

					FIRST DRAFT Proposed Policy Revision	
					<i>This first draft is for early discussion with the Planning Commission and to collect early feedback from the public. The policies will undergo several rounds of revision before their estimated final adoption in June 2025</i>	
Existing Goal - Number	Existing Policy Number	Existing Page Number	Theme / Subheading	Existing Policy		Reasoning for Proposed Policy Change
3A	3A	73	Protection Rural Character	Protect the rural landscape, character, and lifestyle by: (a) Defining and identifying rural lands for long-term use and conservation; (b) Providing for a variety of rural densities and housing opportunities; (c) Maintaining the character and historic and cultural roles of existing rural communities; (d) Allowing land uses which are compatible and in keeping with the protection of important rural landscape features, resources, and values; (e) Encouraging economic prosperity for rural areas; and (f) Ensuring that appropriate and adequate rural levels of service are provided.	Protect the rural landscape, character, and lifestyle by: (a) Defining and identifying rural lands for long-term use, conservation, and resilience ; (b) Providing for a variety of rural densities and housing opportunities; (c) Maintaining the character and historic and cultural roles of existing rural communities; (d) Allowing land uses which are compatible and in keeping with the protection of important rural landscape features, resources, and values; (e) Encouraging economic prosperity for rural areas; and (f) Ensuring that appropriate and adequate rural levels of service are provided.	Modified to include climate resiliency in goal. Consistent with Commerce Climate Planning Guidance Resilience Requirement 2 and Commerce Menu of Measures 373.
4A-5	4A-5.6	126	Agricultural Resource Lands	Drainage Plans: Minimize and mitigate flooding and drainage impacts on agricultural lands. Skagit County Public Works shall develop criteria to review development proposals for drainage impacts on agricultural lands. Drainage plans for minimizing impacts of development shall be circulated to the affected Drainage District for comment prior to issuance of permits by Public Works.	Drainage Plans: Minimize and mitigate flooding and drainage impacts on agricultural lands. Implement enhanced drainage management practices designed to mitigate the projected impacts of extreme precipitation intensity on agricultural lands. These practices could include the installation of adaptive drainage infrastructure such as improved culverts, ditches, and water retention systems to prevent flooding and waterlogging of crops. Skagit County Public Works shall develop criteria to review development proposals for drainage impacts on agricultural lands. Drainage plans for minimizing impacts of development shall be circulated to the affected Drainage District for comment prior to issuance of permits by Public Works.	Promotes proper drainage on agricultural lands to mitigate extreme precipitation. Specifies drainage techniques to pursue.

