

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALDE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT](#)

[INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN](#)

[WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN](#)

[CONTENTS OF THE PLAN](#)

[RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES](#)

[WHY DO WE PLAN](#)

[HISTORY OF PLANNING IN FERNDALDE](#)

[OTHER DOCUMENTS](#)

COMMUNITY VISION STATEMENT:

Ferndale seeks to promote a high quality of life;

..to preserve and enhance the unique and diverse character of the City.

..to do so by protecting open space and natural resources, and providing recreational opportunities

..to ensure an efficient and safe transportation network, desirable economic development, and safe and affordable City services.

..to be accountable to the citizens of Ferndale through active public participation, stewardship of public funds, and intergovernmental cooperation.

In doing so, the City that is given to the next generations will be greater and more prosperous than the City that currently exists.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAN:

Over the next twenty years, Ferndale is forecast to grow more rapidly than any community in Northwest Washington, adding nearly 7,000 people and up to 4,000 jobs. The Ferndale Market Area, which includes the City limits, the Ferndale School District, the Lummi Nation, and the Cherry Point Industrial Area, will

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

provide new and varied economic growth, creating jobs and retail opportunities we can't even imagine in 2016.

To help chart our course through this period of rapid change, we have produced this Comprehensive Plan. This is not the first, nor will it be the last Comprehensive Plan for the City. The first was completed in 1968 and updated periodically through the 1980's. The [Washington State Growth Management Act](#), or GMA, was adopted in the early 1990's and requires that jurisdictions create plans such as this to ensure cities evaluate their capacity to provide adequate services such as water, sewer, and roads; plan for system-wide transportation improvements like the Thornton Connector; and identify land uses and the land areas necessary to serve both new and existing development. The City's first comprehensive plan under GMA was completed in 1997 and updated in 2005.

The growth forecast for Ferndale, in combination with uncertain environmental changes, competing demands for scarce resources, and a desire to preserve and enhance Ferndale's unique sense of place, will at times test our community's ability to adapt. As such, this plan anticipates some of the difficult and costly decisions we will all face, and seeks to provide guidance for future decision-makers and community members, without limiting those groups or an individual's ability to make the right decision at the right time to meet their needs.

In recognition of the fact that Comprehensive Plans play a supporting role in daily life, this 2016 update also will endeavor to reach our community through mediums non-technical readers are more comfortable and familiar with. The plan is written and organized for electronic viewing, and features illustrations, links to other resources, and a companion multi-media presentation for each element. The plan and the multimedia presentations will be available in both a traditional print format and via the City's official website, but also via social media and entertainment websites.

To help every reader understand even the most complex aspects of this plan, the majority of maps are interactive and provide vast amounts of information. The maps are designed to be utilized by the community as well as decision-makers to understand growth projections, planned projects, and other statistics. Some maps, particularly the Capital Facilities Map, are powerful planning tools that may be used to consolidate future public projects, thus saving public money and time.

Lastly, this comprehensive plan reflects Ferndale's spirit by challenging the status quo in adopting innovative approaches to complex issues – by planning for growth beyond the required twenty year period, adopting essential housing values that will apply to all citizens, integrating its capital project planning and working with private and public utilities for the greater good.

This plan, like Ferndale itself, does not shy away from asking difficult questions: What if new technologies are employed? What if major industries cease to exist? What if climate change happens more rapidly or dramatically than is expected? What if this plan, or some of the assumptions within it – is wrong? By asking these questions, and by planning for the results, this plan will place our community and its decision makers in a better position to tackle the changes that may lie ahead, and to preserve opportunities for this generation and all subsequent generations.

So turn the page, or click your mouse, and take a peak at our future...

