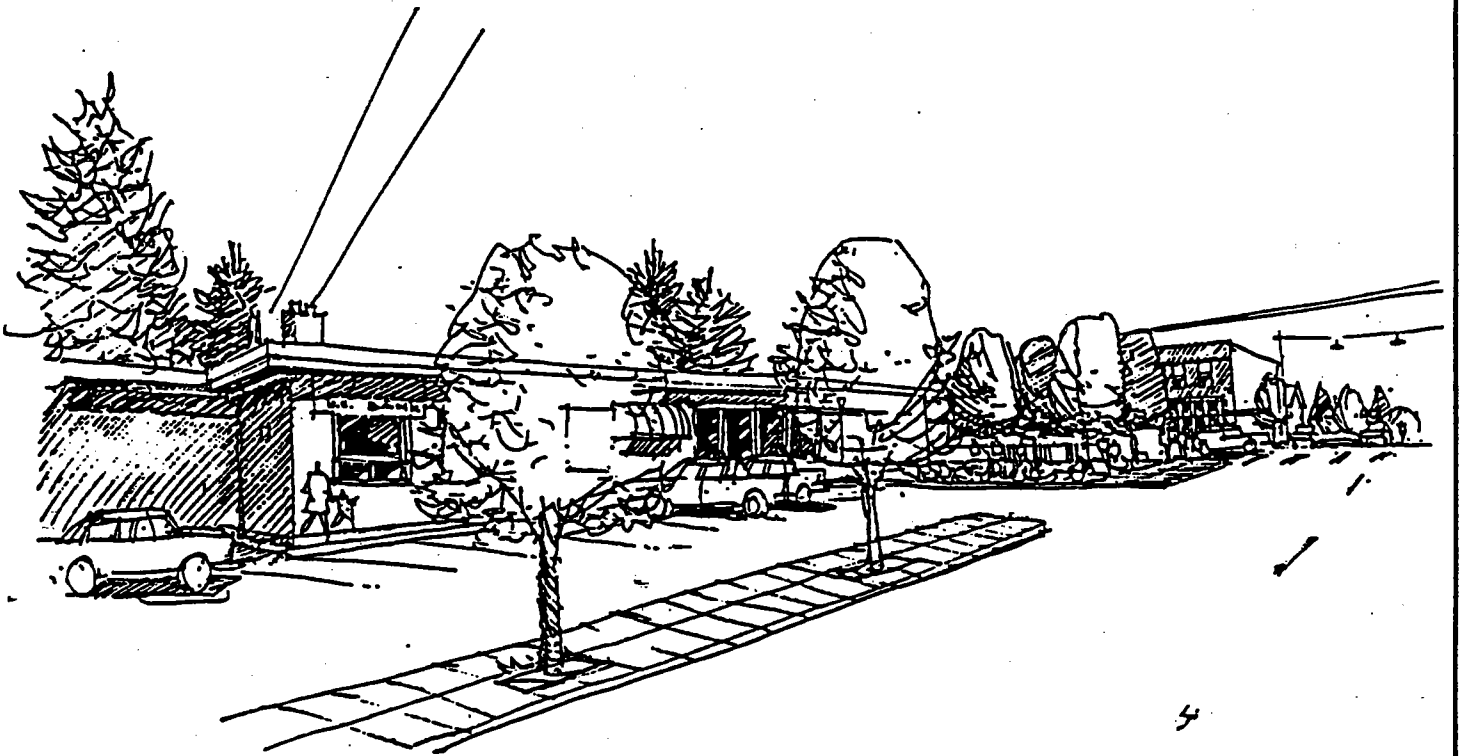


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Vashon Town Plan



King County
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Metropolitan King County Council

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VASHON TOWN PLAN

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the spring of 1993, Vashon Island's Town Plan Committee and King County retained a consulting team to prepare a new plan for the unincorporated commercial heart of Vashon Island. This planning effort was undertaken to reflect the current desires of Islanders to protect this area's character and structure, and to guide any future development in directions consistent with this character.

The result was the proposed 1994 Vashon Town Plan. Because the County's planning structure had changed under the State Growth Management Act and the 1994 King County Comprehensive Plan (KCCP), the proposed Plan was revised to comply with KCCP, including policy I-209, relating to subarea plans. The Vashon Town Plan, as a subarea plan, includes (1) applicable Comprehensive Plan policies relating to Rural Towns; (2) policies for the Town Planning Area on such topics as land use, circulation, parks and residential areas; (3) proposed implementation actions. The Town Plan identifies policies from the Vashon Community Plan (1986) which are to be deleted and replaced by its policies.

