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COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Chapter Outline

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Puyallup Design Review & Historic Preservation Board
Kristopher Stamon – Chair
Luke Heath – Vice Chair
Andy Anderson
Paula Harmes
Jerry Isaksen
Chris Larson
Jamie Prossick
A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Community Character Element is to guide future development and redevelopment in Puyallup so that it develops its identified Regional Growth Centers, protects its residential neighborhoods and established historic qualities, promotes alternative modes of travel, and enhances the streetscape and landscape on all properties and streets. This element builds on work done during development of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan update process, which included public meetings and workshops that explored residential, commercial and industrial development prototypes considered to be consistent with and complementary to the unique character of the community.

The Community Character Element provides a design framework for new development and construction and addresses components such as natural features and historic character preservation. The element is meant to address the goals of retaining Puyallup’s distinct character and creating gathering places with a sense of history and identity filled with diverse arts and cultural opportunities. It addresses the vision of respect for the natural environment, and is also intended to help carry out the vision of keeping Puyallup a safe, friendly and attractive city in the future. Ultimately, it intends to create and make healthy places livable and enjoyable for all.

Although this is not a GMA required element, it is closely linked to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Community Character is addressed broadly in the Vision Statement and Framework Goals. Land use categories in the Land Use Element are described in further detail and provided with policy direction in the Community Character Element to illustrate and guide future development. Issues identified in the Environment Element, such as construction on hillsides, sensitive development in proximity to environmentally critical areas, and preservation of open space are addressed in this element. Additionally, the Community Character Element complements the Transportation Element by reinforcing the desirability of pedestrian facilities and an integrated street system. Street design issues including street trees and reduced local street widths are also discussed. A well designed community with its own character and identity can produce a strong sense of place that can enhance quality of life, promote social and emotional wellness and fuel economic development.

B. DESIGN QUALITY AND CHARACTER

Design quality is important to Puyallup because citizens desire that new development enhances the community. Generally, development becomes more acceptable if it is well-designed. Design describes more than appearance, it also means the way a development functions and relates to surrounding properties. Examples are similar building form, comparable landscaping, collective open and public space, and connections for pedestrians.

Assets and attributes of adjacent sites, when connected or combined, improve the overall function and appeal of an area. Design quality means thoughtful development and beneficial improvements. It is seen as a development’s overall contribution to the appearance of the community. For example, within new development, retention of existing vegetation and new landscaping contribute to Puyallup’s image as a community that values and protects its trees and landscape.

C. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND IDENTITY

Many residents identify where they live, work, or spend their free time as a particular neighborhood. Neighborhoods in the City have differing characteristics and often specific identities. Someone who lives near the commuter rail station downtown experiences a different flavor of the city compared to one who lives near the Washington State University Research and Extension Center at the west edge of town, and different still from one living in a subdivision on South Hill. It is important that each of these neighborhoods be recognized and appreciated for the unique qualities that they add to the overall character of Puyallup.

Three sub-areas or neighborhoods that are currently addressed in great detail within the Comprehensive Plan include the City’s two Regional Growth Centers: Downtown and South Hill, as well as the River Road corridor. Additionally, the West Hills neighborhood had a dedicated Element in previous versions of the Comprehensive Plan; discussion of that neighborhood has since been consolidated in this Element as identified below. Further work
may be done outreaching to City residents to help identify physical boundaries and aesthetic characteristics of additional neighborhoods in the City.

### West Hills

The West Hills neighborhood is located in the southwest portion of the City/Urban Growth Area, bounded by 9th Street SW to the east, Woodland Avenue to the west, 23rd Avenue SW to the north and SR-512 to the south. Approximately two-thirds of this area was annexed to the City in early 2009. This neighborhood has a semi-rural residential character with a few minor home occupation uses and has specific characteristics and needs including current and future housing density, infrastructure needs related to roads, storm drainage, sewer, and parks. There is a mix of housing types and densities, from recently-developed small-lot subdivisions, to typical quarter-acre lot suburban plats, to larger four and five acre tracts – many of which support the keeping of livestock.

Public meetings held in the summers of 1999 and 2000 as well as more recently in February, 2014 indicate that the neighborhood’s greatest strength is its rural atmosphere in a convenient location, while the lack of infrastructure is one of its biggest challenges. Ultimately, residents identified strongly with their existing, long-established neighborhood character and expressed a desire for that to be acknowledged and maintained by City policies and development standards.

