

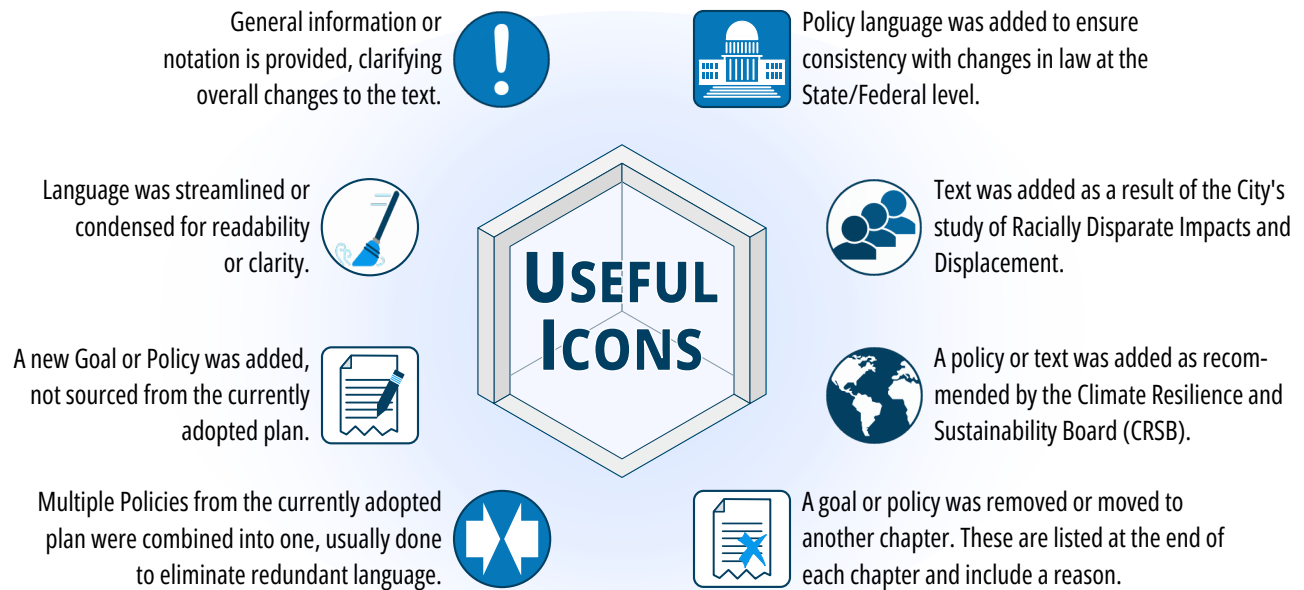


The chapter you see here is the result of months of work by countless individuals throughout the community. It represents a combination of inputs generously provided by the public, Plan Commission, City Council, and many others. This updated chapter will eventually be considered by the Plan Commission and City Council for inclusion in [PlanSpokane 2046](#).

Our teams have worked hard to create these updated chapters. Each has been discussed at the Plan Commission, by various Plan Commission subcommittees, with City Council in general, and shared with the public at various points along the way. These chapters represent the efforts of many, helping to describe the policy and guidance the Comprehensive Plan can provide in each topic area.

Please note this version supersedes any previously published versions, including the release of many chapters last October. All prior versions should be considered out-of-date from this point on.

As with prior versions, this chapter includes the basic text, but might not match the visual look and format of the final document (we're still working on that). To help readers identify where updated language has been provided, a series of icons are shown at right along the way. These aren't part of the final document--they're provided to help readers understand where certain changes may have come from, where past policies have been combined, etc. A guide to those icons is provided below. Each chapter will use the same set of icons for consistency.



What's Next for PlanSpokane?

Because this is the first complete view of some chapters (e.g. Growth Strategy, Transportation, Capital Facilities), we anticipate one more release of updated chapters and maps later this summer. After that, Plan Commission will likely hold a hearing to consider the overall document. We'd love to hear from you along the way.

