



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN INTRODUCTION

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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND –Past, Present and Future

I. BAINBRIDGE ISLAND HISTORY

The Historic Preservation Commission has prepared a lengthy historical narrative, which will be considered for adoption as an appendix to the Plan. The HPC has been tasked with preparing a condensed summary for inclusion in this part of the Plan’s Introduction. They expect to have that draft ready by mid-July.

II. BAINBRIDGE ISLAND TODAY

People

The population of the Island is 91% white and well educated. With the majority of the population above 45 years of age, the composition of the Bainbridge Island population is markedly different than that of both Kitsap County and Washington State. The median age for Bainbridge Island is nearly 10 years older than that of Kitsap County and nearly 12 years older than that of Washington State.

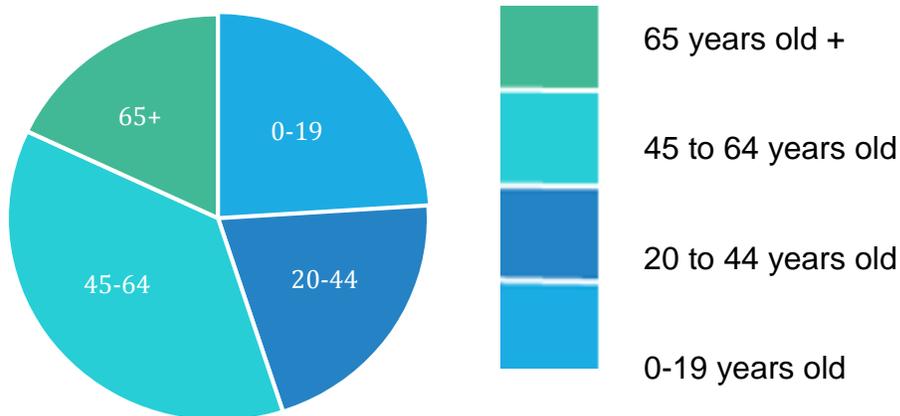
Figure 1 - Population age cohorts 2000 to 2019



Source: 2000-2010 U.S. Census and Experian Census Area Projections & Estimates

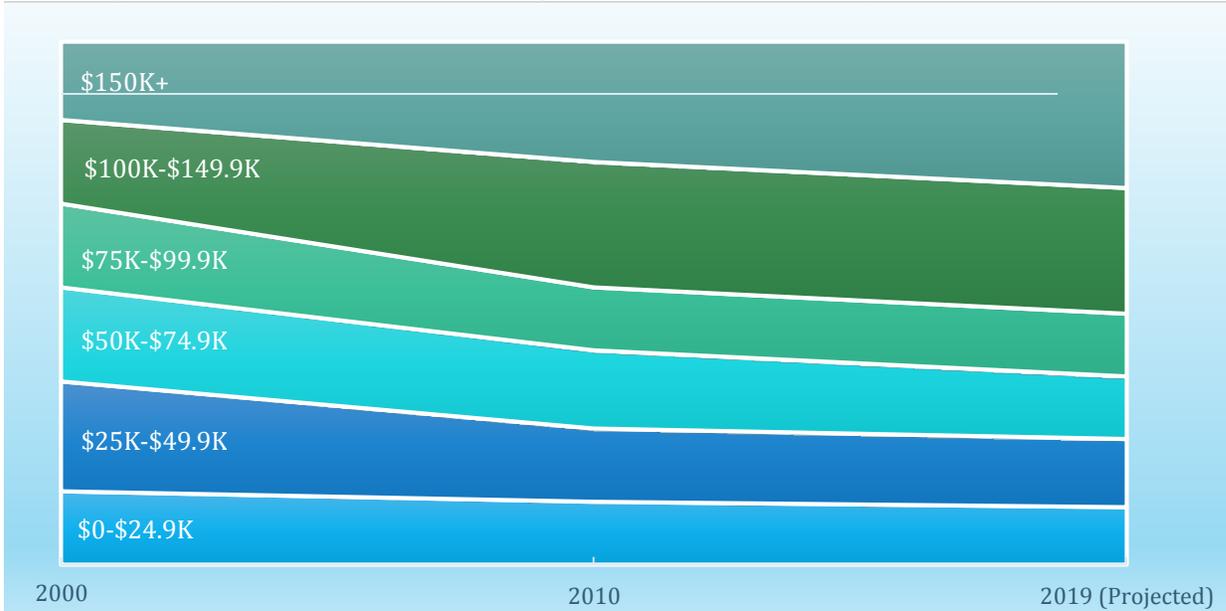
The median age of Bainbridge Islanders in 2016 is 49 years old.

