



## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT INSTRUCTION GUIDE AND TIMELINE

This guide is intended to explain the comprehensive plan amendment process pursuant to City of Covington Municipal Code Chapter 14.25 and to provide guidance in completing an application for such an amendment. Also included in these instructions is the current year's timeline of specific dates and deadlines. Please direct any questions regarding this process to the Department of Community Development, at 253-480-2400 or via e-mail to [amueller@covingtonwa.gov](mailto:amueller@covingtonwa.gov).

### Purpose

The comprehensive plan is a document which guides the nature and intensity of development in the City of Covington. An amendment to the plan is a mechanism by which the city may periodically modify its land use, development, or growth policies to reinforce the role of the plan in guiding growth in our community. A comprehensive plan amendment may involve a related change in development regulations or the City's zoning map. Any proposal for a related development regulation or zoning map amendment should be included on the comprehensive plan amendment application and is subject to the same procedures and timeline.

### Application Period

The City Council will consider comprehensive plan amendments on an annual basis only (except for emergencies and certain other exemptions), as required by the State Growth Management Act (GMA). Privately initiated applications for an amendment may be submitted only during the period specified in the current year's timeline, by the deadline indicated at the top of these instructions.

*Note that proposals for changes to development regulations or the zoning map that do not require a comprehensive plan amendment follow the process outlined in Covington Municipal Code Chapter 14.27 and may be proposed at any time of the year.*

### Who May Apply?

Any person or entity (e.g., private citizens, groups, City departments, Planning Commission or City Council) may initiate a non site-specific amendment to the plan, i.e., a proposal to change the plan text language or a general modification of the City's future land use map. Only property owners or their authorized agents may initiate a site-specific amendment to the Plan.

An individual or group may seek sponsorship of a non site-specific comprehensive plan amendment from the City Council if they feel that it has broad significance for the public good of the City. If the Council agrees to sponsor an amendment, the application fee is waived. A Council-sponsored amendment proposal must be submitted by the deadline date above.

### Fee

Please refer to the City's current fee resolution for updated fees. Depending on the nature of the proposed amendment, a SEPA (environmental) checklist and additional applicable fee may be required before the application is considered by the Planning Commission.

### Procedure

1. Application
  - To propose a comprehensive plan amendment, an individual should fill out the application form (available online and at City Hall), provide any required materials, and pay the application fee. A pre-application meeting with City staff is strongly encouraged prior to submittal of an application. The application must be submitted no later than 5 p.m. on the deadline date. Proposed amendments that are deemed complete become part of the preliminary "docket" (the list of proposed amendments to be considered).
2. Comment period

The preliminary "docket" will be made available to the public for review and comment at least 15 days prior to consideration by the Planning Commission. The City will solicit public comment on the preliminary docket by posting it on the City website and making it available at City Hall. The preliminary docket will include a description of each proposed amendment in non-technical terms. Interested citizens may submit comments or suggestions (supportive, opposing, clarifying) related to the proposed amendment. Comments or questions may be e-mailed to [amueller@covingtonwa.gov](mailto:amueller@covingtonwa.gov) or delivered to City Hall. Comments should be made within the two-week period as specified on the preliminary docket.
3. Preliminary review and determination of final docket

The Community Development Director will briefly evaluate whether proposed amendments meet the selection/decision criteria below, and make a recommendation to the Planning Commission and City Council as to which proposals should be placed in the final docket. At its discretion, the City Council may hold a joint workshop with the Planning Commission to consider the recommendations. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing and make a formal recommendation to the Council, and the City Council will thereafter decide which amendment proposals will be included in the final docket.
4. Final review and decision

The Community Development Department staff will prepare a staff report for all amendment proposals placed in the final docket. The Planning Commission will evaluate the proposed amendments, hold a public hearing, and make a recommendation to the City Council. The Council will consider the recommendation and make the final decision to approve, deny, or modify the proposed comprehensive plan amendments and any related development regulation amendments.

## Selection/Decision Criteria

1. Proposed amendments that meet one of the following criteria will be included on the preliminary docket for Planning Commission/Council consideration:
  - a. If the proposed amendment is site-specific, the subject property is suitable for development in general conformance with adjacent land use and the surrounding development pattern, and with zoning standards under the potential zoning classifications.
  - b. State law requires or a decision of a court or administrative agency has directed such a change.
  - c. There exists an obvious technical error in the pertinent comprehensive plan provision.
2. Proposed amendments that do not meet one of the criteria in (1) must meet all of the following criteria in order to be placed in the preliminary docket:
  - a. The amendment represents a matter appropriately addressed through the comprehensive plan, and the proposed amendment demonstrates a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare of the city.
  - b. The amendment is in compliance with the three-year limitation rules as specified in the Covington Municipal Code (14.25.040(3)).
  - c. The amendment does not raise policy or land use issues that are more appropriately addressed by an ongoing work program approved by the City Council.
  - d. The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the pertinent comprehensive plan map or text was amended. "Significantly changed conditions" are those resulting from unanticipated consequences of an adopted policy, or changed conditions on the subject property or its surrounding area, or changes related to the pertinent comprehensive plan map or text; where such change has implications of a magnitude that need to be addressed for the comprehensive plan to function as an integrated whole.
  - e. The proposed amendment is consistent with the comprehensive plan and other goals and policies of the City, the King County Countywide Planning Policies, the Growth Management Act, other state or federal law, the Washington Administrative Code and other applicable laws.

## Completing the Application

Requests for amendments must be submitted by the deadline date on the application form provided by the Department. The applicant must provide all information requested on the application and answer with as much detail as possible as to how the proposal meets the selection/decision criteria.

1. Contact Information  
Give the name and contact information of the applicant. If a lawyer or group is acting on behalf of or jointly with the applicant, complete agent contact information. Indicate the primary contact person. For site-specific amendments only, also complete contact information for property owner(s).
2. Amendment Type  
Indicate whether the proposed amendment is site-specific (involving only one or two properties), or is area-wide or a change to the text of the comprehensive plan.
3. Site-Specific Amendments  
Complete address, parcel, and legal descriptions for property. Indicate proposed change to land use map designation (and proposed change to zoning map if applicable).
4. Area-wide and Textual Amendments  
Provide proposed language for a change to the text of the comprehensive plan (and to the text of development regulation(s) if applicable).
5. Section/Decision Criteria  
Provide detailed information as to how the proposed amendments meet the selection/decision criteria.
6. Costs and Benefits, Additional Information  
Provide information on the costs and benefits to the public, both monetary and non-monetary, and describe any additional information that supports the proposed amendment.
7. Signature  
The applicant or the applicant's agent must sign the application, indicating that these instructions have been read and that the information provided on the application is true and correct. Property owners applying for site-specific amendments must also sign and have notarized a Property Owner Declaration.

# PROJECTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PRIVATELY INITIATED AMENDMENT TIMELINE

