



# ABERDEEN

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

DRAFT - January 2022

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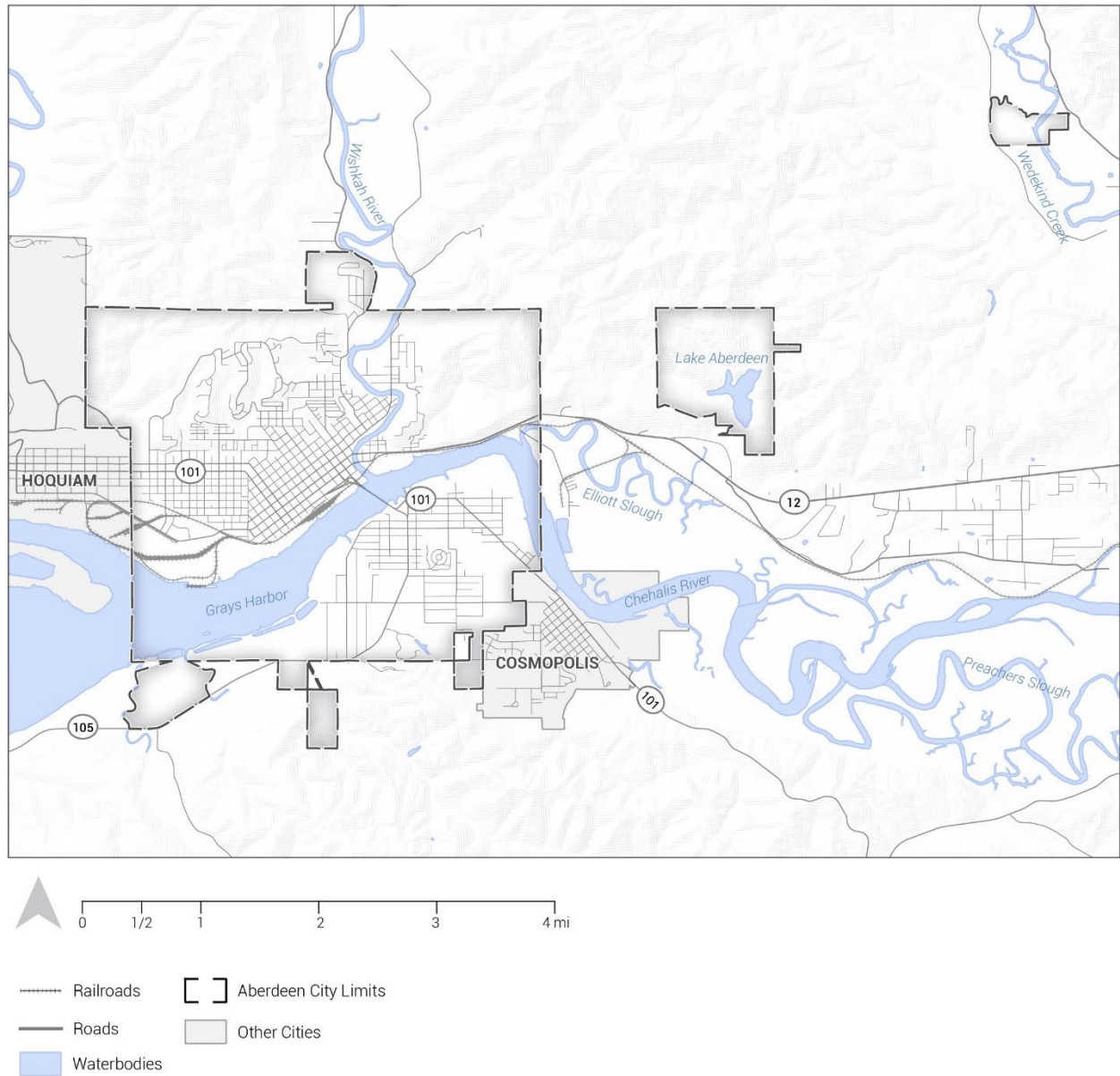
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## Land Acknowledgment

The City of Aberdeen acknowledges that Grays Harbor and its surroundings are part of the traditional homeland of the Central Coast Salish People and their successors, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis, Shoalwater Bay Tribe, and Quinault Indian Nation, who stewarded these lands and waters from time immemorial.

Map A-1 Aberdeen City Limits



# Glossary

<b>ACS</b>	American Community Survey, a product of the US Census Bureau
<b>ADA</b>	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
<b>ADU</b>	Accessory dwelling unit, a small home that shares a lot with a larger home
<b>BLR</b>	Buildable lands report, an assessment of development capacity under existing regulations and market conditions
<b>CPAT</b>	Community Planning Assistance Team, a program of the American Planning Association
<b>COVID-19</b>	Abbreviation for “coronavirus disease of 2019,” a disease caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2, which caused a worldwide pandemic beginning in 2020
<b>EIS</b>	Environmental impact statement, a lengthy report required for some actions under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)
<b>Essential Public Facilities</b>	Public facilities that are typically difficult to site (i.e., find an appropriate location for) but that serve an essential purpose for the broader public good, e.g., airports
<b>FEMA</b>	Federal Emergency Management Agency, an arm of the federal government that operates the national flood insurance program, and other disaster-related programs
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas, any of several gases that contribute to global warming, especially carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) and methane (CH <sub>4</sub> )
<b>EV</b>	Electric vehicles
<b>Microgrid</b>	A microgrid is a local energy grid with control capability, which means it can disconnect from the traditional grid and operate autonomously
<b>PUD</b>	Public Utility District, e.g., Grays Harbor PUD
<b>RCW</b>	Revised Code of Washington, state law statutes, as passed by the legislature
<b>SEPA</b>	State Environmental Policy Act, passed in 1971, one of the state’s principal environmental protection laws
<b>SRO</b>	Single room occupancies, small efficiency dwelling units in a multi-family building typically with shared facilities such as kitchens or bathrooms, rather than individual in-unit facilities
<b>SouthShore Mall</b>	Renamed the Shoppes at Riverside in 2016, this mall in south Aberdeen opened in 1980
<b>TDM</b>	Transportation demand management, a set of strategies that help reduce weekday peak-hour traffic congestion
<b>MFTE</b>	The multifamily tax exemption, a program that allows cities to temporarily reduce property taxes in targeted areas to incentivize multifamily housing development
<b>TIF</b>	Tax increment finance, a public funding tool enabled by 2021 legislation
<b>Urban form</b>	A city’s physical character, which includes the scale and arrangement of buildings, roads, open spaces, social gathering spaces, and other features



<b>VMT</b>	Vehicle miles traveled, a measure of how much vehicular driving is happening in a region
<b>WUI</b>	Wildland urban interface, the area where natural lands and urbanized areas meet; typically used in reference to wildfire hazards
<b>WSDOT</b>	Washington State Department of Transportation





# Introduction

CHAPTER

1

Aberdeen  
Comprehensive  
Plan



# Comprehensive Plan

## Purpose

The goal of a comprehensive plan is to bring together in one place everything that’s needed for a community to chart out its course for the near- and medium-term future. It records community-supported preferences related to the city’s future growth and change, contains relevant information to give these preferences context, and points to some tools and subsequent steps to achieve the goals. Its policies guide the City of Aberdeen’s day-to-day decision making.

The plan serves many purposes—it is a great community-building opportunity, a place to store important information, and a chance to revisit familiar topics with a fresh perspective. But above all, its mission is to unite community efforts towards shared goals, so that everyone is “rowing in the same direction.”

### The Chehalis River Bridge by Tawni Andrews

Clouds streak across the sky,  
Wind brushes my cheek,  
My hair takes on life,  
The radio serenades me.

The car’s engine softly hums,  
Others await with me,  
Within their own cars,  
Within their own universe.

Tourists, truckers,  
Families and townies.  
With different destinations,  
Stopped as one.

Some emerge to stand,  
Looking out over the river,  
For the elusive boat or barge  
The bridge remains open for.

All of our lives,  
Brought together now,  
At this moment  
To await it’s reopening.

We may have never met,  
This may be the first time  
Our paths have crossed,  
Or one of many times.

As we see the barge arrive,  
This one loaded with logs,  
Steering wheels are tapped,  
A few eyes are closed.

Inconvenience for some,  
Reflection for others,  
Wonder for a few,  
A piece of life’s poetry.



# Context and Process

## Assets and Challenges

From the original inhabitants—the Tsihalis (Chehalis), Hookium (Hoquiam), Humptulips, Wynoochee, Satsop, and Quinault tribes—to European pioneers, timber industries, tourists, retirees, and those working-from-home, people have been attracted to Aberdeen’s setting on the Pacific Coast and abundant natural resources. Aberdeen is rich with the following treasures:

- **Setting.** Proximity to forests, rivers, hills, and beaches; mild climate; access to water and beyond for industry and tourism
- **Community.** Being the “little big city” of the region where “life is good here;” sense of an intertwined, approachable community; resilient, strong, hardy people
- **City design.** Historic character; abundant parks and open spaces; people-friendly, walkable streets and amenities within walking distance; easy transportation
- **Resources and amenities.** Hospital, college, industries, retail, schools, and other civic institutions

This Comprehensive Plan recognizes and leverages these assets to maintain and strengthen Aberdeen’s unique identity.

However, Aberdeen is also currently challenged with aging buildings and infrastructure, flood risks, vacant storefronts, costly maintenance and renovations, a weak job market, high cost and lack of housing, limited waterfront recreational access, and lack of a unified vision and openness to change. Changing trends and outside influences (e.g., climate change) may test Aberdeen’s resilience.

## Process to Vision

To chart a path forward and focus Aberdeen’s efforts, community members have come together for a few planning processes, notably the Downtown Aberdeen Community Planning Assistance Team Report (2015), the Active Living and Transportation Master Plan (2015), the Timberworks Resiliency and Restoration Master Plan (2016), and other City and partner plans. Through housing, economic development, and transportation focus groups, multiple Planning Commission meetings, two public workshops, an online survey, and many informal conversations held in 2020, this document unifies the existing plans into one vision and set of policies for Aberdeen. **The following Centers and Corridors Strategy, Guiding Principles, and Framework Goals state the vision for Aberdeen.**

See the Aberdeen Comprehensive Parks & Recreation Plan, the Timberworks Resiliency and Restoration Master Plan, and the Downtown Aberdeen Community Planning Assistance Team Report, for more Aberdeen and Grays Harbor history and context.

# Centers and Corridors Strategy

## Purpose

The Centers and Corridors Map on page 6 illustrates the vision for Aberdeen’s city form over time and through change:

- Reflects the Guiding Principles and Framework Goals in Aberdeen’s physical context
- Provides a framework to strategically focus investments for transformational change and greatest public benefit
- Forms the basis for the land use designations, streets classifications, and green corridors

## Centers and Districts

The Centers and Corridors Strategy builds on Aberdeen’s history and traditional development patterns where people could reach their daily needs within a 15-minute walk or short bike or vehicular trip. Human and business activity was generally concentrated in a few districts, and most people lived close enough to easily get to their jobs, grocery, social activities, school, and other needs. Aberdeen’s historic neighborhoods’ location and walkable physical environment reflect this legacy.

See the Aberdeen Historic Preservation Plan for more information about historic districts and neighborhoods.

The centers proposed on the map show the downtown, Port, and neighborhood centers that would support a thriving and comfortable set of destinations. They are generally spaced no closer than 1 mile apart to encourage focused activity appropriate for Aberdeen’s population. They range in expected intensity and character:

- **Neighborhood centers.** These are small hubs that include a business or civic anchor (e.g., park, school) easily reachable by a surrounding neighborhood. With appropriate zoning and focused investment, these may evolve to become thriving centers supported by a combination of public and private community gathering places. Some may be modest, with a single coffee shop or park acting as the center, while others may include multiple businesses, schools and daycares, parks, trails, and more homes nearby.
- **Regional commercial centers.** These include Downtown and East Aberdeen and serve the region as employment, retail, and service centers. They also serve locals living within walking distance and may evolve over time to include a greater mix of residential and commercial uses.
- **Employment center.** The Port is a major employment center for Grays Harbor. It is a unique center in that it will

include industry and commerce—not residences—making use of its waterfront location and freight access.

The centers are supported by their surrounding districts—the area where people can reach the center within a 15-minute walk. These are typically residential areas that provide the population needed to support businesses and make use of civic investments like schools. They also have unique characters derived from their historic architecture, topographic bounds, or other identifying characteristics. These centers are described in Aberdeen Centers on page 8.

The historic districts noted on the map are areas with significant numbers of historic buildings. These include Downtown and the Broadway Hill, Scammel Hill, and Arnold Hill neighborhoods. Maintaining the sociability, charm, and architectural rhythm of these historic districts is an important aspect of Aberdeen’s vision.

## Corridors

For the centers to function, people must be able to get to them. The corridors illustrated on the map are high priority paths for getting to centers and out to the region. Safety is a priority on all.

**Vehicle priority.** These corridors are important for businesses, locals, and visitors to reach and travel through Aberdeen. They should be easy to use and understand and safe for all users. With higher traffic volumes, they are also attractive for businesses that benefit from greater visibility.

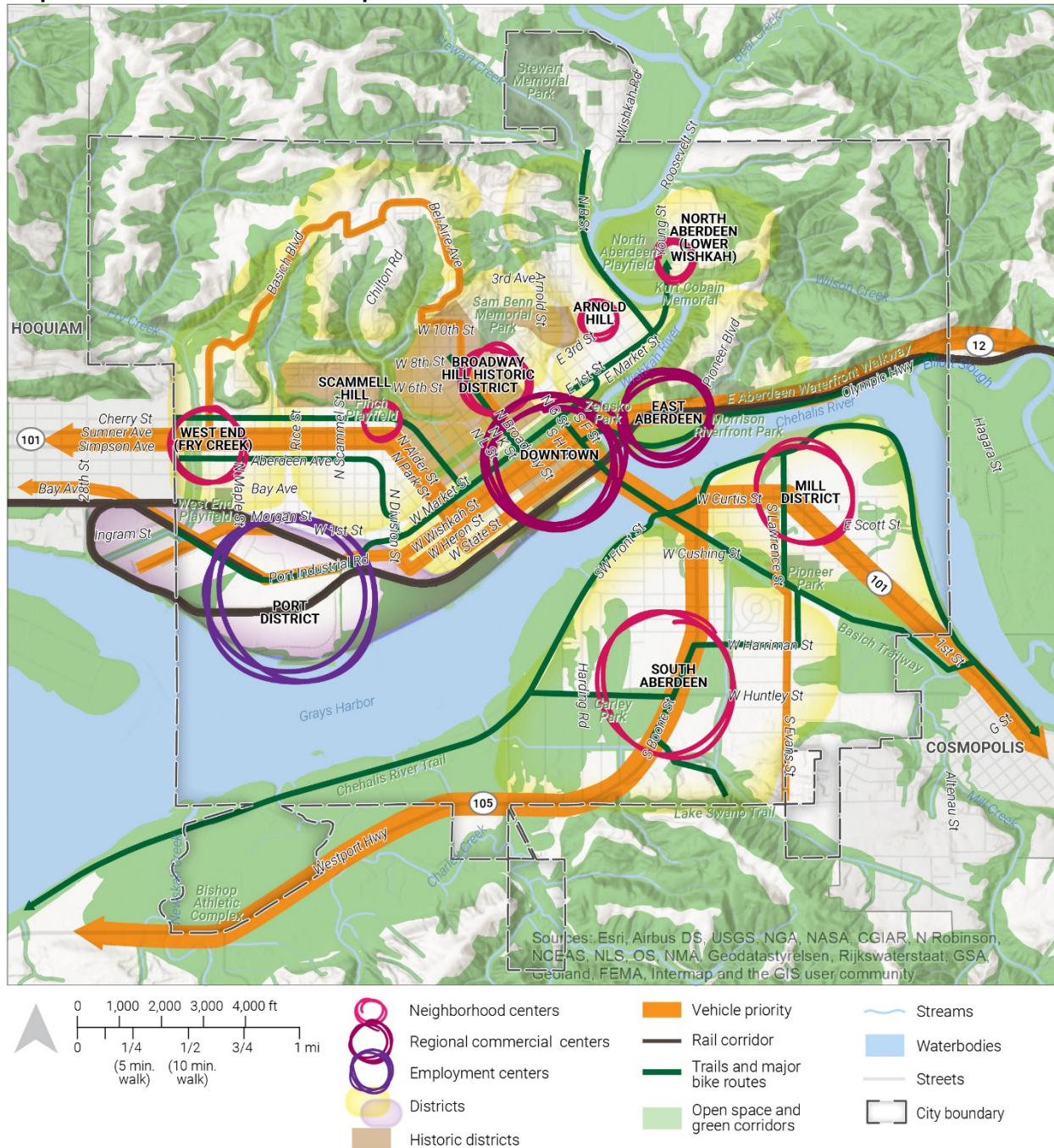
**Freight priority.** These corridors support truck and train freight movement to the Port and other commercial and industrial enterprises. Freight and people on foot/bike/wheelchair are generally incompatible unless carefully designed.