Figure 2 – Population by Age Cohort in 2016



Bainbridge Island's population is relatively affluent. The trend line from the years 2000 through 2019 indicates relative increases in yearly household incomes above \$100,000 and corresponding decreases in the percentage of households earning below \$100,000.

Figure 3 - Proportion of Bainbridge Island Households by Income Brackets

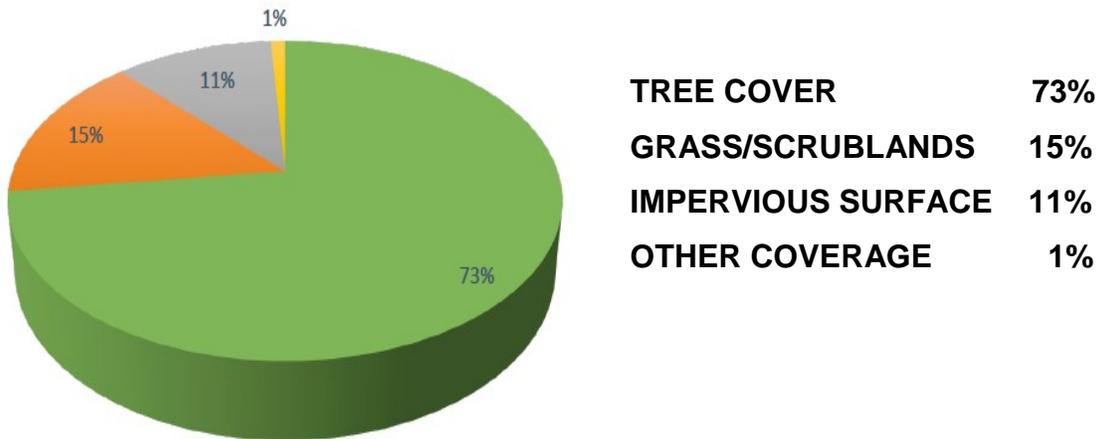


Source: 2000-2010 U.S. Census and Experian Census Area Projections & Estimates

Island-wide Land Profiles

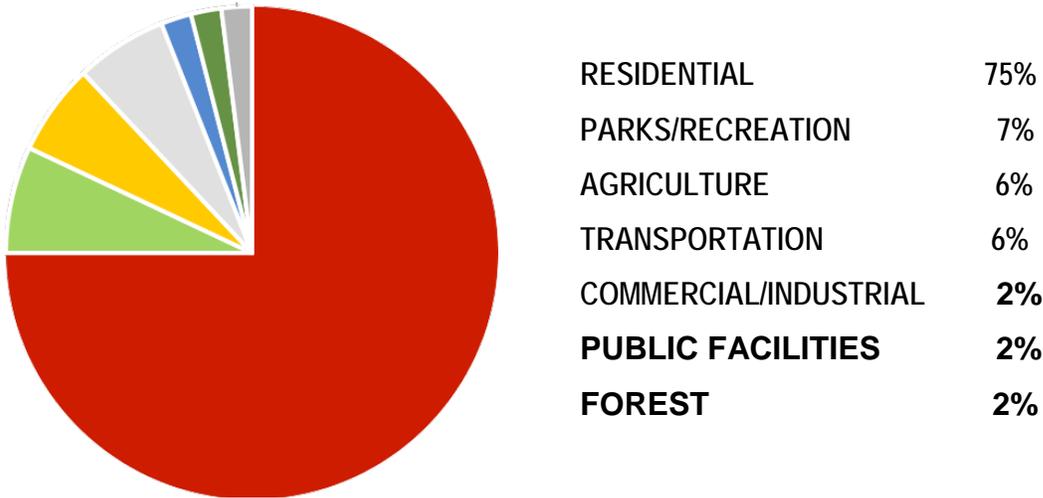
Almost 88% of the twenty-six square miles of the Island's land coverage is either tree cover or grass/scrublands. The developed portions of the Island constitute impervious surface totaling about 11% of its land area.

Figure 4 – Land Coverage Types



The predominant land use on Bainbridge Island is residential (75%), with forest, agriculture, parks/recreational lands totalling another 15%. The remaining 10% of the Island is transportation (6%), Commercial/Industrial (2%) and Public Facilities (2%).

