

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION



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## ABOUT FIRCREST

In 1907, financiers from San Francisco, including Major Edward J. Bowes of the "Original Amateur Hour" fame, had a vision of a 'residential park, an enchanting spot to enjoy life and raise a family.' With this in mind, the Narrows Land Company purchased a parcel of land to the west of Tacoma and named the subdivision they platted *Regents Park*. The influence of the developers is reflected in the streets named after their California backgrounds and their value of higher education.

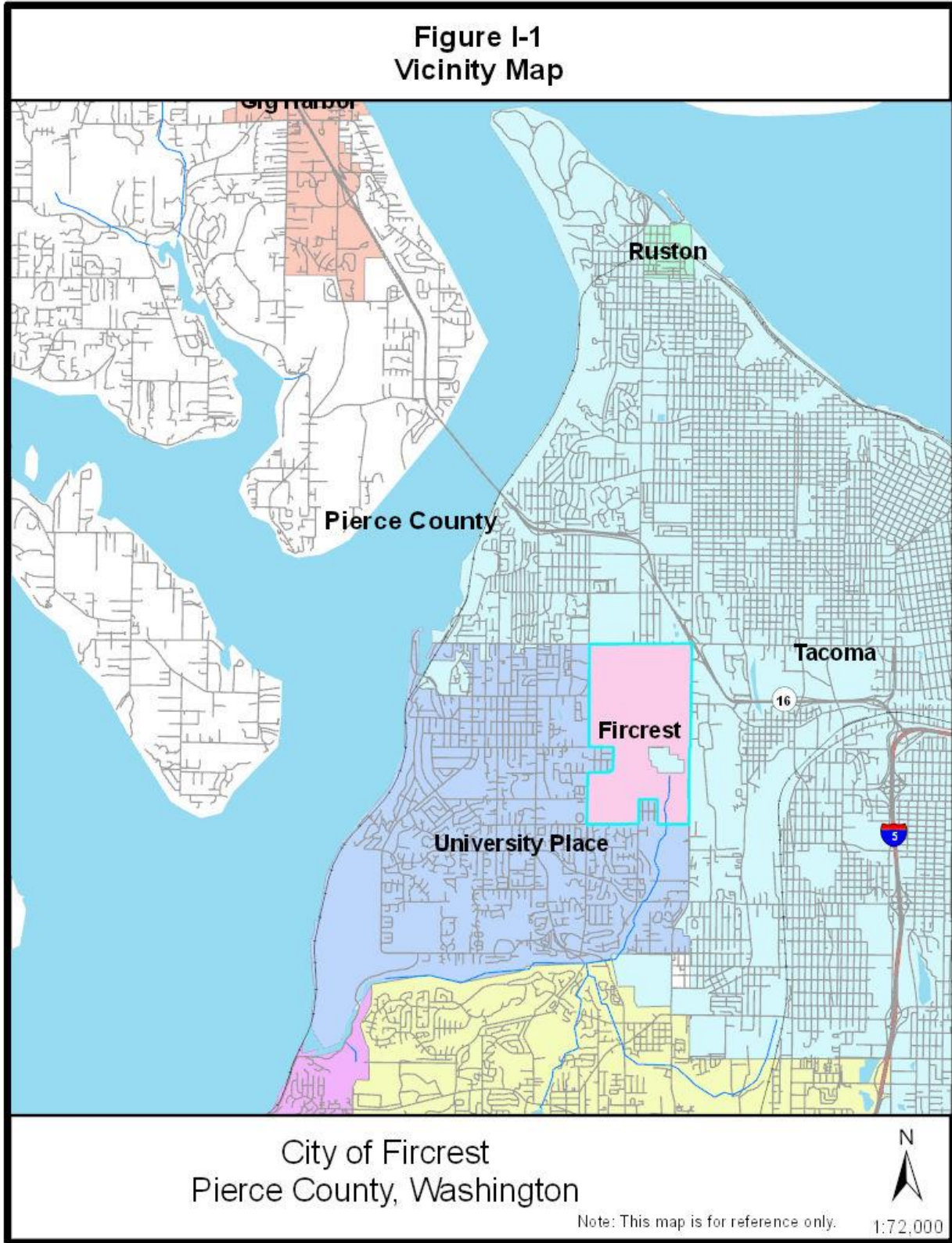
With its curved, aesthetically designed streets, sidewalks, and sewers, Regents Park offered quiet living with a strong sense of community. The first store was established in 1908 on the corner of University Street (now Columbia Avenue) and Berkeley Avenue. The Fircrest Golf Club was incorporated in 1923.