**Trails and major bike routes.** These routes connect centers for people who are walking, biking, or rolling (i.e., active transportation). Ideally, they would often align with green corridors.

**Green corridors.** These corridors tend to align with existing critical areas (e.g., streams, wetlands, steep slopes) and connect natural areas outside of city limits to the Chehalis River and parks and open space in Aberdeen. These corridors are important for connecting healthy plant and animal habitats (e.g., pollinator pathways, salmon migratory corridors). In addition, they can provide multiple benefits by treating, detaining, infiltrating, or slowing stormwater and, when aligned with streets or trails, enhance the human environment by buffering people from vehicular traffic and improving street aesthetics. See Map 1-2 Green Corridors Map on page 7.

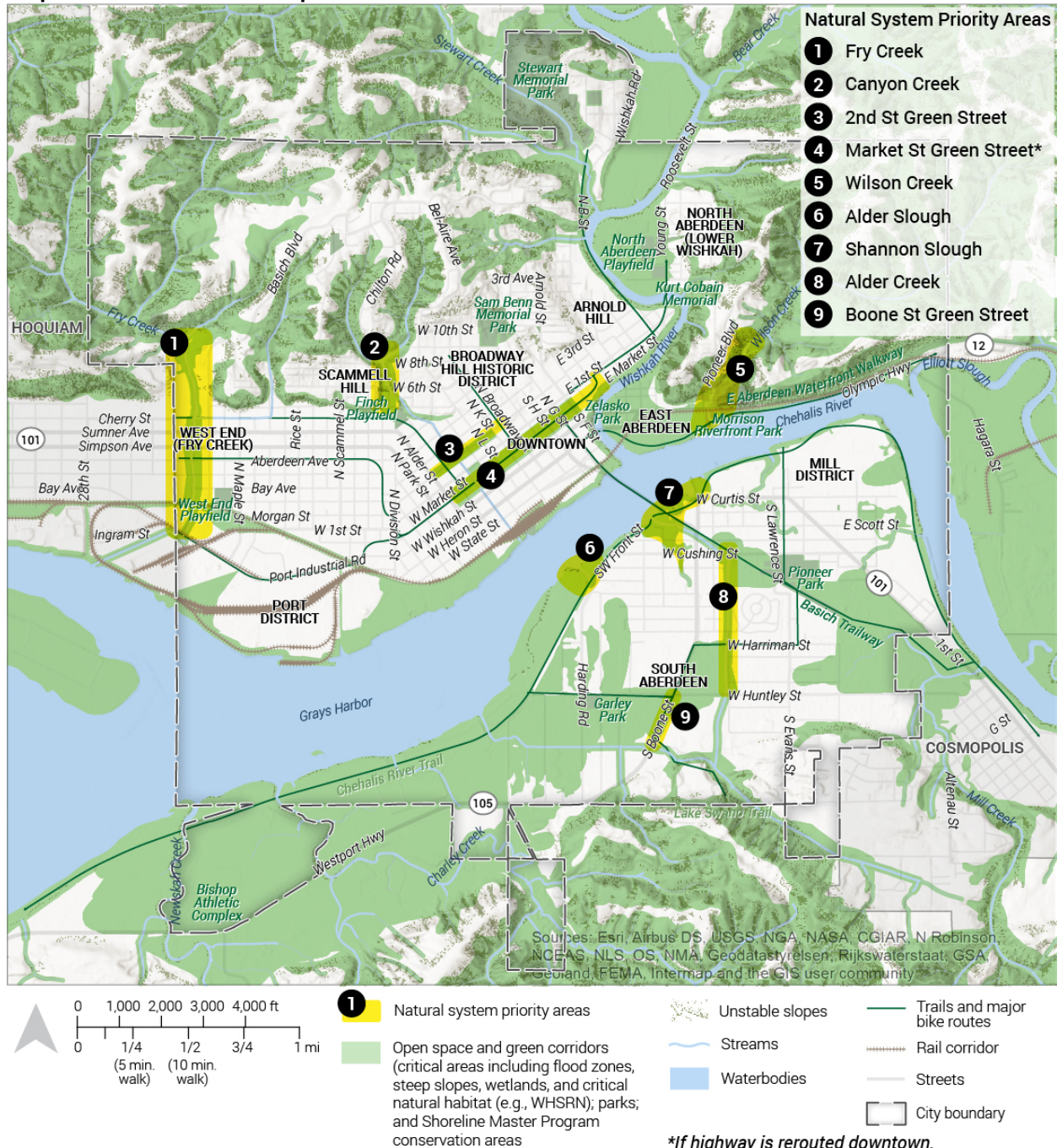


Map 1-1 Centers and Corridors Map





Map 1-2 Green Corridors Map





# Aberdeen Centers

The following neighborhood centers roughly correlate with those mapped on the Centers and Corridors Map.

## East Aberdeen



East Aberdeen, nestled between the Wishkah River and the hills of northeast Aberdeen, was once known as the “Town of Wishkah.” The district is a major commercial center, with the Olympia Gateway Plaza shopping mall that includes Walmart, Staples, Ross, Marshalls, Tractor Supply Co, and many smaller restaurants and businesses. US 12 runs through the area, carrying heavy through traffic and dividing the retail businesses to the south from an older mixed commercial/residential neighborhood to the north.

*Opportunity: Take advantage of waterfront views and access and connect safely to existing commercial amenities.*



## North Aberdeen



**North Aberdeen** is a quiet riverside neighborhood along the east bank of the Wishkah River. It is mostly composed of homes and natural areas, with few businesses. The area is somewhat isolated from other parts of Aberdeen - the Young Street Bridge connects to the Arnold Hill and downtown, while Pioneer Blvd provides a scenic, winding connection to Wishkah/the East End. Unlike most other historic neighborhoods in Aberdeen, North Aberdeen's grid system was not fully built out, creating quieter, though less well-connected, residential streets. Fern Hill Cemetery, where Grays Harbor residents have been interred for well over a century, is located to the north of the neighborhood proper. There are no current or planned levees protecting North Aberdeen, leaving the lower elevation parts of the district at risk for flooding.

*Opportunity: Make it easier and more comfortable to walk or bike on Young Street, including the bridge. Consider allowing small commercial services along Young St.*



## B Street



Located northeast of downtown, the B Street/Arnold Hill/Stewart center includes lowland and hillside neighborhoods. B Street is the area's central spine, running through the lowlands along the base of Arnold Hill. B Street connects downtown to neighborhood residential streets and local commercial services before continuing north of the city as Wishkah Road. The lower neighborhood also boasts Stewart Field, the city's premiere football field since 1905, Robert Gray Elementary School, several churches, and the Kurt Cobain memorial at the base of Young Street Bridge. Overlooking B Street is Arnold Hill, one of Aberdeen's historic hillside neighborhoods. It features well-preserved early and mid-twentieth century houses in a range of architectural styles.

*Opportunity: Create a more vibrant neighborhood amenity center along the B St corridor.*



## Broadway Hill



Broadway Hill is a mixed commercial/residential neighborhood centrally located in Aberdeen just north of downtown. It features a well-balanced mix of businesses, homes, and civic and religious institutions. The residential neighborhood up on Broadway Hill has the city's largest concentration of historic residential architecture, especially Craftsman and Revival-style grand homes constructed for early twentieth century timber magnates. Sam Benn Memorial Park, with stately trees and landscaped trails, overlooks the rest of the city from the north. Further down the hill, Harbor Regional Health East Campus and Aberdeen High School are major institutions serving the city. A third community institution, the Aberdeen Armory Building, burned down in 2018. The area has several historic churches with long legacies of involvement in the community. A mix of houses, apartments, and community services is spread throughout the rest of the area, providing residents easy walking access to nearby businesses.

*Opportunity: Repurpose the old Armory site to strengthen a neighborhood center with residences and commercial amenities.*



## Downtown



Downtown Aberdeen is a compact, historic urban center with commercial, residential, and industrial buildings on a tight grid of streets. Downtown hosts a wide range of local, regional, and national businesses, in addition to City Hall and other government offices. Many downtown buildings have multiple stories, topped by the Becker building which rises to seven stories. However, many storefronts and buildings are vacant and some older structures are in need of repair. US 101 runs through downtown on surface streets, bringing tourists and customers for local businesses, as well as impacts from traffic. Downtown is connected to South Aberdeen via the Chehalis River Bridge and the East End/Wishkah via the Heron St and Wishkah River bridges.

*Opportunity: Strengthen downtown as Aberdeen’s people- and community-oriented center and as a draw for tourists. Create a clear vision for waterfront properties and connect to them. Work with the Main Street Association and other stakeholder groups to move toward a unified vision for downtown.*



## Scammel Hill



Scammel Hill is located northwest of downtown Aberdeen. It is one of the city's historic districts, where houses built by middle-class and wealthy residents in the early twentieth century have been largely preserved. The residential area on the hill has a compact grid of streets, ringed with forested slopes with a handful of roads and stairs that provide access. Below the hill is a mixed commercial/residential neighborhood, with auto-related businesses and restaurants along US 101.

*Opportunity: Safely and comfortably connect residences with the commercial center (and transit) on Hwy 101 for a full-service neighborhood. Consider higher density residential development.*



## West End



Fry Creek/West End is a mixed commercial/residential area in west Aberdeen next to Hoquiam. Fry Creek flows south through the area from the hills towards the port. A business district that serves the nearby port and residents of both cities is centered around US 101 and Myrtle Street, featuring several grocery stores along with offices and operations facilities for Grays Harbor PUD. Traditional residential blocks with mid-twentieth century homes surround the commercial area.

*Opportunity: Leverage investment in Fry Creek and existing mix of uses to encourage further commercial, light industrial, and residential development for a full-service, walkable neighborhood.*

## Port District



The Port District is an industrial area along the north shore of Grays Harbor. The district is organized around the Port of Grays Harbor facilities, which provide the only deep-water port on Washington’s Pacific Coast. Grain silos, liquid storage tanks, lots for imported cars, and the rail switching yard occupy much of the district’s land area; related commercial services are adjacent to Port facilities. The east-west rail line which serves the Port partly cuts the district off from the rest of the city, limiting industrial activities’ impacts on nearby residents. Along the waterfront, older industrial facilities can be an environmental challenge, requiring adaptation or environmental cleanup.

*Opportunity: Continue allowing and supporting industrial, light industrial, and commercial activities in this area. Carefully consider waterfront access with priority given to railroad operations and human safety.*



## South Aberdeen



South Aberdeen/Finch Farms is located opposite downtown on the south side of the Chehalis River/Grays Harbor estuary. The area includes a diverse mix of traditional residential areas, distinctive mid-century development, modern public facilities, and natural areas. The earliest development in the area took the form of working class homes built in traditional block-grid layout near the shore. Leisure Manor, a mobile home park with a distinctive concentric road system, and SouthShore Mall (now Shoppes at Riverside) embrace post-war modernist design. The mall, which was recently closed due to structural issues, has been a commercial and community hub for decades. The mall and neighborhoods are protected from flooding by a levee which doubles as a segment of the Westport South Aberdeen Trail, a multi-use path, and are surrounded by natural areas and wetlands. The landscaped main campus of Grays Harbor College, the principal higher education facility in the region since 1930, sits on a hill to the south.

*Opportunity: Encourage renovation/redevelopment of the mall property to catalyze a multi-faceted neighborhood center for the area and meet residential growth needs.*



## Mill District



The Mill District is located on the south shore of the Chehalis River, between South Aberdeen and the City of Cosmopolis. The area was the site of several large lumber mills from the 1920's to the early 2000's, when most mill operations ceased. Pacific Veneer, a former Weyerhaeuser veneer/plywood mill continues to operate under local ownership. The mill sites ring a traditional residential neighborhood served by Stevens Elementary School, with commercial services along US 101/West Blvd, which runs diagonally through the district. Pioneer Park Sports Complex offers youth and adult ballfield facilities for the Grays Harbor region and is connected to Cosmopolis and South Aberdeen via Basich Trailway, a multiuse path. Near the bridge to downtown Grays Harbor Historical Seaport is developing Seaport Landing, an interpretive center, tourism attraction, and employment center, on a former sawmill site. The lack of rail connections on the south side of the river limits its viability for industrial uses.

*Opportunity: Make use of large vacant waterfront area to meet residential growth needs. Provide public access and views to water. Encourage a mix of uses and safe, comfortable paths for a full-service, walkable neighborhood.*



## The Heights



The Heights include several neighborhoods on the hills north of central Aberdeen. Unlike the centers discussed above, these neighborhoods consist entirely of houses and private natural areas. The Heights could become a future center, with increased residential and commercial development, if climate change and tsunami risks preclude development in the lowlands.



# Historic Districts

Aberdeen has an important legacy as one of Washington state's early major cities. The buildings and urban character of its prosperous late 1800s-early 1900s heyday are prominent in the city's four historic districts, shown in Map 1-3 below.

**Map 1-3 Historic Districts**



# Guiding Principles

1. **Unique Aberdeen identity.** Set the framework for physical and social structures to build a sense of community, identity, and mutual connection to place.
2. **Economic prosperity.** Build long-term strength in the local economy with a balance of different sectors offering good wages while maintaining a low cost of living.
3. **Human health.** Enhance the urban environment to make it easy to get exercise, see friends, and eat healthy food.
4. **Environmental health.** Steward and revive forest, water, and wetland systems in and around the city.
5. **Equity.** Support life fulfillment for all Aberdeen residents, regardless of background.
6. **Resilience.** Develop and maintain physical, social, and economic infrastructure that is resilient to climate change, natural disasters, and economic disturbances.

# Framework Goals

7. **Unified vision.** Maintain a clear and relevant vision for the future so that Aberdeen’s community is all “rowing in the same direction.”
8. **Functionality for supporting our best lives.** Support the transportation, land use, economic, social, environmental, and infrastructure systems needed for Aberdeen residents to say, “Life is good here.”
9. **People friendly.** Promote a people-friendly built environment.
10. **Regional coordination.** Coordinate with and leverage the interconnected Grays Harbor region, including municipalities, Port, and Tribes.
11. **Public engagement.** Foster community ownership over Aberdeen’s future through public engagement on major decisions.





# Land Use Element

CHAPTER

2

Aberdeen  
Comprehensive  
Plan

# What is this chapter about?

The Land Use Element sets the goals and policies to shape Aberdeen’s design and layout, using the Centers and Corridors Strategy as a guide. It provides a framework for Aberdeen to distribute land uses and intensities across the city to meet residential, employment, recreation, public facilities, and other land use needs. The envisioned development pattern will:

- Support people-friendly places and social activities
- Leverage Aberdeen’s waterfront setting and natural environment with appropriate waterfront uses and access
- Promote economic prosperity through adequate commercial and industrial land and resilient design
- Promote vibrant, walkable downtown and neighborhood centers so that Aberdeen residents can live in districts that meet their daily needs via active transportation
- Recognize safety risks and be resilient to hazards
- Protect natural systems
- Encourage human health and equity
- Develop a network of connected green corridors and public spaces

# Why is this important?

The Land Use Element shows how Aberdeen will use its land appropriately to accommodate expected population and employment quantities. Aberdeen’s population grew rapidly from 1890 to 1930, reaching a peak population of 21,723.<sup>1</sup> Since then, it has declined or remained steady, with a relatively steady population around 16,500 between 1990 and 2018.<sup>2</sup> The loss of water- and resource-oriented industries led to a decline in jobs, and Aberdeen has been slowly building its population back with increases in retirees, tourism, and regional retail. Education and healthcare have remained large employment sectors. Aberdeen’s 2020 population was 17,013. In recent years, Aberdeen’s annual growth rate has been around 0.8%, and during the COVID-19 pandemic, Aberdeen saw significant growth.

