

# CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The City of Des Moines (City) Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year plan that articulates community's vision and values about how to grow into the future. The goals, policies and implementation strategies included in this Plan provide a basis for the City's regulations and guide future decision-making. The Plan also addresses anticipated-targeted population, housing, and employment growth, and how facilities and services will be maintained or improved to accommodate expected growth between now and the year 20352044.

The Comprehensive Plan guides how Des Moines will work with Tribal Nations, partners, stakeholders, state and regional agencies, and the public and plans for growth that will occur on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples. In respect for and acknowledgment of their legacy, this Plan seeks to create a livable, equitable, and sustainable home for current and future generations.

This introduction section provides information about our community, our vision for 20352044, and a description of the comprehensive planning process.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Comprehensive Plan guides how the City of Des Moines will work with Tribal Nations, partners, stakeholders, state and regional agencies, and the public as we plan for growth that will occur on the ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples. The City recognizes the importance of continuous collaboration with the Coast Salish peoples who have stewarded the Salish Sea since time immemorial. In respect for and acknowledgment of their legacy, this Plan seeks to foster meaningful exchange of information with Tribes, preserve the region's cultural heritage, and create a livable, equitable, and sustainable home for current and future generations.

## OUR COMMUNITY

Des Moines is situated along-on Puget Sound midway between Seattle and Tacoma, Washington. Geographically, the City is long and narrow (6.3 miles long and 2.1 miles wide) and covers 4,340 acres. The City is divided into nine neighborhoods, each providing a mixture of population, variation in density, housing, commercial opportunities, and amenities (Figure 1-1).

The City was incorporated on June 17, 1959 and is currently developed as a suburban residential community. Between the time of incorporation and the year 2000, the City experienced significant population growth which

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was primarily the result of annexations from King County. In more recent years, the City has experienced minimal moderate growth, and will continue to grow per its classification as a High Capacity Transit Community.

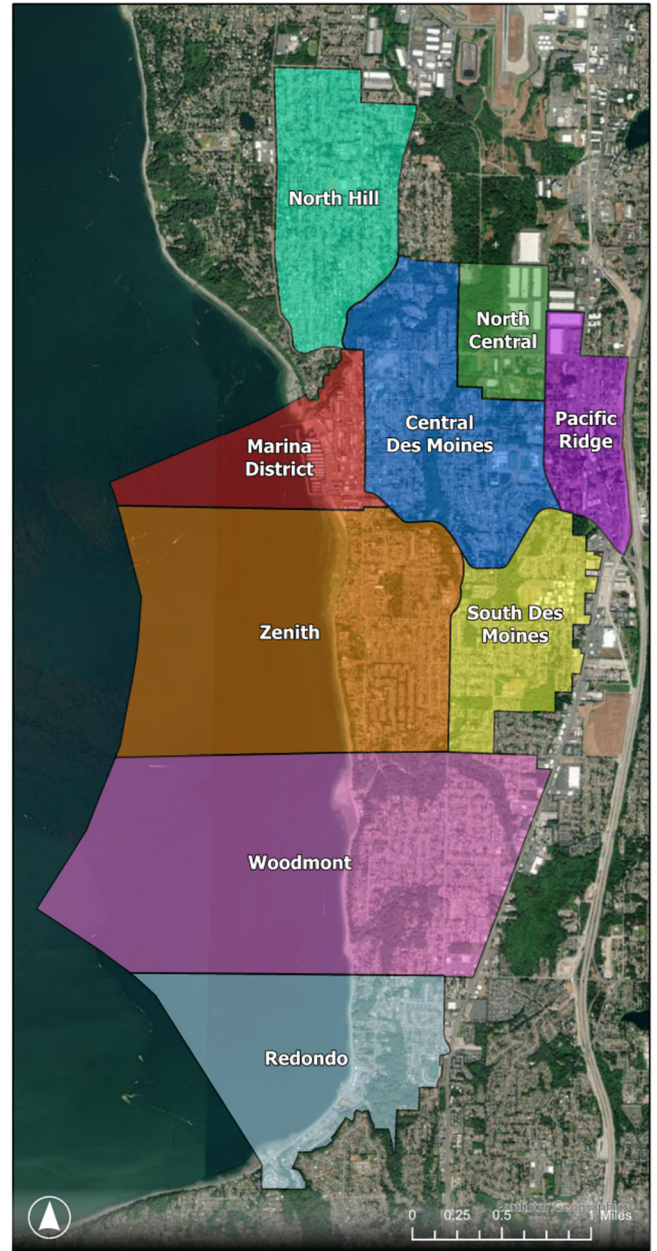
According to the 2010 United States Census (2010 Census), Des Moines had a population of 29,673 and was the 41st largest city in the state and the 12th largest city in King County. As of April 1, 2015, the Washington State Office of Financial Management estimated the City's current population at 30,100. Exhibit 1-1 shows the growth trend over the past 53 years.