In September 1925, Regents Park and its 306 residents incorporated as the Town of Fircrest in an effort to jumpstart the development and reenergize the community. Incorporation gave them the financial stability and control to repair and develop needed infrastructure and services.

Beginning in the 1950s, the community grew through numerous annexations and experienced much more rapid residential development. In 1960, Fircrest constructed the Community Center, which was followed by the construction of the community's swimming pool at Fircrest Park and the dedication of Masko Park. Fircrest continues to provide exceptional recreational resources, facilities and programs and is home to the Fircrest Golf Club.

Fircrest constructed its Public Safety Building in 1979. In 1988, Fircrest changed to a Council-Manager form of government, and in 1990, the town that had started as an early example of a planned development became the City of Fircrest, having grown in size and population. The 1990s saw the end of the volunteer fire department's 52 years of service to the community, and a contract was signed with the Tacoma Fire Department for emergency services. Fircrest constructed its Public Works Facility in 1993 and built a new City Hall in 1999.

Today, Fircrest, with a population of 6,710 (in 2018), has lived up to the dream of a residential park. Fircrest continues to work hard to keep its reputation of a quiet, residential community with attractive, livable neighborhoods and fine recreational facilities. Looking to the future, Fircrest will be supportive of carefully planned economic development that provides a foundation for continued prosperity for the community. **Figure I-1** shows Fircrest's location within the southern Puget Sound region.



## MISSION STATEMENT

*This Comprehensive Plan exists to ensure that Fircrest remains a predominantly residential community with vibrant commercial mixed-use centers that:*

- *Remains an attractive and distinctive place to live*
- *Maintains a land use balance that serves residents' needs*
- *Ensures that the basic needs for nutritional food, adequate shelter, and community-centered recreation that provides outlets for physical activity are met for all of Fircrest's residents*
- *Has a sound economic base that ensures basic utilities and urban services are available as needed*
- *Provides a safe, healthy environment in which to live, work, and play*
- *Has complete streets that are designed for the safety and ease of pedestrians, transit patrons and bicyclists as well as motorists*
- *Encourages the increased availability and integration of housing and transportation to support flexibility, mobility, independent living, and services for all age groups and those with special needs*
- *Considers the needs of future citizens as well as current citizens*
- *Provides ample opportunities for all citizens to become involved with community life and participatory government.*

## PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan is a broad statement of the community's vision for the future and contains policies primarily to guide the physical development of the city, as well as certain aspects of its social and economic character. The Plan steers regulations, implementation actions and services in a direction that supports the vision. The Plan reflects the long-term values and aspirations of the community as a whole and shows how various aspects, such as land use, housing, transportation, capital facilities and services work together to achieve the desired vision.

While the Comprehensive Plan is meant to provide a strong and constant vision for the future, it is also a living document that must be able to accommodate change, such as a new technology, an unforeseen impact or an innovative method of achieving a component of the vision. It is therefore regularly updated to account for changing issues or opportunities facing Fircrest, while still maintaining the core values of the community. Fircrest's Comprehensive Plan considers mandatory elements of the Growth Management Act (GMA), PSRC's VISION 2040 Regional Growth Strategy, Pierce County County-Wide Planning Policies, factors affecting land use, assumptions about future trends, and public opinion.

Fircrest's Comprehensive Plan was initially developed and then updated through a public involvement process conducted by the Planning Commission. The Plan reflects a community vision of how Fircrest should grow and develop over a 20-year planning horizon. The Plan aims to protect residents' high quality of life and equitably share the public and private costs and benefits of growth. The Plan establishes overall direction for residential, commercial and industrial growth in a pattern that maintains and enhances the character of existing neighborhoods.

