



Skagit County Planning & Development Services

DALE PERNULA, AICP *Director*

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2016 Comprehensive Plan Update

To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Dale Pernula, AICP, Director
Kirk Johnson, AICP, Senior Planner
Re: Briefing to Board on 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update
Date: December 12, 2013

The Department will update the Board of County Commissioners on Tuesday of next week on the requirements related to the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update.

What needs to be reviewed and potentially updated?

- Comprehensive Plan
- Development Regulations
- Critical Areas Ordinance
- Resource Lands
- Urban Growth Areas

What requires a change to the plan or development regulations?

- Statutory changes
- Updated population and employment data
- Other changes in relevant facts and local conditions

Jurisdictions are advised to use the Department of Commerce Periodic Update Checklist as a guide (copy attached).

What is the schedule?

The update must be adopted by June, 2016. Here are some *very preliminary* planning goals. These are subject to change as we get further into the process:

Preliminary agreement among GMASC on pop/emp projections and allocations	Spring 2014
BCC formally approves scope of work for County update process	June 2014
PDS develops Update Proposal, analysis, and documentation	July 2014 – March 2015
County releases proposal and SEPA analysis/threshold determination	March 2015
Public review and comment	March – June 2015
Planning Commission hearings and deliberations	June – September 2015
Board of County Commissioner adoption	December 2015 – March 2016

Recommended process goals

1. Use Planning Commission as 2016 Update Advisory Committee
2. Keep scope narrow
3. Focus only on what needs to be done
4. Provide adequate time for public input
5. Finish on time

Major Update Requirements (Preliminary Analysis)

- 1. Update population and employment projections and allocations**
 - a. Work currently underway through SCOG
 - b. New OFM population projections (see attachments):
 - i. Significantly down from pre-recession projections
 - ii. Many cities reporting more residential capacity than previously thought
 - iii. Residential UGA expansions likely not necessary (unless GMASC chooses higher-than-medium growth forecast)
 - c. Greater emphasis on economic development and employment growth:
 - i. Concerns about out-commuting
 - ii. Envision Skagit – more industrial land
 - iii. Industrial land inventory
 - iv. SCOG Board Resolution: stronger regional economic development focus
 - v. More aggressive employment growth projections could translate into additional acreage for urban industrial development.
 - d. County ultimately adopts updated allocations into Countywide Planning Policies
- 2. Urban growth area reviews:**
 - a. New pop/employment targets could have implications for some UGA boundaries
 - b. May not be time for County to adopt City UGA modifications by June 2016 deadline, given the need to go through City and County planning processes.
- 3. Possible tweaks to UGA modification procedures:**
 - a. Cities seek more streamlined process
 - b. County seeks comprehensive city planning to be done before proposal moves to County
 - c. Discussion of possible TDR requirement for residential UGA expansions
 - d. Update UGA designation criteria policies to be consistent with state law limiting UGA expansion into 100 year floodplain (with some exceptions)

Other likely focus areas:

- 4. Updated Comprehensive Plan Housing Element**, including updated inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs over the 20-year planning period.
 - a. Skagit County housing needs assessment last formally adopted in 1990s
 - b. Recent work done by BCC-created Affordable Housing Committee and consultant Paul Schissler will probably address many of the housing update requirements.

5. **Updated Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element**, including:
 - a. A forecast of traffic for at least 10 years, using updated SCOG transportation model
 - b. A pedestrian and bicycle component, and
 - c. A multiyear financing plan based on needs identified in the comprehensive plan
 - d. **This is likely a significant workload item relying major coordination with Public Works and SCOG**
 - e. May require update of Transportation Systems Plan, last updated in 2003
6. **Update Comprehensive Plan policies to acknowledge adoption of UGA open space plan meeting GMA requirement**
7. **Consideration of urban planning approaches that increase physical activity** (new GMA requirement).

Major Development Regulation Update Issues

8. **Regulations that allow electric vehicle infrastructure (EVI) as a use in all areas except those zoned for residential or resource use, or critical areas** (new GMA requirement)
9. **Further review required to determine if Critical Areas Ordinance is fully up to date and consistent with GMA Best Available Science requirements or requires update.**
10. **Review (existing, GMA compliant) provisions to ensure early and continuous public participation, for possible improvements**
11. **Review (existing, GMA compliant process) to assure that proposed regulatory or administrative actions do not result in an unconstitutional taking of private property, for possible improvements**