

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## GREATER GRAHAM COMMUNITY

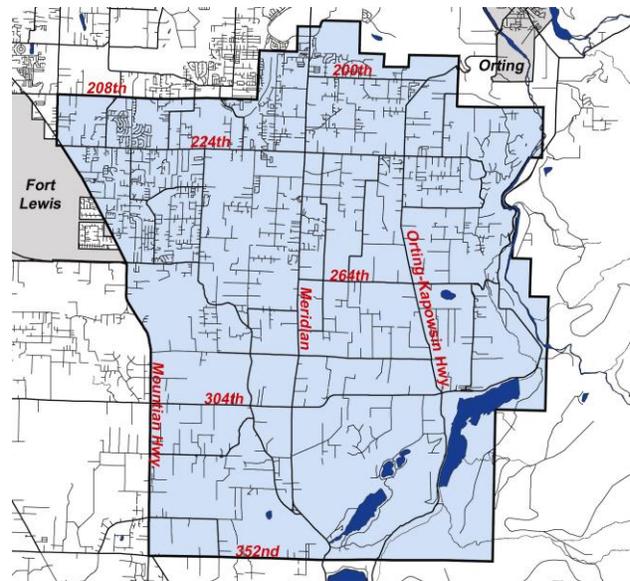
The greater Graham area in Pierce County has experienced a significant amount of growth during the past several decades. Some of this growth has been at the expense of the areas' rural atmosphere. Pierce County and representatives from the community have identified a community vision, discussed issues and created policies that will assure sensible and appropriate levels of development within the plan area over the next 20 years.



The result of this work is the creation of a community plan that provides a framework for consistent land use standards in both the urban areas and in the outlying rural and natural resource lands. Higher density and intensity development is directed into urban areas, where it can be supported by urban level services and facilities. This also allows rural and natural resource areas to retain the low density, agricultural, and forested character that the community values.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN AREA

The Graham Community Plan area is located in south central Pierce County at the fringe of the County's urban growth area limits. The plan area is bounded by the communities of Spanaway, Frederickson, and South Hill to the north. The northernmost limits range from 208th St. E. at the western edge up almost to 176th St. E. at SR 161 (Meridian Avenue). SR 7 (Mountain Highway) is located along the western boundary of the plan area and 352nd St. E. represents the southern boundary. The plan area extends as far east as the Puyallup River Valley. The intersection of 264th St. E. and SR 161 is roughly the geographic center of the plan area.



**Graham Community Plan area**

The plan area is approximately 76.5 square miles in size and encompasses almost 49,000 acres of urban, rural and natural resource lands. Many small, distinct communities are located within the plan area including Graham, Elk Plain, Kapowsin, Thrift, and Rocky Ridge, and some plan area residents associate themselves with other neighboring communities such as Eatonville and Orting. Major north/south transportation routes within and adjacent to the plan area include

Mountain Highway, SR 161, which bisects the center of the plan area, Webster Road and the Orting-Kapowsin Highway. The main east/west access routes through the plan area are 224th, 304th, and 352nd Streets E.

While a small portion of the northern plan area is located within the County's Urban Growth Area boundaries, the majority of the plan area is very rural in character with rolling pasturelands, timberlands and low density rural residential housing. There are many unique environmental features within the plan area including a myriad of lakes and a complex system of rivers and creeks, many of which are salmonid bearing. These systems also support a variety of wildlife species. Morse Nature Preserve, located at the headwaters of Muck Creek, provides an excellent opportunity within the plan area for bird watching and educational events.



*Morse Wildlife Preserve*

## GROWTH TRENDS, POPULATION AND DEMOGRAPHICS

### GROWTH TRENDS

During the years between 1990 and 2000, the Graham plan area had a higher percentage of population growth than the surrounding communities and Pierce County as a whole. The following is an example of the comparative growth (expressed in percent) from 1990 to 2000 between the plan area and other areas:

Graham - 58%

South Hill - 44%

Frederickson - 52%

Pierce County (incorporated and unincorporated) - 20%

### CURRENT POPULATION

The year 2000 population within the plan area was calculated at 32,513 people. Of the total plan area population, it is estimated that 2,837 of those people reside inside the Comprehensive Urban Growth Area (CUGA) boundary while the remaining 29,676 residents live in either designated rural or natural resource areas.

