

## Wilkeson Comprehensive Plan Open House

July 22, 2024

### Highlights

1. The last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2014. The Washington State Growth Management Act requires us to update the Comprehensive Plan every 10 years. This one is due by December 31, 2024.
2. The work on the document is funded through a \$100,000 grant from the Washington Department of Commerce and a small portion from the Wilkeson General Fund.
3. The document is about 90-95% complete. The document needs to be reviewed by the Department of Commerce, Pierce County, WSDOT, and Puget Sound Regional Council. More importantly, it needs to be reviewed and approved by the people and Town of Wilkeson.
4. The Updated Draft Comprehensive Plan was accomplished by the Town's Engineers, Gray and Osborne and by the Town's Planners, Sound Municipal Consultants. The Update is based several important factors including:
  - a. The results of the public survey,
  - b. The regional and state requirements of the:
    - i. Growth Management Act,
    - ii. Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2050,
    - iii. The Pierce County Buildable Lands Report (2022),
    - iv. The Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies, and
    - v. Other state and federal requirements.
  - c. Stakeholder groups including the school district, fire district and PSE,
  - d. The Capital Improvements Plans in each applicable chapter were sourced from the corresponding existing plans including the Wilkeson Water System Plan and the Wilkeson General Sewer and Wastewater Facility Plan. Other Capital Improvements sourced in the Transportation, Capital Facilities and Parks Elements came from existing plans or consultation with the Town.
5. The Updated Comprehensive Plan contains nine Chapters including:
  - Chapter 1 Introduction
  - Chapter 2 Land Use\*
  - Chapter 3 Critical Areas \*
  - Chapter 4 Housing\*
  - Chapter 5 Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces\*
  - Chapter 6 Utilities\*
  - Chapter 7 Transportation\*
  - Chapter 8 Capital Facilities\*
  - Chapter 9 Economic Development

\*Required Elements under the Washington Growth Management Act.

**Chapter 1 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the town, provides its geographic and historical setting, describes the organization and purpose of each chapter, and outlines the various planning requirements including compliance with:

- a. The Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.060),
- b. Puget Sound Regional Council’s VISION 2050,
- c. Pierce County’s Countywide Planning Policies, and
- d. Pierce County’s Buildable Lands Report (2022).

This chapter also describes the history of planning in Wilkeson and the public participation process for this plan update.

**Chapter 2 Land Use**

This chapter discusses the many land use related planning requirements – including state, multicounty and countywide planning goals, and policies.

*Growth Targets*

Wilkeson is required by law to comply with the Pierce County Growth Targets for Employment and Housing (Pierce County Ordinance No. 2022-46s). SMC represented Wilkeson to the Pierce County Growth Management Coordinating Committee throughout the 2020-2022 Buildable Land Allocation process. The Growth Targets for Wilkeson are shown below. Wilkeson is expected to grow by 69 housing units and 11 jobs to achieve its share of regional growth by 2044.

<b>GMA Population, Housing Unit and Employment Targets</b>			
<b>Population</b>	Estimated 2020 Census Population	2020-2044 Population Growth	2044 Total Population Allocation
	499	187	686
<b>Housing Unit</b>	Estimated 2020 Census Housing Units	2020-2044 Housing Unit Growth	2044 Total Housing Unit Allocation
	182	69	251
<b>Employment</b>	2020 Total Employment Estimate	2020-2044 Total Employment Growth	2044 Total Employment Target
	85	11	96

The draft Comprehensive Plan demonstrates there is adequately zoned land to reach each of these targets. When combining vacant and underutilized land, vacant single units and the development in the pipeline at the time of the report, Pierce County determined there is adequate residential zoning to accommodate only an additional 43 new housing units, which leaves a deficit of 26 additional units the Town must accommodate to meet the 2020-2044 target.