This Comprehensive Plan is meant to provide a flexible framework that guides where focus and investment would be impactful,

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<sup>1</sup> US Decennial Census

<sup>2</sup> US Decennial Census and American Community Survey Annual Estimates



whether or not growth trends continue, and offers strategies to attract and retain youth and talent for economic prosperity.

Some challenges Aberdeen faces—that can be mitigated by strategic land use choices—include:

- Young adults migrate to bigger cities for job opportunities and in part because they desire car-free lifestyles in amenity-rich neighborhoods
- Public infrastructure spread too thin is an inefficient use of public funds
- Social isolation, correlated with housing and community design, challenges individual and community health
- An obesity pandemic faces American communities, caused in large part by a dependence on automobiles for transportation
- Vehicular emissions (from people having to drive to their destinations) pollute the air and quicken climate change

The Land Use element goals and policies offer solutions and strategies to focus efforts on developing and continuing a positive, resilient, amenity-rich physical environment that fosters Aberdeen’s community and environmental health and prosperity.

## Goals

- Goal LU-1 Design the city for people.** Encourage positive social interaction to maintain the sense of an intertwined, approachable community.
- Goal LU-2 Natural setting.** Leverage, relate to, and celebrate Aberdeen’s setting within the natural environment, including its waterfront, weather, and nearby forests and beaches.
- Goal LU-3 Economic prosperity.** Provide opportunities for diverse employment development that leverages Aberdeen’s waterfront and physical environment, increases downtown and Port activities, supports a healthy natural environment, contributes to quality of life, and is compatible with desired development patterns.
- Goal LU-4 Vibrant centers.** Focus growth and investment downtown and in well-connected neighborhood centers with services and amenities to accommodate a healthy balance of residents and jobs.
- Goal LU-5 Resiliency.** Set the framework for an urban form that is resilient to hazards (e.g., flooding, sea level rise, tsunamis, earthquakes) and climate.

A city’s **urban form** is its overall physical character, defined by the scale and arrangement of its buildings, roads, open spaces, social gathering spaces, and other features. Urban form is shaped by factors like building and transportation technology, topography, government regulation, culture, and economics.

- Goal LU-6 Environmental health.** Proactively steward our natural systems and avoid development impacts when possible. When unavoidable, minimize and mitigate development impacts for a healthy natural environment.
- Goal LU-7 Community health and equity.** Consider community health and social equity outcomes when making future land use decisions and avoid disproportionate adverse impacts on vulnerable or traditionally underrepresented communities.
- Goal LU-8 Public and natural spaces.** Develop a connected network of public spaces, especially downtown, and draw nature into the city.
- Goal LU-9 Certainty with adaptability.** Guide development in a manner that provides certainty about future land use and allows flexibility to adapt to future opportunities and conditions.
- Goal LU-10 Regional coordination.** Coordinate with Grays Harbor municipalities, Port, and Tribes to accommodate expected population and job changes and complement each other's strengths.



*Figure 2-1. Aberdeen's urban form features a compact downtown, an industrial waterfront, some small neighborhood businesses, and houses on blocks with a connected street grid. Image source: Ted Wiseman*

## Policies

### Focusing on Centers

The following policies address how Aberdeen's urban form should accommodate growth or decline in its residential and employment communities. The Centers and Corridors Map, shown in Map 1-1 on page 6, emphasizes hubs of activity in designated centers, or districts. These districts traditionally had a mix of commercial, civic (e.g., schools, parks), and residential activities within about a 15-minute walk so that community members could easily reach their daily destinations. Likewise, a concentrated residential population around a business hub provided a strong customer base. Aberdeen's historic districts had their own character, and buildings and streets were designed for comfortable and safe trips on foot, bike, wheelchair, or stroller. The Centers and Corridors Map reinvigorates this strategy of focusing on walkable, livable centers to:

- Retain youth and talent by meeting changing needs (e.g., car-free lifestyles in amenity-rich neighborhoods)
- Shape a built environment that promotes healthy activity and a reduction in air-polluting vehicular emissions. Make efficient infrastructure investments that form the backbone of a functional city with reliable services
- Foster positive social interactions amongst neighbors

### Why focus on vulnerable and traditionally underrepresented communities?

When Aberdeen addresses physical and other barriers to health, education, and economic opportunities, the community benefits with stronger infrastructure that works for all, resilience, and sense of community. Vulnerable and traditionally underrepresented communities may include people with low incomes; people with disabilities; seniors; children; black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) communities; LGBTQ+; immigrants; and English language learners.

- Policy LU-1 Centers and Corridors.** Designate land uses to implement the Centers and Corridors Map shown in Map 1-1 Centers and Corridors Map.
- Policy LU-2 Compact development.** Encourage compact development—i.e., homes, workplaces, schools, recreation, and services within close proximity—to support Aberdeen’s traditional neighborhood centers’ vibrancy, foster community health through active living and social interaction, and make efficient use of public investment in transit and other infrastructure.
- Policy LU-3 Focused centers.** Allow and encourage higher intensity land uses downtown and in neighborhood centers.
- Policy LU-4 District identity.** Foster unique identities for each neighborhood center and encourage an inviting, delightful public realm.
- Policy LU-5 Historic districts.** Where appropriate and desired by community members, consider designating historic areas per the Aberdeen Historic Preservation Plan, and foster neighborhood identity and neighborly interactions through traditional design elements such as porches, stoops, and business/service spaces scaled and designed for people.

See Community Health on page 26 for more on how thoughtful, integrated land use and transportation planning improves health outcomes.

See Economic Development Policy ED-7 and Policy ED-8 on page 58 for more about downtown revitalization.

## Vibrant Economy

- Policy LU-6 Employment areas.** Support employment-oriented areas through land use designations and a transportation system that serves job centers, such as the Port’s industrial area, commercial and freight corridors, and downtown.
- Policy LU-7 Place-based industry.** Support industrial and/or commercial uses where rail and/or the Chehalis River deep water channel serve the site, and where industrial development would avoid impacts to important ecological functions (e.g., designated wetlands, floodwater detention) and be compatible with neighboring uses.
- Policy LU-8 Industry retention.** Retain prime industrial land and encourage the capacity, affordability, and viability of industrial uses.
- Policy LU-9 Waterfront-oriented tourism.** Designate land along the Chehalis and Wishkah Rivers for recreational opportunities to draw tourists.
- Policy LU-10 Toxic site cleanup.** Consider toxic site cleanup needs when designating land uses, and support cleanup to attract investment.



Figure 2-2. Wishkah River and B-Street Center. Courtesy of Dewey Howell at Aerial Drone Solutionz.



## Community Health

The following policies support planning, decision-making processes, and investments that promote active, healthy living; offer a fair chance to meet one's full potential; and reduce negative impacts on the community.

**Policy LU-11 Promote beneficial urban form.** Target investments where they support and catalyze the centers and corridors concept to foster healthy ways of living and getting around and reduced air pollution from vehicular emissions.

**Policy LU-12 Integrate land use and transportation.** Plan for land uses and transportation system features to be mutually beneficial and lead to healthy and equitable ways to get around.

**Policy LU-13 Parks.** Maintain adequate quantity (as defined in the Aberdeen Parks Comprehensive Plan) of land for parks and recreation opportunities in locations that support active living and the Centers and Corridors strategy.

**Policy LU-14 Compatible uses.** Avoid conflicts between industrial uses and residential and recreational uses when possible through land use designations and appropriate separations, and/or mitigate incompatibilities with measures such as buffers.

**Policy LU-15 Protection from hazardous materials.** Continue to prohibit bulk crude oil storage and handling facilities within the city limits, and explore broadening the prohibition to include additional fossil fuels (e.g., coal, natural gas).

**Policy LU-16 Equitable strategies.** Avoid strategies that cause displacement of local businesses or residents or disproportionate burdens, and fairly distribute benefits across the city.

The Centers and Corridors Strategy on page 4 is the conceptual vision for this plan. It ties together strategies for open space, development, transportation, and economic development.

See Resilient Open Spaces on page 77 for more about parks, recreation, and open space.

See Active Transportation on page 71 for ways the transportation system can support healthy lifestyles.

See housing-specific health considerations in Health and Resilience on page 48 on page.

## Resiliency

The following policies support planning, decision-making processes, and investments that help increase the resiliency of the city's urban form, community, and economy.

**Policy LU-17 Sustainable urban form.** Designate land uses for resiliency, adaptation to climate change, and environmental health, while maintaining economic vitality and people-oriented places.



*Figure 2-3. Healthy wetlands help reduce flood risk. Source: MAKERS*

**Policy LU-18 Resiliency planning.** Continue to implement existing plans that address flooding issues and develop new plans to further prepare the city for natural disasters and climate change impacts, including earthquakes, tsunamis, wildfires, and sea level rise.

**Policy LU-20 Flood parks.** Explore opportunities for using parks to mitigate urban flooding, dissipate wave energy, and help reduce flooding impacts (e.g. Finch Playfield flood control park, a storm-surge/tsunami mitigation park along the waterfront, etc.)

**Policy LU-21 Reducing carbon emissions.** Maintain and adapt land use, zoning, tools, and approaches to support a shift towards low-carbon energy sources.

**Policy LU-22 Managed Retreat.** Initiate and proactively manage a long-term retreat strategy for Aberdeen communities that are critically vulnerable to sea level rise, tsunami events, and other natural hazards. Consider and carefully balance social equity and economic development needs along with climate and community resilience.



Figure 2-4. Downtown Aberdeen. Source: Dewey Howell, Aerial Drone Solutionz.

**Policy LU-23 Downtown charm.** Plan for charm downtown, including outdoor gathering and green space.

**Policy LU-24 Connect to waterfront.** Seek out and pursue opportunities to provide downtown-accessible public open space on the waterfront. The future downtown levy design should accommodate public access to waterfront open space. See Figure 2-5.

**Policy LU-25 Seismic retrofits.** Consider seeking funding for providing assistance to encourage seismic retrofit of buildings in the downtown area that are particularly vulnerable to damage from an earthquake.

See Downtown Aberdeen and Encouraging Reinvestment on page 59 for more about downtown prosperity.

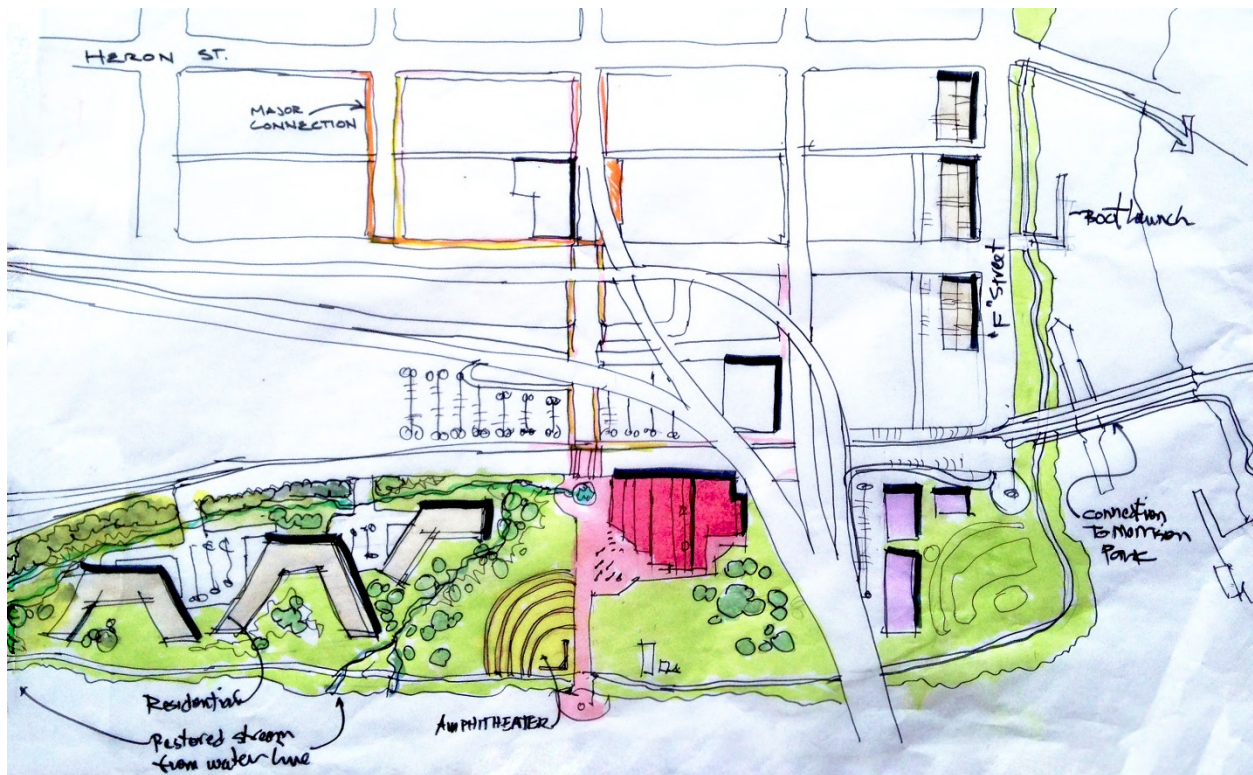


Figure 2-5. Conceptual plan for a downtown waterfront park developed at the 2014 Aberdeen Downtown Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) event.

## Waterfront

**Policy LU-26 Waterfront access.** Maintain and seek additional physical and visual waterfront access, including recreational boating access, trails, fishing, and seating.

**Policy LU-27 Responsibly manage waterfront.** Designate land uses that make use of waterfront access for recreation, tourism, industry, research, or other pursuits that benefit Aberdeen's economic prosperity and community and environmental health and resiliency.

Aberdeen's Shoreline Master Program requires public access where appropriate with new waterfront development.



## Natural Environment

**Policy LU-28 Protect Critical Areas.** Continue to protect ecologically sensitive and hazardous areas, including their functions and values, by following the City’s Critical Areas Ordinance.

**Policy LU-29 Protect Shorelines.** Continue to steward shoreline areas by following the City of Aberdeen’s Shoreline Master Program.

**Policy LU-30 Implement Park Plan.** Follow and work to implement the City of Aberdeen’s Park and Recreation Department’s Comprehensive Report.

**Policy LU-31 Steward urban open spaces.** Preserve and enhance the city’s network of urban habitat corridors and open spaces.

See Resilient Open Spaces on page 77 in the Capital Facilities Element for more about tree canopy, parks, recreation, and open space.

**Policy LU-33 Invest in restoration and ecosystem health.** Work to implement restoration and other ecosystem health plans through a mix of investments, partnerships, and management.

**Policy LU-34 Improve ecosystem functions.** Seek opportunities to acquire, restore/enhance, and maintain environmentally sensitive sites to support natural stormwater and ecosystem functions.

**Policy LU-35 Green corridors.** Use the Centers and Corridors and Green Corridors Map as conceptual guides for connecting and integrating open spaces.



Figure 2-6. The Chehalis Riverfront Walkway is an example of an existing green corridor. Source: MAKERS

## Zoning and Permitting

**Policy LU-36 Flexibility and predictability.** Ensure zoning code allows for flexibility and supports the Comprehensive Plan goals to encourage desired development.

**Policy LU-37 Vision/code consistency.** Ensure development code allows the development types that would implement the Centers and Corridors Map and land use designations and prohibits development that would detract from the vision.