If you have any comments on the chapters, please engage with us at <http://planspokane.org> or by email at planspokane@spokanecity.org. All comments are considered and each will be provided to the Plan Commission and City Council for their consideration prior to any hearings on the proposed document.

Chapter 1: Introduction

(Y)our Plan

The City of Spokane is a growing and vibrant city, bringing together a rich history and bright future to support a resilient, connected, and livable city for all community members.

Just as people make plans for their personal and professional lives, cities plan to make their aspirations a reality. In large urban areas where the landscape is highly complex and constantly changing, Comprehensive Plans shape the future by translating community input to identify what is needed to meet the interests of the city's diverse community, providing guidance for City budgets, regulations, growth, and much more.

This Comprehensive Plan looks to a horizon of 20 years, creating a long-term plan to shape the City's built and natural environment and providing the overall scheme of city development – the major land uses, transportation systems, parks and open spaces, and areas for commercial and employment opportunities. The Plan provides direction for future decisions that is intended to:

- **Create a collective vision** for the City of Spokane's future.
- **Identify locations where different types of growth should occur**, guiding both private and public development.
- **Guide City decision-making** and **establish priorities** for public investment.
- **Create a framework** for future plans, programs, and initiatives.
- **Align the work of City Departments** around issues that matter most to the community.
- **Foster community and regional partnerships.**

Shaping and realizing a future where all Spokane community members can prosper and live healthy and thriving lives, requires ongoing collaboration between the City, regional agencies and organizations, and all community members. Together, we can ensure that **"In Spokane, We All Belong"**.

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This Comprehensive Plan is organized into 14 Chapters, each covering major topic areas that work together to shape the City of Spokane's future. Those topics include **Implementation, Growth Strategy, Transportation, Capital Facilities and Utilities, Housing, Economic Development, Urban Design and Historic Preservation, Natural Environment, Community Health, Neighborhoods, Parks and Recreation, Local Governance Through Civic Participation**, and **Shorelines**. A **Glossary** helps define less



The Introduction Chapter has been substantially rewritten, streamlining the content and adding additional framing the community has identified as important. The intent is to frame the role of the Comprehensive Plan, the history of the city, and the planning context of the Comprehensive Plan, all while identifying how the community is involved in developing this crucial document.

commonly used words, so all community members are reading with a shared understanding of what is being discussed.

Within each Chapter, there are a series of Goals and Policies. A Goal is an overarching aspiration – where we want to go as a City. Policies support the goal by providing more specific ways in which the City can meet that Goal. However, Policies are still general, allowing for multiple ways to implement. Plans, programs, and regulations outside of the Comprehensive Plan ultimately implement the Goals and Policies to make them a reality for our city.

In addition to the Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, there are several appendices that support the overall document.

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Profile of Spokane

The City of Spokane is located in the heart of the Inland Northwest and is the most populous city in Eastern Washington. The Spokane River runs through the city, with the Spokane Falls creating a breathtaking focal point for the downtown. The area largely sits upon the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, which feeds into the Spokane River and serves as Spokane’s water supply, carrying millions of cubic meters of water each day.

The Spokane River, particularly the series of falls, has drawn people to the area for thousands of years. The river provided an abundance of salmon, which sustained the region’s indigenous peoples, the “Spokanes.” The Spokanes are a river people, whose ancestors lived a semi-nomadic way of life on a seasonal round pursuing hunting, fishing, and gathering opportunities. They lived along the banks of the Spokane and Columbia rivers and scattered up the tributaries in much of northeastern Washington, which consisted of approximately three million acres. During salmon runs, other Tribes joined the Spokanes at the Falls for fishing, trade, games, celebration, and socializing.

