



COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

Rural Element

Welcome!

The Comprehensive Plan Update

A comprehensive plan helps the public and elected officials define objectives, set priorities, and seek solutions to long-term issues. The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan provides a sense of direction, as well as a broad overview of where a community is and how it will grow over a 20-year horizon.

Skagit County last completed a major Comprehensive Plan update in 2007. This current update process responds to Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements to update the County's plan for 2016.

Why We Are Here

The public workshop you're attending today is intended for public input on rural-area policies and needs. Today, we are asking you to:

- Help us ensure that the Rural Element describes your vision for Skagit County's rural areas.
- Tell us any concerns, comments, or priorities you may have

Today's Forum

Around the room you will find a variety of posters providing information for you to gain further understanding of the Rural Element and the update process.

Feel free to browse the stations in any order. If you have questions or comments, please find a staff member and they will be happy to speak with you.



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Rural Element Requirements

The Growth Management Act requires counties to include in their comprehensive plans:

“A rural element [which includes] lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources. The rural element shall permit appropriate land uses that are compatible with the rural character of such lands and provide for a variety of rural densities and uses.” (RCW 36.70A.070(5))

The rural element must include measure to:

- Assure the visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area;
- Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- Protect critical areas and surface water and groundwater resources; and
- Protect against conflicts with the use of designated agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands



Photo credit: Joe Mabel



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Existing Element Goals

The overall scope of the Skagit County Rural Element is captured in the following goal:

Goal A - Rural Area Characteristics

Protect the rural landscape, character and lifestyle by:

- Defining and identifying rural lands for long-term use and conservation;
- Providing for a variety of rural densities and housing opportunities;
- Maintaining the character and historic and cultural roles of existing rural communities;
- Allowing land uses which are compatible and in keeping with the protection of important rural landscape features, resources, and values;
- Assuring economic prosperity for rural areas; and
- Assuring that appropriate and adequate rural levels of service are provided.



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Recent Demographic Trends



In **2012**, the population of the rural area was estimated to be **38,277** – or about **one-third** of the County’s total population of **117,949**.

By **2036**, the rural population is expected to grow to an estimated 45,665, an increase of 7,338 new residents or roughly 3,000 new households.

That population would represent about **29%** of the County’s total projected **2036** population of **155,452**.



Rural Element policy **3A-2.2** states: “The rate of development in rural and resource areas should be in accordance with adopted Countywide Planning Policies stating that urban areas should accommodate **80 percent** of new population growth, with the remaining **20 percent** locating in non-urban areas.”



A 2012 review of permit trends indicates growth has tended to occur in UGAs and the rural area as directed by GMA, the Countywide Planning Policies, and policy 3A-2.2.

Skagit County saw an estimated growth pattern of **79% urban** and **21% rural** growth over the years 2000-2010.



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Key Questions going forward:

1. How do you define Skagit County's rural character?
2. What do you value or cherish about the rural community in which you live, work, or recreate?
3. What concerns do you have for the present and the future of Skagit County's rural areas?
4. Are current Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations effective at promoting the following rural area goals (from Rural Element Goal A – Rural Area Characteristics)?
 - a. Providing for a variety of rural residential densities and housing opportunities.
 - b. Maintaining the character and historic and cultural roles of existing rural communities.
 - c. Ensuring that land uses are compatible and in keeping with the protection of important rural landscape features, resources, and values.
 - d. Assuring economic prosperity for rural areas; and
 - e. Assuring that appropriate and adequate rural levels of service are provided.

Comment cards are available for feedback.