### TWENTY-YEAR POPULATION FORECAST

Population forecasting is an inexact science. A number of different assumptions are put into population models in an attempt to predict what the population will look like in the future. Another layer of complexity is added to this task when considering the implementation of social policies, such as the Growth Management Act, and determining how they may affect growth. To acknowledge these differences, the projected population growth between the years 2002 and 2022 for the Graham plan area is estimated between 6,700 and 13,000 people.

The lower population projection is a product of the Pierce County Population Allocation process. Through this process, substantial emphasis is placed on the urban growth policies adopted in cities' and towns' comprehensive plans that have the effect of redirecting growth back within city limits. The accuracy of this low range relies on the success of implementing those policies. The higher estimate results from the same modeling process; however, the results were not further refined to incorporate cities' and towns' policies. In general, the exclusion of these policies from the forecasting process generates higher growth estimates in urban and rural areas of unincorporated Pierce County.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics for the plan area were compiled from information contained within the year 2000 U.S Census survey. The following nine census tracts encompass the plan area and were used to derive the demographic information; 731.07, 731.09, 731.13, 731.14, 731.15, 731.16, 731.17, 731.18, 731.19.

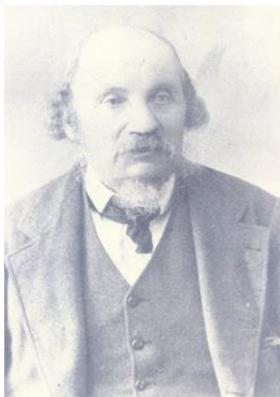
The age of the population within the plan area is generally younger than Pierce County's average. Approximately 62 percent of the population is between 18 and 65 years of age, while 31.4 percent of the population is under the age of 18. The County as a whole has roughly 27 percent of its population under the age of 18.

The income characteristics indicate the households in the plan area have a higher income level than Pierce County as a whole. The median household income for Pierce County is approximately \$45,200 and 64 percent of the households in the plan area have an income of \$45,000 or higher. Roughly 10 percent of the households within the plan area have an income less than \$20,000 and approximately 11.6 percent have an income level of \$100,000 or higher.

## HISTORY OF THE PLAN AREA

### EARLY HISTORY THROUGH THE 1900S

#### PRE-1850S



*John McCloud's Daughter –  
Catherine Mounts*



Before the 1850s, the Graham and Kapowsin areas were largely forested and the Elk Plain area was a vast prairie. Native Americans inhabited these areas for thousands of years and maintained a fire regime to help foster the oak woodland and prairie areas. The community planning area was part of the traditional lands of the Nisqually and Puyallup Indian Tribes. The Puyallup villages were located near the northeastern portion of the

community planning area. The Nisqually people considered the area a major part of their "bread-basket" as the area was teeming with fish and wildlife and the

prairies provided nuts, roots and other edible plants. The variety of resources was also used for shelter, clothing and other household provisions. The Nisqually people called Kapowsin Lake “Tuh-powt-se,” Muck Creek “Y’ll-whaltz,” and Orting Prairie “Tu-wa-quots.”

Also prior to 1850, Elk Plain was utilized by the Hudson’s Bay Company as a grazing area and its employees lived in the Muck Creek Area. In 1850, the Donation Land Claim Act was passed by U.S. Congress. The only donation land claim within the community plan area was filed by John McCloud for 320 acres near Muck Creek. Prior to this, Native Americans used the site as a summer campground. John McCloud married a local Native American woman and had a daughter. Some of their descendents still live in the area.

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## 1850s – 1900

In 1862, The Homestead Act was passed by U.S. Congress bringing more settlement into the area. The area was still largely forested with huge trees and it took months to clear an acre of land. Some of the first settlements included the Peter Leber Settlement, the first post office in 1884, and the Barling Place, which raised and sheared sheep for wool. The cultivation of hops as a cash crop was widespread in the area until 1890 when hops lice devastated hops production.

During this time many school districts, often one-room schools, were formed and churches were constructed to serve new parishes. Newly formed school districts included: Muck Creek/Oak Knoll School District (S.D.) No. 5 in 1859; Spanaway S.D. No. 6 in 1860; Spanaway S.D. No. 25 in 1882; Kirby S.D. No. 49 in 1888; Thrift S.D. No. 41 in 1891; Rocky Ridge S.D. No. 59 in 1891; and Elk Plain S.D. No. 80 in 1892. In 1898, Bethany Lutheran Church was constructed.