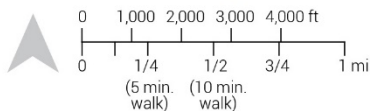
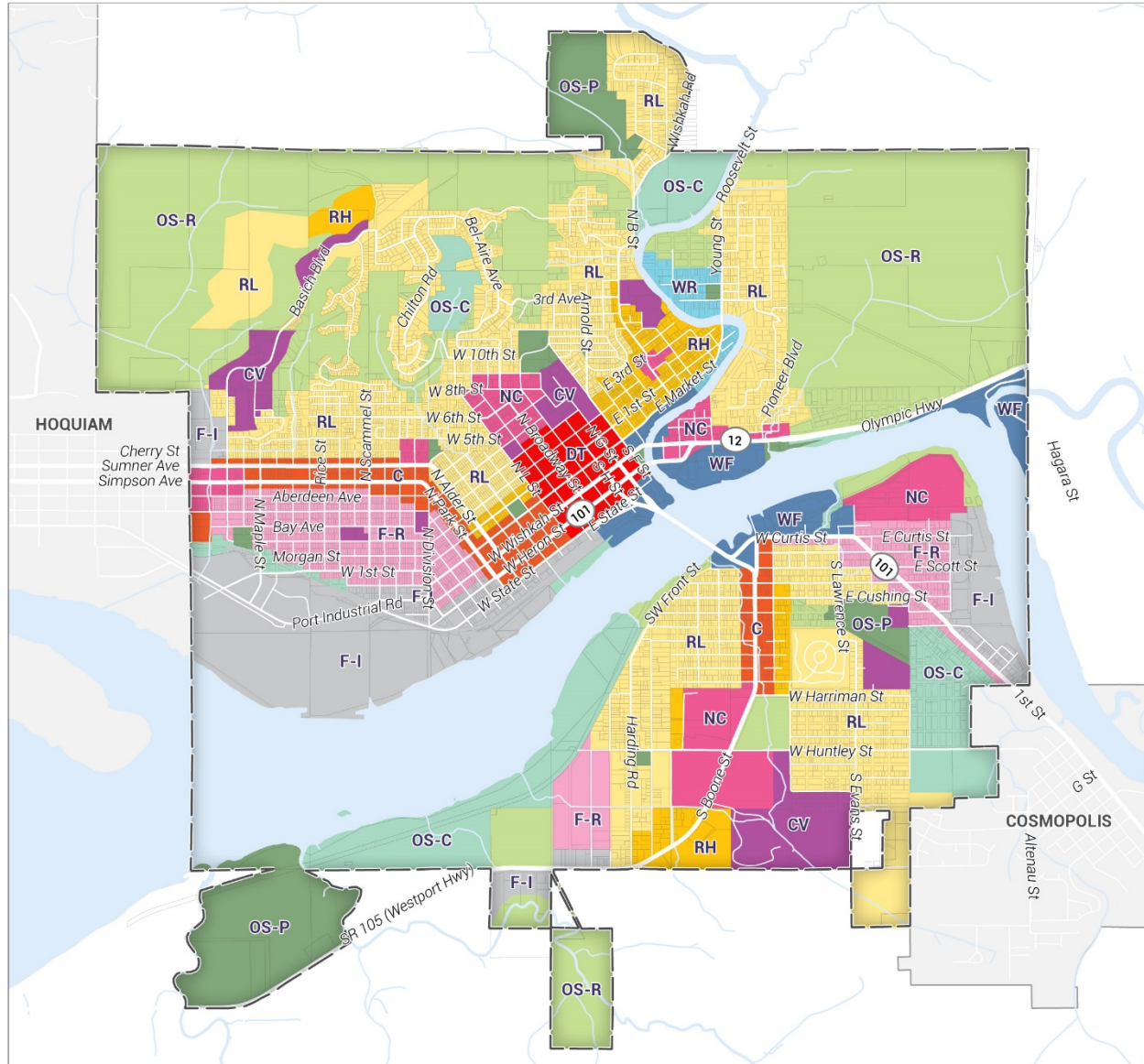
**Policy LU-38 Adaptable regulations for changing conditions.** Adopt development regulations that can accommodate changing business needs, types of business, and business locations.

**Policy LU-39 User ease.** Provide user-friendly development code and clear and efficient permitting processes.

## Land Use Designations

The land use designations bridge the Centers and Corridors strategy and zoning regulations. They implement the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, guiding future development in Aberdeen to be consistent with this plan’s vision. Map 2-1 maps the designations, and the descriptions below include the intent and rationale for the designation, desired development types and activities the place supports, general intensity/density, and special considerations.

**Map 2-1 Future Land Use Map**



**Zoning**

- DT** Downtown Mixed Use
- NC** Neighborhood Center Mixed Use
- C** Commercial
- F-I** Flex - Industrial

- WF** Waterfront
- WR** Waterfront Residential
- CV** Civic
- F-R** Flex - Residential

- RH** Residential High
- RL** Residential Low
- OS-R** Open Space - Residential
- OS-C** Open Space - Conservancy
- OS-P** Open Space - Parks

**Other**

- Waterbodies
- Aberdeen City Limits



**Policy LU-40 Downtown Mixed Use**

**Intent.** This designation is intended for Aberdeen’s historic central core. It reinforces downtown as Aberdeen’s center of commercial, civic, cultural, and tourism activities. Downtown is expected to accommodate new development while reinforcing and enhancing its historic pedestrian-friendly character and scale.

**Expected development types.** Mixed residential and ground floor commercial, mixed office and ground floor commercial, and single purpose residential, commercial, and office.

**Considerations.** Explore development and design standards to enhance Aberdeen’s unique identity as a regional hub set on the Olympia Peninsula with a rich history. Seek opportunities to expand public space downtown. Coordinate development standards with transportation system needs (i.e., highway, freight, transit).

**Policy LU-41 Neighborhood Center Mixed Use**

**Intent.** This designation encourages a focus and reinvigoration of Aberdeen’s traditional districts, as envisioned in the Centers and Corridors strategy. These higher intensity areas are limited to places that are located well to be 15-minute walking centers throughout Aberdeen and make use of existing anchors, such as schools, parks, and groceries or other businesses.

**Expected development types.** New development should include a mix of residential and neighborhood-serving commercial. Multistory buildings, especially with some ground floor commercial, are encouraged.

**Considerations.** Explore design standards to ensure development complements and bolsters existing neighborhood identity; contributes to delightful, sociable public spaces; and carries forward historic design patterns where applicable. Explore strategies to encourage more homes and amenities in prime locations.

See Downtown Aberdeen on page 58 and Encouraging Reinvestment on page 59 for strategies to focus on downtown and encourage rehabilitation of existing buildings or redevelopment.



**Policy LU-42 Commercial**

**Intent.** This designation provides for a wide variety of general service, retail, commercial, and storage that serves local and regional customers. It is generally located along major transportation corridors. It may support accessory or upper story residential uses, but the focus should be on maintaining affordable commercial space in Aberdeen to serve the region's needs. These are relatively centrally located and along transit lines so that all areas of the city have access to commerce.

**Expected development types.** Development should include a wide variety of general service, retail, commercial, and professional office buildings. Development may include residential.

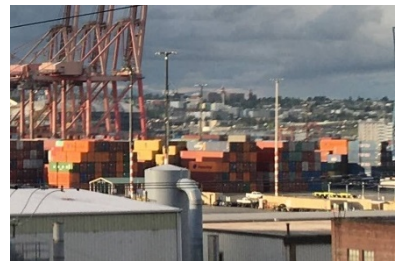
**Considerations.** Because Aberdeen's major transit systems run along the highways located in Commercial designations, design standards to support transit access with safe and comfortable sidewalks and crosswalks and adequate space for bus stops is important.

**Policy LU-43 Flex - Industrial**

**Intent.** This designation provides for a mix of industrial, service commercial, and limited retail uses that minimize unmitigated external visual, auditory, physical impacts on adjacent properties and generally do not compete with uses in the Downtown and Neighborhood Center Mixed Use areas. Many sites are located along the Chehalis River where orientation to navigable waterways and rail access is of primary importance.

**Expected development types.** Structures and surfaces that support industrial, light industrial, manufacturing, shipping, research and development, marine-oriented commercial, and commercial uses.

**Considerations.** Clarify differences between commercial uses allowed in Industrial versus Downtown and Commercial designations.





**Policy LU-44 Waterfront**

**Intent.** This designation provides for a mix of commercial, cultural, recreational, and water-related light industrial uses in waterfront areas to support tourism and continued water-oriented uses. Development should emphasize and make use of the unique waterfront setting with a pedestrian-friendly environment and public access and views to the water where feasible. Because these areas are generally not protected by the existing or planned levee, high intensity uses are not expected.

**Expected development types.** Typical development should include a mixture of commercial buildings, light industrial activities, and recreational or commercial water access. These areas should be less intense than Downtown or Neighborhood Center designations, except where they also align with a regional center (i.e., the regional shopping center at the mouth of the Wishkah River).

**Considerations.** Consider applying design standards for trails and waterfront access to encourage pedestrian-friendly design.

**Policy LU-45 Civic**

**Intent.** This designation ensures land remains available for schools, colleges, hospitals, and other community-serving civic or institutional uses.

**Expected development types.** Schools, colleges, hospitals, and other institutional buildings.

**Considerations.** Consider design standards to encourage people-friendly public-facing spaces and access for people walking, biking, and rolling to the site.



**Policy LU-46 Residential High**

**Intent.** This designation provides for moderate to high density homes on land suitable for urban development. These areas are conveniently located near downtown or neighborhood centers, transportation opportunities, parks, and civic/institutional facilities, while avoiding areas impacted by air quality, noise, critical areas, flooding, or other risks.

**Expected development types.** Typical housing types should include a mixture of multifamily and single family homes. Small neighborhood-serving commercial spaces (e.g., café, corner store grocery, daycares) should be allowed. Densities are expected to be greater than Residential Low and less than Neighborhood Center Mixed Use.

**Considerations.** Explore design standards to ensure development types complement and bolster existing neighborhood identity; contribute to delightful, sociable public spaces; and carry forward historic design patterns where applicable. Consider incentive zoning to encourage more homes in prime locations.



See Goal H-1, Policy H-2, and Policy H-4, in the Housing Element for more on housing supply and low and middle-density housing.

**Policy LU-47 Residential Low**

**Intent.** This designation supports lower density residential development further from Aberdeen's centers. It is intended to continue Aberdeen's neighborhood pattern and allow for infill development, especially to accommodate residents moving uphill out of higher risk areas and provide the housing stock needed for Aberdeen's expected population. At the same time, it allows for areas constrained by topography, wetlands, and other critical areas to create a lower intensity transitional area between the city and the surrounding natural areas.

**Expected development types.** Typical housing types should include houses, townhouses, cottage housing, small lot houses, tiny houses, duplexes, small multiplexes, and accessory dwelling units. Small neighborhood-serving commercial spaces (e.g., daycares, café, corner store grocery) should be allowed, especially where relatively dense residential areas are separated from neighborhood centers by steep topography. Densities are expected to be the lowest of Aberdeen's residential areas, but greater than what they are today.

**Considerations.** Explore design standards to ensure development types complement and bolster existing neighborhood identity; contribute to delightful, sociable public spaces; and carry forward historic design patterns where applicable.





**Policy LU-48 Flex-Residential**

**Intent.** This designation allows for a wide range of uses, including residential, commercial, and light industrial. The district emphasizes smaller scale industrial uses such as food processing, workshops, or fabrication; wholesale retail and professional services; home occupations; and low-to-moderate density residential to increase the availability of jobs and allow workers to live close to where they work.

**Expected development types.** Small to medium footprint flexible buildings that can be used for a variety of business applications should be allowed, as well as detached houses and middle housing types such as townhouses and duplexes. Home occupations and live/work units should be allowed.

**Considerations.** Because of the broad mix of use categories allowed in this area, careful consideration of specific uses to exclude will be needed, based on potential impacts to local residents. In addition, dimensional standards should be imposed to reduce the size of commercial and industrial uses operating in this zone. Consider developing a subarea plan for this area to explore challenges and opportunities.

**Policy LU-49 Waterfront Residential**

**Intent.** This designation allows for existing waterfront residential uses not protected by the planned levee to continue, recognizing private investment in homes and attachment to waterfront living. In the long-term, new residential growth should not be allowed without flood-resilient design.

**Expected development types.** The designation is similar to Residential Low.

**Considerations.** Because of the waterfront location, flooding and other risks should be considered, especially during “managed retreat” planning.



**Policy LU-50 Open Space – Parks**

**Intent.** This designation allows for existing and future parks and public open space, public community facilities, and essential public facilities. They are located to support downtown and neighborhood centers with public amenities, as well as to enhance the waterfront as a recreational draw.

**Expected development types.** Refer to the Parks and Recreation Plan for most parks and open spaces. These typically include public parks and recreation facilities, trail corridors, and open space. They may include small commercial spaces (e.g., park concession stand).

**Considerations.** Along the waterfront, open space/park design should include resiliency and adaption measures to flooding and tsunamis.

**Policy LU-51 Open Space – Residential**

**Intent.** This designation allows for potential residential development in areas that are currently undeveloped open space. It is intended to preserve and enhance natural areas where critical areas (e.g., steep slopes, streams) limit feasibility while providing long-term flexibility for residential expansion if needed.

**Expected development types.** Cabins and small residences may be conditionally allowed. In areas outside of tsunami- and flood risk zones, clusters of more intense residential development may be considered if additional land for residential expansion is needed. Agriculture and timber uses may be allowed.

**Considerations.** These areas are important to consider when managing the community's retreat from flooding and tsunami risk areas. Development in these sensitive areas should mimic existing natural processes and incorporate green stormwater management techniques to limit downstream impacts. Because developable land may be scarce in OS-R areas, higher density development should be clustered in areas least impacted by critical areas, with more sensitive areas preserved in a natural state. Wildland urban interface (WUI) best practices should be incorporated to protect the Aberdeen community from wildfire dangers. Consider public trails with new development to increase access to Aberdeen's open spaces.





**Policy LU-52 Open Space – Conservancy**

**Intent.** This designation allows for preservation of natural areas with minimal disruption. These areas may be located to mitigate/adapt to flooding, landslide, and tsunami risks. In some cases, existing uses are commercial or industrial, and these may remain in place until vacated.

**Expected development types.** Existing uses may remain. In the future, trails, interpretive displays, and other development that increases public enjoyment and connection to nature may be considered if designed for a positive impact on natural systems.

**Considerations.** These areas play an important role in environmental resilience, mitigating some natural hazard threats, and strengthening local biodiversity, including pollinator and bird populations.



## Implementation

1. Update and apply zoning consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations.
2. Conduct subarea planning for South Aberdeen to establish a clear, community-backed vision; identify development barriers and solutions; and pursue a Planned Action Ordinance and environmental impact statement (EIS) to improve development feasibility.
3. Pursue the North Aberdeen Feasibility Study, as recommended by the Timberworks Resiliency and Restoration Master Plan to evaluate options to reduce flood risk in this area.
4. Develop a Climate Action Plan (in partnership with nearby communities and agencies such as the Port and Grays Harbor PUD, if possible) that identifies the city's key vulnerabilities to climate change and strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that align with WA State's emission reduction targets and support the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.
5. Acquire, steward, and manage sites containing critical areas (e.g., wetlands, steep slopes) for maximum public benefit.



# Housing Element

CHAPTER

3

Aberdeen  
Comprehensive  
Plan



# What is this chapter about?

The Housing Element directs Aberdeen’s strategy for housing stock maintenance, growth, and role in enhancing civic life.

The Comprehensive Plan’s Housing Element establishes the goals, policies, and implementation steps to encourage Aberdeen housing to adequately serve its residents with shelter, comfort, and stability. It seeks to preserve and create housing which is:

1. Adequate in quantity to house Aberdeen’s current and future population
2. Well-suited to Aberdeen’s demographics and household needs
3. Affordable to households making typical local incomes
4. Attractive and supportive of healthy community interaction
5. Safe, in good state of repair, and minimally exposed to natural hazards
6. Expressive of Aberdeen’s identity and rich history

## Aberdeen Housing Facts

- Housing units: 7,235<sup>a</sup>
- Median year built: 1950<sup>b</sup>
- Owner-occupied: 45%<sup>b</sup>
- Renter-occupied: 41%<sup>b</sup>
- Median home value: \$142,000<sup>b</sup>
- Median rent: \$700<sup>c</sup>
- Housing prices have risen significantly in recent years

Sources: <sup>a</sup> ACS 5-Year Estimates, US Census Bureau, 2019; <sup>b</sup> ESRI, 2021; <sup>c</sup> CoStar, 2020

# Why is this important?

A city's housing plays a huge role in residents lives. Safe, appropriate, affordable housing allows residents to pursue work, education, culture and recreation; take care of health and family needs; protects them from the elements; and provides a stable foundation for civic life. The design, arrangement, and location of housing powerfully shapes the character of a community and social opportunities. Most buildings in Aberdeen are homes, and most land is dedicated to residential uses.

