Chapter One: Introduction

Purpose and Intent
The comprehensive plan provides the frameworks for City development including major land uses, transportation systems, parks, recreation, and open spaces. This plan establishes the framework for all other planning activities. The plan is a set of goals, policies, maps, illustrations, and implementation strategies that show how the City will grow physically, socially, and economically. This plan attempts to anticipate changes in the community, and attempts to manage them in a deliberate manner reflecting the desires of Airway Heights' residents.

This plan suggests managing growth from multiple points-of-view through land use availability and compatibility, financial capability, provision of governmental and social services, and environmental sensitivity. Though the plan provides an extensive amount of information and guidance, it relies on the appropriate exercise of individual interpretation and initiative to fulfill the plan's overall goals, policies and objectives. The plan emphasizes innovative and flexible strategies to guide growth and development.

This plan contains elements that individually and collectively influence Airway Heights' future development.

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Capital Facilities
- Essential Public Facilities
- Utilities
- Parks and Recreation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Community Design
- Natural Environment

The Comprehensive Plan guides development of the City’s zoning and subdivision regulations, capital improvement programming and budgeting, and other legal and regulatory actions necessary to manage Airway Heights' physical, social, and environmental character. For implementation to be successful, the implementing steps must be consistent with this plan.

About Airway Heights
Airway Heights is located in Eastern Washington, in west-central Spokane County approximately 7 miles west of the City of Spokane, as illustrated in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. The City’s population per the 2000 US Census was 4,500 people, of which 1,822 are institutionalized at Airway Heights Correction Center.
The current population estimate for 2006 is 4,840 people, with 2,140 institutionalized at Airway Heights Correction Center. A more detailed look at the City follows in Chapter 2 the Community Profile.

**Figure 1.1**
*City of Airway Heights Statewide Locator Map*

The planning area for the City is land within the municipal boundaries, the urban growth area designated in the Spokane County Comprehensive Plan, and portions of the West Plains Joint Planning Area.
Figure 1.2
City of Airway Heights Regional Locator Map
Planning Process
Planning is an attempt to deal with change in a deliberate and structured manner. Planning is a continuing process, ensuring that plans can be amended to reflect changes in circumstances. The goals and policies of the plan guide public and private decision-makers so land use and development decisions can be made to reflect the desires of the overall community.

An effective plan must have a solid base of community involvement and support. This helps ensure that the community’s interests are heard and taken into consideration for final plan development. A variety of methods can involve the public in this planning process, including public workshops and design charrettes, mail and telephone surveys, listening posts, flyers advertising, and public comment at planning commission and City council meetings and hearings.

Airway Heights used a combination of focus group meetings, public surveys, planning commission-sponsored workshops, televised presentations and public notices to solicit community involvement.

State Requirements and the Growth Management Act
The state legislature enacted the Growth Management Act (GMA) in response to legislative findings that uncoordinated growth and a lack of common goals toward land conservation posed a threat to the public health, safety, and general welfare, and to the environment and sustainable economic development. The following table, Table 1.1, illustrates the planning goals outlined in GMA to help guide the development of comprehensive plans and land use regulations for those municipalities and counties planning under the requirements of the act.

Table 1.1
Planning Goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A.020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Goal</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Growth</td>
<td>Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.</td>
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<td>Reduce Sprawl</td>
<td>Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Encourage efficient, multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and City comprehensive plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>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 the preservation of existing housing stock.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
<td>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. Encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state’s natural resources, public services, and public facilities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property Rights</td>
<td>Property rights shall not be taken for public use without just compensation. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permits</td>
<td>Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictably.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Resource Industries</td>
<td>Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.</td>
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In addition to identifying planning goals, GMA also specifies mandatory and optional comprehensive plan elements, which must (if mandatory) or may (if optional) be included in a jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan. These elements are highlighted below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mandatory Elements</th>
<th>Optional Elements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Capital Facilities</td>
<td>Community Design</td>
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<td>Transportation</td>
<td>Natural Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
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Consistency
One of the most important tenets of GMA is **consistency**, meaning consistency between:

- Comprehensive plans and the planning goals identified in RCW 36.70A.020.
- Municipal and county comprehensive plans.
- Comprehensive plans of each municipality and county with those of neighboring municipalities and counties.
- Elements within the comprehensive plan (internal consistency).
- Comprehensive plan and development regulations.
- Comprehensive plan and capital budgets.
- State agency actions and municipal and county comprehensive plans.