Railroads played an especially important role in shaping the character and pattern of development in the plan area. Railroads were brought through the hinterlands of Pierce County to reach the areas where natural resources such as timber, coal, and mineral resources were extracted. They also provided transportation for livestock and farm products and milled wood products. Tacoma Eastern Railroad was extended in 1900 to Frederickson, Graham, Thrift and Tanwax Junction. In 1901, the railroad reached Kapowsin and by 1904 the line was extended to Elbe and Ashford.

From an early period, Mountain Highway (SR 7) and Meridian (SR 161) were the two main north-south thoroughfares that connected the rural communities located within the plan area to the bigger cities and towns. In the 1890s, Mountain Highway was a country road, extending southward through prairie and into a forested area at Benston’s Hill after crossing Muck Creek. In the early 1900s, daily horse-drawn stage coaches traveling on the road from Tacoma to Ashford passed by Elk Plain. Webster Road and many other roads in the area were also constructed during the 1880s and 1890s.

## THE EARLY 1900S THROUGH THE EARLY 1950S

### 1900 – 1920s

During the early 1900s, many logging camps were established in the eastern portion of the plan area at Kapowsin and along the Tacoma Eastern Railroad line and logging mills sprang up along the shores of Lake Kapowsin. By mid-1906, five shingle or saw mills were in full operation at Lake Kapowsin, 23 mills were in full operation along the Tacoma Eastern railroad line, and several additional mills were under construction.

The Electron Hydropower Plant was also constructed and went into service in 1904. Electron was the first major hydroelectric project in Pierce County and the largest in the state at the time.



*Harding Mill – Early 1900s*

Mountain Highway became one of the first concrete paved highways in the state largely due to the extraordinary efforts of Torger Peterson, an early settler of the Ohop Valley. By the fall of 1926, 49 miles of highway from Tacoma to the Mt. Rainier park entrance was paved with concrete.



*Moebius Farm circa 1920s, early 1930s*

Farming continued to flourish in the plan area during the early 20th century. Most farmers tended chickens, cows, and vegetable gardens and logged timber for their livelihood. Granges were organized in the 1920s to promote farmers' interests in taxation, water and utility provisions, pricing, distribution, and transportation issues. They also provided for agricultural research, education, and as community gathering places for social and family activities and events. During this time period the following granges were established.

- Loveland Grange No. 782, May 23, 1921, later renamed Elk Plain Grange No. 782.
- Thrift Grange No. 804, 1921, rechartered to Kapowsin Grange No. 804.
- Benston Grange No. 892, November 5, 1928, later consolidated with the Elk Plain Grange.
- Graham Grange, 1931, demolished in 2004.
- Crocker Grange, May 29, 1942, later merged with the McMillan Grange in 2001.

### 1930s – 1950s

By the 1930s through 1950s timber mills were starting to decline due to dwindling timber resources. Some mills, such as the one in Harding, that were burned in fire accidents were not

replaced. As logging activity decreased, so did employment in the area. Former loggers and sawmill workers had to find work elsewhere. During this time many plan area residents began commuting to work in Tacoma, DuPont, Fredrickson, and other urban centers.

Much of the existing road network within the plan area was constructed by this time period and tourism on Mountain Highway to Mt Rainier became more active. Some of the earlier roads included the Orting-Southern Road which later became Orting-Kapowsin Highway, L. C. Tallman Road (158th Ave. E.), Mathias-Webster Road, Eustis Hunt Road East, Muck-Kapowsin Road (224th St. E.), Thrift Extension Road, McDonald Road (264th St. E.), and the Graham Farm-to-Market Road (Meridian [SR 161]).

During 1945 planning for the area's first park (Frontier Park) began. The St. Paul and Tacoma Lumber Company was persuaded to donate 20 acres of land just north of Graham, with the proviso that it be used as a park. The first picnic was held there that same spring. The local residents donated labor and funds to make improvements to the land. Soon the field was prepared for baseball and other activities. By 1952, the Rainier Riding Club was given permission to use some of the park's space to create a quarter mile track and other improvements.