**It's important to note Pierce County feels Wilkeson needs to grow by an additional 37.5% of housing units in a twenty-year planning period.** This is a radical departure from the growth trends exhibited in Wilkeson over the last planning period. The 2010 US Census found 175 housing units in Wilkeson. The 2020 OFM estimate was 182 housing units. **The Pierce County 2044 target for Wilkeson is to grow by over a third the existing size to 251 housing units. From 2010 to 2020, only seven new units were produced in Wilkeson, less than one new unit per year (mean = 0.7/year actual). Wilkeson is being asked to build an average of 3.45 new unit/year, almost five times the historical growth rate<sup>1</sup>.**

Pierce County assumed there is no capacity for residential in the Town's Commercial zone (WMC 17.03.040) and very little in the R-3 multi-family zone (WMC 17.03.030). No mention was made of the Town's Planned Unit Development Code (WMC 17.03.060). Both the Commercial and Multifamily zones allow for a density of 16 dwelling units/acre. The Commercial zone also explicitly permits transitional housing, group homes and assisted living facilities. Under RCW 43.21C.450, and chapters 35A.21, 35.21 and 19.27A RCW, any of the existing commercial buildings in either the Commercial or Multifamily zones can be retrofitted for residential use. Wilkeson is home to the state historic register Washington Hotel and Brothel. Residential use in the Historic District is not without precedent. It's possible retrofitting or the creation of new residential in the Commercial district, an already permitted use, will allow Wilkeson to bridge the gap and allow for the additional 26 units the County would like the town to create. Wilkeson's existing PUD code allows for residential or mixed use with an allowable density bonus of 20%. Wilkeson is also likely to make up the difference by adopting the new Accessory Dwelling Unit codes (RCW 36.70A.681) and conforming to the Missing Middle Housing requirements of allowing a duplex in every residentially zoned lot (RCW 36.70A.635(1)(c)).

There is enough existing land zoned for commercial uses to provide for 37 new jobs, which is far higher than the 11 jobs allocated to Wilkeson in the 2020-2044 time period. Wilkeson has adequate land capacity given its existing zoning to accommodate the buildable lands employment projections.

### *Zoning*

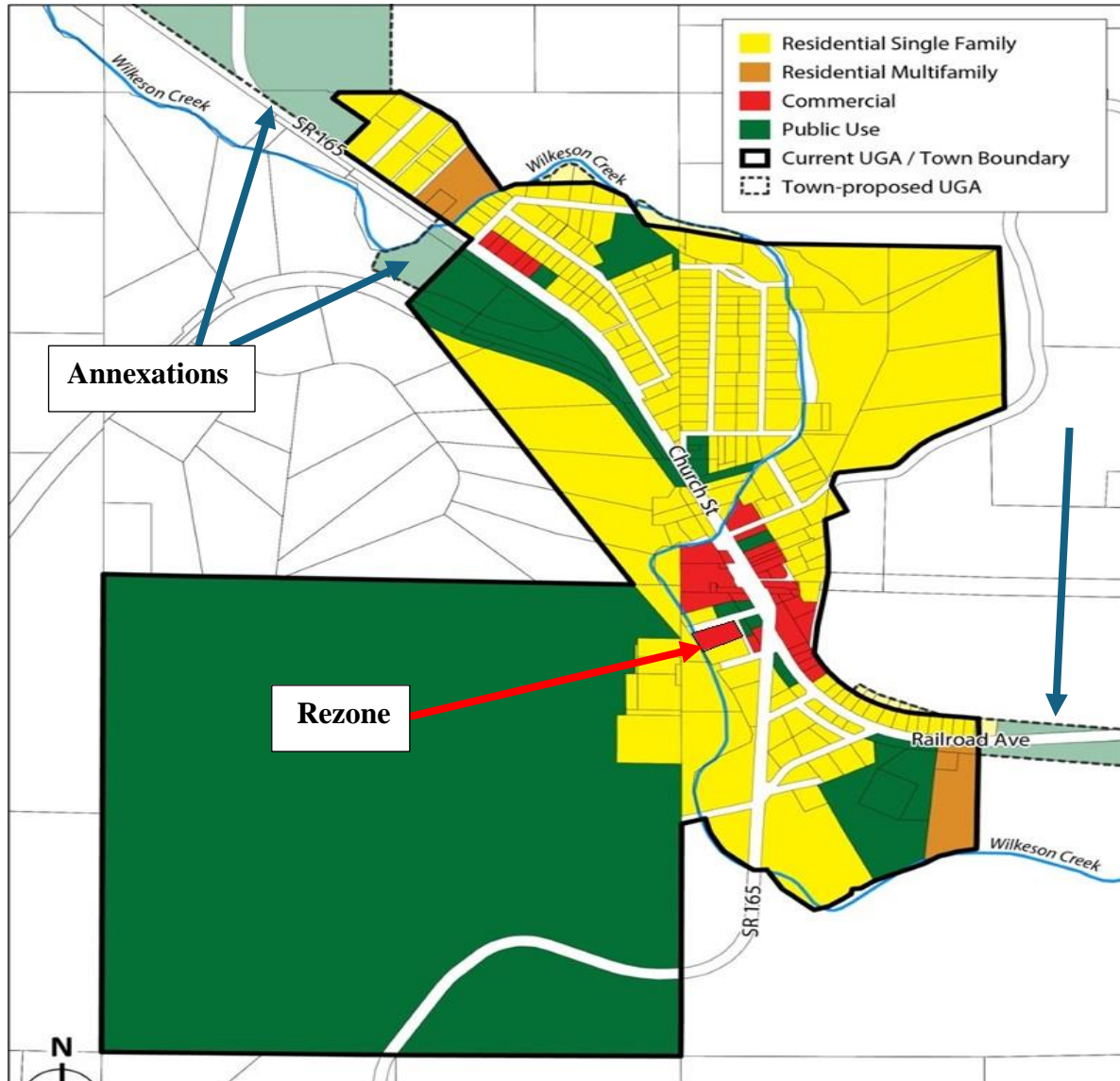
The Future Land Use Map includes the annexation properties and the Hallett Rezone Request to move to commercial zoning. See the map on the next page.

