

## Chapter 7 – Capital Facilities and Utilities

### Introduction

Public infrastructure is the backbone of the community. Citizens rely upon public facilities and services daily for their personal and business transportation needs; to provide safe drinking water; to dispose of sewer and garbage; to provide educational institutions, recreational facilities, and public buildings. The condition of these facilities is directly related to our County's economic vitality.

County residents rely on facilities and services that help to define their quality of life and maintain their health and well-being. They expect their tax dollars to be used efficiently and want measurable and obvious returns on their contributions. They want their quality of life to be maintained and improved through the services and facilities that their government provides. Public facilities and services are often taken for granted. Yet, without coordination and conscientious planning for future growth, facilities and services may be interrupted or inadequate.

One fundamental tenet of the Growth Management Act (GMA) is for local governments to ensure that both existing and future development are adequately served by public facilities and services. Existing facilities and services must be able to support new development or provisions for improvements must be made where deficiencies exist. If the level of service of an existing road decreases to an unacceptable standard due to the impacts of a development, then the road must be improved to a standard that is acceptable. The concept is simple. The planning process is not. A host of county, state, and federal agencies, as well as regional service providers, are important players in the process.

Capital Facilities is one of the elements the Growth Management Act *requires* to be included in Spokane County's Comprehensive Plan. The separate elements of the Comprehensive Plan work together. The growth scenario envisioned in the land use element will not become a reality unless it can be shown through the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) there will be adequate facilities and services in place to support future development. It must also be shown that those improvements owned by the County can be afforded, with funding sources identified. Some of the most important goals of the Growth Management Act are realized through the Capital element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Another element required to be included in Spokane County's Comprehensive Plan is the Utility Element. The utilities element is addressed in RCW 36.70A.070(4) of the Growth Management Act.

### Background

Capital Facilities are characterized by their long, useful life and require significant expenditures to construct. They include facilities such as roads, water and sewer systems, parks, jails, and solid waste. Capital Facilities are provided by both public and private entities. Services such as police and fire protection are also included within the Capital Facilities element.

Capital facilities appear in other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, transportation facilities such as roads and transit appear in the Transportation element and the Land Use elements. Parks and other recreational facilities are also addressed in the Parks and Open Spaces Element.

## Capital Facilities Plan

The Capital Facilities Plan is a 6-year plan for capital improvements that support Spokane County's current and future population and economy, within the context of long-range forecasts of capital needs over a 20-year period. One of the principal criteria for identifying needed capital improvements is standards for levels of service (LOS). The CFP contains LOS standards for public facilities and services and requires new development be served by adequate facilities. The CFP also relies on this element's broad goals and specific policies guide and implement the provision for adequate public facilities, services and concurrency requirements.

The purpose of the Capital Facilities Plan is to provide adequate public facilities consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and concurrent with, or prior to, the impacts of development. The CFP will allow Spokane County to achieve and maintain adopted standards for levels of service and to exceed the adopted standards when possible.

Capital Facilities Plans are required in the Comprehensive Plan in order to accomplish the following:

1. Provide capital facilities for land development that is envisioned or authorized by the Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Maintain the quality of life for existing and future development by establishing and maintaining standards for the level of service of capital facilities.
3. Coordinate and provide consistency among the many plans for capital improvements, including:
  - a. Other elements of the Comprehensive Plan;
  - b. Master plans and other studies of the local government;
  - c. Plans for capital facilities of state and/or regional significance;
  - d. Plans of other adjacent local governments; and
  - e. Plans of special purpose districts.
4. Ensure the timely provision of adequate and concurrent facilities as required in the GMA.
5. Document all County owned capital projects and their financing.

The CFP is an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan. It establishes, levels of service standards, the basis for providing capital facilities concurrent with growth and contributing to the community's quality of life. The requirement to fully finance the CFP (or revise the land use plan) provides a reality check on the vision set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. The capacity of capital facilities that are provided in the CFP affects the size and configuration of the Urban Growth Area.