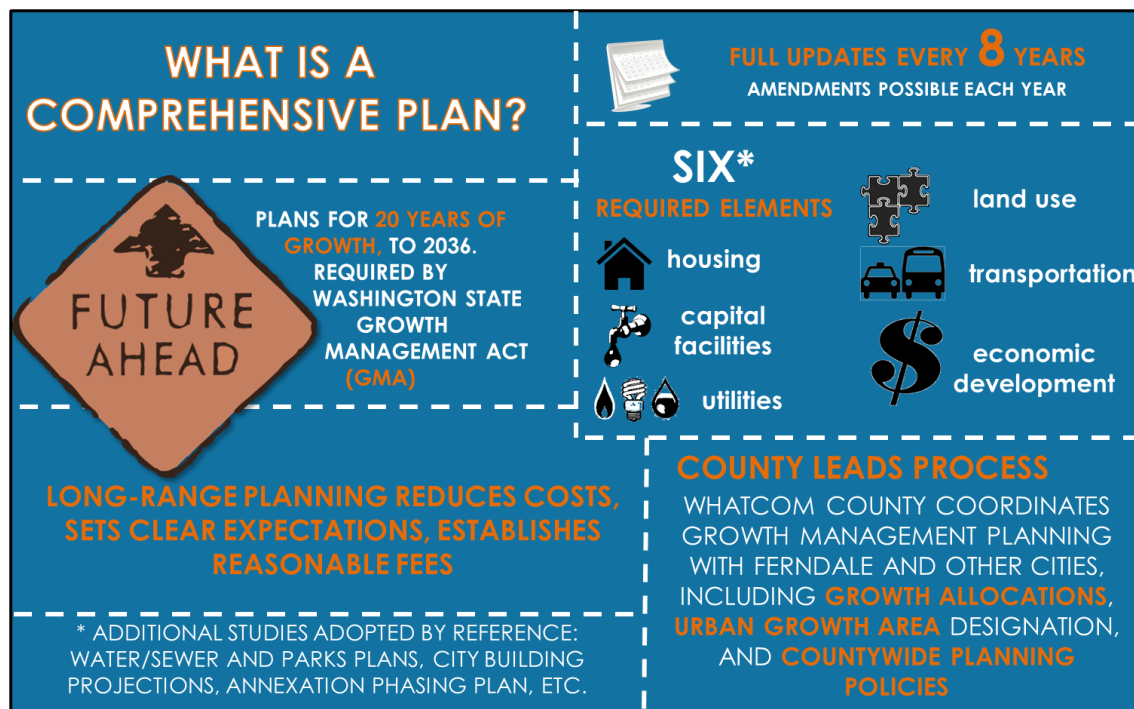
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan identifies long-range plans and policies that will guide the City in its day-to-day actions. From these policy documents, the City establishes a number of regulations and policies intended to implement the Comprehensive Plan. Figures IE1 and IE2, below, illustrate contents and requirements of the Comprehensive Plan, and its relationship to other City regulations and policies.

Figure IE1: What is a Comprehensive Plan?



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALDE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CONTENTS OF THE PLAN

This Comprehensive Plan is divided into seven chapters, as well as appendices and hyperlinks to information relative to the Whatcom County-wide Planning Policies, the adopted six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the adopted six-year Capital Facilities Improvement Plan (CIP), the Essential Public Facilities Ordinance, the Municipal Building Long-Range Plan, the Annexation Blueprint/Phasing Plan, the Comprehensive Water and Sewer Plans, the Main Street Master Plan and the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan. Future updates to this Plan may include additional elements that the citizens believe are important to the community's future.

The Elements contained in this plan are:

Chapter I – Introduction

The Introduction provides information about the purpose and intent of the Plan, the process through which it was prepared, and the Plan's relationship to other plans the City, county and other agencies have prepared and adopted that influence the development of this Plan.

Chapter II – Land Use Element

The Land Use Element establishes the pattern and intensity of land development within Ferndale and its urban growth area (UGA). It, like the other chapters of the Plan, takes a 20-year view, setting strategies that are more long-term in nature and anticipates evolutionary changes in the community's form, size and function. The Land Use Element is designed to set the stage today for the type of future growth and development that will compliment the community's overall vision.