Figure 5 – Land Use Types



III. THE BAINBRIDGE ISLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The authority and requirements for the City of Bainbridge Island to adopt and update its Comprehensive Plan (the **Plan**) is contained in the Growth Management Act (**GMA**) (RCW 36.70A). The GMA requires that the plan be reviewed and updated at least every eight years, which means that the periodic update cycle for Bainbridge Island is 2016, 2024, 2032, and following.

The GMA requires that the Plan have sufficient land capacity and urban services adequate to accommodate at least the next twenty years of growth, although the City may choose to adopt policies and strategies with an even longer time frame. For example, sustainability goals, policies or strategies may have a multi-decade or even multi-generational perspective.

What a Comprehensive Plan is and isn't

The GMA definition of a Plan is:

"Comprehensive land use plan," "comprehensive plan," or "plan" means a generalized coordinated land use policy statement of the governing body of a county or city that is adopted pursuant to this chapter."

Thus, the Bainbridge Island Comprehensive Plan is a "policy statement" that

provides important direction to a variety of city actions, including, but not limited to, the adoption of its capital budget and its development regulations. However, the Plan is not a “land use control” which means that it is not designed or intended to be applied directly to development permits.

The GMA definition of development regulations is:

“Development regulations” or “regulation” means the controls placed on development or land use activities by a . . . city, including, but not limited to, zoning ordinances, critical areas ordinances, shoreline master programs, official controls, planned unit development ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and binding site plan ordinances together with any amendments thereto . . .”

The GMA also states:

“Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 *shall perform its activities* and make capital budget decisions in conformity with its comprehensive plan.”

The “shall perform its activities” phrase suggests broader application of comprehensive plan policies than simply codes and capital budgets. On Bainbridge Island, the City maintains a number of functional plans, such as the City’s utilities plans as well as programs it funds and administers through its budget. The City also coordinates with other units of local government, e.g., the Bainbridge Island School, Fire, and Parks districts, each of which maintains its own programs and functional or operational plans. These are inventoried in the “Capital Facilities Element.”

How is the Comprehensive Plan used?

The Vision, Guiding Principles and Policies in this section of the Comprehensive Plan provide substantive direction to all of the Plan Elements as well as the City’s budget and work program priorities. They also provide direction to the City’s functional plans such as its parks, storm water and utilities plans.

In addition, the Vision, Guiding Principles and Policies communicate the City’s priorities to the other units of government responsible for providing services to the Island community. This includes the Bainbridge Island Fire, Park and School Districts, and the Washington State Department of Transportation, all of which prepare functional and operating plans to provide their respective services and facilities to Island residents.

Types and degrees of policy direction

The Elements in this Comprehensive Plan consist of Goals and Policies. Goals express the high-rank order values that are most important to the Island community. They are aspirational, frequently describing desired outcomes. The Policies listed under each Goal identify strategies or specific actions to be taken to move the community in the direction of fulfilling the Goal.

Depending on the issue and the Element, the Goals and Policies may provide direction to the City Council, the Planning Commission, the Hearing Examiner and City staff. Some of the actions will take the form of land use or other regulations; others will be capital projects or programs; and still others may take the form of outreach, education, coordination or partnership with citizens, organizations or other units of government.

The goal and policy statements sometimes use very directive verbs, such as “maintain” or “adopt”. In other cases, less directive verbs are used, such as “consider” or “encourage.” The more directive verbs convey a higher rank order of policy direction. Directive goal or policy language may call for the updating of development regulations, however, that does not convert them into controls or conditions that can be directly applied to a permit decision.

A similar distinction can be made between the auxiliary verbs “should” and “shall.” Both terms are used in the Comprehensive Plan and it is intended that both provide substantive direction. The difference in meaning between “should” and “shall” is one of degree rather than kind. As used in this Plan, the word “shall” imparts a higher order of substantive direction than the word “should.” However, as with the active verbs, the use of “shall” remains substantive policy direction, not a land use control within the GMA meaning and definitions cited above.

How and when may the Comprehensive Plan be amended?

In addition to the eight-year cycle for the periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan, the GMA also includes requirements regarding potential plan amendments in the intervening years. Set forth at RCW 36.70A.130, these include:

- A comprehensive plan may be amended only once in any calendar year.
- All proposed plan amendments, including those initiated by private parties or by the City, should be considered concurrently to determine the cumulative effect of the proposals.
- Procedures must be adopted for any interested person to suggest amendments to either the Comprehensive Plan or development regulations.
- A city must establish a means by which it will “docket” (i.e., compile and maintain a list) of all suggested plan or development regulation amendments and consider whether or not to adopt them during the amendment process.
- Public participation programs must be developed and followed for proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan or development regulations.
- Exceptions to the once-a-year limitation on plan amendments include: the initial adoption of a subarea plan; the adoption or amendment of a Shoreline Master Program; the amendment of the capital facilities element that occurs concurrently with the adoption of the city budget; when the city is under a remand order from either the Growth Hearings Board of a court; and when the City declares an emergency.

