



TO: Jack Moore, Planning and Development Services Director
Allen Rozema, Assistant Planning and Development Services Director
Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner
Tara Satushek, Senior Planner

FROM: Clay White, Director of Planning

DATE: December 3, 2024

RE: December 10, Planning Commission briefing – 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update – Development Regulations

We look forward to the opportunity to brief the Skagit County Planning Commission on December 10, 2024, regarding the 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update. The briefing will focus on providing the Planning Commission with an overview and approach to development regulation changes which will be considered as part of the Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update:

Development regulation changes generally fall into four categories including:

- Changes proposed for consistency with state law changes which have occurred since the last Comprehensive Plan Periodic update.
- Changes to the comprehensive plan land use map, zoning map, and/or development regulations necessary for accommodating population, housing, and employment targets
- Optional code changes which are consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA) and implement the community vision for growth in the future. This could include, for example, options to promote more affordable housing types in certain areas of the county.

The fourth category is completing an update to the critical areas ordinance, where necessary, to respond to new Best Available Science (BAS). Critical area ordinance updates will be discussed at a future Planning Commission meeting.

We look forward to answering any questions the Planning Commission may have and receiving feedback on the summary of proposed development regulations. Your comments will help as we continue efforts to engage the community and develop a complete Comprehensive Plan draft this winter.

Background

This presentation and memo is part of the 2025 Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Between July to October 2024, the Planning Commission reviewed preliminary draft revisions to the policies in the existing 2016 Skagit County Comprehensive Plan. Please go to <https://skagitcounty.net/2025cpa> to see preliminary draft policies presented at the meetings and public comments received.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) [Housing Element](#) requirements have been modified since the last Periodic Comprehensive Plan update in 2016. This primarily occurred through [House Bill 1220](#), which now requires cities and counties to plan for housing that is affordable to people making different

incomes while also providing enough zoning capacity to accommodate their allocated population targets. This requires breaking down the population into housing targets and then distributing them by Area Median Income (AMI) brackets. Only certain types of housing are affordable to people making different incomes. As an example, single family detached housing would typically be affordable to those at 100% of the AMI or higher. At 50% AMI or below, this would almost exclusively be multi-family housing.

Table A shows how housing is distributed under the Department of Commerce’s Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT). Although 0-50% AMI housing requires [urban governmental services](#) (RCW 36.70A.030(43)) and cannot be provided by counties. Skagit County is still responsible for planning for 769 housing units in rural areas for people that make between 51-100% AMI. Typically, a household making between 51-100% of the AMI will not be able to afford single family detached homes. Therefore, Skagit County will have to allow more housing types while still maintaining [rural character](#) (WAC 365-196(2)) and not allowing growth to result in low density sprawl. These changes to accommodate more housing types will be implemented through policies the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

Table A

INITIAL FINAL 2045 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS IN SKAGIT COUNTY

Urban Growth Areas	Allocation of Net New Housing Needed (2020-2045)						Total			
	0-30% AMI*	31-50% AMI	51-80% AMI	81-100% AMI	101-120% AMI	Above 120% AMI				
Anacortes	924	943	592	604	422	226	201	577	546	2,942
Burlington	893	911	572	584	408	218	194	558	528	2,843
Mount Vernon	1,627	1,659	1,043	1,064	743	398	353	1,016	963	5,180
Sedro-Woolley	831	848	533	544	380	203	180	519	491	2,646
Concrete	24	35		22	15	8	7	21	20	107
Hamilton		0		0	0	0	0		0	0
La Conner	39	40	25	26	18	10	8	24	22	124
Lyman		0		0	0	0	0		0	0
Bayview Ridge		0		0	0	0	0		0	0
Swinomish	27	38		24	17	9	8	23	22	118
UGAs Subtotal	4,285	4,474	3,811	3,868	2,003	1,072	951	3,238	2,592	13,960
Rural (outside UGAs)	89	0	57	0	501	268	238	2,227	2,483	3,490
Grand Total		4,474	2,868	2,504	1,340	1,189		5,075		17,450

Changes proposed for consistency with state law changes which have occurred since the last Comprehensive Plan Periodic update

- Add definitions and allow for indoor emergency shelter, transitional housing, emergency housing, and permanent supportive housing in the appropriate residential and commercial zones.
 - [STEP](#) or supportive housing types are required by RCWs [36.70A.030](#) and [84.36.043\(3\)\(c\)](#).

- Revise or delete current definition of “family,” to be compliant with RCW [36.01.227](#), which does not allow a County to limit the number of unrelated persons occupying a household or dwelling unit.
- Add behavioral health facilities to the list of “essential public facilities” regulated in SCC 14.16.600, as amended in RCW [36.70A.200](#).
- Add [unit lot subdivision](#) standards to Skagit County subdivision regulations, to comply with RCW [58.17.060\(3\)](#).
 - Unit lot subdivisions allow for the subdivision of a “parent lot” that meets zoning dimensional standards, into two or more “unit lots” that are sellable legal lots with their own tax or parcel number.
- Update impact fee schedule to reflect a proportionally lower impact fee for smaller housing units.
 - RCW [82.02.060](#) requires impact fees for new housing units to be based on the square footage of, number of bedrooms in, or trips generated from the housing unit.

Changes to the comprehensive plan land use map, zoning map, and/or development regulations necessary for accommodating population, housing, and employment targets

- Allow for middle housing in Rural Village Residential zones.
 - Middle housing is typically affordable to households earning 80-120% AMI.
- Allow manufactured home and tiny home parks in Rural Village Residential zones.
 - Manufactured homes and tiny homes are currently allowed in the rural village residential zones as single-family dwelling units or temporary homes.
 - Manufactured homes are typically affordable to households earning 80-120% AMI.
- Allow planned unit development opportunities with affordable incentives.
- Allow for one attached and detached accessory dwelling unit (one AADU and one DADU) in all residential zones that allow for a single family detached houses.
 - ADUs are typically affordable to households earning 50-80% AMI.

Optional code changes which are consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA) and implement the community vision for growth in the future.

This could include, for example, options to promote more affordable housing types in certain areas of the county.

Farmworker housing has been highlighted in public feedback and in the Housing Needs Assessment as an important housing type to increase supply of in Skagit County. In 2018, Skagit County had 1,737 year-round agriculture jobs and 1,356 temporary jobs. That same year, only 240 dedicated permanent farmworker housing units and 461 beds for temporary workers were available. Leaving as many as 1,377 farmworker households the challenge of finding housing through local market rate options in Skagit County.

- Revise or add the definition of farmworker housing and update standards to allow for co-living housing types as an option for seasonal farmworker housing and sleeping units.

- Co-living housing goes by many names such as, congregate living facilities, residential suites, single room occupancy, lodging house, dormitories, or bunkhouse. However, co-living housing means a residential development with sleeping units that are independently rented, are lockable, and provide living and sleeping space, with shared kitchen facilities used by residents.