Concurrency
A second tenet of GMA is **concurrency**, meaning that public facilities and services must be developed concurrently with the new land uses they are intended to serve, so that adopted level-of-service standards are consistently maintained.

Regarding transportation, the concurrency requirement is especially forceful:

“…local jurisdictions must adopt and enforce ordinances which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level-of-service…to decline below the standards adopted in the… plan, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development.”
Taken together, the various requirements of GMA suggest a strong relationship between urban growth and the public facilities and services necessary to serve that growth. This relationship is further enhanced by the concept of urban growth areas, where land development and public infrastructure improvements are programmed concurrently. To accomplish these new planning requirements, GMA authorizes the use of innovative techniques, including impact fees.

This plan for the City has been developed in accordance with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A, as originally passed in 1990 and its subsequent amendments. Furthermore, this plan is consistent with Spokane County’s County-Wide Planning Policies (CWPP). These policies are based on GMA principles and are intended to provide more detailed guidance for cities and towns in the development of their comprehensive plans. Finally, this plan is based on the locally established visions, goals, and policies, drawn from an extensive public participation process, which expressed the community’s commitment to planning for its future development.

**County-Wide Planning Policies**

Growth management planning is a cooperative process that must occur between the county and cities. Cities are primary providers of urban services within the designated UGA. In order to effectively balance land use, infrastructure, and finance throughout a region, the GMA requires that an overall vision for growth, plus general county-wide planning policies to implement this vision, be established through a collaborative process between county and City representatives. It is intended that the county-wide policies will serve as a framework for the development of each jurisdictions’ comprehensive plan, ensuring consistency between City and county plans, and compliance with the requirements of the GMA.

These policies are used to establish a county-wide framework from which county and City comprehensive plans are developed, adopted, and implemented. This framework helps ensure county and City comprehensive plans are consistent with each other and the intent of GMA.

At a minimum, the GMA requires the county-wide planning policies to address:

- Implementation of RCW 36.70A.110 (UGAs).
- Promotion of contiguous and orderly development and provisions of urban services to such development.
- Siting of public capital facilities of regional or statewide importance.
- Transportation facilities and strategies.
- Affordable housing.
- Joint county and City planning with UGAs.
- Analysis of fiscal impacts.

The steering committee of elected officials, which includes representatives of the county, cities, and special purpose districts, prepared county-wide planning policies, which were adopted by the Spokane County Board of Commissioners. Copies of Spokane County’s county-wide planning policies are available at the Spokane County Planning Department.

For the purposes of this plan, summarized versions of the CWPP are included regarding each relevant element. The policies are listed in Table 1.2 on the following page.
The CWPPs provide the process and framework to analyze, propose and adopt UGAs. UGAs are the primary tool to control sprawl and ensure that adequate services and infrastructure are provided to developing areas. UGAs must accommodate the 20-year growth projection and also include greenbelts and other open space. Each jurisdiction must also protect sensitive environmental and wildlife habitat areas.

Lands outside of UGAs will have low densities that can be sustained by minimal infrastructure improvements such as septic systems, individual wells and rural roads. Growth outside of UGAs should not alter the rural character, degrade the environment or create a need for urban services.

However, areas outside of UGAs must be adequately planned in order to accommodate future expansions of UGAs.

The CWPP address the specification of minimum level of service standards, the planning for utilities, open space corridors, critical areas, natural resource lands and water management; the provision of urban governmental services and public facilities and the distribution of future growth and population within the county. The CWPP also call for an analysis of the maximum capacity of regional capital facilities, development of minimum standards for urban governmental services within UGAs, and specification of minimum development and transportation standards to promote efficient land use.

In order to coordinate population and the distribution of services, the county and each community should accommodate its fair share of housing and essential public facilities needed for the region. Small cities and towns will serve as the focal point and function as the “urban center” for the surrounding area. The policies also recognize Fairchild Air Force Base as an urban center.