IV. VISION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND POLICIES

This section contains the Island's Vision, an aspirational description of the community's desired future. The values and priorities in the Vision are served and advanced through this Comprehensive Plan and its implementing actions. This section also contains eight guiding principles that connect the Vision to the elements of the Comprehensive Plan. These eight principles affirm, clarify and update the five principles in the 2004 version of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Guiding Principles are at the top of the Plan's hierarchy of substantive and directive policy. Grouped below and serving each Principle are several Guiding Policies. These provide further specific direction to the Goals and Policies in the Plan's Elements.

VISION - Bainbridge Island 2036 and Beyond

Bainbridge Island is notable for its beauty, its maritime climate, its location between Seattle and the Olympic Peninsula, and its support of the arts. The island consists of beaches and harbors, forests and fields, trails and two-lane country roads, homes and businesses surrounded by the waters of Puget Sound. We are defined as much by the water around us as by the ground beneath our feet.

Bainbridge has a rich natural and cultural history including a long presence of indigenous people, followed more recently by European and Asian immigrants who built timber, maritime and agricultural economies. Contemporary Bainbridge Island is home to a diverse mix of people including farmers, artists, students, business professionals, retirees, and is hospitable to visitors.

The people of Bainbridge aspire to accommodate inevitable growth while protecting the wildlife habitat, watersheds, shorelines, open space, and the air and water quality of the island. We welcome innovative ideas, industrious business people, new and traditional cultures, and people of all ages and backgrounds. We strive to provide quality housing, education, health care, and business, recreational, and cultural opportunities for all of our inhabitants. We embrace local food sources, renewable energy, and paths for biking and walking.

Global warming and the impacts of climate change are major issues for our generation, and will be for the foreseeable future. We recognize that it will be challenging to adapt to the environmental and economic changes that we will face in the decades ahead. The good will, imagination, and pragmatism of our citizens will foster a compassionate environment in which we listen to, learn from, and engage with all the people who live here. There is no word for exclusion in the Lushootseed language of Puget Sound.

The people of Bainbridge Island understand that it will take an active approach to not only maintain, but restore and enhance the condition of the island if we expect to continue enjoying its bounty. Island residents balance personal interests with concern for the community and the environment. As the island's population increases, we will manage our lands and waters thoughtfully, with innovative planning policies.

Bainbridge citizens embrace the challenges of our future. That future calls on residents and visitors alike to actively participate in shaping a joyful, stable, and sustainable community, where its present and future generations are stewards of the land and keepers of its culture.

Eight Guiding Principles and Policies

Guiding Principle #1

Preserve the special character of the Island, which includes downtown Winslow’s small town atmosphere, historic buildings, extensive forested areas, meadows, farms, marine views, and scenic and scenic and winding roads supporting all forms of transportation.

Guiding Policy 1.1

Adopt an island-wide conservation plan to identify and apply effective strategies to preserve the natural and scenic qualities that make the Island a special place, including better protections for trees, soils, and native plants.

Guiding Policy 1.2

Accommodate new growth in *designated centers* that meet the Island’s identified needs for housing, services and jobs-while respecting conservation and environmental protection priorities.

Guiding Policy 1.3

The built environment represents an important element of the Island’s special character. Improve the quality of new development through a review process that implements the community vision and supports long-term goals for the preservation of the Island’s special character.

Guiding Principle # 2

Protect the water resources of the Island.

Guiding Policy 2.1

Manage water resources for Bainbridge Island for present and future generations, recognizing that the Island’s finite groundwater resources [aquifers] are the sole source of our water supply.

Guiding Policy 2.2

As part of long-range land use planning, consider the impacts of future development to the quality and quantity of groundwater that will be available to future Islanders and to the natural environment. To that end, strive for sustainable groundwater withdrawal, conserve aquifer recharge, guard against seawater intrusion, and prevent adverse impacts to ground water quality from surface pollution.

Guiding Policy 2.3

Preserve and protect the ecological functions and values of the Island’s aquatic resources.

Guiding Policy 2.4

Sea level rise may reduce the volume of our finite groundwater resources. Anticipate and prepare for the consequences of sea level rise to ensure ample quality and quantity of groundwater for future generations.