According to the 2024 Washington State Office of Financial Management estimates, Des Moines had a population of 33,400 in 2024, ranking as the 29th largest city in the state and the 14th largest city in King County. Figure 1-24 shows the growth trend.

With each passing year, Des Moines becomes more diverse in race. Figure 1-32 shows the makeup of the community, which is roughly 50% white, with the Hispanic/ Latino population (of any race) at 19%, followed by Asian at 12% and Black or African American at 9%. One-quarter of the population is foreign-born.

Per the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), the median age in Des Moines was 38; the share of population which is age 62 or older was 18%.

The 2009-2013 ACS data also show the median income for a household in the City was \$59,799 while the per capita income for the City was \$27,056 and about 15% of the population was living at or below the poverty level. Major employers in Des Moines are the Highline School District, Highline College, the City of Des Moines and two retirement centers.



**Figure 1-1: Des Moines, Washington Neighborhoods**

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The ACS data show the median income for a household in the City was \$73,131 while the per capita income for the city was \$38,185. Approximately 11% of the city's population lives at or below the poverty level, which indicates an improvement as compared to the previous figure of 15% which was reported by the US Census for 2008-2013 data. Major employers in Des Moines are the Highline School District, Highline College, the City of Des Moines, the US government (General Services Administration's and Federal Aviation Administration) and two retirement centers.