[INSERT INDIGENOUS TERRITORIES MAP, Map I-01]

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City of Spokane Land Acknowledgement

The purpose of a land acknowledgement is to recognize the Indigenous history and present of a particular location. Typically taking the form of a written or recited statement, land acknowledgements are considered a first step towards recognizing local Tribes and Urban Native communities, with continued recognition and collaboration required to make meaningful actions. The land acknowledgement below was adopted by City Council on March 22, 2021 (RES 2021-0019).



Map can currently be found at the end of this document. It will be integrated into the Chapter once the final template is available.

We acknowledge that we are on the unceded land of the Spokane people. And that these lands were once the major trading center for the Spokanes as they shared this place and welcomed other area tribes through their relations, history, trade, and ceremony. We also want to acknowledge that the land holds the spirit of the place, through its knowledge, culture, and all the original peoples Since Time Immemorial.

As we take a moment to consider the impacts of colonization may we also acknowledge the strengths and resiliency of the Spokanes and their relatives. As we work together making decisions that benefit all, may we do so as one heart, one mind, and one spirit.

We are grateful to be on the shared lands of the Spokane people and ask for the support of their ancestors and all relations. We ask that you recognize these injustices that forever changed the lives of the Spokane people and all their relatives.

We agree to work together to stop all acts of continued injustices towards Native Americans and all our relatives. It is time for reconciliation. We must act upon the truths and take actions that will create restorative justice for all people.

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In the mid-1800s, U.S. soldiers arrived and forcefully displaced the Spokanes from their ancestral land, accelerating white settlement in the area. Fur traders, miners, and missionaries were the first settlers to traverse the broader area of Spokane. The town of “Spokan Falls” was incorporated in 1881, before “Spokane” became the official city name in 1891. At that time, the city was a total of 20 square miles and had a population of about 20,000 residents.

At first, the river was an important travel corridor for industry and logging, as well as the source of early hydroelectric power. That travel corridor was soon complemented by rail lines connecting through the area to regional economic resources and intercontinental lines. Rapid population growth in the late 1800s and early 1900s led to increased development and unique housing choices that are still treasured to this day. The city also saw an increase in Chinese and Japanese residents, partially drawn to local work in railroad and mining industries, with a ‘Chinatown’ consisting of markets, hotels, restaurants, and laundries appearing. Chinatown, along with over thirty blocks of the downtown areas, was impacted by the Spokane Fire of 1889. Despite the fire’s devastation, the city recovered in record time, leading to a building boom. By the 1930s, Spokane became a hub for trade industries – sawmills, carpentry, railways, iron, and steel manufacturing.

During World War II, the City of Spokane experienced yet another surge of growth as the Spokane region saw the development of manufacturing and maintenance depots associated with the Army Air Corps and U.S. Navy.

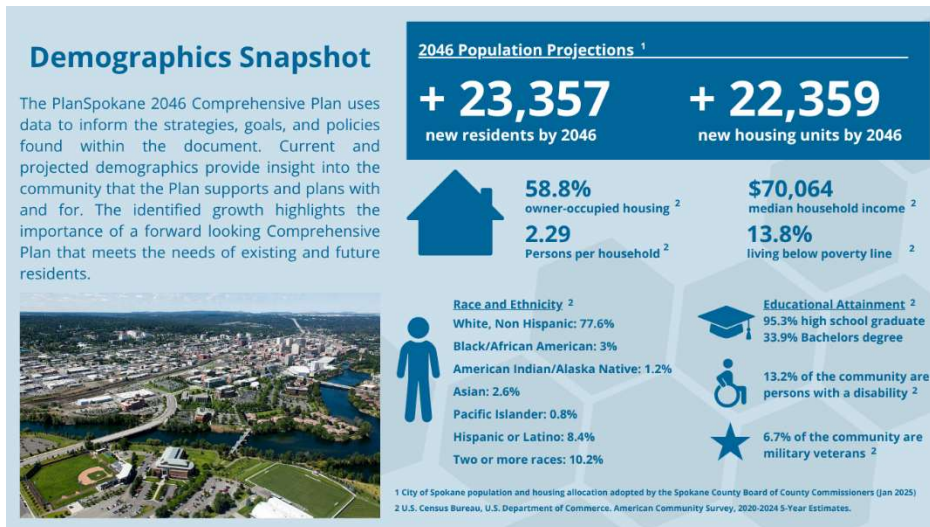
Additionally, the Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) and Nisei (second generation Japanese Americans) populations in Spokane increased as individuals avoided the coastal evacuation zone and relocation and internment camps. In all, Spokane's population grew by nearly 40,000 people, or 31%, in the 1940s.

