

Phase 5 - Drafting and Revision Report

Introduction

Following completion of Phase 4 public engagement, the draft Comprehensive Plan was revised to incorporate community input, agency feedback, and internal consistency updates across all chapters. The overall structure and vision of the plan remain unchanged; however, Phase 5 focused on targeted refinements to strengthen policy clarity, improve alignment between chapters, and ensure the document reflects the priorities identified by the community.

Public engagement results showed a high level of consistency across responses, particularly related to infrastructure, housing, community character, walkability, and recreation. These themes informed the revisions summarized below and are reflected throughout the updated draft.

Key Revisions and Policy Refinements

1. Strengthened Infrastructure-First Framework

Public input consistently emphasized that growth should be supported by available infrastructure. In response, policy language was refined to more clearly establish infrastructure capacity as a primary factor in land use decisions.

Revisions include:

- Strengthening language in Chapter 7 (Public Services, Facilities, and Utilities) to require that development aligns with available water, sewer, and transportation capacities
- Reinforcing coordination between land use decisions and capital improvement planning
- Clarifying that infrastructure availability influences the timing, location, and intensity of development

These updates reinforce a fiscally responsible approach to growth and improve the plan's defensibility as a decision-guiding tool.

2. Refined Housing Policy Approach

Survey results identified housing affordability as a major concern, while also demonstrating a strong preference for lower-density housing and neighborhood compatibility. To address this, Chapter 11 (Housing) was revised to reflect a balanced approach that supports housing opportunities while maintaining consistency with existing development patterns.

Revisions include:

- Emphasizing incremental housing development that aligns with existing neighborhood scale and development patterns
- Reinforcing compatibility with surrounding land uses, including building scale, setbacks, and orientation
- Clarifying that housing strategies should balance affordability with preservation of neighborhood character and available infrastructure capacity

These changes acknowledge the tension identified in public input and provide clearer direction for accommodating housing needs while maintaining compatibility with established neighborhoods.

3. Integration of Small-Town Character Across Chapters

Maintaining Priest River’s small-town character emerged as the most consistent community priority. Phase 5 revisions reinforce this principle by integrating it throughout the plan and strengthening the role of community design as a tool for implementation.

Revisions include:

- Strengthening language related to scale, compatibility, and community identity in Chapter 4 (Economic Development), Chapter 8 (Transportation), and Chapter 15 (Land Use)
- Incorporating more defined community design direction in Chapter 12 (Community Design), including how development patterns, site layout, and built form contribute to overall character
- Ensuring that redevelopment, infill, and infrastructure improvements reinforce existing development patterns rather than introduce incompatible scale or design

These updates move beyond general policy statements and provide clearer guidance on how community character is maintained through both land use and design considerations, establishing it as a consistent and actionable principle across the plan.

4. Enhanced Focus on Walkability and Connectivity

Public input identified gaps in pedestrian infrastructure and neighborhood connectivity. Phase 5 revisions place greater emphasis on walkability as both a safety and quality-of-life issue.

Revisions include:

- Expanding policy language in Chapter 8 (Transportation) related to sidewalks, crossings, and trail connections
- Prioritizing connectivity between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and downtown
- Reinforcing multimodal transportation as part of the City’s long-term system

These updates respond directly to identified needs and support incremental improvements over time.

5. Strengthened Downtown and Economic Development Direction

Survey responses and workshop input demonstrated strong support for a traditional, locally oriented downtown.

Revisions include:

- Clarifying the role of downtown as the primary commercial and community hub in Chapter 4 (Economic Development)
- Supporting small business development, local entrepreneurship, and year-round activity
- Reinforcing development patterns consistent with historic scale and pedestrian-oriented design

These changes align economic development policy with community expectations and existing development patterns.

6. Recognition of Recreation as Core Community Infrastructure

Residents consistently identified parks, trails, and river access as essential to quality of life.

Revisions include:

- Framing recreation infrastructure as a core component of community development in Chapter 9 (Recreation)
- Emphasizing expansion of trails, greenways, and river access
- Strengthening connections between recreation, transportation, and land use planning

These updates reflect the importance of recreation in supporting both community identity and long-term livability.

7. Improved Clarity and Implementation Guidance

Revisions also focused on improving the usability of the plan for staff, decision-makers, and the public.

Revisions include:

- Refining policy language to clarify expectations related to infrastructure capacity, development review, and compatibility
- Improving consistency across chapters and reducing ambiguity
- Incorporating minor technical edits based on agency feedback, including updates to natural resource data and agricultural references

These changes enhance the plan's function as an administrative and regulatory guide.

Nature of Revisions

The revisions completed are both targeted and substantive. They do not alter the overall vision, structure, or policy framework of the Comprehensive Plan. Instead, they strengthen the document by:

- More clearly aligning policies with community priorities
- Improving internal consistency across chapters
- Enhancing clarity for implementation and decision-making
- Incorporating agency feedback and technical corrections

The final draft reflects a balanced approach to growth that supports housing, economic opportunity, and infrastructure investment while preserving the small-town character and quality of life that define Priest River.

Conclusion

Phase 5 represents the transition from a working draft to a refined, community-informed policy document. The revisions ensure that the Comprehensive Plan is not only reflective of public input, but also practical and internally consistent.

The updated plan positions the City of Priest River to manage and guide growth responsibly over the next 20 years while maintaining the values, character, and sense of community that residents consistently identified as most important.