



**Comprehensive
Plan
2016-2036**

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Summary

↳ General

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Skagit County Comprehensive Plan 2016-2036

Second Public Comment Draft June 9, 2016



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Editor's Note: This plan would completely replace the existing 2007 plan, all of its subsequent amendments, and any plans incorporated by reference.

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Plan Organization Components

Commented [A1]: Changes to this section implement PC recommendation 38.

General

The Comprehensive Plan consists of:

- this document, including ~~contains~~ introductory chapters, policy elements with accompanying information (~~profiles~~), and appendices, including the Transportation Technical Appendix; ~~The Comprehensive Plan also consists of supporting documents under separate cover, such as~~
- the Comprehensive Plan Land Use/Zoning Map, ~~supporting maps on file with Skagit County~~, ~~and supporting technical volumes and plans, such as the Transportation Systems Plan~~ Technical Appendix and the Coordinated Water Systems Plan, to name ~~two~~.
- the County's annually updated Capital Facilities Plan (last adopted by Ordinance O20150010 on December 28, 2015);
- the County's adopted Parks and Recreation 2012-2018 Plan (adopted by ordinance O20130005 on December 3, 2013);
- the County's adopted Shoreline Master Program;
- Subarea Plans, including:
 - Alger Community Plan (adopted by O20080015 on December 23, 2008);
 - Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan (most recently amended by O20140005 on November 17, 2014);
 - Guemes Island Subarea Plan (adopted by O20110001 on January 18, 2011);
 - Hamilton Subarea Plan (adopted by O20080010 on August 12, 2008).

Each of these plans is available at www.skagitcounty.net/comprehensiveplan.



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Comprehensive Plan Policy Elements and Accompanying Profiles

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Plan Organization

Comprehensive Plan Policy Elements and Accompanying Profiles

~~Except for Chapter 6—Shoreline Management Master Program Element, and Chapter 12—Plan Implementation and Monitoring, each policy element contains two parts:~~

- ~~■ A chapter containing land use goals and policies, underlying Growth Management Act goals, and Countywide Planning Policies, and~~
- ~~■ A profile of the intent, context, or history related to the goals and policies. Profiles are not intended to be policy documents, but rather ancillary information in support of the policy elements.~~

Each chapter contains narrative description of the intent, context, or history related to the goals and policies. This narrative is not itself policy, but rather ancillary information that supports the policies. Following the narrative, each chapter recites the underlying Growth Management Act goals and Countywide Planning Policies, followed by the Comprehensive Plan's binding goals and policies.

Chapter 1: Introduction and Summary.

This chapter does not contain policies, but provides a brief history and general description of Skagit County today, and offers a brief discussion on the Skagit Valley in its earlier days. It includes information on past comprehensive planning and public involvement, as well as how this comprehensive plan was developed and updated.

Consolidated Land Use Element

Land uses recognized in the Comprehensive Plan fall into four general categories: Urban, Rural, Natural Resource Lands, and Open Space. The following three chapters contain guiding policies for these land-uses, and together comprise the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan:



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Chapter 2: Urban, Open Space and Land Use Element ~~(and Profile)~~

This Element addresses the general distribution and location, and the appropriate intensity and density of Urban and Open Space land uses. The Element also addresses certain land use goals and policies that are generally applied consistently across all land use categories: the treatment of historic land use approvals; pre-existing non-conforming uses; public uses; lot certification; and land divisions. [The element also includes goals and policies for the establishment of regional, or difficult-to-site facilities referred to under state law as essential public facilities.](#)

Chapter 3: Rural Element ~~(and Profile)~~

This Element establishes broad goals and policies guiding residential, commercial, and industrial uses in unincorporated Skagit County consistent with the Growth Management Act's allowance of development in the rural area, including "limited areas of more intensive rural development," otherwise referred to as LAMIRDs.

Chapter 4: Natural Resource Lands Element ~~(and Profile)~~

These policies guide long-range planning, programs and regulations to conserve agricultural, forest and mineral resource lands.

Unconsolidated Elements

Chapter 5: Environment Element ~~(and Profile)~~

The Environment Element provides the policy basis for the protection and regulation of critical areas, such as wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and fish & wildlife habitat conservation areas.

Chapter 6: Shorelines Master Program Element

This chapter contains the goals, policies, and implementation procedures of the Skagit County Shorelines Master Program. Topics addressed include: shoreline use, conservation, public access, circulation, economic development, recreation, protection of historical, cultural, and educational values and, restoration and enhancement.

Chapter 7: Housing Element ~~(and Profile)~~

This chapter contains plan policies that promote suitable living environments at all income levels, encourage housing maintenance, redevelopment and safety, and promote faster approval time when possible in the permitting process.

Commented [A2]: Essential Public Facilities section is being moved from the Capital Facilities Element to the Land Use Element.



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Chapter 8: Transportation Element ~~(and Profile)~~

This chapter details the transportation goals, objectives, and policies which set forth the adopted Level of Service (LOS) standards and other policy commitments for Skagit County as described in the ~~Transportation System Plan~~ [Technical Appendix](#) adopted as part of this Plan.

Chapter 9: Utilities Element ~~(and Profile)~~

The policies in this chapter discuss the following: natural gas, telecommunications, electricity, solid waste, sewer, public water, water quality, drainage, flooding and storm runoff.

Chapter 10: Capital Facilities ~~and Essential Public Facilities Element (and Profile)~~

The focus of this chapter is the planning and provision of needed public facilities for the County's unincorporated and countywide populations. This chapter includes the specific goals, objectives and policies which ~~that~~ address capital costs, financing, levels of service methods and consequences, statutory requirements, and specific related goals, objectives and policies. ~~The element also includes goals and policies for the establishment of regional, or difficult-to-site facilities referred to under state law as essential public facilities.~~

Chapter 11: Economic Development Element ~~(and Profile)~~

This chapter details policies relating to economic needs such as: creating and maintaining diverse employment opportunities, protecting natural resource utilization, increasing non-resource industry diversity, promoting a range of commercial retail and service businesses, increasing tourism, conserving natural resources and open spaces and fostering a healthy public-private cooperative partnership in support of diverse business operations and investment.

Chapter 12: Plan Implementation and Monitoring

This element describes the concepts involved in putting a plan into action, how this Plan is updated and amended, and how the Plan is monitored and evaluated. This chapter also addresses how the Plan and its development regulations will be applied at the community level, through the community planning process.

Appendices

- Appendix A contains definitions and a list of acronyms used within this document.
- Appendix B contains a chronological list of the Comprehensive Plan process from 1965 to the initial adoption of this Comprehensive Plan in 1997.

Commented [A3]: Transportation Systems Plan is being shortened and moved into the Comp Plan as a technical appendix.

Commented [RW-P4]: The Comprehensive Plan does not contain any objectives.



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Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map and Supplemental Maps (under separate cover)

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- [Appendix C contains the Skagit County Transportation Element Technical Appendix, 2016.](#)
- ~~Appendix C identifies and describes related plans, studies and regulations.~~
- ~~Appendix D contains a list of ordinances adopting or amending this Plan.~~

Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map and Supplemental Maps (under separate cover)

The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map depicts general land uses, such as Urban Growth Areas, Rural lands, and Natural Resource Lands, among others. These land uses are guided by and designated countywide based on the policies and criteria set forth in the Comprehensive Plan. The Map also establishes zoning boundaries that are part and parcel of the Skagit County Code. Within each designated land use are one or more zoning districts, within which specific Skagit County land-use regulations apply. Such regulations are consistent with and carry out the policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Also shown on the map are federally designated lands such as national parks and wilderness areas.

In recent years, Skagit County has maintained a variety of maps on the County’s website at www.skagitcounty.net, [such as the iMap interactive mapping tool at \[www.skagitcounty.net/maps/imap\]\(http://www.skagitcounty.net/maps/imap\)](#). Online mapping technology allows for greater public access, decreased mapping costs, and provides the most up-to-date information. Online mapping has been well received by the public, and has substantially reduced the demand for printed maps. Nevertheless, hardcopy maps ~~are still available, including the Map Portfolio, which formerly accompanied the Comprehensive Plan,~~ [may still be ordered from Skagit County’s GIS Department](#). Although no longer printed as a volume (the last reprint was in 2000), the Map Portfolio may nevertheless be useful as a historic reference and is kept on file in Skagit County’s archives. ~~Maps created by other agencies are not maintained by Skagit County.~~ The 2000 Map Portfolio contains previous versions of the following maps:

1. ~~Comprehensive Plan Map~~
2. ~~Rural Villages (2a – 2j)~~
3. ~~Urban Growth Areas (3a – 3g)~~
4. ~~Natural Resource Lands~~
5. ~~Generalized Land Use – 1990~~

Commented [A5]: Current appendix C is being proposed for elimination. Important plans and studies are cited directly below or in relevant chapters of the Comp Plan. Skagit County Code Title 14 is the comprehensive body of land use regulations.

Commented [A6]: An updated list of ordinances amending this plan is now kept on the Planning & Development Services website. <http://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/main.htm>

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6. Floodplain and Floodway
7. Land Cover
8. Volcano and Geologic Hazards
9. Potential Landslide and Erosion Areas
10. Generalized N.W.I. Wetlands, Hydric Soils and Stream Inventory
11. Priority Habitats and Species
12. Alluvial Fans
13. Wellhead Protection Areas
14. Telecommunications
15. Natural Gas Franchise Areas
16. Electrical Transmission System – Existing Facilities
17. Electrical Transmission System – Proposed Facilities
18. Water Service Areas with Primary Transmission Lines
19. Skagit County Drainage Utility Service Area
20. Road Inventory
21. School Districts
22. Fire Districts
23. S.K.A.T. Transit Service Areas
24. Public Sewer Service Areas with Primary Transmission Facilities

Functional and Subarea Plans

[These plans are part of the Comprehensive Plan and address a particular subject area or region of the County. They include:](#)

- [Alger Community Plan, adopted December 2008](#)
- [Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, most recently amended in 2014](#)
- [Guemes Island Subarea Plan, adopted January 2011](#)

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- [Hamilton Subarea Plan, adopted August 2008](#)

Technical Appendices (under separate cover) Related Studies and Plans

The following documents are included in the Plan, as they ~~are~~ were used in the development and implementation of the Plan's Policies Comprehensive Plan, but are not part of the Comprehensive Plan:

- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), Skagit Council of Governments, 2003; [2013 CEDS Data Supplement](#); [2013 CEDS Implementation Plan](#)
- Skagit County Housing Needs Assessment, March 1993
- [Skagit County Low Income Needs Assessment, Community Action of Skagit County, 2009](#)
- [Skagit County Community Needs Assessment, Community Action of Skagit County, 2009](#)
- Skagit County Coordinated Water System Plan - Regional Supplement, 2000
- Skagit County Urban Growth Areas Analysis Update: Population, Employment, & UGA Land Allocations by Jurisdiction, March 1997
- ~~The Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) 2003-2008 - Goals and Policies, Capital Improvements, and Implementation Programs~~
- Skagit County Transportation Systems Plan, August 2003
- ~~Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Utilization of Skagit River Basin Water Resources for Instream and Out of Stream Purposes, December 1996~~
- Skagit County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan ~~Update and Environmental Impact Statement, December, 2005,~~ [Amended 2008](#)
- ~~Skagit County Draft GMA Puget Power Electrical Facility Plan and map updates, November 1992~~
- Skagit County Countywide [Planning](#) Policies, ~~amended in 1996, 2000 and 2007~~

Commented [A8]: The CFP is a part of the Comp Plan, not a related study.

Commented [A9]: This plan is significantly out of date.



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- ~~Population & Employment Forecasting & Allocation 2025, December, 2003~~
- [Skagit County Growth Projections, July 2014; Updated, September 2015](#)
- [Skagit County Growth Projections Summary of Methods and Results, July 2014](#)
- [Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan, September 2009](#)



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The primary purpose of comprehensive planning is to help the public and elected officials define objectives, set priorities, and seek solutions to long-term issues. The Comprehensive Plan provides a sense of direction, a broad overview of where a community is (existing conditions) and where it is going (trends and vision). It is a way of assuring that a community's health, safety and general welfare are protected by striving for and creating a better, more healthful, efficient and aesthetically pleasing environment in which to live.



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The purpose of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan is to address these principles within the framework mandates by the state Growth Management Act and to provide goals, policies, and strategies for managing growth over the net 20 years.

Skagit County Perspective

Skagit County is located in the northwestern portion of Washington State. It encompasses 1,735 square miles, ranks 21st in geographic size among the state's counties and had approximately ~~110,900~~ 120,620 residents as of April 2005 2015 (Washington State Office of Financial Management, 2015).

Skagit County was established in 1883 and named after the river and one of the Indian tribes that lived along its banks. The Skagit River is the third largest in the western United States, flowing 78 miles through a diverse and beautiful land. The county stretches from the crest of the rugged North Cascade Mountains on the east, down through the fertile valleys, to saltwater beaches. The topography of Skagit County ranges from sea level to 8,966-foot Mount Logan and is reflected in the terms used for such places as the Skagit Flats, western islands, upper Skagit, Sauk, and Samish River Valleys, and the Cascades.

Skagit County has a marine climate affected by its proximity to Puget Sound and the Pacific Ocean resulting in mild winters and warm, drier summers. Agriculture is the dominant factor in Skagit County's economy and community character. Farming and ranching have been an important part of the community's heritage since early settlement in the 1800's. The Skagit Valley is regarded as one of the most fertile valleys in the world, producing major commodities, specialty crops, and vegetable seeds and flowers with unique market niches. Forest lands, which predominate much of the county's upland landscape, are another significant natural resource. The practice of forestry (logging, reforestation, and timber management) was established in the earliest stages of settlement in the county. Large-scale commercial forestry remains a vital industry and is practiced on well over 300,000 acres, or about ~~Lands designated for forest resource production account for~~ 29% of Skagit County's total land area of 1.1 million acres. Fishing—commercial and recreational—is another natural resource industry that has influenced Skagit County economically and culturally. The mining industry similarly has much importance to the County economy. In addition to natural resource-based industries, the economy has diversified to include strengths in the areas of retail sales, contracting, fabrication, and services.

Commented [A10]: The 29% figure represents acreage in Industrial Forest-NRL.



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Linking the Past to the Present

The Skagit Valley was inhabited for thousands of years before the arrival of settlers in the 19th Century. The cession of tribal lands through the Point Elliot Treaty of January 22, 1855 greatly changed traditional Native Americans' ways and beliefs. Land titles and surveys were alien ideas to the customs of Native Americans, but were basic to the farmers settling in the valley.

A fern-covered prairie on March's Point seems to have been the site of the first white settlement. By 1870, other new settlements were located elsewhere in the Flats, although there was still very little development. Construction of dikes enabled the growth of farming on the rich delta land.

By 1890 railroads were instrumental in supporting the farming, logging, and mining industries, featuring a line from Portland, Oregon, to Anacortes. During the 1890s, two north-south lines were completed through the county, connecting it with Seattle and Vancouver. By 1901, the east-west line was extended from Hamilton through Concrete and into Rockport.

The Skagit River has played an important role in the history of Skagit County. Tribal settlements were located near salt water and along the rivers. For new settlers in the logging business, the Skagit provided the means to transport timber, although logjams hindered activity until 1889. By 1890, most of the land next to water had been logged off, and operations moved further inland using animals and machines to transport timber.

The River and Sound also furnished an abundance of resources. Salmon provided an important food source for the early tribal peoples. Commercial fishing by new settlers began in the 1890s with the building of fish-processing plants and by 1900, clams and oysters were also being canned. By the turn of the century, however, over-fishing had reduced available stocks and experiments with fish hatcheries sought to supplement dwindling fish runs. Over the next thirty years, canneries continued to be productive in Anacortes. When the commercial fishing industry declined, other marine industries emerged, such as boat-building and recreational boating. Today, the Anacortes and La Conner marinas are among the largest in the State of Washington.

Skagit County separated from Whatcom in 1883. In 1884, La Conner was established as the temporary county seat with its established port and considerable population. The county's first newspaper, the Skagit News, garnered sufficient support to make Mount Vernon as the county seat and a vote later in 1884 confirmed the change.



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Comprehensive Planning in Skagit County

Skagit County has a 49~~50~~-year commitment to the value of planning. The first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1965 and was the guiding document for the physical development of the county until the growth management era.

The 1965 Comprehensive Plan:

- *Set the stage for farmland preservation.*
- *Identified logical areas for industrial and residential uses.*
- *Called for avoiding development in areas sensitive to or suffering from pollution.*
- *Introduced the County’s first zoning and subdivision regulations.*

During the period 1970 – 1990, the County prepared district plans; updated the zoning code; adopted joint sphere of influence agreements with the cities and towns; worked with the tribes to prepare joint plans for the reservations; and began working with the cities and towns on growth management plans. [Further planning under the Growth Management Act is addressed below.](#)

Figure 1 illustrates the progression of County planning through the pre- and post-growth management eras.

Growth Management Act

Starting in October of 1990, the County initiated planning as required by the Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted by the State Legislature earlier that year. This began more than six years of work by the community, Planning Commission, and the Board of County Commissioners leading to the May, 1997 adoption of the ~~current~~-first Comprehensive Plan [developed under the Growth Management Act.](#) [The plan underwent significant updates in 2000, 2007, and 2016.](#)

In addition, the County worked with the cities to draft the Countywide Planning Policies which were [first](#) adopted in July of 1992 and amended in 1996, ~~and~~ 2000, [2007, and 2016.](#) The Countywide Planning Policies support the thirteen state-mandated GMA goals for compact urban growth, reducing sprawl, and addressing transportation, housing, economic development, property rights, permits, natural resource industries, open space and recreation, environment, citizen participation, public facilities and services, and historic

Commented [A11]: Amendment is proposed through this process.



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preservation. The Countywide Planning Policies serve as the legal backbone of the comprehensive plans of the County and cities.



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Pre-Growth Management Act Planning

Skagit County's first comprehensive plan – 1965

First subdivision ordinance – 1965 First development regulations – 1966

Comprehensive plan updated and revised – 1968

Subarea district plans adopted:

North Central District	Northwest District	Island District	Southwest District	South Central District	Eastern District
1973	1974	1976	1979	1979	1982

Cities and towns/County develop Sphere of Influence Agreements – 1981-1982

Post-Growth Management Act Planning

Joint planning with cities & towns to amend Sphere of Influence Agreements

Urban Growth Boundaries proposed

Growth Management Act (GMA) – Title 36 RCW – 1990

Joint planning with cities

Countywide Planning Policies – 1992
(Amended 1996, 2000 & 2007)

GMA Comprehensive Plan – 1997
(Amended 1998, 2000 & 2005. Updated 2007)

Implementing Regulations

First Critical Areas Ordinance – 1996

First Natural Resource Lands Ordinance -1996

First Unified Development Code – 2000

Code Update – 2007

Community & Functional Plans

- Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, 2007
- Ongoing Community Planning
- Identified Areas of More Detailed Planning
- Rural Villages
- Urban Growth Area Planning
- Tribal Plans
- Parks/Recreation/Open Space
- Transportation
- Non-Motorized Transportation
- Drainage
- Solid Waste
- Administration, Law & Public Safety
- Hazards Mitigation
- Watershed Action Plans
- Coordinated Water Systems
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Commented [A12]: Figure to be updated to reflect text.



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Public Involvement

From the start of the GMA era, the County embraced the GMA requirement for “early and continuous” public involvement. This included a wide-ranging visioning process, creation of citizens’ advisory committees for the key plan elements, newsletters and media articles, videotapes, and presentations and briefings to community and interest groups. [A detailed list of major public involvement activities leading to adoption of the 1997 Comprehensive Plan may be found in Appendix B.](#)

Since the Plan was first adopted, the County has used the Planning Commission as the primary focus for public outreach and communication. [This is true in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update process as well, where the Board of County Commissioners instructed the Planning & Development Services department to work directly with the Planning Commission in developing the 2016 Update proposal, ensuring that the Planning Commission had the opportunity to vet major elements of the proposal before releasing the completed draft for formal public review and comment.](#)

Community planning processes for Bayview Ridge, South Fidalgo Island, Alger, and Hamilton involved appointed advisory committees, [as did the Envision Skagit 2060 50-year visioning process.](#) The County has recognized the Guemes Island Planning Advisory Committee (GIPAC) as the community-based representative for subarea planning for Guemes Island. Natural resource advice is provided in part by the Agricultural Advisory Board and the Forest Advisory Board. Other advisory committees have worked on such issues as mineral resource lands, [and Master Planned Resorts, and the Shoreline Master Program update.](#)

~~For the 2005 update, the Board of County Commissioners appointed a 15-member advisory committee to assist the Planning & Development Services department in reviewing the Plan and formulating recommendations for amendments. As time goes on, the County employs a wider range of outreach procedures such as open houses, the *Community Report* newsletter, [community meetings, social media,](#) and the Skagit County website to reach the community. A detailed listing of major public involvement activities may be found in Appendix B to the Plan.~~

[For the 2016 update, the Board of County Commissioners established a scope of work that focused on making required updates and completing the update on time. The plan elements receiving the most attention—Transportation, Housing, and Rural—were discussed at workshops with the Planning Commission in the spring of 2015. Four additional community outreach meetings were held in 2015 in Concrete, Fidalgo Island, Edison, and Big Lake. The](#)



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[County released the 2016 Update proposal for public review and comment in March 2016 and the Planning Commission held hearings in April 2016.](#)

Planning for Tomorrow

The GMA is intended to direct local (county and city) planning to create blueprints for growth over a 20-year period. The basic objective of the legislation is to guide and encourage local governments in assessing their goals, evaluating their community assets, writing comprehensive plans, and implementing those plans through regulations and innovative techniques to encompass their vision of the future. The Growth Management Act invests local government with significant decision making power. This "bottom up" approach is consistent with long held traditions of local governance in this state.

The Vision: A Comprehensive and Balanced Planning Approach

Visioning Process

From the fall of 1990 through the spring of 1991, citizens worked at home and at public workshops to voice their visions for the future. Participants across the county said they wanted to preserve the high quality of life, strive for government efficiency, support economic opportunities, increase housing choices, ensure that transportation facilities and services are available to serve development at time of occupancy and use (concurrency), provide for an efficient land-use pattern, preserve rural, resource and ecologically fragile areas for future generations, respect property rights and maintain opportunities for citizen participation and involvement throughout Skagit County's planning processes.

Major Themes of the Community Vision

All of the goals, objectives and policies of the Comprehensive Plan are based on these community vision statements and are an expansion of the Countywide Planning Policies and State GMA goals:

Preserve the high quality of life: Residents of Skagit County choose to live here for many reasons: natural beauty, clean air, good jobs, a good place to create a home and family. This



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plan seeks to foster this high quality of life for residents and their children by providing for social, cultural, educational, economic, recreational, civic, transit, health, and safety needs.

Strive for government efficiency: This plan calls for efficient delivery of services in a cost-effective way by:

- *concentrating infrastructure investments and service delivery to support development patterns near cities and towns where a full range of local services are or can be made available.*
- *looking to Skagit County to provide certain countywide, regional facilities and services.*
- *relying primarily upon cities, towns and special purpose districts as the providers of local facilities and services appropriate to serve those local needs, except where the County is a local service provider.*

Support economic opportunities: This plan strives to promote a strong and diverse economy for Skagit County residents through policies and programs that promote new business opportunities, increase family wage jobs and create a predictable regulatory environment for businesses and citizens. Sustainable economic development efforts will focus on providing all communities with a balance of jobs and housing and helping communities with redevelopment or new economic initiatives.

Increase the housing choices for all residents: Skagit County unincorporated residents live in a wide variety of home types: single family houses with yards, large rural lots, duplexes, apartments, and mobile homes. This plan seeks to increase housing opportunities for all residents (families, individuals, seniors, and persons with special needs). The plan promotes more choices for both owners and renters alike, such as single family homes on smaller lots, creative opportunities for all types of home ownership, and high quality housing design that fits with surrounding neighborhoods and is located closer to jobs, in particular within UGAs.

Ensure that necessary transportation facilities and services are available to serve development at the time of occupancy and use: This plan provides a basis for targeting road and transit investments where growth is desired and for equitable contributions to the transportation system by new development.

Balance urban uses and environmental protection: This plan promotes an efficient and effective land use pattern within urban growth areas that respects environmental values by balancing urban uses with nature and open space. This will be achieved through careful site



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planning that maximizes developable land while respecting natural systems. This plan also proposes that the County consider community and joint planning to ensure natural systems continue functioning at a smaller geographical level while allowing the economy to expand.

Protect and retain rural lifestyles: This plan seeks to maintain the unique rural lifestyle for which Skagit County is widely known and cherished. Skagit County's rural communities and open spaces require protection and conservation from urban sprawl and suburban development patterns. Rural community character and open spaces are a valued part of Skagit County's diversity.

Protect and conserve agriculture, forest and mineral resource lands: Natural resource lands, such as farms and timber lands, provide economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits. This plan ensures that these areas, including mineral resource lands, continue to be viable today and into the future.

Protect and conserve the environment and ecologically sensitive areas, and preclude development and land uses which are incompatible with critical areas: This plan recognizes that the environment is an important public resource. Protecting and conserving the environment and ecologically sensitive areas is in the community's best interest. Development of areas susceptible to natural hazards may lead to inefficient use of limited public resources, jeopardize environmental resource functions and values, subject persons and property to unsafe conditions, and affect the quality of life.

Respect property rights: This plan respects private property rights by assuring that regulatory and administrative actions do not result in an unconstitutional taking of private property. Skagit County, in exercising its land use regulatory authority to protect the public health, safety and general welfare (Article XI Section 11 of the State Constitution), must respect private property rights by not exceeding the constitutional limits on its authority. Planning, land use regulations and zoning protect individual and community rights in the following ways:

- *by avoiding nuisances ~~by insuring~~ through ensuring against incompatible neighboring land uses;*
- *by balancing public and private responsibilities that may have conflicting interests;*
- *by providing predictability that enhances the value of private property;*
- *by incorporating trends of population growth and resource availability to provide necessary public facilities;*



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- *by providing codes, ordinances and regulations that organize a community's physical layout;*
- *by protecting and conserving the natural resources that provide us with clean air and water;*
- *by protecting our heritage by preserving both natural and man-made resources, and scenic and cultural areas that generate civic pride;*
- *by assuring that each generation has responsibilities as a trustee of the environment for future generations;*
- *by attaining the widest range of land uses without degradation, risk to health or safety, or other undesirable and unintended consequences; and*
- *by recognizing that each person has a fundamental and inalienable right to a healthful environment and that each person has a responsibility to contribute to the protection and enhancement of the environment;*
- *by recognizing existing non-conforming land uses and the development rights associated with them.*

Encourage citizen participation and involvement: This plan derives its strength from the thousands of citizens who have participated throughout the planning process to develop a vision for Skagit County's future. Skagit County has a diverse and vocal population whose opinions continually shape public policy. The development of Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan is the product of a planning process that included extensive public participation. Procedures provided for broad dissemination of all plan proposals and alternatives, opportunities for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services and consideration of and response to public comments.

[Envision Skagit 2060: looking forward 50 years](#)

[Many of these same themes were reinforced by a planning and visioning process the County undertook between 2009 and 2012 called Envision Skagit 2060. Envision Skagit was a collaborative process intended to identify long-term opportunities and challenges facing residents and communities in Skagit County over the next 50 years. The process received assistance from numerous local partner organizations and was funded with two federal grants and local in-kind contributions from participating organizations;](#)



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Skagit County launched the project with the help of a Steering Committee consisting of 18 community leaders representing cities, towns, tribes, and the Port of Skagit, conservation organizations and agencies and the farm and forestry sectors, and Skagit Valley College. The project also drew on the knowledge of four Technical Committees consisting of experts in the fields of agriculture, forestry, ecology, economic development and growth management;

The project made extensive use of a 12-member Citizen Committee consisting of a broad cross-section of Skagit County residents selected from an applicant pool by the Board of County Commissioners and the Mayors of Anacortes, Burlington, La Conner, Mount Vernon and Sedro-Woolley acting as the GMA Steering Committee;

The Envision Skagit Citizen Committee worked between September 2010 and June 2011 to develop its recommendations. The Citizen Committee engaged in extensive information gathering and public outreach activities during that time, meeting with dozens of local elected officials and business and community leaders, making site visits throughout the county, and sponsoring more than a dozen community visioning sessions and open houses in communities throughout the county.

The Envision Skagit Citizen Committee's Final Report and Recommendations were released in October 2011. The recommendations emphasize the following key goals and policies consistent with the existing Comprehensive Plan:

- Encourage the majority of new population growth in cities and towns, which have the infrastructure and financial resources to provide urban services.
- Protect and sustain Skagit County's Natural Resource Lands and industries, and its environmental resources and open spaces, which contribute significantly to the County's economy and unique quality of life.
- Support rural communities and economies, maintain rural character, and discourage urban sprawl into rural lands.
- Address the housing and transportation needs of the current and future populations through sound regional planning; and
- Maintain a strong economy by ensuring adequate land for current and future industrial development at Bayview Ridge.

The Committee's recommendations regarding Bayview Ridge and protecting industrial land for the future were instrumental in generating support for the countywide industrial lands inventory and for significant policy changes at Bayview Ridge, which downplayed future



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[residential development in favor of a stronger focus on industrial development. Amendments to the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan made by the County in 2013 and 2014 increased the amount of land available for development in the Bayview Ridge-Light Industrial zone by nearly 300 acres.](#)

[The State of Washington recognized Envision Skagit with a 2012 Governor's Smart Communities Award for Excellence in Comprehensive Planning. The Board of County Commissioners in February 2013 acknowledged the contributions to the project of more than 50 community leaders and a much larger number of members of the general public.](#)

[At that ceremony, the Board noted that the Envision Skagit recommendations reinforce key goals, themes, and policies contained in the current Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, which has evolved through more than 50 years of community planning in Skagit County and has involved countless Skagit County residents serving on the Planning Commission and citizen advisory committees and otherwise contributing to the development of the plan.](#)

Strengthening Communities Through Local Planning

To be successful, plans must address a broad spectrum of issues that affect a community. The plans must address social as well as physical infrastructure needs. Skagit County's community planning efforts were designed to strengthen communities at three geographic levels: countywide, community, and inter-jurisdictional (with cities, towns, tribes, and other institutions). Functional plans overlay all three community-planning levels. At each planning level, issues and needs vary widely. Each plan will be tailored to those unique characteristics and specific issues. Countywide plans are regional in nature, community plans are defined by watershed boundaries, existing development patterns, or other physical features, and joint plans primarily address cities, towns, and Tribal Reservations and their Urban Growth Areas. Community plans will address the full range of issues for a healthy community, such as public safety, health and human services as well as land use and infrastructure. This menu approach allows the geographic scope of a plan to be determined based on local physical and natural features, political boundaries, issues and concerns.



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Countywide Plan: A Regional, Countywide Perspective

The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan seeks to manage growth by protecting natural resource lands, open space and rural areas, and establishing Urban Growth Areas where development is directed. This Plan:

- Ensures efficient use of land by minimizing the public costs and adverse impacts of growth;
- Avoids incompatible rural and urban uses by reducing sprawl;
- Provides efficient and safe transportation networks;
- Supports coordinated networks for open spaces, greenbelts, and recreation;
- Protects critical areas and environmentally sensitive lands;
- Maintains and improves the quality of air and land resources;
- Minimizes risk to public health and safety; and
- Preserves urban and rural landscapes, lifestyles, character, and features.

This Plan establishes the most appropriate uses of land in unincorporated Skagit County through the year ~~2025~~[2036](#). Broad land use designations have been adopted to provide the basis for regulating uses on natural resource lands, urban growth areas, rural areas, and open spaces. Natural resource lands are where Skagit County will through conservation and protection measures promote long-term, commercially significant agriculture, forest, and mineral resource uses. Urban growth areas include incorporated (city and town) areas and unincorporated areas appropriate for urban growth through the year ~~2025~~[2036](#). Rural areas include rural activities and uses that are not suitable for urban intensity or natural resource uses that do not meet the GMA standard of long-term commercial significance. Open space areas are lands with regional importance that have been set aside, dedicated, designated or reserved for public or private use or enjoyment for either active or passive recreation, scenic amenities, natural resources, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas.

Community Plans: A Sub-Regional Approach

Community plans are more detailed plans for smaller geographic areas that address location-specific issues. Site-specific land-use designations and zoning may result to take into account these local issues and needs. Community plans provide an opportunity for integrating land



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use, infrastructure and human service delivery at a more up-closer level than is possible with the Comprehensive Plan. [Adopted subarea plans are part of the Comprehensive Plan and are listed in the Preface.](#)

Joint Plans: Creating Partnerships with Cities, Towns, Tribal Communities, and Rural Villages

Urban Growth Area plans seek to reduce taxpayer costs by focusing the expenditure of public funds, encouraging concentrated development, and increasing choices for housing and economic development. By directing urban growth to areas within and near cities and towns, growth will be focused in those areas where services can best be provided by cities, towns, special purpose districts and the County. Urban Growth Area plans will strengthen local character and make urban areas desirable places to live while ensuring that future generations will continue to enjoy the best qualities of the Skagit Valley, have choices for affordable places to live, obtain good quality jobs and have a high quality of life. These plans focus on collaborative actions between the County and its cities and towns as established in the Countywide Planning Policies and the Framework Agreement.

Rural Village plans provide an opportunity for rural residents to define and shape the future of existing, historic unincorporated rural communities. Rural Villages contribute to rural housing options and provide employment opportunities and limited commercial-retail services for rural residents. Rural Villages will assist in providing for a variety of rural densities by allowing higher density housing than is permitted in the surrounding rural and natural resource areas. Rural Villages provide activity centers where rural residents and others can gather, work, shop, entertain, and reside. Site-specific land-use designations and zoning will take into account local issues and needs.

Tribal Community plans are unique in that they result from coordinated planning processes involving a tribal community and Skagit County. Skagit County and the local tribes have worked diligently to create better communities for their residents. For example, the Swinomish Rural Village was established in 1988 and modified as an Urban Growth Area in 1997. Agreements were reached to provide for joint County/Tribe comprehensive planning efforts. In 1994, the Board of County Commissioners adopted a resolution recognizing the Swinomish Tribal Community, Upper Skagit and Sauk-Suiattle Tribes as sovereign governments. This creates a formal government-to-government relationship since both entities regulate land use activities affecting Indian and non-Indian interests. Tribal



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Community plans provide policy guidance for future development (both public and private), land stewardship, and resource protection. The importance of Tribal Community plans is evident as both jurisdictions seek to: assure a quality of life which is deemed desirable to both present and future generations; confront the issues of land and resource management; and balance the interests of Indians and non-Indians.

Functional Plans: ~~Providing Countywide~~ Detailed Plans for Facilities or Services

Functional plans are detailed plans for facilities and services and other governmental activities, such as:

- Transportation
- Parks
- Solid Waste
- Stormwater
- Economic Development
- Housing Needs
- Water
- Schools
- Emergency Services
- Natural Hazards

Some functional plans are operational or programmatic, which means they guide daily management decisions or include the specific details of facility design and location. Functional plans are prepared by Skagit County, independent special districts, and other public agencies.

Capital improvement programs (CIPs) are important components of functional plans as these plans identify needs, costs, and funding mechanisms for facilities and services. CIP plans distinguish between capacity improvements needed for new growth versus improvements to meet general public health, safety, and welfare needs.



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The ~~2005~~ 2016 Update

The Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to periodically review and update their plans and development regulations ~~every seven years~~. Skagit County and ~~all of the~~ its cities and towns were last required to update their plans in 2005, and again face a state periodic update requirement in 2016 are in a cycle for updates at 2005, 2012, 2019 and beyond. (The exception is jurisdictions under 5,000 in population which received a deadline extension to 2018). At each of these points, the 20-year planning horizon is extended and the resulting growth forecasts must be addressed in terms of land needs, infrastructure, and the other GMA factors. The plans can be amended annually as well, but the ~~seven-year~~ periodic update requires a more comprehensive review: to consider:

- updated population and employment projections;
- urban growth area sizing;
- consistency with GMA and any recent updates to the act and related state statutes; and
- evolving local circumstances.

The County Comprehensive Plan has undergone substantial reviews and revision since 1997 for a variety of reasons. Consequently, the 2005 update was focused in three ways:

- ~~A check up to consider the durability and consistency of the goals and policies. This includes continued consistency with GMA and any recent updates to the act, related state statutes, and evolving local circumstances.~~
- ~~A clean up to remove or update old information and directives and reduce redundancies.~~
- ~~Development of new goals and policies to provide additional guidance for future planning and implementation.~~

Growth Forecast

In 2003, elected officials serving as the Growth Management Act Steering Committee adopted a county population target of 149,080 for 2025, or 46,100 new residents over the next 20 years. The Steering Committee's decision was based on the recommendation of a technical committee of County, city and town planners who reviewed the population forecast

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range by the state Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the local ability to accommodate growth. The OFM forecast a range from 139,253 to 198,992. The adopted number of 149,080 is approximately half-way between the Office of Financial Management's low and medium estimates. The target was further broken down into numbers for the cities, towns and their municipal UGAs (96,500), the County and tribal UGAs (9,250), and the rural area population (43,330). These numbers are used as the basis for comprehensive plan updates in each jurisdiction. [In 2014, the Growth Management Act Steering Committee adopted a county population target of 155,452 for 2036, or 35,751 new residents over the next 20 years. The Steering Committee based its decision on the recommendation of a technical committee of County, city, and town planners who reviewed the population forecast range by the state Office of Financial Management \(OFM\) and the local ability to accommodate growth. The OFM forecast a range from 128,123 to 198,189. The adopted number of 155,452 is approximately half-way between the Office of Financial Management's low and medium estimates. The target was further broken down into numbers for the cities, towns and their municipal UGAs \(104,488\), the County and tribal UGAs \(5,299\), and the rural area population \(45,655\). These numbers are used as the basis for comprehensive plan updates in each jurisdiction.](#)

[The adopted population allocations do not include population numbers for future fully contained communities or non-municipal UGAs such as Bayview Ridge \(other than a minor population allocation to Bayview Ridge reflecting existing buildable residential lots\). Based on review of historical data and local knowledge, the GMA Steering Committee concluded that new non-municipal UGAs or fully contained communities should not be necessary to accommodate future population growth within the 20-year planning period. The selection of the medium population forecast also recognizes the unique quality of life and rural character of Skagit County and that planning efforts for further growth should reflect the desire to protect and preserve that character while promoting a robust economy that compliments the policy to preserve and protect Skagit County's rich agricultural and resource heritage.](#)

In addition, the Growth Management Act Steering Committee adopted an employment target for 2025 that—converted to acreage—works out to nearly 3,500 acres of developable commercial and industrial land for the urban areas. This is only 129 acres more than the adopted number for 2015 contained in the current Countywide Planning Policies and reflected in existing Urban Growth Area boundaries. The process is documented in *Population & Employment Forecasting & Allocation, December, 2003*.



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[In addition, the Growth Management Act Steering Committee adopted an employment target for the County of 70,617 jobs for 2036, an increase of 18,853 jobs over the 2015 total of 51,764. \(The GMASC set the initial employment target at 67,762 in 2014, but then increased it to 70,617 in 2015 to reflect projected job growth at the Center for Innovation and Technology/North Cascades Gateway Center in Sedro-Woolley\). The employment projection is based on several factors, including historic ratios of job growth to population growth in Skagit County, and projections by the state Employment Securities Division for the growth of certain industries present in Skagit County. The process is documented in the \[Skagit County Growth Projections Summary of Methods and Results, July 2014\]\(#\).](#)

[The aggressive job growth projection also reflects an intent by local elected officials to implement strategies to strengthen the local economy and emphasize growth in family-wage jobs. Examples include Skagit County's designation of additional industrial acreage at Bayview Ridge through 2013 and 2014 amendments to the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, and the ongoing partnership between the City of Sedro-Woolley, the Port of Skagit, and Skagit County to establish the Center for Innovation and Technology on a portion of the old Northern State Campus north of Sedro-Woolley.](#)

Update Process

Two parallel activities were initiated in 2004. First, the County prepared a scope of work for the update process and formulated a schedule for the review. The Board of County Commissioners appointed a 15 member Steering Committee representing various interests: resource, economic, property rights, environmental, growth management, urban, rural, community, and tribal. The Committee's role was to advise the Planning and Development Services department in the review of the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. This included a year of intensive meetings resulting in recommended revisions that were sent to the Planning Commission for further review. During this period, Planning and Development Services conducted outreach via the County's *Community Report*, the website, media releases, presentations to community groups, and open houses.

The second update activity included the public docketing of policy recommendations and proposals for changes to the land use map. Citizens submitted these recommendations and proposals to the County. The policy recommendations were integrated into the Steering Committee review and recommendations. The mapping proposals were screened by Planning and Development Services staff, previewed by the Board of County Commissioners, and then



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evaluated for consistency with the goals and policies of the Plan. Other mapping proposals were brought forward by Planning and Development Services following suggestions by other advisory bodies and the Board.

The draft Plan was published in November 2005, commencing review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), as well as public review and comment, Planning Commission hearings and deliberations, and ultimately transmittal of a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

In addition to the Comprehensive Plan, the 2005 update also examined the adopted Unified Development Code and produced recommendations for amendments to the Code to be implemented over the next year. This is described in a separate report to the Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners.

Skagit County undertook an extensive review of its comprehensive plan, land use/zoning map, and development regulations in the 2005 GMA Update. Because of the magnitude of that review, it took the County two years past the 2005 deadline to complete the process, culminating in the adoption of the current Comprehensive Plan in 2007.

For the 2016 Update, the Board of County Commissioners approved the following goals:

- keep the scope focused on required elements under state law;
- instruct the Planning and Development Services Department to work directly with the Planning Commission, rather than a separate advisory committee, to develop the 2016 Update proposal;
- provide adequate time and opportunities for public input; and
- complete the process on time.

To initiate the process, the Planning and Development Services Department reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations against the Washington State Department of Commerce's Periodic Update Checklist for Counties. The checklist is designed to help counties identify components of their comprehensive plan and development regulations that may need to be updated to reflect new information or to comply with recent changes to GMA.

The Department issued a memo in October 2014 proposing the scope for the 2016 Update based on that checklist review. The Board of County Commissioners held a public hearing and comment period on the proposed scope in fall 2014, generating 36 written or spoken

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[comments. In December, the Board adopted Resolution R20140374 which found that “the Comprehensive Plan is generally working well as currently written and needs only minor changes, not a major overhaul...” and established the scope and work plan accordingly.](#)

[In terms of the Comprehensive Plan, the resolution directed the Department to:](#)

- [focus greatest attention on the Rural, Transportation and Housing elements;](#)
- [update population and employment allocations and, in consultation with the cities, consider any required changes to urban growth boundaries;](#)
- [update land use and demographic data where needed in the plan;](#)
- [integrate existing subarea plans, the Skagit County Parks and Recreation plan, and the Capital Facilities Plan with the Comprehensive Plan; and](#)
- [review policies and narrative regarding availability of water for rural development in light of recent court decisions and actions by the Department of Ecology.](#)

[The resolution also directed the Department to:](#)

- [move forward with some 30 code amendments necessary to implement updates to state law, improve permit processing efficiencies, or resolve inconsistencies between policies and code; and](#)
- [conduct public work sessions with the Planning Commission on the above topics in the process of developing the proposal; and](#)
- [hold up to four additional community work sessions with the Planning Commission and public in various communities in the county.](#)

[These Planning Commission and community work sessions were held as directed in 2015 and early 2016, with meeting materials and notes being placed on the 2016 Update website.](#)

[The County created an additional opportunity for input into the 2016 Update process by determining that policy, code or map amendment proposals submitted by members of the public by the end of July 2015—the normal deadline for annual Comprehensive Plan and code amendments—would be considered for inclusion in the 2016 Update.](#)

[Through that process, the County received 17 policy and code amendments from members of the public, and 5 map amendment proposals from property owners and one city \(Sedro-Woolley\). Again, the Board held a public hearing and written comment period on the](#)



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[amendment proposals in October 2015, and adopted Resolution R20150390 in December 2015 establishing which proposals would be added to the 2016 Update.](#)

Update Themes

Several [The following key](#) themes emerged during [or helped to shape](#) the ~~2005-2016~~ update process regarding the following needs:

[Limited scope:](#) The County completed an extensive update process in 2005-2007 and a [thorough scoping review before the 2016 Update. As a result, the Board determined that the scope of the 2016 Update would focus primarily on periodic GMA requirements, technical updates, and other necessary but limited amendments.](#)

[Transportation planning:](#) The update process included an update and downsizing of the [Transportation Systems Plan into the Transportation Technical Appendix, in parallel with an update to the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The update included a 20-year traffic forecast, a bicycle and pedestrian component, and a 20-year financing plan.](#)

[Housing needs:](#) The review and amendment of the [Housing Element included an update to the housing inventory and the 20-year housing needs analysis. In addition to the Housing Workshop held with the Planning Commission and public in February 2015, the County hosted a Housing Summit in January 2016 that drew 300 participants and further emphasized the need for better coordination in the provision of affordable housing.](#)

[Integration of existing plans:](#) The 2016 update focused on incorporating existing subarea [plans, parks and recreation plans, capital facilities plans, and other relevant planning documents into the Comprehensive Plan.](#)

[Emphasis on employment growth:](#) The population projections adopted by the [GMA Steering Committee through 2036 emphasize moderate population growth but strong employment growth. This reflects a desire by local elected officials to strengthen the local economy and emphasize growth in family-wage jobs. At the same time, the GMA Steering Committee concluded that projected population growth could be accommodated within cities and towns and their Urban Growth Areas, without need for additional residential capacity in non-municipal urban growth areas such as Bayview Ridge or new fully contained communities.](#)

[These 2016 Update themes add to the following themes identified through the 2005 Update:](#)

[A land use management database:](#) The County has less data regarding the inventory of “buildable” lands, legal lots, and associated development capacity than is desired for growth



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management planning. Building such a data base is an expensive task and probably cannot be compiled at one time. Rather, the County should initiate the development of the database on an incremental basis – perhaps in conjunction with the phasing of community plans.

A predictable program of community planning: The Plan identifies both specific and general areas that need another, more specific type of planning to address localized issues and conditions. This program should be established by determining the scope of community plans and then adopting a schedule based on priorities of need, funding, and other criteria. This process is important as a way to address more specific applications of designating local areas of more detailed planning.

Additional work with the cities on urban growth planning: The Countywide Planning Policies should be updated to address the provision of infrastructure and other government services within Urban Growth Areas, Urban Growth Area expansion and development standards, an affordable housing strategy, and other common issues.

More emphasis on the preservation of the resource land base: Farming, forestry and other resource activities are threatened by the loss of the land to non-resource uses. In particular, the transfer of resource lands to non-profit corporations and other agencies for purposes of habitat protection or enhancement results in farm and forest land being taken out of natural resource production.

Closer coordination with natural hazard avoidance: Both urban and rural area planning in Skagit County need to be more sensitive to the threats posed by devastating natural hazard events, particularly flooding. UGA expansion, rural community development, public facility siting, and other forms of growth in identified hazard areas should be avoided through integrated comprehensive and hazard mitigation plans.

More and better incentives: The toolbox of methods for achieving the County’s growth management goals for the preservation of resource lands, protection of critical areas, and preservation of property rights should be expanded. These tools include the purchase and transfer of development rights as well as density “credits” for producing affordable housing and other desired results.



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Introduction

Skagit County’s Comprehensive Plan focuses on a countywide, regional land use approach that is derived from Growth Management Act goals, Countywide Planning Policies, market and other factors affecting land development, projections about future trends, the community vision statements described in Chapter 1, and evolving public opinion.

The Plan is based on a vision of how Skagit County can grow and develop while protecting the region’s high quality of life and equitably sharing public and private costs and benefits of growth. The Plan encourages well-managed development to protect public health, safety,



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and welfare, and to enhance Skagit County’s community character, natural beauty, and environmental quality. The Comprehensive Plan establishes four general land use categories: Urban Growth Areas, the Rural Area, Natural Resource Lands, and Open Space areas. These various land use categories are distinguished from each other through land use *designations* that are reflected on the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map. Each land use designation has a corresponding zoning district that contains the specific development standards for land use activities in that zone. Table 1 shows the general distribution of Urban, Rural, Natural Resource Land, and Open Space areas in the County.

Table 1: Land Use Designations and Acreage* ([Source: Skagit County Mapping Services, 2016](#))

LAND USE DESIGNATIONS	ACREAGE	ACREAGE
Water Bodies	176,696	2222
PUBLIC OPEN SPACE OF REGIONAL/STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE (OSRSI)		
National Forest	283,027	282,812
National Park & Recreation Areas	130,850	130,848
Wilderness	83,533	83,530
State Parks & Recreation Areas	5,471	5,425
Other	16,780	16,727
Subtotal	519,661	519,342
NATURAL RESOURCE LANDS (NRL)		
Secondary Forest (SF-NRL)	37,794	38,008
Industrial Forest (IF-NRL)	319,500	319,623
Rural Resource (RRC-NRL)	26,495	26,871
Agriculture (Ag-NRL)	88,564	89,277
Subtotal	472,353	473,779
Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO)	61,682	[61,492]
RURAL LANDS		
Rural Village Residential (RV)	2,782	2,791
Rural Intermediate (RI)	8,069	8,035
Rural Reserve (RRv)	70,740	70,378
Subtotal	81,591	81,204
COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL LANDS		
Rural Business (RB)	188	186
Rural Freeway Service (RFS)	39	29
Rural Village Commercial (RVC)	27	20
Natural Resource Industrial (NRI)	183	239
Small-Scale Recreation & Tourism (SRT)	21	16
Rural Center (RC)	19	19
Rural Marine Industrial (RMI)	50	50
Small-Scale Business (SSB)	33	31
Master Planned Resort	113	113
Subtotal	673	703
URBAN GROWTH AREAS (UGA)		
Incorporated UGA Areas (not including incorporated water areas)	23,092	22,675
Unincorporated UGA Areas	11,171	11,409
Subtotal	34,263	34,084
TOTAL	1,108,540	1,109,112

Commented [A15]: New number requested from Skagit GIS



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*Acreage figures are based on the best information and technology available. Accuracy may vary depending on the source of the information, changes in political boundaries or hydrological features, or the methodology used to map and calculate a particular land use. Bracketed figures represent an overlay to other land uses and do not contribute to the total acreage.

The Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Element addresses the general distribution and location, and the appropriate intensity and density, of Urban and Open Space land uses. There are separate chapters for Rural and Natural Resource Lands—Chapters 3 and 4 respectively—because of their significance in Skagit County. The Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Element also addresses [essential public facilities and](#) certain land use goals and practices that are generally applied consistently across all land use categories: the treatment of historic land use approvals; pre-existing, non-conforming uses; public uses; lot certification; and land divisions.

Land uses in Skagit County fall into four general categories recognized by the Comprehensive Plan: Urban, Rural, Natural Resource Lands, and Open Space. The Urban, Open Space and Land Use Element addresses the general distribution and location, and the appropriate intensity and density, of Urban and Open Space land uses. There are separate chapters for Rural and Natural Resource Lands – Chapters 3 and 4 respectively – because of their significance in Skagit County. This Urban, Open Space and Land Use Element also addresses [essential public facilities](#) certain land use goals and policies that are generally applied consistently across all land use categories: the treatment of historic land use approvals; pre-existing, non-conforming uses; public uses; lot certification; and land divisions.

[The essential public facilities policies were moved from the Capital Facilities Element to the Land Use Element during the 2016 update where they are a more appropriate fit. Essential public facilities are a land use issue because land use deals with the suitable placement of different uses as they relate to other uses and activities taking place on the land. Since essential public facilities can have significant impacts on the land and the populations living and working around them, it is important to consider how they fit into the larger land use planning picture.](#)

Land Capacity

[Based on 2015 land capacity analyses conducted by Skagit County and cities for their UGAs, collectively there is adequate capacity to accommodate the allocated residential growth of 28,601 new people and the allocated employment growth of 20,388 new jobs by 2036.](#)

Commented [A16]: Essential public facilities section is moved from Capital Facilities Element to this element where it is a more natural fit.



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[Countywide planning policies were revised in 2016 to add guidance on land capacity analysis and establish an annual land use monitoring program through the GMA Steering Committee. Each city and the county were evaluating their plans and addressing land uses and zoning to address the balance of GMA goals and unique local circumstances.](#)

Urban Growth Areas

Most new growth in Skagit County is encouraged to locate in Urban Growth Areas. These areas include the incorporated cities and towns and unincorporated land surrounding the incorporated areas that the County has determined to be necessary and appropriate for urban growth through the year ~~2025~~2036. [Urban Growth Areas are designated in](#) policy 2A-1.4. [The following Urban Growth Areas are designated within Skagit County:](#)

— [Anacortes](#)

— [Bayview Ridge](#)

— [Burlington](#)

— [Concrete](#)

— [Hamilton](#)

— [La Conner](#)

— [Lyman](#)

— [Mount Vernon](#)

— [Sedro Woolley](#)

— [Swinomish](#)

Each city or town in Skagit County has an Urban Growth Area (or UGA). The UGAs for the towns of La Conner, ~~and Lyman, and Hamilton~~ do not extend beyond their town limits, whereas the UGAs for the other municipalities include the incorporated area—the city or town itself—as well as additional land which may be added to the corporate limits through annexation. There are also two non-municipal Urban Growth Areas: [the](#) Bayview Ridge UGA, and the Swinomish UGA. Only about three percent of all land in Skagit County is designated urban.



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↳ Bayview Ridge UGA

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The Urban Growth Area designation recognizes historic urban development patterns and present and future needs for urban land. An adequate supply of land through [2025-2036](#) will ensure that immediate and future urban needs are met, and will provide for an orderly and efficient transition from low-intensity land use to urban land use over time. The establishment or modification of Urban Growth Area boundaries takes into consideration population and employment growth projections for the planning period, the ability of local jurisdictions to provide required urban services in an efficient and economical manner, and the protection of critical areas and Natural Resource Lands of long-term commercial significance.

The County, cities, and towns have worked closely together to establish development standards for the unincorporated portion of municipal Urban Growth Areas that address the needs of property owners, the local jurisdictions and service providers. Prior to annexation, only low-intensity rural residential and commercial uses are allowed, to preclude land division patterns and uses that may prevent future development at full urban densities. Urban development may only take place concurrent with the availability of public services and capital facility programs. When property is annexed and services are made available, development may occur at appropriate urban densities, resulting in an orderly, economical transition from rural to urban land use patterns.

Since many of the policies in the Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Element refer to residential density, it is important to understand the difference between “gross density” and “net density.” Gross density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the total land area of the site or area, excluding nothing. Net density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the net area of the lot or site. The net area excludes roads, public open spaces, community facilities, and critical areas.

Bayview Ridge UGA

The only unincorporated Urban Growth Areas that are not expected to be annexed by a city or town are the Bayview Ridge UGA and the Swinomish UGA. The County has adopted a subarea plan and development regulations for the Bayview Ridge UGA that includes goals, policies, and land use and zoning designations specific to that area. [The plan, development regulations, and land use designations were updated in 2013 and 2014 to expand the area within the UGA available for industrial development and to remove from the UGA lands previously intended for new urban residential development.](#) The Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan



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has been developed following the goals, policies, and procedures contained in the Plan Implementation and Monitoring Element which is Chapter 12 of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Bayview Ridge Subarea is ~~4,011 acres, which includes a 3,633-acre non-municipal Urban Growth Area~~, 3,586 acres located approximately one mile west of the City of Burlington. The Bayview Ridge Subarea community is characterized by a mix of industrial/business uses, airport and aviation-related uses, pastureland, and a variety of residential uses. The land use designations for the subarea include:

- Bayview Ridge Residential (BR-R)
- ~~Bayview Ridge Urban Reserve (URV)~~
- Bayview Ridge Light Industrial (BR-LI)
- Bayview Ridge Heavy Industrial (BR-HI)
- Aviation Related (AVR)
- Aviation-Related Limited (AVR-L)
- ~~Bayview Ridge Community Center (CR-CC)~~

These designations have been created to respond to the existing and anticipated future growth conditions within the subarea based on an extensive community-based planning process including environmental review. The subarea plan includes a capital facilities element and utilities element identifying needs and solutions for infrastructure improvements in support of anticipated growth.