4B-2	4B-2.11	131	Forest Resource Lands Wildfire	Wildfire Planning Program: Continue the National Fire Protection Association’s “Firewise Communities Program” consistent with the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan and with agency partners such as the Skagit Conservation District, fire districts and state agencies. Skagit County supports further development of a county-wide wildfire planning program to increase public safety and awareness regarding forest fire dangers, and establish the means of managing, reducing and suppressing catastrophic wildfires.	Wildfire Resilience Strategy Planning Program: Skagit County supports further development of Develop a comprehensive, county-wide wildfire resilience strategy planning program to increase public safety and awareness regarding forest fire dangers, and establish the means of managing, reducing and suppressing catastrophic wildfires. Continue the National Fire Protection Association’s “Firewise Communities Program” consistent with the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan and with agency partners such as the Skagit Conservation District, fire districts and state agencies.	Aligns with Commerce Menu of Measures 325. Implements Climate Resilience. Developing a wildfire resilience strategy would address the natural, social, and economic challenges associated with preparing for, reducing, responding to, and recovering from wildfire impacts. Create evacuation plans and outreach materials to help residents plan and practice actions that make evacuation quicker and safer.
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5A-5	5A-5.1	171-174	Protection and Conservation Measures	<p>Critical Areas shall be designated and protected to prevent their continued loss and degradation. Furthermore, priority shall be given to the avoidance of impacts to Critical Areas, followed by the minimization of impacts and full mitigation respectively.</p> <p>(a) Wetlands</p> <p>(i) The greatest level of protection should be provided to wetlands of exceptional resource value, based on the Washington State Wetland Rating System for Western Washington (2014 Update).</p> <p>(ii) Measures shall be taken to protect the natural ability of wetlands to improve the quality of surface water runoff, hold and gradually release storm water, function as primary producers of plant matter, provide habitat for fish and wildlife, provide recreational opportunities, and provide historical and cultural values.</p> <p>(iii) Mitigation projects shall, whenever feasible, contribute to an existing wetland system or restore an area that was historically a wetland.</p> <p>(iv) A wetland buffer zone of adequate width should be maintained between a wetland and any adjacent development to protect the functions and integrity of the wetland. Where buffers are required, adequate buffer widths and protective mechanisms, using best management practices to sustain the buffer functions, shall be established.</p> <p>(v) Wetland buffer zones should be retained in their natural condition to the greatest extent possible. Re-vegetation may be required to restore the functional value of the buffer zone.</p> <p>(vi) Regulated wetlands and their associated buffer zones shall be protected from adverse wetland impacts to their overall functions. No wetland or buffer zone alteration should be authorized unless it can be shown that the impact is unavoidable and that the adverse impacts are offset by deliberate restoration, creation or enhancement of wetlands and buffer zones.</p> <p>(b) Aquifer Recharge Areas</p> <p>(i) Water resources shall be protected using natural systems and non-structural methods wherever possible.</p> <p>(ii) Ground Water Management Areas (according to WAC 173-100), Wellhead Protection Areas and Significant Use Zones shall be established to further protect the quality and quantity of ground and surface water.</p> <p>(iii) Skagit County will review and update its Saltwater Intrusion Policy for the islands and those coastal areas of the mainland where seawater intrusion has been documented.</p>	<p>(b) (iii)</p> <p>Skagit County will review and update identify and implement strategies in its Saltwater Intrusion Policy to prepare for and mitigate the effects of saltwater intrusion into its aquifers and drainage systems for the most vulnerable islands and those coastal areas of the mainland where seawater intrusion has been documented most vulnerable.</p>	<p>Need to update existing Saltwater Intrusion Policy and expand. Adopted from Commerce Menu of Measures 518.</p>
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- (iv) Skagit County will update the county code to address instream flow, mandated sewage code changes and water code changes. Aquifer recharge areas will be evaluated and protected under the revisions to the Critical Areas Ordinance.
- (v) Consistent with State law (RCW 19.27.097), Skagit County will not issue a permit for a building requiring potable water unless the applicant can demonstrate they have a legal and adequate source of water and the source meets drinking water standards.
- (c) Frequently Flooded Areas
- (i) Undisturbed natural rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, and floodplains shall be protected to avoid increases in flood elevations, to reduce flood damage, and to allow proper conveyance of flood flows.
- (ii) When reviewing proposed developments or designing infrastructure, consider the potential effects of tsunamis, high tides with strong winds, sea level rise, and extreme weather events, including those potentially resulting from global climate change, and apply conditions of approval to ensure adaptation to future conditions and mitigation of potential impacts.
- (d) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas
- (i) Stream and wetland buffers shall be set so as to protect habitats associated with riparian dependent species.
- (ii) Habitat fragmentation shall be minimized to enhance wildlife diversity by protecting important wildlife areas, open space, and interconnecting corridors that form a continuous habitat network.
- (iii) Protective measures will be required in all areas that have the potential to introduce sediments into fish bearing streams, unless the applicant can adequately demonstrate that other mitigating measures will avoid impacts to instream resources.
- (iv) Habitats or species that have been identified as priority species or priority habitats by the state, federal or tribal governments should not be reduced and should be preserved through regulation, acquisition, incentives and other techniques. The County should determine which habitats are of local importance.
- (v) The level of protection for HCAs shall be commensurate with the resource population status and management objectives as determined by appropriate resource managers.
- (vi) Native vegetation shall be preferred and retained over exotic species in Fish and Wildlife Conservation Areas.
- (vii) Native plant communities should be integrated with land uses wherever possible.

(viii) Give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries.

8A		243	Safety Movement	Plan and maintain a safe and efficient system for the movement of people and goods in partnership, where appropriate, with the Skagit Council of Governments.	Plan and maintain a safe, efficient, and equitable system for the movement of people and goods in partnership, where appropriate, with the Skagit Council of Governments.	Integrating equity to align with requirement 3 of Commerce's Climate Planning Guidance.
8A	8A-1.3	243	System Management	Multi-modal transportation – Participate in the planning and implementation of multi-modal transportation systems to increase mobility of all users and provide alternatives to the passenger car.	Multi-modal transportation – Participate in the planning and implementation of multi-modal transportation systems to increase mobility of all users, especially in underserved communities , and provide affordable, accessible, and reliable alternatives to the passenger car to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions .	Incorporates equity considerations and vehicle miles traveled considerations aligned to Commerce Menu of Measures Requirement 3 and specifies alternatives to the passenger car.