**Housing needs.** Aberdeen faces serious challenges related to housing. As of summer 2021, the city is extremely undersupplied with housing units and constrained by the market. New housing of all types is needed to foster economic growth and vitality.

**Recent trends.** Aberdeen's housing stock has seen little growth in recent decades. Many homes are in poor condition, and existing homes may not match people's needs or household size. However, there are indications of potential increased development in the future.

**Changes to housing landscape.** The construction of the Northshore Levy will reduce flood risk for homes in central Aberdeen, where a large stock of older houses are within walking distance of downtown. The reduced flood risk will lessen the burden of flood insurance premiums, which have discouraged property owners from investing in these properties. Meanwhile, the growth of remote work during the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the general scarcity of housing throughout the state of Washington, has increased residential demand in Aberdeen and other towns and small cities across the state.

**Housing Element purpose.** The creation and maintenance of housing is affected by local zoning regulations, financing availability, construction costs, and exposure to environmental hazards. With good policies and regulations in place, these trends could be harnessed to secure housing investment and increase the customer base for local businesses. However, they also threaten to accelerate the rising housing costs that have already impacted the ability of Aberdeen residents to afford their homes. It is important that city leaders make pro-active and creative use of tools available to protect housing affordability, increase supply, and create healthy, resilient neighborhoods.



Figure 3-1. Traditional houses in South Aberdeen. Source: MAKERS



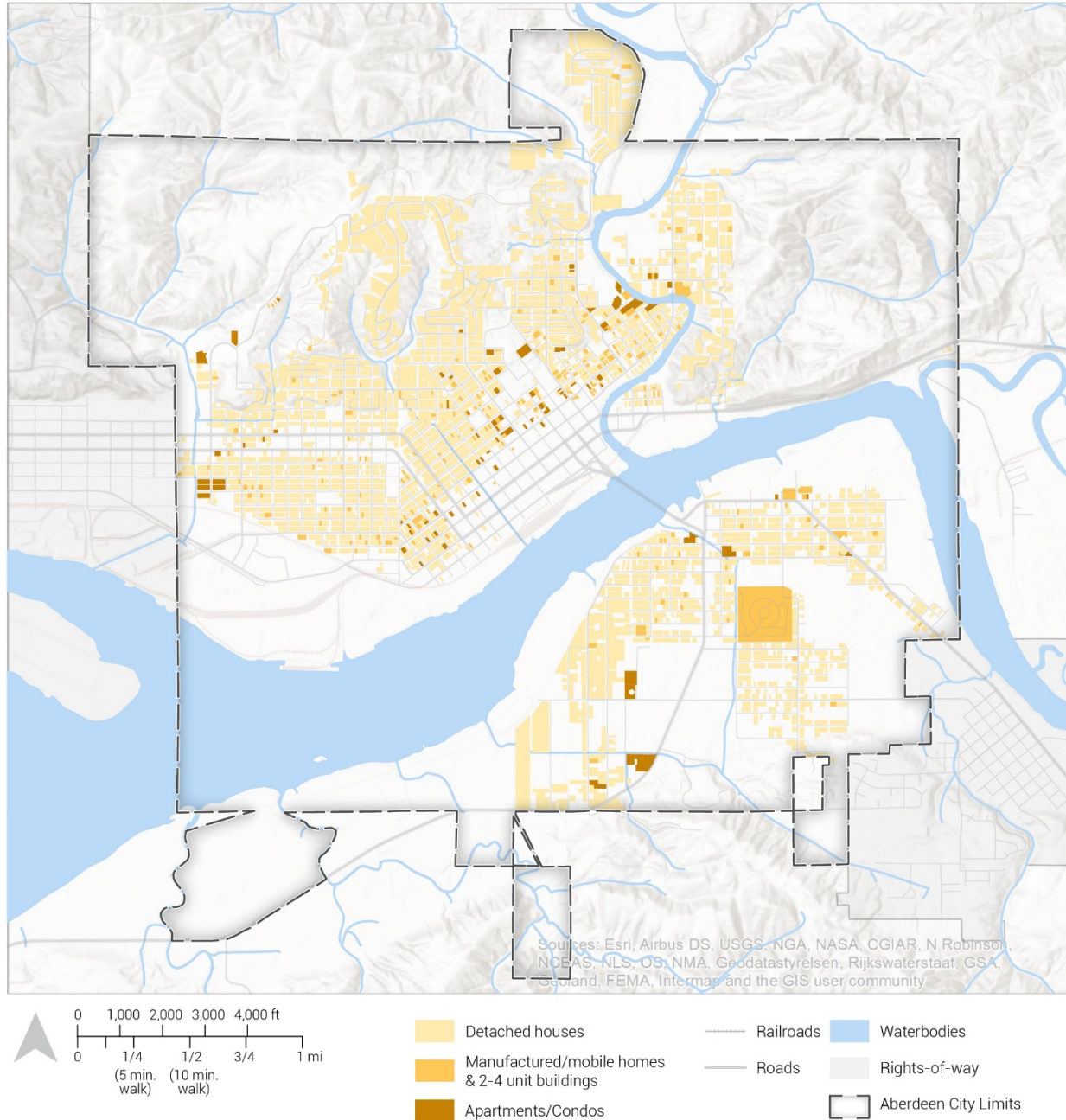
Figure 3-2. Historic home on Broadway Hill. Source: MAKERS



Figure 3-3. Addition of an attached ADU to an existing home. Source: MAKERS



**Map 3-1 Existing Residential Uses in Aberdeen**



Source: Washington State Department of Ecology, Grays Harbor Tax Assessor, 2020.

# Goals

- Goal H-1 Supply.** Encourage an adequate supply and variety of homes, districts, and neighborhoods attractive to people of all ages, characteristics, and interests to meet Aberdeen’s population needs and support economic development.
- Goal H-2 Variety and attainability.** Improve the variety, quality, availability, and attainability of housing opportunities in the city—through production and preservation/rehabilitation—for all incomes levels and to allow residents to stay in their neighborhoods as life needs change.
- Goal H-3 Residents and visitors.** Promote a balance of rental and ownership homes, and meet needs of residents and visitors.
- Goal H-4 Affordability focus.** Focus on affordable housing options.
- Goal H-5 Rehabilitation/preservation.** Encourage rehabilitation and preservation of Aberdeen’s historic neighborhoods and downtown buildings.
- Goal H-6 Sociability.** Promote housing design that encourages comfortable social interactions and trust amongst neighbors.
- Goal H-7 Aging in place.** Support aging in place options (e.g., ADA accessible condominiums, accessory dwelling units (ADUs)).



*Figure 3-4. An historic four-unit residential building.*

## Aging in Place

Many people prefer to stay in their communities and live independently as they age for as long as possible. However, many homes are not configured for seniors’ needs. Some important considerations for aging in place include:

- Elevator or ground floor accessible housing
- Smaller units for 1-2 person households
- Limited home and yard maintenance
- Easy access to groceries and services
- Safe walking environment for exercise
- Affordability
- “Mother-in-law” units or other multigenerational styles of living



# Policies

## Land Use Strategy

One of the areas where the City can most impact housing is through zoning. Zoning districts control what types of buildings can be built and what types of “uses” – broad categories of activities, including residence – can be performed there. In 2021, the most widespread zone in Aberdeen is Single-Family Residential (R-S), which covers about 45% of the city.

- Policy H-1 High density zoning for people-friendly places.** Areas near businesses, parks, and services, with well-connected street grids, located away from pollution sources are most appropriate for higher population densities.
- Policy H-2 Low density.** Lower density zoning is most appropriate near sensitive environmental areas and areas further from downtown.

## Variety

- Policy H-3 Housing data.** Work with regional partners to collect and maintain data to understand housing supply and needs for Aberdeen’s income levels and household types.
- Policy H-4 Local ownership.** Allow housing types that promote local ownership of properties and homes and facilitate connections to and awareness of home-ownership programs.
- Policy H-5 Missing middle housing.** Encourage a wide range of home types, including duplex, triplex, townhouse, small apartment buildings, etc, to fill in Aberdeen.
- Policy H-6 Small units.** Encourage production of a range of unit sizes appropriate for Aberdeen households—including smaller, affordable units for single-person households or elders staying in Aberdeen.
- Policy H-7 Abundant rentals.** Support an adequate supply of high-quality rental units.
- Policy H-8 Community-oriented rental housing supply.** Encourage the rental market to meet community needs, with an adequate balance of units for residents and visitors.
- Policy H-9 Accessible units.** Encourage production of ADA accessible units near resources and amenities.

### Lot sizes and density

In addition to buildings and uses, zones also control the minimum lot size and density of residences that can be developed. For instance, most residential zones in Aberdeen have a minimum lot size of 5,000 square feet. Typical residential lots in Aberdeen are about 4,000-7,500 square feet, so many residential lots fall below the minimum lot size. Aberdeen residential zones also have a maximum density that can be developed – 7 dwellings per acre for the R-S zone and 29 dwellings per acre for the other residential zones.



*Figure 3-5. Rowhouses are an example of middle density housing. Source: MAKERS*

**Policy H-10 Student housing.** Coordinate with Grays Harbor College to support student housing efforts.

## Affordability

**Policy H-11 Affordable housing.** Where possible, encourage local governments, non-profit housing providers, and private developers to expand programs to provide housing and housing support for those in need.

**Policy H-12 Funds for affordable housing.** Support housing providers' efforts to secure funds for affordable housing construction.

**Policy H-13 Inclusive zoning.** Explore regulatory tools like incentive zoning and the multifamily tax exemption (MFTE) to create new affordable housing units.

**Policy H-14 Affordable homeownership.** Explore strategies to support and expand affordable homeownership through community land trust, cooperative ownership, or other programs.

**Policy H-15 Manufactured housing.** Support continued role of manufactured homes in residential neighborhoods providing a more affordable option for home ownership.

**Policy H-16 Flexibility for affordability.** Look for opportunities to create flexibility in code to allow for a range of affordable housing options.



*Figure 3-6. Affordable housing owned by Grays Harbor Housing Authority. Source: MAKERS*

## Rehabilitation and Preservation

**Policy H-17 Revitalize downtown.** Enact policies and programs to create an attractive, lively, and safe mixed-use environment in downtown to attract investment in residential and mixed-use development.

**Policy H-18 Historic preservation.** Understand the characteristics that make older neighborhoods people friendly and functional and determine what “historic preservation” means for Aberdeen’s neighborhoods.

**Policy H-19 Building rehabilitation.** Explore ways to provide technical, regulatory, or financial assistance (e.g., through grant programs or tax increment or abatement programs) to help navigate potential issues with rehabilitation of downtown buildings.

**Policy H-20 Code compliance.** Support code enforcement for building/property maintenance.



*Figure 3-7. Historic buildings in downtown. Source: MAKERS*

See Economic Development Policy ED-7 and Policy ED-8 on page 58 for more on downtown revitalization.



## Feasibility/Supply

While zones control what kinds of housing can be built, market conditions (construction cost, availability of financing, asking rent) determine what housing *will* be built. The city government does not build housing, but it can influence what kinds of homes will be built by adjusting zoning and development regulations and, where possible, influencing market conditions.

Builders take into account profitability when deciding what to build and where to build it. Easy access to credit, property tax discounts, short wait time for permits, and cheap land all make new construction more profitable, while extra requirements and long delays make it more costly. This plan supports strategies that increase profitability and others that may impact it; the goal is a balance to ensure an adequate, affordable, and high-quality housing supply that best meets Aberdeen’s needs.

**Policy H-21 Construction capacity.** Coordinate with regional partners to increase construction trade capacity in Grays Harbor.

**Policy H-22 Funding for desired development.** Seek grant funding and other funding sources to increase feasibility of desired development.

**Policy H-23 Remove code barriers** to desired development in downtown and other areas. Common code barriers include ground-floor commercial requirements, minimum parking requirements,

**Policy H-24 Share the SEPA burden.** Ease permitting to increase development feasibility in desired areas (e.g., near Grays Harbor College, South Aberdeen waterfront, or downtown) by taking on State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) analysis through a city-led planned action, subarea plan, or infill exemption.

## People-friendly Neighborhoods

Because most people spend more time in their homes than any other place, the design, construction, location, and other factors of homes have huge impacts on Aberdeen residents' well-being. Aberdeen policies and regulations should support the creation and upkeep of homes that are safe for human habitation, provide access to quality open space and nature, and facilitate social interactions and building community.

**Policy H-25 Learn from the past.** Analyze the desirable characteristics of Aberdeen's historic neighborhoods to set design guidance for infill, redevelopment, and rehabilitation projects.

**Policy H-26 Historic preservation.** Implement the Aberdeen Historic Preservation Plan and/or update its recommended actions to respond to changing conditions.

**Policy H-27 Support sociability.** Explore design standards, especially in higher density zones, to facilitate healthy social interaction, such as porches, street-oriented buildings, and small clusters of units with shared semi-private open space.

**Policy H-28 Room to roam.** Require new homes, especially in higher density developments, to have adequate open space per resident.

**Policy H-29 Public/private space clarity.** Transitions between public (e.g., sidewalks) and private (e.g., inside individual unit) areas should be designed with clearly delineated public, semi-private, and private areas to promote safety, community connections, and a sense of ownership.



*Figure 3-8. Compact traditional residential architecture. Source: MAKERS*



*Figure 3-9. A short fence clearly defines the private and shared open spaces.*



## Health and Resilience

Aberdeen housing should adapt to known environmental hazards, including floods, tsunamis, and liquefaction. In general, new housing should not be built in flood zones. Much of the City is exposed to tsunami risk, and new housing built in these areas should have easy access to evacuation routes or provide vertical evacuation towers.

**Policy H-30 Homes on high ground.** Discourage new housing production in high-risk flood zones (FEMA designated A and AE). New housing in areas designated for Waterfront Residential areas should include flood mitigation design techniques as appropriate.

**Policy H-31 Tsunami resilient.** Pursue and implement development regulations for flooding and tsunami resilience and coordinate with capital facilities planning.

**Policy H-32 Evacuation towers.** Seek out opportunities to include vertical evacuation towers in larger new developments with challenging tsunami evacuation routes.

**Policy H-33 Where the air is clear.** Locate housing a safe distance from pollution sources such as highways when possible. Airborne particulates created by tailpipe exhaust, vehicle brake pads, and rubber tires have well-documented negative health effects, especially for children. The degree of exposure declines rapidly with distance.

The Waterfront Residential land use designation described in Policy LU-46 on page 36 applies in areas where residential uses in flood zones are likely to continue.



Figure 3-10. Tsunami evacuation route sign

## New Neighborhoods

Throughout Aberdeen’s history technological and economic forces have shaped how and where the city grew. As these forces continue to affect desirable locations for industry and neighborhoods, the City should take an active role in revising land uses in certain places.

Several opportunities for new planned neighborhood developments include:

1. **Mill District.** The Weyerhaeuser Mill once dominated the south shore of the Chehalis River north of US 101, but the approximately 65-acre site has been vacant since the early 2000’s. This area is not served by rail and the river is no longer dredged, making it less desirable for industrial uses than other areas on Grays Harbor. However, the area has minimal flood risk and the river offers an impressive aesthetic amenity. With proper cleanup and environmental remediation, this area could host a new residential neighborhood, with easy access to major transportation routes and South Aberdeen businesses.
2. **Grays Harbor College.** Vacant land near Grays Harbor College and the former SouthShore Mall offers a good opportunity for new residential development in an area with low flood risk. The project could help address needs for student housing and leverage possible future redevelopment of the mall site.
3. **North Hills.** The City may also consider new residential development in northwest Aberdeen, where uplands are outside of flooding and tsunami risks.

**Policy H-34** Pursue grant funding for subarea planning infrastructure study and residential development at opportunity sites.



*Figure 3-11. Mill District area.  
Courtesy of Kevin Tuggle.*



*Figure 3-12. Vacant land near  
Grays Harbor College. Source:  
MAKERS*



*Figure 3-13. High-voltage  
powerlines and critical areas  
impact development feasibility  
along Basich Blvd in north  
Aberdeen. Source: MAKERS*

## Homelessness and Housing Security

- Policy H-35** Promote homes, care, and services for people experiencing homelessness in appropriate locations.
- Policy H-36** Facilitate City, County, and human service organizations coordination around preventing homelessness and addressing emergency, transitional, and permanent housing needs.
- Policy H-37** Periodically audit zoning and development code for barriers to housing, especially for vulnerable populations, e.g., restrictions on the number of unrelated people living together.

