COMPREHENSIVE / NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN AMENDMENT PROCESS

The Growth Management Act (GMA) allows amendments to the Comprehensive Plan only once a year, with certain exceptions. Bellingham’s Neighborhood Plans are a component of our Comprehensive Plan and are therefore subject to the once a year amendment limitation. The GMA also requires Neighborhood Plan amendments to be consistent with, and implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Types of Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan Amendments

Site Specific: Property owners or their authorized representatives may apply for a proposed amendment to Comprehensive Plan / Neighborhood Plan land use designations relating to a specific site. Site specific proposals must be filed concurrently with an application for rezone.

Non-Site Specific: Anyone may apply for other types of amendments that involve non-site specific Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan provisions.

Process Steps

Comprehensive and Neighborhood Plan amendments are considered under a two part process. The first part of the process establishes the list of comprehensive / neighborhood plan amendments (“the docket”) that will be considered in the annual amendment process. The second part of the process is a final review and decision on applications that were approved for inclusion in the annual docket.

1. Docket Application. Applications are due by April 1 of each year for review during the following year. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. An application consists of the following materials:
   - Docket Application Form.
   - Fee payment calculated at 10% of the total Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan amendment fee.* The fee is not refunded if the proposal is not docketed. The fee is calculated as follows:

   (a) Site specific Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan amendments:
       $1,594 base fee + $255 notice fee + $213 per acre over first acre ($12,750 max.) x 0.1 = fee due at docket application. Final fees will be calculated at the time the application is submitted.
       OR
   (b) Non-site specific Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan amendments:
       $1,594 base fee + $255 notice fee x 0.1 = $185 due at docket application.

   *Recognized Neighborhood Associations are exempt from this fee.

2. Establishment of the Annual Docket. Applications for the annual review docket shall be determined by the City Council Committee of the Whole based upon meeting the docketing criteria outlined in Bellingham Municipal Code 20.20.030.

3. Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan Amendment Application. Applicants for proposals that have been included in the annual docket must submit a Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan Amendment application within 45 days of the City Council docket decision or a date approved by the Planning and Community Development Director in order to continue to final review. Incomplete applications will not be accepted. If a complete application is not submitted by the deadline the proposal may be removed from the docket.
Submittal Requirements.

A. Site specific proposals must complete the following:

- Pre-application conference with City staff. The purpose of the conference is to obtain guidance on the proposal. A waiver from the staff conference may be requested. See Pre-Application Meeting Information and Application and waiver forms.
- Neighborhood meeting. See Neighborhood Meeting Instructions form.
- Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan Amendment Application form.
- SEPA Checklist, including Part D for Non-Project Actions.
- Submit Rezone Application form.
- Attach a map (8.5” x 11”) identifying the property included in the proposed amendment and showing parcels and streets located within and adjacent to the site.
- Payment of fees calculated as:

  Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan amendment fee balance:

  $1,594 + $255 notice fee + $213 per acre over the 1st acre ($12,750 max.) x 0.9
  + Rezone fee:  $1,594 + $308 notice fee + $213 per acre over first acre
  + SEPA Checklist fee:  $266

  = TOTAL FEE (Final fees will be calculated at the time the application is submitted.)

B. Non-Site Specific Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan amendments must submit the following:

- Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan Amendment Application Form.
- A completed SEPA Checklist including Part D for Non-Project Actions.
- Payment of fees:

  Comprehensive / Neighborhood Plan amendment fee balance:

  $1,594 + $ 255 notice fee - $185 docket fee = $1,664
  + SEPA Checklist fee:  $266

  = $1,930 TOTAL FEE

*Recognized Neighborhood Associations are exempt from these fees when authorized by the City Council at the time of docketing.

4. Final Review. Applications the City Council approves to be included in the annual docket will then receive further consideration through a Type VI process as described in Bellingham Municipal Code 21.10.150 and includes:

- Noticed public hearing and recommendation to the City Council by the Planning Commission.
- Noticed public hearing and decision by the City Council.

Criteria

Questions in the application form are designed to help applicants address the factors and criteria the City will use in deciding whether a proposed amendment should be approved. The specific factors and criteria are listed in Bellingham Municipal Code 20.20.040.