## **Chapter 3 Critical Areas**

The Growth Management Act requires the Town to identify policies related to preservation of the environment. The Critical Areas chapter defines the critical areas that affect or could affect Wilkeson including wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, erosion hazard areas, landslide hazard areas, seismic hazard areas,

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<sup>1</sup> Note the Pierce County Buildable Lands Report rounded the historical production up (0.7 became 1 unit/year) while rounding the target projection down (3.45 became 3 units per year), thus significantly underreporting the impact.



Future Land Use Map

and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. The chapter provides maps of these critical areas and sets goals and policies for protecting each of the above individual critical areas as well as air quality, natural resource lands, and surface water, and reducing the impacts of climate change and noise.

### Chapter 4 Housing

Housing is another required element of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition to demonstrating Wilkeson can meet its growth target allocation in the Pierce County Buildable Lands Report, the Growth Management Act also requires the Town to calculate and plan for its share of the County’s affordable housing needs.

The Comprehensive Plan must also comply with VISION 2050 and the Countywide Planning Policies. As noted in the Land Use Element, the Town has enough residential and commercial

zoned land to meet its housing and employment targets for 69 new houses and 11 new jobs by 2024.

**HOUSING NEEDED FOR ALL SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY 2020-2044**

	Total	0-30% AMI		>30-50% AMI	>50-80% AMI	>80-100% AMI	>100-120% AMI	>120% AMI	Emergency Housing Needs (Beds)
		Non-PSH	PSH						
<b>Estimated Supply (2020)</b>	182	4	0	17	81	34	21	26	0
<b>Allocation (2020-2044)</b>	95	10	12	17	-6	12	10	40	5

In addition to adding the required housing units, the Town must seek to divide those new units into various levels of affordability by income group. Using the Department of Commerce’s Housing All Planning Tool, Wilkeson has an overabundance of certain types of housing and an underabundance of affordable housing. **To accept its regional share, Wilkeson must produce not just 69 new dwelling units (under Buildable Lands) but must provide 95 new dwelling units (26 more than the Buildable Lands requirement). Of these, 22 must accommodate households with an income of 0-30% Area Median Income (10 in non-permanent supportive housing and 12 in permanent supportive housing) and 17 units affordable to households earning 30-50% of Area Median Income. Wilkeson has an oversupply of housing affordable to households making between 50% and 80% of Area Median Income but a shortage of 12 units affordable to households making 80-100% of Area Median Income. There is a shortage of dwelling units in the price range of households earning 100% or more of Area Median Income (about 50 units). Additionally, the State wants to see Wilkeson create five emergency shelter beds.**

