



MEDICAL LAKE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

2046



Medical Lake Comprehensive Plan 2046

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Introduction

Message from the Mayor

The Comprehensive Plan is the City's official statement regarding its vision for future growth and development over the next 20 years. Over the past several years, Medical Lake has faced extraordinary change. We have endured hardship, demonstrated resilience, and rediscovered the strength that comes from being a small town with a big sense of community. As Mayor, I am proud to present the 2046 Comprehensive Plan—our roadmap for stewarding that strength into a future defined by opportunity, stability, and shared purpose.

A meaningful update to our Comprehensive Plan is more than a statutory requirement. It is our chance to reflect on who we are, what we value, and what we want for the next generation. Our previous plan served the community for many years, but Medical Lake has grown, our needs have evolved, and state law now asks us to plan more intentionally for housing, transportation, climate resiliency, and public services. This new plan rises to that challenge.

Most importantly, this plan was shaped by the voices of our residents. Through workshops, surveys, conversations, and partnerships, the community made it clear that Medical Lake's future must protect what we cherish—our small-town character, our natural beauty, our history of healing—while preparing responsibly for the growth that will sustain our economy, our schools, and our quality of life.

The 2046 Comprehensive Plan sets forth a clear vision: safe and walkable neighborhoods, accessible parks and recreation, diverse housing options, a vibrant local economy, and strong public services supported by thoughtful infrastructure investment. It aligns with our Healing Waters Strategic Plan and gives City Council, staff, and community partners the tools needed to make consistent, transparent, and long-term decisions.

This plan represents both a commitment and a promise. A commitment to good governance, collaboration, and transparency—and a promise that every decision we make will help build a Medical Lake where people feel welcome, connected, and hopeful about the future.

Thank you to everyone who contributed your time, ideas, and energy. Together, we are shaping a Medical Lake that honors its past, meets the needs of today, and looks forward with confidence to 2046 and beyond.

Terri Cooper

Mayor, City of Medical Lake

Community Vision

The Medical Lake Comprehensive Plan 2046 endeavors to:

- Nurture Medical Lake's small-town charm and community spirit while honoring its history.
- Integrate the natural and built environment in a thoughtful, sustainable manner.
- Create safe, walkable neighborhoods with accessible parks and housing for all.
- Establish a community where all members thrive, empowered by equitable access to resources, strong social connections, and a healthy environment.
- Encourage community partnerships and recreational tourism to help the economy thrive, with special attention to downtown.

The Comprehensive Plan

Welcome to the new and improved 2046 Medical Lake Comprehensive Plan. This City's first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1979. In 1997, after the adoption of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), the City adopted a new comprehensive plan. The plan was revised in 2003, 2007, 2010, and 2019, but remained similar to the 1997 version.

Considered a fully-planning city under the GMA, it is mandated that our comprehensive plan is updated every ten years to plan for the next twenty years. This ten-year update cycle is referred to as the "Periodic Update." The City of Medical Lake chose to use this opportunity to not just update, but to replace the comprehensive plan with a document that better represents the City and provides more guidance for future decision making. The Plan communicates the City Council's intent, priorities, objectives, and expectations to residents, businesses, agencies, developers and others with an interest in the city.

This Comprehensive Plan provides a vision for growth and development over the next twenty years and works in conjunction with the City's Healing Waters Strategic Plan. While growth is important to the City's vitality, the policies also address preserving and improving those aspects and features of the City and the natural environment that contribute to quality of life in the community. This document will guide City policy and ensure consistency amongst City departments and staff.

The Plan reflects input from community members, stakeholders, and public officials. This wealth of information will continue to educate all members of the community and spur future conversations.

The Plan provides implementation strategies and is the foundation for development regulations found in the municipal code. It provides guidance in maintaining the Capital Improvement Program. The plan provides priorities to ensure continuity and consistency in land use decisions, and a systematic approach to preparing for projected growth.

Contributing Documents

The Comprehensive Plan is informed and supported by various detailed analyses that are contained in separate documents. Supporting plans and studies, referred to or adopted by reference within the Comprehensive Plan, are listed below.

- Healing Waters Strategic Plan
- Capital Improvement Plan
- Land Capacity Analysis
- Housing Needs Assessment
- Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Transportation Plan
- Parks Master Plan
- Shoreline Management Plan

These plans and studies are anticipated to be updated over the life of the Comprehensive Plan as environmental, fiscal, social, economic, and technological circumstances evolve. Such new information should direct future amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, as appropriate, to maintain its usefulness to the community.

State and Regional Planning

Planning under the Growth Management Act requires a balance of local policy objectives with mandates within the Act and with regional and countywide policy priorities.

Growth Management Act

In Washington State, comprehensive plans are directed by the Growth Management Act (GMA), Chapter 36.70A RCW. GMA provides a context and specific requirements for jurisdictions planning under the Act. This context is outlined in the framework planning goals contained in RCW 36.70A.020, as follows:

1. **Urban growth.** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
2. **Reduce sprawl.** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
3. **Transportation.** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled, and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
4. **Housing.** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
5. **Economic development.** Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

6. **Property rights.** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
7. **Permits.** Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
8. **Natural resource industries.** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands
9. **Open space and recreation.** Retain open space and green space, enhance recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
10. **Environment.** Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
11. **Citizen participation and coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
12. **Public facilities and services.** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.
13. **Historic preservation.** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.
14. **Climate change and resiliency.** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.
15. **Shorelines of the state.** For shorelines of the state, the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 shall be considered an element of the county's or city's comprehensive plan and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.

