

Sustainability and Redmond's Comprehensive Plan:

Guiding Principles for Procedures and Policy for the 2010-11 Update

Why update the Comprehensive Plan?

Redmond's Comprehensive Plan needs a tune-up. The current Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2004, a significant undertaking by the City of Redmond with substantial public involvement. At that time it was necessary to build the Comprehensive Plan anew, to reflect significant changes within the City and region.

In 2004 Redmond citizens were asked to describe their community values and think 18 years ahead when describing a vision for the future. The City has grown and developed over the last six years and moved closer toward the vision described in the 2004 Comprehensive Plan, and the underlying values and description of the preferred future will continue to guide policy development for the current plan update. .

Though the Comprehensive Plan remains current in terms of where Redmond should be headed, the City is ensuring it charts the best course of action to get us there. Indeed, state law requires cities to review their comprehensive plans every five years and update the plans as needed to reflect changing conditions.

So what elements of the plan will change? The City will look further into the future in planning for growth and development, by extending the Plan's time horizon from 2022 to 2030. This will allow the City to continue to plan for growth and increased vibrancy in Downtown and Overlake, and to continue to pursue long-term objectives such as planning a transportation system that complements major regional infrastructure projects such as East Link light rail and SR 520 multi-modal improvements.

This review and update is also an opportunity to reflect changes in regional plans and state law since 2005. For example, comprehensive plans are now required to include urban planning components that promote physical activity and outline steps to improve performance of locally-owned transportation systems, including provisions for pedestrian and bicycle mobility.

Another important change is that the update will employ sustainability as an organizing principle across the Comprehensive Plan elements. Sustainability is an important theme in the City of Redmond for its global implications. But sustainability also resonates in Redmond on a local level as reflected in community values, such as:

- Quality neighborhoods
- Diverse citizenry
- Healthy environment
- Safe and caring community
- Community connections
- Economic viability, diversity and competitiveness
- Healthy community
- Livable and vibrant community
- Resource conservation

Citizens of Redmond have expressed where they want to see the City heading and why, and we are six years closer to reaching the 2022 destination. It is now time to start thinking about the next destination 2030 so the City can make wise investments now, and act strategically over the next 20 years in order to maximize public and private investments.

How will we do this? Each element is reviewed individually to identify needed revisions. Public hearings are held for each element, and community events provide opportunities for further engagement at critical points during the process. The Redmond Planning Commission, City Council and citizens then review the final document as a whole prior to adoption at the end of 2011.

The current comprehensive planning process is a tweak not an overhaul, but crafting strong and relevant policy is no less vital. Comprehensive Plan policies are significant because they guide elected and appointed community leaders, staff, and administrators in making decisions, and act as a bridge between goals and implementing actions. The City must be thoughtful both in the substance of revised policy statements, and the manner in which the document is presented.

How Does Sustainability Relate to the Update?

From the document’s overarching vision statement and citywide goals, to the functional elements and their corresponding policies, Redmond’s Comprehensive Plan directs the City toward a sustainable future. Yet the term is not as explicit as it could be. Aspects of sustainability already exist in Redmond, through programs and projects that support development and investments to benefit citizens today and in the future, with sensitivity to the landscape and its inhabitants.

But the concept of sustainability is bigger than immediate actions. True sustainability transcends generations, and it therefore needs to become as powerful an organizing principle as it is a short-term objective. By intentionally weaving sustainability into the fabric Comprehensive Plan we

acknowledge the many aspects of society touched by this bedrock principle, and challenge ourselves to think holistically in our decision-making.

What are the current sustainability linkages in the Comprehensive Plan and how can they be improved through the updating process? In their 1987 report, *Our Common Future* (the “Brundtland report”), the United Nations World Commission on the Environment and Development defined the term *sustainability* means, “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” It is further described as including the interdependent pillars of economic development, social equity, and environmental protection. Nicknamed the three E’s, these pillars recognize that although there are natural limits to our consumption of resources there should be no limit toward improving our quality of life.

The three pillars of sustainability have been translated to the regional level as well. In 2008 the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) adopted its Vision 2040 Plan, an Integrated Growth Management, Environmental, Economic, and Transportation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound’s four-county region. The three pillars of sustainability are represented in the plan’s central theme, *People, Prosperity and Planet*. The agency describes this theme as an organizing principle suggesting that the people of our region, our economic prosperity, and our relationship to the planet are tied together in mutually supportive and interdependent ways. The City of Redmond coordinates its planning with PSRC, and also shares a similar perspective; that a strong economy, healthy natural environment and equal access to services are not mutually exclusive; they are mutually dependent.

As the City of Redmond looks at its Comprehensive Plan, it asks, “How can policy improvements be better adapted to the three pillars of sustainability?” When developing the Comprehensive Plan six years ago, the citizens of Redmond expressed values and reaffirmed a preferred vision for the City. In the intervening years we have made great strides toward realizing this vision. This update is not an attempt to reinvent the Comprehensive Plan by establishing new values and vision. Instead, it examines the connections among City goals and policies through the lens of sustainability. The theme is not limited to any one element or section of the plan, to be considered in isolation. Instead it is offered as a thought process to apply to all aspects of the Comprehensive Plan.

The following principles are central to sustainability and shall guide the Comprehensive Plan update, both in terms of process and content:

- Integrate sustainability throughout the Comprehensive Plan rather than create a separate element
- Emphasize policy goals and alternatives for accomplishing the goals, over methods that are too prescriptive
- Consider decisions that the City makes today in light of the impacts on not only the next generation but also as much as five generations from now
- Consider decisions in the context of how Redmond fits into and helps to positively contribute to the region
- Encourage innovation and the use of new approaches to achieve policy goals
- Lead by example, such as by reducing the carbon footprint for City operations
- Provide for continuing community engagement and education

In Redmond we believe our life experience is greater than the sum of its measureable parts, and our actions far-reaching. We know through the vision and corresponding goals, policies and actions that our destination is a sustainable future. This revised Comprehensive Plan charts a stronger course toward that future by improving our ability to choose wisely.