



Skagit County Planning Commission

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Chair Tim Raschko **Vice Chair** Tammy Candler
Members Angela Day, Vincent Henley, Amy Hughes, Jed Holmes, Kiera Wright, Joe Woodmansee, Patsy Good

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Skagit County Planning Commission's Recorded Motion regarding 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update

Proposal publication date: February 13, 2025

Proposal name: 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update

Documents available at: www.skagitcounty.net/2025CPA

Public hearing body: Skagit County Planning Commission

Public hearing date: Tuesday, March 11, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Written comment deadline: Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 4:30 p.m.

PC deliberations (closed
record public hearing): April 8, 2025 & April 15, 2025

After considering the written and spoken comments and considering the record before it, the Planning Commission enters the following findings of fact, reasons for recommendation, and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on the 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update.

Findings of Fact and Reasons for Recommendation

1. **Periodic Comprehensive Plan Updates.** The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to update Comprehensive Plans and implement development regulations every 10 years (RCW 36.70A.130). Comprehensive Plans are 20-year policy documents which guide the community vision for growth population, housing, and employment, transportation, capital facilities and utilities, parks, recreation and open space, rural areas, and protection of natural resource lands (RCW 36.70A.070). While the deadline to update the comprehensive plan was June 30, 2025, recent legislation (House Bill 2296) extended the deadline to December 31, 2025. Skagit County is still focused, however, on completing this project by June 30, 2025.
2. **Continuing Review of Comprehensive Plans.** RCW 36.70A.130 mandates that Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan and corresponding development regulations be subject to continuing review and evaluation. Any amendments or revisions to development regulations must be consistent with and implement the Comprehensive Plan.

3. **Last Periodic Update to Comprehensive Plan.** Skagit County's last periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2016.
4. **2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update.** Skagit County is conducting its periodic review and update of its Comprehensive Plan, Land Use/Zoning map, and Development Regulations pursuant to the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A.130(5). This non-project legislative action proposes plan, map and code amendments to address GMA requirements and consistency measures and to address local circumstances. The proposal is required under the Growth Management Act. Applicable sections of the Growth Management Act include, but are not limited to, RCW 36.70A.130, 36.70A.070, 36.70A.035, 36.70A.040, 36.70A.095, 36.70A.096, 36.70A.140. Below is a summary of the amendments:
 - a. The proposed draft update revises the goals and policies of the previously adopted 2016 Comprehensive Plan to be compliant with recent changes to state laws governing Comprehensive Plans including but not limited to:
 - (i) **Climate Planning Element.** A new Climate Element, Resiliency Sub-element, and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions Sub-element required by RCW 36.70A.070 and RCW 36.70A.095.
 - (ii) **Updates to Housing Element.** Revisions to the Housing Element to accommodate housing at all income levels based on the 20-year population forecasts required by RCW 36.70A.070, RCW 43.62.035.
 - (iii) **Updates to Transportation Element.** The transportation inventory, land use assumptions, travel forecasts, Level of Service (LOS) standards, current and future transportation needs, and a transportation financial plan required by RCW 36.70A.070(6).
5. **Consistency with Countywide Planning Policies.** The proposal revises all goals and policies to adequately address recent changes to regional Countywide Planning Policies including the updates to the County's 20-year population, housing, and employment projections. On March 25, 2025, Skagit County adopted amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies which includes growth targets for population and employment through the year 2045.
6. **Growth Targets.** The Growth Management Act requires Skagit County to review population and employment growth for the 20-year planning period, which extends to 2045.
7. **Consistency with the recently adopted Capital Facilities Plan.** The proposal would revise the entire Comprehensive Plan document to ensure consistency with the recently adopted Capital Facilities Plan.
8. **Updates to Data.** Revisions to demographic, geographic, environmental, housing, transportation, and economic data necessary for inventory and assessment of Skagit County's land use, services, and facilities.

9. **Urban Growth Areas.** The GMA requires Skagit County to review Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) per RCW 36.70A.130(3).
10. **Comprehensive Land Use/Zoning Map Amendments.** Skagit County received one mapping requested City of Anacortes has submitted a docket petition to expand its Urban Growth Area (UGA) as part of the 2025 Skagit County Periodic Comprehensive Plan update. These city-owned parcels will not be used to accommodate City population, housing, or employment growth targets and will only be used for recreational and city operational uses.
11. **Community Engagement.** Skagit County held numerous opportunities for public engagement by hosting community surveys, open houses, tabling events, stakeholder interviews, and by reaching out to various community groups.
12. **Public Comment and Public Hearings.** Skagit County held a two-step policy review process. Preliminary draft policy amendments, for each comprehensive plan element, were prepared and brought to the Planning Commission for initial comments between July and October 2024. In addition, a 30-day comment period was provided each month for the public to provide early comments. After early briefings with the Planning Commission and public comment, a draft comprehensive plan was developed and issued on February 13, 2025. The draft comprehensive plan was released to the public for comment and the Planning Commission from February 13, 2025, to March 13, 2025. A public hearing was held by the Planning Commission to receive public testimony on March 12, 2025. All comments received and information shared to the Planning Commission are found on the project website. Public comments and testimony were recorded, and the Department provided a written response to the comments received and incorporated policy revisions as appropriate and in alignment with the Countywide Planning Policies, state law, and community visioning principles.
13. **Energy Resiliency.** The Planning Commission acknowledges recent changes to RCWs that show movement toward reduction or elimination of greenhouse gas emissions. However, we believe a healthy and resilient Skagit County community should maintain options for a variety of energy sources until such times as advancements in technology negate the need for multiple options to include fossil fuels.
14. **Agricultural Advisory Board Recommendation.** The Agricultural Advisory Board supports the recommended changes to the agricultural policies in the Natural Resource Element, as recommended by the Planning Commission.