Spokane Countywide Planning Policies

The Countywide Planning Policies (CWPPs) establish a countywide framework for developing and adopting comprehensive plans and Urban Growth Areas. The CWPPs are intended to ensure that comprehensive plans are consistent between jurisdictions and to provide direction necessary for the coordinated implementation of GMA goals. Medical Lake planning staff participates in the Spokane County Planning Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) that provides advice to the Spokane County Steering Committee of Elected Officials (SCEO). The Mayor of Medical Lake is a member of SCEO and this body provides recommendations to the Spokane County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC), who ultimately adopt the CWPPs.

The basis of comprehensive planning in Washington State starts with a population forecast provided by the Office of Financial Management. Each county receives a population forecast that they allocate to each jurisdiction, including the unincorporated portions of the county. This allocation process is developed through PTAC, is reviewed by SCEO, and approved by the Spokane County BOCC. With this information, each jurisdiction performs a land capacity analysis using the methodology prescribed in the CWPPs. The purpose of this exercise is to determine if the jurisdiction has enough available land within the UGA to accommodate 20 years of growth. In other words, is there enough undeveloped land to provide housing and employment for the forecasted population. If the 20 years of growth cannot be accommodated, the first step is for the jurisdiction to look at opportunities to change zoning designations and regulations to provide that opportunity. New to this Periodic Update, is the requirement to examine housing needs by income level. This means that jurisdictions must provide for a variety of housing types and densities. When this has been reasonably done, and there is still a need, the county examines the UGA as a whole for the possibility of expansion.

The West Plains

Medical Lake is part of the West Plains of Spokane County, an area west of the City of Spokane and home to the neighboring cities of Cheney and Airway Heights, Fairchild Air Force Base, and housing and employment centers in unincorporated Spokane County. The combination of these communities has created a dynamic regional ecosystem where housing, transportation, employment, and public services are increasingly interconnected.

Airway Heights serves as the commercial and industrial core of the West Plains, with significant job growth driven by aerospace, manufacturing, logistics, and service-sector employers. Cheney contributes a strong educational and cultural presence through Eastern Washington University and provides well established residential neighborhoods and supporting services. Fairchild Air Force Base is the region's largest single-site employer and a critical part of the West Plains economy and identity, shaping workforce demand, housing needs, and regional infrastructure investments. Surrounding unincorporated areas host large industrial parks, distribution centers, and the Spokane International Airport which serves as another major driver of regional growth supporting thousands of jobs in aviation, warehousing, logistics, and advanced manufacturing.

Through ongoing collaboration, Medical Lake and its West Plains partners can work to address growing public safety, transportation, housing, and workforce demands by maintaining strong public services and enhancing quality of life for residents, businesses, and the region as a whole.

Healing Waters Strategic Plan

The six targets of the Healing Waters Strategic Plan inform the objectives and key results of City actions. These targets are instrumental in the forming of the Comprehensive Plan.

1. A thriving local economy
2. A healthy and sustainable environment
3. Engaged and empowered citizens and stakeholders
4. Multi-modal connections into and throughout the community
5. Supporting healthy living and recreation
6. Community safety and security

Part One: The People

Chapter 1: Context

History and Culture

For centuries, the Spokane people and other Indigenous tribes believed in the healing properties of Medical Lake's waters, mud, and salts, calling it "strong medicine water" and using it for steam baths and powdered salts.

In 1872, Andrew Lefevre, followed by his nephew Peter, discovered the lake while settling sheep, and experienced relief from rheumatism. This sparked an interest in the lake's alleged curative powers. Stanley Hallett arrived in 1877 and began to commercialize lake salts and soaps which helped launch the town's identity based on healing waters.

By the late 1870s, spas, bathhouses, hotels, and resorts lined the lake. The Town of Medical Lake was officially incorporated in 1890 and within a few years had multiple hotels, stores, and saloons. With the addition of the electric interurban rail in 1905, connecting Spokane to Medical Lake, weekend crowds increased. Peak summer draw brought thousands of visitors. The resort era declined in the 1920s due to overuse of its mineral deposits, automobile travel, lake degradation, and waning belief in mineral therapies. The interurban rail ceased operations by 1922.

Hallett was the first mayor of Medical Lake, and he and Lefevre were instrumental in encouraging the State to locate an insane asylum in Medical Lake. Among others, they donated land and granite to encourage the siting. In 1891, Eastern State Hospital was constructed to serve Eastern Washington. Later, the site grew further with institutions including Eastern State Custodial School for developmental disabilities (now Lakeland Village), Pine Lodge women's prison (now closed), and Westlake.

The arrival of Spokane Army Air Corps depot early in WWII (renamed Fairchild AFB in 1950) significantly boosted population. With many residents tied to military service, the population of Medical Lake doubled from 1940 to 1950.

By the 1960s, lake health had declined due to polluted runoff, leading to algae blooms and fish population loss. To revitalize the lake, a sewer system was installed in 1964 allowing cleaner water to flow to the lake. In 1977 alum was added to the lake to help clear the water and reduce the nutrients that help feed the algae. During the 1980s-90s, aerators were placed in the lake to add oxygen to the deeper waters. Today, the lake is in good health and even though it does not provide healing properties of the past, it now provides free recreational opportunities for locals and the region.