Swinomish UGA

The Swinomish UGA is located within a portion of the Swinomish Indian Reservation. The County's authority and responsibility for planning and land use management within the Reservation is promulgated by federal and case law. In general terms, within the exterior boundary of the Swinomish Indian Reservation the interests of the Tribe extend to all lands regardless of ownership while the County's regulatory authority extends only to non-trust and non-tribal fee-simple lands. As such, the County's regulatory authority is put into practice by adopting the Residential District (R) land use designation for the non-trust and non-tribal fee-simple lands within the Swinomish UGA, with the exception of the Hope Island Inn which is designated Commercial (C).

Commented [A17]: List of zones changed consistent with updated Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan.



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Open Space Areas

There are a variety of types of open space lands in Skagit County. Open space areas include greenbelt corridors within and ~~around~~ between urban growth areas, green belts which connect critical areas, lands receiving open space tax incentives, resource lands, conservation easements, rural open space areas, park lands, and significant historic, archaeological, scenic and cultural lands.

~~By December 1, 2007,~~ In January 2009, Skagit County will develop a program to identify and ~~prioritize~~ adopted the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan, which identifies and prioritizes open space corridors and greenbelts within and between UGAs that include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas, and working farm and forestlands. The ~~program will include a list identifying and prioritizing~~ plan identifies and prioritizes open space and greenbelt lands desirable for public acquisition or continued private ownership and conservation. Any ~~potential~~ land acquisition ~~that may be proposed by such a program~~ under the plan will not include any condemnation actions; ~~any potential acquisition for land for open space or greenbelts shall~~ but instead will only be achieved by voluntary donation, CaRD subdivision, or mutually agreeable sale.

Public Open Space

Public open space areas include publicly owned lands that are dedicated or reserved for public use or enjoyment for recreation, scenic amenities, natural resource land management, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. *Where identified below to be of regional or statewide importance, such lands are designated on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map.* Other publicly held lands, such as local neighborhood parks, scenic roads and highways, shorelines, rivers and streams, and utility corridors, *although not designated as open space on the Comprehensive Plan Map,* nevertheless offer similar open space functions and benefits. However, certain areas may not be open to the public, such as utility corridors, road easements, etc., where ownership or public safety reasons may preclude public access, even though these areas may provide open space benefits to wildlife.

Commented [A18]: Proposed edit to be consistent with statute and Goal 2-B. Implements PC recommendation 12.



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Public Open Space of Regional/Statewide Importance (OSRSI)

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Public Open Space of Regional/Statewide Importance (OSRSI)

The County has designated certain public open space areas on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map as Public Open Space of Regional/Statewide Importance (OSRSI). These areas are so identified because their recreational, environmental, scenic, cultural and other open space benefit extend beyond the local area to be regional or statewide in significance. They include:

Deception Pass State Park; Sharpes Park and Montgomery-Duban Headlands; Burrows Island, Saddlebag Island; Hope Island; Ika Island; Huckleberry Island; Skagit Island; Hat Island; Larrabee, Rasar, and Bayview State Parks; PUD #1 Judy Reservoir; Skagit Wildlife Refuge; North Cascades National Park; Noisy Diobsud Wilderness; Glacier Peak Wilderness; Ross Lake National Recreation Area; Mount Baker National Forest; Seattle City Light Wildlife Mitigation Lands; Rockport State Park; WA Department of Natural Resources Natural Resource Conservation Areas and Natural Area Preserves; and portions of the Northern State Recreation Area.

Private Open Space

There are several private organizations in Skagit County that in some way set aside lands for conservation purposes, such as for their ecological, scenic, or natural resource values. Private land trusts, such as the Skagit Land Trust, the San Juan Preservation Trust, and the Nature Conservancy, among others, own or in some way administer a significant amount of land in Skagit County.

These private organizations contribute to the preservation of wildlife habitat, biodiversity, natural and scenic greenbelts and open-space corridors. Through the use of such techniques as conservation easements, purchase of development rights, or the outright purchase of land, development of these lands is limited or precluded altogether.

Open Space Taxation

Lands enrolled in a taxation program as defined in RCW 84.34 are identified in the Current Use Open Space Taxation Program map. This map also may change over time according to participation.



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Public Uses

Public Uses generally are government or quasi-government owned and operated facilities including primary and secondary schools, libraries, postal services, offices, training facilities, fire and police stations, and courts. Public Uses do not necessarily include Essential Public Facilities as provided for in Chapter 10 of this Comprehensive Plan.

Within each Comprehensive Plan land use designation, public uses may be considered as “special uses” under the Skagit County Unified Development Code. Public uses are reviewed as site specific projects so that public benefits and land use impacts can be analyzed and, if necessary, appropriate mitigation applied.

Essential Public Facilities

State laws under the Growth Management Act require that comprehensive plans include a process for identifying and siting essential public facilities, or facilities that are generally difficult to site (RCW 36.70A.200). Examples of an essential public facility include state educational facilities, correctional facilities, transportation facilities, solid waste handling, mental health facilities, human services and more. As such, no local plan or development regulations can preclude the siting of these facilities.

Existing essential public facilities in Skagit County include:

- Skagit County Fairgrounds
- Skagit Regional Airport
- Skagit Transit Station
- Puget Sound Energy Fredonia Generating Station
- Skagit Valley Hospital
- Skagit County Jail
- Interstate 5
- State Route 20
- Washington State Ferries Anacortes Terminal



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GMA Mandate

The following GMA Planning Goals are directly relevant to the urban, open space and land use matters addressed in this chapter:

- ❏ *Encourage urban development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.*
- ❏ *Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.*
- ❏ *Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.*
- ❏ *Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.*
- ❏ *Encourage the retention of Retain open space, enhance and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.*
- ❏ *Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archeological significance.*

Commented [A19]: Revised to match GMA goal.

Commented [A20]: Revised to match GMA goal.

These GMA goals in the context of the entire Growth Management Act led to the development of the following Countywide Planning Policies that provide specific guidance to the land use and essential public facilities policies in this chapter:

❏ *Urban growth shall be allowed only within cities and towns, their designated Urban Growth Areas and within any non-municipal urban growth areas already characterized by urban growth, identified in the County Comprehensive Plan with a Capital Facilities Plan meeting urban standards. Population and employment allocations for each UGA shall be consistent with those allocations shown in [the table below]. (CPP 1.1)*

<u>Urban Growth Areas</u>	<u>2036 Population Allocations</u>	<u>2015 – 2036 Forecast Percent of Population Growth</u>	<u>2036 Employment Allocations</u>	<u>2015 – 2036 Forecast Percent of Employment Growth</u>
<u>Anacortes</u>	<u>22,293</u>	<u>16.5%</u>	<u>10,480</u>	<u>11.0%</u>



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Burlington	14,272	10.7%	13,412	18.6%
Mount Vernon	47,403	34.8%	21,288	25.3%
Sedro-Woolley	17,069	12.7%	9,179	23.4%
Concrete	1,193	0.9%	467	0.6%
Hamilton	427	0.3%	288	0.4%
La Conner	1,226	0.9%	1,420	1.7%
Lyman	605	0.5%	38	0.0%
Bayview Ridge	1,883	0.2%	3,455	9.5%
Swinomish	3,416	2.6%	1,247	1.5%
UGAs Subtotal	109,787	80%	61,274	92.4%
Rural (non UGA)	45,665	20.0%	9,343	7.6%
Total	155,452	100%	70,617	100%

Notes: The figures for cities and towns include their associated UGAs. Washington State projections used in employment growth forecast are for non-farm jobs and exclude proprietor, self-employed, unpaid family or volunteer workers, farm workers, and domestic workers.

Source: BERK Consulting, 2014; Skagit Council of Governments 2014 -2015

- Cities and towns and their urban growth areas shall include areas and densities sufficient to accommodate as a target 80% of the county's 20-year population projection. (CPP 1.2)
- Urban growth areas shall provide for urban densities of mixed uses and shall direct development of neighborhoods which provide adequate and accessible urban governmental services concurrent with development. The GMA defines urban governmental services as those governmental services historically and typically delivered by cities, ~~and includes~~ including storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic waster systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas and normally not associated with nonurban areas. (CPP 1.3)
- Urban growth areas shall include greenbelt[s], open space, and encourage the preservation of wildlife habitat areas. (CPP 1.4)



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- Cities shall encourage development, including greenbelt and open space areas, on existing vacant land and in-fill properties before expanding beyond their present corporate city limits towards urban growth boundaries. (CPP 1.5)
- Annexations beyond urban growth areas are prohibited. (CPP 1.6)
- The baseline for 20-year countywide population forecasts shall be the official Growth Management Act Population Projections from the State of Washington’s Office of Financial Management. The Growth Management Act Technical Advisory Committee (“Planners commit”) shall recommend the process for allocating forecasted population and employment, which shall be cooperatively reviewed by the Growth Management Act Steering Committee (GMASC), consistent with the “2002 Framework Agreement.” Final growth allocations will be ratified by each government’s legislative body. The growth allocation process shall use the procedures in Appendix B [of the CPPs], which calls for the following steps:
 - a. Initial Growth Allocations;
 - b. Reconciliation;
 - c. Long Term Monitoring; and
 - d. Allocation Adjustment (proposed CPP 1.7)
- The County and cities/towns shall use consistent land capacity analysis methods as approved by the GMASC to determine the amount of undeveloped buildable urban land needed. The inventory of the undeveloped buildable urban land supply is to be maintained by Skagit County in a Regional GIS database. (proposed CPP 1.8)
- The County and cities/towns will establish a common method to monitor urban development to evaluate the rate of growth and maintain an inventory of the amount of buildable land remaining. The Planner’s Committee shall develop a monitoring process, prepare annual monitoring reports and present the reports to the Growth Management Act Steering Committee annually. (CPP 1.9)
- ~~Development within established urban growth boundaries shall, as a minimum, conform to those urban development standards in effect within the respective municipality as of April 1, 1999. Bayview Ridge UGA urban standards for roads, sewer, and stormwater shall meet or exceed those in effect in the City of Burlington on April 1, 1999. UGAs with populations of over 1,500 or a Commercial/Industrial land allocation (new) over 100 acres shall have, as a minimum, the...urban law~~

Commented [A21]: This and the following three edits reflect proposed changes to the CPPs themselves.



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enforcement and fire service levels [as further elaborated in this Countywide Planning Policy]. (CPP 1.7)

- *All growth outside the urban growth boundary shall be rural in nature as defined in the Rural Element, not requiring urban governmental services except in those limited circumstances shown to be necessary to the satisfaction of both the County and the affected city to protect basic public health, safety and the environment, and when such services are financially supportable at rural densities and do not permit urban development. (CPP 1.8¹⁰)*
- *Contiguous and orderly development and provision of urban services to such development within urban growth boundaries shall be required. (CPP 2.1)*
- *Development within the urban growth area shall be coordinated and phased through inter-agency agreements. (CPP 2.2)*
- *Master planned sites designated for industrial and large-scale commercial uses shall be clustered, landscaped, and buffered to alleviate adverse impacts to surrounding areas. (CPP 2.7)*
- *Commercial areas shall be aggregated in cluster form, be pedestrian oriented, provide adequate parking and be designed to accommodate public transit. Strip commercial development shall be prohibited. (CPP 2.8)*
- *Urban commercial and urban industrial development, except development directly dependent on local agriculture, forestry, mining, aquatic and resource operations, and major industrial development which meets the criteria contained in RCW 36.70A.365, should be restricted to urban or urban growth areas where adequate transportation networks and appropriate utility services are available. [\[The policy further defines the process for consideration of sites for specific major industrial developments outside of urban growth areas.\]](#) (CPP 2.9)*
- *The Comprehensive Plan should support innovative land use management techniques, including, but not limited to, density bonuses, cluster housing, planned unit developments and the transfer of development rights. (CPP 4.3)*
- [Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location of residential development shall be made in a manner consistent with protecting natural resource lands, aquatic resources, and critical areas. \(CPP 4.6\)](#)

Commented [A22]: This and subsequent proposed CPP additions reflect existing Countywide Planning Policies that are relevant to this Chapter and therefore should be cited here.



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- Commercial, industrial and residential acreage shall be designated to meet future needs without adversely affecting natural resource lands, critical areas, and rural character and life styles.(CPP 5.6)
- Lands within designated agricultural resource areas should remain in large parcels and ownership patterns conducive to commercial agricultural operations and production. (CPP 5.10)
- Proposed regulatory or administrative actions shall not result in an unconstitutional taking of private property. (CPP 6.1)
- The rights of property owners operating under current land use regulations shall be preserved unless a clear public health, safety or welfare purpose is served by more restrictive regulation. (CPP 6.1)
- Forest and agricultural lands located within urban growth areas shall not be designated as forest or agricultural land of long term commercial significance unless a program authorizing transfer or purchase of development rights is established. (CPP 8.3)
- Open space corridors within and between urban growth areas shall be identified; these areas shall include lands useful for recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas. (CPP 9.1)
- Land use decisions shall take into account the immediate and long range cumulative effects of proposed uses on the environment, both on and off-site. (CPP 10.2)
- Public facilities and services shall be integrated and consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans and implementing regulations. (CPP 12.1)
- A process shall be developed for identifying and siting essential public facilities. The Comprehensive Plan may not preclude the siting of essential public facilities. (The GMA defines essential public facilities as those facilities that are typically difficult to site, such as airports, state education facilities and state or regional transportation facilities, state and local corrections facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and in-patient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities and group homes.) (CPP 12.3)



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Goals and Policies

Skagit County’s land use goals and policies are implemented through land use designations and related zoning districts and regulations. Comprehensive Plan land use designations are intended to represent the most appropriate uses of land in the unincorporated portion of Skagit County. Designation criteria provide objective rationale for the application of land use designations to the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map, based on the characteristics of the land.

This next portion of the Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Element describes the criteria and procedures for designating Urban Growth Areas; the policies that guide development and the provision of infrastructure within those areas; and the need for coordination and joint planning between the County and cities, towns, and tribal governments to ensure the necessary transition of governmental services within the Urban Growth Areas. In discussing municipal Urban Growth Areas, or those associated with a city or town, it is important to keep in mind that there is both an *incorporated portion* which is the area within the city or town limits, and an *unincorporated portion*, or the area outside of the municipal limits that may be added through annexation.

Since many of the following land use policies refer to residential density, it is important to understand the difference between “gross density” and “net density.” Gross density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the total land area of the site or area, excluding nothing. Net density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the net area of the lot or site. The net area excludes roads, public open spaces, community facilities, and critical areas.



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Urban Growth Areas

Goal 2A Guide most future development into concentrated urban growth areas where adequate public facilities, utilities, and services can be provided consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies.

Urban Growth Area Designation

Goal 2A-1 Establish Urban Growth Areas in which urban development will be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is rural in character.

policy 2A-1.1 Work with local jurisdictions to designate and maintain Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) of sufficient size to accommodate the County's 20-year urban population and employment allocations. Areas proposed for UGA designation shall meet the following criteria:

- (a) Compact development can be accomplished through infill or expansion, while minimizing the fiscal and environmental impacts of growth and assuring opportunities for housing, jobs, and commerce.
- (b) A range of governmental facilities and services presently exists or can be economically and efficiently provided at urban levels of service [in a timely manner](#). These services include sewer, water, storm drainage, transportation improvements, fire and law enforcement protection, and parks and recreation.
- (c) The area has a physical identity or social connection to an existing urban environment.
- (d) Natural features and land characteristics are capable of supporting urban development without significant environmental degradation.
- (e) The land does not have long-term, commercially significant value for agriculture, forestry, or mineral production and that can accommodate additional development without conflicting with activities on nearby natural resource lands.



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policy 2A-1.2 Proposals for Urban Growth Area expansions shall be evaluated for their consistency with the Urban Growth Area Modification Criteria developed and approved by the Growth Management Act Steering Committee. These criteria address issues including: land capacity analysis; ability to provide urban services; impacts on critical areas, natural resource lands, and hazard areas; and compliance with related Countywide Planning Policies.

Urban Growth Area expansion proposals shall demonstrate that expansion is necessary within the 20-year planning period, that public facilities and services can be provided concurrent with development, and that reasonable efforts have been made to encourage infill and redevelopment within existing Urban Growth Area boundaries before those boundaries can be expanded.

policy 2A-1.3 In designating Urban Growth Areas, consider GMA requirements to provide for recreational lands, critical areas, open space corridors, greenbelts, and view sheds, and to avoid natural hazard areas prone to flooding or other risks to public safety.

policy 2A-1.4 The following Urban Growth Areas are designated within Skagit County:

Non-Municipal UGAs

Bayview Ridge

Swinomish

Municipal UGAs

Anacortes

Burlington

Concrete

Hamilton

La Conner

Lyman

Mount Vernon

Sedro-Woolley



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policy 2A-1.5 Overall residential densities within Urban Growth Areas shall be a minimum of four (4) dwelling units per net acre, when urban services are provided. “Net density” is what results when only the area of the residential lots is counted, not roads, open spaces, drainage facilities, or other site uses that are not residential.

[policy 2A-1.6](#) By June 30, 2018, or prior to annexation, whichever comes first, the City of Sedro-Woolley must provide a sewer plan amendment or other documentation to the County showing the sewer service extension plan for the northern UGA expansion area. The County and City of Sedro-Woolley should conduct joint planning of the Sedro-Woolley eastern UGA to identify methods, costs, and funds to extend urban services and achieve urban densities or to define alternative UGA boundaries.

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Concurrency

Goal 2A-2 Adequate urban public facilities and services shall be provided concurrently with urban development, as appropriate for each type of designated land use in the Urban Growth Area.

policy 2A-2.1 Encourage growth in areas already characterized by urban development or where the appropriate levels of urban public facilities and services are established in adopted capital facilities plans.

- (a) Ensure that adequate urban public facilities and services are provided in Urban Growth Areas concurrent with urban development.
- (b) Implement streamlined standards and development procedures to encourage and facilitate development within the Urban Growth Areas.

Urban Services

Goal 2A-3 Within the designated Urban Growth Areas, coordinate with the respective local jurisdictions and other service providers within the Urban Growth Areas to ensure that growth and development are timed, phased, and consistent with adopted urban level of service standards.



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policy 2A-3.1 Urban public facilities include: improved streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, road lighting systems and traffic signals; urban level domestic water systems, sanitary sewer systems, storm sewer systems, park and recreational facilities and schools as defined in the Capital Facilities Element with adopted level of service standards.

policy 2A-3.2 Urban public services include fire protection and suppression; emergency medical services; public safety; public health; education; recreation; environmental protection; and other services as identified in the Capital Facilities Element with adopted level of service standards.

policy 2A-3.3 Urban governmental services should not be extended to, or expanded in, rural areas except in those limited circumstances necessary to protect basic public health and safety and the environment, and when such services are financially supportable at rural densities and do not support urban development.

policy 2A-3.4 The process of siting of major industrial developments in the rural area with associated provision of urban facilities and services shall be in conformance with RCW 36.70A.365 and Countywide Planning Policy 2.6.

policy 2A-3.5 The process of siting new fully self-contained communities in the rural area with associated provision of urban facilities and services shall be in conformance with RCW 36.70A.350, the Countywide Planning Policies, and the community planning process.

Joint City-County Planning

Goal 2A-4 Conduct joint planning between the County and local jurisdictions for future annexation areas within the Urban Growth Areas in accordance with the Framework Agreement and the Countywide Planning Policies.

policy 2A-4.1 Joint planning should consider issues including, but not limited to:

(a) coordination of development permit review.



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- (b) assessment of the capacity of current public facilities and services to accommodate projected growth.
- (c) the phasing of development within the Urban Growth Area and the provision of capital improvements to the area concurrent with development.
- (d) the impacts of annexation on property owners, service providers, and other stakeholders in the Urban Growth Area.
- (e) fiscal impacts and cost/revenue implications of future annexations.

policy 2A-4.2 Use interlocal agreements, pre-annexation agreements, and/or development agreements to equitably allocate financial burdens and resolve other issues resulting from the transition of governance from the County to local jurisdictions.

policy 2A-4.3 Work with local jurisdictions to implement the Countywide Planning Policies and address other regional land use, economic, and transportation issues through interlocal agreements and codes.

Commercial Development

Goal 2A-5 Encourage commercial and industrial development to locate in well-defined centers within the Urban Growth Areas. Prohibit new zoning that furthers the continuation of strip commercial development.

policy 2A-5.1 Plan for compact commercial and industrial centers in the Urban Growth Areas and provide infrastructure accordingly.

policy 2A-5.2 Attract commerce and industry to designated areas within Urban Growth Areas by ensuring an adequate supply of land with adequate urban public facilities and services.

Quality of Life

Goal 2A-6 Ensure a high quality of life within Urban Growth Areas.



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policy 2A-6.1 Foster development within Urban Growth Areas that creates and maintains safe, healthy and diverse communities. These communities should contain a range of affordable housing and employment opportunities, and school and recreational facilities, and be designed to protect the natural environment and significant cultural resources.

policy 2A-6.2 Adopt plans, policies, codes, and development standards that promote public health by increasing opportunities for residents to be more physically active. Such actions include: concentrating growth into Urban Growth Areas, promoting more compact urban development, allowing mixed-use developments, and adding pedestrian and non-motorized linkages where appropriate.

policy 2A-6.3 Concentrate facilities and services within Urban Growth Areas, using urban design principles, to make them desirable places to live, work, and play; increase the opportunities for walking and biking within the community; use existing infrastructure capacity more efficiently; and reduce the long-term costs of infrastructure maintenance.

Transformance of Governance

Goal 2A-7 Provide for the orderly transition from rural to urban development patterns within the unincorporated portions of the municipal Urban Growth Areas.

policy 2A-7.1 Work with the cities and towns to ensure the cooperative and timely transfer of governmental responsibilities as urban development occurs.

policy 2A-7.2 Limit land divisions and development intensities within the Urban Growth Areas to rural levels until property is annexed, thereby creating an economic incentive to encourage annexation.

policy 2A-7.3 Allow residential development within Urban Growth Areas at rural densities prior to the provision of urban infrastructure, provided that future development at urban densities is not precluded.

Commented [A23]: These two existing policies address RCW 36.70A.070 (1) provision that land use element should consider urban planning approaches that promote physical activity.



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Development Process

Goal 2A-8 Work with local jurisdictions to simplify the permitting process for land owners and developers within the unincorporated portions of the Urban Growth Areas.

policy 2A-8.1 Maintain, in consultation with local jurisdictions, a common set of municipal Urban Growth Area zoning districts and development regulations for residential, commercial, industrial, and other land uses in the Urban Growth Areas.

policy 2A-8.2 Maintain development regulations that allow development in the Urban Growth Areas at lower-than-urban densities and/or intensities, prior to annexation, provided that future urban development is not precluded. Development shall follow standards generally consistent with those applied in the rural portions of the County.

policy 2A-8.3 Maintain zoning maps for each of the Urban Growth Areas showing the zoning of all lands within the unincorporated portions of the Urban Growth Areas.

policy 2A-8.4 Development at urban densities and/or intensities may be allowed prior to annexation. However, such development shall only be allowed if urban infrastructure is provided, and shall be subject to the standards of the future annexing jurisdiction.

policy 2A-8.5 Any subdivision of land under these regulations shall include measures to ensure the accommodation of future rights-of-way for urban transportation infrastructure and utilities that will be required when the property is further subdivided and developed at urban densities and land uses.

Open Space

As discussed in greater detail in the [Urban, Open Space, and Land Use Profile](#) above, there are two major categories of Open Space in Skagit County: public, and private. Open space lands in private ownership play an important role in maintaining ecological, scenic, and natural resource values, but because of their private nature they are not shown on the



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Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map. Public open space lands are those lands in public ownership that are dedicated or reserved for public use or enjoyment for recreation, scenic amenities, natural resource land management, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. *Where identified below to be of regional or statewide importance, such lands are designated on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map.* Other publicly held lands, such as local neighborhood parks, scenic roads and highways, shorelines, rivers and streams, and utility corridors, *although not designated as open space on the Comprehensive Plan Map,* nevertheless offer similar open space functions and benefits.

Goal 2B Recognize the important functions served by private and public open space, designate and map public open space of regional importance, and designate open space corridors within and between around urban growth areas.

policy 2B-1.1 Public open space areas are shall be those lands in public ownership that are dedicated or reserved for public use or enjoyment for recreation, scenic amenities, natural resource land management, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive. ~~They~~ These open space areas may include:

- (a) Neighborhood and community parks. These should be linked by open space networks whenever possible.
- (b) Land that offers special natural resource-based and recreational opportunities, such as: federal, state and local regionally important parks and recreation areas; islands; federal wilderness areas; wildlife refuges; lakes; reservoirs; creeks; streams; river corridors; shorelines and areas with prominent views.
- (c) Lands which include a significant historic, archaeological, scenic, cultural or unique natural feature.
- (d) Areas that take advantage of natural processes, wetlands, tidal actions and unusual landscape features such as cliffs and bluffs.

policy 2B-1.2 Of these public open space areas, the County has designated certain ones on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map as Public Open Space of Regional/Statewide Importance (OSRSI). These areas are so identified because their recreational, environmental, scenic, cultural and other open

Commented [A24]: PC Recommendation 12 to be consistent with state law (RCW 36.70A.160)

Commented [A25]: Policy language should be directive, not merely descriptive.



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space benefit extend beyond the local area to be regional or statewide in significance. They include:

Deception Pass State Park; [Sharpe Park and Montgomery-Duban Headlands Park](#); Burrows Island, Saddlebag Island; Hope Island; Ika Island; Huckleberry Island; Skagit Island; [Hat Island](#); Larrabee, Rasar, and Bayview State Parks; PUD #1 Judy Reservoir; Skagit Wildlife Refuge; North Cascades National Park; Noisy Diobsud Wilderness; Glacier Peak Wilderness; Ross Lake National Recreation Area; Mount Baker National Forest; Seattle City Light Wildlife Mitigation Lands; Rockport State Park; WA Department of Natural Resources Natural Resource Conservation Areas and Natural Area Preserves; and portions of the Northern State Recreation Area.

Commented [A26]: Edits make narrative consistent with what's already mapped as OSRSI

policy 2B-1.3

[Consistent with RCW 36.70A.160, Skagit County should continue to work with its partners—partner governments, organizations, residents, and property owners—to identify, prioritize and conserve open space corridors within and between urban growth areas, including lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas.](#) By December 1, 2007, Skagit County will develop a program to identify and prioritize open space corridors and greenbelts within and between UGAs that include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas. The program will include a list identifying and prioritizing open space and greenbelt lands desirable for public acquisition. Any potential acquisition that may be proposed by such a program will not include any condemnation actions, but instead will be achieved by voluntary donation, CaRD subdivision, or mutually agreeable sale.

Commented [A27]: The Board of County Commissioners directed that this new language for policy 2B-1.3 be added for purposes of receiving public comment.

Implement the adopted Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan to conserve open space areas, greenbelts and corridors within and between urban growth areas.

Commented [A28]: This text was proposed for deletion and updating with the below language in the original proposal released March 3rd.

Commented [A29]: The Planning Commission recommended deleting this policy released with the March 3rd proposal, and moving reference to the 2009 adoption of the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan to the open space narrative above. The 2009 adoption of the open space plan is already mentioned in the Land Use Profile and doesn't need to be repeated in the above narrative.

(a) — Plan implementation should seek to protect lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas, and working farm and forest lands.

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(b) — Land acquisition under the plan should be achieved through voluntary donation, CaRD subdivision, or mutually agreeable sale, not condemnation.

policy 2B-1.4 Private Open Space is privately owned land that has been or will be set aside by the operation of the Critical Areas Ordinance, by voluntary conservation or by other means. These lands may include:

- (a) Critical areas as defined in the Critical Areas Ordinance.
- (b) Lands with conservation and land reserve easements in place.
- (c) Lands within urban growth areas that are wooded and serve a functional purpose in climate, noise, light or pollution control, or provide wildlife habitat or greenbelts.
- (d) Lands that can provide for a separation between communities, minimize or prevent sprawl, provide a buffer between urban and rural areas, or between natural resource lands and rural areas.

policy 2B-1.5 The Current Use Open Space Taxation Program includes properties utilized for agricultural, timber and open space uses as provided in RCW 84.34. Property owners should be encouraged to enroll in the Current Use Open Space Taxation Program.

Land Use Approvals

Goal 2C Recognize for a reasonable period of time land use approvals that have been granted but not yet acted upon. After landowner notification and the designated period of time, those approvals shall expire.

policy 2C-1.1 Historic land use approvals such as conditional use permits, special use permits, and contract rezones that already have been exercised may continue to operate under the conditions of their original permit or land use approval. Any expansion or change beyond the conditions of the original permit or land use approval shall require a revised permit or land use approval.



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policy 2C-1.2 Historic subdivisions shall be subject to the provisions of RCW 58.17.170. Other historic land use approvals with vested development rights that have not yet been exercised will remain valid for five years from the date property owners are given notice of adoption of this policy. Property owners will be notified within two years of adoption of this policy. Land use approvals not exercised within this five-year period shall expire.

Pre-Existing Non-Conforming Uses

Goal 2D Prohibit expansions of pre-existing non-conforming uses that are not in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan or development regulations.

policy 2D-1.1 A nonconforming use is any use established in conformance with Skagit County rules and regulations in effect at the time of establishment, which no longer conforms to the range of uses permitted in the site's current zone or to the current development standards of the code, due to changes in the code or its application to the subject property.

policy 2D-1.2 Nonconforming uses will be allowed to continue operation subject to County regulations governing nonconforming uses and general municipal police powers regarding health and safety. Expansion of such uses shall be limited to certain previously approved and therefore vested expansion plans.

Public Uses

Public Uses, generally, are government or quasi-government owned and operated facilities such as primary and secondary schools, libraries, postal services, offices, training facilities, fire and police stations, and courts. Public Uses under this section do not necessarily include Essential Public Facilities as provided for in Chapter 10 of this Comprehensive Plan.

Goal 2E Allow public uses as special uses in most comprehensive land use designations, to be reviewed on a site-specific basis.

policy 2E-1.1 In most comprehensive plan land use designations, public uses are to be allowed as either administrative or hearing examiner special uses. They are



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reviewed as site-specific projects so that public benefits and land use impacts can be analyzed and, if necessary, mitigated.

- (a) Public uses on Natural Resource Lands are limited to those providing emergency services.

Lot Certification

Goal 2F Only lots created in a legal manner consistent with state law and County regulations shall be considered for development permits.

- policy 2F-1.1 The County shall establish and maintain a review process to determine whether lots on which development is proposed were created legally. Only lots created legally shall be considered for development permits pursuant to the provisions of RCW 58.17.210.
- policy 2F-1.2 A legally created lot meeting the minimum dimensional standards for the zoning district it is located in shall be eligible to be considered for development permits. A legally created substandard lot, meaning a lot not meeting the dimensional requirements of the zone, shall be evaluated against performance criteria considering factors such as lot size and previous development activities in determining eligibility for development.
- policy 2F-1.3 The performance standards used in reviewing substandard lots will seek to protect property rights and investment-backed expectations, as well as preserve natural resource lands and prevent sprawl.



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Land Division

Goal 2G Allow for the orderly division of land by providing for the creation of new lots meeting the dimensional standards of the zoning district in which the lots are located.

Encourage innovative land division technique as an alternative to traditional land division practices. These techniques allow flexibility in design and provide for better preservation of critical areas, natural resource lands and rural character.

Agricultural Land Preservation allows for the separation of an existing house from the existing larger parcel on lands designated Agricultural-Natural Resource Land and Rural Resource-Natural Resource Land, and is intended to encourage long-term agricultural land protection. This type of division allows flexibility to the landowner and protects the land with a conservation easement held in perpetuity.

Planned Unit Developments (PUD) or Planning Residential Developments (PRD) allow variations in controls related to density and other design elements. PUDs/PRDs are more appropriately located in urban growth areas or new fully contained communities where urban services and utilities are provided. They differ from standard land divisions because they routinely involve density bonus beyond what is normally permitted in a given land use designation or zone in exchange for meeting certain land use management objectives. PUDs often involve permitting of mixed uses (commercial/residential) development whereas PRDs are typically limited to residential uses.

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 and Rural Resource-Natural Resource Land in order to encourage long-term protection of agricultural land.

~~policy 2G-1.1~~ policy 2G-1.2 Planned Unit Developments and Planned Residential Developments shall be allowed only in Urban Growth Areas where public services and utilities are available or will be provided concurrent with development.

The *Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD)* provisions allow innovative techniques to be used for land divisions in the Rural area and in certain circumstances on Natural Resource Lands. The CaRD land division concept is attractive because it provides future land use

Commented [A30]: Added policy to support agricultural land preservation narrative and existing code.



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options and protects and conserves open space, natural resource lands, rural character and critical areas. It also allows landowners to maintain some equity and development potential on the land while retaining open spaces and minimizing infrastructure costs. In certain Rural land use designations, incentives are provided in the form of density bonuses to encourage voluntary participation in this approach to land division. Even where density bonuses are not provided, CaRD land divisions can reduce infrastructure and other costs.

~~policy 2G-1.2~~ [policy 2G-1.3](#) CaRD land divisions may achieve some or all of the following benefits:

- (a) Flexibility in site development, which may result in more compact, clustered lots or environmentally sound use of the land, while maintaining the County's rural character.
- (b) Buffer areas to reduce land use conflicts between Rural and natural resource uses and the loss of Natural Resource Lands.
- (c) Reduction in housing costs due to reduced engineering, infrastructure, and development costs, smaller lot sizes, and more intense use of buildable areas.
- (d) Greater opportunity for property owners to derive reasonable economic use of the land by maintaining larger open space areas that may be used for the production of food, fiber, or minerals.
- (e) More flexible land development options in areas with potential to be designated urban growth areas in the future.
- (f) Allowance of bonus development lots when a landowner meets the various requirements of the CaRD provisions.
- (g) Large tracts of open space land held for recreation, natural resource management, and protection of critical areas and significant cultural resources.

~~policy 2G-1.3~~ [policy 2G-1.4](#) CaRD land divisions shall be designed to minimize impacts on neighbors, infrastructure systems, and the surrounding environment.



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~~policy 2G-1.4~~ [policy 2G-1.5](#) When CaRD land divisions are approved for Long CaRDs their conservation easements or conditions/covenants/restrictions (CCRs) shall be in place for a specified period of time.

- (a) Certain identified critical areas shall be set-aside as a Protected Critical Areas (PCAs) and others may be placed into Open Space Preservation Areas (OS-Pas).
- (b) A long CaRD land division which has designated Natural Resource Lands (NRL) not satisfying 2G-1.4(a) above shall have the remaining NRL set-aside as a conservation easement, which removes the development right on such lands until such time as the land is determined by a court of competent jurisdiction to no longer have long-term commercial significance for the production of food, agricultural products, timber, or extraction of minerals.
- (c) A long CaRD land division that has designated Rural lands not satisfying 2G-1.4(a) above shall have the undeveloped lands set-aside as a land reserve until the land is redesignated through a comprehensive plan amendment.

■ Essential Public Facilities

Essential public facilities are facilities "typically difficult to site, such as airports, state education facilities, state or regional transportation facilities, state and local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and in-patient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities, and group homes" (RCW 36.70A.200). The County and the cities may also identify additional public facilities that are essential to providing services without which development cannot occur.

These policies guide the process of identifying and siting of essential public facilities. The Comprehensive Plan may not preclude the siting of essential public facilities.



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Goal 2H Establish siting criteria and procedures for Essential Public Facilities of a statewide and countywide nature to ensure that they will not be excluded from Skagit County as long as their siting conforms with this Comprehensive Plan and the Countywide Planning Policies.

policy 2H-1.1 The County has a responsibility to ensure that these Comprehensive Plan policies do not prohibit or exclude the siting of essential public facilities.

policy 2H-1.2 The County must use regulations and procedures to identify and site essential public facilities:

(a) The state or local government proposing to site an essential public facility must provide a justifiable need for a public facility and for its location in Skagit County based upon forecasted needs and a logical service area;

(b) The state or local government proposing to site an essential public facility must establish a public process by which the residents of the County and affected communities, "host" municipalities, and all other affected jurisdictions, agencies and utilities have a reasonable opportunity to participate in and comment on the site selection process.

(c) The impact of siting new essential public facilities should be weighed against the impact of expansion of existing essential public facilities, with appropriate buffering and mitigation. During this process, possible appropriate mitigation measures may be determined.

policy 2H-1.3 Essential Public Facilities must comply with adopted federal, state, and county land use regulations and be in conformance with this Comprehensive Plan.

policy 2H-1.4 All State Environmental Policy Act provisions and concurrency of supporting capital facilities must be addressed as part of any project approval by Skagit County.

policy 2H-1.5 Decisions about the review, location, land use, and intensity of a proposed facility, including siting, acceptance, modification or rejection shall be conducted with opportunities for public participation.



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2: Urban, Open Space,
and Land Use

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policy 2H-1.6 The County code must establish approval criteria for facility requirements and impacts. Proposals should be conditioned to be consistent with the County Comprehensive Plan, functional pPlans, and development regulations. The County may execute interlocal agreements regarding the siting, operation and/or expansion of such facilities within Skagit County. Agreements are encouraged to the extent they would result in locally beneficial siting decisions, facilitate the sponsor's voluntary provision of enhanced mitigation measures exceeding those required by applicable regulatory standards, and/or provide for mitigation of any disproportionate financial burden on the County created by the proposed facility.

policy 2H-1.7 The applicant for a proposed essential public facility must provide justification for the location of the facility based upon anticipated need and the service area.

policy 2G-1.5policy 2H-1.8 Skagit County shall encourage the siting of essential public facilities equitably so that no single community and no racial, cultural or socio-economic group should absorb an inequitable share of these facilities and their impacts. In addition, siting should consider environmental, economic, technical, and service area factors.



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Introduction

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. It may also provide for clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques that will accommodate appropriate rural uses not characterized by urban growth. (RCW 36.70A.070 (5))



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This Element establishes broad goals and policies guiding residential, commercial, and industrial uses in unincorporated Skagit County consistent with the Growth Management Act’s allowance of development in the rural area, including “limited areas of more intensive rural development.”

This section provides documentation supporting the goals and policies in the Rural Element. It summarizes current conditions, describes the character of Skagit County’s rural area, and provides background information on the rural land use designations. The Natural Resource Conservation Element Profile describes the County’s designated Natural Resource Lands, while the Land Use Profile-Element discusses Urban Growth Areas, Open Space areas, Public Uses, and other general land use matters.

Rural Character

About 80,000 acres in Skagit County fall under one of the rural area designations. These lands are outside of the Urban Growth Areas and the designated Natural Resource Lands (Agriculture-NRL, Industrial and Secondary Forest-NRL, and Rural Resource-NRL). Table 2-1 on the following page shows the acreage of the various rural land use designations.

Skagit County’s rural area is characterized by: large areas of relatively undeveloped land, in which natural features and vegetation predominate over the built environment; scattered unincorporated rural communities and villages; isolated rural businesses and industries; and regionally important recreation areas. The rural area land use designations provide a variety of living environments at lower than urban densities which are compatible with farming, fishing and timber management. Rural areas preserve historic and cultural structures and landscapes, retain open spaces, protect designated Natural Resource Lands and identified critical areas, and minimize service demands and costs on County government.

Rural Growth and Development

In ~~2000~~2015, the population of the rural area was estimated to be ~~34,000~~38,515 (including the small number of residents living on designated Natural Resource Lands). This was about one-third of the total County population. By ~~2025~~2036, the rural population is expected to be about ~~43,000~~45,665, or less than 30 percent of the total. The rate of growth in the rural area should be lower than the urban rate. The Countywide Planning Policies state that over the



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20-year planning period, no more than 20 percent of the County’s growth should locate in the rural area. During the period 1995-2004, the rural population increased by about 500 persons per year. As the County and cities’ Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations are implemented, this level of rural growth relative to urban growth is expected to decline. [Skagit County considered several methods to estimate urban/rural growth trends in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan in 2016. Results generally show the County and cities achieved a 79% urban and 21% rural growth split over the years 2000-2010 reflecting the general success of growth management planning by the County and cities.](#) In addition, limitations on water rights and measures to protect critical areas and resource lands may tend to further restrict rural residential development.

Commented [A31]: These figures represent the most recent Census-based evaluation of urban and rural growth.

Table 1: Land Use Designations and Acreage* (Source: Skagit County Mapping Services)

LAND USE DESIGNATIONS	ACREAGE
RURAL LANDS	
Rural Village Residential (RV)	2,782,794
Rural Intermediate (RI)	8,069,035
Rural Reserve (RRv)	70,740,378
Subtotal	81,591,204
RURAL COMMERCIAL/INDUSTRIAL LANDS	
Rural Business (RB)	188,186
Rural Freeway Service (RFS)	3929
Rural Village Commercial (RVC)	2720
Natural Resource Industrial (NRI)	183,239
Small-Scale Recreation & Tourism (SRT)	2116
Rural Center (RC)	19
Rural Marine Industrial (RMI)	50
Small-Scale Business (SSB)	3331
Master Planned Resort (MPR)	113
Subtotal	673,703
TOTAL	82,264,907

*Acreage figures are derived based on the best information and technology available. Accuracy may vary depending on the source of the information, changes in political boundaries or hydrological features, or the methodology used to map and calculate a particular land use.

The Rural area goals, policies, and land use designation criteria are included in the Rural Chapter, the companion document to the Rural Profile. The land use designations for the Rural Area allow for a variety of residential densities and rural- and natural resource-related businesses while protecting rural character. Several of these designations implement the Growth Management Act’s allowance of “limited areas of more intensive rural development,” or LAMIRDS, based on 1997 amendments to the Act. LAMIRDS allow greater development than is generally allowed in the rural area, provided that certain limitations are maintained to retain rural character and prevent sprawl. One category of LAMIRD recognizes areas that



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were already for the most part developed in 1990, when the Growth Management Act was adopted. These existing residential, commercial, or industrial areas primarily allow infill development, and must be contained within logical outer boundaries to prevent sprawl. Two other types of commercial LAMIRDs – small scale recreation and tourism uses, and isolated small scale businesses – may allow new development provided that development is contained and consistent with the surrounding rural character.

The residential land use designations in the Rural Area are:

- Rural Intermediate (RI);
- Rural Village Residential (RVR);
- Rural Reserve (RRV); and
- ~~Bayview Ridge Urban Reserve (BR-URV).~~

All lands designated Rural Intermediate and Rural Village Residential are considered to be part of a LAMIRD that was predominantly developed by 1990 and contained by a logical outer boundary consisting of the “built environment.” The Rural Village Residential and Rural Intermediate designations reflect areas that were for the most part already developed or platted at land use densities of 1 residence per 2.5 acres, or greater, when the Growth Management Act was implemented. The Comprehensive Plan’s Rural Village Residential and Rural Intermediate designation criteria closely follow the GMA LAMIRD provisions because Skagit County was considering its 1997 Comprehensive Plan at the same time that the state legislature was developing the ESB 6094 amendments to the Growth Management Act that institutionalized the LAMIRD concept. Skagit County carefully considered the existing built environment and logical outer boundaries to its RVR and RI designations when it first mapped these areas through the 1997 Comprehensive Plan.

Some think of the LAMIRD concept as being limited to specific areas such as Similk Beach, which was designated a LAMIRD in 2002 to address a problem of failing septic systems. Skagit County has clarified through the 2005 GMA Update that many of its rural designations fall into one of the three categories of LAMIRD under GMA.

In contrast to Rural Village Residential and Rural Intermediate, the Rural Reserve designation covers those portions of the rural area that were not already developed at higher densities in 1990. The Growth Management Hearings Boards have generally said that rural area densities must be one residence per five acres or lower – equating to lot sizes of five acres or larger – unless the area is designated a LAMIRD. Land designated Rural Reserve may be developed at



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one residence per 10 acres, or two residences per 10 acres through a Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD), a technique for allowing development while preserving open space that is discussed in greater detail in the Land Use Chapter and Profile.

The Bayview Ridge Urban Reserve designation is intended to indicate where the UGA may expand at some future date. Development regulations for the Urban Reserve area require clustering of development within designated areas outside the UGA so as not to preclude future urban residential development, and provide for a transition from rural to urban infrastructure. The maximum allowed residential gross density is 1 residence per 10 acres in a standard land division, or 1 residence per 5 acres in conservation and reserve development (CaRD) land divisions.

The Comprehensive Plan's land use designations are implemented by regulations specific to each zone as found in the Skagit County zoning code and other development regulations.

Commercial and Industrial Uses Outside UGAs

In developing its rural commercial and industrial designations 1998 - 2000, Skagit County undertook an extensive review of existing commercial and industrial uses and zoning in the rural area. The County combined this information with an analysis of the commercial, industrial, and natural resource industrial uses allowed in the rural area under the Growth Management Act, to develop the following rural commercial and industrial land use designations:

- Rural Village Commercial (RVC)
- Rural Center (RC)
- Rural Freeway Service (RFS)
- Small Scale Recreation and Tourism (SRT)
- Small Scale Business (SSB)
- Rural Business (RB)
- Natural Resource Industrial (NRI)
- Rural Marine Industrial (RMI)

Commented [A32]: BR-URv zone no longer exists due to changes to the Bayview Ridge UGA and Subarea Plan.



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Virtually all of these rural commercial or industrial designations may be categorized as a type of LAMIRD allowed under GMA. These designations are shown on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map to indicate an existing use in the rural area meeting the appropriate land use designation criteria. In some cases, new rural commercial or industrial uses may be designated on the map following the map amendment process described in the Community Plans and Implementation Element. Comprehensive Plan amendment applications for new rural commercial or industrial designations require the submittal of a ~~specific business plan~~ [development proposal](#) consistent with the designation criteria ~~that will be initiated within two years of the property being redesignated. This is to avoid speculation in rural commercial/industrial land and to ensure that the County focuses its review efforts on real development proposals.~~ [for the commercial or industrial designation being requested.](#)

Following is a brief description of the various rural commercial and industrial land use designations. Greater detail is provided in the goals, policies, and designation criteria contained in the Rural Chapter. In some cases, detailed information has been removed from the designation policies and added to the [Profile narrative](#) as a way to maintain the legislative history behind certain land use decisions.

Rural Village Commercial

Rural Village Commercial districts are intended to serve as the major centers of rural commercial activity in the County unincorporated area. A Rural Village Commercial district is identified for each of the 10 Rural Villages in the County (Alger, Bay View, Big Lake, Clear Lake, Conway, Edison, Lake Cavanaugh, Lake McMurray, Marblemount and Rockport). Rural Village Commercial districts may be expanded through the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle or through a community plan, provided that the district remains within the boundaries of the Rural Village itself. Rural Village Commercial districts are the top priority location under the Comprehensive Plan for new commercial development in the rural area. Rural Village Commercial districts existing within Rural Villages, which are pre-existing LAMIRDS surrounded by logical outer boundaries as allowed by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i) and (iv).

Rural Center

Rural Centers are clusters of small-scale commercial uses at selected locations in the unincorporated portion of the County. In some cases they include public uses such as a fire hall or post office. Typically they are located at crossroads of County roads, state routes, or



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major arterials. They are smaller in size and intensity than Rural Villages, but like their larger counterparts above, Rural Centers are intended to help meet existing and future commercial needs at existing areas of commercial activity. Rural Centers are pre-existing LAMIRDs surrounded by logical outer boundaries as allowed by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i) and (iv).

Rural Freeway Service

Rural Freeway Service (RFS) areas were designated at portions of four Interstate 5 freeway interchanges in the rural area that had existing commercial development (or development commitments) as of 1990. They qualify as pre-existing LAMIRDs surrounded by logical outer boundaries as allowed by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i) and (iv). The County conducted extensive research in 1998 – 2001 to establish and verify that the properties currently designated RFS meet the GMA and Comprehensive Plan LAMIRD requirements. Each RFS-designated area underwent close scrutiny by the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board following appeals of those designations. Because the RFS designation recognizes areas that had existing commercial development or development commitments in 1990, Skagit County does not expect that new RFS areas will be designated.

Small Scale Recreation and Tourism

The Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism designation is intended to foster economic development and diversification that is recreational or tourist-related, that relies on a rural location and setting, and that incorporates the scenic and natural features of the land. The SRT designation is consistent with the type of LAMIRD authorized by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(ii).

Natural Resource Industrial

The Natural Resource Industrial (NRI) designation is intended to support the production of agricultural, forest, and aquatic products by allowing processing facilities, limited direct resource sales, and limited natural resource support services. Examples of typical NRI uses include saw mills, agricultural or forest industry equipment maintenance, agricultural processing plants, and seafood processing and on-site sales. Mineral processing activities are generally guided by separate policies found in the ~~Land~~ Natural Resources [Lands](#) Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The NRI designation provides a location for natural resource processing and support services that does not remove designated natural resource lands



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from production. The NRI designation may qualify as a LAMIRD under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i), if the site has been in industrial use since 1990, or under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iii), if the use is new.

Rural Marine Industrial

The Rural Marine Industrial (RMI) designation is intended to recognize existing rural marine industrial facilities, to permit expansion of existing rural marine industrial activities that are water or shoreline dependent, and to provide for limited changes of use. The term “rural marine industrial facilities” includes harbors, marinas, docks, moorages, and other existing or permitted facilities that support and enable marine industry and commerce.

Because Skagit County has significant navigable waters, and a long and continuing history of marine related commerce and industry, a rural marine industrial designation is an essential component of Skagit County’s comprehensive land use plan and its rural and natural resource-based economy.

Despite the abundance of navigable waters in Skagit County, marine access is very limited, particularly outside of Urban Growth Areas. Due to the state’s Shoreline Management Act, the siting of new marine industrial facilities would be difficult. The Rural Marine Industrial designation seeks to utilize to best advantage those existing locations in the rural area with a history of marine industrial activity or regulatory approval, and with continuing use of the property for marine industrial purposes.

The RMI-designated properties were reviewed under, and found to comply with, the GMA criteria for limited industrial areas of more intensive rural development as authorized by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i).

Small Scale Business

The Small-Scale Business (SSB) designation allows small-scale commercial or industrial activities involving the provision of services or fabrication or production of goods, primarily for clients and markets outside of the immediate rural area. The SSB designation may be applied to existing or new businesses, whereas the Rural Business designation applies only to businesses that were established as of June 1, 1997. The name of the designation was changed during the 2005 GMA Update from Cottage Industry/Small Scale Business to avoid any confusion with Home Based Business. A SSB may be substantially larger, and requires a



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designation on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning map, whereas Home Based Business does not. The SSB designation is a type of LAMIRD authorized by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iii).

Rural Business

The Rural Business designation is intended to acknowledge certain significant uses in the rural area that were in existence as of June 1, 1997, when the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan was adopted, that do not match any of the other commercial and industrial Comprehensive Plan designations. The Rural Business (RB) designation provides reasonable expansion and change of use opportunities for these pre-existing rural uses. The designation is consistent with the Growth Management Act's allowance for "the intensification of development on lots containing isolated nonresidential uses" (RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iii)). The Rural Business designation may not be appropriate for all pre-existing commercial uses in the rural area, if the use is more consistent continuing to operate under a special use permit, or if the granting of a commercial designation might jeopardize the appropriate use of surrounding Natural Resource Lands.

Master Planned Resorts

Master planned resorts are self-contained and fully integrated planned unit developments, in settings of significant natural amenities, providing short-term visitor accommodations including a range of indoor or outdoor recreational facilities and visitor services. Master planned resorts are larger in scale, and involve greater potential impacts on the surrounding area, than uses permitted under the Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism designation. Master planned resorts may constitute urban growth outside of urban growth areas as limited by RCW 36.70A.360 and RCW 36.70A.362. Designation of Master Planned Resorts requires amending the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Maps, prior to, or concurrent with an application for master plan review. The comprehensive plan amendment process should evaluate all the probable significant adverse environmental impacts from the entire proposal, even if the proposal is to be developed in phases, and these impacts shall be considered in determining whether any particular location is suitable for a Master Planned Resort.



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Rural Water

Pursuant to RCW 19.27.097 and RCW 58.17.110, Skagit County legally cannot issue residential building permits—a permit for a building requiring potable water or approve subdivision applications unless the applicant has a lawful and adequate water supply. Typically, the applicant provides a letter of availability from a public water source such as PUD, provides demonstration of a water right, or proposes to use a permit-exempt well. Under Washington law, the State of Washington regulates water and its availability for appropriation, determining whether an applicant’s proposed use of a well is lawful.

In 2001, the State of Washington adopted an Instream Flow Rule for the Skagit River Basin, establishing minimum river and stream flows for salmon habitat. Although the 2001 Rule in draft form allocated water for rural landowners and agriculture, the published 2001 Rule failed to provide a water allocation for rural landowners or agriculture.

In 2006, the State amended the 2001 Rule in an effort to fix this problem, establishing a small allocation for rural landowners and agriculture in the Skagit River Basin and each of its tributaries (the “2006 Amendment”).

In 2008, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community (“Swinomish”) filed suit against the State in an effort to invalidate the 2006 Amendment. On October 3, 2013, the Washington Supreme Court ruled in favor of Swinomish, invalidating the 2006 Amendment. *Swinomish v. State, Wa. Sup. Ct. Case No. 87672-0.*

As a result of the *Swinomish* lawsuit, the State Department of Ecology provided the following guidance to Skagit County:

Skagit County is legally required to stop issuing building permits and subdivision approvals in the Skagit Basin that rely on new wells, unless Ecology approves a plan for mitigation (or a plan for reliance on an alternative water source during times when the minimum instream flow requirements set in WAC 173-503 are not met).

Consistent with this, Skagit County is directing all building permit and subdivision applicants that propose to rely on new use of an exempt well within the Skagit Basin as their source of water to obtain Ecology’s approval of the applicant’s proposed water use prior to submittal of a permit or subdivision application to Skagit County.

Skagit County is working with the State, PUD, and other stakeholders to ensure that rural landowners are able to utilize their land consistent with rural zoning requirements.

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Commented [A33]: This change in narrative text corresponds to Planning Commission-recommended revision to policy 3A-2.1(a).



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GMA Mandate

There are no specific GMA goals for rural growth and development. Rather, the goals for urban growth, reducing sprawl, economic development, and natural resources tend to address the rural focus indirectly. The Act does define “rural character” as being characterized by areas:

- (a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;*
- (b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;*
- (c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;*
- (d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;*
- (e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;*
- (f) That generally do not require the extension of urban government services; and*
- (g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and ground water and surface water recharge and discharge areas.*

The following Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) provide more specific guidance for the Rural Element:

- *All growth outside the urban growth boundary shall be rural in nature as defined in the Rural Element, not requiring urban governmental services, except in those limited circumstances shown to be necessary to the satisfaction of both the County and the affected city to protect basic public health, safety and the environment, and when such services are financially supportable at rural densities and do not permit urban development. (CPP 1.8)*
- *Rural development shall be allowed in areas outside of the urban growth boundaries having limited resource production values (e.g. agriculture, timber, and mineral) and having access to public services. Rural development shall have access through suitable*



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county roads, have limited impact on agricultural, timber, mineral lands, critical areas, shorelands, historic landscapes or cultural resources and must address their drainage and ground water impacts. (CPP 2.3)

Rural commercial and industrial development shall be consistent with that permitted by the Growth Management Act, specifically including RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) and related provisions and the 1997 ESB 6094 amendments thereto. This development shall not be urban in scale or character or require the extension of urban services outside of urban growth areas, except where necessary to address an existing public health, safety or environmental problem.(CPP 2.4)

Rural commercial and industrial development shall be of a scale and nature consistent and compatible with rural character and rural services, or as otherwise allowed under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), and may include commercial services to serve the rural population, natural resource-related industries, small scale businesses and cottage industries that provide job opportunities for rural residents, and recreation, tourism and resort development that relies on the natural environment unique to the rural area. (CPP 2.5)

Priority consideration will be given to siting of new rural commercial and industrial uses in areas of existing development, including existing Rural Villages and existing Rural Centers, followed by already developed sites in the rural area, and only lastly to wholly undeveloped sites in the rural area. (CPP 2.6)

Commercial areas should be aggregated in cluster form, be pedestrian oriented, provide adequate parking and be designed to accommodate public transit. Strip commercial development shall be prohibited. (CPP 2.58)

...The process to consider siting of specific major industrial developments outside of urban growth areas shall follow the process included in the Memorandum of Understanding between the County and the cities for adoption of Countywide Planning Policies.... (CPP 2.69)

~~Rural commercial and industrial development shall be consistent with that permitted by the Growth Management Act, specifically including RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d) and related provisions and the 1997 ESB 6094 amendments thereto. This development shall not be urban in scale or character or require the extension of urban services outside of urban growth areas, except where necessary to address an existing public health, safety or environmental problem.(CPP 2.4)~~

Commented [A34]: The numbering of this CPP is corrected to reflect addition of new Rural CPPs through 2005 Update.