Planning for major capital facilities and their costs enables Spokane County to:

1. Demonstrate the need for facilities and the need for revenues to pay for them.
2. Estimate future operation/maintenance costs of new facilities that will impact the annual budget.
3. Take advantage of sources of revenue (i.e., grants, impact fees, real estate excise taxes) that require a CFP in order to qualify for the revenue.
4. Get better ratings on bond issues when the County borrows money for capital facilities (thus reducing interest rates and the cost of borrowing money).

## Growth Assumptions

The County's adopted growth assumptions are the basis for the Land Use element of the Comprehensive Plan which determines, among other things, the size of the Urban Growth Area. The same growth assumptions are used to evaluate the adequacy of public infrastructure within the CFP. The County periodically adopts population projections to serve as a basis for long-range planning purposes.

## Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan contains goals and policies related to capital facilities. It also contains guidance for what and where future land uses will be within its Land Use element. It guides where and how the County will grow by applying land use classifications within the Urban Growth Area. The Capital Facilities Plan provides an inventory and analysis of the County's capital facilities, applying LOS standards as benchmarks from which to provide analysis as to the adequacy of the public facilities for the current population and for projected future growth. The capacity of public facilities and services noted in the Capital Facilities Plan affect the size and configuration of the County's Urban Growth Area.

The Capital Facilities Plan is a separate document that is adopted as a part of the Comprehensive Plan.

## Service Agreements

Several public facilities and services are provided on a regional basis in Spokane County through interlocal service agreements. For example, the County's sewage is treated at the Regional Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility. Utilizing regional service delivery is often more efficient and cost effective for the County and its residents. Spokane County, its cities and districts need to continually explore opportunities for regional facilities and services.

Another important issue is that Spokane County must work diligently with individual cities to establish interlocal agreements for service provisions within the Joint Planning Areas. The agreements are necessary to establish guidelines for public facility design standards, transfer of facilities upon annexation and consistency in service delivery.

## Focused Public Investment

Focused public investment targets capital improvement expenditures in public investment areas to produce *fully served land* for development. Focused public investment maximizes the use of limited public funds by coordinating government expenditures and focusing development, first in some areas, then in others. The targeted public investment is an incentive for development to occur where the public's capital investment is focused. For public investment to be focused to produce fully served land, the County and other service providers will need to resolve the following issues. (1) What criteria should be used to prioritize public investments? (2) How should areas be selected for targeted investment?

## Siting of Essential Public Facilities

Local governments are required by GMA to include a process for identifying and siting essential public facilities that are difficult to locate, such as jails, education facilities, landfills and sewage treatment plants. Jurisdictions in Spokane County addressed this requirement through the Countywide Planning Policies, which provided the initial framework for the siting of essential public facilities.

In 1995 the Essential Public Facilities Technical Committee was appointed by the Steering Committee of Elected Officials to develop a model for the siting of Essential Public Facilities, consistent with the

Countywide Planning Policies and the GMA. On May 3, 1996, the Steering Committee of Elected Officials approved the *Growth Management Essential Public Facilities Technical Committee Report*, which includes a Model Siting Process, an Interjurisdictional Consistency Review Process and an inventory of existing essential facilities.

## Levels of Service (LOS)

Levels of service standards are quantifiable measures of the amount of public facilities or services that are provided to the community. Typically, measures of levels of service are expressed as ratios of facility or service capacity to demand (i.e., actual or potential users). For example, the level of service for parks may be expressed as acres of parks for every 1,000 people.

Spokane County's Comprehensive Plan guides overall economic, community, and land use growth and the levels of service identified in the CFP will guide future capital facility and service decisions. Therefore, the Board of Commissioners adopts levels of service that represent the community's vision. The Board's consideration is influenced by recommendations of the Planning Commission, providers of public services, Steering Committee of Elected Officials, and the public, through the County's public participation program guidelines.