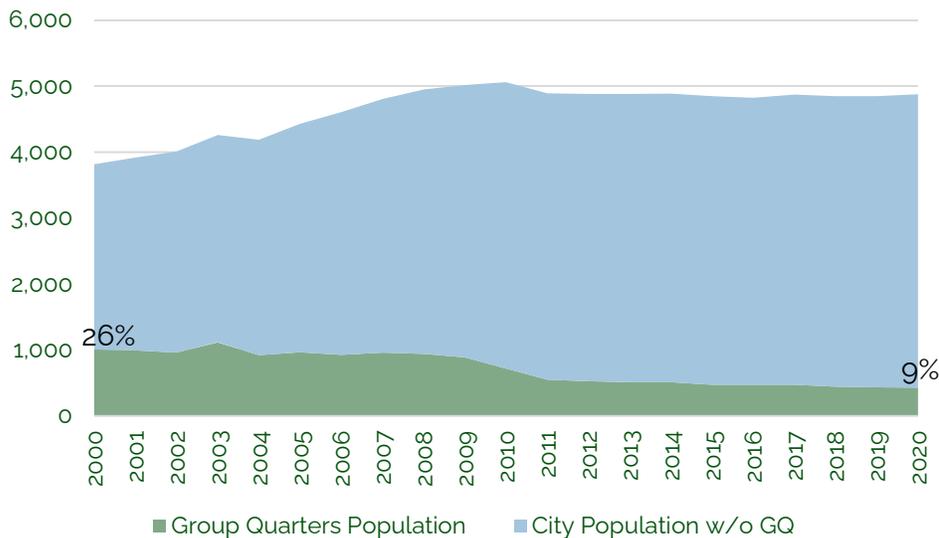
On August 18, 2023, a fire started near Gray Road just west of Medical Lake city limits, and quickly spread by strong winds from the west. Ultimately, the fire grew to 10,085 acres in and around Medical Lake, destroying 240 homes, 56 within the City. Recovery efforts galvanized local nonprofits, businesses, churches, and residents, rewriting Medical Lake's identity around resilience, mutual aid, and shared recovery.

Medical Lake remains a place of relaxation and enjoyment, being ideally located as a haven for outdoor recreation with multiple lakes, ample trails, and a small-town spirit captured in year-round festivals and events.

Population

At a glance, the population growth numbers for Medical Lake would suggest that the City is in a state of decline. Looking closer at the numbers, there is a more nuanced history. Medical Lake had a population of 3,815 in the year 2000. With several new residential subdivisions, the population increased by nearly a third by 2010, reaching 5,060 residents. However, at the same time the state institutions within the city boundaries were beginning to decline in population. In 2000 the three institutions, Lakeland Village, Eastern State Hospital, and Westlake housed 1,006 residents. By 2010, this population was already down by nearly 30% to 715 people. State institutions have continued to reduce their population and Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) has stopped including the residents of Westlake campus of Eastern State Hospital in the population calculations. Now only Lakeland Village and Eastern State Hospital residents are counted in Medical Lake's total population. Hence the state institution residents that count towards the City's population is less than half of what it was 24 years ago. Meanwhile, Medical Lake leadership in the 2010's adopted a no-growth policy and new development slowed down. Leadership and attitudes about growth have recently changed, but the City is still struggling to overcome that legacy.

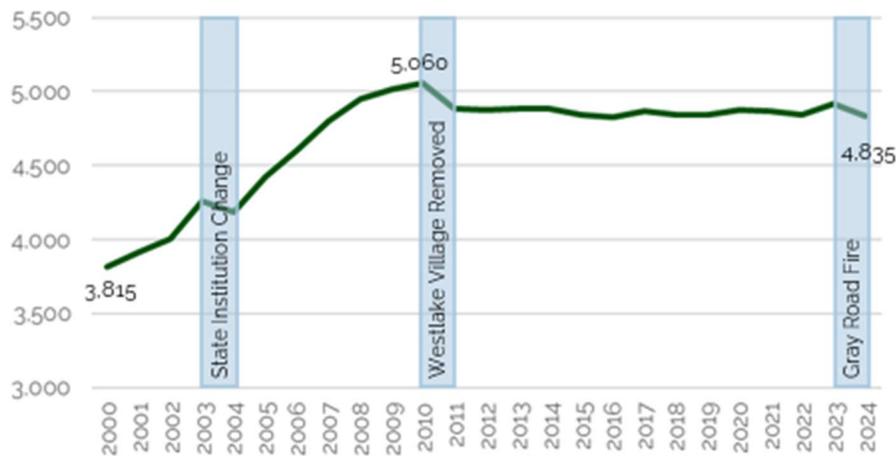
Figure 1. Medical Lake Institutional Population 2000-2020



Source: OFM

These historical population growth numbers are important to Medical Lake because they play a role in allotting future population to the city. Spokane County is given a forecasted population from OFM for the entire county for the year 2046. Growth trends were used to allocate this population to all the jurisdictions and the unincorporated areas of the County. Population growth from only 2010 to 2022 was considered. In this small window, Medical Lake's population decreased from 5,060 to 4,840 due to a change in who OFM includes in population.