Commented [A35]: The numbering of this CPP is corrected to reflect addition of new Rural CPPs through 2005 Update.



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- ~~■ Rural commercial and industrial development shall be of a scale and nature consistent and compatible with rural character and rural services, or as otherwise allowed under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), and may include commercial services to serve the rural population, natural resource-related industries, small-scale businesses and cottage industries that provide job opportunities for rural residents, and recreation, tourism and resort development that relies on the natural environment unique to the rural area. (CPP 2.5)~~
- ~~■ Priority consideration will be given to siting of new rural commercial and industrial uses in areas of existing development, including existing Rural Villages and existing Rural Centers, followed by already developed sites in the rural area, and only lastly to wholly undeveloped sites in the rural area. (CPP 2.6)~~
- Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location of residential development shall be made in a manner consistent with protecting natural resource lands, aquatic resources, and critical areas. (CPP 4.6)
- Home occupations that do not significantly change or impact neighborhood character shall be permitted. (CPP 5.2)
- Economic diversity should be encouraged in rural communities where special incentives and services can be provided. (CPP 5.3)
- A diversified economic base shall be encouraged to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy to economic fluctuations. (CPP 5.5)
- Commercial, industrial and residential acreage shall be designated to meet future needs without adversely affecting natural resource lands, critical areas, and rural character and life styles. (CPP 5.6)
- Tourism, recreation and land preservation shall be promoted provided they do not conflict with the long-term commercial significance of natural resources and critical areas or rural life styles. (CPP 5.7)
- Agriculture, forestry, aquatic resources, and mineral extraction shall be encouraged both within and outside of designated resource lands. (CPP 5.8)
- Value added natural resource industries shall be encouraged. (CPP 5.12)
- The Comprehensive Plan shall support and encourage economic development and employment to provide opportunities for prosperity. (CPP 5.15)



- *Rural character shall be preserved by regulatory mechanisms through which development can occur with minimal environmental impact. (CPP 10.6)*

Goals and Policies

Rural Area Characteristics

The Skagit County rural landscape is characterized by open spaces with natural vegetation; a variety of rural residential densities; farms, forests, mining, and aquatic resource areas; small unincorporated rural communities; small, isolated rural commercial and industrial developments; and regionally important recreation areas.

The Rural Area land use designations provide a variety of living environments at lower than urban densities which are compatible with farming, fishing and timber management. Rural areas preserve historic and cultural structures and landscapes, retain open spaces, protect designated natural resource lands and identified critical areas and minimize service demands and costs on county government. The following goals and policies for the rural area include general intent statements based on the above discussion as well as the more formal policies for the designation of rural land uses. Urban and resource land use goals and policies are included in the Land Use and Resource Lands Elements.

Goal 3A 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;



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(e) Assuring Encouraging economic prosperity for rural areas; and

(f) Assuring Ensuring that appropriate and adequate rural levels of service are provided.

Commented [A36]: Some commented during the Rural Element workshop that it is not the County's responsibility to "assure" economic prosperity

Commented [A37]: This is the County's responsibility under GMA. Ensure is the more appropriate word here than assure.

Monitoring Rural Growth

policy 3A-1.1 Monitor rural growth in relation to the target established in Countywide Planning Policy 1.2 that 80 percent of new growth should locate in urban areas. Analyze development trends to determine if changes in land use designations are necessary or additional regulatory techniques or measures are needed to assure compliance with targeted urban/rural population distribution goals.

Goal 3A-2 Provide for a variety of residential densities and business uses that maintain rural character, respect farming and forestry, buffer natural resource lands, retain open space, minimize the demand and cost of public infrastructure improvements, provide for future Urban Growth Area expansion if needed, and allow rural property owners reasonable economic opportunities for the use of their land.

policy 3A-2.1 Manage development in rural areas through density requirements that protect and maintain existing rural character, natural resource lands, open space, critical areas, significant cultural resources, and water resources, and that manage traffic volumes.

(a) Consistent with RCW 19.27.097, Skagit County will not issue a residential building permit for a building requiring potable water unless the applicant can demonstrate they have a legal and adequate source of water, such as a water right from Washington State Department of Ecology, a letter from an approved public water purveyor like Skagit PUD, or an approved rainwater catchment system and the water source meets drinking water standards.

Commented [A38]: Edit recommended by Planning Commission based on public comment.

(b) Consistent with RCW 58.17.110, Skagit County will not approve a land division unless the applicant can demonstrate they have a legal and adequate source of water, such as a water right from Washington State

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Department of Ecology or a letter from an approved public water purveyor like Skagit PUD.

(c) Skagit County should work with the state legislature, state agencies, landowners, tribes, and other affected parties to resolve the uncertainty over rural water availability and achieve a long-term solution that meets the needs of all affected parties consistent with state law.

policy 3A-2.2 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. Monitor the pace of development in conjunction with the maintenance of data describing the inventory of available buildable land.

policy 3A-2.3 Rural residential development near designated natural resource lands shall minimize potential conflicts and not contribute to the conversion of farm and forest land to non-resource uses. Encourage techniques such as land conservation, clustering and buffering.

policy 3A-2.4 Encourage rural conservation and reserve development (CaRD) land divisions through public outreach and communication with property owners and developers.

policy 3A-2.5 The design of rural residential developments near urban areas should include means to further subdivide at urban densities should these developments be added to the urban area in the future, using techniques such as conservation and reserve development (CaRD) land divisions.

policy 3A-2.6 Rural land-use designations within ¼ mile of the designated Mineral Resource Overlay shall be no greater than one dwelling unit per ten acres, except for isolated situations where higher densities, and an existing mining operation within the MRO, already exist. Where greater densities would normally be possible through a CaRD subdivision, such increase in density can be transferred to a portion of the property located outside the ¼ mile.

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policy 3A-2.7 Develop and implement standards to ensure that noise and light impacts from residential and commercial development in the rural area do not diminish rural character.

Goal 3A-3 Assure **Ensure** that public facilities, services, roads and utilities are properly planned for and provided, consistent with rural character, needs, and lifestyles.

policy 3A-3.1 Priorities for funding public investment in rural areas shall be to maintain or upgrade existing facilities, services, and utilities to serve existing development at rural service standards. New facilities, services, roads, and utilities which support planned rural growth shall meet rural service standards.

policy 3A-3.2 Continue to work with water providers such as Skagit PUD to extend public water service in rural areas where ground water supplies are limited, with the greatest emphasis being on areas already identified as pre-existing higher density rural areas with corresponding Comprehensive Plan designations and zoning, specifically limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs) including Rural Villages and Rural Intermediate.

~~policy 3A-3.2~~ policy 3A-3.3 Standards and plans for structures, roads and utility systems, and other public services and facilities shall be consistent with rural densities and uses. Such facilities and services shall be such designed, constructed, and provided to minimize the alteration of the landscape and the impacts to rural residents and community character, to preserve natural systems, to protect critical areas, to protect important land features such as ridgelines, to retain historic and cultural structures/landscapes, and scenic amenities.

~~policy 3A-3.3~~ policy 3A-3.4 The County's public health responsibility for ensuring adequate wastewater treatment includes the determination of failing on-site septic systems, technical assistance to property owners, and actions to require necessary improvements. These services may include community plans and other strategies for creating area-wide solutions when surface waters or groundwater is threatened.

Commented [A41]: Policy suggested by the Planning Commission.

Commented [A42]: Ensure is the proper word here rather than assure. It is the County's responsibility under GMA to ensure public facilities are properly planned for and provided.

Commented [A43]: This proposed policy is consistent with comments the County made to the Skagit PUD when it was updating its Water System Plan in 2008, and that the PUD subsequently incorporated into its plan.



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~~policy 3A-3.4~~ [policy 3A-3.5](#) On-site wastewater systems are preferred to treat and dispose of effluent in rural areas. Community on-site systems or decentralized treatment systems may be used in land divisions or to serve limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDs).

- (a) The size of a community or large on-site sewage system for a designated LAMIRD shall be limited to the build-out potential of all development within the LAMIRD’s designated boundaries, unless it is also needed to address existing public health, safety or welfare issues of properties outside of the LAMIRD.
- (b) The size of a community or large on-site sewage system for a land division shall be limited to the number of residential units allowed under the land division. The system may not be used for development that is not part of the proposal land division unless it is found to be needed, in the land division review process, to address existing public health, safety and welfare issues of existing development.

~~policy 3A-3.5~~ [policy 3A-3.6](#) Consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies, urban services shall not be extended into or expanded in rural areas except in those limited circumstances shown to be necessary to protect basic public health and safety and the environment, and only when the urban services are financially supportable at rural densities and their extension or expansion does not allow urban development.

Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development

The Rural Area provides a choice of living environments and rural- and natural resource-related economic activities through a mix of large lots, conservation and reserve development (CaRD) land divisions, and limited areas of more intensive rural development. Amendments to the Growth Management Act adopted in 1997 as part of ESB 6094 established that “*the rural element may allow for limited areas of more intensive rural development...*” or LAMIRDs (RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)). These limited areas include the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas; the intensification of development on lots containing or new development of small scale recreational or tourist uses; and the intensification of development on lots containing

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isolated nonresidential uses or new development of isolated cottage industries and isolated small-scale businesses that are not principally designed to serve the rural population but that provide job opportunities for rural residents.

Goal 3B Establish certain Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development, consistent with the Growth Management Act, to recognize historic rural residential, commercial, and industrial development patterns, and to allow certain new small-scale recreation and tourism uses and industries that provide jobs for rural residents.

policy 3B-1.1 Skagit County has developed and applied various rural land use designations, as described below, following the GMA provisions for Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Developed (LAMIRDs) in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d).

policy 3B-1.2 The GMA establishes three basic types of LAMIRD. The first is authorized by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i) and consists of commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed use areas that were in existence on July 1, 1990, and that are surrounded by logical outer boundaries. The Skagit County rural land use designations created and placed on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map using these criteria are:

- (a) Rural Village Residential.
- (b) Rural Intermediate.
- (c) Similk Beach LAMIRD, and other residential LAMIRDs as may need to be identified to address similar health and environmental issues.
- (d) Rural Village Commercial, which must fall within the Rural Village Residential boundary.
- (e) Rural Center.
- (f) Rural Freeway Service.
- (g) Rural Marine Industrial.
- (h) Some Natural Resource Industrial designations also meet these “(d)(i)” LAMIRD requirements, but not all. New natural-resource related uses are



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also allowed in the rural area under GMA, provided they remain compatible with rural character and do not promote sprawl.

policy 3B-1.3 The above land use designations provide for the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas, whether characterized as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads developments.

policy 3B-1.4 Skagit County has adopted measures to minimize and contain these existing areas or uses of more intensive rural development, as appropriate.

(a) Lands included in such existing areas or uses shall not extend beyond the logical outer boundary of the existing area or use, thereby allowing a new pattern of low-density sprawl.

(b) Existing areas are those that are clearly identifiable and contained and where there is a logical boundary delineated predominantly by the built environment, but that may also include undeveloped lands if limited as provided in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d).

(c) The County shall establish the logical outer boundary of an area of more intensive rural development. In establishing the logical outer boundary the county shall address:

(i) the need to preserve the character of existing natural neighborhoods and communities;

(ii) physical boundaries such as bodies of water, streets and highways, and land forms and contours,

(iii) the prevention of abnormally irregular boundaries, and

(iv) the ability to provide public facilities and public services in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl;

(d) An existing areas or uses as described above is one that was in existence on July 1, 1990, when the Growth Management Act was adopted.



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policy 3B-1.5 The identification of the Rural Village and Rural Intermediate designations as Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD) does not by its name, label or designation automatically confer any increased development potential to these areas. The LAMIRD label is only intended to indicate that Rural Villages and Rural Intermediate areas are designated consistent with the requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d). The LAMIRD label itself does not grant any increased land uses, intensities, or densities not already allowed for in the Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations applicable to the Rural Village Residential or Rural Intermediate designations.

policy 3B-1.6 Two other types of LAMIRD are allowed by GMA. The County's other rural commercial and industrial designations were created and applied consistent with these other provisions. Pursuant to RCW 36.70(A).070(5)(d)(ii), the County's Small Scale Recreation and Tourism designation allows:

- (a) The intensification of development on lots containing, or new development of, small-scale recreational or tourist uses, including commercial facilities to serve those recreational or tourist uses, that rely on a rural location and setting, but that do not include new residential development.
- (b) A small-scale recreation or tourist use is not required to be principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population.
- (c) Public services and public facilities are limited to those necessary to serve the recreation or tourist use and shall be provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl.

policy 3B-1.7 The County's Small-Scale Business and Rural Business designations are based on a third type of LAMIRD allowed under GMA. There are distinctions between the two designations: Small-Scale Business may be applied to a new use in the rural area, whereas a Rural Business must have existed on June 1, 1997. Both designations are consistent with RCW 36.70(A).070(5)(d)(iii) which permits:

- (a) The intensification of development on lots containing isolated nonresidential uses or new development of isolated cottage industries



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and isolated small-scale businesses that are not principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population and nonresidential uses, but do provide job opportunities for rural residents.

- (b) Rural counties may allow the expansion of small-scale businesses as long as those small-scale businesses conform with the rural character of the area as defined by the local government according to RCW 36.70A.030(14).

policy 3B-1.8 The GMA provision referenced above in Policy 3B-1.6 is also the basis for the potential creation of a limited number of new Rural Centers in the Rural area. The creation of new Rural Centers is only permitted under very narrow, limited circumstances within the context of a community planning process where the creation of a center is supported by community needs. (See Policy 3C-2.17)

policy 3B-1.9 Certain other land uses are allowed in the Rural Area. These are Master Planned Resorts and Major Industrial Developments, both of which are a type of urban use that may take place under certain circumstances in the rural area; and Open Space uses. Land use designation policies for agricultural, forest, rural resource, and mineral resource lands are included in the Natural Resource Lands Element.

Rural Residential Designations

Rural Reserve, Rural Intermediate, and Rural Village Residential are the main residential land use designations in the Rural area. There is also a Bayview Ridge-Urban Reserve (BV-URV) designation adjacent to the Bayview Ridge Urban Growth Area to allow expansion of the Urban Growth Area in the future if necessary. All lands designated Rural Intermediate and Rural Village Residential are considered to be part of a Limited Area of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRD) as described in policy 3B-1.2 and as authorized by RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i). These designations reflect areas that were generally already developed or platted at land use densities of 1 residence (or “dwelling unit”) per 2.5 acres, or greater, when the Growth Management Act was implemented in 1990. The Rural Reserve designation identifies portions of the Rural area that were not already developed at these higher densities. The Rural designation and density criteria follow=.

Commented [A45]: This heading and narrative was out of sequence with the goal text.



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Goal 3C Provide for a variety of rural residential land use densities while retaining the rural landscape, character, and lifestyles.

policy 3C-1.1 **Rural Reserve (RRv).** The Rural Reserve designation applies to all rural areas outside of the following designations: Natural Resource Lands, Rural Intermediate, Rural Village, any of the various Rural commercial/industrial designations, Open Space of Statewide/Regional Significance, or Urban Growth Area. The maximum allowed residential gross density is 1 residence per 5 acres in conservation and reserve development (CaRD) land divisions, and 1 residence per 10 acres in standard land divisions.

policy 3C-1.2 All lands shown as Rural Intermediate and Rural Village Residential on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning map were designated following the criteria for Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development, or LAMIRDs, under RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(i), as described in policy 3B-1.2 above.

policy 3C-1.3 **Rural Intermediate (RI).** The Rural Intermediate (RI) designation applies to rural areas where the average existing and/or surrounding parcel density is predominantly more than or equal to 1 parcel per 2.5 acres or 1/256th of a section, not including any lands within a UGA. If rural lands proposed to be added to the RI designation have a density of less than 1 parcel per 2.5 acres, these lands must be included in any calculation of "average existing and/or surrounding parcel density." These RI designations are intended to balance property rights in the legally vested lots and the built environment that is reflected in certain rural areas of the County with the GMA requirements to minimize sprawl and concentrate growth in urban areas. [\(There are many pre-existing lots in the RI designation that are significantly smaller than the 2.5 acre minimum parcel size that applies to new land divisions in RI.\)](#)

Areas may be considered for designation as RI by identifying clearly-contained logical boundaries that are delineated predominantly by the built environment existing on July 1, 1990, per policy 3B-1.2 above. However, in some cases, where lots were legally created since that time, but prior to adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and have either been developed, or have vested rights to develop at those densities, RI designation may be appropriate on those lots as well. Finally, as described in more detail under the Rural Study Areas policies in the Plan Implementation and Monitoring



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Element, some RI density may be appropriate in one or more of those study areas, but only after completion of the necessary community plan.

(a) The RI designation does not necessarily apply to every existing lot smaller than 2.5 acres in the County since, to do so, could result in a pattern of scattered and unconsolidated areas of more intense rural development.

(b) Within the Rural Intermediate designation, the minimum lot size that may be created through a land division is 2.5 acres, resulting in a maximum residential gross density of 1 dwelling unit per 2.5 acres.

policy 3C-1.4 The purpose of the Rural Intermediate designation is to provide and protect land for residential living in a rural atmosphere, taking priority over, but not precluding, limited non-residential uses appropriate to the density and character of this designation. Long-term open space retention and critical area protection are encouraged.

policy 3C-1.5 ~~Reserved. Bayview Ridge Urban Reserve (BR-URv). The Bayview Ridge Urban Reserve designation is intended to indicate where the UGA may expand at some future date. Development regulations for the Urban Reserve area require clustering of development within designated areas outside the UGA so as not to preclude future urban residential development, and provide for a transition from rural to urban infrastructure. The maximum allowed residential gross density is 1 residence per 10 acres in a standard land division, or 1 residence per 5 acres in conservation and reserve development (CaRD) land divisions.~~

Commented [A46]: BR-URv no longer exists.

Rural Village

policy 3C-1.6 Rural Villages shall be located only in designated Rural areas. Rural Village designation and densities are based on existing rural residential and commercial development patterns and uses, environmental constraints, presence of critical areas, proximity to designated natural resource lands, and adequate capacity to maintain existing rural levels of service.

policy 3C-1.7 Rural Villages represent historical communities throughout the County with future development limited to infill within designated boundaries, as described further in policy 3B-1.2.



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- (a) Consider designating additional areas as Rural Village that meet the Rural Village designation criteria under the Comprehensive Plan and the Growth Management Act, and that have the same characteristics, land uses and functions as areas already designated Rural Village, including the same limitations on expanding beyond a logical outer boundary.
- (b) Landowners and residents of an area being considered as a newly-designated Rural Village should be involved in the planning process considering that new designation.

policy 3C-1.8

The community planning process is the preferred method to determine the sizes, configurations, uses, and development potentials specific to each Rural Village. As discussed in greater detail in Chapter 12, community plans draw upon the local knowledge, experience, and preferences of community residents, provided that such is consistent with the Growth Management Act, Countywide Planning Policies, and the Comprehensive Plan.

- (a) Issues appropriate for consideration through a community plan include suitable land uses within the Rural Village, community infrastructure requirements, and development standards and design guidelines to protect and retain important features valued by the community.
- (b) The outer boundaries of a Rural Villages shall only be amended through a community plan or through a periodic state-mandated GMA comprehensive plan Update, provided that the boundaries of the historic Rural Villages shall be defined predominantly by the built environment that existed on or before July 1, 1990.
- (c) Because Rural Villages are the preferred location for commercial uses in the Rural area, the establishment of new Rural Village Commercial designations *within existing Rural Village boundaries* may occur through the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process, and is not required to occur through a community plan.

Commented [A47]: The Planning Commission agreed to propose a policy that discusses possible designation of additional areas as Rural Village that meet the Rural Village criteria and look and act like other already-designated Rural Villages. Commissioner Lohman has raised this issue in the past. The two most frequently mentioned areas are Blanchard (currently zoned Ag-NRL) and Allen (mostly zoned Rural Reserve). (In the past, when the Ag Advisory Board has been asked if areas such as Blanchard should be redesignated from Ag-NRL to something else such as Rural Village, they have advised against it.) The Planning Commission agreed with keeping this proposed policy in, with the additional language about limits on expansion beyond logical outer boundaries.

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Commented [A48]: Additional policy proposed by Planning Commission in response to public coments.



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Rural Village Density

- policy 3C-1.9 Single-family residential densities for land designated as Rural Village Residential are:
- (a) 1 residential dwelling unit per acre, with public water and an approved on-site septic system;
 - (b) 1 dwelling unit per 2.5 acres, with private water and an approved on-site septic system; or
 - (c) a Rural Village Community Plan may recommend smaller lot sizes, provided public sewer and water are available, and if those smaller lots are consistent with existing Rural Village development patterns and/or are appropriate to better protect critical areas, open spaces or public health and safety.
- policy 3C-1.10 Subdivisions of undeveloped parcels on the east side of the Big Lake Rural Village are allowed with lot sizes of 5 acres or greater unless those parcels are divided through conservation and reserve developments (CaRD), utilize public utilities, and protect Big Lake Water quality. Prior to the adoption of a Big Lake Rural Village Plan, property that is commonly referred to as the Overlook Golf Course may be subdivided according to provisions contained in the Unified Development Code.
- policy 3C-1.11 The Board of County Commissioners will work with the Department to prioritize community planning efforts for Rural Villages and other areas of more detailed rural planning, as further discussed in the Plan Implementation and Monitoring Element.

Rural Commercial and Industrial Designations

- Goal 3C-2 Support the rural economy by fostering opportunities for rural-based employment, home businesses, natural resource-related industries, and economic diversification in tourism and recreation, of an appropriate size and scale to maintain rural character.



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policy 3C-2.1 New rural commercial and industrial uses should be located principally within designated commercial areas to avoid the proliferation of commercial businesses throughout the rural area. However, certain limited commercial uses, resource-related uses, home based businesses and other non-residential uses may be permitted if carefully reviewed, conditioned and found to be compatible with rural areas. To encourage efficient use of the land, the broadest range of commercial and industrial uses should be allowed in areas already accommodating such use and development, with greater limitations placed upon such uses within areas devoted predominantly to residential use (i.e., Rural Intermediate, Rural Village Residential and Rural Reserve areas). Comprehensive Plan and Zoning designations devoted principally to commercial and industrial uses in the unincorporated portions of the county are:

- (a) Rural Village Commercial
- (b) Rural Center
- (c) Rural Freeway Service
- (d) Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism
- (e) Natural Resource Industrial
- (f) Rural Marine Industrial
- (g) Major Industrial Developments
- (h) Master Planned Resorts
- (i) Small-Scale Business
- (j) Rural Business

policy 3C-2.2 Comprehensive Plan Amendment applications to any of the rural commercial or industrial designations must meet the following criteria in order to be found consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed designation and use must:



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- (a) be consistent with the existing rural character of the area;
- (b) not create conflicts with surrounding agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands and practices; and
- (c) provide for the protection of critical areas, frequently flooded areas, and surface water and ground water resources, including sole source aquifers.

policy 3C-2.3 An applicant for any of the rural commercial or industrial designations available under this plan must submit, at the time of application, a development proposal that is consistent with the appropriate designation criteria, and that will commence or may be phased within a specified amount of time following the property's redesignation and rezone. The time lines for commencement and phasing are specified in the development regulations. A development project that has not commenced according to the specified timeline, or those portions of a phased project that have not proceeded according to an approved phasing schedule, will lose its rural commercial or industrial designation and zoning, and will be returned to its prior designation and zone.

policy 3C-2.4 Public services and public facilities necessary for rural commercial and industrial uses shall be rural in nature, limited to those necessary to serve the use, and provided in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl. Uses may utilize urban services that previously have been made available to the site.

The following policies describe the various rural commercial and industrial designations, and provide guidance on the types and scale of permitted uses within them.

Rural Village Commercial (RVC)

policy 3C-2.5 The Rural Village Commercial District provides for a range of commercial uses and services to meet the everyday needs of rural residents and natural resource industries, and to provide goods, services, and lodging for travelers and tourists to the rural area.

Commented [A49]: PDS no longer believes the timeline provision serves a useful purpose. It does not account for economic downturns and fact that the amendment/rezone process is sufficiently rigorous that map changes should be long-term.



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policy 3C-2.6 Generally, there should be only one contiguous area designated Rural Village Commercial in each Rural Village. New uses should be clustered around the existing Rural Village Commercial district, unless the particular nature of the new use justifies an alternative location within the Rural Village.

policy 3C-2.7 Typical uses in the Rural Village Commercial district include small retail and service businesses that primarily serve the needs of the surrounding population or support natural resource businesses and industries, art and performance galleries and studios, overnight lodging and related services for visitors to the rural area, and minor public uses.

policy 3C-2.8 Maximum size limits for uses within the Rural Village Commercial district are intended to retain the rural character of the Rural Villages and are based on the size of existing commercial uses within the Rural Villages. A community plan may modify the dimensional standards for a particular Rural Village Commercial district, provided that the newly developed standards are consistent with existing commercial uses within that Rural Village.

policy 3C-2.9 Land within a Rural Village may be redesignated to one of the other rural commercial or industrial designations, based on the appropriate land use designation criteria, and subject to a Rural Village community plan if one has been adopted.

Rural Center (RC)

policy 3C-2.10 Rural Centers are small-scale commercial clusters at selected locations in the rural portion of the County. They are smaller in size and intensity than Rural Villages and generally serve the population residing within a 2 ½ mile radius.

policy 3C-2.11 Typical uses in Rural Centers are small retail and service businesses that primarily serve the needs of the surrounding rural population and visitors to the rural area. Examples include: retail food, drug, feed, nursery, and hardware stores, specialty shops, restaurants, bed and breakfasts, service stations, and personal care services.

policy 3C-2.12 Rural Centers may not include new residential uses other than business-owner or operator residences and loft living quarters over store fronts,



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unless such residential uses are specifically authorized through a community plan.

policy 3C-2.13 Rural Centers are designated at specific, limited sites in the following areas: Allen, Birdsvie, Day Creek, Dewey Beach, East Edison, and Guemes Island.

policy 3C-2.14 Rural Centers of sufficient number and size will be designated to meet existing and projected rural commercial needs for retail and service businesses serving the surrounding rural population and visitors.

policy 3C-2.15 Substantial infill, development, and redevelopment shall occur within existing Rural Centers and Rural Village Commercial districts before any new Rural Centers may be designated.

policy 3C-2.16 Before additional acreage may be added to an existing Rural Center, the County shall conduct an analysis of the logical outer boundaries of that Rural Center, in accordance with RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iv).

Limited Number of New Rural Centers

policy 3C-2.17 A limited number of new Rural Centers may be designated to meet future needs for goods and services in areas of the County not otherwise served by an existing Rural Village or Rural Center. These include the Samish Valley north of Sedro-Woolley, and certain islands likely to experience future residential development, such as Vendovi and Sinclair Islands. These have been identified as Rural Study Areas in the Plan Implementation and Monitoring Element.

policy 3C-2.18 In addition, as also described in more detail in the Plan Implementation and Monitoring Element, the existing Day Creek Rural Center and the Birdsvie Rural Center may be considered for possible expansion, change, or more intensive rural uses, but only after completion of the community planning effort described in that Element.

policy 3C-2.19 Any new Rural Center designations shall meet the following criteria:

- (a) All property to be included is located within the Rural Intermediate or Rural Reserve designations only.



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- (b) The commercial area existed predominantly as an area or use of more intensive commercial development on July 1, 1990.
- (c) Location at the crossroads of county roads, state routes, or major arterials.
- (d) The designation does not jeopardize the protection of designated critical areas, frequently flooded areas, and surface water and ground water resources, including sole source aquifers, or the conservation and productive use of designated natural resource lands.
- (e) The travel distance between a new Rural Center and existing rural commercial designations is a minimum of 5 miles. This is generally the minimum distance that existing Rural Centers are located from other rural commercial designations.
- (f) Proponents of new Rural Centers must demonstrate that there is sufficient surrounding population, or market demand to support the need for the Rural Center.
- (g) New Rural Center designation proposals shall be supported with development plans demonstrating compatibility with surrounding rural uses and character.
- (h) New Rural Centers shall be designated only after the conduct of a community plan as described in the Plan Implementation and Monitoring Element.

Rural Freeway Service (RFS)

Goal 3C-3 Serve local rural populations and the traveling public with appropriate commercial goods and services at certain Interstate 5 interchanges already characterized by more intensive rural development.

policy 3C-3.1 Rural Freeway Service areas provide freeway-oriented goods and services at certain Interstate 5 interchanges in Skagit County that meet the GMA definition of “limited areas of more intensive rural development” in RCW



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36.70A.070(5)(d)(i). The following portions of the Bow Hill, Conway, Alger, and Cook Road interchanges are designated RFS:

- (a) Conway: the approximately 1.3 acre parcel in the southeast quadrant where there was commercial development as of July 1, 1990.
- (b) Bow Hill: the approximately 2.4 acre parcel at the northwest quadrant, and approximately 10 acres in the southwest quadrant that has existing urban sewer service (pre-1990) and water service.
- (c) Alger: four parcels totaling approximately 5 acres in the southeast quadrant that are served by, or are prepared to be served by, water, sewer and power, and are bounded by elements of the built or natural environment which create logical boundaries to any future commercial sprawl.
- (d) Cook Road: approximately nine acres at the northeast quadrant, and approximately six acres at the southeast quadrant. Both areas are surrounded by logical boundaries consisting of the built or natural environment, have paid sewer commitments dating back to the late 1970s and are served by public sewer and public water.

policy 3C-3.2 New development at these locations is subject to development regulations and design guidelines intended to maintain the rural character of the area, and to minimize impacts to rural residential areas, resource lands, critical areas, and other sensitive natural features of the environment. Such development shall not be expanded into designated natural resource lands or create conflicts with natural resource practices.

Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism (SRT)

Goal 3C-4 Use the County’s abundant recreational opportunities and scenic and natural amenities to diversify the economy of rural Skagit County by allowing small-scale recreational and tourist uses in an environmentally sensitive manner.



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policy 3C-4.1 The Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism designation is intended to provide opportunities for businesses that create recreational or tourist-oriented jobs for rural residents. Proponents may apply for a Comprehensive Plan/Zoning map amendment and rezone to the SRT designation and zone demonstrating that the proposed location or use:

- (a) Relies on a particular rural location and setting;
- (b) incorporates the scenic and natural features of the land; and
- (c) would be inappropriate or infeasible in a Rural Village, Rural Center, or Urban Growth Area.

policy 3C-4.2 Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism areas shall not be created from lands designated Ag-NRL or IF-NRL.

policy 3C-4.3 Typical uses within small-scale recreational or tourist areas may include but are not limited to: cabins, cottages, campgrounds, recreational vehicle (RV) parks, and other forms of overnight lodging that are rural in scale; outdoor recreational equipment rental and/or guide services; outdoor recreational facilities; recreational, cultural, or religious retreats; and accessory uses such as restaurants and small retail shops. Owner or caretaker housing is also permitted. Other residential uses are not permitted.

policy 3C-4.4 SRT areas and uses are limited in size and scale so as to be rural in nature and compatible with the surrounding rural area as follows:

- (a) Up to 20 acres of developable land may be located within an SRT designation. Additional land used for passive recreation purposes only may be included provided it remains substantially undeveloped
- (b) The maximum number of units of overnight lodging permitted within a SRT area is 35. This limit does not apply to the number of camping sites or recreational vehicle hook-ups within a campground or resort.

policy 3C-4.5 Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan for new SRT designations shall include site plans as further specific in the Legislative Actions section of the Unified Development Code.



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Natural Resource Industrial (NRI)

Goal 3C-5 Facilitate the production of agricultural, forestry, and aquatic products by allowing related processing facilities, limited direct resource sales, and limited natural resource support services that support local natural resource activities.

policy 3C-5.1 The NRI designation applies to agricultural, forestry, and aquatic industries and products. Mineral processing activities are generally guided by separate policies found in the Land Use and Resource elements of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan.

policy 3C-5.2 Permitted uses include natural resource processing facilities; wholesaling and storage of products associated with natural resources; limited direct resource sales; and limited natural resource support services.

policy 3C-5.3 New Natural Resource Industrial designations may be located on lands currently in one of the other Rural designations. In certain circumstances designated Natural Resource Lands may be redesignated to NRI, subject to the following provisions and the specific policies for each natural resource land or industry contained below.

- (a) The NRI designation may generally be located on land currently in a Natural Resource Land designation for uses directly involved in the extraction, sorting, and primary processing of natural resources.
- (b) NRI uses that are not directly involved in the extraction, sorting, and primary processing of natural resources should generally locate on rural lands, including in Rural Villages. These activities include support services, and certain storage and processing uses that serve natural resource industries but are not directly involved in the on-site extraction or primary processing of natural resources.
- (c) NRI uses may be located in more densely populated rural areas, including Rural Villages, provided their operations do not present an unreasonable threat to the health, safety and welfare of rural residents.



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(d) Development of the proposed NRI site would have minimal adverse impacts on nearby primary natural resource activities.

policy 3C-5.4 In considering NRI designation requests, priority consideration will be given to properties that have had prior industrial activity and site improvements, but that may now be vacant or under-utilized, rather than to entirely undeveloped sites.

Policies Specific to Agriculture-NRL

policy 3C-5.5 ~~Reserved.~~ Skagit County should designate an area (or areas) in which to concentrate agriculture-related industrial uses and agricultural support services in an “agricultural industrial park.” This would allow for these services and their impacts to be concentrated, rather than dispersed throughout the rural area. Designation of an agricultural industrial park is the only instance where Ag-NRL land may be converted to a NRI designation, and only based on a finding that the agricultural sector is better served by having the land in NRI designation to permit an agricultural industrial park.

Policies Specific to Forest-NRL

policy 3C-5.6 Certain forestry-related industrial activities are permitted outright through the Industrial Forest-NRL, Secondary Forest-NRL, and Rural Resource-NRL zoning districts and do not require a Comprehensive Plan designation to NRI.

policy 3C-5.7 Certain forestry-related industrial activities are not permitted, or are only permitted on a temporary basis, in the Industrial Forest-NRL, Secondary Forest-NRL, and Rural Resource-NRL zoning districts. The NRI designation is an appropriate place for these uses to occur on a permanent basis.

Policies Specific to Aquatic Industries

policy 3C-5.8 Aquatic and marine uses permitted through the NRI designation shall only be located on non-NRL designated lands.

policy 3C-5.9 Additionally, the proposed site should be close to:
(a) the natural resource or natural resource activities it intends to serve;

Commented [A50]: The Planning Commission recommended retaining this policy, based on public comment from the Ag Advisory Board.

The March 3rd proposal had proposed striking the policy, on the basis that large amounts of industrial land are now designated at Bayview Ridge and a growing number of ag industrial businesses are locating there.



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- (b) major transportation facilities associated with the proposed use (highway, rail, water, or air); and
- (c) non-urban or existing urban services necessary for the proposed resource-related industrial use.

Rural Marine Industrial

Goal 3C-6 Provide a land use designation that recognizes existing industrial facilities that are directly linked to an existing rural marine location and that serve the county’s rural marine industrial needs; permits expansion of existing rural marine industrial activities that are water or shoreline dependent; and provides for limited changes of use.

policy 3C-6.1 The Rural Marine Industrial (RMI) designation is intended to recognize existing rural marine industrial facilities and to permit expansion of existing rural marine industrial activities that are water or shoreline dependent, and to provide for limited changes of use. The term “rural marine industrial facilities” includes harbors, marinas, docks, moorages, and other existing or permitted facilities that support and enable marine industry and commerce.

policy 3C-6.2 Areas or facilities are designated RMI based on their history of marine industrial use, or regulatory approval and related site improvements for marine industrial use, prior to July 1, 1990. The RMI-designated properties were reviewed under, and found to comply with, the GMA criteria for limited industrial areas of more intensive rural development, as outlined in policy 3B-1.2. The existing areas or facilities identified as Rural Marine Industrial areas on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map, are:

- (a) Twin Bridge Marine Park, on the east side of the Swinomish Channel north of State Route 20 and Josh Green Lane.
- (b) The former “Western Lime” property on the Swinomish Channel directly north of the Twin Bridge Marine Park.
- (c) Property on Turner’s Bay at the north end of Similk Bay, which has served historically as a marine terminal for logs and other natural



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resource materials, as a log storage site, and for other marine-industrial uses.

(d) Rozema Boat Works, located in the Bay View Rural Village, on the eastern shore of Padilla Bay.

policy 3C-6.3 Permitted uses within the Rural Marine Industrial designation are those that are “water and shoreline dependent or related,” and are rural in nature, as consistent with the County’s Shoreline Master Program.

Major Industrial Developments

Goal 3C-7 Ensure adequate site opportunities for major industrial developments that have land needs that cannot be met in Urban Growth Areas.

policy 3C-7.1 A “major industrial development” is a master planned site for a business that requires a parcel of land larger than is available in the urban growth area or is a natural resource-based use requiring a location near agricultural land, forest land, or mineral resource land upon which it is dependent. The siting of major industrial developments outside of an urban growth area shall comply with the framework agreement between the County and the Cities and the criteria contained in RCW 36.70A.365 and CPP 2.6. The major industrial development designation requires the development of additional Comprehensive Plan policies and development regulations pursuant to those criteria, before any properties may be so designated.

Master Planned Resorts (MPR)

Goal 3C-8 Provide for the siting of Master Planned Resorts, consistent with the requirements of the Growth Management Act, in locations that are appropriate from both an economic and environmental perspective.

policy 3C-8.1 Master planned resorts are self-contained and fully integrated planned unit developments, in settings of significant natural amenities, providing short-term visitor accommodations including a range of indoor or outdoor recreational facilities and visitor services.



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policy 3C-8.2 Master planned resorts are larger in scale, and involve greater potential impacts on the surrounding area, than uses permitted under the Small-Scale Recreation and Tourism designation. Master planned resorts may constitute urban growth outside of urban growth areas as limited by RCW 36.70A.360 and RCW 36.70A.362.

policy 3C-8.3 Designation of Master Planned Resorts requires amending the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Maps, prior to, or concurrent with an application for master plan review. The comprehensive plan amendment process should evaluate all the probable significant adverse environmental impacts from the entire proposal, even if the proposal is to be developed in phases, and these impacts shall be considered in determining whether any particular location is suitable for a Master Planned Resort. Review and approvals will be conducted using the following criteria:

- (a) Development Agreements, as authorized by RCW 36.70B.170, may be used to implement these policies.
- (b) The development and its impacts should be buffered and mitigated from the adjacent rural areas. Master Planned Resorts should be of sufficient size to mitigate the potential impacts from the development on site. Where located in a rural area, the Master Planned Resort should also be of sufficient size to screen the development and its impacts from the adjacent rural areas.
- (c) MPRs are not allowed on designated Ag-NRL lands. Location on other Natural Resource Lands requires a County finding that the proposed site is better suited and has more long-term importance for the Master Planned Resort than for the commercial harvesting of timber or production of natural resource products, and will not adversely affect adjacent Natural Resource Land activities.
- (d) The Master Planned Resort must be developed consistent with the County's development regulations established for critical areas and consistent with lawfully established vested rights, and approved development permits.



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- (e) The Master Planned Resort shall consist of predominantly short term visitor accommodations, with associated indoor and outdoor recreational facilities, conference facilities and commercial and professional activities that support and are integrated with the resort. In addition, permanent residential uses, including caretakers' or employees' residences and vacation home properties may be included, provided they must be integrated into the resort and consistent with the on-site recreational nature of the resort. Some goods and services for the surrounding permanent residential population may also be included.
- (f) Where supported by historic use of the property and where such historic uses are intended to be integrated into the overall Master Planned Resort concept, commercial or industrial uses not typically associated with resort or recreational activities may be included, such as on-going natural resource industrial activities.
- (g) Master Planned Resorts may be developed using clustering design, setbacks, and lot sizes that vary from those provided in the Rural or Natural Resource Land designations. MPR commercial facilities necessary to serve the resort may be larger than those otherwise permitted in rural commercial areas, but nevertheless limited to primarily serving the needs of the resort.
- (h) Capital facilities and services, including wastewater, water, storm water, security, fire suppression, and emergency medical provided on-site shall be limited to meeting the needs of the resort and may be provided by outside service providers, provided that the resort pays all costs associated with service extension capacity increases, or new services that are directly attributable to the resort, and provided that the nature of the facilities and services provided are adequate to meet the increased needs of the resort.
- (i) Resort traffic mitigation should not require the construction of additional traffic lanes on State routes except in the immediate vicinity of or within the boundaries of the Master Planned Resort where necessary to accommodate increased traffic and turning movements generated at the site.



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- (j) The Master Planned Resort shall contain sufficient portions of the site in undeveloped open space for buffering and recreational amenities to help preserve the natural and rural character of the area.
- (k) Master Planned Resorts may be sited within or adjacent to existing Urban Growth Areas or within or adjacent to an existing area of more intense rural development, such as an existing Rural Village or an existing Rural Intermediate designation.

Small-Scale Business (SSB)

Goal 3C-9 Recognize the land use needs of existing and new small-scale businesses that are beyond the size and scale of home-based businesses.

policy 3C-9.1 The Small-Scale Business (SSB) designation is intended to provide for commercial or industrial uses involving the provision of services or the fabrication or production of goods, primarily for clients and markets outside of the rural area. The SSB designation may be applied to existing or new businesses, whereas the Rural Business designation applies only to businesses that were established as of June 1, 1997.

policy 3C-9.2 Typical uses within the SSB zone include the small-scale production or manufacture of goods; the production, repair and servicing of specialized tools and equipment; and the provision of services, including professional, management, consulting, construction, and repair services. The business may have customers visit the site, but retail sales are limited to products primarily produced on site.

The scale of activities within a SSB is typically greater than can be accommodated through a Home Based Business. Nothing in these policies is intended to create a presumption that the property on which a Home Based Business is located should be re-designated to SSB if that business outgrows its home-based status. There is no automatic progression from Home Based Business to Small-Scale Business.

policy 3C-9.3 Caretaker residences may be located on site in a SSB.



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- policy 3C-9.4 A Small-Scale Business may have up to 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, meaning an employee that visits the business site more than two times per week, including visits solely for purposes of vehicle transfer.
- policy 3C-9.5 The SSB designation is consistent with the Growth Management Act’s allowance for the “intensification of development on lots containing isolated nonresidential uses or new development of isolated cottage industries and isolated small-scale businesses that are not principally designed to serve the existing and projected rural population and non-residential uses, but do provide job opportunities for rural residents.” (RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)(iii))
- policy 3C-9.6 Rural policy 3C-2.1 regarding priority consideration to siting of new uses in areas of existing development, shall be applied when considering new Small Scale Business designations. A home-based business shall not be considered as an already developed site for the purposes of this policy.
- policy 3C-9.7 A Small-Scale Business designation should not be located on designated natural resource lands, nor create the potential for conflicts with the use of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

Home-Based Businesses (HBB₁ & HBB₂)

Goal 3C-10 Provide opportunities for rural entrepreneurs to establish work places within their homes that are compatible with surrounding uses.

policy 3C-10.1 Home-Based Businesses (HBB_s) are intended to provide increased rural economic opportunities by providing the ability to supplement a family income, start a business, or establish a work place at home. [The three classes of HBB are progressively larger in size or impact on neighboring land uses.](#)

policy 3C-10.2 [All](#) HBBs are located inside single family homes or a permitted accessory outbuilding and remain clearly incidental and secondary to the primary residential use. [HBB activities may consist only of business activities that are compatible with the primary use of a property as residential or resource based. The activities must support and may not diminish rural character.](#)

Commented [A51]: Amendments are proposed to the Home Based Business HBB) policies to add HBB3 which exists in code but is not referenced in policy, and to ensure consistency between the policies and HBB code.



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policy 3C-10.3 Home-Based Business 1 (HBB1) consists of ~~services or fabrication activities~~ a business that is carried ~~on~~ out exclusively by residents of the household residents and which ~~do~~ does not involve client or customer visits. ~~On-premises or off-premises signs are not permitted. These businesses are permitted outright.~~

policy 3C-10.4 Home-Based Business 2 (HBB2) consists of a business commercial or industrial activities involving the provision of services or fabrication or production of goods. Examples include but are not limited to: dressmaking, upholstering, weaving, baking, limited metal working activities, and computer software development that is carried out exclusively by household residents. Clients or customers may visit the site. A single small, on-premises sign is permitted. Limits on the number of employees are established in the development regulations.

policy 3C-10.5 Home-Based Business 3 (HBB3) consists of a business that is carried out by household residents but may also employ a small number of employees. Clients or customers may visit the site.

~~policy 3C-10.5~~ policy 3C-10.6 For any type of HBB, there may be no ~~There shall be no off-premises signs or other indications of a commercial or industrial enterprise visible off-premises, and auto and truck traffic, noise, and pollutant emissions shall not exceed that normally associated with a residential property. No outside storage is allowed.~~

~~policy 3C-10.6~~ policy 3C-10.7 Within resource lands of long-term commercial significance, care must be paid to protection of the primary resource activity and code requirements may limit the use in a manner to avoid conversion of resource lands and promote the primary resource-based uses. On lands of long-term commercial significance (Ag-NRL, IF-NRL, SF-NRL and RRc-NRL), HBB2 and HBB3 may be conditionally permitted only if no conversion of resource land is required to accommodate the business activity; except that HBB3 is not allowed in Ag-NRL under any conditions. Limitations on new structures may also be conditions. ~~Home-Based Business 2 is only allowed on land designated Ag-NRL if it is clearly secondary and incidental to an actively managed agricultural operation.~~

Commented [A52]: Policy related to signage is removed to avoid conflicts with recent Supreme Court decisions on signage and the First Amendment.

Commented [A53]: Proposed edit recommended by Planning Commission based on public comment from the Agricultural Advisory Board.



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Rural Business (RB)

Goal 3C-11 The Rural Business designation is intended to accommodate significant commercial and industrial uses that existed as of July 1, 1997 but do not qualify for other rural commercial and industrial Comprehensive Plan designations.

Generally

~~policy 3C-11.1~~ The County in 1999 – 2000 conducted an extensive review of existing commercial and industrial uses in the rural area and provided a Rural Business designation to many commercial or industrial uses that were in existence as of June 1, 1997, when the County implemented its Comprehensive Plan under the Growth Management Act.

~~policy 3C-11.2~~ [policy 3C-11.1](#) Commercial and industrial uses not designation Rural Business or other rural commercial/industrial designation – for instance those operating under a special use permit – may apply for designation as Rural Business through the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process.

~~policy 3C-11.3~~ [policy 3C-11.2](#) The designation shall be evaluated based on whether the use is similar in nature and location to other uses designated Rural Business; and whether the granting of the designation would be compatible with the rural character of the area, would conflict with the conduct of natural resource activities of long-term commercial significance; and would be consistent with any adopted Community Plan for the area.

Expansion of Use

~~policy 3C-11.4~~ [policy 3C-11.3](#) All uses designated RB may expand by up to 50 percent of the existing building footprint and/or up to 50 percent of the existing outdoor working area, provided that the total expansion does not exceed a total of 1,500 square feet of gross floor area. The expansion must occur on the same lot upon which the existing use is located. The total square footage of allowable expansion is determined on a onetime basis, based on the area of use as of June 1, 1997.



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[policy 3C-11.4](#) Uses that were established as of July 1, 1990 may expand beyond the 1,500 sq. ft. limitation with an approved Hearing Examiner Special Use Permit, subject to criteria contained in the Unified Development Code.

policy 3C-11.5 [Uses that support natural resource industries should not be subject to the expansion limitations.](#)

Change of Use

policy 3C-11.6 Properties with a Rural Business designation may change uses provided that the new use is rural in nature and does not result in a substantial change to rural character or create substantially greater impacts on surrounding properties, critical areas, natural resource lands, and other factors as further identified in the development regulations. A change to a new use does not create a new expansion opportunity.

- (a) Changes from one use to an identical or "substantially similar" use are subject to Administrative review only. The Administrative Official will determine if the new use is an identical or substantially similar use based on a definition contained in the development regulations.
- (b) A Hearing Examiner special use permit is required to change from one use to another use that is determined not to be identical or substantially similar to the prior use. The Hearing Examiner shall grant a special use permit for change of use only if is determined that the change of use would not result in significantly adverse impacts or be inconsistent with an adopted community plan.



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Introduction

Natural Resource Lands are the cornerstone of Skagit County’s economy, community, and history. As such, their protection and enhancement is of paramount importance to Skagit County and its citizens. The Natural Resource Lands Element establishes the purpose and intent of land use policies for agricultural, forest and mineral natural resource lands. These



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policies guide long-range planning, programs and regulations to conserve natural resource lands. In cases where some residential use is allowed on natural resource lands, development will occur in a manner that minimizes both the amount of land converted to non-resource uses, and the associated impacts to long-term management of the natural resources.

The goals and policies set forth in the Natural Resource Lands Element represent a commitment to a viable natural resource economy in Skagit County, including natural resource lands industries and healthy natural resource systems. This section supports the goals and policies in the Natural Resource Lands Element by summarizing current conditions and describing the desired management of natural resource lands that the County will be addressing throughout the 20-year planning period.

The Element supports long-term commercial uses on natural resource lands and allows for support services and businesses that are compatible with these uses. Other uses such as residential and recreational uses on Natural Resource Lands, if allowed, are to be compatible with the long-term commercial [resource](#) use of these lands.

Natural Resource Land Designations

The natural resource lands designation indicates areas where Skagit County land-use plans, regulations, and incentives are intended to promote long-term, commercially significant resource use. These natural resources provide valuable products and raw materials that support jobs, create tax revenues, and are an important component in regional and local economies and markets. Farmlands and forests also provide aesthetic, recreational, and environmental benefits to the public, while contributing to a diverse community lifestyle and character. The land use zoning designations for natural resource lands are:

- *Agricultural – Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL)*
- *Industrial Forest – Natural Resource Lands (IF-NRL)*
- *Secondary Forest – Natural Resource Lands (SF-NRL)*
- *Rural Resource – Natural Resource Lands (RRc-NRL)*
- *Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO)*



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Agricultural Natural Resource Lands

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Agricultural Natural Resource Lands

Agricultural Resource Lands are those lands with soils, climate, topography, parcel size, and location characteristics that have long-term commercial significance for farming. Skagit County designates agricultural lands primarily based on the presence of prime agricultural soils. These lands are concentrated in the fertile floodplain of the Skagit River as it flows into the Puget Sound. There are also agricultural lands designated along the upper Skagit Valley in areas of rich alluvial soils. Based on the designation criteria presented in Chapter 4, Natural Resource Lands, Skagit County has designated an estimated 89,169,88,564 acres of land as Agricultural lands, although significantly fewer acres are in full agricultural production in any given year. Designating valuable agricultural soils protects the resource for future use, regardless of current farming conditions. Designating also ensures a cohesive and distinct agricultural area within Skagit County, and limits the extent to which non-agricultural uses can conflict and interfere with farming.

Primary crops and agricultural products in Skagit County include apples, berries, floriculture and sod, potatoes, peas and other vegetables, vegetable seeds, dairy, and ornamental nursery stock. Skagit County’s annual Tulip Festival brings in over \$60 million in economic activity, adding to the over \$300 million in gross farm income annually – making agriculture a major contributor to the health of both the regional and Skagit County economies.

Despite the current strength of the agricultural industry in Skagit County, there are some significant challenges facing agriculture, primarily in maintaining the land base and ensuring long-term viability. Pressures to convert agricultural lands to residential, wildlife habitat, and other uses, conflicts with neighboring non-resource uses, regulatory limitations on farming, and fluctuating economic conditions all add to the industry’s challenges.

The Natural Resource Lands Element promotes preservation of the agricultural land base, reduction of land use conflicts, and support for a diverse and economically strong agricultural industry. Conservation strategies are critical for preserving and strengthening the agricultural land base. These include a strong Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program, and the development of a GIS database for natural resource lands. Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands goals, policies and ordinances promote a clear mandate for agricultural production as a priority on agricultural lands. The strength of the agricultural industry is promoted in the Natural Resource Lands Element by integrating support and information services in a Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse, promoting the agricultural industry and supporting services and businesses that sponsor the development and diversification of agricultural products.

Commented [A54]: According to GIS, the biggest changes to Ag-NRL acreage from 2008 to 2015 are from more precise mapping of the Skagit River between Sedro Woolley and Lyman and other shoreline areas based on analysis of aerial photos, resulting in an increase in acreage associated with water bodies and a decrease in the acreage shown as Ag-NRL.



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Industrial and Secondary Forest Resource Lands

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Industrial and Secondary Forest Resource Lands

Forest Resource Lands are those lands with soils, parcel size, and location characteristics that have long-term commercial significance for forestry. Based on the designation criteria presented in Chapter 4, Natural Resource Lands, Skagit County has designated an estimated ~~314,576~~ **319,500** acres of land as Industrial Forest Natural Resource Land (IF-NRL) and ~~38,750~~ **37,794** acres as Secondary Forest Natural Resource Land (SF-NRL). Industrial Forest lands form the bulk and core of the commercially significant forest resource, with a surrounding Secondary Forest designation which provides a transitional density between that of Rural areas and Industrial Forest. Secondary Forest also offers the potential for smaller-scale commercial timber operations, supporting natural resource industries, and limited residential uses. These lands are concentrated in the slopes and foothills of the Cascade Mountains in the eastern and northern portions of the county.

Primary forest products in Skagit County include: raw logs, primarily for the domestic market, with some exports; lumber, both green and kiln dried; wood chips; and hog fuel (a mix of bark, sawdust, and planer shavings). Production of the later is expected to increase due to the increased development of cogeneration plants as energy sources for industry. Value-added products and industries include local cabinet making shops, engineered wood products, such as beams, and small fine wood product shops producing anything from custom wood furniture to musical instruments.

Aside from wood products, forestry is a significant contributor to the economy, environment and lifestyle in Skagit County. Support industries include logging, trucking, and equipment sales & service, small trucks, fuel, supplies and repair services. Spin-off services, such as retail grocery, clothing, restaurants, and other services also rely heavily on a healthy natural resource lands industry. An often overlooked benefit of good forest management is the industry's contribution to and protection of clean air, water, fish & wildlife habitat, and recreational activities.

Currently, there are significant challenges facing the industry, primarily in maintaining the land base and promoting a viable, long-term forest industry. The industry, and the County have seen a decline in the strength and role of forestry in the Skagit County economy over the past 20 years – much of this due to declining harvests on Federal and State lands. Other challenges result from pressures to convert forest lands to other uses; regulatory requirements, economics and market factors. [At the same time, forestry is estimated to generate approximately 1,500 jobs in Skagit County and forest excise tax distributions to](#)

Commented [A55]: Changes to SF-NRL are based on reclassification through 2005 Update of Rockport State Park and Blanchard Mountain/Larrabee State Park to OSRSI. IF-NRL - Biggest change is Skagit River re-alignment to aerial photo. Also area near Rockport State Park changed from IF-NRL to OSRSI.



