

I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Castle Rock Comprehensive Plan is to provide a framework for guiding growth, development, and public decision-making in the city and adjacent area.

A Comprehensive Plan is the basic foundation for local planning. It lays out a community vision and priorities and describes, where, how, and in some cases when development will occur. It is adopted by the city as flexible guidelines for policymakers, land managers, and land users about how to conserve, rehabilitate, or develop an area while



Welcome sign – traveling south to the downtown area.

addressing land use, transportation, economic development, parks and open space, urban design, and utilities. The plan is forecasted for twenty years and is usually updated every five years

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process for the Castle Rock Comprehensive Plan began in August 2004, when the City of Castle Rock contracted with the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG), to work with the city to update and revise the existing plan as necessary. Council of Governments staff worked with the Castle Rock Planning Commission, and city staff to coordinate and draft the plan development efforts.

Development of this plan began with research by the planning commission on new techniques to approaching land use decisions, and public involvement methods. The city conducted a Visual Preference Survey, which uses visual images to help people better understand crucial planning elements and make more informed, pro-active decisions about creating places where they want to live, work, shop and play. From this survey city staff was able to better

understand what citizens would like their community to look like.

Once decisions were made on goals, policies, development areas, and future needs, a draft plan was developed. The plan was taken back to the public at a hearing. The Planning Commission unanimously approved and forwarded the plan to the city council in November 2005 with only a few recommended changes to the draft. The city council held two workshops on the plan before adopting it in December.

The result of the comprehensive planning process is believed to be a very thorough, community sensitive plan intended to guide growth, development, and public decision-making in Castle Rock and adjacent area. The plan is intended to be the working central statement of city policy, community goals, aspirations, and operating policies. The comprehensive planning

process is only the first part of a continuing planning process that includes the adoption of the plan, implementation of the plan through

ordinances, and revisions to the plan as needs arise.

THE STUDY AREA

City comprehensive plans are often designed to address only that area within city limits at the time the plan is drafted. However, with the pressures of growth, city limits do not remain fixed for long. Annexations periodically are initiated. The city is part of the center of a larger region, into which the city can be expected to grow and be requested to provide services, has a necessary and logical interest in projecting and guiding land use and capital improvements, exerts influence through the jobs and services provided by the city. For these reasons, the land area addressed in the Castle Rock comprehensive planning process extends beyond city limits, and encompasses census tracts inside and outside of the city. The study Area is shown in Figure 1-1.

To plan for the unincorporated area outside city limits is not a novel practice in city planning. Many cities and



River front Trail – looking south

counties, notably Oregon, have recognized the city's legitimate interest in controlling its own destiny through joint city-county planning and identification of the city's area of expansion or influences.

From the study area shown in Figure 1-1, this comprehensive plan focuses down to the area in which urban services are already provided or can be provided efficiently over the next 10 years without major expansion of sewer collection and water distribution systems.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE 1986 PLAN

This plan reflects a significant update of the 1986 Castle Rock Comprehensive Plan, a plan that has guided growth and development in Castle Rock for almost two decades. Comprehensive plans are designed to account for a planning horizon of around 20 years and are periodically updated.

The plan was initiated in response to changing demographics and population

growth, along with recent community planning efforts such as the Castle Rock Community Action Plan, Marketing and Feasibility Plan, and Downtown Design Strategy. Additionally, there was strong support from elected and appointed officials to lay the framework for orderly and efficient community development consistent with the desires of residents and sound planning principals.

