

CIP Fact Sheet

What is a CIP?

The Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is a list of capital projects the City expects to build or purchase over the next six years. The CIP shows how much each project will cost, when it will be completed, and how the City will pay for it. A realistic source of funding must be identified for each project included in the CIP. The CIP is updated annually to reflect current budget conditions and to ensure it always covers a six-year period.

What is a capital facility?

While there's no specific definition for what constitutes a "capital facility", capital facilities generally include things that are durable, expensive, and infrequently replaced. Capital facilities typically include things like sewer systems, storm-water facilities, schools, parks, public buildings, firefighting equipment, and streets.

How is the CIP related to the Comprehensive Plan?

The CIP is part of the City's comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan is required by law, covers a 20-year period, and contains a number of "elements" which are essentially chapters. Each element addresses a specific topic, such as transportation, land use, and capital facilities. The capital facilities element must identify the facilities and improvements necessary to support 20 years of population and employment growth. The capital facilities element is comprised of two parts, including a general list of projects and funding sources for a 20-year period, and a detailed list of projects and funding sources for a six-year period. The six-year list is known as a CIP. By law the CIP must be consistent with the rest of the comprehensive plan.

How is the CIP related to the budget?

A comprehensive plan is a document that explains what the City will do and what the City will not do. The plan becomes a reality by adopting and enforcing regulations, and by budgeting money and building things. By law, all of the City's actions, including the adoption of an annual budget, must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. In order for a capital project to be included in the budget, it must first be included in the CIP. To ensure the budget is consistent with the CIP, it's important that the CIP be updated prior to beginning the budgeting process. While money may only be spent on projects listed in the CIP, including a project in the CIP does not mean the City is obligated to pay for, or complete, the project.

Does the CIP apply to other government agencies?

Yes. Unless explicitly exempt, state agencies, municipal corporations, and special services districts must comply with the City's planning policies and development regulations. In Burlington, this requirement extends to the Skagit Public Utility District, Skagit Area Transit (SKAT), Burlington Edison School District, Dike District 12, the Housing Authority, and to Burlington properties owned by Skagit County and Skagit Valley College. Burlington requires these agencies to submit updated capital plans each year. Capital plans submitted by other government agencies must be consistent with the Burlington Comprehensive Plan. Importantly, capital plans that relate to population or employment growth, such as student enrollment, low-income housing needs, or water use, must be based on the City's adopted population, employment, and housing forecasts.

What is the process for updating the CIP?

The Community Development Department begins the CIP update process by requesting changes from City departments and other agencies. Community Development then reviews the proposed changes from consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Proposed changes are also reviewed to ensure that a reasonable source of funding has been identified for each project. The draft amendments prepared by Community Development are then presented to the Planning Commission for consideration. Once the Planning Commission has issued a recommendation, a final list is sent to the City Council for action. As a final step, the City Council may make adjustment during the annual budget process to ensure the CIP is aligned with the City's financial resources.

What are we doing differently?

Since adopting an updated comprehensive plan, the City has been working to bring the CIP process into compliance with Washington State law. Changes have been made to the CIP adoption process to ensure projects are carefully evaluated for consistency with Comprehensive Plan policies and to ensure a reasonable and sufficient source of money is identified for each project. While these changes are necessary to comply with Washington State law, they are also intended to ensure the CIP can be used by the City Council as a tool for making informed investments in capital facilities. Moving forward, major capital projects will move through the CIP in a three-step process from concept to construction. The three steps will include planning, design, and construction phases. A project management summary will also be provided for each CIP item. The summary will identify important steps, responsible officials, permitting requirements, and other information.