

8 Essential Public Facilities

8.1 Introduction

The Growth Management Act (GMA) mandates that comprehensive plans include a process for identifying and siting essential public facilities (EPFs), as outlined in RCW [36.70A.200](#)(1). These facilities are often considered difficult to site due to local opposition but are required to provide local or regional services. The GMA prohibits the exclusion of such facilities from comprehensive plans or development regulations, ensuring they are sited to support orderly growth and public service delivery.

This element includes the following:

- A description of relevant requirements and policies to be considered in the Comprehensive Plan,
- The location of current essential public facilities in the City of Gig Harbor, and
- A review of the process to be pursued by the City when siting essential public facilities.

This also contains goals and policies for essential public facilities and the City's relationship to external urban service and utility providers. It directs Gig Harbor's management and financing of capital improvements for the facilities and utilities it owns and operates.

One important note with this section is that the term "essential public facilities" is not exclusively applied to facilities that are publicly owned. While many of these facilities may be managed by government agencies, there are others that may be provided by the private sector as well.

8.2 Background

8.2.1 GMA Requirements

Essential public facilities are those that are challenging to locate due to potential negative impacts such as size, bulk, hazardous characteristics, noise, or concerns related to public health and safety. These facilities are part of a regional or county-wide service system and can be seen as a subset of public purpose lands, though they do not encompass all public, semi-public, and institutional land uses. The importance of the???

The city must identify land for essential public facilities that meets the needs of the community. This is defined by RCW [36.70A.200](#) and WAC [365-196-550](#), and includes:

- Local solid waste handling and treatment facilities
- Landfills
- Drop-box sites and sewage treatment facilities
- Airports

- State educational facilities
- Essential state public facilities
- Regional transportation and utility facilities
- State and local correctional facilities; and
- In-patient facilities (including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities, and group homes);

as well as any other state facility included on the six-year facilities plan maintained by the Washington State Office of Financial Management.

Although these requirements present the facilities that must be included, cities have leeway with respect to other facilities which may be included. However, as per [WAC 365-196-030\(2\)](#), cities have significant leeway with respect to what can be included as “essential” under local policy.

8.2.2 Countywide Planning Policies on EPFs

The current Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies have provisions for essential public facilities. These require that cities:

- Adopt a local comprehensive plan policy for siting essential public facilities that serve countywide or statewide needs with a useful life of 10 years or more. (EPF-1)
- Designate lands suitable for public purposes and integrate these designations into local comprehensive plans. (EPF-2)
- Develop a local comprehensive plan policy and process for identifying and siting essential public facilities. This also includes requirements for the state to provide a justifiable need for EPFs and ensure public participation. (EPF-3)
- Maintain policies that consider facility requirements, impacts on land use, environment, health, and urban growth, and ensure site compatibility and community distribution. (EPF-4)
- Ensure that facility siting aligns with County and municipal comprehensive plans, including land use, capital facilities, utilities, transportation, housing, and regional welfare considerations. (EPF-5)
- Align policies related to siting these facilities with broader planning goals like reducing sprawl, fostering economic development, protecting the environment, ensuring fiscal benefits, and supporting affordable housing. (EPF-7)

EPF-6 also allows cities to establish standards for construction timing, property acquisition, impact control, zoning, climate change, health and safety, and sustainable development.