Catalyzed by the war, Spokane's Black population quadrupled between 1940 and 1960. Racial discrimination became more pronounced during these years as a backlash ensued. Spokane property owners and powerbrokers engaged in an organized effort to keep Black Spokaneites within the confines of downtown and East Central Spokane, leading to neighborhood segregation. The City of Spokane, like all cities in Washington and the United States, is actively navigating the legacy of this discrimination, understanding the racially disparate impacts of past and current decisions.

Then in 1974, Spokane hosted EXPO '74, the World's Fair Exposition. An immediate success, the fair drew huge crowds throughout the summer. The intrigued crowds thronged through the EXPO site, which had only recently been cleared of the railroad lines and industrial businesses that had once crowded the river front site. Today, the Great Northern Depot clock tower remains as a feature of the park and serves as a reminder of the integral role the railroad and the Expo played in shaping Spokane.

Since then, the City of Spokane has seen continued success and growth, with a current population exceeding 230,000 residents. Significant industries in the City include aerospace, health sciences, agribusiness, energy, and clean technology, providing jobs and supporting regional research and education. Major events draw visitors from across the globe and residents benefit from a robust cultural arts scene. Bloomsday, a race through the core of Spokane, started in 1977 and continues to be a springtime favorite averaging over 30,000 participants. Starting in 1990, Hoopfest has become the world's largest three-on-three basketball tournament, drawing global participants. From art and cultural festivals to sports tournaments and seasonal markets, the City of Spokane has shaped and continues to develop a community for everyone.

Demographics Snapshot



 New graphic since May 2026 draft release. A larger version will be available in the final template.

Implementing the Community's Vision

The Comprehensive Plan addresses a range of topics and strategies that work together to meet the community's vision for the future.

After a robust visioning process, the community developed a vision statement that outlines its aspirations for the next 20 years. The Chapters of the Comprehensive Plan work together to meet this vision, identifying ways to support our vibrant, resilient, and inclusive city.

<<The following text will be included as a callout box, highlighting the text>>

Community Vision Statement

"Spokane aims to foster a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive city by supporting economic growth, environmental stewardship, and the diverse needs of the whole community. The City is dedicated to ensuring access to attainable housing, safe streets, and thriving neighborhoods while inspiring innovation, cultural vitality, and connection for all Spokane residents."

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To help reach that vision and plan for the next 20 years, the Comprehensive Plan includes guiding principles throughout its Chapters that reflect community priorities.

Plan for Housing

Providing diverse housing types of different intensities and affordability levels is an integral part of supporting future growth in the City of Spokane, providing shelter for both existing and new residents. Distributing housing that is affordable to different income levels throughout the city will create

more equitable access to all of Spokane's neighborhoods, allowing for greater choice of where one lives. This work also emphasizes locating more housing near transit, schools, employment, services, and daily needs.

Plan for Equity

A history of local and national policies and practices have disproportionately and adversely shaped the experience for many within Spokane, particularly Black and Indigenous communities and other Communities of Color, limiting housing and other opportunities for these communities. A key pillar of this Comprehensive Plan was to seek and incorporate feedback from typically underrepresented voices and learn from their lived experiences. Racially disparate impacts analysis informed the development of this Comprehensive Plan, with recognition of how the City may work to undo these harms through intentional actions. Many policies emphasize the need to target areas of historic disinvestment and support overburdened communities.