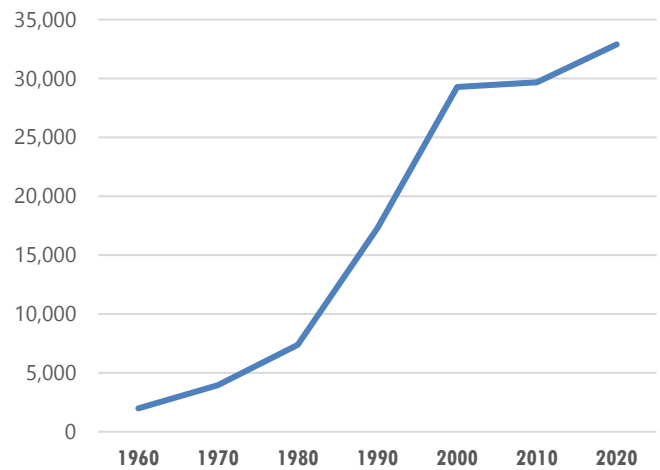


Figure 1-2: Population Growth

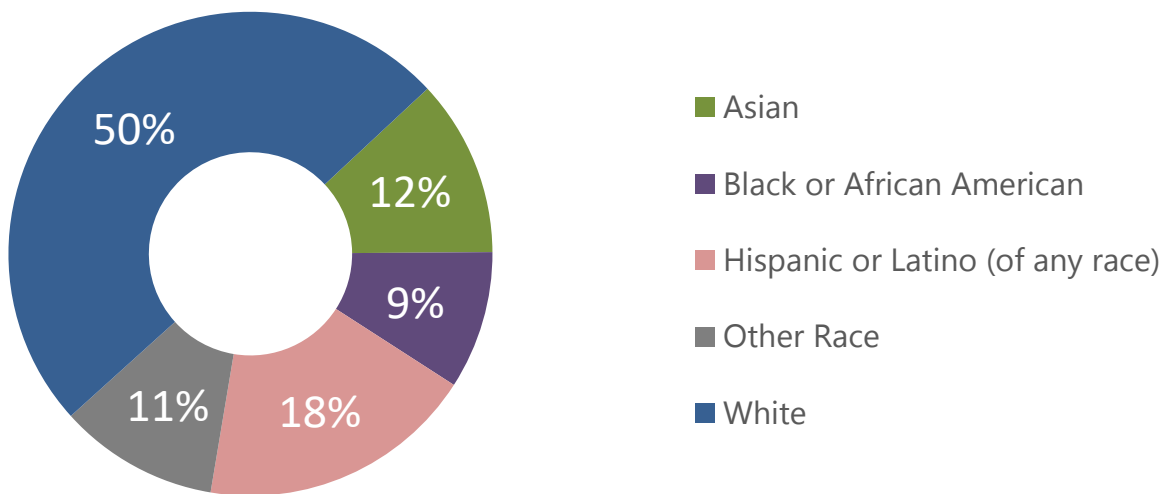


Figure 1-3: Des Moines Population by Race and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2020

Source: US Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (Table DP05); Washington Department of Commerce, 2023

## LOOKING FORWARD TO ~~2035~~2044

The City's mission of Des Moines City Council is to (as revised by the Council during a November 2024 retreat) is "protect, preserve, promote and improve the community by providing leadership and services reflecting the pride and values of Des Moines Citizens. Des Moines is a waterfront community; building a safe, sustainable environment by providing a high quality of life for all to live, work, and play." Looking forward to the year 2035~~2044~~, the City Council's vision is for Des Moines is to be:

***~~"An inviting, livable, safe waterfront community; embracing change for the future while preserving our past."~~***

***"Be the premier waterfront destination in the Pacific Northwest."***

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Additionally, the core values of the City of Des Moines are:

- Safety
- Sustainability
- Integrity
- Transparency
- Innovation

Growth and development within Des Moines are influenced by activities outside the city and external factors including: state regulations; regional economic trends, development plans, transportation systems and commuting patterns; development within bordering jurisdictions; and local influences such as Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (Sea-Tac Airport) and Highline College.

Just over 4 million people live in the central Puget Sound region and forecasts indicate the region will grow to 5.8 million by 2050. The region is projected to add about 1.2 million jobs by 2050. By year 2040, the Puget Sound Region is expected to add 5 million people and 3 million new jobs. This growth, identified in the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) VISION 2050 plan for the region, is being allocated by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to the four-county region – King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties. King County will need to accommodate 233,077 new housing units and 428,068 new jobs 366,377 new housing units and 490,103 new jobs between 2019 and 2044.

The King County's Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) sets has historically set household and employment growth targets for cities in King County in the the county, documented in the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). In addition, the process of allocating growth is now based on the amount of net new housing needed to plan for and accommodate an equitable distribution of housing choices across all jurisdictions that is affordable to all economic segments of the population of the county, as provided by the Department of Commerce. These targets have been distributed in accordance with the PSRC's regional geographies of Metropolitan Cities, Core Cities, High-Capacity Transit Communities, Larger Cities, Small Cities, Cities and Towns, and Urban Unincorporated areas. Des Moines falls within the "Larger Cities High-Capacity Transit Communities" regional geography. The current targets established by the GMPC are for the period 2019-2044<sup>1</sup>. 2006-2031 For purposes of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, these targets have been extended to the 2035 planning horizon.

***Des Moines needs to plan for an additional  
3,480-3,800 Housing Units and 5,800 2,380 New Jobs  
plus 726 new permanent Emergency Housing Units.***

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<sup>1</sup> 2021 King County Countywide Planning Policies amended via King County Ord. 19660 (Aug 15, 2023; ratified Nov. 30, 2023)



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~~As we plan for our future, we need to~~ It is important to consider how ~~we~~ the community can grow in ways that support economic development and job growth; create strong neighborhoods with a range of housing, commercial, and transportation options; and champion healthy neighborhoods that provide families-residents and visitors with a clean environment.

## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The *Des Moines Comprehensive Plan* serves as a roadmap that expresses our community's goals and aspirations for how we want to grow and prosper into the future. It is the City's official policy guide that defines—through goals, policies, and implementation strategies—how Des Moines should best accommodate forecasted household and job growth, manage traffic, and provide open space, and recreational opportunities, and deliver other vital services. The plan is "comprehensive" in both scope and coverage. It addresses the use of land and buildings, the movement of traffic and pedestrians, the provision of parks, schools, and public facilities, and protection of the environment. It also addresses residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, public and institutional lands, and public rights-of-way. It provides a guide for public investments and capital improvements, and can help to ensure that public taxes and revenues are invested wisely. Finally, the comprehensive plan serves as a marketing tool to promote Des Moines' unique assets, and help to attract new people, families, businesses, investment, and development to our community.

As a companion to the Comprehensive Plan, the Des Moines Municipal Code along with other Federal and State-federal and state regulations provide the requirements for the permitting, development and use of land and buildings that implement many of the goals, policies, and implementation strategies contained in the Plan.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT**

The State of Washington adopted the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990. This legislation requires comprehensive plans to include specific elements; obligates cities to adopt implementing regulations and counties to develop Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) to address regional issues; and establishes protocols and deadlines for these tasks. The state legislature frequently adjusts the GMA; it has evolved over the past decades and extensive, substantial changes legislation passed in 2022 and 2023 regarding climate and housing.

The GMA now sets out fourteen-fifteen statutory goals that guide the development of comprehensive plans. For a plan to be valid, it must be consistent with these goals and the specific requirements of the Act. Consistency, in this context, means that the comprehensive plan shall be consistent with the state statutory goals, CPPs, or-and plans of adjacent jurisdictions. The fourteen-fifteen statutory goals identified in the state legislation are summarized as follows:



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide urban growth to areas where urban services can be adequately provided;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce urban sprawl;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems <u>that reduce the amount of vehicle miles traveled and reduce greenhouse gas emissions;</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage economic development throughout the state;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assure private property is not taken for public use without just compensation;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage predictable and timely permit processing;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage retention of open space <u>and green space</u> and development of recreational opportunities;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect <u>and enhance</u> the environment and enhance the state's quality of life;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage the participation of citizens in the planning process <u>including those in vulnerable populations or from overburdened communities;</u></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure adequate public facilities and services necessary to support development;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and preserve lands and sites of historic and archaeological significance;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate while supporting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions;</u> and</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage shorelines of statewide significance.</li> </ul>

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES AND ~~VISION 2040~~ VISION 2050**

As part of the comprehensive planning process, King County and its cities have developed Countywide Planning Policies. These policies were designed to help the 39 cities and the County to address growth management in a coordinated manner. The policies are adopted by the King County Council, and subsequently ratified by cities, ~~including the City of Des Moines~~. Taken together, the CPPs try to balance issues related to growth, economics, land use, and the environment including climate change. Specific CPP objectives include:

- Implementation of Urban Growth Areas;
- ~~Promotion of~~ Promoting contiguous and orderly development;
- Siting of public and capital facilities;
- Establishing transportation facilities and strategies;
- Creating affordable housing plans and criteria;
- Addressing social equity and health; and
- Ensuring favorable employment and economic conditions in the county.

In addition to the GMA and CPPs, Des Moines' Comprehensive Plan is guided by the multi-county policies (known as MPPs) of ~~Vision 2040~~ VISION 2050, the regional plan developed by ~~the Puget Sound Regional Council~~ PSRC. Vision 2040 VISION 2050 is an integrated, long-range vision for maintaining a healthy region by promoting the well-being of people and communities, economic vitality, and a healthy environment. It contains

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an environmental framework, a ~~regional growth strategy~~Regional Growth Strategy, and policy sections that are guided by overarching goals, implementation actions, and measures to monitor progress.