8.2.3 Essential Public Facilities in Gig Harbor

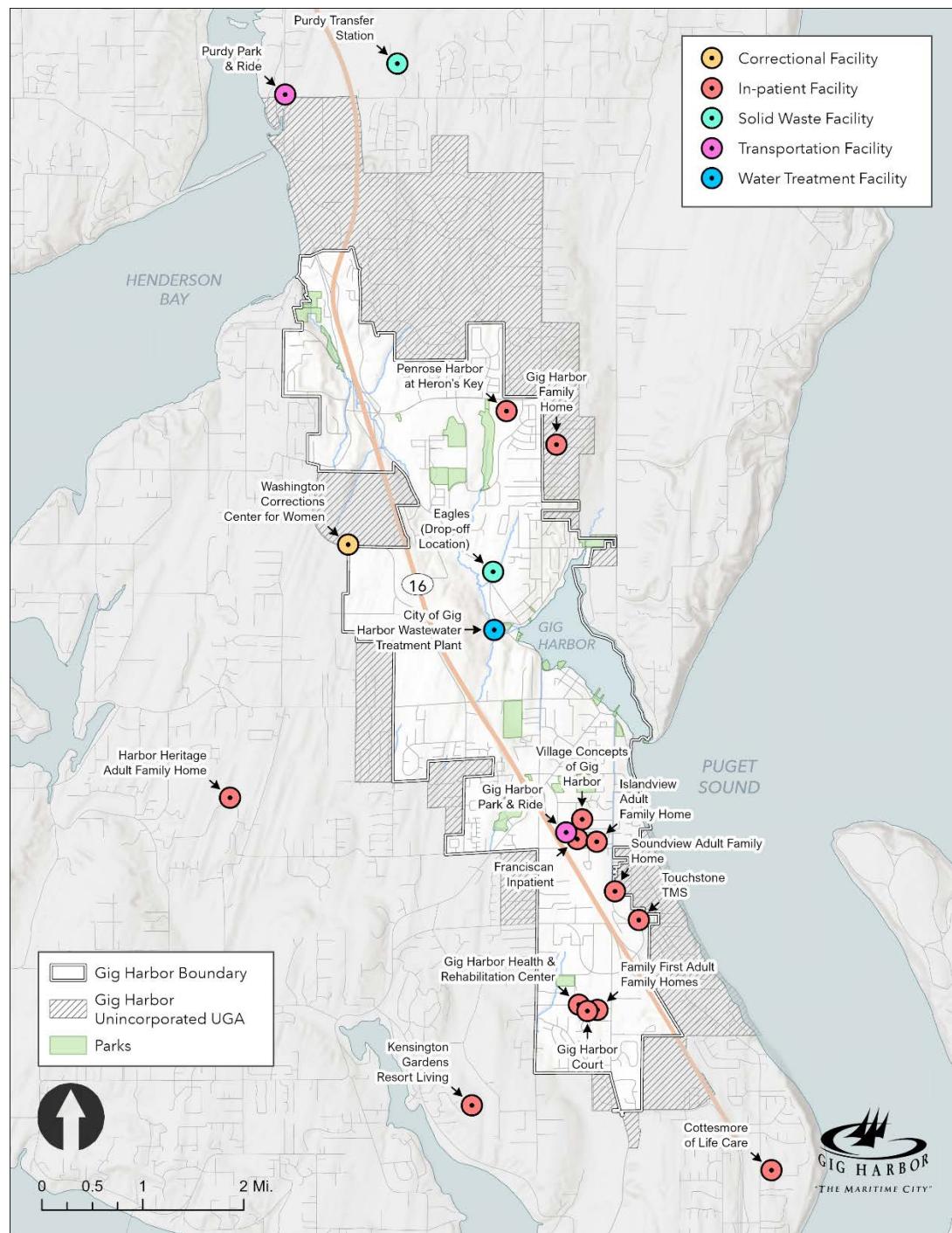
As of the 2023–2029 Six-Year Facilities Plan, no new statewide EPFs are expected to be built in Gig Harbor. The following facilities indicated in Exhibit 3-1 currently within Gig Harbor and its UGA are considered EPFs under the definitions provided above. These facilities are also shown on the map in Exhibit 8-2.

Exhibit 8-1. Essential Public Facilities in Gig Harbor

Facility	Address	Type
Purdy Transfer Station	14525 54th Ave NW	Solid Waste
Eagles (Drop-off Location)	4425 Burnham Dr NW	Solid Waste
City of Gig Harbor Wastewater Treatment Plant	4216 Harborview Dr	Water Treatment
Gig Harbor Park & Ride	6565 Kimball Dr	Transportation
Purdy Park & Ride	14567 Purdy Dr	Transportation
Washington Corrections Center for Women	9801 Bujacich Rd	Correctional Facility
Gig Harbor Health & Rehabilitation Center	3309 45th St Ct	In-patient Facilities
Touchstone TMS	2727 Hollycroft St	In-patient Facilities
Franciscan Inpatient	6401 Kimball Dr	In-patient Facilities
Family First Adult Family Homes	4700 Point Fosdick Dr Suite 312	In-patient Facilities
Islandview Adult Family Home	3011 Islandview Ct	In-patient Facilities
Harbor Heritage Adult Family Home	7006 71st Ave NW	In-patient Facilities
Soundview Adult Family Home	5917 Soundview Dr	In-patient Facilities
Cottesmore of Life Care	2909 14th Ave NW	In-patient Facilities
Gig Harbor Family Home	3615 107th St NW	In-patient Facilities
Village Concepts of Gig Harbor	6633 McDonald Ave	In-patient Facilities
Penrose Harbor at Heron's Key	4340 Borgen Blvd	In-patient Facilities
Kensington Gardens Resort Living	3804 Olson Dr NW	In-patient Facilities
Gig Harbor Court	3213 45th St Ct	In-patient Facilities