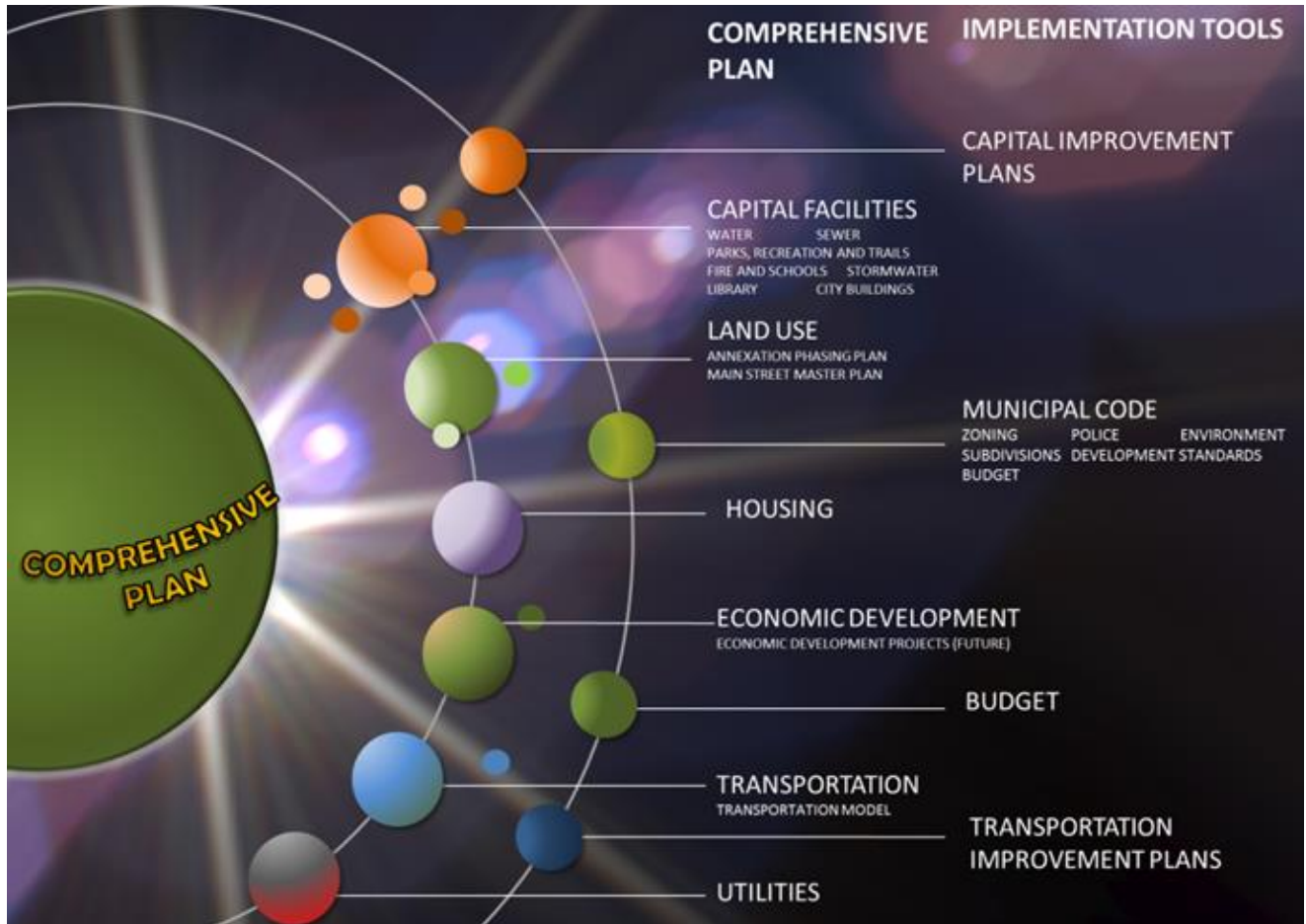
Chapter III – Housing Element

The Growth Management Act requires that comprehensive plans include housing elements to assess housing affordability and condition and to outline public policies to make safe and decent housing as accessible as practicable to residents of the community. This chapter provides generalized economic information on Ferndale's households, population growth, population density and housing affordability. The chapter also contains goals and policies designed to make housing more accessible to all residents of the community.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Figure IE2: Comprehensive Plan Organizational Structure



Chapter IV – Transportation Element

The Transportation Element helps to define a system of highways, roads, trails and paths that will provide access to the community and that is compatible with the overall expressed desires of its residents. The Transportation Element must reconcile the potentially conflicting demands of freight mobility and pedestrian access, of tourist traffic and local traffic, and of highway and trail improvements. Many transportation systems emphasize automobile travel, and Ferndale, with limited access to public transit opportunities, is no exception. However, this chapter strives to elevate the importance of pedestrian and bicycle travel by creating a network of transportation-related improvements and crafting policies that will ensure that high speed travel can co-exist with the community's need for a safe and comfortable non-motorized travel environment. This chapter also identifies and prioritizes transportation improvements that are necessary to accommodate the future growth and development anticipated over the 20-year lifespan of the Plan.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter V – Utilities Element

The Utilities Element has been developed to address utility and public services in the City of Ferndale. It specifically considers the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities and related service facilities, including public structures and major utility lines. It also discusses levels of services for current and future residents and businesses. The discussion in this section is related to components of other Plan elements including Transportation and Capital Facilities financing.