*Analysis*

The Housing Goals and Policies are designed to give a path to meeting these requirements while complying with the other County, Multi-County and State mandates. With respect to housing, Wilkeson is challenged in several ways. The Town is remote with no access to transit. There are many critical areas including extensive shorelines and steep slopes (See Chapter 3 Critical Areas Element). Another challenge is there are few employers in town so anyone without vehicular access must work inside the town either in a small-scale enterprise servicing the other residences (daycare, lawncare, dog walking, housekeeping, or home health aide for example) or must work remotely in a home occupation (See Chapter 9 Economic Development Element). The expected growth of 69 housing units from 2022-2044 is likely to come primarily from the development of accessory dwelling units and the densification of existing large lot development through short plats. There are no parcels that can accommodate a large subdivision. However, there are parcels with multi-family zoning that could accommodate more density with higher unit counts.

## Chapter 5 Parks, Recreation and Open Space

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space chapter demonstrates compliance with each of the required county, regional and state policies. It catalogs town owned and other recreational facilities in town (the School District) and regional parks, trails and open space. This element provides a review of the state parks classification system and levels of service for each park type. It provides an assessment of needs by park type and a capital facilities plan.

## Chapter 6 Utilities

The Utilities chapter of the Comprehensive Plan must be compliant with many local, regional, state and federal regulations and plans. These are described in detail in the chapter. The Utilities chapter inventories and describes Wilkeson's Water, Wastewater and Stormwater Utilities and their service areas. It also discusses utilities provided by others including natural gas, electrical, telecommunications and solid waste collection.

## Chapter 7 Transportation

The Transportation chapter of the Comprehensive Plan must also be compliant with county, regional and state policies and regulations. The chapter describes these outside requirements and demonstrates compliance with them. The Transportation chapter presents an inventory of transportation facilities and services and discusses multi-modal forms of transportation or the lack thereof including bus, shuttle, rail and air service. The chapter analyzes current and projected transportation demand and sets levels of service. The chapter provides a discussion on transportation demand management. Funding capability and resources are discussed as are goals and policies that demonstrate concurrency with Wilkeson's future needs and compliance with county, regional and state policies and regulations. Goals include consistency with the regional growth strategy, provision of transportation facilities, parking and load/unload areas, air quality and citizen participation.

## Chapter 8 Capital Facilities

The Capital Facilities chapter contains the capital improvements plans for Wilkeson's utilities, existing buildings (Town Hall and the Fire Station), the Cemetery and Parks. This chapter also describes Wilkeson's unique forestry program, the harvesting plan and potential acquisition of parcels. This chapter also describes potential funding sources. The chapter sets level of service standards for each utility, service and facility. It also discusses services provided by others such as PSE, the School District and internet providers. Capital facilities are also subject to the county, regional and state policies and regulations. This chapter sets goals and policies for service standards, environmental impacts, facility and service providers, costs and financing, UGA and annexations, inter-jurisdictional coordination, consistency with other Comprehensive Plan elements, concurrency, power and heating, and communication.

Location, Size and Use	Improvements
540 Church Street Approximately 0.65-acre Town Hall Building, Library and associated parking	<b>Existing:</b> This two-story ~9,000sf building is the Town Hall. Town offices and the Council Chamber are on the upper floor. The basement is largely vacant.