Plan for Climate Resiliency

A changing climate and climate-extreme events – including heat, wildfires, smoke from wildfires, and drought – already affect the City of Spokane and are projected to worsen. Communities in Spokane may experience climate impacts in many ways, such as disruptions to local economy and daily travel routes, or impacts to physical and mental health. These impacts ultimately stress infrastructure systems, affect community wellbeing, and harm local ecosystems. Climate hazards also do not impact everyone equally, with risk depending on an individual's level of exposure and capacity to respond and adapt. To support the community, the City of Spokane is identifying further action to build local resiliency to climate hazards, including the reduction of vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. Policies addressing climate and resiliency are integrated throughout the Chapters, illustrating how interconnected these concepts are with the overall future of the city.

Plan for Community Well-being

Community well-being can come in many forms, from supporting physical health to providing opportunities for social interaction. Community connection was identified as a significant desire from community members in the development of this Comprehensive Plan. Opportunities to support well-being include policies and programs that influence or improve resource allocation, the physical environment, cultural and recreational opportunities, and accessible health systems. Intentional City actions can help to create a City of Spokane where people can not only live, play, and work, but also thrive.

Plan for Economic Prosperity



Direct reference to vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions added based on community feedback.

Balanced with housing, a City must plan for employment and economic opportunities to support a thriving community. Providing flexibility and recognizing changing industry needs can support economic prosperity and employment opportunities. Creating opportunities for innovative industries can also support existing industrial lands and benefit the local economy. Additionally, community members expressed a desire to support local small businesses and creative industries during the development of this Comprehensive Plan. The Plan's policies identify ways to ensure the local economy is resilient and provides opportunities for all community members to prosper.

Planning Framework

The Comprehensive Plan is developed from state and regional planning frameworks that provide direction on how best to prepare for future growth and change in communities.

Planning in Washington State

The Washington Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990, establishing planning goals and a framework of planning for cities and counties in the state. The GMA requires local governments to prepare comprehensive plans to accommodate 20 years of expected growth and to update those plans on a regular basis. Comprehensive plans guide important City decisions, implemented through land use and development regulations, environmental ordinances, and City programs and investments.

The following fourteen GMA goals must be met within the City of Spokane Comprehensive Plan:

- **Urban growth.** Encourage development in urban areas.
- **Reduce sprawl.** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land.
- **Transportation.** Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems.
- **Housing.** Plan for and accommodate housing that is affordable to all economic segments.
- **Economic development.** Encourage economic development throughout the state.
- **Property rights.** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made.
- **Permits.** Applications should be processed in a timely and fair manner.
- **Natural resource industries.** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries.
- **Open space and recreation.** Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities.

- **Environment.** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- **Citizen participation and coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens.
- **Public facilities and services.** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate.
- **Historic preservation.** Identify and encourage preservation.
- **Climate change and resiliency.** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate.
- **Shoreline management.** Protect, preserve, and enhance the Spokane River and Latah Creek, which are designated as shorelines of statewide significance.

The GMA authorizes the inclusion of additional plan topics of specific local interest.

Regional Collaboration

The Growth Management Act (GMA) also calls for regional collaboration through the development of Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). CPPs address a range of topics to ensure planning efforts among jurisdictions within a county planning under GMA are coordinated.

The CPPs address the following topics:

- The designation of Urban Growth Areas (UGAs).
- Joint planning within Urban Growth Areas.
- Promotion of contiguous and orderly development and provision of urban services.
- Parks and open spaces.
- Transportation.
- Siting of capital facilities of a countywide or statewide nature.
- Affordable housing.
- Economic development.
- Fiscal impacts.
- Climate change and resiliency.

The CPPs for Spokane County provide a framework from which Spokane County jurisdictions develop and adopt their comprehensive plans, ensuring consistency across the region.

In addition to guiding policies within jurisdictions' comprehensive plans, regional planning processes also allocate projected population growth to each jurisdiction, ensuring the region can accommodate anticipated population growth over the 20-year planning horizon. More details can be found in Chapter 3, Growth Strategy, and Chapter 6, Housing.