Homelessness is a complex issue. This plan addresses long-term causes and mitigation of housing insecurity in the following sections:

- Housing Element policies to ensure adequate housing supply, diversity, and affordability
- Economic Development Element policies to pursue, protect, and increase access to living wage jobs in Aberdeen
- Transportation Element policies to improve mobility especially by foot, bike, wheelchair, and transit



# Implementation

## Data and Monitoring

1. Conduct a zoning code audit to identify barriers to desired types and feasibility analyses to understand added costs to residential construction from development regulations. Use audit results to identify regulations causing unnecessary costs.
2. Coordinate with Grays Harbor County to conduct a countywide buildable lands reports (BLR) on a regular basis (such as once every decade) to establish baseline information about housing supply and land capacity.

## Regulatory Actions

3. Update and apply zoning to match Comprehensive Plan land use designations in the Land Use Element to:
  - a. Encourage construction of middle density housing like duplexes, townhouses, ADUs, and small footprint apartment buildings
  - b. Replicate valued residential patterns in historic Aberdeen neighborhoods
  - c. Strategically require ground floor commercial where most beneficial and feasible
  - d. Consider strategically reducing parking minimums in selected areas to reduce construction costs
  - e. Ensure feasibility of affordable, small unit housing options, such as single room occupancies (SROs), ADUs, studios, one bedrooms, and tiny houses
  - f. Create an incentive zoning program to encourage construction of affordable multifamily units (e.g., more generous density limits, reduced setbacks, taller buildings, or reduced parking requirements in exchange for adding affordable units to a project)
  - g. Consider allowing taller buildings in Residential High and Neighborhood Center areas.
  - h. Consider reducing minimum size for offsite manufactured/modular build construction that is either assembled at the factory or building site.

For more about the land use designations applied in this plan, see Land Use Designations in the Land Use Element.

4. Pursue grant funding to create a subarea plan and planned action for opportunity sites at the Mill District, near Grays Harbor College, or other potential new residential neighborhoods.
5. Pursue grant funding to create an infill exemption or planned action for downtown.

A photograph of a city street scene. In the foreground, there are trees with yellow and orange autumn leaves. A street sign for "N BROADWAY ST" is visible. In the background, there are buildings with signs for "DAVIDSON", "earingLife", "MorningSide", and "ALL WAYS CARING HOME CARE". A person is walking on the sidewalk in the distance.

# Economic Development Element

CHAPTER

# 4

Aberdeen  
Comprehensive  
Plan



# What is this chapter about?

Economic Development addresses the coordinated actions that can improve the economic health and standard of living of a community. It covers a broad spectrum of economic activities including business activity, jobs and income, and tax base. The economic development chapter of the Comprehensive Plan establishes local goals, policies, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life.

These goals and policies establish approaches to help the city meet its current and future economic development needs in keeping with the Comprehensive Plan’s major themes – unique identity, economic prosperity, human health, environmental health, and equity.

The intent of the Economic Development Chapter is to guide decision making and investments that diversify and strengthen the local economy by:

- Supporting safe, attractive, and character-rich neighborhoods.
- Creating a more dynamic, successful downtown.
- Increasing the Port of Grays Harbor's standing as a regional hub for business and Port-related enterprises.
- Investing in infrastructure that encourages private investment and reinvestment.
- Encouraging and supporting reinvestment by focusing on development opportunities, tools, and incentives.
- Recognizing and supporting the economic impact of the college, downtown, and the Port.
- Optimizing the city's relationship with its natural setting and encouraging investments that strengthen resilience.

# Why is this important?

The economy plays a key role in the quality of life within Aberdeen. A strong economy provides economic opportunities to all current and future community through the creation of jobs and business opportunities, elevating income levels, and by creating a tax base that provides schools, police, fire protection, parks and other community facilities, services, and amenities.

A clear, regionally-unified, and focused approach to economic development will help to cultivate a fertile environment for business and industry development, in support of the high quality of life that makes Aberdeen an attractive and desirable location.

Aberdeen has significant assets that serve as economic advantages and opportunities, including a thriving port, rail facilities, an engaged local college, and an established downtown, among others—all of which position Aberdeen competitively for future growth. However, the City has suffered from a lack of building maintenance, population and jobs losses, and development challenges that led to limited new construction, limited housing options, declining housing affordability, and a limited economic base.

Likewise, Aberdeen’s coastal location is an asset but also a growing challenge as climate change threatens economic prosperity. Rising sea levels, the risk of tsunamis, and the predicted increasing frequency of extreme weather call for Aberdeen to incorporate resilience-based policies into its economic development approach. Doing so will help Aberdeen maintain a long-term sustainable economy that is resilient to impacts to climate change and other major disrupters.

There is now a need to diversify Aberdeen’s economic base and provide more economic opportunities for Aberdeen’s community. The purpose of the Economic Development Chapter is to ensure that Aberdeen’s long-range planning policies reflect the community’s pursuit of a healthy local economy. A healthy economic environment requires a long-term vision of Aberdeen’s future that is flexible enough to serve the community in periods of growth and recession and is open to periodic review and refinement.

Given that economic cycles, new and emerging technologies, and industries change and evolve, often at a rapid pace, the Comprehensive Plan and implementing tools must be flexible for continued economic vibrancy, while providing clear direction for the City’s strategies and programs.

Aberdeen’s economic development priorities will influence the policies of other elements of the comprehensive plan. The City must coordinate and integrate economic development planning with all other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. The future economic fortunes of Aberdeen and its neighbors will be substantially influenced in conjunction with the private sector by the planning decisions made by the city, Grays Harbor County, Greater Grays Harbor, other local jurisdictions, and the Port of Grays Harbor. The Economic Development Chapter is closely tied to other sections of the plan:

- Transportation and utilities providing the infrastructure to support economic development activities;
- Providing sufficient land zoned to accommodate a variety of employment needs and centers for higher density development;

- Opportunities for economic activities in resource land (agriculture, forestry, and mineral) as well as recreational and tourist pursuits in these lands;
- Housing options for a variety of households, including affordable, workforce, and middle- and upper-income households;
- Human services and workforce training to improve workforce productivity; and
- A healthy natural environment draws tourism and recreation dollars to Aberdeen and makes the community and economy more resilient.

## Goals

**Goal ED-1 Healthy economy.** Foster a healthy, diverse, sustainable economy that supports prosperity and equitable employment opportunities in harmony with natural resources.

**Goal ED-2 Diverse talent base.** Invest in quality and unique sense of place and affordable and diverse housing types to attract and keep talent.

**Goal ED-3 Vibrant downtown.** Focus efforts and investments downtown.

**Goal ED-4 Healthy businesses.** Encourage business incubation, entrepreneurship, and retention.

**Goal ED-5 Complete transportation.** Serve employment and shopping districts with a diversified transportation system and options that meet industrial, commercial, tourism, and other employment sector needs.

**Goal ED-6 Active waterfront.** Support a multifunctional waterfront, including employment, recreational, natural systems, housing options, appropriate industrial/manufacturing, and water transportation uses.

**Goal ED-7 Unique Aberdeen identity.** Use arts, natural and social history, and culture to reinforce Aberdeen’s unique sense of place.

**Goal ED-8 Distinct employment districts.** Maintain and/or establish employment districts that prioritize or expand lands for commercial and industrial uses.

**Goal ED-9 Economic resilience.** Improve Aberdeen’s economic resilience to impacts from climate change, natural disasters, and other economic disrupters through a strong, diverse local economy and equitable opportunities for prosperity.



**Goal ED-10 Regional coordination.** Coordinate with Grays Harbor municipalities to efficiently run government, address common challenges, and save costs.

## Policies

The city plays a key role in providing leadership to ensure that the economic development plans and policies of the city and other organizations intended to strengthen the economy are coordinated, implemented, and monitored.

Economic development is regional in nature and, as a result, no single entity or agency can carry out all the necessary activities. Developing a culture of collaboration and enhanced coordination both in Aberdeen and among neighboring communities is important in creating a positive climate for businesses and for the economic well-being of the City and its residents.

The following policies will help Aberdeen meet its long term economic goals in a manner that is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's major themes.

### Economic Diversification

A fundamental aspect of the "quality of life" characteristics of a city is a robust and diversified economy. A diversified economy is one that provides a wide variety of job opportunities in various sectors suited to all skill levels of the workforce. Such an economy would provide opportunities for all segments of the community, from manufacturing and marine trades to medical research and high technology. A diversified economy is able to absorb inevitable market changes and business cycle fluctuations. Overreliance on any one sector of the economy makes a community more vulnerable to business cycle downturns and market changes. Similarly, a diversified local economy can better withstand disruptions from climate change, sea level rise, natural disasters, and future pandemics.

The City seeks to create a local economy that is diversified and results in long-term economic prosperity. The following policies help Aberdeen meet these goals by supporting existing business growth, incentivizing and encouraging new industries, encouraging startup and entrepreneurial enterprises, and collaborating with major employers and public agency partners.

**Policy ED-1 Alleviate barriers to business expansion.** Coordinate with existing businesses and public agency partners to identify barriers to business and industry expansion and implement strategies to alleviate barriers.

- Policy ED-2 Support workforce training.** Support the efforts of business and educational institutions to train workers to meet the current and future needs of local businesses.
- Policy ED-3 Provide technical and financial assistance to businesses.** Coordinate plans and investments with programs that provide technical and financial assistance to foster new business growth.
- Policy ED-4 Conduct a partnership recruitment strategy to attract new business.** Working with the Port, Greater Grays Harbor, and others, explore and pursue opportunities to solicit/attract new investment and expansion from businesses outside the Aberdeen area, both regionally and nationally.
- Policy ED-5 Support startups and entrepreneurial enterprises.** Support startup efforts to make it easier for businesses to get started in Aberdeen by coordinating plans and investments with programs that provide technical and financial assistance to encourage entrepreneurship, innovation, and business growth, and explore methods to encourage low-impact enterprises and emerging business models.
- Policy ED-6 Attract remote workers.** In the near term, focus on attracting information technology workers and others who can work from home, e.g., by leveraging Aberdeen’s telecommunication infrastructure, high quality of life, and outdoor recreation.

## Downtown Aberdeen

Downtown Aberdeen is the preeminent office concentration in the region and the employment center for financial and business services, hospitality facilities, retail activity, entertainment center, and community services.

The following policies support the revitalization of downtown, expanding job opportunities in the public and private sectors, targeted capital investments, and developing downtown housing.

- Policy ED-7 Support downtown mixed-use development.** Promote downtown redevelopment and/or rehabilitation, especially with mixed use and affordable housing, with targeted approaches, tools, and incentives like incentive zoning, MFTE, etc.

See Downtown on page 28 for more about land use-oriented downtown policies.



*Figure 4-1. Aging downtown buildings in need of rehabilitation.*

**Policy ED-8 Prioritize investments downtown.** Prioritize community and public amenities, services, connection to downtown, the arts, and open space as a way to increase activity in Downtown.

**Policy ED-9 Create parking strategies.** Consider consolidating downtown surface parking lots into public structured parking and encouraging shared parking in select locations to increase mixed-use development feasibility, make visiting downtown by car convenient, and free up property for parks and infill development.

**Policy ED-10 Leverage tourism.** Focus on downtown and the City’s regional gateway location to grow tourism.

**Policy ED-11 Downtown mobility for business.** Continue to explore opportunities to increase business activity and support downtown prosperity by reconfiguring the transportation network through downtown.

**Policy ED-12 Public services.** Consider adding public bathrooms in the downtown area.



*Figure 4-2. Two-hour parking sign downtown.*

## Encouraging Reinvestment

The lack of vacant land in Aberdeen increases the importance of using the city’s existing land supply more efficiently through redevelopment or intensification of uses on existing properties, focusing on industries that can thrive within a largely built-out community. As such, accommodating employment and household growth and fostering economic development requires new policies, strategies, and solutions.

The following policies support reinvestment and redevelopment in Aberdeen with targeted public investments and strategies.

**Policy ED-13 Prioritize underutilized areas for new development.** Prioritize the redevelopment of existing underutilized areas, like the waterfront and Southshore Mall, and investigate strategies and incentives that may make redevelopment a greater financial opportunity.

**Policy ED-14 Develop an incentive toolkit.** Compile a toolkit of incentives and seek, offer, and/or connect developers to grants or incentives to encourage the revitalization and utilization of historic and older commercial and industrial districts.

**Policy ED-15 Pursue a balanced approach to historical preservation.** Balance historical preservation goals with building re-use feasibility.

See Policy LU-24 on page 28 for more about supporting seismic retrofits and reinvestment in historic buildings.



**Policy ED-16 Solidify regional relationships.** Maintain and expand relationships with major employers, developers, brokers, economic development professionals in government, neighborhood and nonprofits, and others in the employment and development communities to foster a balanced understanding of community needs.

**Policy ED-17 Prioritize reusable buildings.** Maintain an inventory of historic and significant older buildings that could be redeveloped or rehabilitated for economic activities rather than demolished.

**Policy ED-18 Leverage city-owned land.** Where publicly-owned land is well-located and could serve as a catalyst for private investment, consider leveraging the public ownership through public-private partnerships, disposition, or other strategies that would allow the site's development to accomplish multiple public objectives.

**Policy ED-19 Support and leverage transit.** Encourage transit ridership by locating new development and jobs in locations that can be well-served by public transit.



*Figure 4-3. Grays Harbor Transit service provides connections within Aberdeen and to nearby cities. Source: MAKERS*

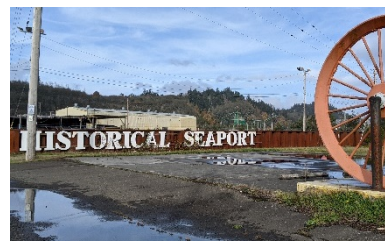
## Tourism

Tourism is a key industry in the Grays Harbor region that brings people, retail spending, and activity to Aberdeen.

**Policy ED-20 Promote the outdoors.** Promote the region's outdoor amenities and offer ample cultural and recreational opportunities for residents and tourists.

**Policy ED-21 Support heritage tourism.** Continue making Aberdeen's rich, varied, and unique history—including Native American, maritime, industrial, and bordello—visible in its landscape (e.g., Seaport Landing, Benn's Landing project, history museum).

**Policy ED-22 Support business associations.** Aid the efforts of business associations to promote economic activities and tourism.



*Figure 4-4. Grays Harbor Historical Seaport plans to include a mixed-use center for regional visitors. Source: MAKERS*

## Land Use Approach

Market and economic conditions are changing constantly, and the City will benefit from an approach to economic development—including its regulatory structure—that is flexible, adaptable, and proactive.

**Policy ED-23 Provide flexible regulations.** Maintain flexible land use, zoning, tools, and approaches to adapt to market changes.

**Policy ED-24 Simplify zoning.** Ensure that zoning is simple and not a barrier to residential and economic development.

**Policy ED-25 Maintain waterfront connections.** Maintain and augment strong connections to the waterfront to enhance Aberdeen’s sense of place.

## Land Supply and Infrastructure Support

An adequate land supply and corresponding infrastructure are key to growing existing businesses and creating opportunities for new business. Aberdeen is largely built out with few areas of substantial vacant land to accommodate new development.

The following policies outline ways for Aberdeen to utilize its existing land supply and support economic growth by prioritizing infrastructure investments and capitalizing on development opportunities that lead to a greater utilization of existing land through infill and redevelopment.

**Policy ED-26 Support infrastructure for major employers.** Continue to support the expansion and infrastructure needs of Grays Harbor College, the School District, Grays Harbor Community Hospital, Harbor Regional Health, the Port of Grays Harbor, and other major employers that offer a diverse range of living wage jobs.

**Policy ED-27 Increase access to infrastructure.** Maintain and increase opportunities to access adequate and efficient community infrastructure such as roads, water, sewer, stormwater management, and other public facilities and services that build on Aberdeen’s assets, offer unique experiences, and improve quality of life.

**Policy ED-28 Explore innovative financing options.** Pursue grants and other ways to support the financing of public infrastructure in support of economic development.