### Washington State Fair

The Washington State Fair is a long-established, integral part of Puyallup’s history and community identity. The fairgrounds comprise 120 acres; additionally the Fair owns a number of other parcels in the surrounding area. Over the years, the Fair has expanded from a fall Fair to a year-round host to various events, clubs, and associations. This level of activity has benefits and impacts to both the immediate neighborhood as well as the larger community. Traffic, noise, visual, and pedestrian safety impacts have been raised as areas of concern, while increased visitors, employment, and a community event space are positive aspects of this entity. Other aspects of the Fair are addressed in the Land Use and Economic Development Elements, but specific impacts to community character should be further identified within this element.

### D. CULTURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION

Not only the natural environment shapes the character of the community built upon it; the built environment resulting from human activity is significant in creating the identity of the community. Varied architectural building styles, street details such as light and signage, and landscape features weave together into a visual history of the community. Often a particular building or landscape feature such as a park or a mature historic tree become landmark features with which neighborhoods are identified. Community resources include several small scale historic commercial buildings integrated into residential blocks which are unique and contribute positively to the identity of the neighborhoods. Preserving such cultural resources and promoting education and awareness aids in preserving the community’s unique identity and fosters a sense of pride in residents.

Puyallup’s location on the Puyallup River and Clarks Creek has played an important role in local Native American history and culture. Development in these areas has the potential to expose artifacts from the time when Native Americans were the primary residents along the river. These artifacts require care and protection when discovered.
through the development process, and collaboration between the City, project applicants, and local Tribes and other agencies is vital to resource preservation.

In 2011 the City became a Certified Local Government, which allows the City to have oversight of our local register of historic places. As part of that process we adopted historic preservation regulations and expanded the scope of our Design Review Board to include Historic Preservation. Over the years, Puyallup has taken advantage of various grant opportunities to complete historic surveys of specific neighborhoods, including downtown and the northwest residential section of the city. However, further work can be done to survey other neighborhoods. The City can also take a more proactive approach to encouraging property owners to seek historic designation, which can have both financial benefits for the property owner and long-term benefits to preserving the character of a neighborhood and maintaining the identity of the City.

E. UTILITY PLACEMENT

Careful attention to siting and treatment of utility facilities such as electrical substations, transmission lines, telecommunication towers, and water reservoirs can allow these essential elements of modern life to be sensitively integrated into the community without degrading the quality of life or visual appearance. These facilities can be intrusive to the scale and character of residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, and therefore should be appropriately screened.

Relatively large transmission substations and generating facilities are encouraged to be located where there are limited noise and aesthetic impacts on surrounding non-industrial land uses. Utility corridors, including electrical transmission lines, should be sensitively sited in hillside areas so as to reduce visual impacts. Slope stability and erosion potential should also be considered, as addressed in the Environment Element.

Utility poles and overhead wires associated with above ground placement of electrical utility lines have a detrimental effect on the visual appearance of the community. In addition, overhead power lines limit the placement and selection of street trees. “Undergrounding” of existing overhead distribution lines is significantly more expensive than placing new distribution lines underground initially, however this should be the siting preference whenever possible.

The City of Puyallup supports the placement of new distribution lines underground in all major subdivisions, commercial projects, or other projects including the creation of new public streets. Placement of electrical lines underground has the advantages of reducing the potential for power outages, reducing threats to public safety should lines be downed by a storm event, reducing visual clutter along streets, and reducing the potential for conflicts with the canopies of street trees.

Finally, while there is typically a functional relationship between the placement and height of telecommunication towers and dishes, it is possible to reduce the visual and aesthetic impacts of such facilities. Towers and dishes should be located with sensitivity to the skyward view from the community. Potentially visually obtrusive towers should be located near structures or vegetation of similar height where feasible.

F. NOISE EXPOSURE

Noise from various sources affect the conducting of commerce, enjoyment of property, rest and sleep, and the overall quality of the community environment. The City does not have direct authority to control some of the noises affecting the community such as passing airplanes and trains. These public transportation systems have tended to be background and infrequent in nature and have thus far been considered tolerable to the community. However, train noise has been raised as a more frequent and disruptive concern. Coordination with the railroad regarding the use of an automated
horn system should be considered. Additionally, noises considered to be public nuisances and disturbing to community residents should be controlled.

Besides controlling noise generation, construction techniques and siting of new development next to pre-existing sources of noise should be designed to provide quiet internal spaces within a development. Providing a relative degree of tranquility in the urban environment enhances the character of the community and should be preserved.

G. GOALS AND POLICIES

Neighborhood Character

CC - 1 Puyallup is a community of inviting neighborhoods and vibrant business districts that honors its established neighborhood character.

CC - 1.1 Maintain the identity and character of established residential neighborhoods through appropriate landscaping and site design of new developments and infill projects.

CC - 1.2 Allow a variety of unit types and sizes within single family residential areas while ensuring consistency with the scale, massing, and architectural character of the surrounding buildings.

CC - 1.3 Create a sensitive interface between residential and non-residential areas through various measures such as setbacks, screening, vegetative buffering and shielded lighting.