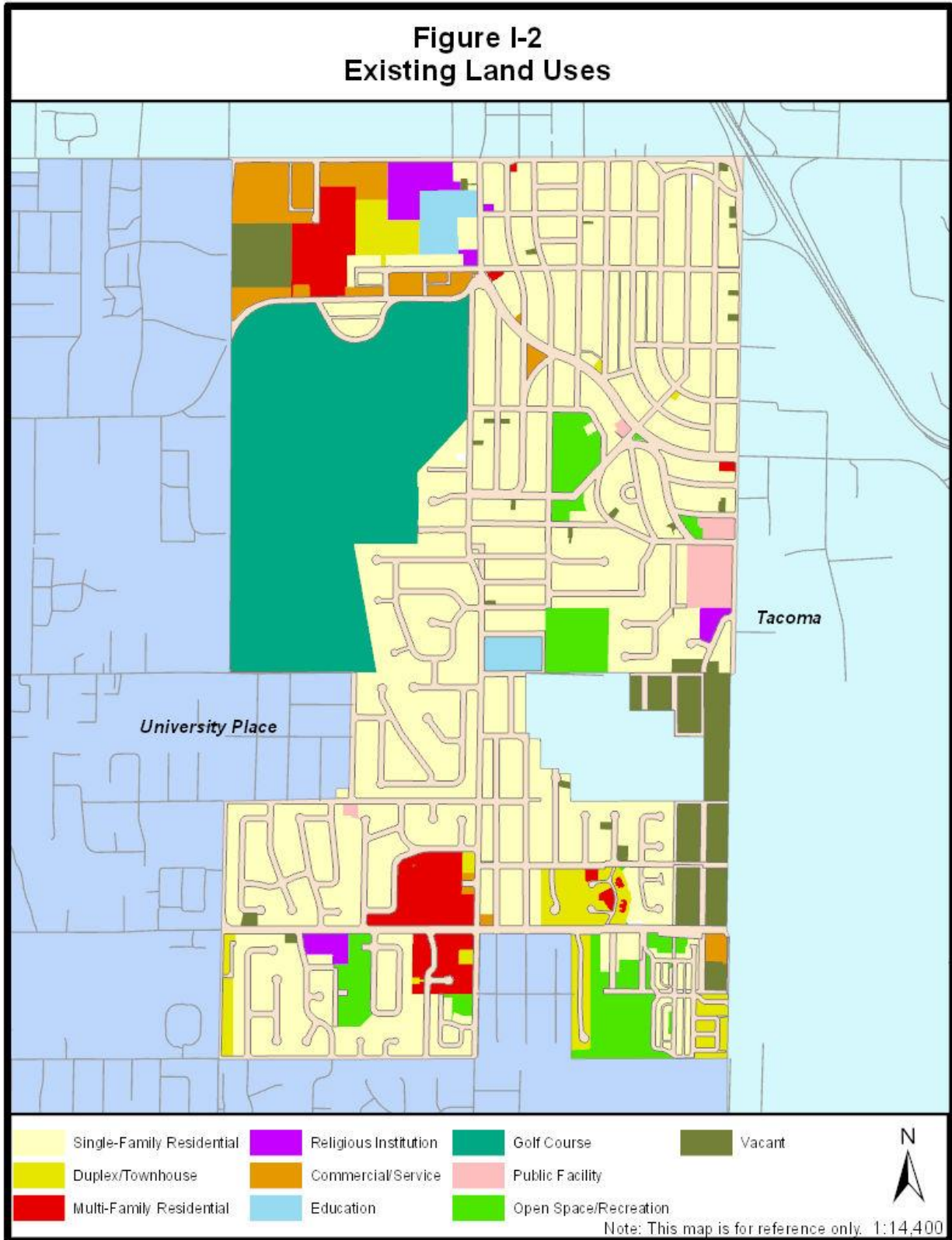
The Plan comprehensively integrates "health and well-being" into its goals and policies. It protects public health and safety, while enhancing community character, natural beauty, environmental quality and economic vitality. The Plan guides Fircrest's efforts to achieve these ends by indicating where new housing, services, and commercial mixed-use development should be encouraged and where open space should be protected. It emphasizes growth where adequate public facilities and services can be provided in a timely and cost-effective manner. Finally, the Plan conserves open space, protects wildlife habitat and sensitive areas, maintains and improves the quality of air, water, and land resources.

## FIRCREST'S PLANNING AREA

This Plan includes planning information for incorporated Fircrest. The GMA requires that counties designate urban growth areas (UGAs) within which urban levels of development shall be encouraged. Outside of these UGAs, development can occur only if it is rural in nature.

The Pierce County *Countywide Planning Policies* elaborate on GMA requirements concerning the provision of urban services. In addition, the *Comprehensive Plan for Pierce County, Washington* may specify for municipalities a potential annexation area (PAA), formerly known as an urban service area. The PAA represents the geographic area within which the city may anticipate providing urban services in the future, either prior to or subsequent to annexation. Delineation of each city's PAA is based on input from the municipalities and on evidence that the city is capable of providing urban services to the area. The City of Fircrest annexed its PAA in 2018 as outlined in the Countywide Planning Policies and the Fircrest Comprehensive Plan.