Chapter VI – Capital Facilities Element

The Growth Management Act requires capital facilities planning as part of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure:

- The provision of public services for land development envisioned by the Land Use Element;
- Maintenance of the quality of life for existing and future development by establishing and maintaining level of service standards for existing and future facilities;
- Coordination and the provision of consistency among the many plans for public service improvements, including other elements of the Comprehensive Plan, plans of adjacent jurisdictions, plans of state or regional significance, and plans of special districts;
- Ensurance of the timely provision of adequate facilities required by GMA;
- Documentation of all improvement projects and their financing;
- Facility improvement and development carried out prior to or concurrent with the impacts associated with new development.

This chapter describes each of the public facilities and services serving Ferndale, the level at which those services are provided and the type and extent of improvements needed to accommodate forecasted growth and development. It estimates likely funding for the various improvements outlined within the chapter, and then prioritizes them based on their relative importance to the community.

“PLANNING LEVEL” COST ESTIMATES

The Comprehensive Plan is a long-range planning document that is tasked in part with projecting the City’s ability to pay for needed improvements as much as twenty years or more before they are built.

As is discussed in greater detail in the Capital Facilities and Transportation elements, the City has a variety of ways to fund these improvements, ranging from direct municipal funding to grants and bonds that are paid off over time.

Since the specific projects described in this plan are identified well before they are designed and built, the City and its consultants must use “planning level” costs to estimate the approximate cost of these improvements. These estimates are based on the best available information, and are usually general in nature, based on current (2016) values for similar projects. The actual cost of individual projects may vary substantially from these planning level costs, and will fluctuate based on a number of factors over time (inflation, availability of materials, complexity of site conditions, etc.).

The 6-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) revise these estimates for those projects that are planned within the near future, and project-specific (ready-to-build) designs further clarify these costs. Ultimately, the “bid award” to one or more contractors to actually construct the project will determine the actual cost, and the City Council has the final authority to determine if the project will proceed, based on these numbers.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This chapter also includes a section on Essential Public Facilities. These are defined as public facilities that are regional in nature, are difficult to site, but that each local jurisdiction must accommodate to help meet a regional obligation to accommodate these types of facilities. Essential public facilities include things like hospitals, jails, airports, flood control infrastructure, and highways of statewide significance.

Chapter VII – Economic Development Element

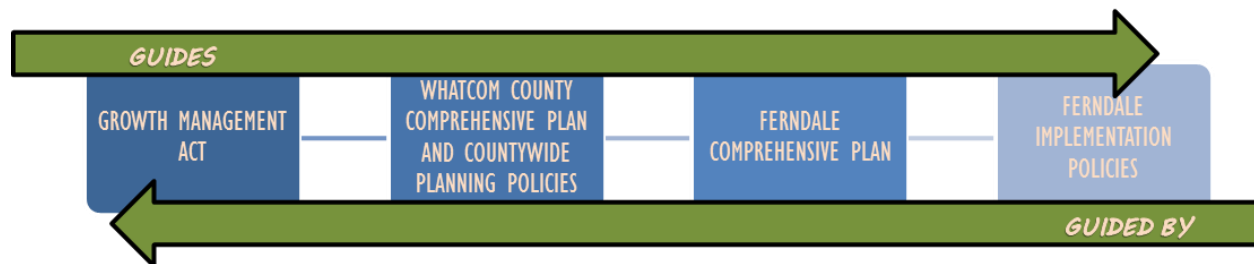
This chapter analyzes the City’s economy, including the “Ferndale Market Area” which includes not only the city limits and Urban Growth Area, but the entire Ferndale School District. The chapter is intended to promote increased commerce within this area, and to identify Ferndale as the major location for shopping, recreation, education, and housing within the area.