CC - 1.4 Promote the development of commercial uses that are visually attractive, compatible with the character of the community and natural environment, and which retain their own distinct sense of place.

CC - 1.5 Enhance the commercial employee and customer experience through quality site and architectural design, landscaping, streetscape and non-motorized improvements.

CC - 1.6 Encourage industrial development projects which complement and contribute positively to the character of the community through sensitive site design, buffering from adjacent uses, and facilitation/acknowledgement of the pedestrian experience.

CC - 1.7 Outreach to residents to determine neighborhood identity in order to work towards the possible development of a Neighborhood Identity Plan or Placemaking Strategy.

CC - 1.8 Collaborate with organizations that contribute to the identity of a specific area to address potential impacts to the surrounding neighborhood.

Buildings and Site Design

CC - 2 Puyallup’s built environment is characterized by high-quality urban design that accommodates a mix of compatible residential, commercial and light industrial uses.

CC - 2.1 Adopt urban design principles that recognize the unique characteristics of different types of development, including single-family, multi-family, mixed-use, and various types and sizes of commercial and industrial development.

CC - 2.2 Encourage building design that creates distinctive places in the community.

CC - 2.3 Buffer the visual and noise impact on residential areas of commercial, office, industrial, and institutional development.

CC - 2.4 Consider Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles when developing mixed use, commercial, high-density residential uses, and parks and open space.

CC - 2.5 Maintain a system of design review that applies more intense levels of review where the scope of the project has greater potential impacts to the community.
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CC - 2.6 Refine design standards so new projects enhance the livability and the aesthetic appeal of the community.

CC - 2.7 Require commercial, mixed-use, and multi-family development to incorporate a variety of public amenities, such as public and pedestrian access, pedestrian-oriented building design, mid-block connections, public spaces, parks and open spaces, community activities, and solar access.

Vegetation and Landscaping

CC - 3 Natural land forms, vegetation, and scenic areas that contribute to the City’s identity and visually define the community, its neighborhoods and districts are preserved.

CC - 3.1 Encourage development to consolidate on-site landscape areas to be large enough to balance the scale of development.

CC - 3.2 To the greatest extent feasible, preserve significant trees and mature vegetation.

CC - 3.3 Prohibit use of invasive species in required landscaping, and encourage use of native plant species whenever possible.

CC - 3.4 Maximize canopy coverage throughout the City to create comfortable pedestrian environments, provide stormwater benefits and mitigate microclimate impacts.

Streetscapes and Pathways

CC - 4 Design streets to create a cohesive image, including continuous non-motorized improvements that connect to the surrounding neighborhoods and enhance the visual quality of the community.

CC - 4.1 Where appropriate and feasible, provide lighting, seating, landscaping, and other amenities for sidewalks, walkways, and trails.

CC - 4.2 Establish and maintain attractive landscaped gateways at entry points and key corridors into the City.

CC - 4.3 Promote the planting of street trees and other landscaping standards to enhance corridor appearance, neighborhood identification and streetscape unity.

CC - 4.4 Create inviting, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes by enhancing lighting, landscaping, distinctive pedestrian crossings, pathways and public art.

CC - 4.5 Allow the use of shared driveways in both commercial and residential zones to reduce curb-cuts and enhance pedestrian accessibility.

CC - 4.6 Work with WSDOT to establish a landscaped appearance along the freeways within the community.

Signage

CC - 5 Implement sign regulations that equitably allow adequate visibility in the display of commercial information while protecting Puyallup’s visual character.

CC - 5.1 Consolidate signage within commercial developments to reduce visual clutter along streets.

CC - 5.2 Ensure that signage is located and sized appropriately to passersby.

CC - 5.3 Encourage signage to be complementary in scale to the building architecture and site design.

CC - 5.4 Discourage multiple or large signs that clutter, distract, or dominate the streetscape of commercial areas.
Public Spaces

CC - 6  Create a built environment that promotes public gathering in a variety of forms and locations throughout the community while taking advantage of the surrounding natural features.

CC - 6.1  Encourage and develop places and events throughout the community where people can gather and interact.

CC - 6.2  Preserve and enhance views from public places of water, mountains, or other unique landmarks as valuable civic assets.

CC - 6.3  Provide public spaces of various sizes and types throughout the community.

CC - 6.4  Create a supportive environment for cultural activities in public spaces.

CC - 6.5  Design public spaces to provide amenities and facilities such as seating, lighting, landscaping, kiosks, and connections to surrounding uses and activities that contribute to a sense of security.

CC - 6.6  Utilize landscaping buffers between different uses to provide for natural transition, noise reduction, and delineation of space while maintaining visual connection to the public amenity.