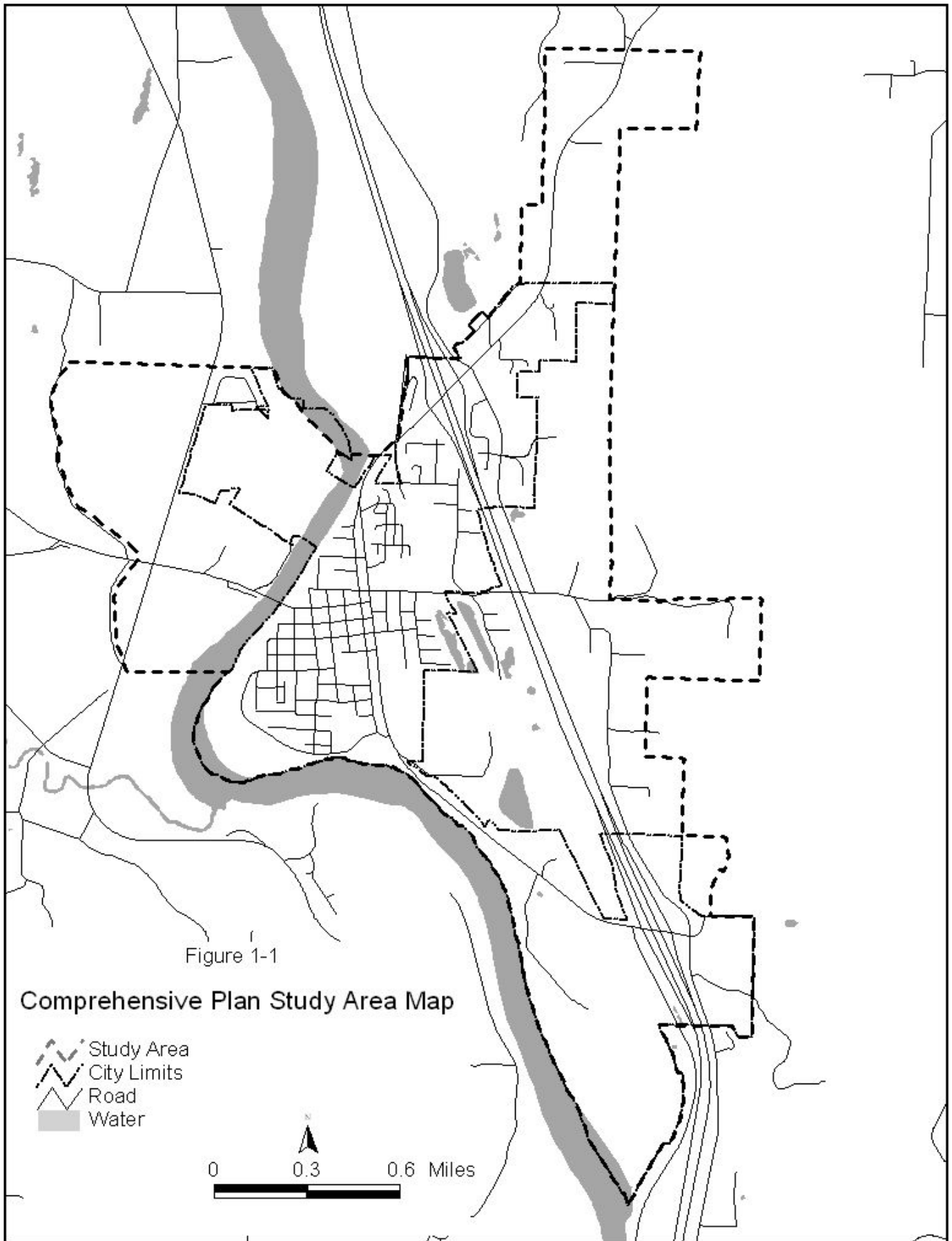


Figure 1-1

Comprehensive Plan Study Area Map

- Study Area
- City Limits
- Road
- Water



While much of the content of this plan, including many goals and policies are very similar to the 1986 document, the overall format and specific wording has been substantially altered. This plan was

also designed to more closely mirror the requirements of state planning statutes along with applicable trends and newer concepts in the field of city planning.

USE OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The comprehensive plan will be utilized in a variety of ways in the years to come. First, the plan creates a framework for making decisions concerning the future of Castle Rock, guiding the investment of public funds and services. Second, it sets a policy directive based on the expressed community vision as gleaned through input from citizens, state and local agencies, stakeholders and locally elected and appointed officials. Zoning, subdivision and other regulations should embody policies generated by the comprehensive planning process. Proposed code changes affecting land use, including rezones and annexations will be reviewed to determine their general consistency with the plan. Likewise, efforts to initiate changes to rules and regulations may also be instigated by the plan.

At the same time, it is important to recognize the intended limitations of the comprehensive plan. The plan is not a specific regulation or law that controls the use of land, nor does it change

existing zoning. However, appropriate city regulations should be consistent with the broad goals and policies of the plan. Furthermore, it is not a document designed to be the determining factor for site-specific projects. In some cases though, such as with rezone requests, substantial weight will be placed on conformance with the comprehensive plan. Land use decisions, projects and proposals do need to conform to the plan in a general sense, but conformance is mostly reflected in how a given project complies with city code.

Mechanisms for implementing the plan include zoning and subdivision ordinances and other rules and documents that guide and direct land use. In other circumstances, the plan simply calls for future research and consideration of specific factors that may or may not lead to rule changes. Conditional uses and other applicable permits will also be reviewed for their conformance with the plan.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

The Castle Rock Comprehensive Plan should be updated every five to seven years or sooner if necessary. The 2010 Census and accompanying data due out thereafter, provide an ideal time frame to begin and complete the first major update of this plan. Relatively minor updates to text or the future land use

map should be limited to once a year as directed by the City Council, unless emergency situations arise and/or to protect the health, safety and well being of the public. Amendments may be proposed by the city or by an individual applicant seeking consideration of a specific proposal.

