating of the Land Use Element in 2005 as part of the 10-year Comprehensive Plan Update.

**Functional Plans**

Functional plans address in detail subjects more generally discussed in individual comprehensive plans. These plans are adopted by reference in the Capital Facilities Element of the City of Monroe Comprehensive Plan and include:
The city may also find the need to adopt new functional plans as state regulations and the community’s needs change. The city hopes to adopt a comprehensive storm water plan in the near future. General consistency between these functional plans and the comprehensive plan are important, as is regular updating of functional plans to maintain their currency.

Regulatory Measures

The Growth Management Act requires that, upon adoption of the final comprehensive plan, local governments must enact land development regulations that are consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan. The city should perform a comprehensive review of its existing regulations related to land development and compare those regulations through a matrix with the goals and policies set forth in the comprehensive plan. This procedure will allow the city to amend existing regulations or add new regulations to achieve consistency with the comprehensive plan.

There are two major regulatory measures that must be undertaken in order to implement the comprehensive plan. First, the zoning ordinances and map must be amended to be consistent with the future comprehensive land use map and policies established in the plan. The Land Use Element included in the comprehensive plan describes the 20-year physical development pattern of the city, showing land use types and intensities. The amended zoning ordinance and zoning map will reflect only the areas within city jurisdiction. The Growth Management Act requires that cities develop a six-year capital facilities plan and allow development when the city can afford to provide urban services. Therefore, the process will be one of determining the ability of the city to service a specific area, the development of the zoning map describing the land use types and ultimate densities in that area and the allowance of development to occur. As the city is able to afford to develop more areas based on subsequent capital facilities planning and concurrency management, additional areas will be annexed and zoning maps and ordinances will be revised. This long-range process is based on a general annexation plan developed in this comprehensive planning process. This growth plan is only a guide and is subject to change as the concurrency management process re-evaluates the initial projections.

The second major regulatory component is the adoption of concurrency management and impact fee ordinances. The plan requires that adequate public facilities must be in place to serve new development. The plan also adopts level of service standards that must be maintained. The concurrency management ordinance implements this concept by establishing the criteria by which the city will determine whether an individual development proposal is served by adequate public facilities. The ordinance will also set up monitoring procedures so that the city will obtain a periodic update of the capacity of public facilities and services.

Administrative Actions

The plan includes a number of policies that should be carried out through administrative actions, such as interlocal agreements, revised development and review procedures, public involvement programs, and code enforcement. Ongoing monitoring of land capacity, demographics,
development trends, housing costs, traffic levels, level of service standards, and other factors affecting growth is also needed.

An example of the need for interlocal agreements relates to the Plan policy regarding the annexation of county areas within the interim urban growth boundary. This policy should be accomplished through an interlocal agreement with the county establishing the terms and limitations of such annexations. Development and review procedures must be revised to implement concurrency and to ensure that new development complies with the performance standards established. The plan also calls for the city to publicize county and state initiatives, such as affordable housing programs, so that Monroe residents are able to take advantage of them. The city should establish a work program that prioritizes each of the plan policies that must be implemented through administrative actions.