Recommendation

The Planning Commission recommends that the Board of County Commissioners **approve** the 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update with the following changes:

1. **Staff Recommendations.** The Planning Commission recommends incorporating all 18 Staff Recommendations in Attachment C, with the following changes:
 - a. Revise **Recommendation #1** with the following amendments:

- i. **Policy 4A-1.1(a).** Amend the Agricultural Resource Lands criteria to include parcels which are 1 acre or greater, rather than 5.
 ...Generally, all lands in unincorporated Skagit County which are parcels ~~1 5 acres~~ or greater, and that contain “prime farmland soils” as determined by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, shall be identified (see the narrative for a description of prime farmland soils). The County may also consider unique farmland soils and farmlands of statewide importance....
- ii. **Policy 4A-1.1(b).** Remove the requirement that Agricultural-Natural Resource Lands be located in the 100-year floodplain.
- iii. **Policy 4A-1.1(c)(iv).** Amend to include irrigation districts in addition to diking and drainage districts when referencing special purpose districts.
- iv. **Policy 4A-3.1.** Add reference to WAC 365-190-040.
- v. Add references to all policies within the Natural Resource Lands element addressing de-designation of resource lands that reference the applicable Washington Administrative Code (WAC) sections: WAC 365-190-050 for agricultural resource lands, WAC 365-190-060 for forest resource lands, and WAC 365-190-070 for mineral resource lands. References should be incorporated based on the type of natural resource.
- vi. Bring consistency to countywide analysis language in policy **4A-1.1, 4A-3.1, 4B-1.1, and 4B-1.3** by adding the word comprehensive and removing county-led.
- b. **Recommendation #2.** Add a definition for the Wildland Urban Interface to the glossary.
- c. **Recommendation #5.** Make the following amendments and additions:
 - i. Add Storage to the Forest Carbon Sequestration heading.
 - ii. **Policy 4B-8.5** Amend policy with the following:
 Promote and encourage forest management and forest sector practices that do not result in substitution, leakage, or negative environmental outcomes.
- d. Incorporate **Recommendation #6** with the following addition to encourage long-term protection of forest land:
 Policy 2G-1.1 Allow the separation of an existing house from the larger parcel where it is located on lands designated Agricultural-Natural Resource Land, Secondary Forest – Natural Resource Land, and Rural Resource-Natural Resource Land in order to encourage long-term protection of agricultural and forest land. Establish conservation easement on the separated resource land in perpetuity.

- 2. **Introduction & Summary.** The Planning Commission recommends making the following amendments to the Introduction & Summary:


- a. Consider strengthening the Community Values section (Page 28) by adding a historical narrative and more accurately reflect the priorities and values expressed in the community surveys.
3. **Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Element.** The Planning Commission recommends making the following amendments to the Land Use Element:
 - a. Remove the reference to the zoning of Hope Island Inn on the Swinomish UGA paragraph of Page 49 as it is inaccurate.
4. **Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Element.** The Planning Commission supports policies 2A-8.6 and 2A-8.7 on page 65 to encourage increasing the density allowed in unincorporated urban growth areas and to reduce future allocations into rural areas.
5. **Utilities Element.** The Planning Commission recommends making the following amendments to the Utilities Element:
 - a. Amend Policy 9A-5.1 with the following language: “The county shall prioritize the transition to renewable energy sources in both new and existing county buildings where feasible.”
 - b. Amend policies under Goal 9A-5 to say should rather than shall.
6. **Climate and Resiliency Element.** The Planning Commission recommends making the following amendments to the Climate and Resiliency Element:
 - a. Amend Policy 12J-1.1 with the following: Develop regulations, if appropriate, after in-depth analysis and stakeholder engagement, for elevating or setting back new and substantially improved structures to reduce the risk of damage caused by sea level rise.
7. **Anacortes Urban Growth Area Expansion.** The Planning Commission recommends approving the Anacortes Urban Growth Area expansion that would include 9 parcels into the Anacortes Urban Growth Area for recreational and city operational purposes. The UGA expansion will not be used for the purposes of accommodating population, housing, or employment growth.

Commission Vote	Support	Oppose	Absent	Abstain
Tim Raschko, Chair	X			
Tammy Candler, Vice Chair	X			
Jed Holmes			X	
Vince Henley	X			
Amy Hughes	X			
Angela Day	X			
Joe Woodmansee	X			
Kiera Wright	X			
Patsy Good	X			
Total	8	0	1	0

The Planning Commission recommends that the Board of County Commissioners adopt the 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update as recommended.

This recorded motion is **approved** on this 15th day of April 2025.

SKAGIT COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
SKAGIT COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Tim Rasenko, Chair

4-15-25

Date



Jack Moore, Secretary

4-16-25

Date

Attachments

- Attachment C - Staff Recommendations
- Agricultural Advisory Board Memo