The Planning Commission should consider all amendment proposals on an annual basis at the same time so that their cumulative effects can be ascertained. Proposed zoning changes should be coupled with simultaneous comprehensive plan amendments to ensure consistency between the comprehensive plan and development regulations.

In reviewing proposed changes to the Castle Rock Comprehensive Plan, the planning commission and City Council shall place substantial weight on the following approval criteria:

1. The proposal is consistent with the provisions of state planning statutes and will not result in comprehensive plan or regulatory conflicts;

2. The proposal will change the development or use potential of a site or area without creating significant adverse impacts on existing uses and critical areas;
3. The proposed amendment will be adequately served by applicable services, facilities, and utilities, including transportation;
4. The proposal will help implement city goals and/or policies contained within the plan;
5. If the proposal could have substantial impacts beyond incorporated city limits, it has been distributed to all appropriate bodies and agencies for review and comment including Cowlitz County.

VISIONING

Visioning is a process that helps to determine core values and ideals for a community and transform them into feasible community goals and policy. It is a citizen-driven approach that seeks to broadly define a preferred future for a given area. The general goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan should be compatible with the vision statement for the City of Castle Rock.

In 2002, A Community Action Plan (CAP) was completed in collaboration with the city, stakeholders, citizens, and the United States Forest Service. Outside consultants were hired to provide technical assistance with the plan. Members of the Action Plan committee represented a broad range of businesses, citizens and governmental interests.

While the Community action plan was focused on the economic vitality, social networks, favorable business conditions, and cultural and recreational opportunities for the City of Castle Rock, it has helped shape ideas for the city overall, due to the intense citizen involvement process. Citizens went through an extensive visioning process associated with the Action Plan, and the city has chosen to adopt the same vision statement for the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement is stated below;

Castle Rock: Where Past, Present and Future Come Together

Castle Rock is a wonderful place to live, work and play. It's a community where the people are as resilient and vibrant as the natural features that surrounds their home; a place where life-long residents

and visitors alike feel they are part of the same tight-knit family.

Castle Rock values and celebrates its historical roots, while always planning for and embracing its future.

Over the years, community organizations and volunteers have joined forces with local governments to create an impressive menu of year-round recreational activities, town festivals and cultural attractions. They have helped make Castle Rock a place where people not only want to come...but a place people want to stay.

Citizens and government work in partnership with business and industry to support and enhance the city's diverse economic base. The fruit of their efforts can be seen in a thriving downtown core,

bustling I-5 business district and an ever expanding mix of employment opportunities. People in Castle Rock understand that a balanced, prosperous economy fuels a healthy social environment.

The community places a premium on life-long learning. Schools enjoy strong public support, and extended education opportunities – from specialized vocational training to personal-enrichment courses – are available to people of all ages.

Castle Rock is a place people are proud to call home; a place where each generation works to pass along to their children the sense of safety and comfort provided by their own parents. It's a place where the past, present and future come together.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public was notified and informed of the comprehensive plan update process in a variety of ways. Early in the update process, a letter was sent to key groups, organizations, individuals and governmental entities notifying them of the plan revision, associated timeline,

and requested them to participate in the visual preference survey. Additional notice was provided via newspaper articles published in the Valley Bugler and the Daily News, and draft elements, meeting announcements, and information were posted on the City's website.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ORGANIZATION

The comprehensive plan is divided into eight (8) main sections that correspond to the following elements.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Environment

Chapter 3: Land Use

Chapter 4: Housing

Chapter 5: Transportation

Chapter 6: Capital Facilities & Utilities

Chapter 7: Economic Development

Chapter 8: Parks, Recreation & Open Space

For the most part, each chapter contains the same basic components, a brief introduction, purpose of the element, relative background information, facts, future needs, and goals and policies. *Goals* represent the general aspiration and direction of the city, while *policies* are meant to be more detailed operational actions that likely require a specific action by the city, possibly within a give timeframe.

Data and information presented add context to goal and policy directives and inform elected and appointed city

officials and the general public of various topic. The supporting existing conditions provide direction and identify issues, trends and possibly needed improvements. As a note of caution, maps, tables, figures and other data within each section may not be updated regularly and anyone seeking specific information on zoning or other matters should contact the city. Background information and data should be updated only at major plan revisions (approximately every five to seven years).