## THE 1950S THROUGH THE 1970S

During post-World War II, farming continued within the plan area including berries, cherries, bulbs such as daffodils and tulips, poultry farms and dairy farms. Logging and timber mill production dwindled but plywood milling was introduced and became established in the plan area. During the 1960s, residential growth started expanding.

In May 1963, a Board of Directors for Frontier Park was created and incorporated under the new name. In 1967, the Pierce County Fair Board was invited to hold its annual fair at the park and the board accepted. The fair moved from Sumner to Frontier Park in August 1968. The Pierce County Fair has remained at the park since that time. It remains one of the sources of community pride.

## THE 1970S THROUGH PRESENT

During the 1970s through the early 1990s, the plan area experienced a building boom in residential housing, including mobile home placement. Zoning within the plan area was General, which allowed for virtually all uses. Crime also increased during this time period and police protection became an important issue.

In 1994, the County adopted the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan. This plan designated most of the plan area as rural with low residential densities permitted. Commercial areas within the plan area were contained within designated Rural Activity Centers (e.g., 224th St. E. and Meridian) and Rural Neighborhood Centers. Further commercial sprawl down Mountain Highway and Meridian was stopped by defined centers and rural zoning.

## INDIVIDUAL COMMUNITY HISTORIES

### BENSTON

Benston was originally called Huntersville. The name was changed in 1892 to honor local citizen Adam Benston, an employee of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who later served as a mail carrier. The Benston School District split from the Muck District in 1878 and operated until 1930 when it merged with the Kapowsin District. Benston was an agricultural community raising crops such as wheat, oats, and barley, and livestock for beef and dairy products.

### ELECTRON

Electron was the first major hydroelectric project in Pierce County and the largest in the state at the time it was constructed. When the construction of the facility was at its peak, the project employed between 1,500 and 2,000 workers who were stationed in “camps” at the various project sites. The Electron [Hydroelectric] Plant went into service in 1904. The Electron Plant became part of a power distribution system that included Snoqualmie Falls (1898), White River (1911), the Georgetown Steam Plant (1906), Nooksack Falls (1906), the York Street Stream Plant in Bellingham, gas properties in Bellingham and coal mines in Renton. A 300 mile long 55,000 volt transmission line connected these systems and provided a regional power supply system in the Puget Sound area.

The importance of the Electron Plant has been diminished by the development of other power sources in the area over the past decades. However, the Electron dam and powerhouse were still operational in 2004 and celebrated its 100th anniversary with nearly 60 employees and retirees.

### ELK PLAIN

Elk Plain got its name from the herds of elk that grazed the prairie area. Native Americans who inhabited the area kept the land open for grazing through regular burning of the area. By the mid-1840s, the Hudson’s Bay Company used Elk Plain as a grazing area for their estimated 6,000 sheep and 3,500 head of cattle. The former Puget Sound Agricultural Company land was not open to settlers until Washington Territory and Pierce County could purchase the land for \$750,000 in 1867 after a long court battle over the sale price. Early industry included a sawmill that used to be located at about 240th St. E. Some of the pioneer families included Beattie, Ockfen, Wright, Moe, Theil, Rohr, Ehlers, Fisher, Kinsman, and Fuchs. Many of their descendents still live in the area.

The Elk Plain School District was created in 1892 on land donated by S. E. “Amos” Moe. A two-room schoolhouse was built on the site where Elk Plain Elementary is located today. In 1901, the Elk Plain Café was built as a gas station and roadside café. Within a couple of years, cabins were added in back for weary tourists traveling on the road to the mountain.

Loveland Grange No. 782 was formed in 1921. This grange was started by local residents who wanted to form an organization for mutual support in seeking fairer compensation for their properties when the local area was condemned for the construction of Camp Lewis, which

began in 1917. The grange meetings also led to the formation of the Loveland Mutual Light Company. The company's interests were sold in 1971 to what is now Tacoma Public Utilities. Elk Plain School District No. 80 was consolidated into Bethel School District No. 403 in 1949.

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## GRAHAM

Around 1900, Smith Graham, foreman for the Cascade Timber Company, was among the first who started harvesting timber in the area. In the early 1900s, the Tacoma Eastern Railroad (later the Milwaukee Railroad) built tracks from Tacoma through Frederickson, Harding, Graham, Thrift, Tanwax Junction, Kapowsin, and Elbe. The railroad and lumber companies established mills and logging camps in the Graham area. Graham was a necessary stop for the trains transporting lumber to mills located in Kapowsin.