Figure 2. Medical Lake Population 2000-2024



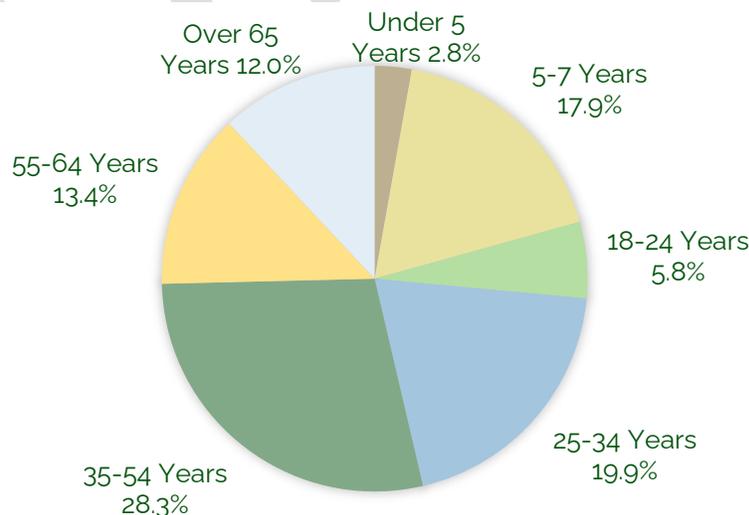
Source: OFM

Even though Medical Lake experienced housing growth, the elimination of Westlake's residents in the calculation made the total population decrease. With this low growth rate, the County is allocating only 244 new residents between 2023 and 2046. Medical Lake is not limited to 244 additional residents, but rather this is the minimum number of residents the City is expected to accommodate. The City of Medical Lake performed a land capacity analysis in early 2025. This analysis looked at underdeveloped and vacant land for potential development over the next 20 years. Using the zoning development standards of the time, it concluded that the City has the potential for accommodating an additional 744 people in 293 dwelling units. This is well above the small population of 244 allocated by Spokane County. Although this may suggest a lack of need for change, there is a regional need for housing that Medical Lake can fulfill.

Demographics

Demographically, Medical Lake is a small, predominantly White community with balanced age distribution. The existence of young families and older adults indicates a variety of needs in the community, ranging from early learning facilities to aging-in-place housing options.

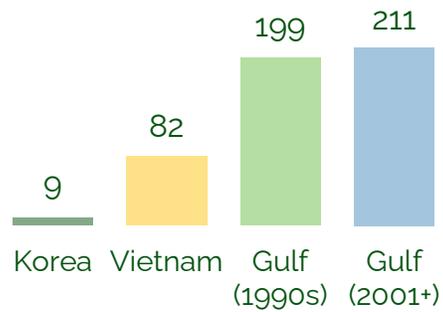
Figure 3. Population Distribution



Source: Neighborhoodscout.com

Located close to the Fairchild Air Force Base, it is not surprising that 13.8 % of Medical Lake's population are veterans. Of these 536 veterans, 447 are male and 89 are female. This percentage is significantly higher than the county average, which will influence housing, services, and economic opportunities.

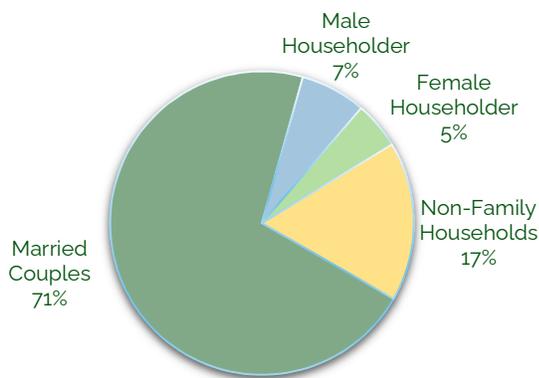
Figure 4. Veteran Status



Source: Censusreporter.org

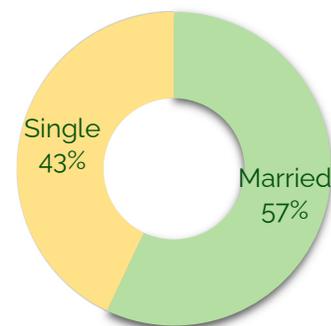
According to the US Census Bureau, there are 1,877 households in Medical Lake. The median income of these households was \$74,426 in 2024. This was slightly below the Spokane County median household income of \$78,582. With an average of 2.3 persons per household, the majority of households consist of married couples.

Figure 5. Household Types



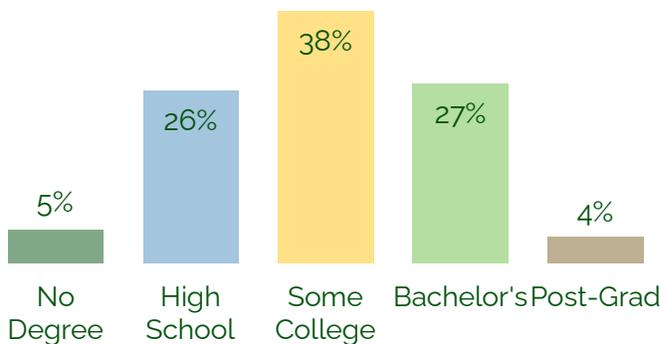
Source: Censusreporter.org

Figure 6. Marital Status



Source: Censusreporter.org

Figure 7. Education Attainment



The population of Medical Lake has a strong education attainment with 95.5% of adults having a high school degree or higher.

