Chapter 10: Review, Update and Evaluate the Capital Facilities Element

Jurisdictions should develop CFP benchmarks and a monitoring system to provide feedback on whether or not the jurisdiction is achieving its policies for Level of Service (LOS), finance, and capital projects to serve its adopted land use plan. Such feedback will help a jurisdiction adjust policies in either the CFP, financial plan, or the land use plan in order to improve consistency and achieve the desired outcomes envisioned in the comprehensive plan.

Overview: The role of the update

The periodic update, which occurs at least every 8 years under current statute (RCW 36.70A.130(5)), is a time to bring the comprehensive plan and implementing development regulations – including the critical areas ordinance – up to current standards. It is also an opportunity to reassess the vision and progress toward achieving the vision a community has determined for itself. Some general questions that should be raised include:

- Were our assumptions correct?
- Are we doing what we said we would do?
- Is it turning out as we had hoped?
- If not, why? What should be done to make the outcome better?
- What policy adjustments can be made if needed?
- Is our financial plan adequate to meet infrastructure expectations?
- Are levels of service standards consistent with our infrastructure needs and ability to pay for infrastructure?
- Do we need to make changes to the land use plan if we are falling behind in funding infrastructure?

Depending on the answers to those questions, more specific questions can be raised and discussed publicly. It is important to include the public in these questions and throughout the update process.

Basic Steps in the Periodic Review

As far as capital facilities and public services go, the basic requirements of the update process include:

- Update inventory
- Assess progress on implementation
- Update the forecast and identify any new needs
- Assess your findings
  - Are we keeping up with growth?
  - Are we falling behind in maintenance?
  - Are we making progress on our other plans?
  - Can we provide our urban areas with the services needed?
  - Are the assumptions used still valid?
Are the assumptions and timeframes of functional plans (sewer, water, stormwater, etc.) – especially those of other entities – consistent with the comprehensive plan?

- Update the implementation plan

This must be done in light of any new population figures, changes in growth patterns, annexations or new incorporations, or changes to the urban growth boundary. If the jurisdiction has assumed any special purpose districts, if new special purpose districts have formed, or if the local situation has changed due to new information, policies, or changes in Level of Service standards, the factors must be updated and addressed in the revised CFP. The update must address any changes in statute since the pervious update as well. Changes to the GMA, such as the provision to promote physical activity, may result in changes to the comprehensive plan and that may impact the capital facilities element.1

The review and assessment may show that the jurisdiction is on track to achieve its vision, it may show a potential gap in one aspect of services, or it may highlight the need to improve the level of operation and maintenance to certain facilities. Or it may show that a certain geographic area has fallen below adopted LOS and strategies need to be developed to bring it back up to standard.

The importance of the update is that it provides a process by which the review occurs, involving all stakeholders and special purpose districts as well as the public. It is an excellent opportunity to educate newly elected officials about the importance of long term planning for growth and the needed infrastructure to serve that growth. It is also a time to communicate with the public about the costs of the existing systems and what will be needed to implement the land use and related plans. These discussions can often lead to a willingness to accept higher densities or different growth patterns so that limited infrastructure funding can be maximized to serve a greater number of people at a lower cost.

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1 Growth Management Services publishes a document titled “Growth Management Act and Related Laws” annually. For the latest version visit: http://www.commerce.wa.gov/Services/localgovernment/GrowthManagement/Pages/LawsRules.aspx