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# Chapter 1: Introduction

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## OVERVIEW OF THE PLAN AREA

The Parkland-Spanaway-Midland (PSM) Communities Plan area encompasses approximately 13,003 acres (20.3 square miles) and is located in west-central Pierce County. The plan area includes three separate, but interconnected communities, tied by history, environmental features, transportation issues, and growth pressures. The PSM Communities Plan area is bounded on the north by the City of Tacoma, the west by the City of Lakewood, McChord Air Force Base, and Fort Lewis, on the south by Fort Lewis, and on the east by the Summit-Waller/North Clover Creek Collins and Frederickson Community Plan areas.

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The communities are characterized by a mix of historic urban communities, new suburban residential neighborhoods, semi-rural and large lot residential areas, Pacific Lutheran University, Sprinker Recreation Center/Spanaway Park, the Clover Creek and Spanaway Creek watersheds, Spanaway and Tule Lakes, and major commercial and transportation arterials (i.e., SR 512, Pacific Avenue/Mountain Highway, Portland Avenue, 112th and 176th Streets, and Steele Street/Spanaway Loop Road). The plan area had an estimated 1999 population of approximately 60,104 residents with significant growth since that time. While these communities share some common characteristics, each community has its own unique pattern of development.

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### PARKLAND

Parkland is defined by the presence of Pacific Lutheran University (PLU). The wooded, small lot, urban pattern of the north-central part of the community goes back to its platting in the 1890s. Parkland's character was altered significantly by the construction of the SR 512 freeway that resulted in splitting the community north to south. The newer residential portions of Parkland lie to the east of Pacific Avenue and south of PLU; both areas have experienced significant growth in recent decades. The western edge of Parkland is characterized by Clover Creek drainage, its wetlands, and wooded large lot residential areas and historic farmsteads. Besides PLU, Parkland is characterized and influenced by the presence of the heavily used Pacific Avenue commercial corridor, which is the main link from SR 512 and I-5 to Bethel, Graham, Frederickson, and Spanaway areas, as well as the main route to Mount Rainier National Park. The historic Garfield Street neighborhood, at the eastern edge of PLU, serves as the pedestrian commercial center of the community and university.

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### SPANAWAY

Spanaway is defined by the presence of Spanaway Lake and the associated regional recreation centers, e.g., Sprinker Recreation Center, Spanaway Park, and Lake Spanaway Golf Course. The

historic Spanaway town site lies to the south of Spanaway Park on the eastern shore of Spanaway Lake. Spanaway has grown substantially in recent decades with suburban and large lot residential neighborhoods developing on the east side of Pacific Avenue and in the areas surrounding Spanaway Lake. As with Parkland, Spanaway is characterized by the Pacific Avenue corridor, as well as Old Military Road (the entrance to the east gate of McChord AFB), and 176th Street (the main east-west link to Frederickson and South Hill).

## MIDLAND

The community of Midland can also trace its settlement back to the 1890s, when it was a farming community, with a town site platted along the southern end of Portland Avenue. Midland today is characterized by a mix of urban residential development, interspersed with large lot residential areas, pastures, wetlands, and woodlands. The community is accessed and characterized by the Portland Avenue transportation and employment corridor. Most commercial development in Midland is focused along the 72nd Street corridor where it borders with East Tacoma. A significant amount of light industrial uses exists in the vicinity of the historic town site along Portland Avenue and in close proximity to SR 512.

## HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITIES PLAN AREA

### EARLY SETTLERS

The first inhabitants of the Parkland-Spanaway-Midland area were the Squally Indians. There were abundant food sources on the prairies and in Clover Creek, such as salmon, trout, elk, deer, bear, berries and edible roots that were hunted or gathered by the Native Americans. The British-owned Hudson Bay Company established Fort Nisqually, which was located in the present-day City of DuPont, to operate a fur-trading business. The company also established an agricultural subsidiary called the Puget Sound Agricultural Company. Twelve thousand sheep, 3,000 cattle, and 300 horses are said to have grazed the Puget Sound Agricultural Company land. The Hudson Bay Company personnel were the first European inhabitants of the south Puget Sound area.

The communities of Midland, Parkland, and Spanaway started as farming communities over 125 years ago. The Donation Land Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1850 brought a major influx of new settlers into the area. The law provided 320 acres to single adult male citizens over twenty-one years of age. Married couples could claim 640 acres (one section) of the land. After the law expired in 1855, the Homestead Act was passed in 1862, granting 160 acres to individual citizens. The first wagon train of pioneers arrived in Pierce County in 1853. The earliest pioneers that settled in Parkland were Thomas and Agnes Tallentire. Some of the early donation land claimants included the Mahons, Smiths, Pattisons, and Moreys.