Between 1905 and the 1960s a variety of businesses operated in the community such as a shingle mill, barbershop, blacksmith shop, feed and supplies, auto and tractor repair shop, tavern, restaurant, cold storage lockers, and a meat market.

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## HARDING

The settlement of Harding was a railroad stop and mill site located along a spur line adjacent to the Tacoma Eastern Railroad right-of-way. It was located one mile west of present-day Graham and was named after Henry and Charles Harding, the first mill operators at that place. With a mill operating in the community and active logging operations in the vicinity, Harding was a small but thriving community from the 1900s to 1920s, complete with a store, boarding house, dance hall, cookhouse, and several smaller homes. In its heyday, an interesting addition was the Japanese village, which consisted of neatly kept homes admired by the community.

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## KAPOWSIN

The community settled by Euro-Americans in 1888 got their start through the booming logging industry like many other small communities in the southern portion of the County. The name of the community is likely to have been derived from the Native American name Kapousen which means "shallow place" and was also the name of the leader of the local Native American band that lived along the lakeshore.

From 1888 to 1929 the rise and growth of Kapowsin was tied inextricably to logging, milling, and railroads.

The Kapowsin Post Office opened in 1890. The

Tacoma Eastern Railroad reached the area from Tacoma in 1901 and was joined later by the Northern Pacific Railroad to transport timber resources harvested from the area. The first sawmill in Kapowsin was built by the Kapowsin Lumber Company in 1901. By mid-1906, five mills were in full operation on the lake - two shingle mills and three lumber mills.



*Town of Kapowsin – early 1900s*

By 1915, Kapowsin was a thriving community with an estimated population of 750. It had a vibrant business section that served the community that included a restaurant, café, theater, three general stores, two churches, telephone and telegraph office, bakery, bank, laundry, hotels, and doctor's office. Electricity was provided to the community as early as 1905 by the Electron Power Plant. Samuel Fix installed a water system from 1913 to 1914. A very small four-room school was built in late 1904. Later, a much bigger school building was built which housed students from grade one through twelve with an average student population of 280 students. Its first high school class graduated in 1914. A major gymnasium, which included a swimming pool, was built in 1922. The gymnasium was considered the finest in the County at the time.

By 1928, logging in Kapowsin was in sharp decline because much of the surrounding timber land had been cleared. Workers in the logging industry and those who served their needs started to move on. Most of the mills closed down except one. The demise of the community accelerated in 1928 when the City of Tacoma, which coveted Kapowsin Lake for a municipal water supply, announced plans to acquire considerable land around the shores of the lake. The city announced its plans to purchase the mills, stores, homes, churches, and any other standing buildings and level them. However, the City soon discovered a major artesian source of water in South Tacoma and no longer needed the water from the lake, which required transporting water 25 miles to the City.

By 1930, Kapowsin reverted back to being a rural farming community. Kapowsin School District continued to provide a sense of civic identity. Eventually, Kapowsin School District was consolidated with Bethel School District in 1949. The influx of new residents seeking the quiet solitude of Kapowsin Lake has been gradual. Kapowsin is now a community of a variety of residents engaged in dairy and fruit farming, logging, and recreational fishing, in addition to retirees.

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#### KIRBY

Kirby was a small sawmill camp on the Tacoma Eastern Railroad, 14 miles southeast of Tacoma. The railroad reached there in about 1900. There was no village at Kirby. It was a train stop from which lumber was hauled to Tacoma. The North Star Lumber Company built a mill in about 1908 and in 1912 the mill was bought by the Kirby Lumber Company. The mill burned in 1913. At the time, there were 55 men employed at the mill. Kirby was also the site of a small schoolhouse.

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#### LEBER

Leber, a small community located about 340th St. E. and Mountain Highway, included the old Weyerhaeuser Elementary School, a fire station, and a small grocery and gas station. This is one of the oldest communities in Pierce County. The Leber Post Office was established in 1884. It was named after an early settler, Peter L. Leber, who served as the first postmaster. Mr. Leber's small log cabin served as the original post office. His home site still contains several of the rough hewn cedar out-buildings he constructed. A train route was extended from Tanwax Junction through Leber and on to the Silver Lake area lumber mills in the early 1900s.