Existing land uses within the community are shown in **Figure I-2**.



# PROFILE OF FIRCREST

Table I-1

<b>Population</b>	
2010 Population*	6,497
2018 Population Estimate**	6,710
Median Age*	41.2 years
Population Under 20*	25.4%
Population 55 and Older*	29.6%
Population 65 and Older***	17.3%
Sex Female***	53.9%
Sex Male***	46.1%
<b>Race / Ethnicity*</b>	
White	78.9%
Black/African-American	7.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	0.7%
Asian	5.1%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0.5%
Other	0.8%
Other – Two or More	7.0%
Hispanic or Latino of Any Race	4.6%
<b>Income***</b>	
Median Household Income****	\$63,750
Median Family Income*****	\$79,375
<b>Housing Characteristics***</b>	
Number of Dwelling Units	2,847
Single Family Units (attached and detached)	80.6%
Multifamily Units	19.0%
Mobile Homes	0.4%
Owner Occupied Units	67.5%
Renter Occupied Units	32.5%
Average Household Size****	2.39 persons
Average Family Size*****	2.93 persons
Median Home Value	\$309,400
Median Rent	\$1,165
<b>Geography</b>	
Land Area in Square Miles	1.58

\* U.S. Census 2010

\*\* Washington State Office of Financial Management

\*\*\* U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2008-2012

\*\*\*\* A household consists of all people who occupy a housing unit regardless of relationship. A household may consist of a person living alone or multiple unrelated individuals or families living together.

\*\*\*\*\* A family consists of two or more people (one of whom is the householder) related by birth, marriage, or adoption residing in the same housing unit.



## STATE PLANNING CONTEXT

### ***GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT***

In 1990 Washington's Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA), which established 13 planning goals and a system of planning for cities and counties that have experienced rapid growth. A 14th goal, shorelines of the state, was subsequently added. These goals, which guide development of the City's Comprehensive Plan, are listed below:

- Urban Growth - Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- Reduce Sprawl - Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- Transportation - Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- Housing - Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
- Economic Development - Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capabilities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- Property Rights - Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
- Permits - Applications for both state and local governmental permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- Natural Resource Industries - Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
- Open Space and Recreation - Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.
- 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 in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- Public Facilities and Services - Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development, at the time the development is available for occupancy and use, without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

- Historic Preservation - Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- Shorelines of the State. The goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act as set forth in RCW 98.58.020.

### ***PERIODIC UPDATE***

Cities and counties are required to periodically update their plans to comply with updates in regional and state requirements, as well as changes in local conditions. The Fircrest Comprehensive Plan satisfies the 2015 GMA Periodic Update requirement and addresses planning issues throughout a 20-year planning horizon ending in 2035. This Comprehensive Plan ensures compliance with Washington State, regional, and Pierce County requirements for comprehensive planning. Minor amendments have occurred each subsequent year.

## **REGIONAL PLANNING CONTEXT**

### ***VISION 2040 MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (MPPs)***

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the designated forum for collaborative work on regional growth management and transportation planning in Pierce, King, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties. *VISION 2040*, adopted in 2008 by the PSRC, promotes an environmentally friendly growth pattern that will contain the expansion of urban growth areas, conserve farm and forest lands, support compact communities where people may both live and work, and focus new employment and housing in vibrant urban centers.

*VISION 2040* includes a set of multicounty planning policies that provide an integrated framework for addressing land use, economic development, transportation, public facilities, and environmental issues. Under the GMA, consistency between regional transportation plans, countywide planning policies and the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans is required. MPPs serve as the regional guidelines and principles used for the Regional Council's consistency certification of policies and plans within the four-county area.

*VISION 2040* provides clear and specific guidance for the distribution of population and employment growth into types of places defined as "regional geographies." Fircrest is assigned to the small cities geography, which obligates the City to accommodate an assigned share of regional growth envisioned for this particular geography. Population, housing and employment targets for individual cities within each geography are set by Pierce County in consultation with municipalities.

### ***PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPs)***

In accordance with the GMA, Pierce County adopted, and the cities within the county endorsed, the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP). The CPP addresses issues that transcend city boundaries, such as setting Urban Growth Areas, accommodating housing and job demand, supporting health and wellness, and addressing capital facilities that are regional in nature. The CPP provides a framework

to promote consistency among a multitude of municipal comprehensive plans within Pierce County.