The chapter also lists relative strengths and weaknesses of the local economy and identifies general concepts that are intended to further strengthen the economy as time goes on.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER POLICIES

The Ferndale Comprehensive Plan must be internally consistent – the various elements cannot contradict each other – and must also reflect Washington State law and the Whatcom County County-wide Policies. In turn, the implementation regulations adopted by the City must be consistent with this plan. Figure IE-3 shows these relationships.

Figure IE-3



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

WHY DO WE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is intended in part to describe the vision of the officials and citizens of Ferndale for its future. We plan for the future because it will be different from the present – as a result of new technologies, climate change, growth, changing demographics, and more. Change will come regardless of whether this plan exists or not. But ultimately we plan because we believe that well-planned and managed growth will have a net positive benefit on our community. We plan because we recognize that poorly planned or managed growth will have a negative impact.

And ultimately in absence of a plan the City is placed in the position of simply reacting.

A COMMUNITY UNITED

Perhaps more than any Northwest Washington City, Ferndale has been tested by loss and change. The community has persevered in part through the common bonds that tie it together. Ferndale residents are proud to be from Ferndale and show this pride in thousands of different ways. This Comprehensive Plan depends on this generous spirit.

- The community has benefited from the thousands of individuals and businesses who have contributed to its infrastructure. From large anonymous donors who supported the Ferndale Public Library to hundreds of families who contributed money and time to build Star Park. From businesses who have funded crosswalks and other public safety items, to volunteer organizations who celebrate and remember the United States and her veterans. From the pedestrian who cleans trash from the sidewalks to community clean up days. From community meals to church and school fundraising efforts - and so much more.

- A united community does not necessarily mean a community without disagreements. In fact the opposite is true. Ferndale is comprised of an increasingly complex number of individuals, businesses, backgrounds and cultures - and they will disagree from time to time. In order for this comprehensive plan to succeed, thoughtful public debate should be encouraged - not stifled. The City is committed to participating in robust community conversations through both formal processes (such as City Council meetings) and informal ones, such as through all forms of social media. The City will take part in other community conversations as well - and will remain involved in School and Fire District plans, regional planning, and a close relationship with the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County and the Lummi Nation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

HISTORY OF PLANNING IN FERNDAL

The history of Ferndale's planning is characterized by "bottom-up" development – unlike some west-coast cities that were built under the guidance of the United States military (as a result of forts or bases established in the Washington Territory), by or in support of one or more major industries (such as logging, fishing, the railroad or as a seaport), or based on long-term settlement, Ferndale was established incrementally over several decades, and did not incorporate as a town for nearly a half century.

Even after incorporation in 1907, the City did not pursue substantial public works projects until the 1950's, when the significant growth triggered by new refineries at Cherry Point as well as the impending construction of Interstate Five demonstrated the need for a coordinated municipal plan. Until that time, Ferndale had grown relatively slowly, and its compact downtown core served the agricultural community that surrounded it. Like many small towns, Ferndale immediately after World War II was a relatively isolated, relatively self-sufficient rural community.

The industrial growth from the 1950's to the 1970's swelled the City's population, and the interstate highway linked Ferndale to Bellingham in a manner that encouraged inter-city commuting for work, shopping, and entertainment. Until the mid-1990's, the population increase was not mirrored by a similar increase in new businesses or shopping opportunities – and Ferndale emerged as a bedroom community to Bellingham and the Cherry Point Industrial Area.

Ferndale's long-range and development plans focused primarily on responding to residential growth while attempting to protect the Downtown core from further erosion. And while the first Growth Management Act-compliant comprehensive plan was developed in the early 1990's, it was not until the early 2000's that the City began to establish plans that would protect downtown and other important assets, while at the same time welcoming new commercial and industrial growth to the City.