## Concurrency

One of the requirements of the GMA is for public facilities and services to be provided concurrent with development. *Concurrency* means that adequate public facilities will be in place to support new development when the impacts of that development take place or within a specified time thereafter (WAC 365-195-070[3]). For transportation facilities, the specified time is 6 years from the time of development. The impacts of development are usually equated with occupancy and use of the development (RCW 36.70A.020). Concurrency requires that facilities have sufficient capacity to serve development without decreasing levels of service below minimum standards adopted in the CFP.

The GMA *requires* concurrency only for transportation facilities. However, the Washington State Department of Commerce recommends concurrency for water and sewer systems (see WAC 365-195-070[3]). GMA also requires all other public facilities to be "adequate" (see RCW 19.27.097, 36.70A.020, 36.70A.030 and 58.17.110).

Concurrency management procedures should be developed to ensure that sufficient public facility capacity is available for each proposed development.

## Utilities

Utilities are one of six elements required by the GMA to be included in Spokane County's Comprehensive Plan. Utility plans often include water and sewer facilities. For the purposes of this policy document, utilities are identified as electric and natural gas facilities.

Water and sewer facilities are considered capital facilities and are not duplicated within the *Utilities* definition.

In December 1995, a Regional Utility Corridor Plan (RUCP) was developed to fulfill the requirements of the Countywide Planning Policies. This plan includes an inventory and analysis of existing and proposed

electric, gas, telephone/fiber optic, water and sewer “corridors”. Through the inventory and mapping of existing and proposed utility corridors, it was determined that opportunities to share corridors may be limited. A Utility Corridor map within the RUCP identifies electric, gas and telephone/fiber optic corridors from various utility providers. The RUCP provides policies and action statements that are used to guide the goals and policies of this plan.

## Vision, Goals and Policies

While the comprehensive plan does not assert a vision, per se, a sense of a vision permeates every element in the plan. For instance, the chapters on urban and rural land uses include goals and policies that echo prominent community values, projecting them onto the County’s regional landscape. The implied vision is generally aspirational, interpreting the community’s hopes for its future onto a pattern of development and stewardship that will assure the community the future it wants.

In the scheme of capital facilities, several vision-related themes stand out:

- Essential services provided by capital facilities are crucial to the health, safety, and welfare of community residents.
- The character and scale of development must be consistent and concurrent with public facilities capacities and future community vision.
- The pace of growth and development should be consistent and concurrent with the vision set forth in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Services provision should be affordable, both for those customers paying for them through rates and taxes and for the providers, public and private, who must balance investment in facilities with the revenues available to support them.

Goals and policies provide specificity for planning and decision-making. Overall, they indicate desired directions, accomplishments, or aims in relation to the growth, development, and stewardship of the county.

## Goal CF 1 – Relationship to land use

**Provide adequate public facilities to support rural or urban levels of development, as appropriate, integrating capital facilities planning and the siting of essential public facilities with land use policy.**

### CF-1 Policies

- 1.1 Establish and maintain levels of service for facilities deemed necessary for growth and development.
- 1.2 Ensure that the estimated cost of all capital improvements does not exceed the estimate of available revenues.
- 1.3 Finance capital improvements and manage debt consistent with the Capital Facilities Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 1.4 Provide public facilities or accept their provision by other entities only if Spokane County or the other entity is able to pay for subsequent operation and maintenance costs.
- 1.5 Approve urban comprehensive plan land use and UGA amendments only after it is determined that public facilities and services will have the capacity to serve it without decreasing levels of service below adopted standards by the time development is available for occupancy and use.
- 1.6 Ensure fire protection, law enforcement,<sup>1</sup> parks and recreation, public sewer, public water, transportation,<sup>2</sup> and schools meet adopted level of service standards.

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<sup>1</sup>Law Enforcement is not a capital facility, but is instead a public service. RCW 36.70A.070(3) applies to Capital Facilities only. Spokane County addresses Law Enforcement in its CFP and these goals and policies pursuant to a Settlement Agreement.