Source: City of Gig Harbor, 2024

Exhibit 8-2. Gig Harbor Essential Public Facilities Map



Source: City of Gig Harbor, 2024; BERK, 2024

8.3 Goals and Policies

► **EF-1 Identify current, planned, and expected facilities that provide essential public benefits but may pose impacts to the community.**

EF-1.1 Identify and maintain an inventory of current and planned “essential public facilities”, defined as facilities that have a useful life of 10 or more years with the potential for negative community impacts, including:

- a) Airports,
- b) Marine port facilities,
- c) Large ports,
- d) State education facilities,
- e) State or regional transportation facilities,
- f) Regional transit authority facilities,
- g) State and local correctional facilities,
- h) Solid waste handling facilities,
- i) Inpatient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities, group homes, and secure community transition facilities,
- j) Any other facility otherwise identified as necessary and of a statewide nature by the Washington State Office of Financial Management and included on the state 10-year capital plan, and
- k) Those facilities that are otherwise identified as necessary and of a countywide nature by Pierce County.

EF-1.2 Ensure that the identification of statewide essential public facilities is aligned with the standards and project lists from the Washington State Office of Financial Management.

EF-1.3 Identify countywide essential public facilities in coordination with the county and other relevant jurisdictions.

EF-1.4 Ensure that all essential public facilities are associated with justifiable, documented needs within the city, urban growth area, or broader region informed by 20-year population projections and expected technology advancements, if relevant.

► **EF-2 Minimize overall impacts from essential public facilities on the community while supporting public needs through effective site selection criteria.**

EF-2.1 Manage suitable city sites for future use as essential public facilities.

EF-2.2 Encourage essential public facilities to be sited in areas with:

- a) Minimal environmental constraints;
- b) Access to major transportation facilities and corridors;
- c) Compatible surrounding uses; and
- d) Sufficient supporting public services.

EF-2.3 Evaluate site suitability based on:

- a) Specific facility requirements, including the minimum size of the site, availability of supporting services, accessibility, and ability to meet local needs.
- b) Impacts of the facility, including the compatibility of surrounding uses; potential impacts on natural systems; expected changes related to public health and safety; and the effects on resulting development.
- c) Impacts on urban growth areas, including the nature and extent of urban growth.

EF-2.4 Ensure that there are sufficient buffers and screening between facilities and surrounding development.

EF-2.5 Ensure that for essential public facilities sited in residential neighborhoods that it is clearly established how the facility is suitable for the area and can minimize impacts to the surrounding residents.

EF-2.6 Involve the public in the site selection process for essential public facilities, especially residents of potentially affected areas.

► **EF-3 Minimize the impacts from the construction and operation of essential public facilities.**

EF-3.1 Require an impact analysis during the site selection process for an essential public facility to review implications of ongoing operations related to:

- a) Future land use compatibility;
- b) Existing land use and development in adjacent and surrounding areas;
- c) Existing zoning of surrounding areas;
- d) Existing Comprehensive Plan designation for surrounding areas;
- e) Present and proposed population density of surrounding area;
- f) Environmental impacts and opportunities to mitigate environmental impacts;
- g) Physical, social, emotional, and mental health impacts and opportunities to mitigate health impacts of those living in the vicinity;
- h) Effects on agricultural, forest or mineral lands, critical areas, and historic, archaeological, and cultural sites;

- i) Effects on areas outside of the city in neighboring jurisdictions;
- j) Effects on designated open space corridors;
- k) "Spin-off" (secondary / tertiary) impacts; and
- l) Effects from associated development induced by the siting of the facility.

- EF-3.2 Ensure that essential public facilities are consistent with all required and optional elements of this Comprehensive Plan, as well as the general welfare of the city and region, but that the Comprehensive Plan does not preclude the siting of essential public facilities in the city.
- EF-3.3 Provide site, building and design standards that improve the compatibility between essential public facilities and their surroundings.
- EF-3.4 Ensure "fair-share" appropriations or payments that avoid a disproportionate financial burden from the operation of an essential public facility.
- EF-3.5 Provide for a regular review of the ongoing impacts to the community from essential public facilities and coordinate with facility operators to manage these impacts.