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4: Natural Resource Lands ↳ Rural Resource Lands

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[Skagit County \(based on the value of harvested timber\) more than doubled from \\$749,609 in 2010 to \\$1,601,896 in 2015.](#)

The Natural Resource Lands Element promotes preservation of the forest land base, reduction of land use conflicts, and support for a diverse and economically strong forest industry. Conservation strategies are critical for preserving and strengthening the forest land base and include incentives to conserve, and disincentives to convert, forest land to other uses. Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands goals, policies and ordinances promote a clear mandate for forest management as a priority on forest lands. Strength of the forest industry is promoted in the Natural Resource Lands Element by integrating support and information services in a Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse to promote the diversification of forest products and encourage development of value-added products.

Rural Resource Lands

Rural Resource lands are, generally, areas that have the combined land and land-use characteristics of long-term agricultural, forest or mineral lands, and have the potential for multiple use or smaller scale resource management. Because of this mixture, the goals, objectives and policies applicable to both Agricultural and Forest Resource lands are applicable to the Rural Resource lands. Rural Resource lands generally are not managed for industrial-scale farming or forestry but nevertheless contribute to the natural resource land base. Where the Mineral Resource Overlay designation is also applied, industrial-scale mining can occur, however. Based on the designation criteria presented in Chapter 4, Natural Resource Lands, Skagit County has designated an estimated ~~25,658~~ [26,495](#) acres of land as Rural Resource Natural Resource Land (RRc-NRL).

The challenges facing owners of Rural Resource land generally relate to the economic viability of managing small parcels of resource lands, and pressures to develop other uses, such as residential. This is particularly true where Rural Resource lands are located between larger natural resource land parcels and Rural designated areas.

The Natural Resource Lands Element promotes flexibility of uses on Rural Resource lands, while providing for incentives and support for small agricultural, forest and mining uses. Rural Resource lands allow for a range of uses that are complementary to natural resource land preservation. The Natural Resource Clearinghouse will provide further direction and guidance for owners of Rural Resource lands.

Commented [A56]: •The December 2008 Comp Plan replaced a portion of RRc-NRL with Hamilton-Urban Reserve and Hamilton Residential.
•Change in Grandy Creek campground area moved some RRc-NRL to RRv.
•Change of Washington State Parks & Rec parcel from RRc-NRL to OSRSI in Marblemount Area.
•Some small changes to boundaries along Skagit River
•Fidalgo Island - Lake Erie Trucking parcel moved from RRc-NRL to RRv.



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4: Natural Resource Lands

↳ Mineral Resource Overlay

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Mineral Resource Overlay

The Mineral Resource Overlay is an overlay to Forest and Rural Resource lands, where geologic deposits and land use characteristics have long-term commercial significance for mineral extraction. Based on the designation criteria presented in Chapter 4, Natural Resource Lands, Skagit County has designated an estimated ~~60,134~~ [61,682](#) acres of Mineral Resource Overlay. The predominant resources mapped in the Mineral Resource Overlay are sand and gravel construction materials. These resources are typically associated with alluvial and glacial deposits. Quarry rock and valuable minerals such as olivine-rich dunite and limestone have also been designated.

The challenges facing the mineral resource industry primarily relate to conflicting use concerns with neighboring residential uses. With increasing demands for construction materials in developing urban areas, especially in the Puget Sound region, it becomes increasingly important to identify and preserve access to the mineral resources of Skagit County. However, access to much of the county’s minable resources has already been precluded by residential development. Skagit County’s approach to designating mineral lands is to protect what is remaining, now and for the future. Doing so requires that mineral lands of long-term commercial significance be designated in areas where the impacts from mining, when it occurs, can be reduced to the greatest extent possible.

During the ~~recent~~ [2005-2007](#) update of the Mineral Resource Overlay, Skagit County conducted an in-depth review of geologic formations and potential mineral resource deposits. This mapping update confirmed many known mineral resources and identified new mineral resources. A very few currently conforming mining operations did not meet the criteria for mineral resource land overlay designation as applied during this mapping review. Due to the economic conditions of these operations and their beneficial access to markets, Skagit County will consider these existing operations as conforming uses within the provisions of the Mineral Resource Overlay.

It is important to ensure that mining policies and regulations, in addition to protecting the resource and its related activities, also protect public health, safety and the environment. These policies and their implementing regulations work in concert with other federal and State laws to ensure that mining operators and surrounding land owners remain good neighbors.

The Natural Resource Lands Element also establishes Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands goals and policies to promote a clear mandate for mineral extraction activities as a

Commented [A57]: •Area east of Fire Mountain Boy Scout Camp added to MRO.
•Parcel near Marblemount was added in 2013.



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↳ Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands

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priority on lands designated as Mineral Resource Overlay. The vitality of the mineral industry is also promoted in the Natural Resource Lands Element by integrating support and information services in a Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse and allowing support services and businesses to encourage development of ‘value-added’ products.

Natural Resource Land Support Mechanisms

Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands

Where non-natural resource land uses (primarily residential uses) extend into natural resource areas or exist side-by-side, natural resource management operations are frequently subject to nuisance complaints. When complaints relate to the undesired effects of properly regulated and conducted natural resource lands activities, natural resource land managers are required to set aside time and financial resources in order to respond.

Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands policies are intended to promote a good neighbor policy between natural resource lands and non-natural resource land property owners by advising purchasers and users of property adjacent to or near natural resource land management operations of the inherent potential difficulties associated with such purchase or residence. It is essential that neighbors and residents of natural resource lands better understand and be prepared to accept attendant conditions and the natural result of living in or near natural resource lands and rural areas. The Right to Manage Natural Resource Land goals and policies [together with supporting regulations](#) establish mandatory disclosures for purchasers and users and provides authority to the Skagit County Assessor’s Office to track these disclosures for the long-term protection of productive use of Skagit County’s valuable resource lands.

Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse

The Natural Resource Lands Element introduces the concept of a Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse to integrate the support and information services for natural resource landowners and industries. The goal of the Clearinghouse is to efficiently provide the following information and support: Information on resource land conservation, including loans and grants, and conservation easements;

- Information and support for alternatives to land conversion;



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Soils

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- Information on sustainable management approaches;
- Promote sustainable management practices;
- Encourage economic and market opportunities;
- Promote Skagit County products and branding; and
- Educate and inform public on Natural Resource Land values.

Soils Used in Designating Agricultural and Forest Resource Lands

The Natural Resource [Conservation Lands](#) Element uses soil classifications from the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) and the Washington State Department of Revenue’s Private Forest Land Grading (PFLG) system in designating Agricultural Resource, Forest Resource and Rural Resource Lands, abbreviated as follows:

Agricultural Lands Soils

Designation of Agricultural Lands relies, in part, on the presence of various “Prime Alluvial” soil types indicated below. Descriptions of these soil types can be found, by SCS map unit number, in the [Soil Survey of Skagit County Area, Washington](#), USDA Soil Conservation Service, 1998.

Prime Alluvial Soils

SCS Map Unit #Soil Description

21	Briscot fine sandy loam
87	Larush fine sandy loam
88	Larush silt loam
89	Larush variant silt loam
92	Minkler silt loam
123	Skagit silt loam
96	Mt. Vernon very fine sandy loam
130	Snohomish silt loam
136	Sumas silt loam
157	Wickersham silt loam, 0-8% slopes

Prime Alluvial Soils (if artificially drained)

SCS Map Unit #Soil Description

10	Bellingham silt loam
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Agricultural Lands Soils

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11	Bellingham mucky silt loam
34	Cokedale silt loam
97	Mukilteo muck
101	Nookachamps silt loam
102	Norma silt loam
114	Samish silt loam
141	Tacoma silt loam
142	Tacoma silt loam, drained

Prime Alluvial Soils (if protected from flooding)

SCS Map Unit # Soil Description

56	Field silt loam
57	Field silt loam, protected
98	Mukilteo Variant muck
118	Sedro-Woolley silt loam

Forest Resource Land Soils

The soil criteria for designating Industrial Forest and Secondary Forest lands in Skagit County is derived from the Private Forest Land Grading system (PFLG). PFLG was a five year mapping program completed in 1980 for the purpose of forest land taxation. It was funded by the Washington State Department of Revenue in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, Soil Conservation Service (SCS), USDA Forest Service and Washington State University. State and private lands which had the potential of supporting commercial forest stands were surveyed. The Site Index Range is a measurement of the anticipated height of commercial timber species within a particular time span. For Skagit County, located in Western Washington the site-class codes are based on a 50-Year site index. The site-classes for Skagit County as derived from the PFLG soil survey are as follows:

<u>Site-Class</u>	<u>Site Index Range</u>
PFLG I	137 feet +height
PFLG II	119-136 feet
PFLG III	97-118 feet
PFLG IV	76-96 feet
PFLG V	1-75 feet

Rural Resource Land Soils

Designation of Rural Resource lands is determined, in part, by the application of both systems, using PFLG classes 1 – 3, and the SCS units listed below:



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Prime Upland Soils

<u>SCS Map Unit #</u>	<u>Soil Description</u>
59	Giles silt loam
60	Giles Variant silt loam
61	Gilligan silt loam
100	Nargar loam, 0-8% slopes
116	Sauk silt loam
119	Sehome loam, 0-8% slopes
146	Tokul gravelly loam, 0-8% slopes

Mineral Resource Overlay

Skagit County designates, as Mineral Resource Overlay, the following geologic formations, subject to consistency with other land-use designation criteria. Exclusionary criteria may result in some, otherwise qualified mineral resources undesignated. Refer to U.S. Geological Survey and Washington State Department of Natural Resources survey maps for explanations of the classifications used below. These maps are available for viewing at Skagit County Planning & Development Services.

Sand and Gravel Deposits

Qa	Quaternary Alluvium
Qa(s)	Holocene Alluvium – Sand
Qaf	Holocene Alluvial Fan Deposits
Qga	Advance Glacial Outwash
Qgas	Advance Glacial Outwash – Sand
Qgdm(e)	Everson Glaciomarine Drift
Qgo	Glacial Outwash
Qgo(e)	Everson Interstade – Glacial Outwash
Qgo(es)	Everson or Sumas – Glacial Outwash
Qgo(i)	Ice-Contact – Recessional Outwash
Qgo(s)	Glacial Outwash – Sumas Stade
Qgoc	Glacial Outwash, silt and clay – Vashon Stade
Qgom(s)	Glacial Outwash, marine – Sumas Stade
Qoa	Older Alluvium
Qoa(s)	Older Alluvium – Sand Facies

Bedrock Formations

JTRu(ts)	Dunite
JMV(u)	Greenstone
JI(f)	Greenstone
PMPms(c)	Limestone



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GMA Mandate

The Growth Management Act (GMA) clearly establishes the goal to “Maintain and enhance natural resource based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries; encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.” (RCW 36.70A.020-(8)).

This goal, taken in the context of the thirteen GMA planning goals, led to the following County-wide Planning Policies (CPPs) that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this section:

- *Commercial and industrial activities directly related to local natural resource production may be allowed in designated natural resource areas provided they can demonstrate their location and existence as natural resource area dependent businesses. (CPP 5.4)*
- *The primary land use within designated forest resource lands shall be commercial forestry; residential development shall be strongly discouraged within designated forest resource lands. (CPP 5.9)*
- *Lands within designated agricultural resource areas should remain in large parcels and ownership patterns conducive to commercial agricultural operations and production. (CPP 5.10)*
- *Skagit County shall conserve agriculture, aquaculture, forest and mineral resources for productive use by designating natural resources lands and aquatic resources areas, where the principle and preferred land uses will be long term commercial resources management. (CPP 5.11)*
- *Identified critical areas, shorelands, aquatic resource areas and natural resource lands shall be protected by restricting conversion. Encroachment by incompatible uses shall be prevented by maintenance of adequate buffering between conflicting activities. (CPP 8.1)*
- *Land uses adjacent to agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands and designated aquatic resource areas shall not interfere with the continued use of these designated lands for the production of food, agricultural and aquatic based products, or timber, or for the extraction of minerals. (CPP 8.2)*



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- *Forest and agricultural lands located within urban growth areas shall not be designated as forest or agricultural land of long-term commercial significance unless a program authorizing transfer or purchase of development rights is established. (CPP 8.3)*
- *Mining sites or portions of mining sites shall be reclaimed when they are abandoned, depleted, or when operations are discontinued for long periods. (CPP 8.4)*
- *Long term commercially significant natural resource lands and designated aquatic resource areas shall be protected and conserved. Skagit County shall adopt policies and regulations that encourage and facilitate the retention and enhancement of natural resource areas in perpetuity. (CPP 8.5)*
- *When plats, short plats, building permits and development permits are issued for development activities on or adjacent to natural resource lands and aquatic resource areas, notice shall be provided to those seeking permit approvals that certain activities may occur that are not compatible with residences. (CPP 8.6)*
- *Fishery resources, including the county's river systems inclusive of their tributaries, as well as the area's lakes, associated wetlands, and marine waters, shall be protected and enhanced for continued productivity. (CPP 8.7)*
- *Skagit County shall encourage sustainable use of the natural resources of the county, including but not limited to agriculture, forestry, and aquatic resources. (CPP 8.8)*
- *Skagit County shall conserve agricultural, aquatic based, forest and mineral resources for productive use by designating natural resource lands and aquatic resource areas where the principal and preferred land uses will be long term commercial resource management. (CPP 8.9)*

Goals and Policies

Chapter Organization

Agricultural Resource Lands. The Agricultural Resource Lands section establishes policies that ensure the long-term stability and productivity of the county's agricultural lands and industries. These policies are intended to provide clear guidelines for land use planning and implementation in agricultural areas. Also included are policies to establish programs and



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other measures that promote and protect the current and future needs of agriculture within Skagit County.

Forest Resource Lands. The intent of the Forest Resource Lands section is to ensure that forest lands of long-term commercial significance are conserved and managed to provide for sustainable forest yields, job stability, ecological values and the continuation of a viable commercial forest industry in Skagit County. Conservation of forest land will maintain the land base needed to produce the timber for the long-term economy. Conservation of these resources must be assured through measures designed to prevent incompatible development on or adjacent to natural resource lands.

Rural Resource Lands. Rural Resource Lands are a mixture of natural resource lands that include the productive characteristics and uses of agriculture, forest or mineral resource lands and as such, the goals, objectives and policies for each of those designations are applicable to the Rural Resource Lands designation. Natural resource uses on these lands are generally smaller in scale than on other resource lands, [but Rural Resource Lands are nonetheless designated lands of long-term commercial significance for resource purposes.](#) Conservation of these lands is an important component in the long-term economic viability of countywide natural resource lands.

Mineral Resource Overlay. Skagit County supports environmentally responsible and safe mineral resource extraction and processing activities. Mineral lands of long-term commercial significance are to be designated to conserve the mineral resource. These designations apply to areas within other natural resource lands where mining and processing activities are economically and environmentally feasible and where conflicts with other land uses can be minimized. Because mineral resources cannot be replaced or relocated, Skagit County designates all commercially significant mineral resources to ensure that these lands are available for resource production far into the future.

Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands. A variety of natural resource land management activities may not be compatible with non-resource uses and may be inconvenient or cause discomfort to those residing in or near designated natural resource lands. Through mandatory disclosure policies, this section seeks to minimize nuisance complaints regarding normal and necessary natural resource lands operations.

Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse. Skagit County operates a number of programs for the preservation of natural resource lands and related economic activities. This section provides ways in which these programs and their staffing can be organized and function as a



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coordinated clearinghouse for the on-going delivery of research, services, and education that are needed to achieve the goals of this chapter.

Agricultural Resource Lands

Goal 4A Agricultural Resource Lands.

Agricultural Resource Lands are those lands with soils, climate, topography, parcel size, and location characteristics that have long-term commercial significance for farming. Skagit County is committed to preserving and enhancing the agricultural land base and promoting economic activities and marketing support for a strong agricultural industry. The agricultural community faces significant challenges in preserving the agricultural land base and a viable agricultural industry, including: conversion of agricultural lands to development and inappropriate habitat restoration; conflict with neighboring residential uses; drainage impacts; and other disruption of agricultural lands functions and values. The following policies are intended to ensure the stability and productivity of agriculture in Skagit County.

Agricultural Resource Designation Criteria

Goal 4A-1 Maintain land use designation criteria and densities for agricultural natural resource lands. Designate and map long-term commercially significant agricultural resource land accordingly.

policy 4A-1.1 **Agricultural Resource Lands Designation Criteria:** The following criteria, together with the Washington Department of Commerce Minimum Guidelines to Classify Agricultural Lands in WAC 365-190-050, shall be considered when designating Agricultural Resource Lands:

- (a) Generally, all lands in unincorporated Skagit County which are parcels 5 acres or greater, and that contain “prime farmland soils” as determined by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, shall be identified (see Agricultural Lands Profile [the narrative](#) for a description of prime farmland soils).
- (b) Then those lands meeting the parcel size and soils shall be retained in Agricultural Resource Lands designation, provided that a majority of the

Commented [A58]: The Department of Commerce rules regarding Minimum Guidelines to Classify Agriculture, Forest, Mineral Land and Critical Areas were updated in 2010, postdating the County’s last comp plan update: <http://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=365-190> . The proposed change references those updated WACS which will be important to check for new NRL designation or de-designation requests.



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area falls within the 100-year floodplain as adopted by the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

- (c) Parcels meeting both (a) and (b) above shall be further evaluated for inclusion or exclusion in Agricultural Resource Lands based upon the following additional factors:
 - (i) The land is in a current-use tax assessment program derived from the Open Space Taxation Act, RCW 84.34 as it pertains to agriculture.
 - (ii) The land is currently in agricultural use or has been in agricultural use within the preceding ten years.
 - (iii) Existing land uses are primarily agricultural and minimal financial commitment to non-farm uses has been made.
 - (iv) The area includes special purpose districts (such as diking and drainage districts) that are oriented to enhancing agricultural operations, including drainage improvement and flood control.
 - (v) Adjacent lands are primarily in agricultural use.
 - (vi) Land use in the area demonstrates a pattern of landowner capital investment in agricultural operation improvements such as irrigation, drainage, manure storage, barn refurbishing, enhanced livestock feeding techniques, agricultural worker housing, etc.
 - (vii) [The land is not already characterized by urban growth, and designation considers the effects of proximity to population areas.](#)
- (d) Parcels that may not meet any of the criteria described in (a), (b), and (c) above may nonetheless be included to provide logical boundaries to the Agricultural Resource lands designation and to avoid small “islands” or “peninsulas” of conflicting non-resource land uses in the midst of resource lands. Similarly, parcels that meet some or all of the criteria

Commented [A59]: There are 3 main criteria in the WACs – land is not already urban, land is used or capable of being used for agriculture, and the land has long-term commercial significance. There are also consideration of the effects of proximity to population areas. Added “viii” to incorporate the topics that did not appear to be directly mentioned in the designation criteria. <http://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=365-190-050>



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described in (a), (b), and (c) above may be excluded to provide logical boundaries to the Agricultural Resource lands designation and to avoid conflict with existing land uses.

policy 4A-1.2 **Agriculture Resource Land Density Policy:** Residential gross densities for new land divisions in lands designated as Agriculture Resource shall be one (1) residential dwelling unit per 40 acres or 1/16 of a section.

Guiding Principles General Policy Goals: Agricultural Resource Lands

Protect the agricultural land resource and farming in Skagit County; endeavor to minimize the loss of the resource; mitigate unavoidable losses; and replace lost resources whenever possible. These principles shall guide Skagit County’s actions to:

- Preserve agricultural land for agricultural uses;
- Limit new non-agricultural uses and activities on agricultural resource lands;
- Provide education and support services that maintain the farming industry and lifestyle;
- Promote the economic benefits of farming;
- Resolve conflicts between agricultural and environmental objectives; and
- Monitor the long-term achievement of the goals and policies.

Agricultural Support Programs

Goal 4A-2 Support the Agricultural Advisory Board and other programs such as the Farmland Legacy Program for the purpose of promoting a viable agricultural land base and a healthy agricultural industry.

policy 4A-2.1 **The Agricultural Advisory Board** shall represent agricultural producers; reflect the diversity of agriculture; advocate sound agricultural policies and programs for Skagit County and promote economic opportunities for agriculture.

policy 4A-2.2 **The Conservation Futures Program Advisory Committee Board** shall promote the preservation of agricultural land for use as farmland, including through

Commented [A60]: Change recommended by Planning Commission in response to staff recommendations.

Commented [A61]: This is the name of the group as established by Skagit County Code.



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its role in recommending purchases of permanent conservation easements on agricultural land and other lands of strategic significance.

- policy 4A-2.3 **The Farmland Legacy Program** shall continue to lead and coordinate agricultural policy efforts and farmland protection. The Farmland Legacy Program shall coordinate both the Agricultural Advisory Board and the Conservation Futures Advisory Committee.
- policy 4A-2.4 **Agricultural Resource Lands Database:** Skagit County shall maintain a database of current information on land uses, farming activities, conversions of agricultural lands for development or habitat, soils, drainage systems, and other quantifiable factors for the purpose of monitoring and conserving agricultural lands.
- policy 4A-2.5 **Agricultural Lands Status Report:** Skagit County, through the Farmland Legacy Program, shall prepare a periodic report on the “state of Skagit County agriculture” using the US Census of Agriculture and other sources. The report shall include case studies and other information describing successes in implementing conservation easements, purchase of development rights (PDR), and other strategies. The report shall make recommendations for actions and steps for improvement based on the viability of the agricultural land base and strength of industry.
- policy 4A-2.6 **Farmland Preservation Incentives:** The Agricultural Advisory Board, Conservation Futures Advisory Committee and Farmland Legacy Program shall work to formulate strategies for improvements to agricultural production, marketing, processing, and farm labor practices and to develop and maintain programs which offer financial and other incentives to farm owners to preserve farmland for agricultural uses and to reduce their reliance on subdivision of land to raise operating capital.
- policy 4A-2.7 **Agricultural and Critical Areas Goals:** [Consistent with the Growth Management Act, the County will convene a watershed group to prepare a Voluntary Stewardship Work Plan for the Samish and Skagit watersheds in order to protect critical areas and promote the viability of agriculture.](#)~~The County will convene and coordinate a working group of non-profit organizations, industry groups, County agencies and other interested parties~~



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to reconcile, where possible, conflicts between the goals of protecting critical areas and habitat with those of preserving farmland for agricultural purposes.

policy 4A-2.8 **Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse:** Skagit County shall should develop a Natural Resource Information Clearinghouse to collect and disseminate information to benefit long-term productive management of natural resource lands, including agricultural resource lands. Functions of the Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse are described under Goal F of this Chapter.

policy 4A-2.9 **Financial and Estate Planning:** Encourage appropriate agencies to sponsor a variety of continuing educational and technical assistance programs to help farmers with financial planning. Such programs should emphasize options to protect farmland, business planning, farm transition planning, estate planning and conservation programs, techniques and strategies.

policy 4A-2.10 **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Information will be made available to landowners about sustainable agricultural practices, best management practices, and generally accepted management practices.

policy 4A-2.11 **Promote Agricultural Products:** Create and facilitate opportunities to promote and market agricultural products grown or processed in Skagit County through local branding.

policy 4A-2.12 **Promote Public Awareness:** Encourage public awareness of the value of agriculture to the county. Develop printed materials or other media that illustrate the contributions of agriculture to the county, the challenges facing agriculture, and that promote agricultural lifestyle.

policy 4A-2.13 **Promote Education:** Encourage educational programs for public schools as part of the basic education of the county's youth. Emphasize the contributions of agriculture in the county and the need to protect and preserve this valuable resource base.

Commented [A62]: This should be made discretionary rather than mandatory, as there is currently no formal clearinghouse function and the Public Works and Planning Departments do not have staff and resources dedicated to create one.



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Preserve Agricultural Land Base and Use

Goal 4A-3 Promote preservation of agricultural land for agricultural uses, minimize non-farming uses on agricultural lands; and develop incentive programs to promote farming.

policy 4A-3.1 **Long-Term Designation of Agricultural Lands:** Designation of Agricultural Lands is intended to be long-term. De-designation is discouraged, but may be considered only when compelled by changes in public policy, errors in designation, new information on resource lands or critical areas, circumstances beyond the control of the landowner, or an overriding benefit to the agricultural industry. [Evaluate de-designation requests with the same criteria under policy 4A-1.1 used for designation of Agricultural-Natural Resource Lands.](#)

policy 4A-3.2 **Development Rights Program:** Maintain and continue to fund the voluntary purchase of development rights through the Farmland Legacy Program to limit potential conversions or development in agricultural lands.

policy 4A-3.3 **Conservation Easements:** Where legally subdivided land would promote incompatible residential development, encourage the voluntary donation of conservation easements or other development restrictions to Skagit County or to a qualified private nonprofit organization for the purpose of preserving the perpetual agricultural use of the land.

Allowable Land Uses

Goal 4A-4 Land uses allowed on designated agricultural land shall promote agriculture, agricultural support services, and promote diverse agricultural industries.

policy 4A-4.1 **Agricultural Production:** Agricultural production is the highest priority use in designated agricultural resource lands.

policy 4A-4.2 **Agricultural Support Services:** Facilitate agricultural production by allowing agricultural processing facilities, direct farm sales, and agricultural support services that support long term agricultural use.



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policy 4A-4.3 **Farm-Based Business:** Farm-based businesses shall be allowed as an accessory use in Agricultural Resource Land. Farm-based businesses are an accessory use, secondary to the primary agricultural use of a farm property, and shall not interfere with adjacent farming operations, cause nuisances for nearby residences or generate large amounts of traffic.

policy 4A-4.4 **Residential Uses:** Residential uses shall be allowed only as an accessory use in Agricultural Resource Land per Policy 4A-1.2 Agricultural Resource Land Density Policy.

policy 4A-4.5 **Special Events and Activities:** Special events and activities on agricultural lands shall be conducted in ways that reduce potential impacts resulting from the activity. Those impacts include but are not limited to traffic, litter, trespass, and sanitation.

policy 4A-4.6 **Habitat Restoration Projects:** Habitat restoration projects are a permitted use on agricultural lands so long as it is shown through project review that the proposed restoration project does not have an adverse impact on hydrologic functions, drainage infrastructure or the ongoing agricultural use of adjacent properties.

Minimize Land Use Conflicts

Goal 4A-5 Minimize land use conflicts and promote mitigation of conflicts on the lands adjacent to agricultural resource lands.

policy 4A-5.1 **Right to Manage Agricultural Resource Lands:** Goal E, Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands, applies to all lands designated Agricultural Resource Lands to protect agricultural landowner rights to manage their lands for agricultural uses.

policy 4A-5.2 **Deed Restrictions:** All real estate transactions involving residential development on or within one mile of agricultural resource lands shall contain recorded documentation of the residential owners' acknowledgment of the potential farming activities and receipt of the Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands information.



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- policy 4A-5.3 **Cluster Development:** Clustered lots within or adjacent to an NRL designation shall be placed to minimize potential impacts to natural resource land production on both the subject property and any adjacent resource lands.
- policy 4A-5.4 **Residential Setbacks:** All residential development adjacent to agricultural resource lands shall be set back from common property lines in order to protect agriculture from the impacts of incompatible development and to mitigate against the effects of agricultural operations on the residential developments.
- policy 4A-5.5 **Skagit Drainage and Fish Initiative:** Within the Drainage Districts, identified in the Skagit Drainage and Fish Initiative, the agreements for maintenance, fish protection, and habitat restoration outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will predominate over local regulations. The MOU, developed by the Western Washington Agricultural Association (WWAA) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) is designed to reduce conflicts between different users in the Skagit and Samish River Deltas. The Skagit River Systems Cooperative (SRSC) participated in meetings and this Initiative represents movement toward overall reduced conflicts. This policy supports this movement.
- policy 4A-5.6 **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.

Forest Resource Lands

Goal 4B Forest Resource Lands.

Forest Resource Lands are those lands that due to soils, climate, topography, parcel size, and location have long-term commercial significance for forestry. Skagit County is committed to preserving and enhancing the forest land base and promoting a strong forestry industry. The intent of these goals and policies is to ensure that forest lands of “long-term commercial significance” are conserved and managed to provide for sustainable forest yields, job

Commented [RW-P63]: Existing plan contains no goal with this number.



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stability, ecological values and the strengthening of a viable commercial forest industry in Skagit County. Conservation of forest land resources must be achieved through measures designed to preserve the land base, reduce the conversion of forest lands to other uses, prevent incompatible development on or adjacent to resource lands, and provide incentives to managing forest lands of all sizes for forestry.

Designation And Density Policies

Goal 4B-1 Establish land use designation criteria and densities for forest resource lands.

policy 4B-1.1 Industrial Forest Land Designation Criteria: The following criteria [together with the Washington Department of Commerce Minimum Guidelines to Classify Forest Resource Lands in WAC 365-190-060](#), shall be considered when classifying Industrial Forest lands:

- (a) All lands in unincorporated Skagit County shall be screened for Industrial Forest designation based on an average parcel size of 40 acres or greater, with one or more of the following characteristics:
 - (i) The area contains WA State Department of Revenue – Private Forest Land Grade (PFLG) soils 1-5.
 - (ii) The area includes lands which are primarily devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber.
- (b) Lands meeting (a), located in blocks of contiguous parcels approximately 160 acres and larger, shall be designated Industrial Forest.
- (c) Parcels meeting both (a) and (b) above shall be further evaluated for inclusion or exclusion in Industrial Forest Lands based upon the following additional factors:
 - (i) The parcel is enrolled in a current-use tax assessment program under the provisions of RCW 84.33 and 84.34 as it pertains to forestry. Such current-use tax assessment status is not, by itself, a sufficient determining factor for inclusion or exclusion, but is only part of the relevant characteristics to be considered.



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(ii) The area has limited public services and facilities (although the area may be located within a public water district).

(iii) The land is not already characterized by urban growth, and designation considers the effects of proximity to population areas.

(d) Parcels not meeting any of the criteria above in (a), (b), or (c) may still be included to provide logical boundaries to the Industrial Forest lands designation and to avoid small “islands” or “peninsulas” of conflicting non-resource land uses in the midst of resource lands. Similarly, parcels that meet some or all of the criteria above in (a), (b), or (c) may be excluded to provide logical boundaries to the Industrial Forest lands designation and to avoid conflict with existing land uses. For example, areas with pre-existing conditions such as vested subdivisions and rural development, other than isolated pre-existing single-family homes, where commercial forestry is not being practiced, and islands surrounded by multiple sized parcels with existing residences, shall not be classified as Industrial Forest lands. However, isolated, pre-existing residences shall not preclude the adjacent forest land areas from being classified Industrial Forest.

policy 4B-1.2 Industrial Forest Resource Land Parcel Density Policy: Residential gross densities for new land divisions in lands designated as Industrial Forest shall be one (1) residential dwelling unit per 80 acres or 1/8 of a section.

policy 4B-1.3 Secondary Forest Resource Land Designation Criteria: The following criteria shall be considered when designating Secondary Forest lands:

(a) Secondary Forest lands are derived from initially designated Industrial Forest lands, and are located primarily within a ¼ mile band at the perimeter of Industrial Forest lands which contain one or more of the following characteristics:

(i) The area contains WA State Department of Revenue – Private Forest Land Grade (PFLG) soils 1-5.

Commented [A64]: WAC 365-190-060
 There are 3 main criteria – land is not already urban, land is used or capable of being used for forestry, and the land has long-term commercial significance. There are also consideration of the effects of proximity to population areas.
 Added “iii” to encapsulate the topics that did not appear to be directly mentioned.



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- (ii) The area includes lands which are primarily devoted to and used for growing and harvesting timber.
- (b) The above-described parcels shall be further evaluated for inclusion or exclusion based on the following additional factors:
 - (i) The parcel is enrolled in a current-use tax assessment program under the provisions of RCW 84.33 and 84.34 as it pertains to forestry. Such current-use tax assessment status is not by itself a sufficient determining factor for inclusion or exclusion, but is only part of the relevant characteristics to be considered.
 - (ii) The area has limited public services and facilities (although the area may be located within a public water district).
 - (iii) Secondary Forest lands need not be designated adjacent to Agricultural lands.
- (c) Parcels that do not meet any of the criteria described above in (a) or (b) may still be included or excluded to provide logical boundaries to the Secondary Forest lands designation and to avoid small “islands” or “peninsulas” of conflicting non-resource land uses in the midst of resource lands. Isolated, pre-existing residences shall not preclude the adjacent forest land areas from being classified Secondary Forest.

policy 4B-1.4 Secondary Forest Parcel Density Policy: Residential gross densities for new land divisions in lands designated as Secondary Forest shall be one (1) residential dwelling unit per 20 acres or 1/32 of a section.

Guiding Principles ~~General Policy Goals~~: Forest Resource Lands

Protect the forest resource; promote forestry; minimize the loss of the resource land base; mitigate unavoidable losses; and replace lost resources whenever possible. These principles shall guide Skagit County’s actions to:

- Limit new non-forestry uses and activities on forest resource lands;
- Provide education and support services that strengthen and diversify the forestry industry;



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- Promote the economic and regulatory stability of the forest industry;
- Resolve conflicts between forestry activities and non-forestry activities; and
- Carry out adopted policies and programs, and enforce regulations.

Forestry Support Programs

Goal 4B-2 Support the Forestry Advisory Board and establish other support programs for the purpose of promoting a viable forest land base and healthy forest products industry.

policy 4B-2.1 **Forestry Advisory Board:** A Forest Advisory Board comprised of forest industry representatives, agency representatives, and sustainable forestry advocates shall advise Skagit County in achieving these goals and policies.

policy 4B-2.2 **Forestry and Critical Area/Habitat Goals:** The Forest Advisory Board (FAB) will develop a County-coordinated working group of non-profit organizations, industry groups and County agencies to reconcile, where possible, conflicts between the goals of protecting critical areas and habitat with those of preserving forest land for commercial forestry purposes.

policy 4B-2.3 **Natural Resource Information Clearinghouse:** Establish a Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse to provide information and technical assistance to the forest industries and forest landowners to conserve forest lands, promote sustainable management practices, encourage economic and market opportunities.

policy 4B-2.4 **Promote Sustainable Forestry Practices:** Provide information to landowners about sustainable forestry practices, best management practices, and industry standards to promote sound forestry practices.

policy 4B-2.5 **Healthy Forest Initiative:** Skagit County [should continue to](#) supports a county-wide initiative to adopt elements of the “President’s Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003,” including [promote](#) fuel-reduction and forest restoration projects in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other federal and state agencies.

Commented [A65]: The FAB’s “Rural Forestry Initiative” proposal is one outgrowth of this effort.



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- policy 4B-2.6 **Right to Manage Forest Resource Lands:** Goal E, Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands of this Element, applies to all lands designated Forest Resource Lands to protect forest landowner rights to manage their lands for forestry uses.
- policy 4B-2.7 **Fire Prevention and Protection:** Residential development allowed on Industrial Forest Resource Lands shall be limited to those areas located within an existing fire protection district and within 200 feet of a county road or state highway. Skagit County shall require owners of all structures built in the designated forest lands to address forest fire prevention, reduction, and control. The Forest Advisory Board shall review the implementation of this policy annually to ensure its performance.
- policy 4B-2.8 **Promote Public Education and Awareness:** Educate the public on forestry issues, policies and programs regarding forestry in Skagit County. Encourage community awareness of and commitment to an economically and environmentally healthy forest industry, forestry achievements, and challenges faced by the industry in Skagit County.
- policy 4B-2.9 **Promote Educational Programs:** Encouraged educational programs for public schools and extended education programs as part of the basic education of the county’s youth. Emphasize the contribution of forestry in the county and the need to protect and preserve this valuable industry.
- policy 4B-2.10 **Promote Economic Stability and Diversity:** Promote and foster new opportunities to achieve a stable and diversified forest products industry in Skagit County. Encourage and support programs to help the forest products and related industries expand into new market niches.
- policy 4B-2.11 **Wildfire Planning Program:** Consider adopting Continue the Department of Natural Resources 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.

Commented [A66]: Edit recommended by Planning Commission in response to public comment.

Commented [A67]: Conservation district has developed a program in cooperation with Skagit County and others.

<http://www.skagitcd.org/firewise>



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Preserve the Forest Land Base

Goal 4B-3 Preserve and enhance the forest land base as an essential component of a healthy forest economy.

policy 4B-3.1 **Conserve Forest Lands:** Implement conservation and management measures that retain commercial forestry activities in designated forest resource lands.

policy 4B-3.2 **Consolidated Ownership:** Forest resource landowners are encouraged to consolidate forest ownership through land trades, or other means, to ensure consistent and effective management within the forest resource land base.

policy 4B-3.3 **Long-Term Designation of Forest Lands:** Designation of Forest Lands is intended to be long-term. De-designation is discouraged, but may be considered only when compelled by changes in public policy, errors in designation, new information on resource lands or critical areas, or other circumstances beyond the control of the landowner, or an overriding benefit to the forest industry. Consider the development of mitigation measures and criteria for the loss of productive lands.

Encourage Commercial Forestry

Goal 4B-4 Encourage active forest management in designated forestlands and other natural resource lands.

policy 4B-4.1 **Develop Forestry Incentive Options Program:** The County will work with the Forestry Advisory Board and other entities to develop an incentive program to promote preservation of forest land for forestry. Consideration will be given to:

- The loss of land base due to the protection of environmentally sensitive areas;
- Compensation for development rights;
- The promotion of healthy forests; and
- The loss of land base to habitat conservation areas.



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The County will make a determination of the state of the forestry economy, the land base, the actual threats and opportunities, types of available, practical and appropriate to the local economy, and the implications to local taxpayers and fiscal health of the County.

- policy 4B-4.2 **Forestry in Agricultural and Rural Designations:** Growing and harvesting of trees shall be supported in designated agricultural and rural land designations.
- policy 4B-4.3 **Qualification For Current Use Tax Status:** Land owners participating in a current-use tax deferral program may be required by the Skagit County Assessor to certify, on an annual basis, that the conditions required for eligibility in the tax program are still being met, and further, that the owner acknowledge the requirement to pay any applicable penalties and back taxes should the owner fail to comply with program requirements.
- policy 4B-4.4 **Discourage Tax Districts and LIDs:** Special purpose taxing districts and local improvement districts that plan to expand into Industrial Forest Lands, allowing as a result new residential or commercial development, shall be required to provide an analysis of impacts and related mitigation of such new, non-resource development on established commercial forestry operations.

Allowable Land Uses

Goal 4B-5 Allow land uses on designated forest land that conserve forest practices, provide essential forestry support services, and promote diverse forest-based industries.

- policy 4B-5.1 **Intended Use of Industrial and Secondary Forest Lands:** The principal uses of Industrial Forest and Secondary Forest lands are the practice of commercial forestry, forestry support services, and forest-based businesses. Secondary Forest lands are intended to provide a transitional density between Rural-designated lands and Industrial Forest lands. Secondary Forest lands also offer the potential for smaller-scale commercial timber operations, supporting natural resource industries, and limited residential uses. Secondary Forest lands may include low-density residential use if consistent



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with the goals and policies of this chapter. Mining is also allowed in Industrial Forest and Secondary Forest on parcels located within a Mineral Resource Overlay designation.

policy 4B-5.2 **Support and Ancillary Structures and Uses:** Temporary and permanent support uses that are related to forestry are allowed in forest lands. Festivals, logging shows, and demonstration areas, mining uses where designated, limited residential development, and non-residential structures subordinate to forest management may be allowed if it is demonstrated that there is compatibility with the goals and policies of this chapter.

policy 4B-5.3 **Residential Development:** Residential development on all Forest Resource Land shall have limited impact on forest resource management operations and minimize conflicts. Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD) land divisions are encouraged in all forest lands with the residences sited as far as possible from adjacent Industrial Forest lands.

policy 4B-5.4 **Recreational and Park Uses:** Recreational opportunities on Forest Resource land shall be permitted uses where they will not conflict with forest practice activities on these lands or when such impacts can be fully mitigated. Proposed acquisitions of forest land for public recreational, scenic and park purposes shall be evaluated to determine the potential impacts on the economic viability and sustainability of forestry. Lands removed from forestry production for recreation and park uses shall be included in the Converted Natural Resource Lands Database (Policy 4F-1.4).

policy 4B-5.5 **Natural Resource Conservation Areas (NRCA) and Natural Area Preserves (NAP),** as defined by RCW 79.71, shall be considered compatible with Industrial Forest. However, Skagit County strongly encourages that these lands be maintained in forest production. If NRCA or NAP lands are taken out of forestry production, they shall be included in the Converted Natural Resource Lands Database (Policy 4F-1.4).

policy 4B-5.6 **Special Events and Activities:** Special events and activities on Forest Resource lands shall be conducted in ways that reduce potential impacts resulting from the activity. Those impacts include but are not limited to traffic, litter, trespass, and sanitation.



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Minimize Land Use Conflicts

Goal 4B-6 Minimize land use conflicts and promote mitigation of conflicts on the lands adjacent to Forest Lands.

policy 4B-6.1 **Deed Restrictions:** All real estate transactions involving development on or within one-quarter (1/4) mile of Forest Resource lands shall contain recorded documentation of the owners' acknowledgment of the potential forestry activities and receipt of the Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Land information.

policy 4B-6.2 **Land Use Buffers:** Land use buffers or setbacks intended to mitigate for critical areas or potential conflicts between residential and forestry uses shall be located on the area proposed for residential, or other non-resource use or development.

policy 4B-6.3 **Law Enforcement Support:** Skagit County shall provide an officer from the Sheriff's Department to protect against damage to private property, materials, and equipment, and to improve investigation and prosecuting efforts on behalf of protecting forest natural resource lands, land owners, and their contractors.

Effective Regulatory Environment

Goal 4B-7 Establish, in all aspects of forest management regulations, support for the forest product industry and its ability to keep and economically manage forest lands.

policy 4B-7.1 **Local Regulations:** Maintain efficient, effective local forest policies, ordinances, and programs.

policy 4B-7.2 **Coordinated Review with Department of Natural Resources:** Skagit County will work with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to formally establish a coordinated review process designed to transfer the processing of Forest Practice Act (FPA) conversion applications from the DNR to the County as required by Chapter 76.09 RCW and Title 222 WAC. A



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Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) shall address:

- (a) A coordinated and efficient review process for all forest practices applications where Skagit County has jurisdiction;
- (b) Conditions of approval by Skagit County for such forest practice applications consistent with Chapter 76.09 RCW and Title 222 WAC;
- (c) A facilitation process for landowners wishing to utilize the conversion option harvest plan as outlined under WAC 222-20-050; and
- (d) Criteria for permitting only those recreational activities that are compatible with resource management. The proposed recreational uses shall not adversely affect the intent of these forest resource policies.

policy 4B-7.3 **Building and Land Use Moratorium:** A six-year moratorium on all building permits and land use approvals shall be mandatory for all forest practice activities involving those portions of land harvested under the provisions of a Forest Practice application, where the landowner has not indicated that the land will be converted. If applicable, measures will be taken to exclude cedar salvage and work to carry out a Road Maintenance and Abandonment Plan (RMAP); and

policy 4B-7.4 **Alternative Conversion Option Harvest Plan Process:** Skagit County will work with forest land owners to establish an alternative Conversion Option Harvest Plan (COHP) process for the purpose of expediting and minimizing the cost of certain non-conversion forest practice activities as follows:

- (a) Salvage operations as defined in WAC 222-16-010.
- (b) Forest Practices on partially converted or vacant property (over 2 acres) which was platted after January 1, 1960, where the landowner does not have immediate intent to convert the timbered portion thereof.



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Rural Resource Lands

Goal 4C [Conserve Rural Resource Lands that have characteristics of long-term agricultural, forest or mineral lands of long-term commercial significance and have the potential for multiple use or smaller scale resource management.](#)

Rural Resource lands are, generally, areas that have the combined land and land-use characteristics of long-term agricultural, forest or mineral lands [of longterm commercial significance](#), and have the potential for multiple use or smaller scale resource management. Rural Resource lands generally are not managed for industrial-scale farming or forestry but nevertheless contribute to the natural resource land base. Where the Mineral Resource Overlay designation is also applied, industrial-scale mining can occur.

Commented [A68]: Clarifies that Rural Resource – NRLs are resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

Rural Resource Designation Criteria

Goal 4C-1 [Establish land use designation criteria and residential densities for Rural Resource lands.](#)

policy 4C-1.1 **Rural Resource Land Designation Criteria:** All lands in rural unincorporated Skagit County not designated as Agriculture, Industrial Forest or Secondary Forest are subject to Rural Resource lands designation according to the following criteria:

- (a) All parcels approximately 40 acres or greater that contain one or both of “Prime upland farmland soils” as determined by USDA Soil Conservation Service (see [Natural Resource Lands Profile](#) [the narrative](#)), or Washington State Department of Revenue - private forest land grades (PFLG) 1 – 3.
- (b) Lands meeting (a) above that comprise contiguous areas of approximately 160 acres and larger; provided that any parcel 40 acres or larger that is located contiguous to any land designated Agriculture, Industrial Forest or Secondary Forest generally may be designated Rural Resource regardless of whether it is contained within such a large area.



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- (c) Parcels meeting both (a) and (b) above shall be further evaluated for inclusion or exclusion in Rural Resource Lands based upon the following additional factors:
 - (i) Participation in a current-use tax assessment program. Such current-use tax assessment status is not, by itself, a determining factor for inclusion or exclusion, but is only part of the relevant characteristics to be considered;
 - (ii) Whether the area is currently in small-scale agriculture or forestry use or has been in agricultural or forestry use within the preceding ten years, and minimal improvements or financial expenditures have been made to non-resource related uses in the area as a whole. Construction of a single-family residence on any parcel of land shall not be deemed a sufficient non-resource related expenditure for purposes of this subsection; and
 - (iii) Whether the area has limited availability of public services and facilities (although the area may be located within a public water district).
- (d) Parcels that do not meet any of the criteria described above in (a), (b), or (c) may be designated as Rural Resource to provide logical boundaries to the Rural Resource lands designation and to avoid small “islands” or “peninsulas” of conflicting non-resource land uses in the midst of resource lands. Similarly, parcels that meet some or all of the criteria described above in (a), (b), or (c) may be excluded to provide logical boundaries to the Rural Resource lands designation and to avoid conflict with existing land uses.

policy 4C-1.2 **Rural Resource Land Density Policy:** The standard maximum residential density in Rural Resource Land for new land divisions shall be one dwelling unit per 40 acres, or 1/16 of a section. One dwelling unit per 10 acres may be allowed if a condition, covenant, restriction or a conservation easement is executed that is designed to encourage long-term forest and agricultural



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land conservation consistent with the Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD) land division regulations.

Guiding Principles ~~General Policy Goals~~: Rural Resource Lands

Allow a range of natural resource related uses on Rural Resource land and provide for reasonable uses of the land that will be compatible with the long-term production of agricultural and forest products. These principles shall guide Skagit County’s actions to:

- Preserve Rural Resource lands primarily for agricultural and forestry uses;
- Promote the rural qualities that characterize Skagit County; and
- Resolve conflicts between natural resource related activities and non-resource activities.

Resource Lands Support Programs

Goal 4C-2 Establish programs to provide information and technical assistance to Rural Resource Lands managers and planners.

policy 4C-2.1 **Natural Resource Information Clearinghouse:** Establish a Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse to provide information and technical assistance to owners of Rural Resource lands to conserve natural resource lands, promote sustainable management practices, encourage economic and market opportunities, and provide other vital information.

policy 4C-2.2 **Rural Resource Lands Database:** Develop a Rural Resource lands database including information on soil types, land use, productivity and ownership to promote appropriate future land use planning on these lands.

Allowable Land Uses

Goal 4C-3 Allow uses in Rural Resource Lands that further the use of the lands for the production of agricultural, forest and mining products and uses.



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policy 4C-3.1 **Principal uses** of Rural Resource Lands include natural resource production and businesses that support or are compatible with agriculture, forestry and mining activities.

policy 4C-3.2 **Accessory uses** allowed on Rural Resource Lands include agricultural and forest-based businesses and small businesses that support or are compatible with natural resource production.

policy 4C-3.3 **Residential uses** are allowed on Rural Resource Lands consistent with the density policies of this chapter.

Minimize Land Use Conflicts

Goal 4C-4 Minimize land use conflicts and promote mitigation for potential conflicts on the non-Rural Resource property.

policy 4C-4.1 **Right to Manage Rural Resource Lands:** Goal 4E, Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands, applies to all lands designated Rural Resource to protect landowner rights to manage their lands for natural resource production.

policy 4C-4.2 **Deed Restrictions:** All real estate transactions involving development on or within one-quarter (1/4) mile of Rural Resource lands shall contain recorded documentation of the residential owners' acknowledgment of the potential natural resource management activities and receipt of the Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands information.

policy 4C-4.3 **Special Events and Activities:** Special events such as festivals and fairs proposed for Rural Resource lands shall only be permitted when impacts such as traffic, litter, trespass, and sanitation are mitigated.



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Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO)

Goal 4D [Conserve mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance where mining and processing activities are economically and environmentally feasible and where conflicts with other land uses can be minimized.](#)

Skagit County supports environmentally responsible and safe mineral resource extraction and processing activities. Mineral resource lands where mining and processing activities are economically and environmentally feasible and where conflicts with other land uses can be minimized are to be identified and designated as a Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO) to conserve mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance. Because mineral extraction sites can take 20 to 40 years or longer to excavate, identifying and protecting opportunities for mineral extraction operations requires a long-term planning horizon.

Extraction and processing of construction material such as sand and gravel make up most of the mining activity in Skagit County, although there is significant hard-rock mining and processing of such resources as olivine, various other “green rock,” and limestone. Protection of these mineral resources from competing land uses ensures the availability of basic building materials, and helps to reduce costs, as producers would otherwise be forced to transport low value, high volume commodities over long distances.

The potential for mining without adverse impacts is greatest in relatively undeveloped areas. Valuable and non-replaceable resources in these areas are preserved, to the extent possible, by indicating that mining will be the preferred land use for these areas, and by establishing guidelines for adjacent land uses that will help reduce potential conflicts with mining. Extractive industries can conflict with residential uses in several ways, including potential noise, dust and hazards from blasting, rock crushing and heavy truck traffic. Therefore, it is important to establish firm policies and regulations to protect public health and safety, while also preserving a valuable part of Skagit County’s economy, now and into the future.

Concerns and issues related to mining activities in riverine areas are addressed in the Skagit County Shoreline Management Master Program. Concerns and issues related to metal mining are addressed at the state level. The Washington [State](#) Department of Natural Resources and the [Washington State](#) Department of Ecology have previously codified the Washington State metal mining law. This element proposes not to allow chemical leach mining in Skagit County until state laws are enacted to allow such activities.



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Goal 4D-1 Designate and map long-term commercially significant mineral resource lands as an overlay to the Comprehensive Plan Map.

policy 4D-1.1 **Mineral Resource Designation Criteria:** Designate Mineral Resource Overlay based on geologic, environmental and economic factors, existing land uses, [land ownership](#), surrounding parcel sizes, and additional criteria specified in this element [and in the Minimum Guidelines to Classify Mineral Lands in WAC 365-190-070](#). Designating mineral resources of long-term commercial significance is not limited by a projection of need. Like agricultural and forest lands, mineral resources are protected for the long-term. The following first tier of criteria relies primarily on geologic information to identify commercially significant mineral resource lands and shall be considered when designating Mineral Resource Overlay areas.

- (a) Marketability. Lands containing minerals that are minable, recoverable, and are historically, and therefore anticipated to be, commercially traded are considered marketable.
- (b) Minimum Threshold Volume. Construction materials (sand and gravel) and quarry rock are considered for mining when the estimated volume is such that establishing, maintaining and reclaiming the mine would be practical. For the minerals below, minimum threshold volumes are relatively constant compared to market values and are used in the mining industry as predictors of commercial significance. The application of these criteria is approximate using the estimated area and depth of the identified resource.
 - (i) Construction materials: A minimum threshold volume of 1,000,000 cubic yards shall be used to identify commercially significant deposits of sand, gravel, and pit run rock, capable of being used in construction, that normally requiring minimal processing (commonly washing and grading).
 - (ii) Quarry rock: A Minimum Threshold Volume of 1,000,000 cubic yards shall be used to identify commercially significant deposits of quarry rock products, such as shot rock meeting all strength and durability specifications of the Washington State



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Department of Transportation’s 2004 Standard Specifications for Road, Bridge and Municipal Construction (or later editions).

- (c) Minimum Threshold Value. All other mineral resources shall use a minimum threshold value to identify commercially significant mineral resource deposits. The values in 2000 equivalent dollars shall be met or exceeded. Threshold value is the projected value (gross selling price) of the first marketable product from an individual mineral deposit, upon completion of the extraction and any required mineral separation and processing. The threshold values are intended to indicate in a general way the approximate minimum size of a mineral deposit that will be considered significant for designation. The values are not intended, nor in practice could they be, for use as precise threshold values.
 - (i) Industrial and Chemical Mineral Materials: Minimum Value \$1,000,000. Non-metallic mineral materials, such as building and dimension stone, limestone, or specialty sands, which normally receive extensive processing.
 - (ii) Metallic and Rare Minerals: Minimum Value \$500,000. Metallic elements and minerals, gemstones, and minerals that possess special properties valuable to science or industry, including dunite and other olivine-rich rock.
 - (iii) Non-fluid Mineral Fuels: Minimum Value \$1,000,000. Non-hydrothermal mineral fuels occurring in sedimentary rocks such as coal bed methane, bituminous coal, lignite, peat, organic shale, tar sand, uranium and thorium.

policy 4D-1.2 **Standards for Geologic Information:** Adequate information for the purpose of designating areas within the Mineral Resource Overlay shall consist of, but not be limited to, site-specific information prepared by a licensed geologist, U.S. geological survey maps, and/or information on file with the Washington Department of Natural Resources.

policy 4D-1.3 **Mineral Resource Designation Considerations:** All lands meeting the criteria in Policy 4D-1.1 shall be further reviewed considering the following additional



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criteria. Certain limited pre-existing designated MRO lands that may not meet the criteria below may retain their MRO status to address unique economic circumstances or access-to-market.

- (a) General land use patterns in the area;
 - (i) Designate MRO only on lands designated as Industrial Forest, Secondary Forest, or Rural Resource.
 - (ii) Designate MRO lands outside National Park Service lands, National Forest Service lands, Wild and Scenic corridors, Agricultural Resource lands, and Open Space of Regional/Statewide Importance.
 - (iii) Residential gross densities for land designated as MRO shall be no greater than 1 residential dwelling unit per 10 acres.
 - (iv) The preferred land uses adjacent to designated mining sites are open space, forestry, or industrial uses.
- (b) Surrounding parcel sizes and surrounding land uses. Designate MRO lands in areas with surrounding land uses that have a maximum designated density of 1 residence per 10 acres. Appropriate surrounding land use zoning for MRO lands include: Industrial Forest, Secondary Forest, Rural Resource, Rural Reserve, Natural Resource Industrial and other industrial uses;
- (c) Availability of public roads and other public services. Although mining within one to two miles of public roads is preferred, designation of mineral resources beyond this range may be necessary to preserve resources for future use;
- (d) Division or zoning for urban or small lots. Designate MRO areas ¼ mile away from Rural Villages, Rural Intermediate, and Urban Growth Areas, except in limited cases where pre-existing MRO mineral extraction areas may be retained to address unique economic circumstances or proximity-to-market. Conservation and Reserve Developments are acceptable on and within ¼ mile of MROs, provided that the allowed

Commented [A69]: It does not make sense to discuss designating as MRO areas already designated MRO ("pre-existing MRO areas.") Policy appears to refer to pre-existing mining operations instead.



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density (with or without a density bonus) does not exceed 1 dwelling unit per 10 acres.