## **CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT -- WHO PLANS AND HOW?**

City of Fircrest residents, business owners, employees of businesses located in Fircrest, owners of property in Fircrest, or just about anyone who is affected by the Plan are invited to help develop and update the Comprehensive Plan. Generally, planning begins with identification of the issues and of the stakeholders. Planning may be focused on refining the overall vision of the city, or for neighborhoods, or may be related to particular subjects such as parks, recreation and open space -- or community character. Participants may vary depending upon the scope of the particular issue.

The Planning Commission is charged with the responsibility for initially developing, and then reviewing proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan – taking into account the community vision. The Commission meets regularly and addresses planning issues on an ongoing basis. It is the Planning Commission’s job to hold public hearings, discuss updates and make recommendations to the City Council. At times, Council has established ad hoc advisory committees to focus on specific topics within a limited scope or time frame. These temporary committees may provide recommendations on planning matters to the Planning Commission.

Over the years, the City has used a number of methods to encourage community participation in planning. These methods have included community meetings for citywide visioning, neighborhood meetings for smaller planning areas, and stakeholder meetings for topical interests. Community forums, open houses and design charrettes have been, or may be, held to present ideas and to discover new ones. The Fircrest *Town Topics* newsletter, surveys and questionnaires have been used to reach those who may not be able to make meetings.

Fircrest’s website and a variety of communication technologies will increasingly provide, a way to advertise meetings and also to seek ideas on planning questions. Ultimately, all major planning decisions fall to the City Council, which is responsible for establishing regulations, programs and planning policies, and also for adopting the City budget.

Major planning highlights for the community are summarized in **Table I-2**.

**Table I-2  
Planning for Fircrest – Major Highlights**

Year	Highlight
1907	Regents Park Plat I and II Recorded
1925	Incorporation of City of Fircrest
1957	This is Fircrest 1907-1957 -- First Comprehensive Population Survey
1975	Adoption of Comprehensive Bikeway Plan
1988	Adoption of Town of Fircrest Comprehensive Plan 1987 to 1997
1992	Adoption of Interim Critical Area Regulations
1993	Adoption of Interim Design Guidelines
1995	Publication of Draft Environmental Impact Statement for Comprehensive Plan
1996	Publication of Final Environmental Impact Statement for Comprehensive Plan
1996	Adoption of GMA Comprehensive Plan
2000	Adoption of unified Land Development Code (Zoning, Subdivision, Design Guidelines, Permit Processing, Critical Area, and other regulations)
2005	Adoption of Critical Area Amendments incorporating Best Available Science
2014-2015	Adoption of GMA Periodic Update Amendments to Comprehensive Plan
2015	Adoption of GMA Periodic Update Amendments to Development Regulations
2018	Annexation of Potential Annexation Area

## PLAN SUMMARY

The Comprehensive Plan contains an introduction chapter and seven elements -- community character, land use, housing, transportation, utilities, capital facilities, and park, recreation and open space.

Each element typically contains goals, policies, explanatory text and, in some cases, charts, tables and maps. The goals and policies are the guiding principles – the heart of the Plan; however, they are often preceded by explanatory text that describes the context of the goal or policy, or the reasoning behind it. Each element presents part of the picture for managing change and guiding Fircrest’s growth. The Land Use Element provides the overall community vision and interconnections among the other elements. Certain planning objectives, such as health and well-being, are addressed in the goals and policies of multiple elements. Elements typically include the components listed in **Table I-2**, subject to variation as appropriate:

**Table I-3  
ELEMENT COMPONENTS**

<b>Components</b>	<b>Intent and Purpose</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	Provides a local planning context for major planning issues and challenges
<b>State Planning Context</b>	Provides an overview of GMA goals and objectives as they relate to planning issues and challenges
<b>Regional Planning Context</b>	Provides an overview of PSRC and PCRC goals, policies and objectives as they relate to planning issues and challenges
<b>Local Planning Context</b>	Looking ahead 20 years, illustrates a vision of where the community would like to be positioned in responding to major planning issues and challenges
<b>Goals</b>	Define what the community wishes to achieve over a 20-year planning horizon
<b>Policies</b>	Provide guidance for creating and implementing development regulations and taking other actions to achieve the goals
<b>Discussion</b>	Clarifies the intent of the goals and policies and provides policy-specific context and explanation
<b>Background Information</b>	Provides factual data that help inform the statements, goals and policies