Source: Censusreporter.org

Chapter 2: Housing

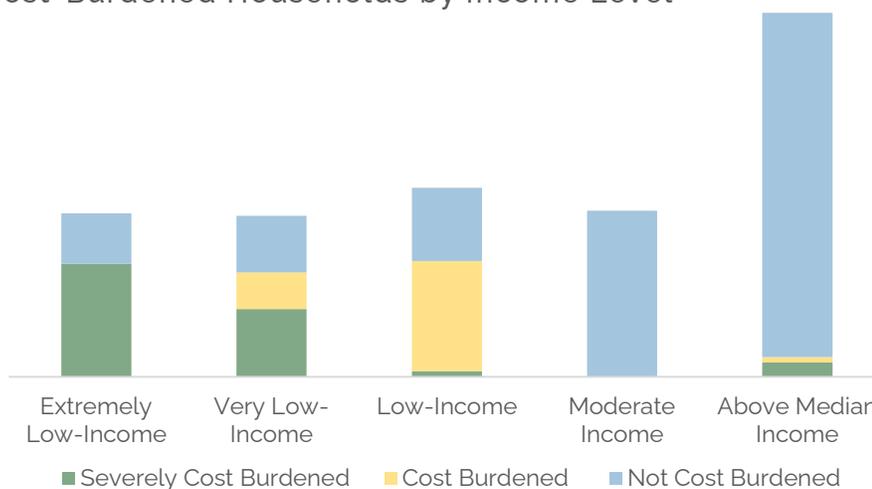
Having a variety of housing types creates a more inclusive, stable community. As our citizens move through life stages, incomes, and household sizes, a mix of housing options—such as single-family homes, apartments, townhouses, and accessory dwelling units—ensures that everyone can find a suitable place to live. Different housing types often come at different price points. Offering a range helps accommodate low-, middle-, and high-income households, reducing housing cost burdens and promoting economic diversity.

As people age or experience changes in mobility, they may need smaller, more accessible homes. By continuing to have diverse housing options this will allow Medical Lake residents to stay in the City rather than being forced to relocate.

A mix of housing types fosters social diversity and creates neighborhoods with varied demographics, which can strengthen community ties and support local businesses. Higher-density housing types like apartments and townhomes make better use of limited land, especially in urban areas, and can reduce sprawl, traffic, and environmental impacts. With varied housing Medical Lake will be better equipped to adapt to economic shifts, population changes, and evolving lifestyle preferences.

In 2020, Berk Consulting, hired by the Department of Commerce, compiled U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data to provide a snapshot of cost-burdened households across the State. The preamble to the data states, "One of the best indicators of affordable housing needs is the number of households that are "cost-burdened" or spending too much of their income on housing. These households have limited resources left over to pay for other life necessities such as food, clothing, medical care, transportation, and education. They are also at higher risk of displacement when housing costs rise or life circumstances change. HUD considers housing to be affordable if it costs no more than 30% of a household's income. Households paying more than 30% of their income for housing are considered to be cost-burdened, while households paying more than 50% are severely cost-burdened."

Figure 8. Cost-Burdened Households by Income Level



Source: housing.berk-maps.com/

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires local governments to “plan for and accommodate” housing that is affordable to all economic segments, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock. This chapter addresses 36.70A.070(2) and the expanded housing element requirements adopted in 2023.

This requirement is in line with the Medical Lake Healing Waters Strategic Plan. Objective 2.1.2 states, we shall “Provide a variety of densities and housing types to promote greater choices and opportunities.” In addition, objective 2.1.3 states, the City should endeavor to “Meet a variety of needs including a broad range of health, social, and affordable housing issues paying particular attention to senior citizens, low-income families, persons with disabilities, and other special need populations.”

The Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) is an Excel-based resource developed by the Department of Commerce to support jurisdictions in meeting the state’s expanded (GMA) housing requirements. This tool includes countywide housing needs projections based on Office of Financial Management (OFM) population projections. Projected housing needs are based on population projections and current household incomes. HAPT provides the method for determining housing needs for moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households, as well as emergency housing and permanent supportive housing (PSH). These income levels are based on the Area Median Income (AMI) determined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). For 2025, the AMI for Spokane County is \$100,800.

The following table represents the existing and projected housing needs for Medical Lake as determined by HAPT.

Figure 9. Projected Housing Needs

	Extremely Low Income		Very Low Income	Low Income	Moderate Income	100-120% AMI	>120% AMI	Total	Emergency Housing
	<30% AMI Non-PSH	<30% AMI PSH	30-50% AMI	50-80% AMI	80-100% AMI				
Existing Housing Units	184	0	159	839	329	96	221	1828	0
	10%	0%	9%	46%	18%	5%	12%	100%	
Needed Housing Units	95	27	65	39	21	17	65	329	15
	29%	8%	20%	12%	6%	5%	20%	100%	
Total Housing Units	279	27	224	878	350	113	286	2157	15
	13%	1%	10%	41%	16%	5%	13%	100%	

AMI = Area Median Income
PSH =Permanent Supportive Housing

Source: Spokane County HAPT

Guidance provided by the Department of Commerce gives a housing type associated with each income level.

Detached, single-family houses are typically affordable to those households earning greater than 120% of the area median income (AMI). Smaller homes and older housing stock may be affordable to households earning less than 120% AMI. Townhouses are single-family houses that are on their

own property but share a wall with another unit. Plexes are multi-unit buildings containing two to six units. These are typically referred to as duplexes, triplexes, etc. Cottage housing is individual houses that are located on a single property. They are typically smaller and can be owned or rented, but always have some type of management company or homeowners association to manage the commonly owned elements. Townhouses, plexes, and cottage houses are examples of housing that is usually affordable for households earning 80%-120% of the AMI. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are small residences on the same property as a single-family house. They can be attached to the main house, over a garage, or in the back yard. ADUs, along with apartments, are generally affordable to households with an income of 50%-80% of AMI. Most typically, any housing that is affordable to those households earning less than 50% of AMI require subsidies.