**Policy ED-29 Increase and leverage communications infrastructure.** Encourage and support the development of technology and telecommunications/high speed broadband infrastructure Citywide and throughout the region.

**Policy ED-30 Leverage public investments.** Leverage public investment in restoration projects, such as Fry Creek, to support economic development through the creation of great places that will attract employers and talent to Aberdeen.

**Policy ED-31 Identify employment areas that lack infrastructure.** Identify employment land that lacks sufficient infrastructure and coordinate City investments in utilities, transportation and other public facilities with business and employment opportunities whenever possible.

**Policy ED-32 Coordinate with utility providers.** Work with public and private providers of utility infrastructure to promote investments, standards and facilities that meet the needs of businesses in the locations where development is needed.

**Policy ED-33 Support freight movement.** Serve Aberdeen’s employment centers with appropriate freight routes and multimodal transportation system to keep freight moving.

**Policy ED-34 Ensure employment land availability.** Ensure there is land available for economic growth and promote strategies to increase the utilization of underdeveloped properties.

**Policy ED-35** Consider and evaluate potential uses of tax increment financing to fund major infrastructure and other capital projects in the City.



*Figure 4-5. Logging truck on Highway 101 downtown.*

*Source: MAKERS*



# Implementation

1. **Regional partnerships.** Facilitate an ongoing economic development collaborative comprised of local economic development entities, neighboring cities, and other stakeholders to solidify regional partnerships, gauge and respond to changing industry needs, ensure seamless planning, and encourage retention and attraction of living wage jobs.
2. **Technical and financial support for entrepreneurs.** Partner with organizations that provide venture capital and technical assistance to startup businesses and existing small and minority-owned businesses.
3. **Prioritize downtown.** As the gateway to Aberdeen and the home to many commercial employers, downtown is part of Aberdeen’s brand and functions as a marketing tool to businesses and investors. Maintaining a vibrant, safe, and attractive downtown will help support economic development and job creation throughout the entire city. Prioritize and focus public investments in downtown to achieve a combined impact that is greater than the sum of its parts.
4. **Pursue grants and new funding strategies** such as Opportunity Zones and Washington State’s new tax increment financing law (passed by the legislature in 2021). Target these tools in focused areas such as downtown so that there is a critical mass of investment that is visible and transformative.
5. **Development opportunity study.** Create a property redevelopment assistance program to support private property owners in conducting feasibility studies for priority opportunity sites in downtown and elsewhere. High-level feasibility studies could assess market, environmental, and physical conditions to identify market opportunities as well as barriers to development that must be addressed. Explore grants and other funding tools, mentioned above, to fund this program.
6. **Downtown parking.** Create additional parking downtown for short- and long-term use or create incentives for private parking that is available for public use.
7. **Explore an alternate highway route.** Convene a working group with public agency partners (e.g., WSDOT) and private stakeholders to explore and pursue alternative routes for the highway alignment.
8. **TIF.** Conduct a feasibility study for one or more potential new tax increment financing (TIF) districts, especially in areas of the City that are unlikely to redevelop without significant capital or infrastructure investments.



# Transportation Element

CHAPTER

5

Aberdeen  
Comprehensive  
Plan

# What is this chapter about?

This chapter is about the transportation system in and around Aberdeen. Aberdeen is served by multiple modes of transportation, including personal vehicles, public transit, freight trains, freight trucks, marine travel, and non-motorized modes. This chapter lays out the goals and policies that will support improvements and expansion to the existing systems and presents a vision for the future transportation system that will support the economy and people of Aberdeen.



*Figure 5-1 Chehalis River Bridge. Source: Ted Wiseman*

# Why is this important?

Aberdeen is a crossroads, a gateway, a destination, and a community. The transportation system supports all of these uses, from local residents on their way to work or school, to freight trains bringing goods to the port, to tourists on their way to the beaches.

These uses also conflict. Freight trains block access into commercial and industrial areas. Tourists passing through bring traffic to a standstill. Local residents are disconnected from many areas of the city. As the region grows/changes and traffic increases, so do the conflicts. Growth or geographic shifts in residents creates more local traffic. Growth at the Port and other industries brings more trains and semi-trucks. This transportation element gives the City an opportunity to plan for that growth and ensure there is an efficient multimodal transportation system developed to meet the future needs of the City.



# Goals

- Goal T-1 System.** Maintain and enhance a coordinated, efficient, multimodal transportation system.
- Goal T-2 Safety and human health.** Focus on safety and design a transportation system for people that promotes positive health outcomes through active transportation, physical activity, and convenient access to healthcare, recreation, schools, and other destinations.
- Goal T-3 Layered benefits.** Design and implement transportation systems that positively impact multiple goals—human, economic, and environmental health.
- Goal T-4 Economic prosperity.** Support a strong and diverse economy with a transportation system designed for Aberdeen to maintain its role as a Port city and regional commercial hub by providing efficient and reliable goods movement, enhanced freight access to industrial areas and intermodal freight facilities, multimodal access to employment districts and schools, as well as balancing rail/freight and human safety and delight considerations.
- Goal T-5 Equity.** Foster safe, efficient, convenient, and affordable modes of transportation equitably across Aberdeen.
- Goal T-6 Environmental health.** Encourage an environmentally sustainable transportation system that is increasingly reliant on active transportation, renewable energy, or electricity from renewable sources to reduce air pollution, water pollution, noise, and reliance on private vehicles.
- Goal T-7 Fiscal responsibility.** Analyze and prioritize capital and operating investments to cost effectively achieve the above goals and responsibly manage existing assets.

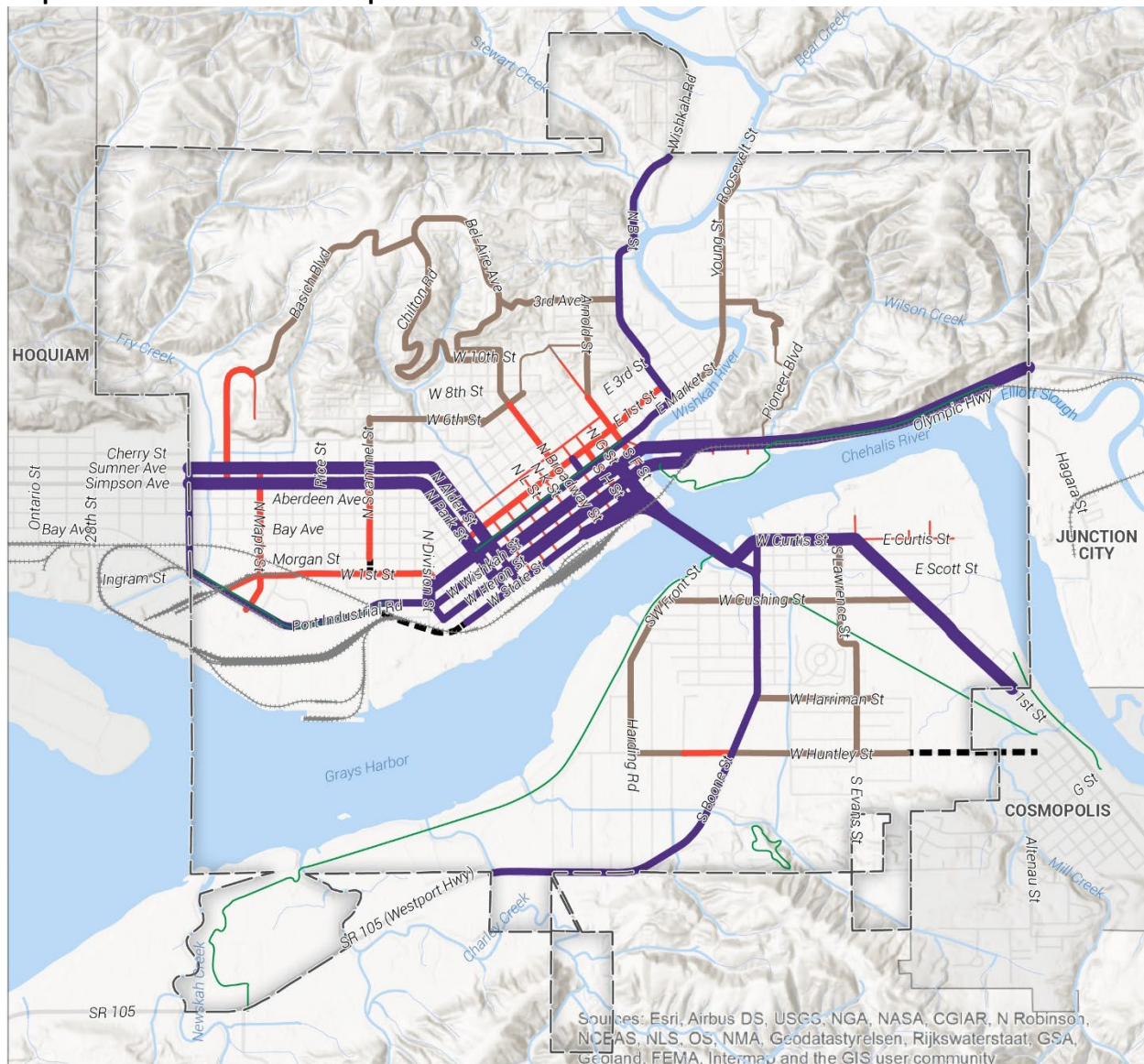
Also see the Aberdeen Local Road Safety Plan.

# Policies

## Streets as Public Spaces

Streets are public spaces with a variety of uses. Not only do they provide for travel around the community, they also serve as gathering spaces, event centers, places to exercise and get fresh air, and where neighbors meet. Streets can define a place, and street improvements can create a place.

**Map 5-1 Road Classifications Map**

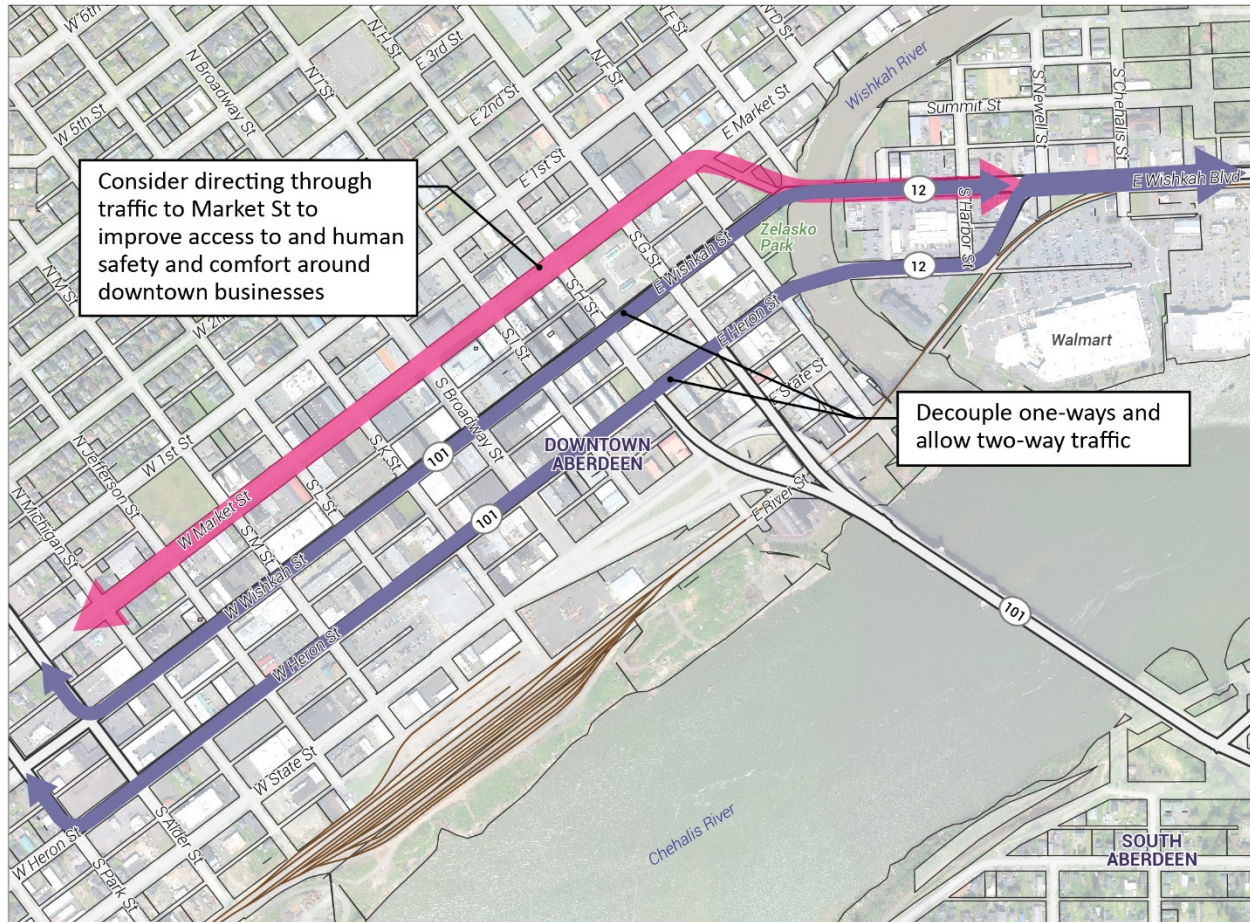


- Policy T-1 Street standards.** Develop and apply street and sidewalk design standards consistent with the urban form framework, environmental context, and land use plans. See Map 2-1 for street types to inform street standards.
- Policy T-2 Complete streets.** New streets and improvements to existing streets should be designed to comply with the Complete Streets ordinance.
- Policy T-3 Multiple functions.** Layer functions that meet multiple objectives, such as green stormwater infrastructure for rainwater storage and facilities for people walking, biking, and rolling for active living.
- Policy T-4 Safe streets.** To increase safety, promote methods that slow down pass-through traffic downtown while remaining efficient for freight movements.
- Policy T-5 Plan for the future.** During the review process for new development or redevelopment, ensure that sufficient right-of-way for bicycle and pedestrian improvements is secured.
- Policy T-6 Connections.** Improve interconnectivity by prioritizing active transportation linkages and connections in the multi-modal system, especially on lower volume roads.
- Policy T-7 Downtown mobility.** Continue exploring opportunities to improve multimodal mobility through downtown Aberdeen that increases accessibility to downtown businesses, such as rerouting highway US-12/US-101 to allow two-way local traffic on downtown streets. See Map 5-2 Potential Downtown Highway Routing on page 69.



*Figure 5-2. Varied streetscapes in Aberdeen. Source: MAKERS*



**Map 5-2 Potential Downtown Highway Routing Alternative**

## Sustainable Transportation System

A sustainable transportation system accomplishes the following:

- Has options that meet the needs of all users
- Can withstand changes in the future to the climate, the economy, and the land uses
- Reduces environmental impacts

**Policy T-8 Encourage alternative transit options.** Encourage car-sharing, ride-sharing, and on-call transit service for travel outside of bus hours or service areas. Encourage large businesses to offer ride share incentives or provide supplemental van transport to minimize vehicular pressure on main roads and parking availability.

- Policy T-9 Efficiency.** Develop and maintain an efficient and cost-effective street system that serves the existing and future population, considers multimodal uses, reduces the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita, minimizes transportation delays and impacts to neighborhoods, and minimizes the disruption of the natural environment.
- Policy T-10 Electric vehicles (EV).** Increase electric vehicle charging options throughout the city to promote shift towards electric vehicles.
- Policy T-11 EV charging infrastructure.** Encourage new commercial and multifamily housing to provide at least one EV charger for tenants, owners, and guests.
- Policy T-12 Efficient street lighting.** Manage street lighting need by applying lighting standards and using lamps that will assure safe and effective illumination at minimum cost and energy use.



*Figure 5-3. Electric vehicle charging. Source: Chuttersnap.*

## Social Equity

Aberdeen's transportation system was historically designed for wagons and foot traffic. Advancements brought trains, automobiles, and semi-trucks. Today's transportation system users are much more diverse: bicyclists, mobility impaired, skateboarders, strollers, runners, and those who depend on public transit all compete for their space within the transportation system. Considering the needs of all users when making decisions will improve equity of the transportation system.