8A	8A-1.8	244	System Management	To ensure integration of transportation and land use planning, make decisions regarding the location and improvement of transportation facilities and public transit in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s goals, policies, and land use map.	To ensure integration of transportation and land use planning, make decisions regarding the location and improvement of transportation facilities and public transit in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan’s goals, policies, and land use map. Emphasize climate resiliency, equity, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the planning and design of these projects, ensuring they support sustainable development and provide fair access to all communities.	Specific mention to climate resiliency, equity, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions when ensuring integration transportation and land use plans. Alignment to the requirements of resiliency and GHG reduction outlined in Commerce's Climate Planning Guidance, specifically Commerce Menu of Measures 53. Development permits and public works transportation plans should be directly coordinated beyond impact fees. New developments and transit expansion must be considered simultaneously. Examples: bus rapid transit, transit fleet electrification, first- and last-mile connectivity to be considered with development.
8A	8A-3.1	245	Public Transportation Coordination	Transit Support- Encourage citizens and businesses to use transit as an alternative to the single-occupant vehicle.	Transit Support- Support Skagit Transit to create incentives to encourage citizens and businesses to use participate in transit use as an over alternative to the single-occupant vehicles to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. Enhance the quality of transit systems viability by increasing speed, frequency, coverage, and reliability.	Specified to reduce GHG emissions and ways to encourage transit use in alignment with Commerce's Climate Planning Guidance Measure 429 (a high priority action). Skagit could implement "last-mile" strategies (shuttles, ridesharing, bike-sharing), beginning with frontline communities, people with physical impairments, children and elderly transit riders.

8A	8A-6	247	Non-Motorized Transportation Network	<p>Provide a safe and efficient network of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off-road facilities that link populated areas of the County with important travel destinations.</p> <p>Achieve high standards in meeting the needs of non-motorized users, through appropriate planning, design, construction and maintenance of user-friendly facilities.</p> <p>Increase education, information and traffic enforcement efforts associated with non-motorized transportation as a means of lowering collision and injury rates associated with these modes.</p>	<p>Provide an equitable, resilient, safe, and efficient network of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off- road facilities that link populated and historically underserved areas of the County with important travel destinations such as jobs, schools, and essential services.</p> <p>Achieve high standards in meeting the needs on-motorized users, through appropriate Implement inclusive planning, design, construction, and maintenance of user-friendly facilities practices to meet the highest standards of accessibility and usability needs for all non-motorized users, with a focus on addressing mobility barriers where needed. Non-motorized transportation networks should be planned to be resilient to natural and climate exacerbated hazards.</p> <p>Increase education, information and traffic enforcement efforts associated with non-motorized transportation as a means of lowering collision and injury rates associated with these modes.</p>	<p>Incorporated equity and resilience considerations, aligning with Commerce Climate Planning Guidance Requirement 3.</p>
9A	9A-5	270	Energy Conservation	<p>Encourage conservation of energy resources, including the reduction of energy consumption in county facilities.</p>	<p>Encourage conservation of energy resources, including the reduction of energy consumption in county facilities, by prioritizing the use of renewable energy sources and energy-efficient technologies.</p>	<p>This update emphasizes the need for conservation through renewable energy and efficiency technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimize reliance on non-renewable resources. Aligned to Commerce Menu of Measures 81, 230.</p>
9A	9A-5.1	270	Energy Conservation	<p>Non-renewable Resources - Generating energy from non-renewable resources may be acceptable if proven to be economically feasible and environmentally sound.</p>	<p>Non-renewable Resources - Generating energy generation from non-renewable resources, such as natural gas, should be phased out where possible, and the county will explore the use of renewable energy sources in both new and existing buildings. may be acceptable if proven to be economically feasible and environmentally sound.</p>	<p>Phasing out natural gas and prioritizing renewable energy is in line with the state's decarbonization goals. Replacing natural gas power and heat systems with electric heat pumps can make the facilities carbon-neutral and reduce GHG emissions. Burning natural gas produces fewer GHG emissions than burning oil, but natural gas is still a fossil fuel that contributes to climate change. Aligned to Commerce Menu of Measures 259, 230.</p>