Included in the CWPPs for parks and open space are the following. (1) Establish a system to coordinate regional park planning. (2) Utilize open space corridors between major developments. (3) Identify and protect large open space areas of regional significance. (4) Develop parks and retain open space to lessen the impact of high-density land uses. (5) Utilize utility corridors as open space and for recreational opportunities.

The CWPPs propose that the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) carry out transportation planning in Spokane County. Consequently, each jurisdiction’s land use plan should be consistent with the regional transportation system.

The policies recognize the need to preserve corridors capable of providing high-capacity transportation such as commuter lanes and rail or dedicated bus lines. Through their comprehensive plans, local jurisdictions will be responsible for planning for developments along these corridors to support public transportation services.

The CWPPs also recognize the need to preserve our existing regional transportation system. New land developments should not lower the level of service of the existing transportation system. To accomplish this, developments would be required to pay for transportation improvements at the time of construction or to identify other transportation strategies to offset the impacts. These strategies could include increased public transportation services, ride-sharing programs and other alternative programs.
**CWPP Description**

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Siting of Capital Facilities of a Countywide or Statewide Nature</strong></td>
<td>The CWPPs stress the necessity of active citizen involvement in siting decisions and the need to carefully consider transportation, site design and other service needs when evaluating potential locations for essential public facilities. Finally, the policies encourage major institutions such as colleges and hospitals to develop master plans that can be adopted as elements of local comprehensive plans.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Affordable Housing</strong></td>
<td>Affordable housing applies to a wide range of housing types at varying costs which can meet the needs of a diverse community. The marketplace is generally capable of meeting the housing demands of the upper income segment of the population. Therefore, the primary focus of these CWPPs is on mechanisms to increase the availability of affordable housing for middle and low income households. Such mechanisms may include regulatory reform, inclusive zoning, mixed-use developments, incentives for increased housing densities and other incentives to encourage a variety of housing types to meet the needs of a diverse population. The affordable housing policies provide a framework by which each jurisdiction can help meet the overall housing needs of Spokane County in a fair, consistent and coordinated fashion. They direct each jurisdiction to accommodate a wide variety of development and housing types; they call for consistency in development regulations and standards within UGAs and they encourage reform of regulations which are unnecessary or costly barriers to the provision of affordable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Development</strong></td>
<td>The CWPPs establish an overall direction for economic development efforts in the region, both public and private, and also provide guidance to individual jurisdictions as they develop their comprehensive plans. The policies call for greater cooperation between the private sector and government in measuring both the performance of the local economy and the relationship between economic development and preservation of the area’s environment and quality of life. The policies stress the need to maintain downtown Spokane as a retail and cultural hub. In addition, the policies indicate a need for a regional (Washington and Idaho) approach to the critical environmental issues of water and air quality and their potential influence on the region’s economic development. Finally, the policies provide specific guidance regarding those topical areas to be addressed in the economic development element of each jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan.</td>
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**Plan Adoption**

The planning commission has the responsibility to make planning recommendations to the City council for consideration for adoption. Prior to making its recommendation, the planning commission engages in public participation, conducts public hearings, and formulates a recommendation to the council. Once the plan is adopted, all new codes and programs subsequently adopted and amended must be consistent.

**Amending the Plan**

The City is committed to conducting an annual process to consider amendments to the plan. The GMA specifies that amendments to a comprehensive plan cannot be made more frequently than once per year except under the following conditions:

1. The initial adoption of a sub-area plan;
2. The adoption or amendment of a shoreline program;
3. The amendment of a capital facilities element of the plan that occurs concurrently with the adoption or amendment of a county budget;
4. To resolve an appeal of a comprehensive plan filed with a Growth Management Hearings Board or with the court; or
5. Whenever an emergency exists (RCW 3670A.130).

Proposals to amend the plan will be accepted at any time, and docketed for consideration along with all other proposals as part of the annual comprehensive plan review and amendment process. All proposals to amend the plan will be considered at the same time so that their cumulative effect can be evaluated. Amendments will be reviewed for consistency with the goals, objectives and policies of the plan. The adopted guidelines for public participation will be used to ensure adequate public participation.

The planning commission will make a recommendation on each request and forward a recommendation to the City council. Prior to making its recommendation, the planning commission will engage in public participation, workshops, and public hearings as required by the City’s guidelines for public participation.