<sup>2</sup>Transportation, including Levels of Service, concurrency, and other associated analyses are addressed in the Transportation Element of Spokane County's comprehensive plan. See, RCW 36.70A.070(6) WAC 365-196-415(2)(a)(iii). Some transportation Capital Improvements may be addressed in this CFP for special funding opportunities.

## Goal CF 2 – Fiscal sustainability

**Create a fiscally sustainable capital facilities environment, ensuring adequate public facilities are provided.**

### CF-2 Policies

- 2.1 Establish interlocal/joint planning agreements with municipalities and other providers of public facilities to coordinate planning for, and development of, Urban Growth Areas.
- 2.2 Use annexation agreements to ensure fiscal balance and equity as portions of the UGA annex into incorporated jurisdictions.

## Goal CF 3 – Resource conservation

**Promote efficient domestic water service and protect the natural resource**

### CF 3 Policies

- 3.1 Ensure water system plans are consistent with anticipated population growth, the Comprehensive Plan, and Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP).<sup>3</sup>
- 3.2 Ensure water systems for urban development includes adequate water rights, supply, and distribution systems for domestic use and fire protection per local, state and federal plans, policies and regulations by the time development occurs.
- 3.3 Encourage public and private water purveyors to implement measurable water conservation practices.
- 3.4 Encourage the continued cooperation, coordination, and consolidation of water purveyors to achieve greater efficiency in the delivery of water services.

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<sup>3</sup> Spokane County Coordinated Water System Plan is available at <https://www.spokanecounty.org/DocumentCenter/View/29361/CWSP>.

## Goal CF 4 – Sanitary sewer service and orderly development

**Promote efficient sanitary sewer service, protect natural resources, and ensure orderly physical development**

### CF 4 Policies

- 4.1 Prohibit the extension of any sewer system that will degrade the existing system below the adopted level of service.
- 4.2 Consider anticipated population growth in sewer planning, ensuring it is consistent with, and developed in coordination with comprehensive plan land use policies.
- 4.3 Consider the location and capacity of existing and planned sewer facilities when determining the intensity and/or density of land use designations.
- 4.4 Determine whether changes to comprehensive plan designation or urban growth areas can be accommodated within the planned capacity of the sewer conveyance and treatment system before approval, in accordance with the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan.
- 4.5 Encourage a coordinated, regional wastewater service organization to provide sewer services to all urban areas of the County inside the Urban Growth Area.
- 4.6 Public sewer service shall not be provided outside the Urban Growth Area boundary, except as follows:
  - 4.6.1 In response to an immediate threat to public health or safety;
  - 4.6.2 When necessary for the protection of aquifers designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170;
  - 4.6.3 Vested development that is required to be served with sanitary sewer as a condition of development approval;
  - 4.6.4 To maintain existing levels of service in existing urban or suburban developments; or
  - 4.6.5 To structures on parcels that are immediately adjacent to the UGA boundary where public sewer is available.
  - 4.6.6 Where otherwise permitted by law



## Goal CF 5 - Stormwater

**Ensure stormwater facilities and related management programs to protect surface and groundwater quality and habitat, prevent chronic flooding from stormwater, maintain natural stream hydrology, and protect aquatic resources.**

### CF 5 Policies

- 5.1 New and expanded development within the UGA shall require stormwater management systems.
- 5.2 Best management practices should be utilized to treat stormwater runoff prior to injection of runoff into the ground.
- 5.3 New and expanded development shall be designed to protect natural drainage functions including flood plains, drainageways, sink areas, and other natural and existing drainage facilities.
- 5.4 New and expanded development shall be designed to prevent onsite and off-site damage from stormwater runoff that result from site development or from new land use activity.
- 5.5 New and expanded development shall consider the multiple uses of facilities, such as the integration of stormwater facilities with recreation/open space areas.
- 5.6 Conduct stormwater management planning by drainage basin, treating basins as complete drainage systems, to assure that the most economical and beneficial stormwater controls are provided.
- 5.7 Encourage use of alternatives to impervious surfaces through rewards and credits.
- 5.9 Provide alternatives to on-site disposal of stormwater in areas of steep slopes, high groundwater, shallow soils, poorly draining soils and other physical conditions make on site stormwater disposal difficult.