9A	9A-5.2	270-271	Energy Conservation	Conservation Methods - Energy conservation should conserve energy resources, minimize air pollution, and delay the need for additional electrical power generating facilities. This may be achieved through methods including, but not limited to education of the public; insulation and weatherization as specified by building codes; and use of energy-efficient systems.	Conservation Methods - Energy conservation should conserve energy resources, minimize reduce air pollution, and delay the need for additional electrical power generating facilities. This may be achieved through methods including, but not limited to: education of the public; insulation and weatherization as specified by building codes; and use of energy-efficient systems--with a focus on low-income and overburdened communities. The county shall conduct culturally responsive public outreach to encourage participation in energy efficiency programs, such as the Community Energy Challenge, to support these efforts.	Incorporates the focus on adaptive reuse of buildings, prioritization of weatherization for emissions reduction and resilience, and the emphasis on equity. Prioritizes the adaptive reuse of buildings, recognizing the emission-reduction benefits of retaining existing buildings. Skagit currently participates in the Community Energy Challenge, an energy efficiency program to encourage residential and commercial energy efficiency retrofits, and to boost local economic development in the construction sector Aligns to Commerce Menu of Measures 84, 489, and 160.
9A	9A-5.3	271	Energy Conservation	Technology Solutions - Residential, commercial, and industrial development shall be encouraged to use energy-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sensitive technologies and resources in new construction.	Technology Solutions - Encourage residential, commercial, and industrial development shall be encouraged to use energy-efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally sensitive technologies and resources materials in new construction and retrofits, including prioritizing lower-carbon building materials to reduce embodied carbon.	This update includes the priority of using lower-carbon building materials and incentivizing retrofits for improved energy efficiency.
9A	9A-5.4	271	Energy Conservation	Alternative Energy Resources - The county shall encourage the use of alternative energy resources in the design and construction of new development.	Alternative Energy Resources - The county shall encourage support the prioritization of the use of renewable and low-carbon alternative energy resources in the design, construction, and retrofit of new and existing developments, such as through programs like C-PACER that provide accessible financing for clean energy projects.	This update emphasizes maximizing renewable energy and the use of programs to finance these improvements.
9A	9A-5.5	271	Energy Conservation	Co-generation - Commercial and industrial facilities shall be encouraged to incorporate co-generation whenever possible, if economically feasible and environmentally sound.	Co-generation - Encourage commercial and industrial facilities shall be encouraged to incorporate support the transition to low-carbon systems, including incorporation of co-generation systems whenever possible, if economically feasible and environmentally sound. In parallel, support the transition of high-carbon emitting sectors, including oil refining and industrial gas manufacturing, to low-carbon processes or industries.	Expanded to include supporting the transition to low-carbon industrial process strategies. Working to lower industrial process emissions will greatly reduce Skagit's overall GHG emissions. These industrial process emissions made up 20% of Skagit County's 2022 communitywide emissions.

9A	9A-5.6	271	Energy Conservation	Solar Energy - The use of solar energy for water and space heating should be encouraged and ordinances shall be developed to protect solar access.	Solar Energy —The use of solar energy for water and space heating shall should be encouraged and incentivized. Where needed, ordinances shall be developed to protect solar access, particularly in high-density and overburdened communities, to enhance energy resiliency and equity.	Adds an equity component, ensuring that solar energy benefits are prioritized in vulnerable communities. Aligns to Commerce Menu of Measures 489 and 160.
9A	9A-5.7	271	Energy Conservation	Design – The county should work with builders and developers through incentive programs to seek and implement alternative energy resources in building and site design, and land use.	Design —The county should shall work with builders and developers to through incentive programs to seek and implement integrate renewable and energy efficiency resources alternative energy resources into building and site design, and land use such as through incentive programs, green building certification programs, and C-PACER financing programs.	Cascadia: This version emphasizes the county's active role in promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency through both certification and financing programs like C-PACER, aligning with broader sustainability goals. Aligns to Commerce Menu of Measures 230 and 160.
9A	9A-6	271	Solid Waste Management	Protect environmental quality and public health in Skagit County through effective practices, education, regulations, and economic incentives.	Promote effective solid waste management through waste reduction and recycling initiatives. Protect environmental quality and public health in Skagit County through effective practices, education, regulations, and economic incentives.	The previous goal didn't effectively capture the under arching policies of solid waste management.
9A	9A-6.2		Solid Waste Management		Support solid waste entities in diverting food waste from landfill to compost or anaerobic digestion.	Supportive of composting goal from CAP (2010).