Figure 10. Income Levels and Housing Types

Housing Type	Detached Single-Family Houses	Townhouses, Cottage Housing and Plexes	Apartments	Accessory Dwelling Units	Apartments with Subsidies
Income Needed	>120% AMI	80-120% AMI	50-80% AMI	50-80% AMI	<50% AMI

Source: Department of Commerce

The City of Medical Lake took a housing inventory in 2024. The process combined Spokane County tax assessor data with City building permit data. Any discrepancies were verified with a site visit or confirmation with a property owner/manager.

Per the inventory, as of 2024, the City has:

- 1291 (71%) Detached Single-Family Houses
- 331 (18%) Plexes (2 to 6 units)
- 204 (11%) Apartments

The City conducted a Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) in 2025. Using methodology developed by Spokane County, potential residential development was determined. Per the LCA, based on available land within the current city limits and the zoning standards effective at the time, it is possible that in the next 20 years, the City grow by 293 units.

Figure 11. Potential Future Housing Units

	Single-Family	Plexes	Apartments	Total Units
Existing Housing Units	1291	331	204	1828
	71%	18%	11%	100%
Additional Potential Units per LCA	204	48	41	293
	70%	16%	14%	100%
Total Housing Units	1495	379	245	2119
	71%	18%	12%	100%

Source: ML Land Capacity Analysis

Feedback from the Pulse of the Community survey found that the Medical Lake community is content with this split of housing types, and will attempt to retain this as growth happens.

The HAPT, shows that the State would like Medical Lake to provide another 187 housing units to those households between 0% and 50% of the average median income (AMI). Most typically, this housing must be subsidized to make it affordable to these household incomes. The City of Medical Lake does not have the resources to provide incentives for subsidized housing. However, the City is willing to work with other agencies to provide such housing as long as supportive services are also available to these households. At this time, medical care, mental health care, substance use care, employment training, and life skill training are services not readily available within the City. If a resident depends on public transit, the public bus is available hourly, making out of town trips difficult.

Based on the 2025 Land Capacity Analysis, the City has adequate vacant and undeveloped land within the City to meet the small population allocation. However, there is a significant need for additional housing on the West Plains. Medical Lake is well positioned to help meet this need. By adjusting zoning districts and the associated standards, more housing types and densities can be accommodated. As part of the Periodic Update, new zoning districts are being considered to provide clearer, more concise, and flexible development standards to encourage housing that is in line with retaining the City's small-town charm. In addition, the City is working with Spokane County to explore the possibility of retaining and swapping those urban growth areas adjacent to Medical Lake, a further opportunity to provide housing for the region.

Chapter 3: Public Services

Critical to the Comprehensive Plan, understanding the quality and contribution of current services ensures that the right services are in the right place to support the growth that is planned. The following includes a summary of existing services.

Public Safety

Law Enforcement

The City of Medical Lake has contracted with the Spokane County Sheriff's Office since 2009. The current contract provides for two dedicated Sheriff's Deputies, from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., seven days a week, based on crime data and community needs. Additional Deputies continue to serve in the West Plains outside of these hours and respond to calls within the City. With office space in the Medical Lake City Hall, deputies are often present, using the space to handle administrative duties. Comprehensive law enforcement services provided include patrol, response, investigations, and enforcement of City ordinances and state law. Beyond the dedicated positions, Medical Lake receives the full benefit of shared service units, including supervisory support, investigations, specialized teams, dispatch services, and countywide resources. The City's relationship with the Sheriff's Office will continue to prioritize community-oriented policing, visibility, and relationship-building.

The Spokane Community Oriented Policing Effort (S.C.O.P.E.), also has an office located in City Hall. S.C.O.P.E. is a volunteer-driven public-safety and crime-prevention organization that supports law enforcement and local communities. Its mission centers on teamwork between citizens and the Sheriff's Office to enhance neighborhood safety and prevent crime.

The Medical Lake School District Resource Officer (SRO) serves as a law-enforcement presence, a prevention specialist, and a student/community resource. The SRO monitors traffic and parking to ensure safe student arrival and departure, maintains a visible presence at school events to enhance safety, investigates reports of cyberbullying, harassment, drug- or alcohol-related incidents, and other school-based concerns, and provides law-enforcement backup for emergency situations within the school community.

Fire Protection

To ensure 24/7 emergency coverage for the community, the City of Medical Lake has contracted with Spokane County Fire District #3 for fire protection, emergency medical response, and life safety services since 2019. Fire Station 311 is located in City Hall and staffed to ensure rapid response times and consistent coverage by a combination of full-time career firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, and trained volunteer personnel. This blended staffing model delivers high-quality service while maintaining cost efficiency for the community.

District #3's extensive service area and regional resources benefit Medical Lake by providing access to specialized equipment, advanced medical care, wildfire response capacity, and a scalable system capable of managing major incidents. The District's training programs, community outreach, and emphasis on prevention enhance local readiness, while coordinated planning and joint exercises improve response during large-scale emergencies such as wildfires. Through these services, Spokane County Fire District #3 plays a critical role in protecting Medical Lake's residents, businesses, and public facilities.

Animal Control

The City of Medical Lake has contracted with Spokane County Regional Animal Protection Service (SCRAPS) since 2014. Spokane County established an Animal Control Department managed by an Animal Protection Director and maintains an animal Care and Control facility through SCRAPS, that provides animal control and enforcement, including licensing services.