## **HOW THE PLAN WILL BE IMPLEMENTED AND AMENDED**

The Comprehensive Plan documents Fircrest's vision for the future and provides goals and policies that will facilitate achieving that vision. Goals and policies must be implemented in the city's regulatory documents and operational procedures. Plan implementation involves a variety of activities. New controls may be placed on development or land use activities through revisions or additions to municipal code. More detailed plans may be developed for specific areas. Decisions about the allocation of funds to various projects and programs must be tested against plan goals and policies to ensure consistency.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are necessary, from time to time, to respond to changing conditions and needs of Fircrest citizens. The Growth Management Act requires that amendments to a comprehensive plan be considered no more frequently than once per year. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan shall be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effect of various proposals can be ascertained. In considering proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, proposals will be evaluated for the extent to which they support the public interest, their intent and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, the need for particular land uses, and the availability of land for specific uses. Amendments to the plan are reviewed by the Planning Commission, which makes recommendations to the City Council.

Implementation is monitored through an annual review process during which the success of implementation is evaluated, changes to implementation strategies are developed as necessary, and proposed amendments to the plan are reviewed and potentially adopted. The annual update cycle for addressing amendments to this plan ordinarily will coincide with the City's budget process in the fall of each year. More frequent amendments may be made only under emergency conditions. Any emergency amendment shall be made in addition to, and shall not count as, the annual review and amendment process.

Procedures for amending the plan will be in accord with Fircrest Municipal Code as it may be revised to conform to the goals and policies of this plan. Amendments and procedures will be consistent with the requirements of the GMA, *VISION 2040*, CPP, and applicable environmental laws.

## **EMERGENCY AMENDMENT TYPES AND PROCEDURES**

There are two types of emergency amendments, *disaster response amendment* and *noncompliance response amendment*. Emergency amendments are in addition to, and do not replace, the annual review and amendment process.

### **Disaster Response Amendment**

When a disaster as defined in an adopted disaster recovery plan occurs, the Comprehensive Plan may be temporarily amended to enable the City to conduct disaster management and recovery procedures specified in the adopted disaster recovery plan. If a disaster recovery plan has not been adopted when a disaster occurs or if the plan's provisions are inadequate to respond to the disaster appropriately, procedures may be specified through a resolution adopted by the City Council.

### **Noncompliance Response Amendment**

The City Manager may request by staff report that the Planning Commission and City Council consider an emergency amendment if noncompliance of the Comprehensive Plan with the GMA, *VISION 2040*, or CPP occurs. This request may result from a noncompliance issue that was not detected at the time of adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and subsequent amendments, or it may be a result of amendments to the GMA, CPP, or *VISION 2040*. Under most circumstances, the annual

review and amendment process will be sufficient to handle these situations. However, the City Manager may determine that the need for an amendment is urgent. The City Manager must explicitly identify the noncompliance issue, amendment contents, and reason for urgency in the staff report.

### **Emergency Amendment Procedures**

An emergency Comprehensive Plan amendment procedure shall be incorporated into Fircrest Municipal Code. This procedure shall enable a timely response to disasters and urgent noncompliance issues and shall, as much as possible, allow for public input to the emergency amendment process. Emergency amendments shall be considered temporary and shall be revoked after the urgency of the emergency situation declines. Emergency amendment procedures shall identify the conditions under which emergency amendments will be revoked. Authorities for initiating, adopting, and revoking emergency amendments shall be identified in the emergency amendment procedure. If appropriate, temporary emergency amendments may be proposed as standard amendments during the next annual review process.

## **CONSISTENCY AND COORDINATION**

The GMA requires that each comprehensive plan be consistent and coordinated with comprehensive plans adopted by neighboring jurisdictions. To ensure this consistency and coordination, Fircrest:

- Drafted goals, policies, and land use designations consistent with the goals and policies of the GMA;
- Consulted the regional growth strategy documented in *VISION 2040*; and
- Ratified the Pierce County CPP on July 28, 1992 and subsequent amendments thereto, and considered the policies of the CPPs during the development of, and updates to, this plan

Conformance to the GMA, CPPs, and *VISION 2040* facilitates the consistency and coordination of Fircrest's Comprehensive Plan with plans of other jurisdictions. In addition, Fircrest's plan identifies those areas for which interlocal planning and cooperation are desirable or essential during plan implementation. Fircrest has laid the foundation for interlocal planning within the context of the GMA through its participation in the Pierce County Growth Management Coordinating Committee (GMCC), a staff level committee that provides technical assistance to the Pierce County Regional Council (PCRC).