## ***WHY IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IMPORTANT?***

The Comprehensive Plan is used as a guide to decide where housing and business growth should occur, what transportation system and public services will be needed to support the growth, what types of businesses and jobs ~~we want to encourage to attract~~, what types of housing ~~we should have in the community to allow and encourage~~, how ~~we can to~~ protect ~~our~~ environmentally sensitive areas and promote environmental sustainability and resiliency, and what values ~~we want reflected in the character of our~~ unite the community. The Plan is the basis for zoning and other associated development regulations, which in turn guides development permits and projects in the City and guides city investments.

## ***HOW IS THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN USED?***

The Plan sets the framework for the City's land-use pattern and what uses are allowed where. It also provides for the basis for regulations such as zoning, building height, landscaping, sign standards, protection of streams and wetlands, and other development regulations. The Plan is also the policy basis for decisions in reviewing development projects and evaluating and/or mitigating impacts under the State Environmental Policy Act.

## ***WHO DECIDES WHAT THE PLAN SAYS?***

The City engages the community to develop a shared vision based on common values, desires, and goals. Public meetings and hearings are held to obtain public comment on the draft Plan. The City Council takes the public comments and testimony into consideration before approving the final Plan.

For the 2024 Plan update, public engagement was at the forefront of the project. The City established a dedicated website for the project which was called "Imagine Des Moines 2044" and used a consistent branding and logo to identify the effort in a unique way. A public survey (conducted in English and Spanish) was held in late 2023 which garnered 482 responses, far exceeding the number of survey responses from the 2015 update process (which had 125 survey participants). The survey was promoted online via social media and in-person at the Farmers Market and National Night Out. Questions in the survey sought to identify community priority areas to address in the update. Survey results identified priority areas respondents would like to see more of, including increased neighborhood commercial uses, community facilities, and general commercial uses. Respondents also expressed a desire to focus on equity, outreach, and representation of all community members. The following topics were identified as the top five areas of importance in the city, listed in order of priority:

1. Preserving natural space
2. Public health and safety
3. Accommodating future growth
4. Affordability (housing, taxes, etc.)
5. Economic opportunity (including access to jobs)





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Next, articles in the city's newsletter, "City Currents" were also featured to inform the community and drive meaningful engagement. Community Development department staff and consultants also talked directly to community members at the Farmers Market and at a National Night Out event booth.

As the City embarked on the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, we asked community members, businesses, property owners and visitors to describe their future Des Moines. Outreach methods included public open houses; tabling events at the Farmers Market, Des Moines Area Food Bank, and public libraries; and a community survey and information posted on the City's website. Of the 125 survey respondents, key issues identified by community members related to public safety, vibrant neighborhoods, family wage jobs, and the multi-generational and cultural needs of the community. The "Wordle" graphic here represents comments from the community survey.

Des Moines' Comprehensive Plan has been updated to incorporate the community's vision and values into goals, policies, and implementation strategies that will carry and sustain our City into the future.



## WHAT TOPICS ARE ADDRESSED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The GMA State Growth Management Act (GMA) governed by (RCW 36.70A) specifies "required" elements – those that must be included in the Comprehensive Plan; and "optional" elements – those that can be included by a jurisdiction if desired. Below is a list of the elements currently required under Growth Management Act GMA (denoted by \*) and additional optional elements contained in Des Moines Comprehensive Plan:

Chapter 1: Introduction ~~(formerly General Planning Element)~~

Chapter 2: Land Use Element\*

Chapter 3: Transportation Element\*

Chapter 4: Conservation, Energy, and Environment Element\*

Chapter 5: Capital Facilities, Utilities, and Public Service Element\*

Chapter 6: Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element\*

Chapter 7: Housing Element\*



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Chapter 8: Economic Development Element\*

Chapter 9: North Central Neighborhood Element

Chapter 10: Marina District Neighborhood Element

Chapter 11: Pacific Ridge Neighborhood Element

Chapter 12: Healthy Des Moines Element