Who Plans and How

The City of Spokane's first Growth Management Act (GMA) compliant Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2001. Spokane Horizons was the name of the public participation process to develop that first Comprehensive Plan and involved all segments of the community in shaping the City's future. Started in the spring of 1995, the Spokane Horizons process was developed to fulfill the City's commitment to active, effective citizen participation.

The Comprehensive Plan was last updated, aside from minor annual amendments, in 2017. The Plan is a dynamic product of the community's continually evolving needs and desires about its future, prepared by involved citizens, recommended by the City Plan Commission, and adopted by the City Council.

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By City Charter, the City Plan Commission has the responsibility to make planning recommendations to the City Council for consideration for adoption. The Plan Commission has the duty to conduct the citizen planning processes that produce planning proposals, to review the results of these processes, and to formulate recommendations to the City Council based on this public involvement.

Adoption by the City Council is the formal step that is necessary to make the Comprehensive Plan an official City document. Under the rules of the GMA, the City Council's action to adopt the plan must be based on "early and continuous citizen participation". This provision adds assurance that the plan represents the community's consensus about the city's growth and how that growth will promote local interests.

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In 2026, the City of Spokane adopted a new Comprehensive Plan – PlanSpokane 2046. A quarter of a century after the first Comprehensive Plan was adopted, this update provided the opportunity to not only engage the community on newly required topics such as climate resiliency, racially disparate impacts, and housing affordability for all incomes, but also discover the community's current vision for the City's future.

Engagement conducted as part of PlanSpokane 2046 followed equitable community engagement standards. Equitable engagement aims to reach and engage with as many people as possible, while centering overburdened communities or other communities that may not typically be heard during planning processes.

In order to support equitable public participation, the following guiding principles were followed and continuously evaluated, as originally defined in the Public Participation Plan:

- **Create Clear Expectations.** Whether the purpose was to inform, gain feedback, or seek suggestions, participants were provided clear directives of how their engagement would impact the plan. Summaries of engagement feedback were developed for transparency and to ensure the community feedback was tracked for incorporation into the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Make it Convenient.** The City provided a range of opportunities to engage – including online surveys and in-person workshops hosted in each Council District – recognizing that not all activities will be convenient for all audiences. In-person workshops often included food and children’s activities and were accessible with public transportation to reduce barriers to engagement.
- **Foster Peer to Peer Conversations.** Rather than creating a transactional form of community engagement, the activities encouraged conversations between City staff and the public, but also between members of the public, to generate greater understanding and build upon each person’s lived experiences.
- **Implement Accessibility Standards.** Accessibility for persons with physical and/or cognitive disabilities was a guiding principle when planning any engagement activity.
- **Ensure Language Access for All.** The Planning Department evaluated language access needs and provided opportunities for both language translation and interpretation.
- **Support Community Participation.** The City supported participation through flexibility, stipends, and food access when feasible, and other ways that supported equitable participation.

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The extensive community feedback received in the development of PlanSpokane 2046 established the foundation of the plan through the community vision statement and guiding principles. These are carried throughout the chapters of the plan, ensuring community input is at the forefront of Spokane’s growth over the next 20 years.

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New graphic since May 2026 draft release. A larger version will be available in the final template.

Annual Amendments

The City of Spokane conducts an annual process to consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. The Growth Management Act (GMA) specifies that amendments to a comprehensive plan cannot be made more frequently than once per year (with some exceptions). The purpose for this is two-fold: it gives the plan stability over time, and it groups all proposed amendments into a common process for consideration, providing the opportunity to examine their collective effects on the plan. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan follow a prescribed process in the City's municipal code.

In addition to annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the City conducts additional planning efforts including subarea and transportation plans. While not adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan, these plans further refine the direction provided by the Plan to meet the community's vision for the future.