- (e) Accessibility and/or distance from point of use. Although mining is preferred within two hours driving distance from incorporated cities or other points of use, designation of mineral resources beyond this range may be necessary to preserve resources for future use;
- (f) Physical and topographic characteristics of the site or area do not preclude mining;
- (g) Depth of the resource or its overburden does not preclude mining;
- (h) Physical properties (such as strength or durability) and quality of resource (such as the percentage of fines in the resource) is sufficient to be marketable;
- (i) Life of the resource is sufficient to be marketable;
- (j) Resource availability in the region. All mineral resources of long-term commercial significance are designated. This helps to ensure that resources are available, and local industry can be responsive to future demand; and
- (k) Policies and regulations are in place to mitigate the potential effects of sediments and pollutants on public drinking water.

policy 4D-1.4 **Mineral Resource Overlay Density Policies:** Residential gross densities on or within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of a Mineral Resource Overlay shall be no greater than 1 residential dwelling unit per 10 acres. New subdivisions with densities greater than 1 unit per 10 acres may be permitted only if the additional development rights can be transferred to and clustered on that portion of the same property lying outside of $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the MRO, consistent with the Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD) land division regulations.



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Guiding Principles ~~General Policy~~ Goals: Mineral Resource Overlay

Maintain and enhance conservation of long-term commercially significant mineral resource lands so that use of, and access to these lands is not precluded by conflicting land uses through the designation of a Mineral Resource Overlay. These principles shall guide Skagit County’s actions to:

- Maintain and enhance conservation of long-term commercially significant mineral resource lands.
- Maximize compatibility between mineral extraction operations and other land uses.
- Reduce conflicts between mining operations and adjacent land uses so that access to mineral lands is not precluded by conflicting land uses; and
- Promote the economic and regulatory stability of the mining industry.

Conserve Mineral Resource Lands

Goal 4D-2 Protect and conserve mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

policy 4D-2.1 **Designate Mineral Resource Overlay:** Areas meeting the criteria for mineral lands of long-term commercial significance shall be identified as Mineral Resource Overlay on the Comprehensive Plan Land Use and Zoning Map.

policy 4D-2.2 **Allowable Mineral Extraction Activities:** Activities associated with mineral extraction operations are those activities that further develop the base product of the mineral being extracted. Examples of these activities include washing, crushing, asphalt plants, and concrete batch plants. Associated activities shall be allowed as a hearing examiner special use within the Mineral Resource Overlay or in areas designated Natural Resource Industrial – NRI. Those associated activities must meet the requirements of the Special Use Permit specific to those areas and must be listed as permitted uses in those Districts. Temporary activities associated with construction projects may be permitted as part of the related construction permit review and may be conditioned as necessary to address applicable mining regulations.



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policy 4D-2.3 **Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse:** Establish a Natural Resource Information Clearinghouse to collect and disseminate information to benefit long-term productive management of natural resource lands, including mineral resource areas. Functions of the Natural Resource Lands Clearinghouse are described under Goal F of this Chapter, but ~~shall~~ should include ~~at a minimum:~~ information on mining practices, reclamation, promotion of mining products, and public awareness, and education regarding mining activities.

Reduce Land Use Conflicts

Goal 4D-3 Discourage incompatibility and reduce conflicts between mineral extraction operations and other land uses.

policy 4D-3.1 **Exclusive Mineral Resource Overlay:** The Mineral Resource Overlay adds additional uses and related requirements to the Industrial Forest, Secondary Forest, Rural Resource, and Natural Resource Industrial districts of the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map. New mining is limited to the MRO, subject to applicable permits. However, pre-existing, permitted mining operations outside the Mineral Resource Overlay may operate subject to the terms of the existing approval(s). Such operations may expand beyond the scope of the original permit but within the existing parcel provided that they receive a mining special-use permit.

policy 4D-3.2 **Right to Manage Mineral Resource Lands:** The provisions of Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands shall apply to all lands designated Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO) to protect mineral resource landowner rights to manage their lands for mining uses.

policy 4D-3.3 **Deed Restrictions:** All real estate transactions involving residential development on or within one-quarter (1/4) mile of mineral resource lands shall contain recorded documentation of the residential owners' acknowledgment of the mineral extraction activities and receipt of the Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands information.

policy 4D-3.4 **Development Regulations:** Development regulations for the Mineral Resource Overlay shall identify permitted uses in MRO lands.



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policy 4D-3.5 **Siting Adjacent Residential Development:** New residential development adjacent to a designated Mineral Resource Overlay should be sited to help minimize potential conflicts between residences and mining operations.

policy 4D-3.6 **Mining Site Buffer Standards:** Mining buffer standards shall maintain the purpose and functions of mineral resource lands. These standards shall require equivalent buffers on mining sites and on adjacent properties with the exception of mines adjacent to mines. Excavation shall not occur within the buffer of any mine except during reclamation and on mines adjacent to mines. Storage of topsoil and excavation associated with reclamation area may be allowed in buffers.

policy 4D-3.7 **Mining Activities Buffer Standards:** Buffers and setbacks should be provided for all activities associated with mineral extraction operations in addition to those required for mineral resource areas.

Effective Regulatory Environment

Goal 4D-4 Coordinate and implement administrative procedures that encourage consistency among permitting jurisdictions and simplify permitting procedures for the applicants and Skagit County.

policy 4D-4.1 **Coordinate State and Local Regulations:** Development regulations for mineral resource lands in the county shall be consistent with applicable Washington State mining regulations and Department of Natural Resources rules. Overlap in the regulatory authority between Skagit County and the DNR may occur to ensure public health and safety in matters not under the DNR’s jurisdiction.

policy 4D-4.2 **Improve Local Permit Process:** Consider a process to allow certain mining operations by administrative special-use permit, if certain defined criteria are met. Such a process should include a requirement to upgrade the level of review to a hearing examiner special-use permit, if information relating to potential adverse environmental impacts or other factors warrant additional public review. Also establish criteria for appeal and public notification requirements.



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Safe Operations

Goal 4D-5 Ensure safety and minimize off site disturbances associated with operating equipment, noise, dust, glare, vibrations and truck traffic.

policy 4D-5.1 **Noise Impacts:** Sound levels, as measured on properties adjacent to the mining site, shall conform to the provisions of WAC Section 173-60-040, Maximum Permissible Environmental Noise Levels.

policy 4D-5.2 **Traffic Impacts:** Potential effects of truck traffic from mining operations shall be reviewed as part of the permitting process.

policy 4D-5.3 **Roads and Bridges:** New public roads and bridges accessing designated Mineral Resource Overlay Areas shall be designed to sustain the necessary traffic for mineral extraction operations. Existing roads and bridges shall be improved as needed as each new extraction operation is developed. Cost sharing for the improvement of roads and bridges shall be negotiated between the permitting authorities and the applicant.

policy 4D-5.4 **Operation Hours:** Standards for hours of operations, appropriate for the underlying land-use designation, shall be established for mineral extraction operations. In determining appropriate hours of operation, consider traffic impacts and requirements, nearby uses, and noise impacts. Project-specific circumstances that demand non-standard or 'off-peak' hours may also be considered.

policy 4D-5.5 **Blasting Timing:** Vibrations from blasting operations and underground blasts causing noticeable vibrations shall be limited to daylight hours when adjacent to residential areas. Blasts should be scheduled for regular and predictable times except in the case of emergencies. Blasting shall be conducted in accordance with the state permit.

policy 4D-5.6 **Noise and Blasting Mitigation:** Site-specific studies shall be conducted to determine appropriate mitigation or noise and blasting for new operations and expansion areas of existing operations. Standards shall be maintained to implement existing and accepted methods by which vibrations and noise



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shall be measured and appropriate mitigation established to alleviate incompatibilities.

- policy 4D-5.7 **Pre-Existing Mining Operations:** Pre-existing, legally operating commercial mining operations outside the Mineral Resource Overlay may continue to operate subject to the terms of the existing approval(s). Such operations may expand beyond the scope of the original approval and within the existing parcel boundary provided that they receive a mining special-use permit.
- policy 4D-5.8 **Chemical Leach Mining:** Chemical leach mining shall not be allowed until State laws are enacted which address their impacts.

Water Quality

Goal 4D-6 Ensure that water quality protection standards associated with mining operations comply with best management practices.

- policy 4D-6.1 **Reclamation Plan:** Support the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) requirement that reclamation plans specify how overburden and spoil material is to be handled and placed in a manner which will control erosion, dust, sedimentation or leaching of material and hazardous substances into surface or ground waters.
- policy 4D-6.2 **Storage Ponds:** Storage pond systems for holding mineral processing waters should be designed to preclude untreated discharge as required by federal and state laws.
- policy 4D-6.3 **Erosion Prevention:** The flow of natural or process runoff from mineral extraction sites shall be dispersed or regulated such that soil erosion on receiving lands is prevented. Natural runoff includes: Any water that runs on disturbed ground, including stormwater and 'process water' that flows through operation.
- policy 4D-6.4 **Aquifer Barriers:** Surface mining shall be vertically limited to only one aquifer unless specifically approved by the Washington State Department of Ecology. Hydrological barriers separating aquifers shall not otherwise be destroyed.



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- policy 4D-6.5 **Aquifer Reclamation:** Reclamation of disturbed aquifers shall be in accordance with federal, state and local law. Disturbed aquifers should be reclaimed as ponds or lakes. On-site material is preferred where an aquifer has been breached.
- policy 4D-6.6 **Aquifer Protection:** Activities related to mineral extraction and processing operations in the vicinity of open aquifers must provide safeguards including containment, to prevent contamination to the open aquifer.
- policy 4D-6.7 **Grading Adjacent to Water Bodies:** Post-mining slopes in an aquifer shall be reclaimed at a grade that allows for easy access in and out of ponds and lakes.
- policy 4D-6.8 **Groundwater Study:** Before a new sand and gravel mine is permitted, the area ground water shall be characterized by a licensed geologist, hydrogeologist or engineer.
- policy 4D-6.9 **Aquifer Monitoring:** Where a proposed mine will breach an aquifer, monitoring shall be established to measure the impact of the mining activity on water quality and supply to wells relying on the aquifer to be breached.

Public Lands

Goal 4D-7 Recognize and identify scientific resource sites as educational and recreational opportunities.

- policy 4D-7.1 **Preserve Scientific Resource Sites:** On public lands, scientific resource sites shall be protected and preserved for educational and scientific use when possible. Examples of such sites may include unique or rare occurrences of rocks, minerals, or fossils that are of outstanding scientific significance.
- policy 4D-7.2 **Recreational Interests:** When feasible, access to local recreational activities, such as fishing, boating, hiking, and camping shall be preserved.



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Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands

Goal 4E Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands.

Natural resource management operations are frequently the subjects of nuisance complaints and on occasion have been forced to cease or curtail operations. Such nuisance complaints discourage investments in natural resource land improvements to the detriment of adjacent natural resource land uses and the economic viability of the county's natural resource land industry as a whole.

Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands policies are intended to promote mutual understanding and good neighbor relationships between natural resource lands and non-natural resource land property owners. This starts by advising purchasers and users of property adjacent to or near natural resource land management operations of the inherent potential difficulties associated with living on or near natural resource lands. These may include, but are not limited to, hours of operation, the use and spraying of chemicals, pruning, harvesting, and mining activities, which occasionally generate traffic, dust, smoke, noise, [and](#) odor. Through mandatory disclosures purchasers and users will be better prepared to understand and accept the consequences of living near natural resource lands and operations.



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Guiding Principles ~~General Policy Goals~~: Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands Policies

~~Assure~~ Ensure that the uses of lands adjacent to natural resource lands do not interfere with the continued use, in the accustomed manner, for farming, forestry, mining, and related uses.

Provide to Skagit County residents notification of the County's recognition and support of the right to manage natural resource lands.

Reduce the loss to Skagit County of its natural resource lands by limiting and defining the circumstances under which natural resource lands management operations may be considered a nuisance.

Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands Notification

Goal 4E-1 Provide notice, through a disclosure statement, of the potential incompatibilities, inconveniences and discomforts, which may arise from natural resource land management activities.

policy 4E-1.1 **Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands Regulations** shall be ~~adopted~~ implemented that limit and define the circumstances under which natural resource lands management operations may be considered a nuisance. Such regulations shall not limit the right to manage natural resource lands operations when such operations are conducted or maintained for commercial purposes, and in a manner consistent with current best management practices.

policy 4E-1.2 **Right to Manage Natural Resource Lands Disclosure Statements:** Right-to-manage natural resource lands regulations shall set forth a disclosure statement, and under what circumstances and to whom such a disclosure statement shall be disseminated. The disclosure statement shall inform land owners of the potential incompatibilities, inconveniences, and discomforts which may arise from natural resource land management activities.

policy 4E-1.3 **Recording with Property Deed:** A standard disclosure form shall be recorded with deeds for all real estate transactions involving development on or within

Commented [A70]: Regulations have been adopted and are being implemented.



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one-quarter (1/4) mile of Natural Resource Lands. The disclosure form shall include recorded documentation of the residential owners' acknowledgment of the potential natural resource management activities and receipt of the Right-to-Manage Natural Resource Lands information.

Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse

Goal 4F Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse.

Skagit County operates a number of programs for the preservation of natural resource lands and related economic activities. The following goals and policies articulate ways in which these programs can be organized into a clearinghouse function to provide information relating to research, services, and education that are needed to achieve natural resource lands management goals and objectives.

Goal 4F-1 Develop a Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse to collect and disseminate information to benefit conservation and management of natural resource lands.

policy 4F-1.1 **Clearinghouse Team:** The Natural Resource Lands Information Clearinghouse work program ~~shall~~may involve the Farmland Legacy Program, Agricultural Advisory Board, Forestry Advisory Board, representatives from Mineral Resource Overlay and Rural Resource land owners, and other interested contributors.

policy 4F-1.2 **Clearinghouse Work Program:** The Clearinghouse work program ~~shall~~should include: conducting coordinated research, monitoring, training, marketing, education and funding activities related to:

- (a) Agricultural land conservation and sustainable agricultural practices, and promoting and marketing Skagit County farm products.
- (b) Forest land conservation, sustainable forest practices, developing and promoting diverse forestry products.
- (c) Rural Resource land ~~profile~~chapter, defining natural resource activities on Rural Resource lands, and assessing economic viability of natural resource production on Rural Resource lands.



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- (d) Mineral resource development, safe mining practices, reclamation planning and execution, diversification and promotion of mineral resource products.
- (e) Implementing the Right-to Manage Natural Resource Lands goals and policies and ordinances.
- (f) Promoting public awareness of natural resource land values and challenges.
- (g) Promoting educational programs in public schools that emphasize the contributions of natural resource lands to the county, and the need to protect these valuable lands.

policy 4F-1.3 **Natural Resource Lands Database:** Maintain a database management system to provide current information on natural resource land uses and activities, soils, conversions, and other quantifiable factors for the purpose of monitoring and conserving natural resource lands.

policy 4F-1.4 **Converted Natural Resource Lands Database:** The Natural Resource Lands database should identify and map, where known, those parcels of land that, although designated as a Natural Resource Land, are not available for productive resource use because of some easement, covenant, or other restriction that converts the primary use of such land to the preservation of habitat, open space, or some other non-resource-land use. This information should contribute to a more accurate assessment of the natural resource land base available for agriculture, forestry or mining uses.



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Introduction

The Environment Element provides the policy basis for the protection and regulation of critical areas as required by the GMA. Growth management, natural resource land conservation, and critical areas protection are interwoven in the framework intended to eliminate or minimize sprawl and the loss of environmental resources as well as to protect persons and property from unsafe conditions and sustain the quality of life. It is more costly to remedy the loss of critical areas than to conserve and protect them from loss or degradation. The inherent economic, social, and cultural values of critical areas should be considered in the development of strategies designed to conserve and protect lands.



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In recognition of these common concerns, classification, and designation of critical areas is intended to preclude land uses and developments that are incompatible with critical areas. There are qualitative differences between and among critical areas. Not all areas and ecosystems are critical for the same reasons. Some are critical because of the hazard they present to public health and safety, some because of the values they represent to the public welfare. In some cases, the risk posed to the public by use or development of a critical area can be mitigated or reduced by engineering or design; in other cases that risk cannot be effectively reduced except by avoidance of the critical area. Hence, classification and designation of critical areas is intended to recognize the differences between these areas, and to provide appropriate regulatory and non regulatory actions.

Preparing development regulations that preclude uses and development incompatible with critical areas does not mean a prohibition of all uses or development. Rather, it means governing changes in land uses, new activities, or development that could adversely affect critical areas. For each type of critical area, the classification system and associated development regulations should prohibit inappropriate uses and provide a basis for the review and approval of other uses and activities in keeping with these goals and policies..

Critical areas designations overlay other land use designations. That is, if two or more land use designations apply to a given parcel or a portion of a parcel, both or all designations shall be made. Best management practices should be utilized where critical areas are designated.

Future operations or expansion of existing operations should be done in consideration of protecting critical areas or reducing risks to public health, safety, and welfare.

There is a clear, positive association between strong environmental policies and a strong economy. It is the County's intent to enforce environmental policies that will conserve the natural environment and support appropriate growth and economic development.

~~This profile describes the context for the goals and policies included in the Environment Element.~~ The basis for the goals and policies is a complicated and overlapping web of federal and state laws. The GMA mandate ~~(in the Element)~~ is the umbrella through which this regulatory web is applied to the County. The GMA requires that local plans and regulations use *best available science* in establishing how they manage growth and development while protecting people, facilities, and natural environmental features from harm. An analysis of the applicable science meeting the GMA mandate is currently being prepared in order to support the Comprehensive Plan policies and the associated development regulations for wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, geologically hazardous areas, and frequently flooded areas.

Commented [A71]: This sentence seems to address split zoned properties rather than explain critical areas overlays. It appears to be unnecessary.



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Skagit County's agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, and outdoor recreation assets are unparalleled in providing a holistic set of opportunities for sustaining the quality of life. Environmental protection and a strong economy have many direct linkages. It is the County's intent to maintain environmental policies that will conserve natural resources and responsibly support population growth and economic development while at the same time protecting the environment and keeping people from harm's way.

Since these objectives are so interwoven, the Comprehensive Plan includes references to environmental protection in many of the elements. For example, drainage of surface water in agricultural areas is critical to farming operations, but also affects habitat conditions and flood controls. And, the location and sizing of UGAs is complicated by the historic locations of cities and towns which were first sited in flood prone areas. Consequently, the goals and policies for critical areas in the Environment Element relate closely to many other adopted plans, policies and regulations. ~~These adopted plans, policies and regulations will again be examined in 2006 as part of a GMA Critical Areas Ordinance update.~~ The following is intended to highlight some of these important relationships:

Shoreline Master Program (SMP)

[As part of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update, Skagit County is updating its Shoreline Management Program.](#) ~~By 2012, Skagit County is required to update the SMP in compliance with recent changes to the rules and guidelines for the state Shoreline Management Act. [The new Shoreline Management Program includes goals and policies for shoreline protection, and updated shoreline development regulations in the County's Unified Development Code \(SCC Title 14\).](#) In the meantime, the adopted goals and policies of the SMP are included in the Comprehensive Plan and the shoreline development regulations are included in the Unified Development Code. The updated GMA Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) will have an affect on the regulation of development within the County's shoreline jurisdiction. As the County proceeds with the SMP update, the GMA policies and regulations will be comparatively reviewed in conjunction with the [to](#) shoreline policies and regulations.~~

Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan

[In 2014,](#) ~~In 2003, Skagit County, the cities and towns, the [Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, and the Samish Indian Nation](#)~~ ~~Upper Skagit and~~



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Swinomish tribes, and Dike District #12 adopted an [updated](#) county wide plan for addressing natural hazards such as avalanches, droughts, earthquakes, fires, floods, tsunamis, severe storms, and volcanic events. [The Plan was approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency on March 4, 2014.](#) More than 50 separate jurisdictions within Skagit County participated in the development of this plan and are included within the plan's vulnerability assessments and mitigation strategies. The basis for this planning is federal legislation in the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 that establishes the means for states and local governments to anticipate and reduce the impacts of disasters caused by natural hazards. This plan includes vulnerability assessments of the jurisdictions' exposure to the hazards and their capacities and proposed strategies for mitigation. The Skagit Plan provides the jurisdictions with opportunities for future federal funding to implement the strategies and reduce the exposure to hazards. It must be evaluated each year and updated every 5 years.

The adopted Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan ([2014](#)) includes goals and policies from the Comprehensive Plan (~~2000~~[2007](#)) and building code references. It proposes strategies for earthquake, fire and flooding hazard mitigation including facility improvements that could be incorporated into the Capital Facilities Element, and others that relate to policies. For example the Hazard Mitigation Plan suggests implementing the "Fire Wise"[Firewise](#) public education program, a policy reflected in the Natural Resource Element and elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan. The ~~most recent update of the Comprehensive Plan~~ has identified additional fire prevention planning as a priority for the rural portions of the County as well. Skagit County's Emergency Management Department has ~~initiated planning efforts to better prepare Skagit County in the event of a~~[addressed tsunami responses; tsunamis are considered to be a low risk based on the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.](#)

Another strategy suggests enacting additional regulations to restrict future residential and non-agricultural construction in the 100-year floodplain. The County's ~~recently updated~~ Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (~~2006~~[2011](#)) has taken important steps in this direction, and ~~additional flood prevention planning has been identified by the Planning Commission as a priority "trailing issue."~~[the county may make other amendments as appropriate based on Federal Emergency Management Agency and other agency input.](#) The County's Critical Areas Ordinance ~~update, ongoing in 2007~~([2009, with minor changes in subsequent years](#)), will ~~will~~ implements new regulations based on "best available science" for wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, geologically hazardous areas, [fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas](#), and frequently flooded areas.



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Regional Water Resource Plans

Other programs that produce plans, policies and strategies related to the environment include Watershed Planning based on Water Resource Inventory Areas (WRIAs). This planning effort is sponsored by the state Department of Ecology and involves inter-jurisdictional watershed planning to address water quantity, with the option to address habitat and water quality. In addition, in-stream flows are regulated by the Department of Ecology and may affect the amount of groundwater available for future domestic, municipal, commercial/industrial, agricultural uses. [In 2001, Ecology adopted the Skagit River Basin Instream Resources Protection Program Rule \(WAC 173-503\)](#). Water and sewage rules are regulated by the Skagit County and State Departments of Health and Ecology. Aquifer recharge areas are addressed through the goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan and subsequent development regulations found in the Unified Development Code. Flood control and flood plain management is a responsibility of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Department of Ecology as well as local jurisdictions. [Habitat protection requirements within the floodplain have become more stringent since the publication of the Biological Opinion by the National Marine Fisheries Service \(NMFS\) relating to FEMA’s National Flood Insurance Program](#). A coalition of jurisdictions under the name Skagit River Impact Partnership is working to evaluate coordinated floodplain management and review the proposed hydraulic calculations and mapping changes being proposed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As these and other issues and considerations are studied and resolved, the policies in the Environment Element and other Comprehensive Plan elements will have to be revisited. This will become an on-going part of future updates.

Air Quality

Although not identified as a critical area under the Growth Management Act, air quality is a crucial component of a healthy environment. The livability of Skagit County is dependent upon good air quality, which is affected by the interrelationship of land use and the activities of people, industries, and natural resource enterprises.

Skagit County seeks to maintain a high level of air quality by working cooperatively with the Northwest Clean Air Agency to minimize individual and industrial impacts on air quality. The County will work with Northwest Clean Air Agency to minimize public exposure to airborne

Commented [A72]: Paragraph updated to reflect adoption of instream flow rule.

Commented [A73]: This statement is outdated and is proposed for deletion.



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pollutants and nuisance odors by assuring regulatory accountability. Skagit County will accomplish this by supporting transportation policies that reduce air pollution; encouraging alternatives to outdoor burning; promoting environmentally sound heating methods; and assuring ensuring that industrial growth utilizes environmentally sound ~~business~~ processes.

Commented [A74]: These two paragraphs moved from policies section.

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Climate Change

Due to increasing greenhouse gas emissions – carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and others – heat is trapped in the atmosphere causing changes to climate worldwide. Climate change is expected to affect the Pacific Northwest including Skagit County. The University of Washington Climate Impacts Group has estimated a possible sea level rise of 0.4 meters by 2050 to 2080. In addition to sea level rise, potential effects that are anticipated to occur in Skagit County include: increased risk of wildland-urban interface fires, warmer temperatures, more precipitation falling as rain in winter and loss of snowpack altering streamflow timing and changes in flood risk, and changes to terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems and species composition. As a result of climate change and ecosystem effects, there could be damage to low-lying farms and urban development in the floodplain. (Skagit County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan 2014; Skagit River Basin Climate Science Report, September 2011)

As these and other issues and considerations are studied and resolved, the policies in the Environment Element and other Comprehensive Plan elements will have to be revisited as an on-going part of future updates.

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GMA Mandate

The following GMA Planning Goal is specific to the environment:

- *Protect the environment and enhance the state’s high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.*

This Goal, taken in the context of the totality of the thirteen GMA Planning Goals, led to the following CPPs that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this chapter:

- Natural resource lands, including aquatic resource areas and critical areas shall be classified and designated, and regulations adopted to assure their long-term conservation. Land uses and developments which are incompatible with critical areas

Commented [A76]: The added language is existing CPP 10.1 language that was previously left out by oversight.



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shall be prohibited except when impacts from such uses and developments can be mitigated (CPP 10.1)

- *Land use decisions shall take into account the immediate and long range cumulative effects of proposed uses on the environment, both on and off-site (CPP 10.2)*
- *The County shall reduce the loss of critical aquatic and terrestrial habitat by minimizing habitat fragmentation. (CPP 10.3)*
- *Wetlands, woodlands , watersheds and aquifers are essential components of the hydrologic system and shall be managed to protect surface and groundwater quality.(CPP 10.4)*
- *Skagit County shall recognize the river systems within the County as pivotal freshwater resources and shall manage development within the greater watershed in a manner consistent with planning practices that enhance the integrity of the aquatic resource, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreational and aesthetic qualities (CPP 10.5)*
- *Rural character shall be preserved by regulatory mechanisms through which development can occur with minimal environmental impact. (CPP 10.6)*
- *Development shall be directed away from designated natural resource lands, aquatic resource areas, and critical areas. (CPP 10.7)*
- *The conversion of tidelands to uplands by means of diking, drainage and filling shall be prohibited, except when carried out by a public body to implement a Comprehensive Plan for flood plain management or to respond to a natural disaster threatening life and property. (CPP 10.8)*
- *Septic systems, disposal of dredge spoils and land excavation, filling and clearing activities shall not have an adverse significant effect on Skagit County waters with respect to public health, fisheries, aquifers, water quality, wetlands, wildlife habitat, natural marine ecology and aquatic based resources (CPP 10.9)*
- *Usual and accustomed activities on natural resource lands and aquatic resource areas shall be protected from interference when they are conducted in accordance with best management practices and environmental laws. (CPP 10.10)*
- *When evaluating and conditioning commercial, industrial or residential development, Skagit County shall consider threatened or endangered wildlife (CPP 10.11)*

Commented [A77]: This is an existing countywide planning policy; apparently it was left out previously by oversight.



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- *Skagit County shall enter into inter-agency agreements with appropriate state and local agencies and Native American Tribes for compliance with watershed protection, including but not limited to, the cumulative effects of construction, logging and non-point pollution in watersheds. (CPP 10.12)*
- *Skagit County and Cities and Towns, in cooperation with appropriate local, state and Federal agencies, shall develop and implement flood hazard reduction programs, consistent with and supportive of the Corps Feasibility Study. (CPP 10.13)*
- *The Skagit River Floodway and the Skagit River Floodplain shall be regulated to protect human life, property and the public health and safety of the citizens of Skagit County; minimize the expenditure of public money; and maintain flood insurance eligibility while avoiding regulations which are unnecessarily restrictive or difficult to administer. (CPP 10.14)*
- *Skagit County and Cities and Towns shall work together to provide ongoing public education about flooding in a coordinated and consistent program, and shall adopt a flood hazard reduction plan, that works together with the natural and beneficial functions of floodplains.(CPP 10.15)*

Goals and Policies

Types of Critical Areas

The GMA requires local governments to designate and protect critical areas including wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. Further, GMA requires counties and cities to develop policies and regulations that are based on “best available science”

Wetlands

Wetlands are fragile ecosystems that serve a number of important beneficial functions. Wetlands assist in the reduction of erosion, siltation, flooding, ground and surface water pollution, and provide wildlife, plant, and fisheries habitats. Wetlands destruction or impairment may result in increased public and private costs or property losses.

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Aquifer Recharge Areas

Potable water is an essential life-sustaining element. Skagit County's potable water comes from groundwater and surface water. Once the source of potable water is contaminated, it is difficult, costly, and sometimes impossible to clean up. Preventing contamination is necessary to avoid exorbitant costs, hardships, and potential physical harm to people.

Frequently Flooded Areas

Flood hazard areas and other areas subject to flooding perform hydrologic functions and may present a risk to persons or property.

Geologically Hazardous Areas

Geologically hazardous areas include areas susceptible to the effects of erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geologic events. They pose a threat to the health and safety of citizens when incompatible residential, commercial, industrial, or infrastructure development is sited in areas of a hazard.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Fish and wildlife habitat conservation means maintaining species in suitable habitats within their natural geographic distribution through cooperative and coordinated land use planning beyond political boundaries.

Critical Areas

Goal 5A Preserve and protect wetlands to prevent their continual loss and degradation.

Encourage the voluntary restoration and enhancement of lost or degraded wetlands.

Protect aquifer recharge areas, and well-head areas, ground and surface water quality and quantity for supplying all needs within Skagit County, including potable water for human use



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Protect hydrologic functions and reduce the potential for physical injury and property damage associated with flooding.

Minimize risk to life, property, infrastructure, and resources caused by disrupting geologically hazardous areas or by locating development in areas subject to naturally hazardous geologic processes.

Protect, restore where practical, and enhance fish and wildlife populations and their associated habitats.

Classification and Designation of Critical Areas

Classification and designation of critical areas establishes the general distribution, location, extent, and quality of critical areas. In the circumstances where critical areas (e.g., aquifer recharge areas, wetlands, significant wildlife habitat, etc.) cannot be readily identified, these areas should be designated by performance standards or definitions, so they can be specifically identified during the processing of a permit or development authorization. Classifying, inventorying, and designating lands or areas does not imply a change in a landowner's right to use his or her land under current law.

Goal 5A-1 In cooperation with local, state, federal, and tribal agencies and jurisdictions, Skagit County shall identify, classify, designate, and map critical areas to protect and conserve them.

policy 5A-1.1 Critical areas shall be identified based on the best available science.

- (a) The National Wetland Inventory Maps, U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service Soil Survey, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitats and Species Database and aerial photo overlays are examples of the information that shall be utilized in determining the approximate distribution and extent of wetlands in Skagit County.
- (b) Soil logs and surveys, geological information, well logs, and geological reports shall be utilized in identifying aquifers and aquifer recharge areas.



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- (c) Hydrologic information such as Washington Department of Natural Resources water type maps, United States Geological Services streamflow data, and Federal Emergency Management Agency maps should be utilized in identifying frequently flooded areas.
- (d) Soil, geologic, topographic, seismic, volcanic, and hydrologic data shall be utilized in identifying geological hazardous areas.
- (e) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas shall be identified in accordance with Washington State Fish and Wildlife Priority Habitats and Species program, WA State Department of Natural Resource Aquatic Lands and Resources and Nearshore Habitat programs, and other extant programs.

policy 5A-1.2 Critical areas shall be designated by definition and site assessment for conservation and protection.

- (a) Critical Areas shall be designated and mapped from general sources of critical area information based on best available science.
- (b) Critical areas shall be designated by performance standards or definitions.
- (c) Critical areas shall be designated upon completion of a site assessment done by a qualified professional during the process of a permit or development application.

policy 5A-1.3 Critical areas shall be classified for conservation, protection, and risk.

- (a) The Washington State Rating System for Western Washington (~~Second Edition~~ [2014 Update](#)) shall be utilized to classify wetlands according to the function, value and uniqueness of wetlands in Skagit County.
- (b) Aquifer recharge areas shall be classified based on their vulnerability, susceptibility to contamination, and potable water quality and quantity.
- (c) Frequently flooded areas should be classified utilizing the 100-year floodplain designations as adopted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Flood Insurance Program.



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- (d) Geologically hazardous areas (areas subject to erosion, sliding, earthquakes, or other geologic events) shall be classified based on the degree of risk to health, life, property and resources.
- (e) “Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas” (HCA’s) shall be classified according to the type of conservation area which include:
 - (i) Areas with which endangered, threatened, and sensitive species have a primary association;
 - (ii) Habitats and species of local importance that have been designated by the County at the time of application;
 - (iii) All public and private tidelands suitable for shellfish harvest;
 - (iv) Kelp and eelgrass beds, and herring, ~~and~~ smelt, and other forage fish spawning areas;
 - (v) Naturally occurring ponds under 20 acres and their submerged aquatic beds that provide fish or wildlife habitat;
 - (vi) Waters of the state as defined by WAC 222-16;
 - (vii) Lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers planted with game fish by a government or Tribal entity;
 - (viii) Areas with which anadromous fish species have a primary association and;
 - (ix) State Natural Area Preserves, ~~and~~ Natural Resource Conservation Areas, and State Wildlife Areas.

Commented [A78]: Minor edits made to this section to match WAC 365-190-130(2)

Education

Goal 5A-2 Provide educational opportunities and the involvement of a well-informed citizenry in developing programs and regulations for the conservation and protection of critical areas.



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- policy 5A-2.1 Educational opportunities should be encouraged that increase public and governmental understanding of the economic, social, cultural, and environmental values of critical areas.
- (a) Public access to publicly owned critical areas for scientific, educational and limited recreational use should be encouraged.
 - (b) Educational programs should improve the understanding of storm water management, groundwater recharge, and groundwater and surface water quality and quantity issues, and encourage citizens to be water resource stewards.
 - (c) Educational opportunities should increase public understanding of stream hydrology and the potential for major flooding in the Skagit River Basin.

- policy 5A-2.2 Readily available information should be assembled and distributed to educate and inform the public about: risks of known frequently flooded areas and geologic hazards; development practices that increase the risks to lives, property, infrastructure, resources and measures to minimize these risks.

Incentives

Goal 5A-3 Utilize economic incentives, such as density credit transfers, transfer of development rights, tax incentives, cluster housing, conservation easements, and public benefit rating systems, as appropriate, to encourage citizens to conserve, protect and restore critical areas.

- policy 5A-3.1 Areas of native vegetation and riparian corridors that connect wetland systems should be conserved and protected whenever feasible through incentive programs.
- policy 5A-3.2 Public and private programs should be encouraged and utilized to support the ability of wetlands to function naturally and provide landscape diversity.
- policy 5A-3.3 Public and private acquisition of critical areas should be encouraged for permanent conservation.



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- (a) Critical areas of local and regional uniqueness and significance should be prioritized for acquisition.
- policy 5A-3.4 Economic incentive programs shall be implemented to encourage private participation in protecting and enhancing aquifer recharge and surface and ground water quality.

 - (a) Reuse of water shall be encouraged and incentives provided for use of best management practices.
 - (b) Incentives shall be developed that encourage industries, businesses and homes to use water conservation technologies and practices.
 - (c) Incentive programs shall be established to maintain and restore conveyance capacity and natural water storage areas.
- policy 5A-3.5 Incentives shall be developed to protect critical areas in agriculture and forestry land.
- policy 5A-3.6 The protection of Habitat Conservation Areas shall be encouraged through acquisition, incentives, and other techniques.
- policy 5A-3.7 Native plant communities and fish and wildlife habitat enhancement shall be promoted through voluntary incentive programs.

Intergovernmental Coordination / Cooperation

Goal 5A-4 Improve communication and seek cooperation and coordination among county, city, state, tribal, federal agencies, and the public to avoid duplication and achieve efficiency and effectiveness in development of standards, policies, regulations, programs, projects, planning and funding efforts that conserve and protect critical areas.

- policy 5A-4.1 The use of inter-agency agreements among county, city, state, federal and tribal agencies shall be encouraged for conservation and protection of critical areas when developing regulations, incentives, and monitoring/enforcement strategies.



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- (a) Local, state, federal and tribal governments shall be consulted in the development of land use plans and development review to identify and protect habitat networks on an inter-jurisdictional basis.
- (b) Local, state, federal agencies, tribes and private interests shall be encouraged to plan and implement methods to protect and enhance water quality at commercial, recreational, and subsistence shellfish beds, including controlling potential new pollution sources, reducing pollution from existing sources, and establishing shellfish protection districts. The County encourages implementation of Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plans. Three watershed specific, nonpoint action plans currently exist and are incorporated as a part of this chapter:

- ~~(i) Nookachamps Watershed Nonpoint Action Plan, May 18, 1995~~
- ~~(ii) Bayview/Padilla Bay Watershed Nonpoint Action Plan, May 30, 1995~~
- ~~(iii) Samish Watershed Nonpoint Action Plan, December, 1995~~

~~(c) In coordination with the Washington Department of Ecology, and based in part, on information obtained through aquifer recharge investigations, Skagit County shall recommend areas where exemptions for ground water withdrawal be eliminated.~~

~~(d)~~ (c) Coordinate with state and tribal programs to protect plant species and communities listed in the Natural Heritage Program, the Priority Habitats and Species (PHS) Program and plant species of cultural (tribal) significance should be maintained.

- policy 5A-4.2 Wetland inspections/delineation training requirements should be coordinated with other Federal and State agencies.
- policy 5A-4.3 Critical area conservation and protection strategies shall be coordinated with watershed planning efforts and watershed implementation plans.
- policy 5A-4.4 All existing county land use regulations shall be reviewed and, where appropriate, modified to eliminate redundancies or conflicts with other

Commented [A79]: TMDLs are the current way the Department of Ecology plans water quality improvements. These older 1990s plans are 20 years old and not based on best available science.

Commented [A80]: The Planning Commission recommended removal of this sentence referring to Total Maximum Daily Load plans.



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county, state or federal requirements for conserving and protecting critical areas and the public to promote a consistent and more efficient regulatory framework.

policy 5A-4.5 Annual evaluations and prioritized recommendations for non-point source pollution control (such as from Watershed Action Plans and Water Quality Management Plans) shall be implemented where found to be feasible and most cost-effective.

policy 5A-4.6 Skagit County shall continue to work cooperatively with the cities, towns, state and federal agencies and tribes as needed in flood hazard mitigation planning and projects to minimize potential for flood damage throughout Skagit County.

policy 5A-4.7 The County shall encourage the restoration of appropriate degraded critical areas through coordinated cooperative public and private efforts.

Protection and Conservation Measures

Goal 5A-5 Skagit County shall, protect and conserve critical areas in cooperation with federal, state, local, and tribal jurisdictions.

policy 5A-5.1 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.

(a) Wetlands

~~(a)~~(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 (~~August 2004~~2014 Update).

~~(b)~~(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,

Commented [A81]: Policy formatting changes are proposed per the the Planning Commission's recommendation.

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provide recreational opportunities, and provide historical and cultural values.

~~(e)~~(iii) Mitigation projects shall, whenever feasible, contribute to an existing wetland system or restore an area that was historically a wetland.

~~(d)~~(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.

~~(e)~~(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.

~~(f)~~(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.

(b) Aquifer Recharge Areas

~~(g)~~(i) Water resources shall be protected using natural systems and non-structural methods wherever possible.

~~(h)~~(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.

~~(i)~~(iii) The Skagit County Department of Health will review and update its Saltwater Intrusion Policy for the islands and those



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coastal areas of the mainland where seawater intrusion has been documented. The update will require data gathering and staff time to complete.

~~(j)~~(iv) The Skagit County Health Department will update the Health Code 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.

Commented [A82]: These functions are moving to Planning.
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~~(v)~~ Consistent with State law (RCW 19.27.097), Skagit County will not issue a residential building permit permit for a building requiring potable water unless the applicant can demonstrate they have a legal and adequate source of water, such as a water right from Washington State Department of Ecology, or a letter from an approved public water purveyor like Skagit PUD, or an approved rainwater catchment system and the source meets drinking water standards.

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Commented [A83]: This policy is also found in Rural Element at 3A-2.1(a). Demonstrates Skagit County's commitment to ensure there is both legal and adequate water available before development is authorized.

(c) Frequently Flooded Areas

~~(k)~~(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.

~~(h)~~(ii) When reviewing proposed developments or designing infrastructure, consider the potential effects of tsunami, 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.

Commented [A84]: Based on WAC 365-190-110 regarding frequently flooded areas: consider climate change in policies and determine appropriate programmatic and regulatory responses.

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(d) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

~~(m)~~(i) Stream and wetland buffers shall be set so as to protect habitats associated with riparian dependent species.



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~~(a)~~(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.

~~(a)~~(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.

~~(a)~~(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.

~~(a)~~(v) The level of protection for HCAs shall be commensurate with the resource population status and management objectives as determined by appropriate resource managers.

~~(a)~~(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.

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

policy 5A-5.2 Land uses that are incompatible with critical areas shall be discouraged.

(a) Frequently Flooded Areas

~~(a)~~(i) Low intensity land use activities such as agricultural, forestry, and recreational land uses should be encouraged in floodplain areas and other land uses in these areas should be discouraged.

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Commented [A85]: Added based on RCW 36.70A.172(1). This is a GMA directive and should have been included previously.

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(b)(ii) Land uses, densities, and development activities in the floodplain and coastal high hazard areas should be limited to protect public health, safety, and welfare, to minimize expenditure of public money and costly flood control projects, and to maintain hydrologic systems, and to protect habitat for threatened and endangered species consistent with the National Marine Fisheries Service Biological Opinion (September 2008).

Commented [A86]: This addition addresses Skagit County's response to the FEMA Biological Opinion.

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(b) Geologically Hazardous Areas

(e)(i) Low land use densities and intensities or open space shall be preferred in geologically hazardous areas where this practice can provide site specific mitigation.

(d)(ii) Land use regulations and practices for geologically hazardous areas shall be established so that development does not cause or exacerbate natural processes that endanger lives, property, infrastructure, and resources on or off site.

(c) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

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(e)(i) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas shall be protected against habitat degradation to the fullest extent possible while allowing reasonable use of property.

(f)(ii) Urban density development in the County and adjacent to Habitat Conservation Areas shall be sited such that HCA functions and values are protected.

policy 5A-5.3 Development allowed in critical areas shall be conducted without risk to lives, and with minimum risk to property, infrastructure, and resources.

(a) Wetlands

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(e)(i) Development adjacent to wetlands should be sited such that wetland and buffer functions are protected and an adequate buffer around the wetland is left undisturbed.



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~~(b)~~(ii) Alterations to wetlands that are allowed in order to maintain or enhance specific wetland functions and values, shall consider all quantitative and qualitative functions of the wetlands and required buffers.

(b) Aquifer Recharge Areas

~~(c)~~(i) Consistent with state and federal laws and regulations, the County shall develop in unincorporated areas and facilitate on a county-wide basis performance standards and regulate uses for activities which can adversely impact water quality or quantity in aquifers, watersheds, and surface waters.

~~(d)~~(ii) Performance standards shall be established to maintain aquifer recharge and protection and require that new developments meet these performance standards and that existing facilities be retrofitted, where feasible, to meet the standards.

(c) Frequently Flooded Areas

~~(e)~~(i) Development regulations shall be adopted that prohibit intensive uses such as urban subdivisions, multi-family dwellings, commercial buildings, and industrial parks in the floodplain.

~~(f)~~(ii) The construction of critical facilities (i.e. schools, hospitals, police, fire, emergency response installations, nursing homes, and installations which produce, use or store hazardous materials or hazardous waste) should be prohibited within the 100 year floodplain.

~~(g)~~(iii) Development shall protect water quality and minimize run-off by limiting impervious surfaces, grading and filling, as well as maximizing vegetative cover and other best management practices.

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~~(h)~~(iv) Flood-proofing of substantial improvements and new structures in frequently flooded areas shall be required.

~~(i)~~(v) Where the effects of hazards can be mitigated, appropriate design standards shall be required for site development and livestock sanctuary areas within the 100-year floodplain.

~~(j)~~(vi) Best management practices shall be required for maintaining the river channel configurations during dredging and gravel removal.

~~(k)~~(vii) Compensatory storage and a "no net loss" land use approach to maintaining flood water storage capacity and conveyance shall be required in frequently flooded areas.

(d) Geologically Hazardous Areas

~~(l)~~(i) Critical facilities (i.e., schools, hospitals, police, fire, emergency response installations, nursing homes, and installations which produce, use or store hazardous materials or hazardous waste) should be prohibited in geologically hazardous areas.

~~(m)~~(ii) Development proposals in designated geologically hazardous areas, where applicable, shall include a geotechnical report and a mitigation plan for development activities, with the amount of information required based on the severity of the geologic hazard and the susceptibility of the development on or off site.

~~(n)~~(iii) Independent third party review of geotechnical reports for development in designated geologically hazardous areas may be required by the planning director when the report is found to be deficient with the review to be paid for by the applicant as a way of expediting development permits.

~~(o)~~(iv) Any development should be carried out in a way that will not cause or exacerbate hazardous geological conditions.



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~~(p)~~(v) Public or private utility service or extensions (sewer, water, natural gas, and electric) should be discouraged in geologically hazardous areas and carefully sited to avoid potential damage to the utility or properties.

~~(p)~~(vi) When residential development is proposed in areas subject to geologic hazards it should be clustered and the development designed to minimize risk to human life, property, and the natural environment.

(e) Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

~~(r)~~(i) New development within or adjacent to HCAs should incorporate design elements that protect wildlife habitat values.

~~(s)~~(ii) All development that may significantly adversely impact HCAs shall require a mitigation plan, prior to any permit approval. A threshold shall be established on a case by case basis by a qualified professional.

~~(t)~~(iii) Storm water runoff, flow rates, flow volumes and pollution caused by site development shall be managed so that detrimental impacts to water resources and property are maintained at pre-development levels.

~~(u)~~(iv) Clearing and grading ordinances shall be developed to avoid impacts of erosion on critical areas.

(v) Impacts to fish and wildlife resources associated with instream flows shall be considered in the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

(vi) Areas important for local and ecoregional biodiversity, as determined through regional ecological assessments, should be considered priorities for conservation and protection.

policy 5A-5.4 Impacts to critical areas should be monitored to ensure the long-term success of mitigation measures.

Commented [A87]: The Washington Department of Commerce minimum guidelines to classify fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas (WAC 365-190-130) and Commerce’s critical areas guidance identify biodiversity information as important to help prioritize areas for conservation and protection.



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(a) Performance standards shall be adopted through appropriate codes and administrative procedures for development in critical areas; including, but not limited to:

- (i) Critical area report information and analysis;
- (ii) Site inspections and development review of construction within critical areas;
- (iii) The use of critical area designations to prohibit, restrict, or otherwise control land uses within short subdivisions, subdivisions, and residential cluster developments;
- (iv) The use of protective covenants or conservation easements to protect critical areas in non-land division developments.

(b) Land used for critical area mitigation should be preserved in perpetuity. Monitoring and maintenance of critical area mitigation sites shall be provided until the success of the site is established.

(c) Monitoring of the mitigation site should take appropriate measures utilizing one or more of the following:

- (i) Applicants should develop comprehensive mitigation plans in order to ensure long term success of the mitigation project. Such plans should provide for sufficient monitoring, maintenance, and contingencies to ensure mitigation persistence.
- (ii) Applicants should demonstrate sufficient scientific expertise, supervisory capability and financial resources to complete and monitor mitigation projects and address cumulative impacts to the surrounding area.
- (iii) Applicants should restore critical areas that are temporarily impacted by development upon project completion.
- (iv) During development review, applicants should identify potential erosion and sedimentation impacts and submit appropriate



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mitigation plans that shall be monitored during construction and assessed periodically thereafter.

- (d) Critical area mitigation proposals should improve overall critical area functions, recognizing that it may be inappropriate to impact certain critical areas. All critical area functions shall be considered.

policy 5A-5.5 Critical areas should be avoided, maintained, restored, acquired, replaced or enhanced.

- (a) Mitigation for proposed alterations to critical areas or associated buffers should be sufficient to maintain the function and values of the critical area or to prevent risk from a critical area hazard. Proposed mitigation should follow the mitigation sequence of:

- (i) Avoid the impact altogether.
- (ii) Minimize the impact utilizing appropriate technology and design.
- (iii) Rectify the impact by restoring, repairing or rehabilitating the affected environment to the conditions existing at the time of initiation of the project or activity.
- (iv) Reduce or eliminate the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the project.
- (v) Compensate for the impact by replacing, enhancing or providing substitute resources or environments.

- (b) On-site replacement of critical area impact is preferred. Where on-site replacement is not feasible or practical due to characteristics of the existing critical area location, replacement should occur within the same watershed and proximity.
- (c) Critical area restoration, creation, and enhancement projects should be completed prior to alteration, where possible. In all other cases, replacement should be completed prior to use or occupancy of the development.

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- (d) The County shall place a high priority on the proper placement or other correction of all identified county road culverts causing blockage of fish passage.
- (e) Acquiring additional natural water storage areas, drainage systems and conveyance capacity should be accomplished through public means.
- (f) Protection of aquifer recharge areas and potable water resources is preferred, and restoration should be supported where warranted by cost-benefit analysis or limited water supply.

policy 5A-5.6 ~~Develop~~ Continue to implement enforcement procedures to ensure compliance with applicable Skagit County ordinances.

- (a) Enforcement action shall be taken whenever a person has violated the provisions of any applicable Skagit County ordinance used for critical area protection.
- (b) The choice of enforcement action and the severity of any penalty should be based on the nature of the violation, the damage or risk to the public or the public resources.

policy 5A-5.7 With the exception of activities that are exempt under the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), any proposed alteration that adversely affects a critical area or its standard buffers' functions shall comply with the substantive and procedural requirements of the CAO regardless of whether such alteration requires a County development permit or approval.

policy 5A-5.8 All activities that are exempt under the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO), shall be carried out in ways that cause the least impact on critical areas and their buffers.

- (a) If any damage is caused to a critical area or buffer, in connection with an exempt activity, the critical area and its buffer shall be restored to the extent feasible.



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Air Quality

Although not identified as a critical area under the Growth Management Act, air quality is a crucial component of a healthy environment. The livability of Skagit County is dependent upon good air quality, which is affected by the interrelationship of land use and the activities of people, industries, and natural resource enterprises.

Skagit County seeks to maintain a high level of air quality by working cooperatively with the Northwest Clean Air Agency to minimize individual and industrial impacts on air quality. The County will work with the Northwest Clean Air Agency to minimize public exposure to airborne pollutants and nuisance odors by assuring regulatory accountability. Skagit County will accomplish this by supporting transportation policies that reduce air pollution; encouraging alternatives to outdoor burning; promoting environmentally sound heating methods; and assuring that industrial growth utilizes environmentally sound business processes.

The Transportation Element and the Transportation Systems Plan address air quality.

Commented [A88]: This language is deleted from the policies section because there are no policies here. Text is moved to the narrative.



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6 Shoreline Master Program

Editor's Note: No changes are proposed to the Shoreline Master Program Element through the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update process. The Shoreline Master Program Element is being updated through a parallel process. See www.skagitcounty.net/smp for more information.



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Introduction

Housing is one of the most important needs in our lives and communities. It is what provides shelter and a link to the neighborhood and the larger community. It is, as well as often being the single largest purchase made by most households. As an industry, in a community's economy, housing is a major partner in an industry and has a large influence on the economic life of the a community, both as a consumer providing a home to consumers of goods and services and producer as well as providing jobs and income to developers and producers of dwelling units, jobs, and income.



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As a major economic activity, housing depends on Housing is also intimately connected to local government. While, where taxes on housing are a principal source of local government revenue, revenues, while services to housing and to the its inhabitants of this housing comprise a major portion of local government expenditures spending.

As a result of housing impact on individual livelihood as well as more macro level factors in a community, planning for housing in Skagit County is essential to the County's future. This housing element serves as a useful tool to accommodate for changing community needs for housing, while addressing land use, economic development, and environmental impacts of growth. This Housing Chapter contains the goals and policies through which Skagit County encourages the availability and affordability of housing for its citizens.

Skagit County faces challenges and opportunities as it works toward providing housing options for present and future generations. Skagit County is experiencing a significant shortfall in affordable housing for moderate and low income households. Every community has low and moderate income households. Since a community benefits from its residents, it makes sense for the community to seek to provide an adequate supply of desirable, affordable housing has a responsibility to ensure they have a desirable place to live. The Comprehensive Plan's Rural Housing Element seeks recognizes a need to provide for balance a variety of rural residential densities and housing opportunities within with the confines of the Growth Management Act (GMA). And although the majority of unincorporated Skagit County is restricted by GMA mandates from providing opportunity to provide higher density (urban) housing, in areas such housing may be made provided in as the Swinomish, Bayview Ridge, and municipal Urban Growth Areas.

The Housing Profile chapter contains detailed information describing the demographic and economic conditions pertaining to housing needs for the next 20 years. In particular, the Housing Profile chapter sets the background for planning for housing through providing a window into existing trends in the community, such as building permits, location of growth, and demographics. In addition, it highlights specific existing and anticipated housing needs that are present in Skagit County, such as rural densities, senior housing, farmworker housing, affordable housing, and others. As part of the Housing Element's evaluation of existing conditions, the following Skagit County-specific documents are referenced. This Housing Chapter contains the goals and policies through which Skagit County encourages the availability and affordability of housing for its citizens.

- [Building A Skagit County Housing Affordability Strategy Interim Report, Skagit County Community Services Department, 2012](#)

Commented [A89]: Sentence revised per Planning Commission's request



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- [Skagit County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, Skagit County Community Services Department, 2012](#)
- [Skagit County Farmworker Housing Action Plan, Washington Farmworker Housing Trust, 2011](#)
- [Skagit Prosperity Report: A Community Needs Assessment 2013, Community Action of Skagit County, 2014](#)

This section provides the background documentation that supports the goals and policies in the Housing Element. It summarizes the current conditions and describes the projected housing needs of the County throughout the 20 year planning period. Unless otherwise specified, this profile describes conditions for all of Skagit County including the cities and towns.

Population and Community

Housing demand is a function of population growth and the demographic characteristics of the population. [Additionally, a growing and diverse population may have different housing needs and preferences, such as housing units for smaller or larger families, housing near important cultural or social centers, access to services, access to employment, and other needs.](#)

Population and Diversity

Overall, Skagit County’s population grew by ~~20~~¹⁰ percent [over the decade](#) between ~~1994 and 2004~~ [and 2014](#) based on annual estimates produced by the state [of Washington](#) Office of Financial Management (OFM). This was a numerical increase of ~~17,800~~^{11,006} residents. The official U.S. Census population for ~~2000~~²⁰¹⁰ was ~~102,979~~^{116,901}. Growth between the ~~1990~~²⁰⁰⁰ Census and ~~2000~~²⁰¹⁰ censuses was ~~23,434~~^{13,922}, or ~~29~~^{about 14} percent. Between ~~2000~~²⁰¹⁰ and the ~~2005~~²⁰¹⁴ estimate, ~~7,921~~^{1,699} new residents arrived, ~~an~~^a [four year](#) increase of ~~7.7~~² percent. The increase is due to a 25 percent 75 percent split between natural increase (births) and migration or movement from other locations. The average annual increase for the 10-year period ~~1990 to~~ [from 2000 to 2010](#) was ~~two~~^{1.3} percent while for the ~~2000-2005~~ period it was ~~1.5~~^{between 2010 and 2014 the average annual increase was} [about half the rate, at 0.6](#) percent.

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The [Countywide total population](#) is estimated 2005 population of [by OFM at 119,500 as of 2014](#). The [unincorporated Skagit County population](#) is [47,250](#) [48,720](#) including the population of the [unincorporated Urban Growth Areas \(UGAs\)](#). The population of the [incorporated cities](#) is [63,650](#). [was an estimated to be 70,780](#). [About 47 percent of the incorporated population lives in Mount Vernon which has a population of 32,710](#).