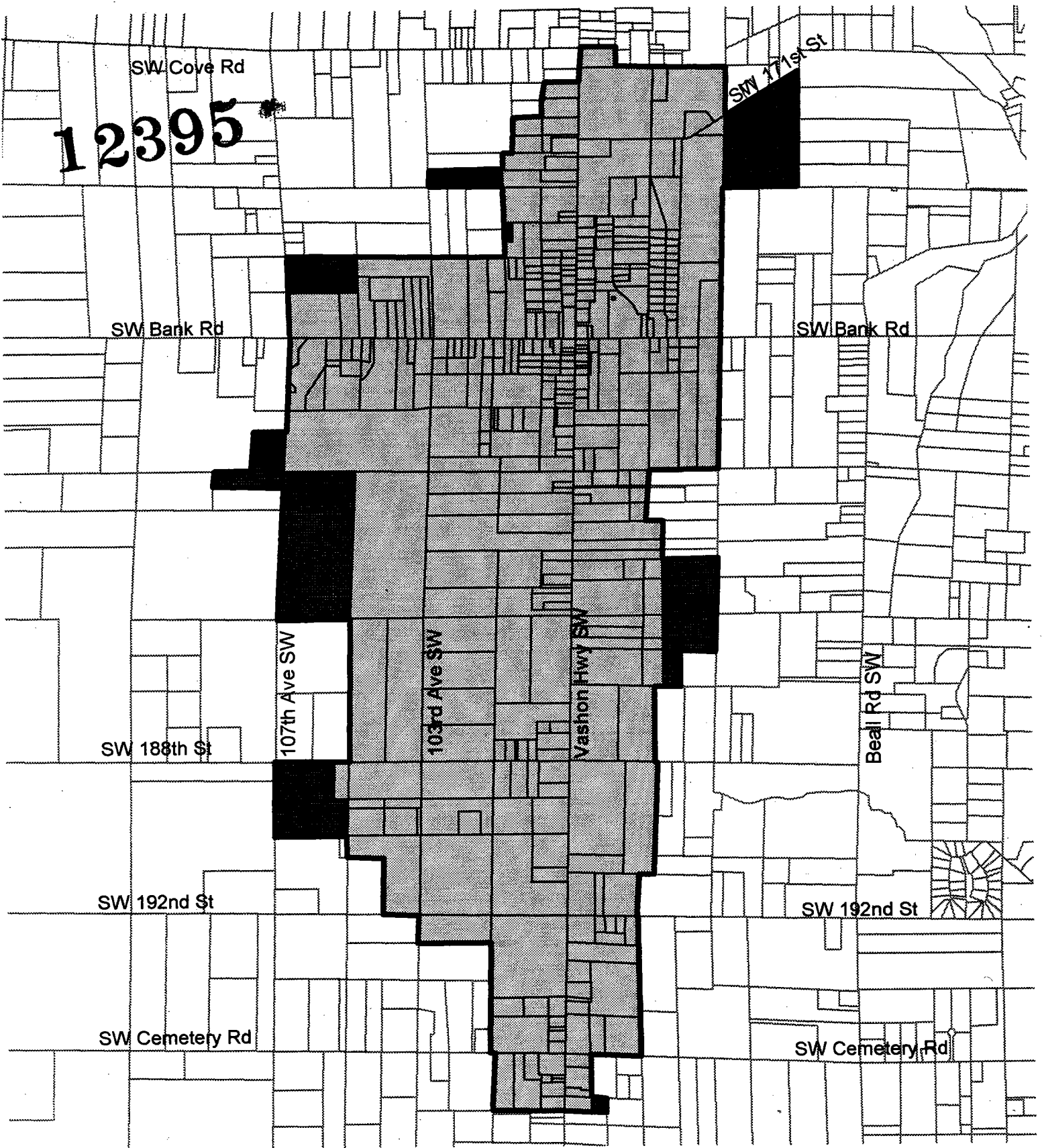
For purposes of the Plan, Vashon Island is referred to as such, and the area surrounding the intersection of Vashon Highway and Bank Road is referred to by its historic name, Vashon. Center is an area around the intersection of Cemetery Road and Vashon Highway. Vashon is the commercial hub of the island, and the desired location for residential, commercial and industrial growth. Center is the geographic and agricultural center of the Island.

The Town Planning Area is shown on Figure 1. This Figure also shows the Rural Town boundaries for Vashon. These boundaries are revised from those of the Rural Town land use in the KCCP, primarily to include the industrial land use south and west of the KCCP Rural Town.

The Rural Town is to be a compact, pedestrian-friendly commercial development mixed with moderate density residential areas. While maintaining its the rural nature, the Town is to support diverse commercial activities, employment opportunities, cultural and educational facilities, parks and open space, and varied housing types arranged in neighborhoods.