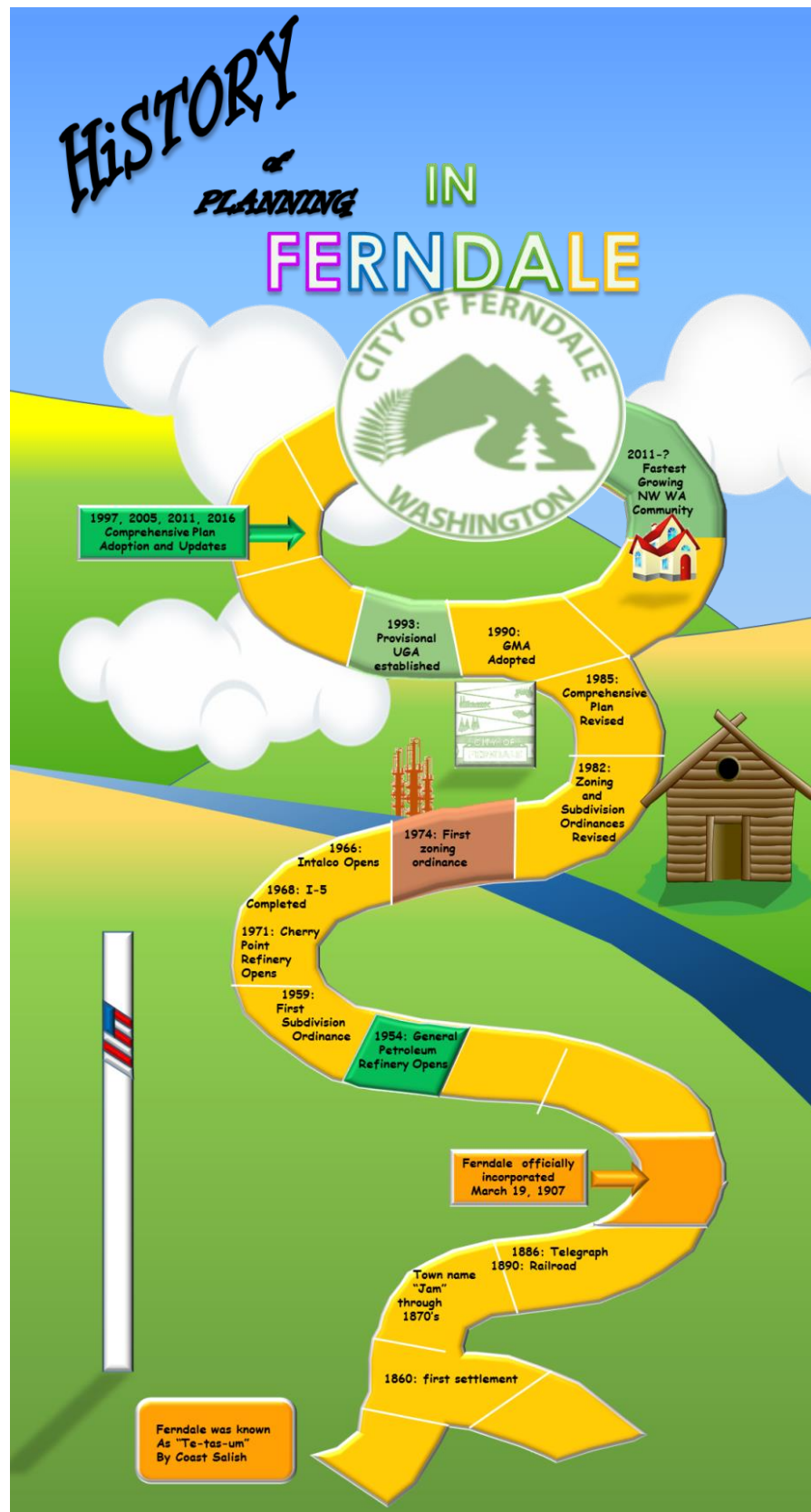
More-recent short and long-range planning approaches have also sought to clarify the timing and pattern of future growth, and to better-coordinate that growth with infrastructure plans. The City has also sought to emerge from land-use specific zoning regulations to regulations that focus more on overall impact and design. These efforts are expected to result in a more vibrant community that is larger and more diverse than the pre-war Ferndale, but which combines a mix of uses that may resemble those found in Ferndale those many decades ago.

An illustrative history of several of the significant points in Ferndale's planning history are shown in Figure IE-4, on the next page.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Figure IE-4



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTORY ELEMENT

FERNDALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

OTHER DOCUMENTS

[Washington State Growth Management Act](#)

[2014 Department of Ecology Stormwater Manual for Western Washington](#)

[Main Street Master Plan](#)

Gateway Stormwater Plan

[Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Whatcom County Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#)

Ferndale Annexation Phasing Plan

[Ferndale Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan](#)

Water System Plan

Sewer System Plan

Regional Transportation System Plan

[Whatcom County Fire District 7 Capital Facilities Plan](#)

[Countywide Planning Goals](#)