Municipal Court

After several years of services through Cheney Municipal Court, the City of Medical Lake now contracts with the Airway Heights Municipal Court. The Interlocal Agreement between the Cities of Airway Heights and Medical Lake for Municipal Court Services and Facilities provides for the use of the facilities, materials, and personnel for the filing and processing of civil, traffic, or other infractions and criminal citations. Detention and corrections services are contracted with Spokane County. The City will explore the desire for a regional West Plains Municipal Court as needs evolve.

Emergency Management

The City of Medical Lake partners with Spokane County through a long-standing series of interlocal agreements, most recently adopted in 2020, to provide coordinated and cost-effective emergency management services. This partnership ensures alignment between countywide and local preparedness efforts while supporting the protection of public health, safety, and property during emergencies.

Under the agreement, Spokane County Emergency Management provides regional coordination, technical assistance, training resources, and access to countywide emergency planning and response infrastructure. The City retains direct responsibility for local emergency planning, staff training, continuity of operations, emergency declarations, activation of local response efforts,

volunteer coordination, and tracking recovery costs. Medical Lake also participates in the regional Emergency Management Policy Board, ensuring the City has a voice in West Plains and countywide emergency management policies, priorities, and resource allocation.

Recent efforts include the City's active participation in the update of the Spokane County Hazard Mitigation Plan and the adoption of a Medical Lake Hazard Mitigation Plan, including documenting risks, vulnerabilities, and mitigation strategies following the 2023 Gray Fire. This work strengthens preparedness, informs future capital planning, and positions the City to qualify for state and federal mitigation funding.

Through these coordinated systems, Medical Lake benefits from a modern, resilient, and regionally integrated emergency management framework capable of supporting the community before, during, and after disasters.

Utilities

Drinking Water

The City of Medical Lake owns and operates a municipal water system that serves all properties within the city limits and extends east to Craig Road. Through interlocal agreements, the City also provides water to Strathview Water District #16 on the east shore of Silver Lake and to Four Lakes Water District #10, supporting broader West Plains utility needs. The system is supplied by two City-owned wells that currently provide sufficient capacity for existing customers and some future growth. To ensure long-term reliability, the City has initiated planning for a third well, with production anticipated within five to seven years.

Medical Lake also maintains an intertie with the City of Spokane for emergency water supply, drawing small amounts at regular intervals to maintain water quality. The City's well water requires only minimal disinfection and is routinely tested to meet all State Department of Health drinking water standards. As part of regional water quality monitoring, the system is periodically tested for PFAS compounds; while levels are not currently a concern, the City has contingency plans to adjust sources if necessary.

The City continues to explore opportunities to expand reclaimed water use for irrigation, promote water conservation, and evaluate potential district consolidation to improve long-term system efficiency. Public Works and Administrative Services collaborate to deliver clean and affordable water to the community. After recent accounting and billing system improvements, the water utility is now known to be financially sustainable. A utility rate study is underway to ensure that future rates adequately support operations, maintenance, and needed capital investments.

Wastewater

The City of Medical Lake operates a 100% beneficial use, Class A reclaimed wastewater treatment facility with a capacity to process 1 million gallons per day. The system serves more than 1,800 properties and provides reclaimed water to West Medical Lake for lake-level stabilization, as well as to Eastern State Hospital and the Washington State Veterans Cemetery for irrigation. The City acts as the lead agency for a regional treatment facility that serves both the community and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) campus, ensuring coordinated management of wastewater flows and reclaimed water distribution.

A significant portion of the City's wastewater collection system currently flows downhill toward Medical Lake before being pumped back uphill to the treatment plant. This aging configuration is

nearing capacity, lacks redundancy, and does not support long-term growth. To address these limitations, the City is designing a new main line that will relieve the existing system, improve reliability, and support future development.

The wastewater utility is funded solely through user fees and an excise tax. A utility rate study is underway to evaluate whether current revenues are sufficient to maintain operations, support ongoing maintenance needs, and fund necessary capital improvements. This work will help ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the wastewater system and its ability to meet the City's future service needs.

Stormwater

The City of Medical Lake manages stormwater through five drainage zones that direct runoff to Medical Lake, Deep Creek, Silver Lake, or Tule Pond, reflecting the natural topography and historic flow patterns of the area. As development adds roofs, parking lots, and paved surfaces, stormwater runoff increases in volume and carries pollutants such as oils, automotive fluids, and trace metals that require treatment before entering natural water bodies.

Where possible, the City relies on natural filtration—such as vegetated swales—to remove contaminants prior to discharge. Some older outfalls to Medical Lake include water-oil separators installed under best practices at the time, but these systems are limited in effectiveness. The City is now designing improved natural filtration systems for all stormwater outfalls to better treat runoff before it reaches local lakes and streams.

Historically, stormwater has not been operated as a utility, and no fees have been collected to maintain or upgrade existing infrastructure. As the system ages and regulatory expectations increase, the City is exploring the creation of a dedicated stormwater utility to provide sustainable funding for maintenance, water-quality improvements, and necessary capital upgrades. This work is also driven by the need to reduce infiltration and inflow into the wastewater collection system, which increases treatment demands and reduces system capacity.

Solid Waste Collection

The City of Medical Lake contracts with Sunshine Disposal and Recycling for curbside collection and disposal of solid waste and recycling. The service is competitively bid at regular intervals to ensure fair rates for customers. Because collection requires no City-owned capital infrastructure, customer rates reflect only the cost of providing the service.

The City also contracts with the City of Cheney for yard-waste disposal. Residents deposit yard waste at the City Maintenance facility, where it is collected and transported by Cheney for proper disposal. This partnership allows Medical Lake to provide an additional waste-reduction service without the cost of operating its own green-waste program.