[Skagit County’s population is becoming more diverse. See Table 1. The percentage of the population that is white alone has decreased between 2000 and 2010 from 86.5 to 83.4 percent and the percentage of Hispanic or Latino persons has increased from 11.2 to 16.9 percent. Though 2013 estimates show less change in the white only percentage compared to 2000, it is based on population sampling, and is not reflective of long-term trends. Year 2013 American Community Survey data shows, however, there is a growing Hispanic population.](#)

Table 1. Percent White and Hispanic Heritage (percent)

Race or Hispanic Ethnicity	2000	2010	2013
White alone, one race, percent	86.5	83.4	86.4
Hispanic or Latino, percent (of any race)	11.2	16.9	17.6

[Note: The 1-year data was used for 2013, rather than the 3-year data. The 3-year data showed 87.4%, whereas the 1-year estimate shows 86.4%. The margin of error is low for the 1-year estimate at 1.2.](#)

[Source: US Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 Table SF1, American Community Survey 1-Year Sample Estimate 2013; BERK 2014](#)

[Most of the Skagit County population speaks English only, but there has been an increase in those speaking Spanish since the year 2000 and a general decrease in the English only percentage. See Table 2.](#)

Table 2. Language Spoken at Home (percent)

Language	2000	2010	2013
English Only	88.3	84.8	85.5
Spanish	8.6	11.5	11.2
Other Indo-European	1.8	2.1	1.9
Asian and Pacific Islander	1.1	1.4	1.1
Other	0.2	0.10	0.40

[Note: The 3-Year Sample Estimate was used for this table to eliminate overlap with the 2010 data.](#)

[Source: US Decennial Census 2000 and 2010 DP-2 and 2011-2013 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates DP02](#)



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Population and Household Profile

A detailed breakdown of the 2000 County’s population [by age and household type](#) is provided by the [American Community Survey and Decennial Census](#). The median age of the [Total population](#) was 37.2 years. Nearly all of the population (98 percent) resided in [“and total households”](#) with the remaining 2 percent in group quarters, such as group homes or jails. There were 38,852 households, with an [have increased but population and household characteristics are changing](#). The share of the population aged 65 years and older has been [increasing, as has the median age](#). The average household size of 2.6 persons. Over two thirds (70 percent) of the [is decreasing, as is the share of family households](#). See [Table 3](#).

Table 3. Population and Household Characteristics

Characteristic	2000	2010	2013
Total Population	102,979	116,901	118,225
Median Age of Population	37.2	40.1	40.5
Population 65 years and over, percent	14.6	16.1	17.4
Total Households	38,852	45,557	45,174
Average Household Size	2.60	2.53	2.57
Family Households, percent	70.4	67.3	68.6

[Note: The 3-Year Sample Estimate was used for this table to eliminate overlap with the 2010 data.](#)

[Source: US Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 Table DP1, American Community Survey 2011-2013, 3-Year Sample Estimate DP02 and DP05; BERK 2014](#)

[About 25 percent of households were comprised of families](#). The remaining 30 percent was [comprised in Skagit County are made up of a householder living alone](#). See [Figure 1](#). Skagit County’s household make up is similar to neighboring counties in terms of the percentage of [the population living alone, in nonfamily households, and married households with no children, except that in Whatcom County there are more non-family households due to presence of Western Washington University](#). The percentage of households with [married couples including children is also similar between Skagit and Whatcom Counties and less than Snohomish and Island Counties](#).



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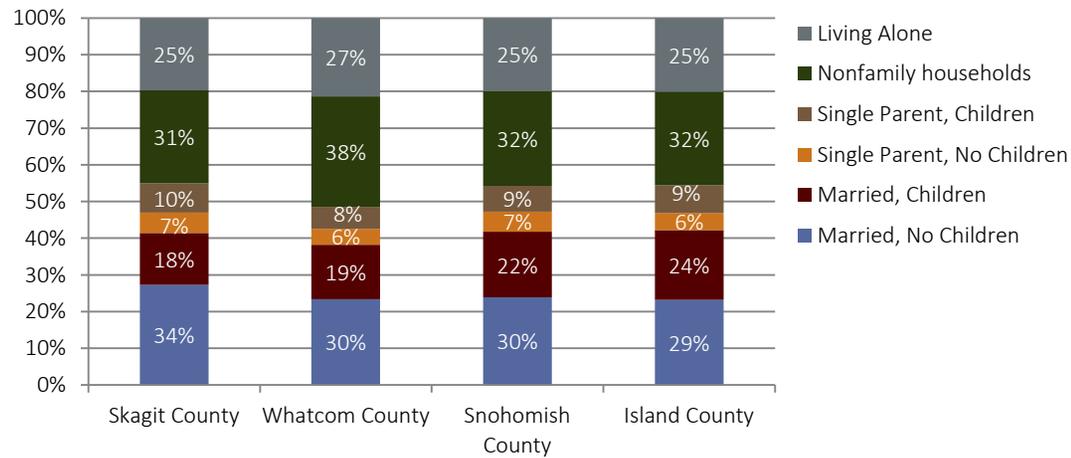
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Figure 1: Household Composition of Skagit and Surrounding Counties (2013)



Source: American Community Survey, 2009- 2013, 5-Year Sample Estimate; BERK 2014

In Skagit County, the percentage of householders living alone, or married with no children has slightly increased between 2000 and 2010 and is about 25 percent of households currently. Likewise the percentage of family households with a married couple and no children has slightly increased to be just over one third of households. These households may need housing styles that fit smaller households than households with children. The percentage of single persons living alone. Thirty percent of the households included children under 18 years of age. Persons over 65 years of age represented 14.5 percent of the county population. parent households headed by females has not changed much over time and is about 7 percent currently. See Table 4.

Table 4. Skagit County Household Composition (Percent)

Household type	2000	2010	2013
Living Alone	23.3	25.6	24.5
Nonfamily Households	29.6	32.7	31.4
Family Households	70.4	67.3	68.6
Single Parent, Female	6.5	6.0	7.1
Married, Children	23.9	18.8	17.5
Married, No Children under 18 Years	32.7	33.3	34.4

Note: The 3-Year Sample Estimate was used for this table to eliminate overlap with the 2010 data.

Source: US Census Bureau 2000 and 2010 DP1, American Community Survey 2011-2013, 3-Year Sample Estimate CPO2 and DPO5; BERK 2014



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Population and Household Preferences and Trends

Younger residents, generally those under 35, and older residents, generally those over 65, are two groups that have shown differing trends in their household preferences. Some of characteristics unique to these groups are highlighted below. The results are based on the following national trend studies:

- American Association of Retired Persons. 2010. Home and Community Preferences of the 45+ Population. Prepared by Teresa A. Keenan, Ph.D. Washington, DC.
- Fry, Richard. 2013. Pew Research Center. Young Adults After the Recession: Fewer Homes, Fewer Cars, Less Debt.
- Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. 2000. Housing America’s Seniors. Cambridge, MA.
- MetLife Mature Market Institute and the National Association of Home Builders. 2011. Housing Trends Update for the 55+ Market – New Insights from the American Housing Survey. New York, NY.
- National Association of Realtors. 2014. Research Division. Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends.

Younger Residents

In Skagit County in 2013, the second and third most common household types were nonfamily households (31%) and those living alone (25%) (2013 5-Year ACS). These numbers are comparable to Whatcom, Snohomish, and Island Counties. Overall trends for householders living alone or married with no kids has increased since 2010, which has an impact on resident preferences and the housing and rental market.

Nationwide, the recession took a big toll on young adults. As unemployment rates rose, the number of young adults living alone went down even though the population under 35 grew. Recent trends in the United States indicate that young adults are not forming households as early as past generations did. As a result of record high debt-to-income ratios for young adults in the 2000s, young adults have chosen to cut corners in order to repay this debt, which often means not owning a home or vehicle (Pew Research Center, 2013). They are taking longer to set up households, and the transition to home ownership is further prolonged. This results in a higher demand for rentals and a delayed demand for ownership.

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[These younger, smaller households are also often looking for housing styles that better fit their lifestyle, such as smaller, less family-oriented designs and higher density living.](#)

[Trends show that younger buyers are more likely to buy older homes or previously owned homes because of the price benefits and value compared to a new home, while baby boomers are more likely to buy a new home in order to cut down on renovation and maintenance \(National Association of Realtors, 2014\). In addition, younger buyers place a high priority on proximity to their job and associated commuting costs and other amenities and don't necessarily staying in their home for the long-term \(National Association of Realtors, 2014\).](#)

[Older Residents](#)

[Older households are growing as the baby boomers age. Many older Americans are choosing to age in place, but others won't be able to do so as their needs for services and particular home amenities change. The 2010 AARP Home and Community Preferences survey, which polled adults aged 45 and older, showed that approximately 86% of total respondents indicated a preference for remaining in their current homes as long as possible and 85% of respondents indicated a preference for remaining in their communities as long as possible. However, many seniors also experience a decreased ability to pay for the costs associated with home ownership as they age, and the proportion of renters that are 65 or older has increased in recent years, meaning many older Americans have to move out of their homes. According to the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University \(JCHS 2000\) study, while Baby Boomers are generally wealthier than their generational predecessors, the proportion of senior renters is projected to continue increasing as seniors seek housing options that are more affordable and require less maintenance commitment.](#)

[While seniors are less likely to relocate than their younger counterparts, some senior migration does occur for a variety of reasons. Proximity to family and friends is one of the most commonly cited reasons for moving among seniors, and it was also highly ranked as a criterion for choosing a new home. Proximity to work, while not as highly ranked among respondents over age 65, was a significant factor for those aged 55-64. \(MetLife, 2011\) This may become a larger factor in the future as more seniors delay retirement, enter semi-retirement, or choose to pursue new careers.](#)

[A study conducted in 2010 by MetLife Mature Market Insurance and the National Association of Home Builders using data from the 2009 American Housing Survey indicated that](#)



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households over the age of 55 showed a strong preference for single-family home ownership, accounting for 71% of households in this age group. In comparison, households under 55 displayed a lower percentage of single-family ownership (54%).

Home ownership rates for the senior population have traditionally been high, often 80% or higher, according to the JCHS. In 2000, nearly 75% of the nation’s seniors lived in conventional housing (as opposed to age-restricted communities, supported housing, or nursing homes), consistent with the groups general strong preference for aging in place. However, the recent recession and housing crisis led to decreased home values for many seniors, any many of these home values are still recovering.

Incomes

In 2013, the median household income in 1999 (Census) was \$42,381, was estimated to be \$55,925 by the American Community Survey; 13.4 percent of total households are in poverty as of 2013. The median family income was \$48,347. Families 64,951; families in poverty status numbered 2,889,161 or just under 8 percent, or 9.3 percent of families.¹ Incomes include wage and salary earnings, Social Security, Supplemental Security, public assistance, and retirement. Per capita income was \$21,256. OFM projects the 2004 household income at \$48,588. income was \$27,065 in 2013. As described in the Economic Element Profile, poverty has increased in almost all Skagit County jurisdictions during the 2000s.

As described in WAC 365-196-410, Housing Element, it is useful to consider income ranges when planning for housing affordability. Household income ranges include the following definitions based on HUD definitions at 24 C.F.R. 91.5:

- Extremely low-income refers to a household whose income is at or below thirty percent of the median income, adjusted for household size, for the county where the housing unit is located.
- Low-income refers to a household whose income is between thirty percent and fifty percent of the median income, adjusted for household size, for the county where the housing unit is located.

¹ Incomes include wage and salary earnings before deductions such as income taxes, social security, and Medicare. Incomes do not reflect that some families receive a portion of their income in noncash benefits such as health benefits, housing subsidies, and food stamps.

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- [Moderate-income refers to a household whose income is between fifty percent and eighty percent of the median income where the housing unit is located.](#)
- [Middle-income refers to a household whose income is between eighty percent and ninety-five percent of the median income for the area where the housing unit is located.](#)

[In 2013, about 40.4 percent of households earned very low, low, and moderate incomes \(0-80 percent of the countywide median income of \\$55,925\). Approximately 18 percent earn middle incomes at 80-120 percent of the median income. Last, about 40.7 percent of households earn 120 percent or greater of the countywide median income. See Table 5.](#)

Table 5. Skagit County Households by Income Range (in 2013 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars)

Income Range	Rounded (1,000s) Income Ranges		Households in Income Range	
	Low	High	Households	Percent
Under 30%	\$0	\$17,000	5,401	11.9%
30 - 50%	\$17,000	\$28,000	5,011	11.1%
50 - 80%	\$28,000	\$45,000	7,891	17.4%
80 - 100%	\$45,000	\$56,000	4,391	9.7%
100 - 120%	\$56,000	\$67,000	4,150	9.2%
120% or Over	\$67,000	\$1,000,001	18,449	40.7%
Total			45,293	100%

[Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Sample Estimate; BERK 2014](#)

[The match of incomes to rental and housing costs is addressed in the Housing Supply and Demand section below.](#)

[Almost 80 percent \(92,593\) Three-fourths \(79,422\) of the total 2000-2010 population was 16 years and older and considered in the workforce. Of this, 4.3 percent was unemployed. As described in the Economic Element Profile, since 1990, the county has experienced higher unemployment rates than the state with some years over 3 percent higher. The present unemployment rate in July 2013 is 8.4 percent, above the average for the state and other I-5 corridor counties.](#)

Community and Special Needs

[In Skagit County, housing needs may differ for households over a lifetime; housing styles and types differ for single persons versus families. Housing needs may also differ for those in poverty, those who have large families, those who are aging with mobility impairments, those with disabilities, those who are homeless with acute housing and social service needs, and](#)



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[those who are farmworkers. This section describes general community needs as well as particular concerns regarding aging, homelessness, and farmworker households.](#)

[Dimensions of Poverty](#)

[Community Action of Skagit County developed a community needs assessment in 2013 addressing the dimensions of poverty in the county. The needs assessment is based on a 704 households surveyed in summer and fall 2013, representing 2,233 persons. Additionally, surveys of human service provider staffs and community leaders were held, as well as focus groups with Mixtec and Slavic communities.](#)

[Most of the respondents had lived in the County for more than four years and nearly half \(45 percent\) lived in Mount Vernon with the balance in smaller cities or the unincorporated county. Most households had children \(59 percent\), and the average household size was 3.4 persons. Most households had wage earners \(60 percent\), and more than two-thirds \(69 percent\) had incomes at or below the Federal poverty level. About 58 percent of the respondents were white, and 37 percent were of Hispanic ethnicity. Over one-third usually speak in non-English languages \(30 percent Spanish, 6 percent other\).](#)

[Most of the respondents—52 percent—rent their housing; about 18 percent own their housing; the balance share housing with another household \(15 percent\), live in transitional or emergency shelters \(7 percent\), are homeless \(7 percent\), or live in employer-provided housing \(1 percent\). Nearly two-thirds \(65 percent\) pay more than 30 percent of their gross income on housing, and over half \(53 percent\) had to choose between paying the rent or mortgage and other daily needs.](#)

[Some of the findings of the study include the following barriers to prosperity for the respondents:](#)

- [Employment: Lack of living wage jobs, lack of job experience or discrimination.](#)
- [Health: Poor health, disabilities, substance abuse, and mental illness.](#)
- [Housing: Difficulties paying the rent, frequent rent increases, cost of utilities, and lacking credit, income or cash for a home down payment.](#)
- [Education: Lack of higher education attainment and lack of English proficiency.](#)

[Some of the particular housing needs identified in the focus groups include: Need for apartments and houses that are large enough for larger families of Mixtec households, and](#)



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[issues of landlord concerns on overcrowding and need for inexpensive transitional housing for new immigrants in the Slavic households.](#)

Age and Disability

[About 13 percent of the Skagit County population has a disability, defined by the US Census Bureau as broadly encompassing physical, mental, or emotional conditions that make it difficult to conduct activities or go outside the home alone or to work at a job. Those 65 years old or greater have a higher percentage of those that have a disability, with 36.2 percent having a disability as opposed to the overall population’s 13.4 percent. See Table 6.](#)

Table 6. Disability Status of the Civilian Non-institutionalized Population

<u>Population</u>	<u>Estimate</u>
Total Civilian Non-institutionalized Population	116,298
<u>With a disability</u>	13.40%
<u>Under 18 years</u>	27,344
<u>With a disability</u>	3.60%
<u>18 to 64 years</u>	69,521
<u>With a disability</u>	10.90%
<u>65 years and over</u>	19,433
<u>With a disability</u>	36.20%

[Source: American Community Survey, Table DP02, 5-Year Estimate, 2009-2013](#)

[Housing units that are designed with “universal design principles” can help any members of a household, particularly those with disabilities. These design principles include features that help with functionality for all inhabitants, such as ensuring the dwelling layout and fixtures consider how a household member would “approach, reach, manipulate\[e\], and use” the space “regardless of the user's body size, posture, or mobility”²](#)

Homelessness

[Estimates indicate that nearly 1,000 persons in Skagit County are homeless at any given time. In 2011, 957 people were estimated as homeless \(Skagit County Community Services Department 2012\) and in 2012 a point-in-time homeless count indicated there were 1,247 homeless persons with 48 percent being children \(Community Action of Skagit County 2013\).](#)

² University of Washington 2012. [Universal Design: Process, Principles, and Applications. Available: http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Programs/ud.html.](http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Programs/ud.html)



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Additionally, other individuals and households are at risk for becoming homeless due to a variety of reasons, including:

- Precarious financial conditions, domestic violence, health crises, and chronic mental health and chemical dependency conditions,
- Challenging reentry issues for those completing psychiatric hospitalization and incarceration, and
- Rising cost of housing and stagnant wages increases the risk of people losing their housing.
(Skagit County Community Services Department, 2012)

Farmworkers

The 2010-2015 Skagit County Farmworker Housing Action Plan (March 2011) provides an overview of the current need for farmworker housing. Based on a survey of 3,000 farmworkers in the County: 77 percent of farmworkers interviewed in Skagit County spent more than the federal standard of 30 percent of their income for housing costs (cost-burden); 46 percent lived in substandard housing; 43 percent lived in overcrowded conditions; and 61 percent had children in the home.

The Action Plan found that:

- There are 244 year-round rental homes dedicated to farmworker families in Skagit County (approximately 1,220 maximum occupancy) and 722 grower-owned beds.
- Approximately 4,220 farmworkers and family members in Skagit County do not have a safe affordable home.
- There are no homeownership programs dedicated to farmworkers in Skagit County. Fair market rents for a two bedroom home in the County are unaffordable to both the average wage earner and average farmworker household.

The Action Plan indicates an immediate need for about 844 farmworker housing units. Since most agricultural activity occurs in rural areas governed by Skagit County, farmworker housing is an important topic in Skagit County's Housing Element policies. At the same time, many services addressing the social and housing needs of farmworker households are in cities such as Burlington, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and others. Therefore encouraging affordable housing solutions in both unincorporated and incorporated areas is appropriate.



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[Recent Initiatives for Special Needs Populations and Creation of Affordable Housing](#)

[Many activities at the federal, state, county and city level are addressing affordable housing needs and the needs of special populations in Skagit County, including, but not limited to \(Community Action of Skagit County, 2014; Skagit Valley Herald, 2015\):](#)

- [A coordinated entry system and a new Housing Resource Center located at Community Action of Skagit Valley was opened in 2013. This is a centralized place for homeless to access help with housing needs.](#)
- [A Supportive Services for Veterans Families program was started in a five-county region including Skagit in 2011 to provide housing services to those homeless individuals who are veterans of families of veterans.](#)
- [Washington State legislative action created Housing and Essential Needs \(HEN\) funding in 2011. This funding is used to ensure single adults who are temporarily unable to work and who do not have income can maintain safe housing.](#)
- [Department of Corrections, Community Action of Skagit County and Skagit County Community Services partners with landlords to assist ex-offenders with transitional housing for three months as a Re-Entry Program for those as they are released from prison.](#)
- [Community Action of Skagit County formed Home Trust of Skagit \(HTS\) in 2009. HTS was established as a non-profit in 2011 and manages housing in La Conner. Another service offered by HTS is partnerships in a community land trust model throughout the county which helps create affordable homeownership.](#)
- [The Housing Authority plans to build a 14-unit complex for farmworker housing in Burlington by 2016 on land it owns.](#)

[See also the Affordable Housing Strategy below where some new initiatives are planned or underway.](#)



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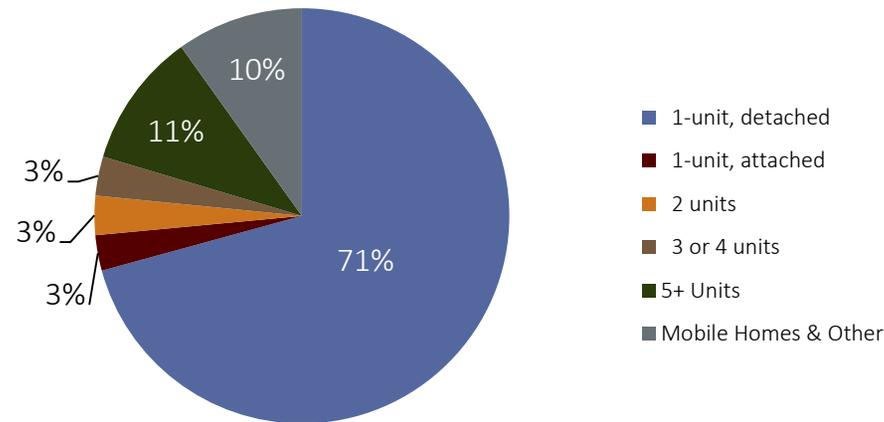
Housing Supply & Demand

Supply and Condition

The 2000 Census counted 42,681 housing units. Most (91.88 percent) of these were occupied. About half (1,971) of the remaining 3,829 vacant units were considered "seasonal, recreational or occasional use." About 925 units were vacant but rentable, and 763 units were vacant due to being on the home sales market. Approximately 68 percent of the occupied units were owner-occupied, and with the remainder were renter-occupied. Household sizes of owner- and renter-occupied units were the same. Seventy-two and 2.7 respectively.

About 71 percent of the units were single-family detached. Of those remaining units, 2.58 percent were single-family attached, 2.83 percent were duplexes, and 12.81 percent were in structures of 3 units or more. Nearly 12 percent of the housing stock was in the form of "mobile homes", with around 140 units in the form of boats, RVs, or vans (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Units in Structure of Housing Inventory (2013)



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Source: American Community Survey, Table DP04, 2009 - 2013 5-Year Estimate DP04; BERK, 2014. Between 2003 and 2013, the inventory of housing units increased by 6,939, an estimated 7,007, or 17.516 percent, an annual average increase of 21.5 percent. Single family housing unit production averaged just fewer than 530 over 620 units per year. In 2001 and 2002, about two thirds Over this time, 93 percent of the 7,007 units permitted were single-family and one third were multi family. The trend toward single family housing has been increasing in the county, with the 2011, 2012, and 2013 single family percentages 100, 99, and 100, respectively.

Year 2013 OFM data indicated a higher total of 52,218 dwellings than the American Community Survey data presented above, rising to 52,505 dwellings in 2014. However, similar to the 2013 American Community Survey information, 72 percent of units were considered single-family detached dwellings. Reviewing unincorporated county information more closely, there is a higher share of manufactured housing units than in incorporated cities as a whole; conversely most of the attached dwellings are in incorporated cities and few are found in unincorporated county territory. See Table 7.

Table 7. Percentage of Housing Types, 2014, County Unincorporated and Unincorporated Areas

Geography	Total Units	Single Family Detached	%	Two or More Units	%	Mobile Homes	%
Skagit County	52,505	37,983	72%	7,979	15%	6,543	12%
Unincorporated Skagit County	23,058	17,695	77%	533	2%	4,830	21%
Incorporated Skagit County	29,447	20,288	69%	7,446	25%	1,713	6%

Source: OFM, 2014

The County's overall housing stock shows more than one third (38 percent) of the housing stock was built in the last thirty years, nearly one third was built between 30-50 years ago (29 percent), and another third is greater than 50 years old (33 percent). See Figure 3. Housing stock that is past 50 years old may exhibit more quality conditions over time depending on the ability of households to maintain them.



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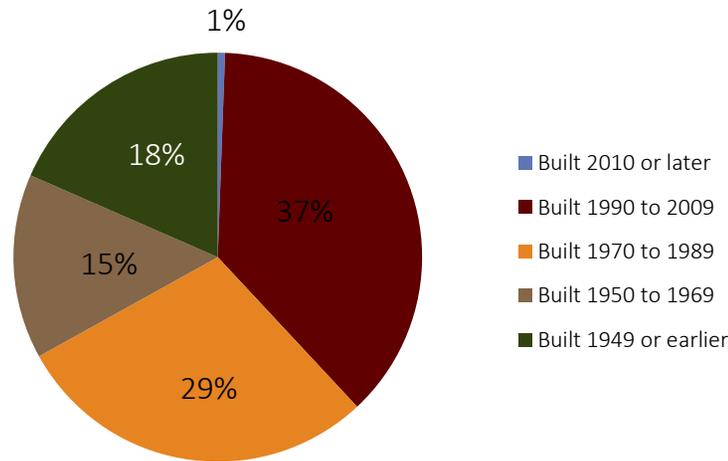
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Figure 3. Year Built – Countywide Housing Stock



Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Sample Estimates, Table B25034; BERK 2014

[Respondents to the Skagit County Community Action 2013 Community Needs Assessment survey indicated that only 30 percent of their housing was in “good” condition, with a majority of housing needing either minor or major repairs. Figure 4 shows the results of the survey.](#)



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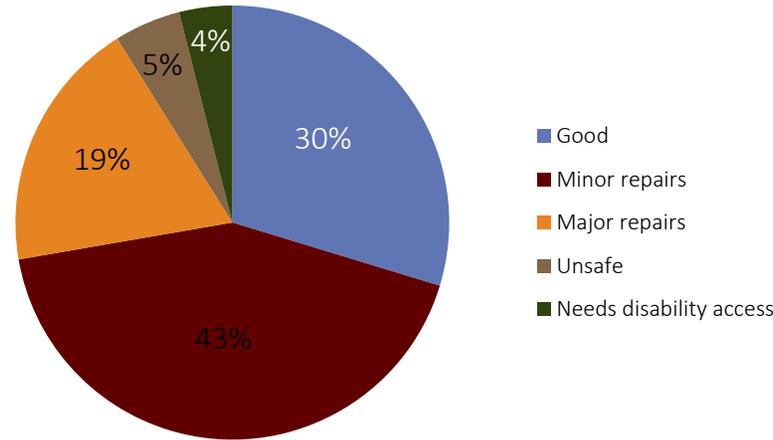
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Figure 4. Skagit County Housing Conditions, 2013



Source: Skagit County Community Action, 2013 Community Needs Assessment

Note: 568 of the survey respondents answered the question about housing conditions.

Home Sales Price

According to the Washington Center for Real Estate Research (WCER), in 2004, from 2013 to 2014, Q2 median home sales prices in Skagit County increased 1.9 percent from \$178,000 to \$180,800. This was well under the state increase of 13.47.9 percent over the same time period and much less than Whatcom County's (25.16.4 percent), San Juan County's (35.4.1 percent), and Snohomish County's (14.10.4 percent). It was comparable to, and Island County's increase of 9.1 (3.7 percent).

The WCER also tracks the inventory of housing for sale by price range in terms of the estimated number of months of supply that is available as shown below in Table 1. In 2004 and 2005, from 2008 to 2013, the supply of housing on the market was much lower than it was in 2000. From 2008 to 2013, the supply of housing on the market has been decreasing. At the end of Q2 2014, there were 808 listings available for sale. The large (relative) inventory of top-priced housing dropped most dramatically, but the drop in moderate and low priced housing availability is of more concern considering the greater volume of housing demand in those moderate and low price ranges. In March, June of



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2005, 46~~2014~~, 32.7 percent of all homes for sale were priced below \$250,000 and 21~~12.5~~ percent were priced below \$160,000.

Table 1–8. Estimated Months of Supply of For-Sale Housing

Price Range	12/2000	Q2/2011	3/2004	Q2/2012	12/2004	Q2/2013	3/2005	Q2/2014
Under \$80,000	7.0	4.1	3.6	6.0	4.4	6.2	3.8	
\$80,000 – 159,999	4.9	8.3	2.5	5.9	2.1	3.3	1.9	4.4
160,000 – 249,000	8.7	2.4	3.2	7.5	1.6	3.4	1.5	3.4
250,000 – 499,999	13.1	7.3	6.7	13.5	3.4	5.7	3.4	7.5
\$500,000 and above	53.0	52.1	19.5	33.9	7.8	19.4	8.4	21.5
Total Market	8.1	3.0	4.2	10.0	5.2	6.6	2.5	6.3

Source: Runstad Center for Real Estate Studies, University of Washington, 2011-2014.

By the third~~2nd~~ quarter of 2005~~2014~~, the median price of single family housing (resales and new construction) had reached \$240,000~~, 270,900~~.

Affordability

The WCRER Housing Affordability Index is the ratio of income to the “bare” minimum~~“outlay necessary to qualify for a mortgage on a median price home. Since 2003, in 2011 through 2013, the index for Skagit County middle income families’ abilities to pay for housing dropped, although the index was better than in fairly consistent with the state and most other neighboring counties.~~ As shown in Table 9~~2~~, Skagit County middle income families had 42~~51~~ percent more income than the bare minimum necessary to qualify for a mortgage to purchase homes in their price range in the first~~1st~~ quarter of 2003~~. By 2011. Though improving over 2012 and early 2013, by the first fourth~~ quarter of 2005~~2013~~, that factor had slipped to 23~~47~~ percent. The state’s comparable factors were 31~~52~~ percent and 12~~49~~ percent respectively.

Table 2–9. Skagit County Housing Affordability Index

Year	2003				2004				2005					
Quarter	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th		
Index	+42	+51	+53	+59	+44	+60	+46	+37	+1	+23	+84	+64	+49	+47

Source: WCRER Estimates, 2011-2013.

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Since this analysis includes both first-time and “move-up” buyers, the WCRER also provides an analysis of affordable home purchase prices for selected income groups, [as shown in Table 10](#). It should be noted that the number of households at incomes of \$30,000 and below that could afford a single down payment of over \$6,000 is low. Likewise, to afford the median home cost of \$270,000 would potentially take a down payment of over \$25,000, also [daunting for first time homebuyers](#).

Table 3-10. Skagit County Housing Ownership Affordability (2014 \$)

(2004 \$)						
Income	Affordable Housing Expense (P & I)*	Mortgage Amount	Down Payment	Maximum Home Purchase Price	Percent of Households at Annual Income Level Range	
\$25,000	\$21,625	\$89,249	\$4,697	\$93,946	25.1%	
					(29.99	
					9 or less)	
\$45,000	\$1,042	\$178,498	\$19,833	\$198,331	28.7%	
					(30,000	
					0 to \$59,999	
)	
\$70,000	\$1,563	\$267,747	\$66,937	\$334,684	20.2%	
					(60,000	
					0 to 90,000)	
\$125,000	\$2,604	\$446,245	\$240,286	\$686,531	19.2%	
0	\$3.12	\$3.12	\$8	\$3	(90,000 to 149,999)	

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Source: WCRER, 2014; American Community Survey 2013 5-year estimates

*\$30,000 income: 5% down payment, \$60,000 income: 10% down payment, \$90,000 income: 20% down payment, \$150,000 income: 35% down payment.

*Uses 25 percent of gross income threshold, 30-year fixed rate mortgage, and 4.5 percent interest assumptions.

*Principal & Interest

Another way of looking at affordability [There is a gap between](#) the “30 percent factor” — that is, [recent supply of housing and the ability of many](#) households should not have to spend more than 30 percent [pay and appropriate proportion](#) of their incomes to pay their housing costs. [own suitable homes](#). The 2000 Census found that nearly 5,500 [2013 ACS estimated the median household income to be \\$55,925](#) (in 2013 inflation-adjusted dollars). This means that



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about half of Skagit County home-owning County's households, and 4,800 of the renter households had in 2013 could afford housing costs higher than 30 percent priced below \$270,000. The percentage of income. This amounts to about one homes available for sale below \$250,000 in the third quarter of all households.

Generally, household incomes are characterized as “low”, “moderate”, “middle”, and “upper” where they are respectively 0-50 percent, 50-80 percent, 80-120 percent, 2013 was 42.4 percent (WCRER 2014) and more than 120 percent the months' supply of the median county income. Using the median household incomes housing at more affordable levels has been dropping as described above, this following distribution would result:

Table 4—Skagit County Household Income Thresholds, 2004

Rents

The Washington Center for Real Estate Research shows that as of fall 2013 the average rent was \$793 for an apartment, and out of 1,358 units surveyed only 38 were vacant, a rate of 2.8 percent. The conditions showed a tight rental market:

The rental market is tight in Skagit County with a vacancy rate of 3.5 percent as of July 2014. According to the Washington Center for Real Estate Research, as of September 2013 the average rent in Skagit County was \$793, up 4 percent from a year ago. The average rent for one-bedroom apartment was \$704 and \$779 for a two-bedroom, one bathroom apartment. Based on preliminary data, no permits were issued for multifamily construction during the 12 months ending June 2014 and only 6 units were issued permits from 2010 through 2013. (US HUD January 2015)³

Federal Section 8 certificates or vouchers allow low-income households to rent eligible units in the private market and receive rental subsidies from the Federal Government. The level of the certificate or voucher is based on fair market rents (FMR), specifically: “The FMR is the 40th percentile of gross rents for typical, non-standard rental units occupied by recent movers in a local housing market.”

³ US HUD PD&R / Economic & Market Analysis Division (EMAD) Northwest Regional Office, January 2015. Available: <http://www.huduser.org/portal/MCCharts/countyCharts.html?countyID=53057&countyName=Skagit%20County,Washington&dt=January%2015,%202015>.



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A fair market rent in Skagit County is estimated at \$988 for a 2-bedroom unit as of 2015. See [Table 11](#).

Table 11. Fair Market Rent in Skagit County (FY 2013-2015)

	Efficiency	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4-Bedroom
Low Household Income Threshold (0-50%)	\$0-				
Moderate Household Income Threshold (50-80%) 2015 FMR Mount Vernon-Anacortes, WA MSA.	\$24,295-\$38,870	\$735	\$988	\$1,387	\$1,392
Middle Household Income Threshold (80-120%) FY2014 FMR Mount Vernon-Anacortes, WA MSA.	\$38,270-\$58,305	\$675	\$908	\$1,275	\$1,279
Upper Household Income Threshold (120+%) FY 2013 FMR Mount Vernon-Anacortes, WA MSA.	\$58,305+	\$669	\$899	\$1,262	\$1,266

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There is a gap between the recent supply of housing and the ability of many households to pay an appropriate proportion of their incomes to own or rent suitable homes. The OFM projected the 2004 median household income to be \$48,500. This means that most of Skagit County's households were in the market for housing priced below \$190,000, but less than half of the for-sale homes were available at that price.

The Skagit County Community Action Agency published the *Skagit County Low-Income Needs Assessment* in August 2005. This report is based on a survey of more than 1,000 low-moderate income households that provides information on a broad range of economic and social needs of this segment of the community. With respect to housing, 26% of the respondents needed emergency housing. Two thirds of the renters, and three fourths of the homeowners paid more than 30% of their gross incomes for rent or mortgage payments. The median cost burden for renters was 44% and for owners—43%. These figures illustrate the need for a comprehensive housing strategy that can lead to solutions to this growing problem.

Housing Source: [US HUD 2013](#)

As described in the Interim Report “[Building a Skagit County Housing Affordability Strategy](#)” the mean renter wage is less than what is needed to rent a fair market unit:

[A Skagit renter household needs a full-time job paying \\$17.70 per hour in order to afford a two-bedroom rental at the Fair Market Rent, an income equal to \\$36,800 per year. This is called the Housing Wage, defined as “the estimated full-time hourly wage a household must earn to afford a decent rental at HUD estimated Fair Market Rent while spending no more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs.”](#)



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Many jobs pay much less than the local Housing Wage of \$17.70 per hour, and many jobs are less than full-time. In Skagit, for a two-bedroom apartment, the gap between a full-time Housing Wage and the mean renter wage is \$6.64 per hour or \$13,800 per year, over \$1,000 short per month.

Table 12 shows income as it relates to rental housing in Skagit County. The table indicates, for 2013 data, the approximate number of rental households at each income range, including their monthly housing budget range. The estimated housing gap describes rental units available to households at varying income ranges, as well as the gap in supply of units for specific income ranges to the demand for those units. As the table indicates, there is a concentration of undersupply in more affordable housing units, as well as an overall county-wide undersupply of housing units.

Table 12. Skagit County Renter-Occupied Income and Current Rents

Ratio to Skagit County AMI	Income Ranges		Monthly Housing Budget*		Estimated Renter HHs		Estimated Gap	
	Low	High	Low	High	Count	Percent	Units	over/(under)
\$55,925								
Under 30%	\$0	\$17,000	\$0	\$425	3,351	23%	851	(2,501)
30 - 50%	\$17,000	\$28,000	\$425	\$700	2,546	17%	1,375	(1,171)
50 - 80%	\$28,000	\$45,000	\$700	\$1,125	3,055	21%	6,492	3,437
80 - 100%	\$45,000	\$56,000	\$1,125	\$1,400	1,493	10%	1,057	(436)
100 - 120%	\$56,000	\$67,000	\$1,400	\$1,675	1,282	9%	1,471	189
120% or Over	\$67,000	-	\$1,675	\$0	2,965	20%	937	(2,028)
Total					14,693		12,183	(2,511)

* Estimated monthly housing budget based on 30% of monthly gross income.

Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Sample Estimate; BERK 2014

Source: American Community Survey, 2009-2013 5-Year Sample Estimate B25063 and B25118; BERK, 2014

Rental units often consist of attached housing. Future affordable rental units would likely be found in the cities and unincorporated UGAs. However, in rural areas, accessory dwelling



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units and in some instances farmworker housing may also help serve the community's general need for affordable rental housing.

Affordability: Households in Need

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordable housing as housing that does not place a cost burden of 30 percent or greater on a household's income. Based on 2006-2010 American Community Survey data, the *Building a Skagit County Housing Affordability Strategy* found that "two out of every five households cannot afford the housing they occupy in Skagit County (38.6 percent, 16,875 out of 43,713 households.)" As of 2008-2012 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data, a similar percentage 37 percent or about 16,900 of 45,475 households are cost burdened. Most of those cost burdened are homeowners at 10,105 households, and a sizable number are renters at about 6,795 households. See Table 13.

Table 13. Housing Cost Burden: Skagit County; Washington 2008-2012 ACS

Housing Cost Burden Overview	Owner	Renter	Total
Cost Burden <=30%	20,800	7,360	28,160
Cost Burden >30% to <=50%	6,320	3,420	9,740
Cost Burden >50%	3,785	3,375	7,160
Cost Burden not available	255	160	415
Total	31,160	14,315	45,475

Source: US HUD 2014

Households earning lower incomes tend to be more cost burdened, especially those at extremely low and very low incomes. More than 77 percent of households earning less than 30 percent of the area family income are paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing, and those that are extremely cost burdened include 66 percent of extremely low income households paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing. See Table 14.

Table 14. Income by Cost Burdened Renters and Owners

Income by Cost Burden (Owners and Renters)	Cost burden > 30%	% > 30%	Cost burden > 50%	% > 50%	Total
Household Income <= 30% HAMFI	3,555	77%	3,055	66%	4,595
Household Income >30% to <=50% HAMFI	3,750	76%	1,910	38%	4,965
Household Income >50% to <=80% HAMFI	4,180	52%	1,340	17%	8,040
Household Income >80% to <=100% HAMFI	1,510	34%	390	9%	4,385
Household Income >100% HAMFI	3,900	17%	465	2%	23,490
Total	16,895	37%	7,160	16%	45,475

Source: US HUD and American Community Survey 2008-2012



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HAMFI = HUD Area Median Family Income

Demand for Housing

By ~~From 2015 through~~ 2036, the population of Skagit County is expected to grow by ~~46,100-~~35,751 (BERK 2014). See Table 15.

Table 15. Population Growth Targets

UGA	2012 Population	2012-2015 Population Growth Forecast	2015-2036 Population Growth Forecast	2015-2036 Population Growth Forecast Allocation Percent	2036 Population Growth Forecast Allocation
Anacortes	16,090	308	5,895	16.5%	22,293
Burlington	10,393	71	3,808	10.7%	14,272
Mount Vernon	33,935	1,034	12,434	34.8%	47,403
Sedro-Woolley	12,431	83	4,555	12.7%	17,069
Concrete	873	0	320	0.9%	1,193
Hamilton	310	3	114	0.3%	427
La Conner	898	-1	329	0.9%	1,226
Lyman	441	2	162	0.5%	605
Bayview Ridge	1,812	-1	72	0.2%	1,883
Swinomish	2,489	15	912	2.6%	3,416
Rural (outside UGAs)	38,277	238	7,150	20.0%	45,665
Total	117,949	-1,752	35,751	100.0%	155,452

Notes: The figures apply to cities/towns including their associated UGAs.

Source: OFM 2012; BERK Consulting, 2014.

The 2013 ACS estimated an average overall household size for renters and owners of 2.6. At the 2000 Census average ~~this~~ household size of 2.6, this will create, there would be a total demand for ~~17~~more than 13,700 new occupied dwelling units. ~~With a~~, not accounting for vacancy. Assuming a future vacancy rate of between 5 and 10 percent, the total ~~would be~~ need for housing in 2036 would be between 14,489 and 15,294 units. At a steady rate of production between 2015 and 2036, this will mean that ~~more than 900~~ between 690 and 728 units ~~should~~will need to come on line each year. This is considerably, with around twenty percent of these new units in rural areas and the remaining in urban areas. This annual future need is significantly more than the rate of production in recent years, which averaged less than 250 annually between 2009 and 2013. See Table 16.

Table 16. Building Permits

Unit Type	2009 (New Units)	2010 (New Units)	2011 (New Units)	2012 (New Units)	2013 (New Units)
Single-Family	251	203	179	227	283
Multi-Family	4	4	0	2	0



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Total New Units	255	207	179	229	283
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[Source: US Census Building Permits 2009 - 2013, Skagit County Annual New Privately-Owned Residential Building Permits; BERK, 2014](#)

The County and the cities have adopted an allocation formula for this growth, assuming that a maximum of 20 percent of the growth ([about 3,000 dwellings](#)) will be in the rural area and the remaining 80 percent-plus ([about 12,000 dwellings](#)) will be in the cities and Urban Growth Areas. Since urban densities must be at least 4 units per net acre, and there will be some land that will not available for [UGAs](#).

[A detailed land capacity analysis has not been prepared for the rural areas, but based on Envision 2060, there is an adequate supply of undeveloped rural zoned lots \(approximately 13,000 not-yet-exercised development, the residential land demand for urban growth may be 4,500 – 5,000 acres. The County’s planned rural densities range considerably, therefore the projected new rural housing land demand will vary depending upon the location and underlying characteristics of the geographic areas. The variables affecting land demand include density, housing types, critical areas, water \[rights in the rural and resource lands\]\(#\)\) to accommodate non-UGA growth. The County anticipates that about 20 percent of all new residences or around 3,000 units will locate in the non-UGA areas over the 20-year planning period. The timing of rural growth would depend on the housing market and availability, septic suitability, and the market. Developing a better estimate of the number of available lots in the rural area is a priority that the County will pursue through a plan implementing various policies of this Comprehensive Plan. \[of water and suitable road access among other factors.\]\(#\)](#)

It can also be assumed that some of the new housing demand will be created by households with low and moderate incomes. It will be difficult for these households to be accommodated without some level of subsidy or assistance. [especially considering the existing high level of households overburdened by housing costs.](#)

Affordable Housing Strategy

Over the next twenty years, Skagit County jurisdictions should diversify the housing supply to accommodate all income levels and household demographic conditions. The County and cities should work with the Skagit Council of Governments to amend the Countywide Planning policies and develop strategies to produce an action oriented program for



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implementing regulatory, administrative, and financial measures. This will allow all jurisdictions to prioritize actions that will be most effective in addressing short- and mid-term housing needs, and then shape additional strategies for more long-term, sustainable measures.

Examples of potential strategies include incentives such as:

- ~~density bonuses for providing affordable housing;~~
- ~~taking additional action to support development of accessory dwelling units;~~
- ~~adopting special regulations for senior housing and housing for persons with special needs;~~
- ~~reviewing regulatory provisions to expedite permitting;~~
- ~~using surplus land for housing;~~
- ~~supporting a shared housing program; and~~
- ~~supporting regional efforts to provide affordable housing.~~
- ~~establishing annual performance measures to determine how the County is doing at accommodating growth and providing affordable housing.~~

By 2025 the current and future housing needs of low income households were estimated to be extremely high: 17,000 currently in need plus 4,550 between 2012 and 2025 applying the year 2010 percentage of households earning less than 80 percent of the area median income:

As we noted above, data from two sources concluded that around 17,000 households in the County are already paying more than they can afford, which is a hardship for these households and has negative ripple effects on the local economy.

In addition, we estimated that 4,550 households with low-incomes will be added to the County by 2025 and will face a challenging time finding housing they can afford.

The sum of these estimates (17,000 plus 4,550) tells us that 21,550 affordable homes will be needed between 2012 and 2025. Approximately 1,800 affordable homes per year will need to be added to meet the growing population's needs.

By 2036, the future demand for affordable units would also grow beyond the estimate of 4,550 above. Assuming the same percentages of lower income households, about 40.4 percent or 6,000 units of the future housing stock will need to be available at affordable levels. If allocated similar to overall growth targets, there would need to be around 4,800



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[affordable units in the UGAs and around 1,200 in the rural areas. This is in addition to providing suitable housing for those 17,000 households currently in need \(see also Table 12\).](#)

[Most of the future growth will occur in UGAs including most of the affordable multifamily and single family dwellings. However, Skagit County can provide opportunities for rural single family dwellings including manufactured homes, accessory dwelling units, and farmworker housing to help meet the general market demand and a share of the affordable unit demand.](#)

Priority Housing Needs

[Existing conditions indicate a variety of specific priority housing needs in Skagit County:](#)

- [General and Affordable Housing Stock Production and Preservation](#) – To meet the [housing needs of a growing population and affordable housing needs of low income households, both single family and multifamily housing production will need to increase beyond recent permit levels in cities and their UGAs and to a lesser extent rural areas. Land capacity for housing in all density ranges is necessary to meet the demand. Preservation of aging housing units that need repair is also important for long-term affordability; over one-third of the county’s housing stock is over 50 years old today and over the 20-year life of the Comprehensive Plan, this will increase. As housing is created or preserved trends should be considered; the increase in small non-family households as well as the need for bigger housing units for larger families shows a continuing need for diverse housing choices. Collective action to increase housing production and preserve dwellings will be needed such as through implementation of Affordable Housing Advisory Committee’s Housing Affordability Strategy \(2013\).](#)
- [Farmworker Housing](#) - As one of the more prominent employment sectors in Skagit County, agriculture creates the need for a focus on farmworker housing. [The Skagit Valley Farmworker Housing Action Plan, completed by the Washington Farmworker Housing Trust in 2011 found an immediate need for over 800 units of farmworker housing.](#)
- [Aging Populations and Persons with Disabilities](#) – The population is aging. Those with [disabilities make up more than 13 percent of the total population and more than one third of those over 65 years of age have a disability. Housing options allowing persons to age in place or to move to housing suited for assisted living would be needed. The](#)



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County's Community Services Department programs may become more important to general housing stability as the population ages and disabilities emerge.

- Homelessness – Recent counts of homeless persons show over 1,000 are homeless and due to the lack of affordable rental housing others are at risk. As part of collective actions, addressing homelessness through appropriate locations of housing in cities and their UGAs and through supportive services offered by the County and social service agencies will continue to be necessary.

Affordable Housing Strategy

Recognizing ongoing affordable housing needs, the Board of County Commissioners appointed a Housing Affordability Committee in July of 2010. The Committee was formed through Resolution R20100206, stating “whereas, there is insufficient affordable housing in Skagit County, and a need for a coordinated and strategic approach to identify strategies to meet those needs in collaboration with all jurisdictions and advocates for affordable house.” This Committee approved a county-wide Housing Affordability Strategy in 2013, which contains primary affordable housing strategies for the county as a whole moving forward. Key recommendations include the following twelve strategies – as noted below recommendation 5 is under active exploration:

- Recommendation 1: By implementing the Comprehensive Plans, each jurisdiction will play a proactive role in creating housing affordability that matches the incomes and jobs in its sphere of influence.
- Recommendation 2: Be ready for the competitive opportunities for nonlocal funding as those opportunities recur or new opportunities emerge, and have a steady stream of housing projects on the drawing boards, getting ready to apply.
- Recommendation 3: Have at least one strong Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)-eligible project ready each year for the CDBG General Purpose Grant Program competition and have a queue of future CDBG-eligible projects on the drawing boards.
- Recommendation 4: Consider using the CDBG Planning--Only Grant Program to plan for programs and projects that produce affordable low--income housing.
- Recommendation 5: Investigate further the advantages and administrative requirements of forming a HOME Consortium as an annual grant source,



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approximately \$600,000 per year for a Consortium of the municipalities in Skagit, Island and Whatcom County. [Note: This is underway; tri-County effort was selected for funding.]

- Recommendation 6: Look for opportunities for local governments to invest in housing affordability programs and projects.
- Recommendation 7: Work to build local support for housing and momentum that leads to a ballot measure asking voters to support local funding for housing for seniors, veterans, working families and other low-income people.
- Recommendation 8: Skagit County could consider, through its normal consultation process, a small fraction of Economic Development Public Facilities Distressed/Rural Sales and Use Tax as an incentive for construction of affordable housing, with uses of the funding limited to paying impact fees and utility fees for eligible projects.
- Recommendation 9: Make sure the implementation of the recommendations in this report supports the progress being made to implement the 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness.
- Recommendation 10: Carry forward the Action Plan adopted by the Skagit Valley Farmworker Housing Trust Advisory Council.
- Recommendation 11: Support and expand the capacity of nonprofit homeownership programs by securing more local and nonlocal funding as the community investment that works as the mortgage gap financing that makes home buying and homeownership affordable.
- Recommendation 12: Build a business plan for the acquisition, renovation and preservation of existing housing that could be offered as rental housing with monthly costs affordable for low-income households. Determine whether adequate community investment is available to make the business plan feasible.

Some of the Recommendations – 9 and 10 – cite other strategic plans to end homelessness and increase farmworker housing.

Skagit County 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness strategies include:

- Strategy 1. Centralize and coordinate the process of intake, assessment and referral.
- Strategy 2. Rapidly re-house families who become homeless.



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- [Strategy 3. Target homeless prevention assistance to people most at risk of losing housing.](#)
- [Strategy 4. Provide interim housing through emergency shelter and transitional housing to those who need it most.](#)
- [Strategy 5. Increase the supply of permanent and permanent supportive housing.](#)
- [Strategy 6. Link people to services that improve housing stability.](#)
- [Strategy 7. Measure and report progress toward goals.](#)
- [Strategy 8. Develop new resources to implement the 10-Year Plan. \(Particularly, more housing units that are affordable to people with very low income.\)](#)
- [Strategy 9. Establish an advisory committee that is accountable to the 10-Year Plan.](#)

The plan indicated an “existing, potential, and needed funding” amount of \$1.9 Million. The existing sources of funds identified included City (Mount Vernon), County (General Fund and Special Funds), State (Commerce), and Federal (HUD) funds.

Strategies and action steps in the *2010-2015 Skagit County Farmworker Housing Action Plan* to develop the estimated 844 farmworker housing units needed immediately include:

- [Public Awareness through a public education campaign,](#)
- [Land Availability through collaboration with local governments and farm preservation groups, and](#)
- [Partnerships and Coordination of Resources by supporting affordable housing and service providers.](#)

Role of the County

[Skagit County has the opportunity to play a role in shaping policies around housing issues in the region and to work alongside cities to achieve a vision of securing housing for all residents that is affordable, encourages preservation of existing housing stock, and provides a variety of options.](#)

[The County has allocated growth to all jurisdictions in accordance with GMA provisions to provide adequate land for housing to meet the anticipated population growth. The County and cities apply zoning at appropriate densities to promote a variety of housing types. The](#)



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[County and cities authorize land use and building permits for single family and attached housing, where appropriate. While the County's share of rural growth is appropriately limited and the majority of housing will be in Urban Growth Areas, the County can play a role in providing diverse rural housing choices through zoning and incentives for manufactured homes, accessory dwelling units or duplexes, farmworker housing such as temporary housing that would not remove long-term productive agricultural lands, and a range of rural single family densities including Conservation and Reserve Developments \(CaRDs\) and infill and adaptive reuse in Rural Villages. State agencies and counties and cities may also surplus lands no longer needed for public purposes as a potential source of land for housing.](#)

[Skagit County has also served as a convener of housing and human service providers and strategies such as through the formation of the Skagit County Affordable Housing Advisory Committee authorized by Skagit County Commissioners' Resolution R2010-0206. This Committee has prepared an affordable housing strategy with city- and county-specific roles and recommendations, and makes recommendations on leveraging collective action. Recent efforts at collective actions include establishing a HOME Consortium as an annual grant source, for municipalities in Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties. Future County actions may include allocating a share of certain revenue sources for incentives to construct affordable housing. More information on the County's affordable housing strategy is provided \[in the Housing Profile above\]\(#\).](#)

[The County Health Department provides services for those with special needs \(home repair program, elder meal services, mental health services, etc.\). Therefore the County will support the social service needs of households throughout the county, which can contribute to housing stability.](#)

GMA Mandate

[As a county that is required to plan under the Growth Management Act \(GMA\), Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan must include a housing element that ensures vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods. The element must include an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs; goals, policies, and provisions for the preservation, improvement and development of housing; and identification of sufficient land for housing of all types.](#)



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Addressing the countywide community housing need requires a regional approach that involves all levels of government (federal/state/local) [local, state, and federal government, as well as](#) and the private sector. Each jurisdiction has a responsibility for meeting its obligations in addressing affordable housing in Skagit County.

The greatest potential for promoting affordable housing is in the urban areas, given the intent of the Growth Management Act to direct most population growth to these areas, and to maintain lower densities and larger lot sizes in the rural area. Skagit County recognizes that development within cities and their unincorporated Urban Growth Areas is subject to interlocal agreements that may affect the type, style and location of housing. The Countywide Planning Policies are the most appropriate tool for advancing a countywide or regional housing strategy supported by the County, cities and towns, and other public and private entities.

The following GMA Planning Goal ~~drives~~, [along with the County vision statements provided in Chapter 1, drive](#) the formation and implementation of the County's housing goals and policies:

- *Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.*

The [Skagit County, along with its incorporated cities prepared their](#) Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) [in 2007. The following CPPs](#) provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this element:

- *Local governments shall allow for an adequate supply of land use options to provide for a wide variety of incomes, housing types, and densities. (CPP 4.1)*
- *Public/private partnerships shall be encouraged to build affordable housing and devise incentives for innovative and environmentally sensitive design to meet the housing needs of people with low and moderate incomes and special needs populations. (CPP 4.2)*
- *The Comprehensive Plan should support innovative land use management techniques, including, but not limited to, density bonuses, cluster housing, planned unit developments and the transfer of development rights. (CPP 4.3)*



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- *The existing affordable housing stock should be maintained and efforts to rehabilitate older and substandard housing, which are otherwise consistent with comprehensive plan policies, should be encouraged. (CPP 4.4)*
- *The construction of housing that promotes innovative, energy efficient and less expensive building technologies shall be encouraged. (CPP 4.5)*
- *Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location of residential development shall be made in a manner consistent with protecting natural resource lands, aquatic resources, and critical areas. (CPP 4.6)*
- *Manufactured home parks shall be allowed only within urban or urban growth boundary areas. (CPP 4.7)*

Goals and Policies

Housing Quantity

Goal 7A Ensure that the supply of housing and sufficient land capacity keep pace with population growth in the County.