Hops became a cash crop among the early settlers after the 1870s. Virgin forests of Douglas fir, cedar, alder, hemlock, and maple were logged for timber. Settlers fished for salmon in the creeks and established orchards and used the area for grazing sheep and cattle. Agricultural

activities continued through the 1880s. The original Parkland Post Office was established in 1891. Spanaway was one of the earliest areas of settlement in Pierce County with the settlement record dating back to the late 1840s. The name "Spannuch" later modified to Spanaway is believed to have been derived from a Native American word referring to Spanaway Lake. Early donation land claimants adjacent to the shores of Spanaway Lake were Henry and Minerva de la Bushalier. The title to the land was given to the couple in 1854.

The first military road constructed in the State of Washington (1853) connected Fort Steilacoom with Fort Walla Walla. The existing Military Road S. in Spanaway is a remnant of that original road. In 1870, one hundred thirty German residents of Chicago came to the area responding to a plea from the territorial governor to come and settle in the area. Gustav F. C. Bresemann, born in Germany and trained in cabinet making, was one such immigrant. Mr. Bresemann and his business partner, Burow, started the first furniture manufacturing plant in the area supplying manufactured fine furniture to many homes in Tacoma and the surrounding area. Mr. Bresemann sold his land and water rights to Tacoma Light and Power Company in 1888. Some of the early settlers included the Rohr, Simond, Bittner, Benston, and Berger families who settled in the community in the 1880s and 1890s. Some of these early immigrant families went into agriculture that provided a variety of meat products including sausage, dairy products, and woolen products. Hops, potatoes, and vegetables were also produced on farms and sold. Many later lost their land when condemned for the Army Post.

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#### PARKLAND - EARLY DAYS

The establishment of the Pacific Lutheran University (PLU) campus and attraction of Scandinavian settlers into the community had a major influence on the development pattern beginning in the 1890s. The Pacific Lutheran Academy which later became Pacific Lutheran University opened in 1894 when Old Main, the present day Harstad Hall, was completed. The first general merchandise store was located at 414 Garfield Street. Homes began to be built in the center of Parkland in 1890. Bjug Harstad, the inspirational leader and Lutheran pastor, was elected the first President of PLU.

The Methodist Church of the Parkland area was built in 1900. The completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad with the location of its western terminus in Tacoma in 1887 spurred rapid growth in the area. In fact, Tacoma became a booming town. The population in Tacoma grew from 1,000 to 45,000 within the ten year period of 1880 to 1890. The Parkland and Brookdale areas were platted in 1890 by William Wilson and Frank D. Nash to provide residential sites for the rapidly growing urban population.

The Parkland area grew rapidly during the 1890s and the community was soon established as a Tacoma suburb. The rail lines were extended from Tacoma to Fern Hill, Parkland, and Spanaway in 1888. The steam-powered locomotive called "Old Betsy" ran from Tacoma to Lake Park (Spanaway) through Edison (S. Tacoma Way) and Parkland with passengers. The street car was discontinued in the 1930s.

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#### SPANAWAY - EARLY DAYS

The Spanaway community was a busy transportation and recreation center in the early 1890s as the southern terminus of the Tacoma and Columbia Railroad. The three-story, seventy-two room Hotel Spanaway was constructed near the depot at the southern terminus of the line at 161st South and Park. The Columbia River Railway and Navigation Company platted the town and named the community Lake Park. The economic panic of 1893 stopped further development activities. Active promotion by the railroad company and the railroad connection from Tacoma via suburbs to Lake Park (Spanaway) made Spanaway the most popular recreational spot in the area. In 1903, Spanaway Park was founded. Managed by the Metropolitan Park District, the area was used for public water supply and recreation. In 1910, Bresemann purchased adjacent property containing 45 acres of land with 1,500 feet of waterfront. For many years, Bresemann managed the property as a private recreation facility. Pierce County entered into the scene when the Metropolitan Park District deeded land to the County. Additional property was acquired into the park system when Pierce County purchased the 45 acres from Bresemann. In 1917, Camp Lewis Military Base was established on the Nisqually Plains as a training and mobilization center. Elmhurst Mutual Power and Light was established in 1922 to provide electrical service in Spanaway.

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#### MIDLAND - EARLY DAYS

The initial settlement of Midland was focused around farming activities. Around 1900, a town site was platted along the south end of Portland Avenue. This part of Midland has been a focus of commercial and some industrial activity for decades.

#### RECENT PAST

The area was relatively unaffected by World War I and the years of 1920-1934 saw few changes beyond the formation of Fort Lewis. In 1927, Fort Lewis became one of the three sites for main divisional posts in the country. The Great Depression of 1929 created severe financial difficulties for the public school district, the Parkland Golf Association, and Pacific Lutheran University. The depression, however, did not significantly alter business activities in Parkland or Spanaway. Until 1940, the community grew slowly and continued to retain a distinctly rural character.