## Goal CF 6 – Public Schools

**Ensure school sites and facilities meet the needs of Spokane County residents.**

### CF 6 Policies

- 6.1 Encourage school districts serving predominantly rural area populations to locate schools within designated Rural Activity Centers or Limited Development Areas.
- 6.2 Encourage school districts to develop capital facilities plans that identify future school sites and include early acquisition of sites in their long-range strategy.
- 6.3 Develop land use designation and policies that protect and allow for the establishment of new schools in urban areas and designated Rural Activity Centers. The extension or provision of public facilities and utilities to serve a school sited in a rural area that serves students from a rural area and an urban area may be allowed consistent with GMA Guidelines.
- 6.4 Encourage school districts to allow for shared access of facilities for recreational or other public purposes.
- 6.5 Encourage the expansion of school facility capacity to proceed at a comparable rate with that of private residential development and demographic trends.
- 6.6 Consider the capacity of school facilities when considering UGA and Comprehensive Plan Amendments.
- 6.7 School districts should develop capital facility plans addressing population growth and future capital needs for schools.
- 6.8 Encourage School districts to develop capital improvement plans which identify future school site expansion.

## Goal CF 7 – Fire Protection

Provide Ensure Fire Protection services are provided efficiently and cost effectively to Spokane County residents

### CF 7 Policies

- 7.1 Encourage new urban development in areas served by a fire protection district or within the corporate limits of a city providing its own fire department.
- 7.2 Road access and water supply shall be adequate for fire safety and suppression in commercial and urban-level density residential developments.
- 7.3 Encourage continued inter-jurisdictional cooperation among fire districts, including the sharing of equipment and facilities to reduce demand for new facilities and equipment.
- 7.4 Fire districts should develop capital facility plans addressing population growth and future capital needs for their district.
- 7.5 Encourage fire districts to develop capital improvement plans which identify future fire district sites and/or expansion.

## Goal CF 8 – Law Enforcement

Provide Law Enforcement services efficiently and cost effectively to Spokane County residents

### CF 8 Policies

- 8.1 Encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation among law enforcement and corrections agencies to further develop, where practical, shared service and facility use.
- 8.2 Assist in and ensure the county-wide provision of at least 9-10 pre-booking detention diversion service beds per 100,000 county population.

## Goal CF 9 – Growth and costs

**Ensure growth and development pays a proportionate share of the cost of planned facilities needed so serve it.**

### CF 9 Policies

- 9.1 Distribute and assess proportionate costs to new growth and development.
- 9.2 Consider instituting impact fees:
  - a. Only for system improvements that are reasonably related to the new development;
  - b. Not to exceed a proportionate share of the costs of system improvements that are reasonably related to the new development; and,
  - c. Only for system improvements that will reasonably benefit the new development
- 9.3 Exempt new housing units meeting the standard federal and state definition of “affordable housing” from development impact fees or proportionate cost payments.
- 9.4 Discount or waive development impact fees or proportionate cost payments for new housing units serving populations with special needs, such as persons with disabilities.
- 9.5 Utilize SEPA substantive authority where necessary and appropriate to impose mitigation on a project or non-project proponent to mitigate impacts to existing facilities that would otherwise drop below established Levels of Service.

## Goal CF 10 – Libraries

**Ensure growth and development pays a proportionate share of the cost of planned facilities needed so serve it.**

### CF 9 Policies

- 10.1 Encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation, sharing of equipment and facilities.
- 10.2 Spokane County’s Library Capital Improvement Plan is a part of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 10.3 Ensure that the expansion of library capacity considers physical as well as digital expansion and service capabilities.
- 10.4 Ensure that land use regulations allow siting of library facilities in locations convenient to residential areas.