Housing Affordability

Goal 7A-1 Maintain a progressive program of financial, regulatory, and development measures that will produce opportunities for a full range of housing affordability.

policy 7A-1.1 Work with housing producers and stakeholders in urban and rural areas to apply creative solutions to infill and development using techniques such as attached dwelling units, co-housing, home-sharing, accessory dwelling units, clustering, planned unit developments and lot size averaging. [consistent with the community's vision for urban growth areas and rural character.](#)

policy 7A-1.2 Develop explanatory materials, offer pre-application conferences, and employ other measures to facilitate the review and approval of building permit and land use applications.



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policy 7A-1.3 Support, when financially feasible, low income housing programs, with tools such as multifamily tax exemptions, public bond issues, grants, and low interest loan programs.

policy 7A-1.4 ~~Zoning~~ Ensure zoning and subdivision regulations ~~should~~ provide for the efficient use of lands for residential development where appropriate to increase available land supply and opportunities for affordable housing to match the demographic and economic housing needs of the County's current and projected population.

policy 7A-1.5 Develop procedures to reduce impact fees and utility fees for low income housing projects, when such fees are required.

policy 7A-1.6 Maintain an ongoing monitoring and evaluation program to improve the process of permit review and approval, save time, and decrease costs.

policy 7A-1.7 Work with the Skagit Council of Governments to establish a program for regular updating of the Housing Needs Assessment, including provisions to monitor and assist in providing affordable housing opportunities. The Assessment should be updated on a regular basis, several years in advance of each ~~seven-year~~ periodic GMA-required Comprehensive Plan update ~~that is required by the Growth Management Act.~~

policy 7A-1.8 Develop growth strategies and housing and human service programs to plan for affordable housing within the regional context. In collaboration with the cities and housing providers, address the countywide need for ownership and rental housing affordable to households with moderate, low and very-low incomes. Work towards a common goal of having 40 percent of the countywide housing stock affordable at or below 80 percent of the area median income (AMI), with an intentional focus on expanding the supply of housing affordable at or below 50 percent of the AMI. Develop objectives for housing affordable to different income ranges and special needs populations.

Commented [A91]: Addition recommended by the Planning Commission based on comments from the Skagit County Public Health Department.

Housing Quality

Goal 7B Strive to preserve, conserve, and enhance the existing housing stock, including historic structures and sites; develop design guidelines and



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standards to improve the quality of new housing consistent with applicable building codes.

~~Goal 7B 1~~ Information

~~Manage regulatory, administrative, funding and information programs that contribute to the development and maintenance of high quality housing and strong communities throughout the County.~~

policy 7B-1.1 Facilitate the rehabilitation and reuse of existing structures for housing by allowing reduced permitting fees and “grandfathered” development standards.

policy 7B-1.2 Allow reuse of formerly non-residential structures for housing in mixed use developments in Rural Village Commercial Districts and Urban Growth Areas.

policy 7B-1.3 Establish development standards and design guidelines for Urban Growth Areas, Rural Villages, and large CaRD developments, to promote efficient, pedestrian friendly, and attractive communities.

policy 7B-1.4 [Manage regulatory, administrative, funding and information programs that contribute to the development and maintenance of high quality housing and strong communities throughout the County.](#)

Housing Distribution and Accessibility

Goal 7C Strive to ensure that a variety of housing types, densities, and values can be produced in the rural area, Urban Growth Areas, and Rural Villages appropriate to the character of the individual communities. Additionally, ensure sufficient infrastructure capacity is available to accommodate growth and provide housing opportunities for all economic segments of the population.

~~Goal 7C 1~~ ~~Housing for Special Needs~~

~~Ensure the availability of housing for people with special needs.~~

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- policy 7C-1.1 Allow mixed residential and commercial uses in Urban Growth Areas and Rural Village commercial districts to promote housing affordability and availability.
- policy 7C-1.2 Consider allowing reduced minimum lot sizes in exchange for community facilities and amenities such as parks, open space, recreational facilities, and community centers.
- policy 7C-1.3 Allow duplexes in zoning districts permitting single-family residences, as an alternative to accessory dwelling units or the ability to further subdivide. A duplex extinguishes two development rights.

Housing for Special Needs

Goal 7D Ensure the availability of housing for people with special needs.

- policy 7D-1.1 Allow specialized housing facilities such as [senior housing](#), group homes for children and adults with special needs, in appropriate zoning districts.

Farmworker Housing

Goal 7E Strive for an adequate supply of housing to meet the needs of farm workers-farmworkers and the agricultural industry.

- policy 7E-1.1 Work in partnership with other public agencies and the private sector to ensure an adequate supply of farm worker [farmworker](#) housing.

[\(a\) Support strategic actions of the Skagit Valley Farmworker Housing Trust Advisory Council to develop new farmworker housing.](#)

[\(b\) Recognize farmworker housing would occur primarily in urban areas where services are available and secondarily in rural areas when sensitively designed to minimize loss of agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.](#)

[\(c\) Consider the seasonal nature of farming and potential options to accommodate seasonal housing that does not permanently convert agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.](#)



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policy 7E-1.2 Review permit applications for farm-worker housing developments in consideration of proximity to job locations and necessary public facilities and services consistent with the Washington State Temporary Worker Housing Health and Safety Regulations (RCW 70.114A).

Manufactured Housing

Goal 7F Recognize the value of manufactured housing as an affordable housing solution.

policy 7F-1.1 ~~Regulations~~ Ensure that regulations regarding manufactured housing shall ~~be~~ are consistent with federal and state laws.



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Introduction

The Growth Management Act ([GMA](#)) has very specific requirements for comprehensive plan transportation elements. To meet these ~~Transportation Element~~ requirements, Skagit County has adopted the Transportation [Element Systems Plan \(TSP\) Technical Appendix](#) which includes a transportation inventory, land use assumptions, travel forecasts, Level of Service (LOS) standards, current and future transportation needs, and a transportation financial plan in addition to other GMA requirements. In this chapter, the transportation goals and policies are presented. Together with the Transportation [Element Systems Plan Technical Appendix](#), the goals and policies provide the basis for transportation infrastructure decisions pursuant to the GMA. Since transportation infrastructure and services are also provided by the state, ~~regional government~~, and the cities and towns, the Skagit County Transportation Element is intended to complement those other systems and networks. ~~The Transportation Profile elaborates further on this.~~

The Transportation Element is based on the following documents:

- ~~Skagit County Transportation Systems Plan, Adopted February, 2003~~ [Element Technical Appendix, 2016](#), amended May, 2004 to include ~~including~~ the [County's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan](#).
- ~~Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Supplemental Map Portfolio (includes road inventories and transit service areas).~~
- Skagit County Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) [2016-2021](#) (adopted by ~~O20140007 on December 8, 2014~~) ~~2000-2005, Goals and Policies, Capital Improvements and Implementation Programs, July 24, 2000~~. The CFP contains information and policies

Commented [A92]: The Transportation Systems Plan is being shortened into the Transportation Technical Appendix and moved from a stand-alone document to an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commented [A93]: The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan is an existing part of the Transportation Systems Plan.



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regarding financing, level of service, and implementation of capital improvement projects.

- ~~Revenue Sources for Capital Facilities 2000-2005, July 24, 2000. This report identifies and briefly describes revenue sources that are available to Skagit County for capital facilities.~~

Commented [A94]: Addressed in Capital Facilities Element

Three aspects of the Transportation Element—[which like the rest of the Comprehensive Plan looks out over 20 years](#)—have a direct bearing on transportation project programming and funding through the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (Six-Year TIP). These are: (1) transportation policies; (2) existing and future transportation needs (based on Level of Service [Service](#)); and (3) the [20-year](#) transportation financial plan. The transportation policies are used to give general direction for transportation improvement investments. Along with the County's Priority Array, which prioritizes road [segments](#) projects primarily [based](#) on physical deficiencies, the Level of Service based transportation needs [and other factors](#) are used to select potential projects. The [Transportation Element's 20-year](#) transportation financial plan is used to produce a financially feasible six-year [transportation program](#) plan. Thus, the Transportation Element provides a framework for use in [making](#) transportation investment decisions.

[The Comprehensive Plan's Transportation Element reflects the County's long-term transportation vision and plan and is based on the same 20-year population and employment projections used in other portions of the Comprehensive Plan. It must include a list of proposed projects – for both motorized and non-motorized transportation – that illustrates how the County intends to meet anticipated future transportation needs. Those projects are typically more conceptual in nature than projects in the County's Six-Year TIP, but must include enough detail to allow the County to generate a reasonable 20-year transportation financial plan.](#)

[Projects proposed for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan can come from a variety of sources, including input from members of the public, the Board of County Commissioners, the Public Works Department or other County departments, and adopted County plans such as the Comprehensive Parks and Recreation Plan. Projects may be added to the Comprehensive Plan through annual or periodic updates. Proposed projects are released for public review and comment and a public hearing before the Planning Commission along with other proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments. The Planning Commission forwards a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners on the proposed amendments](#)



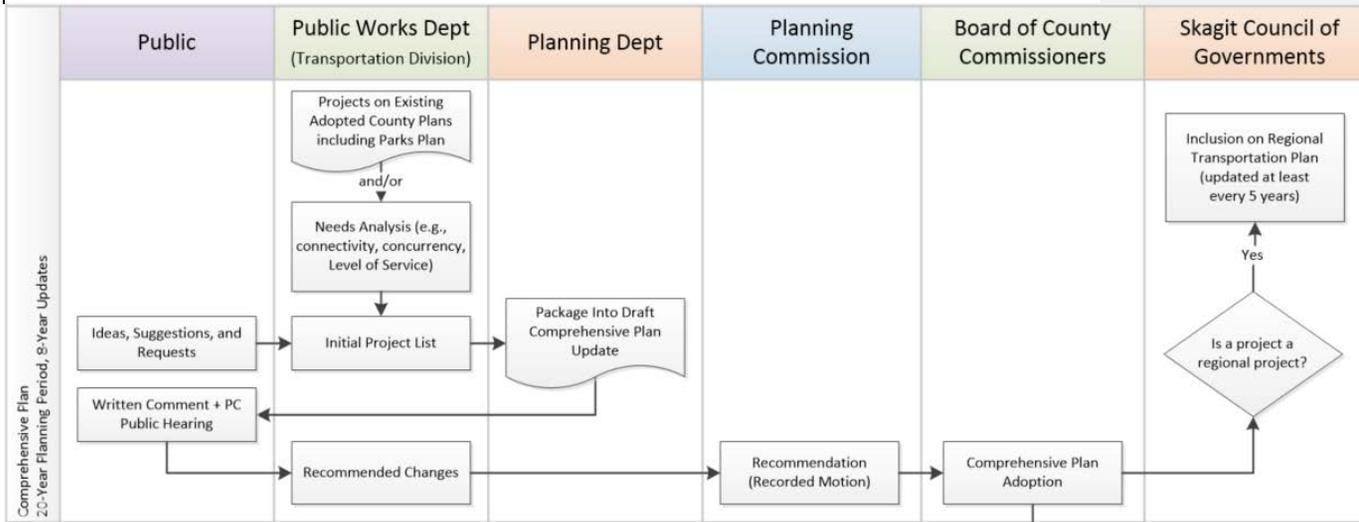
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including proposed transportation projects. The Board of County Commissioners makes the final decision on inclusion. Once adopted into Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan, transportation projects that are regionally significant are forwarded to the Skagit Council of Governments for inclusion in the Regional Transportation Plan.



The Comprehensive Plan's Transportation Element forms the basis for the County's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Pursuant to RCW 36.81.121, the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) is updated annually. The Public Works Department produces a draft TIP that includes projects retained from the previous year, plus any additions or deletions, and a short description of each project. Projects are drawn from the Comprehensive Plan and other adopted County plans, including the adopted Parks and Recreation Plan, or are generated from staff needs analysis. The department Public Works holds an informational meeting for the public to comment on the draft plan, makes any revisions, and sends the draft documents to the Planning Commission for information and comment review, public hearing, and recommendation.

Then the Board of County Commissioners holds its own a public hearing on the proposed TIP, and adopts the TIP prior to adoption of the County budget. Members of the public may comment in writing or in person. The Six Year TIP is usually adopted by the Board of County Commissioners after the Public Hearing. It The TIP is then sent to the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) where regionally significant and/or federally funded projects are it is

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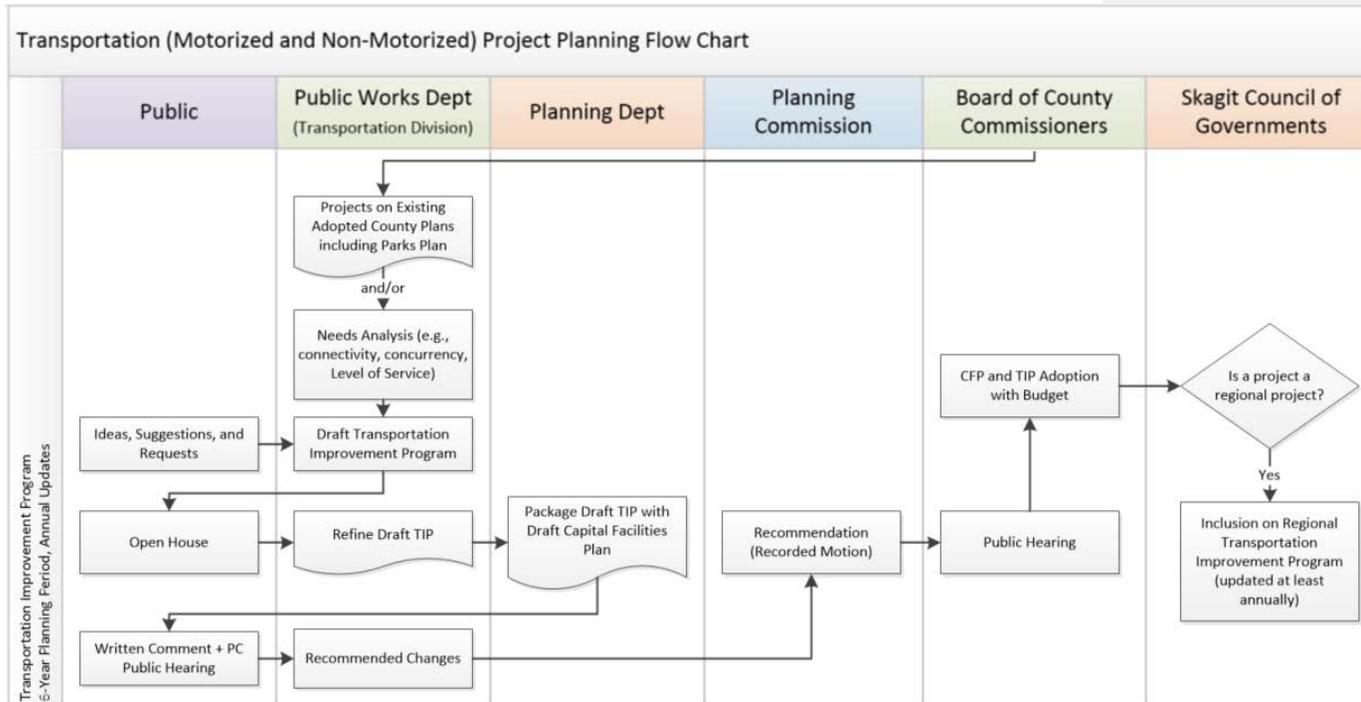
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compiled with [from](#) the TIPs of other municipalities in the County [into the Regional TIP \(RTIP\)](#). SCOG sends the [RTIP](#) to the Washington State Department of Transportation where it is combined into the State TIP.



This section is the companion to the Transportation Element goals and policies. It summarizes the key aspects of current and projected transportation conditions and needs that Skagit County is obliged to plan for. The Growth Management Act [GMA](#) requires that transportation plan elements include the following:

- Land use assumptions used in estimating travel;
- [Estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities;](#)
- Facilities and services needs;
- Financing;
- Intergovernmental coordination; and
- [Demand management;](#) [and](#)



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- [Pedestrian and bicycle component.](#)

Each of these major requirements is described below. The method used by the County to comply with the GMA requirements involves managing a complex and inter-related group of complementary studies, plans, inventories, and standards. In addition to the analyses and documentation prepared by the County, the State of Washington, the cities and towns and the Skagit Council of Governments also maintain similar plans that need to be acknowledged. While the rural road network is the primary transportation mode that the County is responsible for managing, the County through its Comprehensive Plan also acknowledges and addresses the needs for non-motorized transportation, public transportation, aviation, and marine transportation. A recent survey of County rural residents indicated [Outreach for the Comprehensive Plan Update in 2007 and 2016 indicated](#) a concern for increased traffic congestion within the urban areas of the County. The County should consider increasing investment in transportation projects within or connected to the urban areas, in partnership with the cities and towns, state, and federal governments.

Land Use Assumptions

The operation of the roadway network must be adequate to meet the travel demands created by residents, businesses, and visitors. The comprehensive plan land use designations for all jurisdictions provide the basis for estimating. While each jurisdiction and transportation provider is responsible for developing its own transportation plan, there is also a need for consistency among them, to the extent that the need for facilities in one jurisdiction frequently is affected by the demand created from growth in neighboring jurisdictions. In this regard, regional coordination is the key. In the regional transportation model maintained by the Skagit Council of Governments, the entire County is divided into transportation analysis zones (TAZs). These are geographic areas based on census tracts, city limits, physical features, and other boundaries. TAZs are smaller in urbanized areas than in rural areas due to the relative concentration of population. Land use, housing, and employment data for the TAZs are the building blocks for assessing the future transportation system demands that result from growth.

The analysis that creates the 20-year picture requires assumptions to be made about future travel behaviors as well as the realities for maintaining level of service standards within anticipated funding and the feasibility of implementing construction programs within the context of other public policies.

Commented [A96]: Required sub-element of a County's Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(vii), added to GMA in 2005.



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Traffic Impacts to State-Owned Transportation Facilities

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The Countywide Planning Policies allocate the adopted population and commercial/industrial growth employment targets among the various Skagit County jurisdictions. Comprehensive plan policies distribute that growth to urban and rural areas using residential densities and non-residential land use intensities of each jurisdiction’s adopted zoning. This provides the starting point for estimating how future residents and employees will use the roadway system.

Traffic Impacts to State-Owned Transportation Facilities

The Skagit 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies the effects of growth on the regional transportation system including state routes and county and city roads. As described in the RTP, the plan is a link between the local agency transportation plans and the Washington State Transportation Plan (WTP).

The allocation of land use based on Countywide Planning Policies assigns most of the planned growth within existing urban areas. Travel demand from Skagit County areas outside cities is expected to have minimal impacts on state-owned transportation facilities. Local city comprehensive plans highlight impacts to state routes based on ~~to~~ their respective travel demands.

Both the State and Skagit County have traffic count programs to monitor traffic on their respective roads. Skagit County is currently performing counts for the cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley. Once the data is compiled it is sent to the Skagit Council of Governments to be maintained and entered into the Skagit County regional traffic model.

Both the Washington DOT and Skagit County are required by law to meet the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices as adopted by the State of Washington. This commonality usually results in agreement to solutions on intersecting roadways. Normally, the Washington State Department of Transportation takes the lead for projects on State Routes but may require financial participation by other jurisdictions through agreements. This participation is often a percentage based on traffic volumes from the respective agencies.

The coordination required by the Growth Management Act and the traffic growth projections on State Routes will assure the State has the data to evaluate existing and future signalization

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[for their LOS requirements. Signalization or other improvements on county roads can be designed to provide acceptable levels of service far into the future.](#)

Facilities and Services Needs

Along with the land use assumptions, the other building block of estimating the need for improvements to the transportation facilities and services is a cascading series of five steps.

Inventory of Existing Facilities and Services

The County maintains an on-going database of current conditions of the County roadway network and the Guemes Ferry, the two county-owned and operated modes. For the roadway network, the inventory includes extensive information on the condition, utilization, and shortfalls that exist. Similar information for the ferry vessels and terminals is included. In addition to supporting planning, this information is used to program on-going maintenance of the system.

Roadway Network

The County roadway network [in unincorporated Skagit County includes](#) contains about 800 miles of roads, not including city streets, state and federal highways, and private roads. [approximately 800 miles of publicly owned and maintained County roads and 275 miles of private roads. Additional road miles are located in incorporated cities that are not maintained by the County.](#)

[In the County 800-mile public road system – excluding private roads and those managed by WSDOT and the cities – there are about 157 miles of rural major collectors, about 153 miles of rural minor collectors, about 374 miles of rural local roads, and about 108 miles of several urban classifications. This information is depicted in **Exhibit 1.**](#)

[Exhibit 1. County Road Miles by Functional Classification](#)



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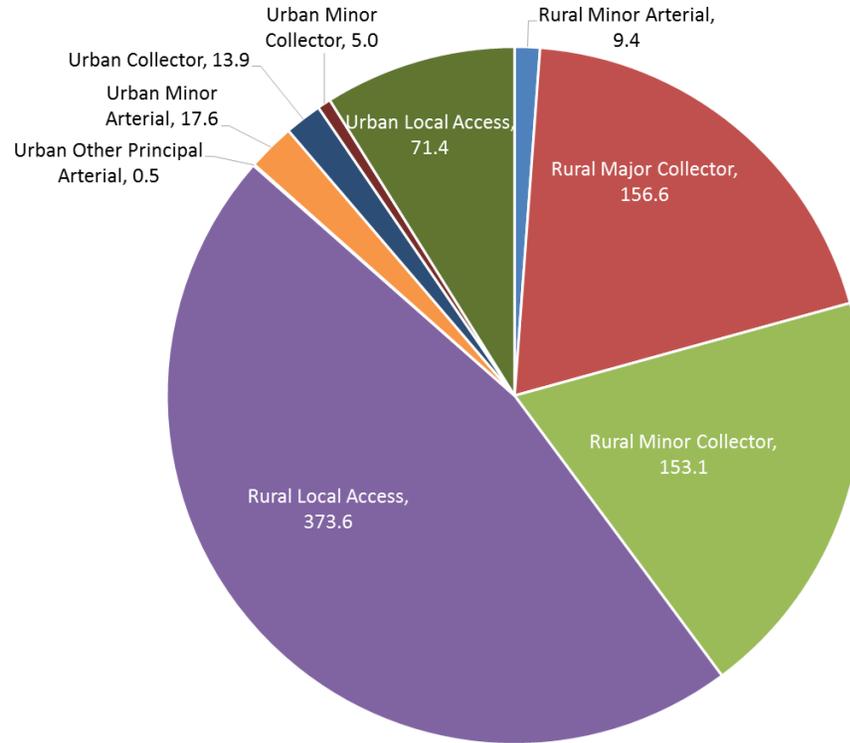
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Source: [Skagit County, 2015](#)

The network is categorized into a “functional classification system.” This is based on federal and state guidelines for identifying roads first as to whether they are urban or rural in terms of the areas they serve and their design. Skagit County defers to the cities and towns in classifying their roads. Rural roads are classified as “Principal Arterials,” “Minor Arterials,” “Major Collectors,” “Minor Collectors,” and “Locals.” This is a descending scale of function. Interstate 5 and SR 20 west of I-5 are the only Principal Arterials. Other state highways and segments are Minor Arterials. ~~The County has 24.8 miles (3%) of urban Minor Arterial roads.~~ Major and Minor Collectors are the heart of the County system. These are the roads that connect the cities and towns and serve as farm-to-market roads in the rural area. The Local Access roads make up the remaining rural system are the other rural roads. The number of road miles in various functional classifications and their relative portion of County’s overall road network is illustrated in Exhibit 1. Major Collectors constitute 19% or 152 miles of the system. Minor Collectors constitute another 20% (161 miles), and there are 384 miles of

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Locals (48%) as of 2006. The final 9% or 73 miles of roads are urban. While these amounts and proportions vary as road functions change or new roads are built, the general distribution does not change significantly.

Another aspect of the functional road classification system involves facilities that have been identified in the state Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) as trucking routes. This classification system is based on the estimates of gross freight tonnage that is carried on the roads. Most County Major and Minor Collectors carry between 100,000 and 5,000,000 tons per year.

- [T-1 more than 10 million tons per year](#)
- [T-2 4 million to 10 million tons per year](#)
- [T-3 300,000 to 4 million tons per year](#)
- [T-4 100,000 to 300,000 tons per year](#)
- [T-5 at least 20,000 tons in 60 days and less than 100,000 tons per year.](#)

[For rural Skagit County, the facilities with the highest FGTS designations include the entire length of I-5 \(Tier 1\), and SR-20 from I-5 to Anacortes \(Tier 2 to Anacortes, Tier 3 for the SR20 Spur\). SR-20 from Burlington to Anacortes carries an estimated 10,000,000 annual tonnage and is considered Tier 2. Cook Road from I-5 to Sedro-Woolley is designated as Tier 2. The majority of Skagit County's FGTS designations are within the range of 3,000,000 to 34,000,000 tons per year. The remaining state highways in the County along with a number of County roads are not included in the FGTS system. In the cities, the streets receiving FGTS designation tend to be those with the highest functional classifications. Most County Major and Minor Collectors carry between 100,000 and 5,000,000 tons per year.](#)

Traffic on County roads outside of the highways and arterials is fairly moderate. Nearly half of the roads carry fewer than 250 vehicle-trips per 24-hour day on average (ADT). About 10% of the roads carry more than 2,000 ADT, and fewer than 2% carry more than 5,000 ADT.

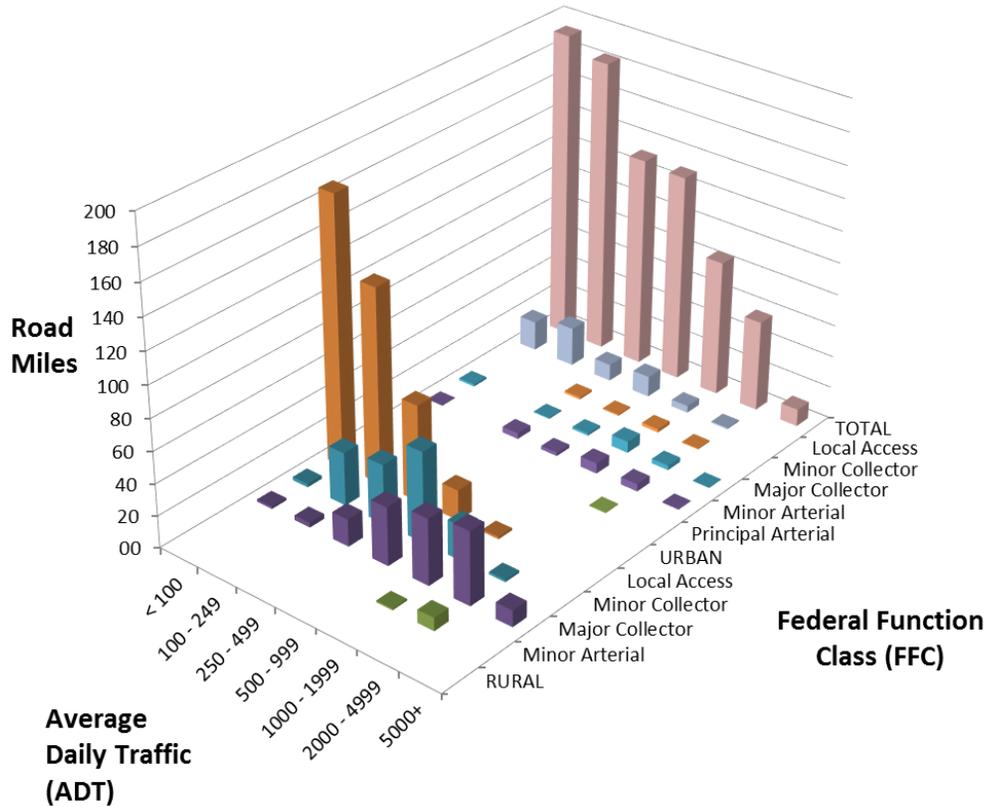


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8: Transportation Inventory of Existing Facilities and Services

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Exhibit 2. County Public Road Miles by ADT Range by Functional Class



Source: Skagit County, 2015

Other Motorized Transportation Facilities

The Skagit County non-motorized transportation system is comprised of all streets and highways to which access by bicyclists and pedestrians is permitted, separated trails and pathways which have a transportation function as defined in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and any system or design accommodations meant to serve non-motorized users. Segments of Bayview Edison Road, La Conner Whitney Road, McLean Road, and West Big Lake Road are the only locations of signed bikeways. There are other off-road trails throughout the County. Skagit County owns and operates a ferry system including a vessel and terminals in Anacortes and Guemes Island. Skagit Transit is a public agency funded by the

Commented [A99]: This discussion of non-motorized is moved below.



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8: Transportation ↳ Level of Service

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County and several of the cities that provides transit service in some portions of the County. Rail and marine transportation facilities within Skagit County are owned and operated by the ports or private companies.

Level of Service

Capacity analysis results for roadways and intersections are described in terms of Level of Service (LOS). Roadway LOS is a qualitative term describing operating conditions a driver will experience while traveling on a particular street or highway during a specific time interval. It ranges from A (very little delay) to F (long delays and congestion). Level of service calculations for intersections determine the amount of ‘control delay’ (in seconds) that drivers will experience while proceeding through an intersection. The LOS/delay criteria for stop-sign controlled intersections are different than for signalized intersections because drivers expect that a signalized intersection is designed to carry higher traffic volumes and experience greater delay. For signalized intersections the LOS ranges from “A” with a delay of less than 10 seconds to “F” with a delay of more than 80 seconds. For stop-sign controlled intersections, LOS A also has a delay less than 10 seconds, while LOS F has a delay of more than 50 seconds.

The Comprehensive Plan includes LOS standards that have been adopted as County policy. These standards are used to measure the performance of the system and identify the need for improvements. The County also works with the state and cities and towns to monitor the related LOS of their facilities.

The inventory of facilities includes an evaluation of current LOS for the roadway system, and Guemes ferry based on traffic counts for roads, and the capacity utilization of the ferry.

[According to the 2014 Concurrency report by Skagit County Public Works, the established LOS for County roads is C. The LOS for County Road intersections is D. An LOS of D is acceptable on roads with the following characteristics:](#)

- [Have Annualized Average Daily Traffic \(AADT\) greater than 7,000 vehicles; and](#)
- [Are NOT federal functionally classified as a Local Access Road; and](#)
- [Are designated as a County Freight and Goods Transportation Systems Route \(FGTS\).](#)

[Roadway capacity is not expected to be a major issue for the Transportation Element. Exhibit 3 below shows the estimated AADT at High Traffic County Road Segments \(as defined in the Skagit County Road Segment and Intersection Concurrency, Skagit County, 2014\). As shown,](#)

Commented [A100]: The following is new information from transportation modeling done for the 2016 Update.



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the County segments along Cook Road and Pioneer Highway are anticipated to remain at volumes levels consistent with LOS D.

However, this LOS does not take into account intersection operations or railroad crossing impacts. It is anticipated that existing traffic congestion along Cook Road between I-5 and Green Road will worsen with additional intersection volumes and with increased railroad crossing delays (See SCOG Rail Crossing Study, 2016). The Transportation Appendix shows the County has already identified a planned capacity improvement project for this roadway segment that includes possible grade-separation from the railroad or other mitigation measures.

Exhibit 3. Roads with ADT greater than 7,000 2014 and 2036 Forecasted Traffic Volumes (2014-2036)

Roadway Segments ¹	Extents	2014 ADT ²	2014 LOS ³	2036 ADT ⁴	2036 LOS
Cook Rd	I-5 SB Ramps to NB Ramps	12,000	WSDOT ⁵	14,300	WSDOT
Cook Rd	I-5 NB Ramps to Old Hwy 99	15,600	WSDOT ⁵	16,800	WSDOT
Cook Rd	Old Hwy 99 to Green Road	12,300	D	13,200	D
Cook Rd	Green Road to Collins Rd	11,100	D	12,000	D
Cook Rd	Collins Rd to Klinger St	10,900	D	11,600	D
Pioneer Highway	County Line to Milltown Rd	8,000	C	10,500	D
Pioneer Highway	Milltown Rd to Fir Island Rd	7,600	C	10,000	D

1. Segments as identified in *Skagit County Road Segment and Intersection Concurrency, Skagit County, 2014*
2. Average Daily Traffic volumes as reported in the *Concurrency* report.
3. Level of Services as reported in the *Concurrency* report, based on the *Highway Capacity Manual (TRB, 2010)*.
4. Average Daily Traffic volumes forecasts based on model growth rates from the SCOG Travel Demand Models for 2013 and 2036.
5. These Cook Road segments are within WSDOT right-of-way.

Source: Transpo, 2015



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Road	2014 ADT (Highest Segment)	2029 ADT (Projected)	Percentage Increase
Cook Road	14,233	19,156	34.6%
Fir Island Road	9,228	12,420	34.6%
Pioneer Highway	8,935	12,025	34.6%
Bow Hill Road	7,738	10,414	34.6%
McLean Road	6,228	8,328	33.7%
LaConner Whitney Road	5,525	7,436	34.6%

[See the Transportation Element Technical Appendix for an analysis of the ferry capacity and system needs.](#)

Actions to Address LOS Shortfalls

When the Priority Array evaluation identifies road segments, intersections, and other facilities that are performing below their assigned LOS, it must prepare improvement plans and funding strategies for addressing these needs. The Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a financially feasible project listing that must be updated every year to look out to the next six years. It includes cost estimates and funding for each project. The TIPs for all county jurisdictions are compiled into the regional TIP and coordinated with the State of Washington.

For facilities that may be threatened by projected growth beyond the six year TIP horizon, the County and other jurisdictions can update their plans ~~and the regional plans~~ to identify solutions that may include system improvements, different funding strategies, or changes to land use densities and intensities that are the basis for the demand forecasts.

Demand Forecasts

The land use assumptions, LOS policies, and facility inventories and planned improvements are used by the Skagit Council of Governments to model future County-wide conditions. The model is a computer program that is calibrated to existing baseline conditions using traffic counts, and other information provided by the inventories. Each Transportation Analysis Zone is assigned trip generation forecasts for future years based on the land use assumptions, travel behaviors, and assumptions regarding system improvements and funding levels that are anticipated. The Regional Transportation Planning Organization and Metropolitan Planning Organization plans are based on this approach and have been prepared using a range of growth scenarios ranging from low to high growth [moderate growth scenario](#). After



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8: Transportation

System Expansion Needs

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evaluating these scenarios, the elected officials comprising the board of directors chose a low-mid range preferred alternative that produced the “financially constrained” plan for adoption. This is consistent with the adopted countywide population forecast and with the level of local and state and federal transportation funding that is probable. For Skagit County, the regional plan includes the projects for implementation over the next 25 years listed below. It should be noted that this project list is dynamic – that is, it will change as conditions change, growth occurs, and the levels of funding change.

Commented [A101]: Updated to reflect process used for 2016 Update.

System Expansion Needs

Current Needs

The County determines current needs in several categories: resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. This is a graduated scale of need ranging from “routine” maintenance to major work that is necessary to support significant changes in capacity or safety. Roadway segments that exceed 7,000 ADT measured on an annual basis may exceed the adopted LOS and therefore require improvements beyond normal maintenance and repair. This may include intersection improvements, widening, traffic controls, and other actions. Some of these projects fall into the six-year TIP and others are expected to be needed beyond the six-year horizon. The County generally looks ahead 15-20 years.

Future Needs

The needs for future improvements show up in the County’s analysis and also in the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) modeling. Projects of regional significance, including Washington State Department of Transportation projects are coordinated for possible joint implementation and funding.

Commented [A102]: Reference to RTPO and MPO not accurate here, therefore removed.

Finance

Transportation system funding comes from a wide range of sources from local property, timber, and fuel taxes, federal grants, and ferry tolls. Local tax revenues are allocated from the general fund. Fuel taxes are proportionate shares of the state’s collections. The state Legislature may identify specific projects funded by the fuel tax. The 2005 “nickel tax” will fund improvements to state highways that will also support County goals. These include



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state/County roadway intersections, transit facilities, seismic upgrades to bridges, and water quality improvements. Forest and timber taxes come from federal, state and private timber sources. In recent years (1998-2002), the total revenues for all County transportation funding have averaged about \$16 million. Of this, about half is property tax revenue. Other sources fluctuate depending upon economic activity and outside influences. The volatile state of fuel costs and state tax rates appears to be a significant unknown in the next few years. The County has taken a conservative, financially constrained approach to forecasting funding for the next 10 years, to 2017. Annual expenditures are expected to be in the range of \$21-29 million. These expenditures will be divided generally in equal thirds for maintenance, construction and “general expenses” that include drainage, Guemes Ferry, and administration.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan to include a multi-year financing plan based on the identified improvement needs in the transportation systems plan. The 20-year financing plan is to be the basis for developing the required six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). If probable funding is less than the identified needs, then the transportation financing program will have to balance several goals, including financial solvency, maintenance, and operations of the existing system, and supporting an appropriate transportation level of service.

To understand this balance, Skagit County has evaluated its future revenues against its existing TIP and 20-year transportation project list. These projects, identified to address existing and future transportation system needs in Skagit County, are then compared to those future revenues. This comparison is contained in the Transportation Technical Appendix demonstrates the County’s ability to implement its Transportation Element.

As with most local agencies, existing transportation revenues will not allow Skagit County to fund all of its needed maintenance, operations, or proposed capital improvements on top of ongoing operations and maintenance. The Transportation Element identifies ways to balance the transportation budget, including through prioritization of capital improvement projects and new policies that could generate additional revenue. Any funding strategy must balance the County’s transportation goals against its system of sustainable revenue sources. This is even more pressing given the limited policy mechanisms counties have at their disposal for raising revenue.

Commented [A103]: This outdated section is replaced with new text below.



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8: Transportation

Financial Capacity for Transportation Capital Investments: 2016-2036

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Financial Capacity for Transportation Capital Investments: 2016-2036

The County already has a highly detailed, fully funded TIP for 2016 to 2021. This TIP relies on some large, already dedicated grants as well as other, more regular revenues. The 7 to 21 year capital program is slightly less certain since it has a longer horizon. Exhibit 4: summarizes Skagit County's projected future revenues presented in inflation adjusted 2015 dollars to show the relative purchasing power of transportation revenues through time.

To understand Skagit County's ability to meet its future transportation improvement goals, the Technical Appendix evaluates Skagit County's future revenues against its existing 20-year transportation programs and project list (Exhibit 26 of the Transportation Technical Appendix).

Exhibit 4: Skagit County Future Transportation Revenues, 2022 to 2036 (2015\$)

Revenue Source	2016 - 2036
Property Taxes	211,220,724
Other Local Receipts	36,867,089
State Fuel Tax Distributions	59,299,963
Other State Funds	56,512,552
Federal Revenues	101,233,002
Ferry Tolls	29,418,954
Total Revenues	\$494,552,284

Source: Skagit County, 2015; WSDOT, 2015; BERK Consulting, 2015.

To understand Skagit County's ability to accomplish its desired capital projects, programmatic expenditures (from administration, maintenance, and operations) are subtracted from total revenues. This is presented in Exhibit 5: , below.

Exhibit 5: Skagit County Revenues Available for Capital Projects under Desired Future State Maintenance and Operations, 2022 to 2036 (2015\$)

	2016 - 2036
Total Revenue	494,552,284



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Total Programmatic Expenditures	474,573,233
Remaining Revenue for Capital Projects	\$19,979,051

Source: Skagit County, 2015; WSDOT, 2015; BERK Consulting, 2015.

Exhibit 5: shows the limited revenues available for capital projects. Skagit County’s current capital project list over the next 21 years, 2016 to 2036, is almost \$250 over \$170 million. However, as Exhibit 6: shows, the County is currently projecting only about \$520 million in available revenues for capital projects, leaving a gap of about \$150 million dollars in unfunded capital projects between 2016 and 2036.

Exhibit 6: Skagit County Capital Project Summary

	2016 - 2036
Remaining Revenue for Capital Projects	19,979,051
Capital Projects	170,668,569
Revenue Deficit	(\$150,689,518)

Source: Skagit County, 2015; WSDOT, 2015; BERK Consulting, 2015.

~~Because none of the 2022 to 2036 projects are necessary to meet concurrency, the County can fully consider additional prioritization or new revenues to help it accomplish its capital project goals.~~ Because the two projects necessary to meet concurrency can be supported by these revenues, the County can fully consider additional prioritization or new revenues to help it accomplish its capital project goals. This is described below.

Summary

~~Projected existing revenue sources would allow the County to fund only about one fifth of its desired transportation improvement projects, although program costs would be fully funded.~~ Under current policies, the County might only be able to fund a little over one-tenth of its desired transportation capital improvement projects for the 2016-2036 period. The County could address this shortfall in several ways:

- 1. Prioritizing Capital Projects.** The County can prioritize its capital projects, such that projects are funded on an as-funds-are-available basis. This would result in a delay in implementation of some projects, especially lower priority improvements.



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2. [Generating Additional Revenue.](#) The County could increase funding for capital transportation projects through several policy changes that would generate additional transportation revenues. These include partnering with other agencies or additional grants.
3. [Restructuring the Ferry System.](#) The County may consider restructuring the ferry system as an enterprise such that the ferry would no longer be subsidized by the County's overall transportation program.

[These options are discussed in further detail in the Transportation Technical Appendix.](#)

Intergovernmental Coordination

[Regional transportation planning was significantly affected by the adoption of the Growth Management Act in 1990. One of GMA's provisions authorized establishment of Regional Transportation Planning Organizations \(RTPOs\). In 1991, Skagit County jurisdictions joined with Island County jurisdictions to form the Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization \(SIRTPO\). The SIRTPO existed from 1991 – 2015, until it was dissolved because it no longer met the member requirements for an RTPO. Upon its dissolution, SCOG became the RTPO for Skagit County and Island County is not currently part of an RTPO.](#)

[SCOG also began serving as a Metropolitan Planning Organization \(MPO\) in 2003 following designation of a portion of Skagit County as a federal Urbanized Area based on the 2000 Census. The Skagit Island County Regional Transportation Planning Organization function was reorganized when Skagit County was also designated a Metropolitan Planning Organization due to the population count in the 2000 Census. As a result, the Skagit Council of Governments has become the lead agency for coordinating the transportation planning efforts of local jurisdictions within the county. In this new role, the organization is responsible for maintaining a County-wide regional transportation plan that frames the policy basis for coordinating transportation planning and improvements within Skagit County, including County, city and town, ports, Indian tribes and other public transportation service providers. The Skagit Island Counties Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan \(M/RTP\). Skagit Metropolitan Plan and Sub-Regional Transportation Plan \(MTP/S RTP\) is the product of this effort. The SCOG maintains the regional transportation forecasting model and facilitates discussion and decision-making among its member agencies all of the stakeholders. The M/RTP regional transportation plan is based on public and agency outreach and MTP/S-](#)

Commented [A104]: This section updated to reflect recent events.



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RTP includes performance measures that are being used to evaluate the following activities of the local jurisdictions [addresses the following priorities](#):

- [Economic vitality,](#)
- [Preservation,](#)
- [Safety,](#)
- [Mobility,](#)
- [Environment, and](#)
- ~~Stewardship~~ Inter-modal connectivity;
- ~~Relationships between the local and regional plans;~~
- ~~Maintenance of the existing system;~~
- ~~Technical support, private sector involvement, and financial support; and~~
- ~~Public involvement.~~

In addition to the coordination provided by SCOG described above, the County and the cities and towns coordinate transportation planning and improvements that affect common interfaces of roads, non-motorized facilities and transit. In particular, the ~~1992-2002~~ Framework Agreement between the County and the cities and towns [establishes agreed upon procedures by which countywide planning policies will be developed and adopted,](#) directs the jurisdictions to address LOS, concurrency, and related transportation system development in the UGA ~~countywide planning policies including those related to~~ [transportation.](#)

Demand Management

Beyond the requirements related to anticipating how physical transportation facilities are capable of accommodating the demands of growth, the County and other jurisdictions are responsible for identifying possible optional means such as management of services in creative ways that leverage the capacities of the facilities. This includes increased use of non-motorized travel, transit and car-pooling, coordination of land use and transportation decisions, and encouraging major trip generators to plan their activities in such a way that peak hour travel demands are minimized.

Commented [A105]: Priorities revised to be consistent with draft Skagit 2040 Regional Transportation Plan.

Commented [A106]: Updates outdated reference to the Framework Agreement.



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Non-Motorized Transportation

GMA requires that the Comprehensive Plan’s Transportation Element include a pedestrian and bicycle component “to include collaborative efforts to identify and designate planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles.” This requirement is addressed by non-motorized transportation policies 8A-6.1 through 8A-6.12 in this Transportation Element, as well as by the more detailed non-motorized plan and policies found in Section 6 of the Transportation Technical Appendix. The non-motorized policies in the Transportation Element provide high-level guidance and are drawn from and consistent with the more detailed policies in the technical appendix’s non-motorized plan. Because Skagit is a rural county, the non-motorized transportation policies and plan address equestrian as well as bicycle and pedestrian needs and goals.

Inventory. The Skagit County non-motorized transportation system is comprised of all streets and highways to which access by bicyclists and pedestrians is permitted, separated trails and pathways which have a transportation function as defined in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and any system or design accommodations meant to serve non-motorized users. Segments of Bayview-Edison Road, La Conner-Whitney Road, McLean Road, and West Big Lake ~~Boulevard Road~~ are capable of supporting bicyclists with dedicated shoulder areas ~~the only locations of signed bikeways.~~ There are other off-road trails throughout the County as well.

The Skagit County Bike Map identifies on and off-street bike routes in the County, including regional bike routes. The map classifies routes based on shoulder width and traffic volumes. Major bike routes include the Coast to Salish Route, the Coast to Cascades Route, the Coast Millennium Route, and the Cascade Trail. The bicycle system provides major connections east to west and north to south with links to adjacent counties (Skagit County, 2015).

The Skagit County Walking Trails Map identifies walking and trail opportunities in Skagit County and provides basic information for users to locate and use them. The map also highlights trail systems in Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon and at the Port of Skagit (Skagit Council of Governments, 2008).

Consistent with these policies, the Skagit County Health Department promotes healthy communities, including efforts to improve non-motorized networks to increase health and activity.

Commented [A107]: This requirement was added to GMA in 2005.

Commented [A108]: Goal A6 and policies 8A-6.1 through 8A-6.10 are existing Comp Plan policies (with minor edits as shown above). Policies 8A-6.11 and 6.12 are new proposed policies drawn from the County’s existing Non-Motorized Transportation Plan. The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan was adopted as part of the Transportation Systems Plan in 2005.

Commented [A109]: This existing section of the profile is moved from p. 20 above, with minor changes as shown.

Commented [A110]: This is an existing, broadly distributed map.

Commented [A111]: This is an existing, broadly distributed map.



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[Regionally, SCOG has been coordinating with member agencies on the Regional Transportation Plan which identifies regionally significant non-motorized transportation projects.](#)

GMA Mandate

Development of this chapter was guided in particular by the following GMA Planning Goal:

- *Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with County and city Comprehensive Plans.*

This [Goal](#), taken in the context of the totality of the thirteen GMA Planning Goals, led to the following [Countywide Planning Policies \(CPPs\)](#) that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this chapter:

- *Multi-purpose transportation routes and facilities shall be designed to accommodate present and future traffic volumes (CPP 3.1).*
- *Primary arterial access points shall be designed to ensure maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions. (CPP 3.2)*
- *The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social, economic and environment impacts and costs (CPP 3.3)*
- *The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan shall be designed to do the following: facilitate the flow of people, goods and services so as to strengthen the local and regional economy; conform with the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan; be based upon an inventory of the existing Skagit County transportation network and needs; and encourage the conservation of energy (CPP 3.4)*
- *Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies, and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan. (CPP 3.5)*
- *The development of a recreational transportation network shall be encouraged and coordinated between state and local governments and private enterprises. (CPP 3.6)*



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- *The Senior Citizen and Handicapped transportation system shall be provided with an adequate budget to provide for those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves. (CPP 3.7)*
- *Level of service (LOS) standards and safety standards shall be established that coordinate and link with the urban growth and urban areas to optimize land use and traffic compatibility over the long term; new development shall mitigate transportation impacts concurrently with the development and occupancy of the project (CWPP 3.8)*
- *An all-weather arterial road system shall be coordinated with industrial and commercial areas. (CPP 3.9)*
- *Cost effectiveness shall be a consideration in transportation expenditure decisions and balanced for both safety and service improvements. (CPP 3.10)*
- *An integrated regional transportation system shall be designed to minimize air pollution by promoting the use of alternative transportation modes, reducing vehicular traffic, maintaining acceptable traffic flow, and siting of facilities. (CPP 3.11)*
- *All new and expanded transportation facilities shall be sited, constructed and maintained to minimize noise levels. (CPP 3.12)*

Regional Transportation Policies

The Skagit Council of Governments has adopted policies and goals for regional transportation planning and infrastructure coordination in its capacity as both the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Skagit County. These policies, contained in SCOG's The Metropolitan Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RMTPO) (RTP), policies are required by federal law and direct more detailed goals and strategies. The RMTPO policies are:

1. *Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the metropolitan regional transportation system through a cooperative effort with its SCOG member agencies, the Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization, the public and private sector, and state and federal agencies.*

Commented [A112]: The below policies are drawn from SCOG's draft Skagit 2040 Regional Transportation Plan.



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2. Provide a ~~Metropolitan Transportation Plan~~ that identifies significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, regional, inter-regional, state, federal, and public needs and requirements while recognizing the inter-relationships within the contiguous urban area and areas immediately adjacent to it.
3. Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing regional transportation system by encouraging and prioritizing timely maintenance of the system.
4. Facilitate cooperation, coordination, and information exchange amongst ~~stakeholders in the Skagit MPO~~ SCOG's member agencies.
5. ~~Maintain and execute an ongoing~~ implement a public involvement participation program ~~and plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the region's interested parties~~ citizens of the Skagit Metropolitan Planning Area in the planning process.
6. Consistent with Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies, encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

The Skagit County portion of the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) has another set of policies that are required to comply with state law. They are:

1. ~~Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional transportation system through a cooperative effort with its member agencies, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the public sector, and state and federal agencies.~~
2. ~~Provide a Sub-Regional Transportation Plan that identifies regionally significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, metropolitan, inter-regional, state, federal, and public needs and requirements.~~
3. ~~Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing transportation system by encouraging timely maintenance of the system.~~
4. ~~Facilitate cooperation and information exchange amongst stakeholders in the Skagit Sub-RTPO.~~

Commented [A113]: The following policies are being removed because of the dissolution of the Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization in 2015.



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~~5. Maintain and execute an ongoing public involvement program and plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the citizens of Skagit County in the planning process.~~

For each [many](#) of these policies, the ~~MTPO/RTPO Plans~~ have [RTP has](#) goals [and strategies](#) that are intended to direct the ~~coordination~~ of the agencies in coordinating their individual plans, ~~and~~ improvement programs, and financing strategies.

Within this framework, the following transportation goals and policies have been adopted by Skagit County.

Goals and Policies

Goal 8A 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.

System Management

Goal 8A-1 Maintain and improve the County roadway system consistent with the growth management strategies of the Land Use Element, and respect the unique environmental and economic character of the area, [including the transportation needs of the agriculture and forest products industries](#).

policy 8A-1.1 **Monitoring for Congestion Relief -** Monitor the capacity of the transportation system to meet level of service standards and manage congestion.

policy 8A-1.2 **Right-of-Way Preservation** – Anticipate and address future transportation needs through strategies for acquiring rights-of-way and limiting of encroachments or ancillary uses that could endanger future roadway improvements.

policy 8A-1.3 **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.

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Commented [A114]: Added in response to comments from the Planning Commission.



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policy 8A-1.4 **Functional Classification** – Designate all county roads according to the functional classification system mandated by federal and state law based on the character of service those road are intended to provide in urban and rural areas. Arterials should serve as the main routes to move traffic through the county. Collectors should serve as the supplemental routes for traffic within the county.

policy 8A-1.5 **Skagit River** - The County supports improving the flow of traffic over the Skagit River, including new bridge construction.

policy 8A-1.6 **Arterial access** - Primary arterial access points should be designed to ensure maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions.

policy 8A-1.7 **Natural Resource Industries** – consider the transportation needs of the agriculture and forest products industries when making decisions about the management and maintenance of the roadway system.

policy 8A-1.8 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.

Level of Service

Goal 8A-2 Establish level of service standards for the County’s road system to gauge the performance of the system and determine areas where transportation improvements are required.

policy 8A-2.1 **Level of Service Standards** - The Level of Service (LOS) standard for County roads is C. LOS D is acceptable for all road segments that:

- (a) Have Annualized Average Daily Traffic (AADT) greater than 7,000 vehicles; and
- (b) Are NOT federally functionally classified as an ~~an~~ an ~~09-a~~ Local Access Road; and

Commented [A115]: New policy suggested by the Planning Commission.



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(c) Are designated as a County Freight and Goods Transportation Systems Route (FGTS).

The LOS standard for County road intersections is LOS D.

policy 8A-2.2 The Level of Service Standards shall not be the overriding factor when the County is considering road improvements. Other factors such as the Priority Array and the Comprehensive Plan policies shall be given equal consideration with the LOS.

policy 8A-2.3 **Design Standards** – Maintain urban and rural design standards for structures, roads, and utility systems constructed either by the county or other public or private sponsors. These standards shall reflect the character of the communities as defined in the Land Use, Rural, and Community Planning Elements.

Public Transportation Coordination

Goal 8A-3 Work with other agencies and jurisdictions to coordinate a safe, accessible, and integrated system of public transportation.

policy 8A-3.1 **Transit Support**- Encourage citizens and businesses to use transit as an alternative to the single-occupant vehicle.

policy 8A-3.2 **Transit Schedules** – Allow County employees to adopt flexible work schedules that can be coordinated with transit schedules. Encourage similar actions by private and other public employers and employees.

policy 8A-3.3 Support adequate funds for senior citizen and handicapped transportation systems to provide for those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves.

policy 8A-3.4 Encourage public transportation services to serve cities, towns, and Rural Villages, and to link with systems in adjoining counties, when financially feasible and supported by the public.



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policy 8A-3.5 Encourage private transit providers to continue to provide services that public transit cannot, including services to the County and State ferry system, and local and regional airports.

policy 8A-3.6 Encourage coordination among public transit service providers, and between the public transit network and the non-motorized transportation system, to promote a more integrated transportation system for those traveling by means other than a private automobile.

Commented [A116]: Policy requested by the Planning Commission and the Washington State DOT.

Passenger Rail Transportation

Goal 8A-4 Support passenger rail service to and through Skagit County as an important element of a balanced transportation system.

policy 8A-4.1 Encourage rail agencies to implement a public education program on railroad safety.

policy 8A-4.2 Work with the Washington State Department of Transportation, local jurisdictions other agencies, and the public to make safety and other improvements to the rail corridors to allow for increased speeds for passenger trains.

policy 8A-4.3 Work with the Washington State Department of Transportation, local jurisdictions, other agencies and the public to determine the location of potential rail crossing closures and, where possible, to consider alternatives to such closures.

Commented [A117]: Policy addition suggested by the Planning Commission. Note: Decisions to open or close a public rail crossings are made by the Washington State Utilities and Transportation Commission, following a petition and public hearing. Those decisions are not made locally.

policy 8A-4.4 Road improvement decisions shall be consistent with any plans for rail crossings closures and with other aspects of rail service.

policy 8A-4.5 Plan for commuter rail service to Skagit County at such time it is determined to be economically and socially acceptable.

Ferry Service

Goal 8A-5 Work to maintain county and state ferry services as an important element of the transportation network.



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- policy 8A-5.1 Encourage the provision of adequate street, highway, and road facilities to accommodate traffic to the ferry terminals in Anacortes.
- policy 8A-5.2 Work with the City of Anacortes, property owners, and residents on Guemes Island to develop and maintain adequate parking areas.
- policy 8A-5.3 To meet future increases in demand, increase service capacity of the Guemes Island Ferry by: (a) encouraging car-pooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on demand; (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand; and (d) adding additional runs outside the current schedule.
- policy 8A-5.4 In making all decisions related to the Guemes Island Ferry, balance the needs of the Island residents, the non-resident property owners, and the County citizenry as a whole. Decisions that would have significant service or financial impacts should be made after providing ample opportunities for public review and comment.
- policy 8A-5.5 Continue to provide safe and adequate ferry service between Anacortes and Guemes Island, and a fare structure designed to recover ~~as much~~ operating costs similar to the ~~as~~ Washington State Ferries ~~does from the users~~ model.
- policy 8A-5.6 Support the State's continued provision of ferry service to and from Anacortes- San Juan Islands-Vancouver Island, B.C.