Guiding Policy 2.5

Create a Bainbridge Island groundwater management plan for the purpose of maintaining the long-term health of our fresh water aquifers.

Guiding Policy 2.6

Recognizing the importance of our ground water and other water resources to present and future generations of Bainbridge Islanders, apply the precautionary principle to activities that pose a potentially adverse impact upon those resources.

Guiding Policy 2.7

Allow for the reasonable needs of farms, home gardens, and domestic landscapes, when planning for the long-term sustainable use of the Island's finite groundwater resources.

Guiding Principle # 3

Foster diversity with a holistic approach to meeting the needs of the Island's and the human needs of the residents consistent with the stewardship of our finite environmental resources.

Guiding Policy 3.1

Ensure a variety of housing choices to meet the needs of present and future residents in all economic segments and promote plans, projects and proposals to create affordable housing.

Guiding Policy 3.2

Make budget decisions that adequately consider the well being of all Island residents with the goal of providing opportunities to be contributing members of the community.

Guiding Policy 3.3

Support, protect, and enhance the value of the arts and humanities as essential to education, quality of life, economic vitality, the broadening of mind and spirit, and as treasure in trust for our descendants.

Guiding Principle # 4

Consider the costs and benefits to Island residents and property owners in making land use decisions.

Guiding Policy 4.1

Respect private property rights protected by the State and U.S. Constitutions.

Guiding Policy 4.2

Recognize that private property rights are not, but must be balanced with necessary and reasonable regulation to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

Guiding Principle #5

The use of land on the Island should be based on the principle that the Island’s environmental resources are finite and must be maintained at a sustainable level.

Guiding Policy 5.1

Regulate all development on the Island consistent with the long-term health and carrying capacity of its natural systems.

Guiding Policy 5.2

Recognize that the sustainable use of the Island’s finite land base is a macro component of “green building” practices.

Guiding Policy 5.3

Preserve and enhance the Island’s natural systems, natural beauty and environmental quality.

Guiding Policy 5.4

Protect and enhance wildlife, fish resources and natural ecosystems on Bainbridge Island.

Guiding Principle #6

Address the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Guiding Policy 6.1

Within our plan, replace the state’s mandated 20-year plan horizon with a horizon of **one hundred years** in order to recognize the longer-term life cycles of natural systems. **Tailor green building practices, and public infrastructure investments to be in line with this longer-term perspective.**

Guiding Policy 6.2

Advance social equity on the Island by addressing basic human needs, including *affordable housing*, personal health and safety, mobility, and access to human services.

Guiding Policy 6.3

Seek appropriate ways to provide economic opportunities for all community residents within a diversified Island economy.

Guiding Principle #7

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the Island's climate resilience.

Guiding Policy 7.1

Mitigation: Participate with state, regional and local partners to reduce greenhouse gas emissions consistent with the 1990 benchmark and future year targets set forth in state law, educate the public about climate change and incentivize Island activities, including land use patterns and building practices that reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Guiding Policy 7.2

Adaptation: Minimize or ameliorate the impacts of climate change on our community and our Island's ecosystems through climate-informed policies, programs, and regulations.

Guiding Policy 7.3

Evaluate the climate vulnerabilities and implications of city actions and identify policies that alleviate those vulnerabilities. Consider the effects of shifting conditions (e.g., sea level rise, changing rainfall patterns, increasing temperatures and more extreme weather events) and the effects they cause (e.g., altered vegetation, changing water demands, economic shifts).

Guiding Principle #8

Support the Island's Guiding Principles and Policies through the City's organizational and operating budget decisions.

Guiding Policy 8.1

Promote good governance and an Island culture of citizenship, stewardship and civic engagement.

Guiding Policy 8.2

Update each City department's work program annually, allocate sufficient time and resources and provide needed policy direction to achieve consistency with and implement the Comprehensive Plan in a manner that is transparent and consistent with the community vision.

Guiding Policy 8.3

Grow a diversified and vibrant local economy.

Guiding Policy 8.4

Nurture a healthy and attractive community including a focus on the quality of the built environment through progressive development regulations and reviews.

Guiding Policy 8.5

Build reliable infrastructure and connected mobility that encourages physical activity such as biking and walking while also respecting the Island's scenic qualities.

Guiding Policy 8.6

Grow a green, well-planned, environmentally sustainable community.

Guiding Policy 8.7

Plan for a safe city where citizens, City officials, and Law Enforcement work together in an environment of accountability and trust.

Guiding Policy 8.8

In implementing policies, consider longer-term, indirect or unintended consequences of decisions.