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## ROCKY RIDGE

Rocky Ridge is an area from approximately 260th St. E. over the North Fork of Muck Creek to the ridge of Muck Creek hill and between 8th Ave. E. (Pole Line Road) and Webster Road. The current Rocky Ridge Elementary School is located on part of the William Benston Sr. family homestead. The original Rocky Ridge School District used a one room schoolhouse from 1910 to 1949 when it was consolidated into the Bethel School District. The history of settlement in the area extends back to the days of Fort Nisqually.

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## TANWAX JUNCTION

Tanwax Junction was a creation of the railroad and logging industries which flourished in the area from 1901 to 1928. It did not begin as a residential community but as a railroad switching station serving the Tacoma Eastern Railroad, as well as the spur lines of the Tanwax and Western Railway and the Tide Water Lumber Company. It was located on the flat plain above the bustling logging community of Kapowsin, just off the now Orting-Kapowsin Highway. The Junction may also have met the immediate needs of the logging industry by serving as a small collector point for railroad cars hauling logs to the Tacoma logging mills.

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## THRIFT

The first homesteaders of this area arrived in the 1880s. The settlement dwindled in the late 1890s but increased in size after 1900 with the arrival of the Tacoma Eastern Railroad. The Thrift family arrived in 1903. Earlier the railroad stop located in the area was called Summit due to the steep grade the logging trains had to ascend. The name was changed to Thrift to avoid confusion with another community called Summit located near Puyallup. Thrift was an early logging site and hop growing area near the turn of the century.

The first store in Thrift was called Edmans Corner. It was located on the corner of Orting-Kapowsin Road and Muck-Kapowsin Highway (224th St. E.). After being sold a couple of times, it was renamed the Thrift General Store. The first two-room Thrift School was built across Muck-Kapowsin Highway from the store. Thrift School District No. 41 organized in 1891 was consolidated into Kapowsin School District No. 347 in 1949.

## PLANNING HISTORY

Pierce County has been conducting comprehensive planning and regulating land use for over four decades. The following is a brief description of the major planning efforts initiated within Pierce County during this time period.

### COUNTY PLANNING

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#### 1962 PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND ZONING

The first Pierce County Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Pierce County Zoning Code were adopted in 1962. Zoning districts were established that dictated the appropriate location for

commercial business and residential homes. However, the 1962 plan did not offer much protection from incompatible uses nor recognize the unique individuality of communities. Under this plan, most of the plan area was zoned General, which allowed a variety of use types and higher levels of residential density than what is currently allowed in the rural and resource zones.

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#### 1994 PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 1990. This legislation required Pierce County to engage in countywide planning with the cities and towns located within Pierce County and to update its existing comprehensive plan and development regulations in conformance with the requirements outlined in the new law.

In 1991, Interim Growth Management Policies were adopted as a transition between the 1962 Comprehensive Plan and the new planning required under the GMA. The Pierce County County-Wide Planning Policies were adopted in 1992, which provided the framework and process by which Pierce County and the cities and towns within the County established urban growth areas, provided infrastructure and services, and preserved agricultural and natural resource lands.

In 1994, per the requirements of the GMA, Pierce County adopted a new Comprehensive Plan, which replaced the 1962 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan in its entirety. This plan established population projections, urban growth areas, rural areas and natural resource lands. The new Countywide plan became effective January 1995, with its implementing development regulations becoming effective July 1995. The majority of the plan area was redesignated to rural as a result of the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

#### COMMUNITY PLANNING

Although the GMA does not require comprehensive plans to provide for community plans, Pierce County Ordinance No. 90-47s directed County officials to prepare a community plans element of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan community plans element identifies which communities will receive a community plan; provides the framework for community planning; and establishes the flexibility for communities to refine comprehensive plan land use designations and associated densities and apply design standards to achieve a local vision, while remaining consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the GMA.

Since 1994, several community plans have been adopted throughout unincorporated Pierce County including the Upper Nisqually Valley, Gig Harbor Peninsula, Parkland-Spanaway-Midland (PSM), South Hill, Frederickson and Mid-County. The majority of unincorporated County residents now live in community plan areas.