- Policy T-13 Eliminate barriers.** Provide a multimodal transportation system that is safe and accessible for users of all ages and levels of mobility.
- Policy T-14 Transit service.** Coordinate with Grays Harbor Transit to ensure safe, efficient, equitable transit service to Aberdeen's neighborhood centers and destinations, and other regional destinations.
- Policy T-15 Reduce impacts.** Reduce impacts from construction projects on local businesses and residents, particularly in low-income and vulnerable neighborhoods.

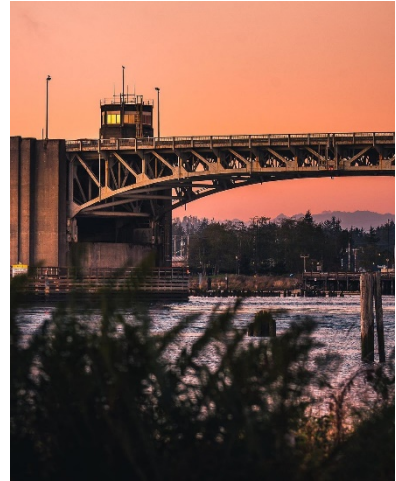


*Figure 5-4. Aberdeen station facilitates transfers between transit and other modes. Source: MAKERS.*

## Maintenance and Resilience

A resilient transportation system is one that will continue to function after disruptions, such as changes in demand, lack of resources, or natural disasters. From a maintenance perspective, resiliency is planning ahead to manage future growth and future conditions, minimizing failures, reducing costs, and continuing to function as needed to support human health and the economy.

- Policy T-16 Bridges.** Continue to implement bridge maintenance and replacement programs.
- Policy T-17 Existing streets.** Maintain the existing street system with preservation projects focused on extending life and reducing the cost of street maintenance.
- Policy T-18 Residential streets.** Prioritize and plan for phased repairs and improvements of residential streets.
- Policy T-19 New streets.** Ensure streets and sidewalks are provided as land is developed, by requiring developers to install on- and off-site street and safety improvements based on a minimum standard and designed to meet future needs for all modes of travel.
- Policy T-20 System redundancy.** Ensure adequate connections are maintained or provided with new development to accommodate multiple evacuation or emergency routes.
- Policy T-21 Sidewalks maintenance.** Prioritize and plan for sidewalk repair and improvements.



*Figure 5-5. Chehalis River Bridge. Source: Ted Wiseman.*

## Active Transportation

The City adopted an Active Living and Transportation Master Plan in 2015. The purpose of the plan was to identify the vision and priorities for the non-motorized network. The plan identifies the types of facilities and improvements needed to meet the vision.

- Policy T-22 Accessibility.** Provide an active transportation system that is safe and accessible for users of all ages and levels of mobility.
- Policy T-23 Implementation.** Update as needed to align with the Centers and Corridors Strategy and implement the Active Living and Transportation Master Plan which provides for a safe, coordinated system of bikeways, walkways, and trails, including through routes, to meet existing and anticipated needs for active transportation. Continue expanding trails and pedestrian/bicycle routes.



**Policy T-24 Expanding the system.** Require new development, infill development, and redevelopments to provide active transportation facilities along their street frontage where appropriate or identified within the Active Living and Transportation Master Plan.

**Policy T-25 Bicycle parking with development.** Require secure bicycle parking in new commercial, industrial, and multifamily housing developments.

**Policy T-26 Bicycle infrastructure in public places.** Provide secure bicycle parking at public destinations throughout the City, such as recreation areas, neighborhood centers, parks, schools, transit facilities, medical centers, and City Hall.

## Implementation

1. Adopt street classification and street design standards for improvements and new roads. Develop and adopt a street classification map for existing city streets.
2. Ensure that development pays for on- and off-site transportation system improvements proportional to their impacts. Adopt standards that require mitigation of on- and off-site impacts to the transportation system due to private development and redevelopment.
3. Continue to maximize the Transportation Benefit District funding by securing grants and other funding sources to supplement City funding.
4. Review and update development regulations to ensure there are no barriers for the installation of electric vehicle charging stations. Consider adopting development regulations as described in RCW 35.63.126.
5. Continue working towards construction of the US 12 Highway-Rail Separation Project and promoting other projects that provide for vehicle, pedestrian, and rail separation.
6. Prioritize and update, if necessary, the proposed actions within the Active Transportation and Living Plan. Include availability or applicability of funding sources as a prioritization criteria to ensure the top priorities can be implemented to create momentum for future projects. Priority actions include:
  - a. Complete the missing links to the city's trail systems, such as the Chehalis River Trail around Seaport and to the Basich Trailway.
  - b. Continue advocating for bike lanes on the US 101 Chehalis River Bridge.

- c. Advocate for a pedestrian overpass on the south side of the US 101 Chehalis River Bridge.
  - d. Establish public paths across steep topography per the Active Living and Transportation Plan’s Stair Walk Conceptual Map.
  - e. Clarify community priorities for safe, comfortable bicycle routes, especially along/near the Sumner/Simpson Ave corridor.
- 7.** Create additional parking downtown for short- and long-term use or create incentives for private parking that is available for public use.
  - 8.** To support industrial growth and redevelopment, identify and reserve freight corridors to ensure efficient access that minimizes impact to the City’s transportation system.
  - 9.** Prioritize and implement projects based on the Local Road Safety Plan.
  - 10.** Develop a vision for green corridors and update the Centers and Corridors Strategy.

# Capital Facilities Element

CHAPTER

6

Aberdeen  
Comprehensive  
Plan



# What is this chapter about?

Capital facilities are those things necessary to maintain the livelihood of a community, as provided by local governmental agencies. Capital facilities and services play a large role in determining what kind, where, when and how much development will occur. Public and private utilities support the community and the economy. The intent of this element is to serve as a framework to encourage coordinated and comprehensive planning efforts, including routine maintenance, upgrading schedules, new construction, timing and funding sources and capabilities, to more efficiently provide these services. It is also focused on ensuring these utilities are able to adequately support the needs of the city now and into the future in a timely and cost-effective manner. Utilities include water, wastewater, stormwater, solid waste, electric, natural gas, and telecommunications.



*Figure 6-1. Electric infrastructure is an example of an essential public facility.*

Source: MAKERS

# Why is this important?

Adequate roads, water supply, wastewater, fire and police protection, parks, libraries, and other public facilities are necessary to support the residents of Aberdeen. Capital facilities protect the public health, safety, and welfare of residents, and help maintain the economy of a community. But capital facilities also have costs of constructing and maintaining the facilities over time. Utilities make living in cities possible; they serve our everyday needs by providing drinking water, heating and lighting our house, allowing us to communicate, and keeping the City and the economy functioning. Planning for capital facilities and utilities can ensure that they are provided as the community grows, and that the community is able to maintain, improve, and expand the facilities in the future.

# Goals

- Goal CF-1 Support envisioned land uses.** Maintain safe and financially feasible facilities to support community services and infrastructure for Aberdeen’s population, jobs, and changing conditions.
- Goal CF-2 Location and design.** Locate and design facilities for reliability, resilience, human and environmental health, and to support Aberdeen’s Centers and Corridors.
- Goal CF-3 Health, equity, prosperity, and environment.** Invest in capital facilities and services to improve equitable service provision, support economic prosperity, and human and environmental health.

- Goal CF-4 Level of service standards.** Establish and uphold level of service standards for City facilities and services to meet community goals and the Centers and Corridors strategy.
- Goal CF-5 Development.** Maintain capacity data and require new development to uphold level of service standards.
- Goal CF-6 Regional coordination.** Coordinate with the City of Cosmopolis, City of Hoquiam, and Grays Harbor County to ensure cost-effectiveness and efficient service coverage.
- Goal CF-7 Support existing and future development.** Build, maintain, upgrade, site, and design public utilities to protect public health, safety, and the environment; ensure services are equitably distributed Aberdeen-wide; accommodate population and employment growth; and be efficient, sustainable, cost-effective, and resilient.
- Goal CF-8 Water supply.** Protect and maintain an adequate water supply and distribution system for Aberdeen’s population and businesses.



*Figure 6-2. Flood control projects like the Southside levee increase resilience to flood events. Source: MAKERS*

## Policies

### Sustainable Capital Facilities and Fleet

Having a policy of sustainable capital facilities will help Aberdeen to become more efficient and meet the City’s needs now and into the future. Sustainability ensures the facilities will withstand growth and other impacts, and the City will be able to maintain and repair facilities over time.

- Policy CF-1 Essential public facilities.** Ensure that essential public facilities are sited and designed to be resilient to or avoid natural disaster risks.
- Policy CF-2 Prioritize resilient facilities.** Prioritize capital projects that increase Aberdeen’s resilience to climate change and hazards.
- Policy CF-3 Flood control projects.** Continue supporting the levee and flood control projects.
- Policy CF-4 Natural disaster preparedness.** Plan for the impacts of climate change, flooding, tsunami, and other hazards.

- Policy CF-5 Efficient fleet.** Reduce fossil fuel use in the city’s vehicle fleet through investments in alternative and fuel-efficient vehicles, driver training, and frequent vehicle maintenance.
- Policy CF-6 Conserve.** Facilitate and encourage conservation of resources to delay the need for additional facilities.
- Policy CF-7 Efficient buildings and landscape.** Design and construct new buildings to be energy efficient, reduce fossil fuel use, conserve water resources, and be cost-effective. Audit energy use within existing capital facility buildings and make improvements to conserve energy and resources.

## Resilient Open Spaces

Parks and open space contribute to the quality of life of Aberdeen’s residents. Not only do parks and open spaces provide access to recreation and nature, they can also make a community more resilient to natural disasters and improve the health of the environment.

- Policy CF-8 Protect natural areas.** Protect and steward open spaces that provide green infrastructure—trees, natural stormwater drainage and retention, and natural areas—to minimize flooding and landslide risks and reduce urban heat island effects.
- Policy CF-9 Optimize.** Select locations for new parks and open spaces both to optimize environmental outcomes and to improve equity by distributing benefits in accordance with need.
- Policy CF-10 Stewardship.** Protect and steward environmental critical areas within the city.
- Policy CF-11 Low impact.** Promote green stormwater infrastructure and low impact development, such as natural areas and landscaped natural drainage facilities, to manage stormwater.



*Figure 6-3. Natural open spaces have benefits for residents, wildlife, and disaster resilience.*  
Source: MAKERS

## Equitable Facilities and Services

Capital facilities provide basic needs to city residents, but the facilities or services are not always distributed equally or equitably. Some residents may have more challenging access to facilities and services or may depend on those services and facilities more than other residents. Considering the needs of all residents when making decisions on capital facilities will improve equity.

- Policy CF-12 Fill in the gaps.** Reduce any disparities or gaps in service to provide equitable access to capital facilities and ensure fair access to infrastructure.



- Policy CF-13 Accessibility.** Locate capital facilities where they are easily accessed by their users.
- Policy CF-14 Eliminate barriers.** Ensure capital facilities are safe and accessible for all users, especially those with limited mobility or other special needs.
- Policy CF-15 Reduce impacts.** Avoid disproportionate construction impacts or service impacts.
- Policy CF-16 Efficiency improvements.** Promote weatherization programs for existing buildings, including subsidizing materials for people with low-income and providing information to the Aberdeen community.

## Meet Current and Future Needs

One of the greatest barriers to urban growth or maintenance is infrastructure. Roads, utilities, fire protection, and other capital facilities support Aberdeen’s current and future population and businesses. But expanding, enhancing, and maintaining capital facilities takes funding and other resources which may not be readily available. Managing and planning for growth is necessary to ensure Aberdeen’s capital facilities remain viable into the future.

- Policy CF-17 Infill and redevelop.** Encourage infill and redevelopment within the areas already served by infrastructure to reduce the costs associated with expansion and additional maintenance.
- Policy CF-18 Utilities for industrial development.** Maintain existing utilities that support industry such as the City’s Industrial Water System and promote new and expanded utilities that support new industrial development.
- Policy CF-19 Regional approach.** Encourage and participate in developing a coordinated regional approach to siting, managing, and maintaining capital facilities.
- Policy CF-20 Concurrency.** Ensure new development and redevelopment pay their fair share to mitigate impacts to capital facility systems concurrently with the development.
- Policy CF-21 Internal consistency.** Coordinate planning for capital facilities with the land use element.

**Policy CF-22 Service and facility planning.** Continue updating service and facility plans for the following systems:

- a. Transportation
- b. Water and sewer
- c. Industrial Water System
- d. Stormwater and Flood Protection
- e. Parks and recreation
- f. Emergency services (police, fire, and medical response)

## Transition to Renewable Energy Sources

As the City grows, the demand on energy systems also increases. By supporting and encouraging the transition to renewable energy sources, the City is taking their part in the effort to reduce greenhouse gasses and other emissions that contribute to climate change and rising sea levels.

**Policy CF-23 Reduce carbon emissions.** Support and advocate for local and regional strategies that reduce carbon emissions and support the transition of the local electrical grid to clean and renewable energy sources.

**Policy CF-24 Microgrids.** Support creation of microgrids, in association with public entities or private development, for ensuring emergency power supply in the event of an emergency and to create a resilient grid.

**Policy CF-25 Energy sources.** Ensure existing codes, regulations, and programs under the City’s control support and promote electric and renewable non-carbon-based sources of energy.

**Policy CF-26 Efficient use of resources.** Facilitate and encourage conservation of resources to delay the need for additional facilities.



*Figure 6-4. Rooftop solar panels provide clean, renewable, carbon-free energy. Source: MAKERS*

## Resilient Utility Infrastructure

A resilient utility system is one that will continue to function after disruptions, such as changes in the climate, natural disasters, changes in demand, or lack of resources. From a maintenance perspective, resiliency is planning ahead to manage future growth and future conditions, minimizing failures, reducing costs, and continuing to function as needed to support human health and the economy.

**Policy CF-27 Infrastructure resilience.** Increase the resilience of high-risk and critical infrastructure through monitoring, planning, siting outside of hazard areas where possible, maintenance, investment, adaptive technology, and continuity planning.

**Policy CF-28 Undergrounding.** Locate new electrical and communication lines underground where possible and practical. Encourage providers to underground existing lines as well.

**Policy CF-29 Water supply.** Promote water use efficiency and acquire additional watershed lands to meet and protect water supply needs.

**Policy CF-30 Reduce Solid Waste.** Encourage a solid waste strategy with reduces the solid waste stream by recycling and other means. Support county-wide waste diversion services to include single stream curbside recycling.

**Policy CF-31 Sustainable funding.** Structure rates and fees for city-operated utilities to recover all costs, including overhead, related to the extension, operation, and maintenance of those utilities to avoid the need for deferring maintenance and other necessary improvements.

**Policy CF-32 Private partnerships.** Assign costs for utility extensions and installations for new development and recently annexed areas to developer or property owners. Assist in formulation of Utility Local Improvement Districts (ULIDs) for major utility or street improvement projects.



# Implementation

1. Through Aberdeen’s Capital Facility planning process, adopt level of service standards to measure system performance and evaluate future facility needs. Adopt requirements to ensure the facilities are expanded or improved concurrently with development.
2. Study and identify feasible vertical evacuation strategies to increase community resilience against future tsunamis.
3. Continue supporting and pursuing state and federal funding sources to construct more regional facilities that will provide more efficient, consistent, and cost-effective service to the region, such as the regional wastewater system.
4. Require that public facilities, services, and improvements should reduce carbon impact through design, efficiency upgrades, choice of building materials, purchasing electric vehicles, etc.
5. Encourage new City fleet vehicles to include electric or hydrogen vehicles to reach 70% by 2040.
6. Review and update zoning and development codes and other regulatory programs to address priority climate actions, including solar-ready development, electric vehicle infrastructure, tree canopy preservation and enhancement, and green or low impact development stormwater systems. Continue to support and implement the City’s Greenhouse Gas Policy (Resolution 2011-05).
7. Review and update development codes and other regulatory programs to address barriers that may restrict the siting and use of small renewable energy systems or microgrids within the city.
8. Encourage energy efficient electric appliances and heating systems in new multifamily and commercial construction.
9. Explore public funding resources to create incentive programs for homeowners looking to electrify their homes.
10. Identify funding to provide low-income homeowners the opportunity to increase their home’s energy efficiency.
11. Identify potential opportunities (e.g., new developments, campuses, etc.) through climate action planning.