Energy

Avista Utilities provides electricity and natural gas service to the City of Medical Lake and surrounding area. Avista is a private utility that adjusts rates to reflect changes in the cost of producing and delivering electricity or natural gas to the consumer. Fees are charged to cover the cost of extending service to new development or new customers. Avista indicates that it does not anticipate any difficulty providing service to meet the demand generated by expected growth in the Medical Lake area.

Avista has a franchise agreement with the City to locate their lines in the public right-of-way.

Medical Lake values opportunities to utilize renewable sources of energy. The City owns and operates a solar array at the Wastewater Treatment Plant to offset energy costs.

Telecommunications

Telecommunications services in Medical Lake are provided by several private carriers offering a mix of telephone, internet, cable, and fiber-optic services. Major providers include Comcast, Zply Fiber, CenturyLink/Lumen, and Davis Communications, each operating under franchise or lease agreements with the City that allow the placement of lines, conduit, and equipment within public rights-of-way. Additional wireless and radio communication infrastructure is supported through equipment located on the City's water tower and other utility structures.

These providers deliver a range of broadband speeds and service options, and recent private-sector investments have expanded fiber availability across the West Plains. While the City does not own or operate telecommunications utilities, it plays an important role in permitting, right-of-way management, and facilitating infrastructure improvements that support economic development, remote work, public safety communications, and community connectivity. As demand for reliable broadband continues to grow, the City will work with providers to encourage system upgrades, improve service reliability, and ensure telecommunications infrastructure keeps pace with residential and commercial development.

Chapter 4: Education

Schools

Medical Lake School District serves approximately 1,720 K-12 students. The district is broader than the Medical Lake city limits and includes Fairchild Air Force Base. In addition to elementary, middle, and high schools, the District office is located in the City as well as an early learning program and the Wellness Center.

Over the past several years, the School District has faced significant challenges—from wildfire-related community trauma to funding uncertainties and aging facilities. Today, the district is stabilizing through new grants, curriculum updates, and continued levy support. Looking forward, its most urgent needs include facility modernization, sustained mental health services, stable funding, and ongoing wildfire recovery support for students and families.

The Wellness Center is a community-focused mental health and wellness hub designed to support students, families, and the broader Medical Lake community. It operates as part of the district's integrated approach to student and family well-being.

Hallett, the elementary school within the City of Medical Lake is at capacity. The District has faced challenges to address this issue because Michael Anderson, the elementary school on Fairchild Air Force Base, is under capacity. The current funding structure does not allow money to be used for additional classroom space in Medical Lake, despite the fact that non-military families cannot utilize the school on base. However, this issue is being addressed in the State legislature.

Early Learning

The YWCA operates an Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) in Medical Lake that provides full-day early education, nutritious meals, health screenings, and family support services to prepare children for kindergarten.

Library

Medical Lake Library is part of the Spokane County Library District that provides access to more than 1.5 million titles in many formats. Open four days a week, The Library's knowledgeable employees help customers of all ages navigate the information they are looking for. The 4,000 square foot building, owned by the City of Medical Lake is located on the northwest corner of East Herb Street and South Brower Street. The Library is a strong supporter of and contributes to economic growth with resources providing guidance for those starting businesses or exploring grant funding.

Recognizing that a child's first teacher is their parents, the Medical Lake Library focuses on regular family programs that introduce important literacy, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and math), and social skills that prepare children for kindergarten and future academic success. Family Storytimes demonstrate early learning techniques that parents can use at home to continue building on these skills in everyday interactions and help their children be kindergarten ready. Storytime is also an opportunity for parents to connect with one another in creating a supportive community.

The Library works with Medical Lake schools and actively participates in literacy and STEM nights by sharing information about the resources and services available to families and students of all ages. Field trips and tours are also offered by the Library.

Located southeast of the city's central business district, building lacks visibility from a well-traveled street. Increasing public awareness of the physical building and the multitude of resources available is an ongoing challenge.

Recreation

For many years the Parks and Recreation Department provided youth sports. Over the last two years, with additional staff, the department has been able to expand youth programs along with adding teen programs and adult sports. After school programs, summer camps, and community events have been added, including Linger at the Lake, a four-concert summer series.

Apart from the School District, which provides after school sports and clubs, and West Plains Little League, Medical Lake Parks and Recreation is the main provider of activities for youth in the immediate vicinity. Medical Lake plays an important role in creating an early experience for children in recreational sports that leads to their participation in school sports.

Youth programs for local residents also create a ripple effect that makes our community more attractive to visitors. A strong recreation pipeline helps the City host more tournaments, races, camps, and festivals. For instance, Medical Lake participates in 4 Rec Youth Sports, a multi-jurisdiction collaboration that provides competitive volleyball, basketball, flag football, and soccer. Games and playoffs that are held in Medical Lake bring in families from the surrounding area, which brings revenue to local businesses.

The City acknowledges that community health and wellness are inextricably linked to access to parks and open space, engaged citizens, and the opportunity for all people have access to recreation programs. Knowing how vital these programs are, the City will continue to expand programs for all ages and abilities. However, currently, indoor programs are limited by the facilities available. The City depends on School District facilities for indoor sports, after school programs, and any event that exceeds the size of the small auditorium on the upper floor of City Hall.

To help alleviate the limit on programs due to the lack of facilities, the City will explore opportunities for a community center and/or a recreation center. It would behoove both the City and the School District to partner in such an endeavor.

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