The years between 1940 and 1960 brought significant changes to the area's character. By 1941, community population increased to 750 persons and PLU enrollment reached 500 students. World War II brought significant growth into the area. In 1940, the military population of Fort Lewis increased to 30,000 and McChord Air Force Base, which had been acquired by the government in 1938, became an active air lift and air defense station. Between 1945 and 1955, the following developments occurred: a large influx of war veterans caused unprecedented increases in demand for goods and services; demands for new housing were at an all time peak; the enrollment at PLU increased to 600 students; twenty-one of the twenty-three major buildings on campus were erected; Garfield Street was paved in 1946; strip development began to occur along Pacific Avenue; and the Pierce County Refuse Company was

established. In 1948, the Franklin Pierce School District was formed and the Parkland Post Office was opened in 1955.

By 1960, Parkland-Spanaway's conversion from frontier to suburbia was complete. With a population in 1964 of 18,450, the area was faced with the contemporary developmental problems of annexation, incorporation, utility expansion, drainage and sewer related problems, and sprawl development.

Residential and commercial growth in the area continued in the 1950s due to additional personnel stationed at the military bases. The community continued to grow from the latter part of the 1950s and through the 1960s and 1970s. Small business establishments continued to serve the communities in semi-rural, general store formats. However, as transportation access improved, residents shopped outside the community at the commissaries of McChord and Fort Lewis, Lakewood's Villa Plaza which opened in the late 1950s, and the Tacoma Mall which opened in the 1960s. Many small businesses that depended on local clientele could no longer be sustained.

The formation of the Pierce County sanitary sewer system in the mid-1970s and its extension into the Parkland, Spanaway, and Midland communities significantly influenced residential growth. As the communities have grown residentially, so has the commercial development along Pacific Avenue. A commercial corridor has continued to expand to meet the needs of Parkland-Spanaway residents and those residents in rapidly growing residential areas to the south. With continued growth, the community has experienced pressure on its transportation systems, its parks and open spaces, schools, and local utilities.

## PLANNING HISTORY

### COUNTY PLANNING

#### 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 businesses and residential homes. However, the Plan did not offer much protection from incompatible uses and did not recognize the unique individuality of communities.

#### 1980 PARKLAND-SPANAWAY COMPREHENSIVE [COMMUNITY] PLAN

The development of a new comprehensive plan for Parkland-Spanaway began in 1974. Parkland residents who were concerned about a Port of Tacoma proposal for an air freight terminal recognized that this issue and several other important land use questions needed to be resolved. Through the efforts of these citizens, the Board of Commissioners appropriated a budget for the development of a comprehensive plan.

In 1976, a citizens' group called the Parkland-Spanaway Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) was formed. This group was tasked to develop and foster community awareness and support for the plan. Over a three-year period, the CAC met on a regular basis to develop the basic goals, objectives, and recommendations, as well as the overall philosophy contained within this plan.

The Parkland-Spanaway Comprehensive [Community] Plan was adopted by Pierce County in 1980. In addition to the Parkland and Spanaway communities, the plan also included the Midland and North Clover Creek/Collins communities. In 1982, the Parkland-Spanaway Zoning Regulations were adopted by Pierce County. In 1983, the Midland area was removed from the control of the 1980 plan and 1982 regulations and reverted to the control of the 1962 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

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### 1994 PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 1990. It required Pierce County to update its existing Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations including existing Community Plans such as Parkland-Spanaway's. The GMA required Pierce County to develop and adopt a comprehensive plan which would control residential, commercial, and industrial growth.

In 1991, Interim Growth Management Policies were adopted as a transition between the 1962 Comprehensive Plan and the new plan required under the Growth Management Act. In 1992, the Pierce County County-Wide Planning Policies were adopted. The policies provided the framework and process by which Pierce County and the cities and towns within the County would establish urban growth areas, provide infrastructure and services, and preserve agricultural and natural resource lands.

In 1994, per the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Pierce County adopted a new Comprehensive Plan. The 1994 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan replaced the 1962 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan in its entirety. The plan established population projections, urban growth areas, and rural areas. The 1980 Parkland-Spanaway Comprehensive [Community] Plan remained in effect as a component of the new Comprehensive Plan, but many aspects of the 1980 plan were not consistent with the new County Comprehensive Plan and consequently were superseded by the new countywide plan and implementing Development Regulations-Zoning that became effective in July 1995.

### COMMUNITY PLANNING

Although the Growth Management Act does not require comprehensive plans to provide for community plans, Pierce County Ordinance 90-47S directs County officials to prepare a community plans element of the Comprehensive Plan. The majority of unincorporated County residents live in community plan areas. Community plans must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the GMA.

The community plans element of the 1994 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan envisions a local voice in how the Comprehensive Plan and its Development Regulations will be carried out in