Location, Size and Use	Improvements
	<b>Planned:</b> The Town Plans to Remodel the building in 2028 using local funding at an approximate cost of \$3,200,000.00
<u>220 Church Street</u> Approx. 2.6 acres Public Works Facility	<b>Existing:</b> The two Public Works outbuildings are 800sf and 640sf, respectively. Both are in average condition and used for storage.  <b>Planned:</b> There are no plans to remodel or add facilities to the Public Works buildings at this time.
<u>501 Church Street</u> Approximately 0.63-acre Fire Station	<b>Existing:</b> The Fire Station was constructed in 1987 on Church Street to the south of Hill Street. The facility was painted in 2024 and the asphalt roof was replaced with metal roofing. There was a light remodel to the interior completed in 2024, to create a community center area when fire staffing allows. The fire station is roughly 4,000sq/ft and should meet the needs of the Town for the 20-year horizon and beyond. The Town contracts fire protection services and emergency medical services through an interlocal agreement with the City of Buckley Fire Department as well as Carbonado Fire Department to provide fire department functions.  <b>Planned:</b> No immediate plans to upgrade. However, there is a joint parks project in the parking lot that is described in Chapter 5, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element.
<u>27807 Johns Road E.</u> Approximately 4.07 acres Wilkeson Town Cemetery	<b>Existing:</b> Cemetery is less than one-half full and was expanded in 2022  <b>Planned:</b> Landscaping is planned in 2024 and 2025 using logging funds at an approximate cost of \$25,000.

## Chapter 9 Economic Development

The Economic Development chapter describes the goals of the GMA, VISION 2050, the Pierce County Planning Policies, and sets Wilkeson’s economic development goals and policies.

Wilkeson has a number of assets including:

1. Its location on a major route to Mount Rainier National Park which could promote tourist activities and local commerce.
2. Wilkeson is a destination for the Pierce County Foothills Trail. Once the trail is complete, Wilkeson will be an important rest stop and destination location for trail users.
3. Wilkeson is adjacent to the Carbon River Canyon, a large open space area with primitive trails. Carbon River Canyon recreation will bring tourists into Wilkeson.
4. Wilkeson has many structures on the State Register or the National Register of Historic Places.
5. The business district is compact, has historic buildings, and has abundant space available for new retail stores. It is a well-defined area on State Route 165, the major transportation route through the Town.
6. The Town Council, Wilkeson Historical Society, and Wilkeson Booster Club (the local commercial club) have a very favorable view toward the promotion of tourism.
7. The Town has promoted festivals to attract tourists, such as Wilkeson Handcar Races each July.
8. The main streets are adequate for traffic.
9. Wilkeson has a small-town quality of life and is in a desirable, picturesque location.

Wilkeson has many opportunities.

1. **Tourism.** Wilkeson could develop a new park system in the potential park areas and future acquisitions areas highlighted in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element and the Capital Facilities Element. Wilkeson could support the completion of the Foothills Trail towards Buckley and towards Carbonado. Wilkeson could also support recreational development in the Carbon River Canyon. These new attractions could bring in tourists. With new tourists, the demand for lodging increases. Many of Wilkeson's existing historical buildings could be modernized to the current building code while retaining their historical value and charm. These could attract tourists to lodge, dine and shop locally.
2. **New Businesses.** Wilkeson could seek grants to restore its historic business district and provide more attractive space for new businesses that serve the existing residents. Wilkeson could incentivize businesses that cater to local needs such as a convenience store, a small grocery store, a butcher shop, a bakery, a deli, a drive-thru coffee shop, dry goods and sporting goods stores and restaurants. Artist venues would also serve to promote tourism while supporting local artists.
3. **Code Enforcement.** Many citizens stated they felt that code enforcement is lacking and that the town would be improved if eyesores and dangerous buildings were brought to code.

### **Development Code Changes**

The Town must accomplish several development code changes in the next year to accompany the Comprehensive Plan. These include:

- Adopting a new official Zoning Map to include the new annexations and the Hallett rezone.
- Amending the zoning code to allow duplexes in all residential zones.



- Adopting a new accessory dwelling unit code compliant with current state law (a minimum of 2 adu/lot, a minimum of 1,000sf, no ownership requirement, no burdensome parking requirements or impact fees).
- Code changes to encourage residential use in the mixed or commercial zones.
- Adopting a new Critical Areas Code to comply with current state law. Wilkeson is under the size threshold and is therefore not required to create a new Climate Change Element to the Comprehensive Plan and the corresponding development changes other larger municipalities are required to adopt.