Cultural Resources and Historic Preservation

CC - 7  Historic properties, which are significant because of architectural appearance or associated with historic figures or events, are preserved.

CC - 7.1  Create and maintain a historic designation provision in the municipal zoning code to designate historic districts, structures, and landmarks.

CC - 7.2  Consider and establish a process for providing incentives for historic landmark designation.

CC - 7.3  Encourage retention and adaptive reuse of historic structures through zoning incentives, financial incentives, design assistance, and resource information.

CC - 7.4  Maintain a Certified Local Government program to encourage historic preservation efforts in order to maintain a historic register, and apply for technical and financial assistance toward preservation of historic buildings and sites.

CC - 7.5  Create and maintain an inventory of heritage structures which may not qualify for designation on the local historic register.

CC - 7.6  Preservation of structures identified on the heritage structure inventory shall be encouraged through flexibility in administering development standards and may be honored and signified by placement of a commemorative marker.

CC - 7.7  Explore options for allowing the establishment of conservations districts, in order to retain certain significant neighborhood characteristics.

CC - 7.8  Work cooperatively with other jurisdictions, agencies, organizations and property owners, specifically including local Tribal entities and the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, to identify and preserve historic resources.

CC - 7.9  Ensure that the potential for the existence of archeological sites is considered during development of new construction projects.

CC - 7.10  Based on local resource identification, conduct site-specific cultural resource assessments to ensure cultural artifacts are protected.

CC - 8  The public is educated and aware of local cultural and historic resources.
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CC - 8.1 Encourage the development of educational materials and programs aimed at increasing community awareness of local cultural resources and historic assets, such as historic photograph exhibits, brochures of self-guided tours of historic buildings and trees, and cultural education enrichment packages highlighting notable local sites, events, and individuals.

CC - 8.2 Establish an updated inventory of historic properties throughout the community including observations on historic significance and structural conditions, to be compiled by a qualified professional meeting the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation reporting standards. As appropriate, the City should assist property owners in designating significant sites for listing on the local, state, or national historic registers.

CC - 8.3 Educate the public about Puyallup’s history through commemoration and interpretation.

CC - 9 Heritage trees are preserved, which are significant because of species, size, or association with historic figures or events.

CC - 9.1 Create and maintain a photographic inventory of heritage trees.

CC - 9.2 Preserve heritage trees through flexibility in administering development standards such as building setback requirements, parking requirements, and street standards.

CC - 9.3 Consider creating a heritage tree register whereby candidate trees would be cataloged and signified by placement of a commemorative marker.

Utilities Siting and Treatment

CC - 10 Utility facilities are sited and treated so as not to detract from the quality of life or visual appearance of the community.

CC - 10.1 Encourage privately owned utility facilities to be treated so as to minimize adverse noise and visual impacts on surrounding uses through screening and innovative site design.

CC - 10.2 Reasonably reduce additional above-ground utility lines where practical, such as new subdivisions, commercial projects, and road projects.

CC - 10.3 Encourage telecommunication apparatuses to be located so as to minimize the impact on the visual quality of the community through appropriate siting and screening.

CC - 10.4 Encourage shared use of telecommunication towers so as to limit the need for additional tower facilities.

Noise Abatement

CC - 11 Citizens receive minimal exposure to the harmful physiological and psychological effects of excessive noise.

CC - 11.1 Enforce regulations to control excessive, repetitive or continuous noises within its practical and legal abilities.

CC - 11.2 Mitigate the impacts of pre-existing generators of noise upon new development within the community, such as along major transportation corridors (e.g., frontages of highways and railroad tracks) or near other major noise generators; residential and commercial development may be required to mitigate the impacts of noise on new development through design and siting.

CC - 11.3 Foster a collaborative relationship with BNSF Railway to explore options for increasing the use of wayside horns, particularly where crossings are in proximity to residential neighborhoods.
**Table 5-1: Implementation Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementing Action</th>
<th>Time Frame¹</th>
<th>Potential Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public outreach to determine neighborhood identity, working towards possible development of a Neighborhood Identity Plan or Placemaking Strategy.</td>
<td>Mid Term</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work with WSDOT to establish a landscaped appearance along the freeways within the community.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff, WSDOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain a Certified Local Government program to encourage historic preservation efforts in order to maintain a historic register.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Staff, Design Review &amp; Historic Pres. Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify and outreach to owners of property that may qualify for designation on the local historic register.</td>
<td>Near Term</td>
<td>Staff, Design Review &amp; Historic Pres. Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and maintain a photographic inventory of heritage trees.</td>
<td>Near Term</td>
<td>Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Time frames are defined as follows: Near Term – years 2015-2020, Mid Term – years 2021-2025, Long Term – years 2026-2030, and Ongoing.