The Plan proposes an expanded grid system of roadways to encourage traditional residential patterns and increased pedestrian traffic. Parking requirements in the central retail area are reduced. A network of open spaces is also proposed, along with street landscaping to make the area attractive to pedestrians.

To implement the policies of the VTP, there are certain proposed changes in land use and area zoning to be adopted concurrently with the Plan. Particularly, new industrially zoned land has been designated to encourage employment and residential zones are planned to provide housing for people to live affordably.



**Figure 1. Vashon Town Planning Area
Proposed Land Use**

Rural Town
 Rural Residential

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOWN PLAN

PURPOSE

Vashon, as it appears today, was never "planned". It evolved due to a combination of geographic, economic and transportation factors. Roads developed along the beach or on section lines between properties. Stores developed along these roads that connected beach landings to inland areas more conveniently accessible to farms or logging operations. The intersection at Vashon Highway and Bank Road is the focal point of Vashon Island. The oldest and most successful business establishments were founded at that intersection and many of today's most successful businesses are located here, the Thriftway shopping center being the primary example. Past fires have wiped out most of the old historic downtown, with the notable exception of Vashon Hardware, which has been in business since 1904.

This evolution has resulted in a typical Pacific Northwest small town, with a mixture of architecture from several eras and haphazard development based on quirks of history and residents' individuality. Vashon Islanders cherish this character and the Town Plan reflects their efforts to maintain it. This preservation consensus does not preclude agreement that the town lacks some important amenities: a permanent home for the outdoor Saturday Market, affordable housing, a performing arts center. All are desired by the community.

Growth pressures in Vashon have illustrated the limitations of the regulatory tools in the Community Plan in achieving its stated goals of maintaining rural character, as opposed to a suburban appearance. Recent development proposals have forced a re-examination of allowable height, scale and parking.

The objective of the plan is to direct gradual growth and infill development so that it best meets the needs of the community and does not over tax infrastructure. The intent is to seek ways to reinforce Vashon's traditional small town values, character and structure. It is also intended that the Plan provide some predictability to Vashon landowners as to future development potential, and give Island residents a description of likely changes which, based on utility availability and market forces, are expected to be gradual. Most important, it provides a blueprint for changes.

MANAGEMENT OF THE PLANNING PROCESS

The 1994 Vashon Town Plan was funded by King County and written by a consulting team under the direction of the Town Plan Committee, a group of volunteer Islanders appointed by the Vashon-Maury Island Community Council.

The Town Plan was designed to develop a land use, design, and implementation plan for the commercial center of Vashon Island, an unincorporated part of King County. The island's population has exceeded County forecasts, and with the passage of the statewide Growth Management Act, the Community Council sought to revisit the island's goals and regulations for its main commercial center.

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The Community Council appointed a Town Plan Committee in 1992 to update the Town's 1983 "Business District Development Guide". While this Guide was officially adopted by the County Council, its recommendations had not been implemented. When the 1986 Vashon Community Plan was adopted, much of the island's allowable development density was reduced (due to Islanders' wishes, and water and sewage restrictions), but the zoning in the Town of Vashon was not adjusted to reflect the newly adopted policies.

PUBLIC PROCESS

While the Town Plan Committee (TPC) was charged with hiring the consultant and managing the funds and process, the entire effort was community-directed. The approach used was to involve as many Islanders as possible. Announcements of TPC meetings appeared in *The Beachcomber*, the local weekly newspaper, and were open to the public. Newspaper articles, fliers, and other printed material described the study's progress and its findings.

Among the problems mentioned by the public were lack of local (Island) control, lack of an entity to ensure maintenance of amenities (e.g., public restroom, mini-parks, flower boxes/baskets, clean-up), housing costs vs. lower-income Islanders' needs, lack of commercially-zoned land for sale, parking, and an uncertain availability of drinking water. The opportunities identified by Islanders included local enthusiasm and expertise, a town that has not experienced rapid development, and the natural limitation on growth imposed by an uncertain availability of drinking water.

TPC members worked closely with property owners, and held numerous public meetings to bring owners' goals into the planning process. Every owner's proposal was considered and voted on by the TPC.

Overall, the basic values the community wanted to see reflected in the Plan include:

- A friendly and safe place (where we know each other and frequently talk to people we don't yet know);
- A "small town character" (rural, not suburban);
- A Town to serve Islanders' needs: provide affordable housing; keep the Saturday Market alive and well; don't make Vashon too "cute", and, thus, cater to tourists or upscale folks;
- A Town where pedestrians are more important than cars.

Most people just want Vashon to stay as it is, and not recognize the growth potential under existing regulations.