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Non-Motorized Transportation Network

Goal 8A-6 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.

Achieve high standards in meeting the needs of non-motorized users, through appropriate planning, design, construction and maintenance of user-friendly facilities.

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.

policy 8A-6.1 The Skagit County non-motorized transportation system is comprised of all streets and highways to which access by bicyclists and pedestrians is permitted, separated trails and pathways which have a transportation function as defined in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and any system or design accommodations meant to serve non-motorized users.

policy 8A-6.2 The County's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan should identify non-motorized needs in the County. Based on those needs, the plan should then identify and prioritize potential non-motorized projects. ~~However, the inclusion of a project in the plan does not constitute a commitment that the County will fund or construct a project.~~

policy 8A-6.3 The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan is a long-term plan to meet County multimodal goals and needs over 20 years. The inclusion of a project in the plan does not constitute a commitment that the County will fund or construct that project. Like all transportation projects, non-motorized transportation projects must be added to the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (6-Year TIP) in order to be funded.

policy 8A-6.4 Provide for the diverse needs of bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian modes through appropriate routing and the utilization of single-use and shared-use facilities. Encourage public education for motorists and non-motorized users

Commented [A118]: Explains the distinction between placing a project in the 20-year Non-Motorized Plan and placing a project on the 6-Year TIP.



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- policy 8A-6.5 Connect all significant traffic generators (such as neighborhoods and communities) with each other and as well as with other important a wide variety of destinations including schools, employment and commercial centers, medical and social service centers, other transportation facilities and modes, scenic and recreational areas, and the non-motorized facilities and systems of cities and towns within Skagit County and of adjoining areas.
- policy 8A-6.6 Coordinate system planning, funding, and development with other local, regional, state, federal and tribal jurisdictions; and with public transit providers, as most public transit trips begin and end with walking or biking.
- policy 8A-6.7 Design all non-motorized facilities in compliance with federal, state and local accessibility standards.
- policy 8A-6.8 Access and trailhead facilities should include adequate parking and sanitation.
- policy 8A-6.9 Promote non-motorized transportation as a viable, healthy, non-polluting alternative to the single occupancy vehicle.
- policy 8A-6.10 **Rail Corridors** - Rail corridors should be preserved through the use of rail banking programs after affected property owners and their property rights are first adequately and legally addressed.
- policy 8A-6.11 Community and subarea plans should identify and address the implementation of pedestrian, bicycle and (where appropriate) equestrian facilities that provide safe, efficient and convenient access to residential neighborhoods, schools, parks and recreation facilities, commercial districts, activity centers, tourist areas and established or planned multi-use trails.
- policy 8A-6.12 Emphasize maintenance of existing non-motorized facilities, including road sweeping, striping, signing, and debris removal, and the ongoing development of smooth and continuous road shoulders, including asphalt overlays or enhanced chip sealing where appropriate and feasible.

Commented [A119]: Strengthens emphasis on public education and traffic safety, as suggested by the Planning Commission.

Commented [A120]: Policy addition suggested by Washington State Department of Transportation.

Commented [A121]: This need was identified at the 2016 Comp Plan Update community meeting in Edison and is a logical topic for community plans. Motorized and non-motorized transportation needs were addressed in the Alger and Bayview Ridge Subarea Plans. Big Lake is in need of better non-motorized planning, particularly around the school.

Commented [A122]: Maintenance is a high priority issue identified in the NMTP yet is missing from the Comprehensive Plan policies. The NMTP states that regular sweeping of routes can “potentially bring the greatest benefit to non-motorized travel at the lowest cost.”



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Freight and Economic Development

Goal 8A-7 Support economic development goals by providing adequate air, rail and surface freight handling routes and facilities throughout the County transportation system.

policy 8A-7.1 **Freight and Goods Transport System** – Invest in road improvements to create an All-Weather Road System as part of the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS). In conjunction with the state, designate portions of the road system as truck routes.

policy 8A-7.2 Provide roads structurally adequate to handle anticipated commercial traffic demand, particularly on the FGTS.

policy 8A-7.3 Encourage the enhancement and expansion of freight rail service to and from economic activity centers.

policy 8A-7.4 Encourage improvements to air transportation facilities consistent with the ports of Skagit County and the state Aviation System Plan. Improve road and transit linkages to airport facilities.

Tourism and Recreation

Goal 8A-8 Support the promotion of tourism, recreation, and special events through the County transportation system.

policy 8A-8.1 Involve affected jurisdictions in the planning and design of transportation projects that affect major tourism, park, and recreation facilities.

policy 8A-8.2 Coordinate management of the transportation system during special events with the responsible program organizations, while minimizing the disruption of normal economic operations [including agriculture, forestry, and other natural resource industries](#).

policy 8A-8.3 Encourage the state to consider high-season traffic demand on SR 20 in East Skagit County whenever the state studies the need for improvements.

Commented [A123]: Policy addition suggested by Planning Commission.



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Scenic Highways

Goal 8A-9 Support the preservation and enhancement of scenic highways and historic, archeological and cultural resources within Skagit County.

policy 8A-9.1 **Scenic Roads Program** – Encourage the state and federal Scenic Highways and Scenic Byways programs to ensure the preservation of scenic resources along designated highways.

policy 8A-9.2 **Interpretive sites** - Develop cultural, historic and natural interpretive sites situated on public lands in a way that non-motorized travelers can enjoy them.

policy 8A-9.3 **Coordination** - Work with the state ~~in-to~~ implementing and maintain highway heritage programs in Skagit County, which integrate scenic resource preservation with the enhancement of access to historic, archeological and cultural resources along the County's highways.

Commented [A124]: Modified language because program has already been implemented.

Traffic Safety

Goal 8A-10 Provide a safe travel environment for county residents and visitors in all modes of transportation.

Recognize public safety, education, and law enforcement as integral to the development of non-motorized transportation opportunities in Skagit County.

policy 8A-10.1 **Safety Improvements** - Include safety improvements as a priority in all capital projects and maintenance decisions relating to the County road system.

policy 8A-10.2 **Rules of the Road** - Promote the safe use of transportation facilities and conformance with “rules of the road.”

policy 8A-10.3 **Education** -Encourage educational programs that teach or encourage transportation safety for all non-motorized users. Encourage awareness among motorists of the rights and responsibilities of motorists and cyclists and the importance of “sharing the road.”



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policy 8A-10.4 **Minimize conflicts** - Encourage planning, design and educational programs that help minimize conflicts among users.

Road Maintenance and Monitoring

Goal 8A-11 Develop a systematic approach for monitoring and maintaining the transportation system in a cost-effective manner.

Provide a high level of maintenance to the County transportation system.

policy 8A-11.1 Monitor (count and assess) traffic volumes on all arterial and major collector roads, and other selected roads as needed, to assist in planning and capital facility programs.

policy 8A-11.2 Coordinate monitoring efforts with other County departments as appropriate, and with other state and local jurisdictions and agencies.

policy 8A-11.3 Operate a road and bridge maintenance management program to ensure that roads and bridges are adequately protected from overloading, meet County and state standards, and are programmed for maintenance and repair on a regular basis.

policy 8A-11.4 Maintain a program for addressing traffic safety problems through monitoring of high incident conditions.

Demand and System Management

Goal 8A-12 Increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system before major capital expenditures are made.

policy 8A-12.1 Implement transportation system management techniques, such as the synchronization of traffic signals and provision of left-turn lanes, as a way to increase the efficiency and safety of the existing transportation system with a minimum of cost.



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policy 8A-12.2 Encourage the Skagit Council of Governments and the Metropolitan Planning Organization to implement transportation demand management strategies, such as increased transit service and flexible work schedules, to reduce the demand for travel in single-occupancy vehicles, especially at peak traffic periods.

Commented [A125]: SCOG is the MPO.

Land Use and Development

Goal 8A-13 Incorporate transportation goals, policies, and strategies into all County land use decisions.

policy 8A-13.1 **Impacts of Growth** – Growth and development decisions shall ensure that the short- and long-term public costs and benefits of needed transportation facilities are addressed concurrently with associated development impacts.

policy 8A-13.2 **Directing Growth** - Mitigate transportation impacts, wherever possible, by directing new development into areas where long term capacity exists on the arterial and collector system.

policy 8A-13.3 **Public Transportation Accessibility** – Require new development and redevelopment to provide adequate motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities within and adjacent to the development, and to provide access to public transit, where available.

policy 8A-13.4 **Airport Expansion** - In the vicinity of the Skagit Regional Airport, review development proposals to avoid future conflicts and the foreclosure of opportunities for future airport expansion.

policy 8A-13.5 **Coordination with County Engineer** - Following major amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the County Road Engineer shall review the Functional Classification, the Priority Array, and the road standards for consistency and compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Recommended changes shall be forwarded to the Planning Department and the Planning Commission for comments prior to their submittal to the Board of County Commissioners for action. The review shall take place within the first year after major Comprehensive Plan updates.



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- policy 8A-13.6 **Support for Existing Development** – Coordinate efforts to develop infrastructure that improves the efficiency of existing major industrial and commercial areas.
- policy 8A-13.7 **Right-of-Way Dedication** – The County shall require dedication of right-of-way for needed roads in conjunction with the approval of development projects.
- policy 8A-13.8 **Land Use Compatibility** - The planning, design, location and construction of new transportation projects and facilities shall consider and be compatible with adjacent land uses, as indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, including natural resource activities and rural residential areas.
- policy 8A-13.9 **Arterials and collectors** - When arterials and collectors traverse residential areas, appropriate traffic controls shall be employed to balance the needs of both the local residents and the traveling public.
- policy 8A-13.10 **Transportation facility standards** - Incorporate standards within the land development regulations to ensure that new development and redevelopment provide adequate motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities within and adjacent to the development.

[policy 8A-13.11 Implement development regulations that allow electric vehicle infrastructure, including battery charging stations, as a use in all areas except those zoned for residential or resource use or critical areas.](#)

Commented [A126]: Required by RCW 36.70A.695.

Concurrency

Goal 8A-14 Ensure that suitable mitigation measures for addressing the impacts of growth are fair and equitable, and that transportation impacts at the project and system levels are mitigated concurrently with the project.

- policy 8A-14.1 When a development project has a particular impact on the safety, structure or capacity of the County's road system, suitable mitigation shall be required in the form of improvements or through the use of adopted impact fees.



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policy 8A-14.2 The County may, in cooperation with a city, collect impact fees on behalf of that city or town for development within its Urban Growth Area, and may enter into cost sharing arrangements where each shares impact fees collected by the other for impacts to their respective roads.

policy 8A-14.3 As an alternative, the County may agree to participate in joint planning, funding, and construction of mutually beneficial transportation improvement projects for the unincorporated portion of a city UGA and the adjacent area in the county with city willing to enter into a Joint Transportation Planning, Funding, and Construction Agreement with the County.

policy 8A-14.4 The County may consider the use of impact fees and SEPA mitigation fees as a means to ensure that adequate facilities (including but not limited to transit, pedestrian, bikeways, or roadways) are available to accommodate the direct impacts of new growth and development.

Commented [A127]: If the Board of County Commissioners chooses to adopt impacts fees, state law requires those fees can only be imposed for system improvements that are reasonably related to the new development and that will benefit the new development.

policy 8A-14.5 If an impact fee ordinance is not in place, the County may require large developments to make improvements or pay a fee in lieu ~~traffic impact contributions~~ if the development significantly adds to a road's need for capacity improvement, to a roadway safety problem, or to the deterioration of a physically inadequate roadway. Such traffic impact contributions are in addition to transportation facility improvements required in the immediate area for access to and from the development.

Commented [A128]: Clarified language based on legal requirements for requiring improvements.

policy 8A-14.6 The County, in cooperation with the development community, may ~~consider alternative means to address transportation impacts of growth, so long as such alternatives comply with~~ through the GMA and the State Environmental Policy Act as, and provide a practical solution ~~that~~ to meets the intent of Goal A14 above.

Commented [A129]: Updated to clarify that SEPA and the GMA are the primary means to address impacts without impact fees in place.



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Implementation and Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal 8B To jointly plan, prioritize, and finance transportation improvements with federal, state, regional, and municipal partners for the greatest public benefit.

- policy 8B-1.1 **Future Plans** – Coordinate transportation plans with local, state, and tribal jurisdictions through the ~~Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Metropolitan Planning Organization~~ [Skagit Council of Governments](#), to identify and provide solutions for anticipated transportation challenges identified over the 20-year life of the Comprehensive Plan.
- policy 8B-1.2 **SR 20** – Encourage the state to provide facilities for non-motorized transportation as part of improvements to SR 20.
- policy 8B-1.3 **Joint Development** – Cooperate with the cities and towns in planning for joint development of road improvements that support mutual objectives.
- policy 8B-1.4 **State Highway Improvements** - In order to ensure that local efforts to meet GMA concurrency requirements are not undermined by inadequate state highways, support efforts at the state level to adequately fund legitimate highway improvement needs.
- policy 8B-1.5 **Public Involvement** --Encourage the Washington State Department of Transportation to ~~continue to develop closer~~ [maintain close](#) coordination with the local jurisdictions and ~~with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Transportation Planning Organization~~ [Skagit Council of Governments](#) in transportation planning and in the transportation project decision-making process. In support of this, the County encourages the State to continue enhancing its public involvement programs for state transportation decisions.
- policy 8B-1.6 **Americans with Disabilities Act** - The County shall comply with the “Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.”
- policy 8B-1.7 **Traffic Impacts** - In determining traffic impacts of development projects, the County should consider the impacts to all jurisdictions (county, city/town, and state) and condition such projects as necessary to mitigate the impacts.



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Capital Improvements

Goal 8C Integrate the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the 20-year long range transportation needs assessment with the Capital Facilities Plan consistent with the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

policy 8C-1.1 **Evaluation Criteria** – Evaluate proposed projects according to the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies as well as engineering feasibility, costs and benefits to the public, safety, impacts to the built and natural environment, community support, opportunities for staged implementation, system benefits and maintainability.

policy 8C-1.2 **Funding** – Make transportation capital investment decisions in consideration of capacity, safety, [economic development](#), [public health](#), and growth management needs.



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Introduction

The Growth Management Act requires comprehensive plans to include utilities elements. Skagit County has elected to describe all public and private utilities in this element. This includes public water, sanitary sewer, surface water management, and solid waste, as well as private electrical power, natural gas and telecommunications utilities. The GMA requires comprehensive plans to address these facilities and services in the following manner:

- Inventory the general location of existing utilities.
- Establish the proposed location of proposed utilities.
- Examine the capacity of existing and proposed utilities.

The GMA requires the utility element to describe locations, capacities, and need for utilities. The policies in this element cover private natural gas, telecommunications, electric utilities; and public solid waste, sewer, water, and surface water utilities. The information relating to utility service providers contained in this Plan is a summary only. More detailed discussions of the topics covered in this chapter are found under separate cover in utility service provider capital functional plans and in the following documents [and websites](#):

- ~~The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan supplemental Map Portfolio. The portfolio includes maps illustrating the locations of major utility facilities, including water, sewer, electrical, natural gas, drainage and dike districts, telecommunications, and transit service areas.~~
- [The Skagit County iMap website \(available at \[www.skagitcounty.net/Maps/iMap\]\(http://www.skagitcounty.net/Maps/iMap\)\). This website shows facilities for several types of utilities, including:

 - \[transmission pipelines\]\(#\);
 - \[stormwater facilities\]\(#\);
 - \[Group A Public Water Systems\]\(#\).](http://www.skagitcounty.net/Maps/iMap)
- [The Skagit County online Map Gallery. This website has an extensive gallery of maps in Adobe pdf format which are free to view and download. For utilities, this includes a Dike District Map and Drainage District Map.](#)
- [The Skagit Transit website, located at \[www.skagittransit.org/routes\]\(http://www.skagittransit.org/routes\). This website contains a map of the Skagit Transit system.](http://www.skagittransit.org/routes)

Commented [A130]: The map portfolio is available as a historic document but has not been kept up to date since the early 2000s and has instead been replaced by iMap and the GIS online map gallery.

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- Skagit County Coordinated Water System Plan - Regional Supplement, 2000. This document provides information on existing water facilities, management and conservation strategies, a needs forecast through 2040, and the availability of water rights to meet those needs, all within the framework of growth management.
- Anacortes-Fidalgo Island Coordinated Water System Plan
- The Capital Facilities [Plan \(CFP\), an element of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan that is updated annually. 2000-2005—Goals and Policies, Capital Improvements, and Implementation Programs.](#) This plan contains information and policies regarding financing, level of service and implementation of capital improvement projects.
- [Skagit County](#) Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) for Skagit County (~~Updated~~ [updated](#) 2005) [and 2013 CEDs Implementation Plan](#). These plans contains specific information regarding various [on utility infrastructure such as](#) sewer service and treatment projects, surface water projects, and utility corridor improvements, as well as estimated costs and potential funding sources.
- ~~Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Utilization of Skagit River Basin Water Resources for Instream and Out of Stream Purpose. Intended to ensure the establishment and maintenance of instream flows, and to provide mechanisms for interlocal cooperation with respect to specific existing agreements and water utilization.~~
- Skagit County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan Update [and Environmental Impact Statement, April 1994, December 2005, amended June 2008](#). Summarizes actions to be taken regarding solid waste management and an implementation schedule showing recommendations and associated costs.
- Skagit County Draft GMA Puget Power Electrical Facility Plan [and map updates \(November 1992\) and system map updates \(April 2015\)](#).

Water

[A large portion of rural Skagit County \(an estimated 5,700 lots\) is affected by the Skagit River Basin Instream Resources Protection Program Rule \(WAC 173-503\) adopted in 2001. Owners of these lots may not rely on permit exempt wells as an approved water source for new development unless the landowners can demonstrate a legal uninterrupted water source.](#)

Commented [A131]: References to the 1996 MOA have been deleted because the County withdrew from the agreement in 2012.



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Skagit County Coordinated Water System Plan

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[Skagit County is working with the Department of Ecology, PUD, and other water purveyors, Tribes, and affected property owners to develop and implement water supply projects and solutions in those areas affected by the Skagit River instream flow rule.](#)

Skagit County Coordinated Water System Plan

Under state law, water utilities are required to establish procedures for coordinated planning under the framework of a “coordinated water system plan” (CWSP). Skagit County’s CWSP was updated in 1999 [and 2000 \(Regional Supplement\)](#) and describes the characteristics of the public water service providers in the county. These include “Group A” systems that serve 15 or more connections or 25 or more people per day for 60 or more days per year. They must meet state and federal Safe Drinking Water Act requirements. In addition, there a number of “non-expanding” and “Group B” water systems that serve smaller areas and are not required to meet federal standards. The federal and state statutory requirements for water system planning and coordination overlap the GMA. ~~It is important for the County to engage in active planning for water supply as the state Department of Ecology examines water rights issues in the “lo flow” basins. Limitation of these water rights could result in the suppression of water supply, particularly for individual well in the rural area and therefore limit future development.~~

The Skagit County [Coordinated Water System Plan](#), ~~represents a significant element of the County’s Comprehensive Plan. The CWSP was jointly developed by all of the major Skagit County water utilities, in cooperation with the County and State agencies consistent with the Public Water System Coordination Act (RCW 70.116).~~

~~The CWSP is incorporated by reference by the Department of Ecology into the “Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Utilization of Skagit River Basin Water Resources for Instream and Out of Stream Purposes.” (Skagit River MOA). The Skagit River MOA further links the CWSP and GMA together by cross-referencing the GMA Urban Growth Areas and the Place of Use definitions for water rights as defined in the CWSP.~~

The Urban Service Areas for the Skagit County water purveyors are defined, as well as the rural service areas. The CWSP incorporates a level of service standard for rural public water service and related fire protection. An agreement on level of service between the County, water purveyors, cities, and County Fire Marshal is also incorporated in the CWSP.

The water demand projections incorporated in the CWSP were based on state Office of Financial Management (OFM) population projections and further adjusted to reflect OFM and



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land use criteria to help ensure consistency with the GMA planning procedure. [Projections of future water demand are based on a population forecast of 155,257 persons in 2030, 157,741 persons in 2040, and 160,265 persons in 2050. These forecasts are relatively similar to the population forecast in this Comprehensive Plan Update, of 155,452 persons in 2036. Therefore, the CWSP, which plans for water supply through the year 2050, addresses demand projections and needed improvements for a future population similar to that being planned for in this Update.](#)

The evolving land use and water resource management planning programs of Skagit County are reflected in the CWSP's Joint Operating Agreement (JOA) between the City of Anacortes and Skagit PUD. This JOA establishes the CWSP (and GMA) document as the framework for regional water supply and transmission development. It ensures that the two major water supply providers in Skagit County will work cooperatively to ensure that water supply will be available where and when required, in accordance with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

The CWSP, ~~Skagit River MOA~~, and JOA [Joint Operating Agreement](#), all combine to provide a comprehensive water supply and capital improvement plan for this Comprehensive Plan. The individual Water System Plans are incorporated by reference and by law in the CWSP, [and identify priorities for expansion of public water systems, including to those rural areas where development is affected by the Skagit River instream flow rule described below.](#)

Water Rights Agreement Summary

~~The "Memorandum of Agreement Regarding Utilization of Skagit River Basin Water Resources for Instream and Out of Stream Purposes" (Skagit River MOA), provides an in-depth analysis of water rights for public water service in Skagit County. The Skagit River MOA was developed and signed by the City of Anacortes, Skagit PUD, Skagit County, Swinomish Tribe, Upper Skagit Tribe, Sauk Suiattle Tribe, and the Departments of Ecology and Fish and Wildlife.~~

~~The Skagit River MOA incorporates both instream and out of stream water resource management objectives, water rights adequate to meet projected public water supply needs until at least the year 2046, and provisions for extending water supply to rural areas to protect public health, minimize impact on instream resources, and to support the States objectives for both the GMA and the management of the State's water resources.~~

~~The Skagit River MOA also recognizes the continuing need to collect data and to undertake a comprehensive watershed management program. The first phase of the joint plan in the~~



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Skagit River MOA includes the Lower Skagit River area, including Cultus Mountain streams. The second phase will include the Upper Skagit River watershed.

Instream flow monitoring and management will help establish where rural public water systems will be required to achieve the local, State, and Tribal government's water resource management objectives.

Instream Flow Rule

In 2001, the Washington State Department of Ecology ("Ecology") adopted the Skagit River Basin Instream Resources Protection Program Rule (WAC 173-503) ("2001 Rule"), establishing minimum river and stream flows for salmon habitat. Although the 2001 Rule in draft form allocated water for rural landowners and agriculture, the published 2001 Rule failed to provide a water allocation for rural landowners or agriculture.

In 2006, Ecology amended the 2001 Rule in an effort to fix this problem, establishing a small allocation for rural landowners and agriculture in the Skagit River Basin and each of its tributaries (the "2006 Amendment").

In 2008, the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community ("Swinomish") filed suit against the State in an effort to invalidate the 2006 Amendment. On October 3, 2013, the Washington Supreme Court ruled in favor of Swinomish, invalidating the 2006 Amendment. *Swinomish v. State*, Wa. Sup. Ct. Case No. 87672-0.

As a result of the *Swinomish* lawsuit, Ecology provided the following guidance:

Skagit County is legally required to stop issuing building permits and subdivision approvals in the Skagit Basin that rely on new wells, unless Ecology approves a plan for mitigation (or a plan for reliance on an alternative water source during times when the minimum instream flow requirements set in WAC 173-503 are not met).

Accordingly, Skagit County directs all building permit and subdivision applicants that propose to rely on new use of an exempt well within the Skagit Basin as their source of water to obtain Ecology's approval of the applicant's proposed water use prior to submittal of a permit or subdivision application to Skagit County.

Skagit County will work closely with landowners, Ecology, and local water purveyors to seek solutions to the lack of available water due to the 2001 Rule. Options include mitigation, securing alternative water sources, and encouraging water purveyors such as Skagit PUD to

Commented [A132]: The following narrative provides an update to the rural water situation in the Skagit River basin resulting from the 2013 Supreme Court decision in *Swinomish v. State*, Wa. Sup. Ct. Case No. 87672-0).



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[extend piped water to affected rural areas. The County may also support legislative solutions to water availability issues created by the 2001 Rule.](#)

Sanitary Sewer

[Sewer service is available in Anacortes, Burlington, Big Lake, Concrete, La Conner, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley.](#) Public sewer service is [generally](#) not provided in rural areas. The Skagit County Health Department and the Skagit Public Utilities District (PUD) have considered the feasibility of providing sanitary sewer service to some areas where public health issues have been raised due to failing on-septic systems, although so far, sewer service has been found to be prohibitively expensive. The Health Department works with these communities to find solutions that utilize improved septic treatment. That process involves testing existing systems and determining solutions to problems, most of which have been resolved.

Within the UGAs, sanitary sewer service is provided by the cities and towns and the PUD. Expansion of these services is implemented as part of the development process. [The ability to provide sewer service is considered by the County in proposals to alter UGA boundaries.](#)

Drainage Stormwater

Surface water management within the county includes regulation of new development; county planning, design, construction, and maintenance of facilities; and other facilities such as drainage ditches that are the responsibility of special districts. Surface water management is necessary for both water quantity and quality. The ~~state~~ [State](#) requires that the County ensure that surface water is managed in compliance with the [2012](#) Stormwater Management Manual for [Western Washington, as amended in 2014](#), ~~the Puget Sound Basin~~ and related federal water quality standards.

[The Stormwater Manual provides guidance on measures necessary to control the quality and quantity of stormwater produced by new development and redevelopment to comply with water quality standards.](#)

[The Washington State Department of Ecology issued the updated 2013-2018 Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit in 2014, which applies to portions of](#)

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Commented [A133]: From the NPDES Phase II permit doc (<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/stormwater/municipal/phaseIIww/5YR/2014mod/WWAPhaseII-Permit-2014Final.pdf>)
• S5 Stormwater management Program for cities, towns, and counties (p.15-39)



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Skagit County. The Phase II Permit requires that permit recipients develop and implement a Stormwater Management Program (SWMP). The Plan must include components relating to:

- Public Education and Outreach;
- Public Involvement and Participation;
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination;
- Controlling Runoff from New Development, Redevelopment and Construction Sites; and
- Municipal Operations and Maintenance.

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The Permit requires that Skagit County report annually on the progress of its permit program and provide a written plan of activities for the coming year. Skagit County issued its 2015 Stormwater Management Program Plan report in March of 2015. The report is the County's Stormwater Management Program compliance document and describes what the County will do to maintain compliance over the next year of the Permit term.

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Description from page 5.

The County's surface water utility collects annual assessments from property owners to pay for some of its operations. However, most drainage projects are the result of road funds and therefore tend to be included in road improvement projects. This includes culvert replacements and "salmon enhancement" projects that are also funded by state and federal programs.

Solid Waste

The County's solid waste management system consists of the collection and delivery of waste including recyclable materials to transfer stations, from which these materials are shipped to remote landfills and processing centers. According to the Washington State Department of Ecology, in 2013 approximately 164,801 tons of solid waste from Skagit County were landfilled or incinerated. This included 92,814 tons of municipal/commercial solid waste, as well as dredge, soils, industrial waste, construction and demolition debris, and other categories. As of 2003, 27% of solid waste generated in Skagit County was recycled or composted and 23% diverted to energy recovery and other uses, and the remaining 50% shipped to an out-of-county landfill.

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[The Skagit County Comprehensive Solid Waste Management Plan, completed in 2005 and updated in 2008, provides a guide for solid waste activities in Skagit County. It describes county demographics, waste quantities, and the solid waste management system, and includes recommended actions with an implementation schedule and associated costs.](#)

Electrical Power

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is an investor-owned utility providing electrical service to approximately ~~1,000,000~~ [1.2 million](#) residential, commercial, and industrial customers in a nine county, 4,500 square mile service area [eight counties](#) in western Washington. [\(Puget Sound Energy, 2015\)](#) [This includes approximately 60,000 electric customers in Skagit County.](#) To provide reliable service, PSE builds, operates, and maintains an extensive electrical system consisting of generating plants, transmission lines, substations, and distribution systems. [PSE power-delivery facilities in Skagit County include 1,400 miles of overhead facilities and 1,000 miles of underground cables.](#)

[PSE generates about 46 percent of the electricity used by customers from its own power plants, and the rest is purchased from utilities, power producers, and energy marketers. Electricity provided by PSE to Skagit County is often produced with the Baker River Dams and is interconnected to the Northwest's regional transmission grid through a network of transmission facilities. PSE will be deploying smart grid technology at each level of infrastructure to enhance and automate monitoring, analysis, control and communications capabilities along its entire grid.](#)

PSE is regulated by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) and is obligated to serve its customers subject to WUTC^{CR} rates and tariffs. [PSE is required by the WUTC to complete an Integrated Resource Plan every two years to forecast the resources necessary to meet future demand over a 20-year period. The current plan, filed in 2013, forecasted that PSE would need to acquire approximately 4,900 megawatts of new power-supply capacity by 2033. More than half of this demand can be met by energy efficiency and the renewal of transmission contracts; the remainder is likely to be met with additional natural gas-fired resources.](#)

[To meet local electric demand in Skagit County, new transmission lines and substations may need to be constructed, and existing facilities will need to be maintained and possibly rebuilt. Potential major construction anticipated in Skagit County in the next 10 to 20 years includes the following:](#)



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- [Rebuilding the Sedro-Woolley to Bellingham #4 Transmission line. This line currently runs from PSE’s substation in Sedro-Woolley to the Bellingham Substation in Bellingham. It will be rebuilt within the same corridor as the existing line.](#)
- [A new substation in South/Central Skagit County and one or two new connecting 115 kV transmission lines between existing substations, such as the Sedro-Woolley substation in Sedro-Woolley.](#)
- [A new substation in the vicinity of Fidalgo Bay to enhance capacity and reliability to the major industries in the area.](#)

Natural Gas

Cascade Natural Gas transmits and distributes natural gas to more than ~~227~~226,000 [customers residential, commercial, and industrial customers in 96 communities in Washington and Oregon](#). [This includes 226,000 residential customers, 33,000 commercial customers, and 700 industrial customers](#) It also distributes gas to approximately 200 large customers, mostly industrial users buying their supplies from third parties. [Cascade Natural Gas owns 5,100 miles of distribution mains, 200 miles of transmission mains, and 3,500 miles of service lines.](#) Subsidiary CGC Resources manages the company’s pipeline capacity. The utility obtains its gas mainly from Canadian suppliers. [Cascade Natural Gas has a pipeline in Skagit County that extends from Anacortes in the west to Sedro Woolley in the east.](#) [\(WUTC 2015, Skagit County 2015\)](#)

[The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission regulates private, investor-owned natural gas utilities in Washington to ensure regulated companies provide safe and reliable service to customers at reasonable rates.](#)

Telecommunications

Telephone and cable services are provided throughout the county by a number of private utilities. As with electrical power, these providers are regulated by the state. [Frontier Communications Northwest is the primary provider of telecommunications services in Skagit County. The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission regulates rates and services of telephone companies operating in Washington State, but does not regulate cable,](#)

Commented [A135]: Updated info not available on Cascade Natural Gas website or 2011 Integrated Resources Plan (http://www.cngc.com/docs/regulatory/2011_irp_may.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

Commented [A136R135]: Old sentence proposed for removal as we could not obtain updated information and infrastructure would have changed.

Commented [A137]: Per WUTC map: <http://www.utc.wa.gov/regulatingIndustries/utilities/Documents/PipelineServiceMap.pdf> and Skagit County iMap data: <http://www.skagitcounty.net/Maps/iMap/?mapid=688aec725030494eab711b7fb6082d79>



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[internet, wireless phones, or “voice over internet protocol” \(VOIP\).](#) Skagit County coordinates provisions of these services through the development permitting process.

Utilities Issues

Other than water rights in the low-flow stream basins and isolated instances of septic failures, the public utility services in Skagit County’s rural areas have sufficient capacities to accommodate projected growth. Distribution of these services is addressed concurrently with growth and development. The provision of services within the UGAs is coordinated with the cities and towns. The private utilities have not indicated any capacity or distribution issues that have an effect on forecasted growth in the rural area.

[Utility locations are determined by utility providers based on system needs and planned growth. Some utility projects are important to the County’s economic development. The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2013 Implementation Plan includes examples of major planned utility infrastructure projects such as major drainage improvements proposed by Skagit County or cities, or municipal sewer improvements.](#)

GMA Mandate

Development of this chapter was guided in particular by the following GMA Planning Goal:

- *Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.*

This Goal, taken in the context of the totality of the thirteen GMA Planning Goals, led to the following CPPs that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this chapter:

- *Public facilities and services shall be integrated and consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans and implementing regulations. (CPP 12.1)*
- *All communities within a region shall fairly share the burden of regional public facilities. (See the Capital Facilities Element for further information) CPP 12.2)*



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- *Lands shall be identified for public purposes, such as: utility corridors, transportation corridors, landfill, sewage treatment facilities, recreation, schools, and other public uses. The County shall work with the state, cities, communities, and utility providers to identify areas of shared need for public facilities. (CPP12.4)*
- *Development shall be allowed only when and where all public facilities are adequate, and only when and where such development can be adequately served by regional public services without reducing levels of service elsewhere (CPP 12.6)*
- *Public facilities and services needed to support development shall be available concurrent with the impacts of development (CPP 12.7)*
- *Public water supply for new development shall conform to or exceed the Coordinated Water System Plan for public water systems (CPP 12.10)*
- *Public drainage facilities shall be designed to control both stormwater quantity and quality impacts. (CPP 12.14)*

Goals and Policies

Utilities

- Goal 9A** Ensure the provision of high quality, cost effective and environmentally sensitive utility services in cooperation with public and private providers.

Systems Coordination

- Goal 9A-1** Coordinate and encourage timely, safe, and cost-effective planning and design of utility systems with providers and state and federal agencies.

- policy 9A-1.1 **Utility Agreements** - Agreements between the county and utility system providers shall provide for the coordination between functional plans and capital facility plans; address the joint use of corridors, installations, and rights-of-way; ensure that development permit reviews address all affected utilities; and mitigate impacts of utility improvement projects.



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policy 9A-1.2 **Human Health and Power Facilities** – In reviewing proposals for new power facilities, the county shall consider whether the latest conclusions of scientific research on extremely low frequency (ELF) electromagnetic fields (EMF) have been used to reduce exposure that might affect human health.

Consistency of Plans and Standards

Goal 9A-2 Ensure the consistency, compatibility, and concurrency of utility functional plans through periodic review.

policy 9A-2.1 **Utility Facility Planning** – Utility system plans shall be reviewed for consistency with the County Comprehensive Plan.

policy 9A-2.2 **Vegetation Management** – The county shall use standards for vegetation management in public rights-of-way in approving utility providers' proposals. Such standards shall be based on similar standards of the state Department of Transportation.

policy 9A-2.3 **Critical Areas** – Any utility construction including maintenance and repair shall comply with county regulations including the Critical Areas Ordinance and vegetation management standards.

Utility Facility Siting

Goal 9A-3 Site facilities consistent with the policies of the Land Use Element.

policy 9A-3.1 **Siting at Critical Areas** – The county shall ensure that utility facilities are not sited in designated critical areas unless feasible alternatives are unavailable, in which case suitable mitigation in accordance with the critical areas regulations shall be required.

policy 9A-3.2 **Siting of Major Facilities** - Outdoor installations of transfer and distribution stations providing electrical power, communications, and natural gas, should, where practicable, be located in industrial or commercially zoned areas. Stations should be reasonably compatible with surrounding uses. Where system design or economics necessitate location of such installations in residential or rural areas, installations shall be suitably screened or enclosed



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so as to eliminate or substantially reduce the visual impact. This may be achieved through appropriate setbacks and screening, such as, buildings, natural topography, landscaping, and vegetation.

policy 9A-3.3 Land Use - Utility facilities may be permitted in all land use zones when and where utility franchises exist and if they are in compliance with this Comprehensive Plan and related codes and standards.

policy 9A-3.4 Wireless Communications – Siting of wireless facilities shall minimize visual and noise impacts, through the utilization of existing sites and structures where possible, adequate setbacks, and appropriate landscape screening.

Undergrounding

Goal 9A-4 Encourage underground utility distribution lines to reduce visual and safety impacts of overhead lines where economically feasible.

policy 9A-4.1 **Planning** - Utility providers shall be encouraged to plan for underground installation of utility lines, and private developers shall be required to underground utilities as directed during permit review.

policy 9A-4.2 **Implementation** - Existing overhead utilities shall utilize joint support structures at such time as the system is upgraded if the cost to place lines underground is not reasonable for the rate payer under the rate structure set by state and federal regulation. If a situation exists where underground existing overhead utilities is desired and is technically feasible, a Local Improvement District or some other financial arrangement will be used to have the beneficiaries bear the cost, rather than the general rate payer.

policy 9A-4.3 **Design** - Provisions for future undergrounding of other utilities should be made in the design of initial utility undergrounding projects.

Energy Conservation

Goal 9A-5 Encourage conservation of energy resources, including the reduction of energy consumption in county facilities.



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- policy 9A-5.1 **Non-renewable Resources** - Generating energy from non-renewable resources may be acceptable if proven to be economically feasible and environmentally sound.
- policy 9A-5.2 **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.
- policy 9A-5.3 **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.
- policy 9A-5.4 **Alternative Energy Resources** - The county shall encourage the use of alternative energy resources in the design and construction of new development..
- policy 9A-5.5 **Co-generation** - Commercial and industrial facilities shall be encouraged to incorporate co-generation whenever possible, if economically feasible and environmentally sound.
- policy 9A-5.6 **Solar Energy** - The use of solar energy for water and space heating should be encouraged and ordinances shall be developed to protect solar access.
- policy 9A-5.7 **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.

Solid Waste Management

Goal 9A-6 Protect environmental quality and public health in Skagit County through effective practices, education, regulations, and economic incentives.

- policy 9A-6.1 **Waste Reduction** - The county shall endeavor to reduce per capita waste production by changing consumer and industrial practices.



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policy 9A-6.2 **Recycling** - The county shall encourage recycling.

Sanitary Sewer

Goal 9A-7 Encourage public sewer services in Urban Growth Areas and limit them in the rural area.

policy 9A-7.1 **Rural Community Systems** – Community-, and other innovative sewage treatment systems in Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD) land developments and limited areas of more intensive rural developments (LAMIRDS) - or to address rural public health problems - should be considered on a case by case basis.

Water

Countywide Planning Policies Regarding Water

■ *All growth outside the urban growth boundary shall be rural in nature as defined in the Rural Element, not requiring urban government services except in those limited circumstances shown to be necessary to the satisfaction of both the County and the affected city [with regard to water the City of Anacortes is the only municipal water purveyor where applicable] to protect basic public health, safety and the environment, and when such services are financially supportable at rural densities and do not permit urban development. (CPP 1.8)*

[Because of the 2001 Instream Flow Rule, Skagit County would support extension of piped water to certain areas to support rural-level development where access to groundwater via exempt wells is unavailable.](#)

Comprehensive Plan Policies Regarding Water

This Comprehensive Plan recognizes that the need for the provision of piped water in rural areas may occur under limited circumstances such as: the transmission pipeline routing between Urban Growth Areas; where existing developments are providing rural public water service and fire protection in accordance with the CWSP; where groundwater does not meet Safe Drinking Water Act and State Health Department criteria for potable water use; where water quantity issues related to actual yield or where groundwater withdrawal will cause a

Commented [A138]: Proposed language included because Skagit County will support efforts to extend public water where feasible to areas affected by instream flow rule.



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conflict with instream resources as defined by the Skagit River MOA the 2001 Rule related to instream flows; and properties that are rural in nature and density and are adjacent to a piped water system.

The provision of piped water service in rural areas ~~shall~~ should support the combined objectives of the Growth Management Act GMA, the CWSP, individual Water System Plans, and the Skagit River MOA ~~and appropriate State and county rules and procedures as described above~~ state law. The implementation of the Skagit River MOA and the update of the CWSP ~~as well as resolution of State rules and case law~~ will better define the refinements to, and application of, the level of service criteria where there is a transition between urban and rural service zones, existing development in rural areas, and agricultural demands for piped water (i.e., dairies and container farming).

Goal 9A-8 ~~To~~ Influence the development and use of the water resources of Skagit County in a manner that is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies and the Comprehensive Plan.

policy 9A-8.1 Cooperation with water districts and other water providers shall be extended to support them in their responsibility to provide a reliable service to assure an adequate quality and quantity of potable water and high quality water supply within their service areas.

policy 9A-8.2 Water supply infrastructure expansion shall be designed to meet local needs and urban or rural levels of service standards, and comply with this Comprehensive Plan's land use densities.

(a) Urban Water Service shall mean service provided by a water system(s) that has been designed to provide service throughout the designated urban growth area. The water service shall be designed to meet the water supply needs of the residential, commercial, industrial, and other water needs as defined by the Skagit County or City Comprehensive Plan, the Coordinated Water System Plan, and the designated water utility's Water System Plan.

(i) The Utility's Water System Plan shall document a plan to meet urban water service using the design criteria outlined in Section 4 and on Table 4-1 of the Coordinated Water System Plan and in

Commented [A139]: Updating to reflect the adoption of the 2001 instream flow rule and to delete reference to 1996 MOA.



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accordance with the schedule required by this Comprehensive Plan.

(b) Rural Water Service shall mean water service provided by an individual well, a stand alone public water system, or extension of a water system from within an urban growth area that is designed to provide rural water service. The water service shall be designed to meet the rural water supply needs of the rural area users as defined by this Comprehensive Plan, the Coordinated Water System Plan, [any designated water purveyor’s Water System Plan \(where applicable\)](#), and the criteria established for the water service in Section 4 and on Table 4-1 of the Coordinated Water System Plan [and applicable state law](#).

(i) The design shall be guided by the projected rural area water supply and fire protection associated with the requirements of this Comprehensive Plan, and based on the physical or hydraulic capacity requirements as outlined in the Coordinated Water System Plan and the designated water utility's water system plan.

[\(ii\) Pursuant to RCW 19.27.097 and RCW 58.17.110, Skagit County cannot legally issue residential building permits a permit for a building requiring potable water or approve subdivision applications unless the applicant has demonstrated a lawful water supply. See Rural Element policy 3A-2.2.](#)

policy 9A-8.3 Interlocal agreements shall be developed with the cities, towns, and water suppliers in the coordination of water service to urban growth areas.

(a) The Skagit County Public Utility District #1, the cities, the Swinomish Tribal Community, and the County shall meet and enter into an interlocal agreement that provides for an increasing local and/or tribal government role in the provision of public water within their designated jurisdictional urban growth areas.

policy 9A-8.4 Water supply development and service shall be consistent with all related plans, including but not limited to, the Coordinated Water Systems Plan, the

Commented [A140]: Including this policy to reflect constraints on County in issuing building permits for rural development in areas affected by instream flow rule.



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Anacortes-Fidalgo Island Coordinated Water System Plan, this Comprehensive Plan, and related purveyor plans as they are developed.

policy 9A-8.5 New capital facilities for water-system compliance with state and federal safe-drinking-water rules, and water treatment standards shall be based on rural area densities and a level of service that is consistent with the existing character of the environment.

policy 9A-8.6 Skagit County shall enforce all county, state and federal laws regarding potable water, well head protection and the installation of water systems.

policy 9A-8.7 Connection to a public water system should be encouraged in those areas of ~~low flow streams~~ [affected by the Skagit River Basin Instream Resources Protection Program Rule \(WAC 173-503\) or other low flow areas.](#)

policy 9A-8.8 Limitations on uses and densities should be considered ~~considered~~ **maintained** within [areas affected by the Skagit River Basin Instream Resources Protection Program Rule \(WAC 173-503\) and any other](#) designated low flow stream corridors where necessary to limit individual wells and protect base flows.

policy 9A-8.9 The Coordinated Water Systems Plan should be reviewed to ~~assure~~ **ensure** consistency with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.

~~policy 9A-8.10 Necessary expansion of existing public facilities may require urban level of water service due to existing development regulations.~~

~~policy 9A-8.11~~ [policy 9A-8.10](#) Water conservation measures shall be incorporated into water supply development and service plans as a method of addressing future water needs.

Stormwater

Goal 9B Protect and enhance natural hydrologic features and functions by: maintaining water quality and fish and wildlife habitat; incorporating natural drainage patterns into measures to protect the public from health and safety hazards and property damage; maintaining a sustainable groundwater discharge/recharge budget; and by

Commented [A142]: Such limitations already exist in the rural area based on GMA-compliant rural zoning. Also added reference to the adopted rule.

Commented [A143]: Propose to strike as the meaning/intent of this policy is unclear.



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promoting beneficial uses as well as water resource education and planning efforts.

Risk Avoidance

Goal 9B-1 Reduce risks to public health and safety and the loss of, or damage to public and private property.

policy 9B-1.1 **Solutions:** Nonstructural storm water measures should be preferred over structural measures.

policy 9B-1.2 **Priority:** Protection of existing development should take preference over the protection of undeveloped lands.

policy 9B-1.3 **Planning:** Strategies for surface water management should balance engineering, economic, environmental and social factors in relationship to stated comprehensive planning goals and policies.

policy 9B-1.4 **Community Awareness:** The county shall promote community awareness of the importance of water quality and flood hazard protection through education and outreach in conjunction with planning for water programs.

policy 9B-1.5 ~~Surface Water~~ **Stormwater Management Program Plan:** The county shall continue to implement its a surface water stormwater management program plan and required compliance reports. using master drainage plans, subarea plans, and UGA plans by 2012.

policy 9B-1.6 **Structural Flood Protection:** Dikes, levees, and other structural flood protection facilities should be designed to allow fish passage, protect flows in riparian zones, and complement or enhance the surrounding landscape.

policy 9B-1.7 **Habitat:** Flood protection measures should not result in a long-term net loss of-, or damage to, fish and wildlife resources, and wherever possible, should result in increased diversity of habitat.

policy 9B-1.8 **Natural Drainage:** Natural drainage shall be preferred over the use of pipelines or enclosed detention systems, where possible.



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policy 9B-1.9 **Best Management Practices:** Storm water runoff from impervious surfaces should be treated by utilizing best management practices (treatment BMPs) before the storm water is allowed to enter the natural drainage system, infiltrate into the ground or enter Puget Sound. Examples of treatment BMPs are, but not limited to: detention ponds, oil/water separators, biofiltration swales and constructed wetlands.

policy 9B-1.10 **Coordination of Regulations:** The county shall work with other jurisdictions and agencies toward standardization and monitoring of regulations that affect storm water management.



10 Capital Facilities

Editor’s Note: This chapter is not presented in strikethrough and underline because it underwent substantial from the previous version. Most of the new text in the chapter is from the annually adopted Capital Facilities Plan. The net effect will be substantially less narrative will be included in the annual update.

Note that the Essential Public Facilities policies moved to the Land Use element.

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Introduction

This chapter, along with the County’s rolling six-year Capital Facilities Plan, constitutes the Comprehensive Plan’s Capital Facilities Plan Element for capital facility development, maintenance, and financing. This element implements Goal 12 of the Washington State Growth Management Act (“GMA”), which provides that the County must “[e]nsure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.”¹

GMA specifically requires that the county’s Comprehensive Plan include a Capital Facilities Plan Element consisting of the following:²

- (a) an inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities, showing the locations and capacities of the capital facilities;*
- (b) a forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities; [including] (c) the proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities;*
- (d) at least a six-year plan that will finance such capital facilities within projected funding capacities and clearly identifies sources of public money for such purposes; and*
- (e) a requirement to reassess the land use element if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs and to ensure that the land use element, capital facilities plan element, and financing plan within the capital facilities plan element are coordinated and consistent. Park and recreation facilities shall be included in the capital facilities plan element.*

Skagit County addresses these requirements in two ways—through policies and Level of Service (LOS) standards in the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, and through the annually updated Capital Facilities Plan. The Capital Facilities Plan is divided into county and non-county facilities, and then grouped by type of facility within each division. Each grouping includes an inventory, forecast of future needs over the 20-year planning period (2005–2025), and financing plan for projects within the next six years. Some jurisdictions (such as Snohomish County) produce a Capital Facilities Plan at the time of their comprehensive plan



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update, and then annually produce a six-year financing plan (sometimes called a Capital Improvement Program). Skagit County has included all of the required components of the Capital Facilities Plan element into this document.

Definition of “Capital Facility”

Although GMA does not specifically define the term “capital facility,” the Growth Management Hearings Board has held that a CFP must include at least the following publicly owned facilities, some of which may be included in other elements:³

- streets, roads, highways, and sidewalks
- street and road lighting systems
- traffic signals
- domestic water systems
- storm and sanitary sewer systems
- parks and recreation facilities
- schools

In addition, the capital facilities element must incorporate planning for “public services,” which include:⁴

- fire protection and suppression
- law enforcement
- public health
- education
- recreation
- environmental protection
- “other governmental services”

Skagit County condenses this into a single definition of “capital facility” which is found in policy 10A-1.1.



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Because the County’s Transportation Technical Appendix, which includes an inventory, and the six-year [Transportation Improvement Program](#) (“TIP”), which includes a financing plan, are incorporated by reference, roads and non-motorized transportation projects that are included in those plans need not appear in the text of this CFP. Accordingly, trail projects other than those contained wholly within a park must be included in the TIP.

Why plan for capital facilities?

The Government Finance Officers’ Association identifies four major purposes of a capital facilities plan:⁵

- **Create a formal mechanism for decision-making.** A basic function of the CFP is to provide a framework for decision makers. Decisions about what to buy, when to buy it and how to pay for it can all be answered by a comprehensive CFP.
- **Provide a link to long-range plans.** The CFP can guide the implementation of the community’s comprehensive plan, sub area plans, and strategies.
- **Serve as an important management tool.** A major organizational purpose is served by the CFP. It provides a mechanism to help prioritize capital projects and match projects with existing funding options.
- **Function as a reporting document.** A CFP communicates to citizens, businesses, and other interested parties the government’s capital priorities and plans for implementing capital projects.

There are numerous benefits of capital facilities planning, including:

- **Focused attention on community goals, needs, and financial capability.** It encourages decision makers and the public to connect future plans and the actions needed to achieve them.
- **Building public consensus for projects and improves community awareness.** The process elevates public awareness of the needs and financial resources of the community.
- **Improved inter/intra governmental cooperation.** A CFP enhances coordination between departments and agencies thereby reducing conflicts and overlapping projects.



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In land use planning

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- Assistance in ensuring financial stability. Capital projects are prioritized and scheduled to fit within expected funding levels, thereby limiting the need for dramatic tax increases or unanticipated bond issues in any one year.

Planning for capital facilities enables Skagit County to:

- Demonstrate facility needs through adopted level of service standards.
- Anticipate capital improvement needs and plan for their costs.
- Integrate community capital facility wants/needs into the annual budget process.
- Monitor growth and manage development.
- Qualify for revenue sources such as federal and state grants and loans, real estate excise taxes and impact fees. This level of planning also enables the county to receive a better rating on bond issues.

Skagit County is responsible for capital facilities and service levels related to:

- **Public works:** County roads/ferry (transportation), surface water management and solid waste disposal
- **Justice:** sheriff and jail facilities, youth & family services and superior and district courts
- **General government:** administration buildings and maintenance facilities
- **Community services:** parks and recreation facilities, County fairgrounds and senior services centers

How do we use the CFP?

In land use planning

A comprehensive plan should balance the relationship between the demand for services triggered by new development and the financing required to pay for capital facilities in order to assure that the land use commitment made in the plan can be sustained financially over time. The plan can achieve this balance by:

- Adjusting the amount, location, or timing of the land development (demand side);



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In budgeting

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- Adjusting the amount of public facilities and services or the level of service (LOS) provided by those facilities and services (supply side); or by
- Adjusting the amount of financing available.

Since these actions are interrelated, balancing between them can become complex.

In budgeting

Capital facility planning often requires multi-year commitments of financial resources.

Financing for some projects assumes receipt of outside grants or voter-approved bonds. If grants or bonds fail to materialize, projects included in the plan may be delayed or removed.

The CFP is a planning document, not a budget for expenditures, nor a guarantee that the projects will be implemented.

In determining needs for new capital facilities

The process to determine need for new capital facilities is rather straightforward. Some facility needs are easy to determine as they are based on the principle of maintaining or meeting technically derived Levels of Service (LOS) standards. LOS standards are established by a technical based measure, e.g. water flow levels to serve a certain population or park space needed per one thousand citizens. Capital facility needs are also derived from special plans and strategies developed for a special purpose.

Planning Period & Update Frequency

Regularly updated capital facilities plans support implementation of the 20-year goals of the Comprehensive Plan. GMA requires at least a six-year plan for capital facility financing.⁶

WAC 365-196-415(2)(a)(iv) recommends a jurisdiction "periodically" review and update its inventory. Skagit County includes both its inventory and financing plan in its six-year CFP, which is updated annually.

Capital Facilities Financing

The 6-year CFP is fully funded, meaning that the cost of all identified facility improvements is matched to realistic funding sources based on an analysis of available funding capacity and



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financial resources. However, capital facility planning often requires multi-year commitments of financial resources. The CFP assumes receipt of outside grants and voter approved bonds. If grants or bonds are not forthcoming projects included in the plan may be delayed or removed. The 20-year CFP provides a broader view of available funds in the longer-term. The CFP is a planning document; not a budget for expenditures, nor a guarantee that the projects will be implemented.

Facility Capacity

A CFP provides public facility capacity to meet current demand based on capacity assumptions and population trends. Capacity assumptions are often called levels of service (LOS) and can be established by applying national standards, regional averages, or service-level assessments for a particular facility or service.

Levels of service are measures of the amount of public facilities that are provided to the community (e.g., number of jail beds). Levels of service may also measure the quality of public facilities (e.g., roads). Typically, measures of levels of service are expressed as ratios of facility capacity to demand (i.e., actual or potential users).

No standard formula or methodology is used, as the considerations for assessing needed parks and recreation facilities, for example, is entirely different than that used for assessing road-improvement priorities. Therefore, the Capital Facilities Plan predicts the demand for various facilities based on capacity assumptions unique to each type of facility. Such assumptions are stated in the Capacity Analysis for each type of facility, or the documentation in support of the analysis is cited where appropriate.

Non-County Capital Facilities

The County's primary responsibility is to ensure that adequate facilities and services are, or will be in place, to support forecasted growth. This includes County owned and operated facilities as well as those of other providers. Within the unincorporated area, the County is primarily responsible for facilities and services supporting community activities, law and justice, solid waste, surface water management, and transportation. Water supply, fire and emergency medical service, schools, sanitary sewer collection and treatment, diking and drainage, transit, and port services are the responsibility of other providers outside of the ownership and management of Skagit County. However, the GMA requires the County to



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coordinate with these other facility providers' plans and to recognize them within the Comprehensive Plan.

Skagit County is not responsible for the provision of planning and land use regulation services within the incorporated portions of the municipal UGAs. However, the County must ensure that public facilities and services are available, adequate and concurrent with development within non-municipal UGAs and the unincorporated portions of municipal UGAs prior to annexation. The Framework Agreement between the County and the cities and towns requires that those jurisdictions plan and implement capital facilities improvements adequate to accommodate growth within their respective UGAs so that concurrency with adopted levels of service is maintained. This requirement provides for the transition of government from the County, to the cities, as intended by GMA. Skagit County solicits capital facilities plans and related information of non-County service providers in conjunction with annual CFP updates, and provides ongoing consultation and assistance to encourage coordination of capital facilities planning across jurisdictions.

Concurrency

Goal 12 of the GMA, also known as the concurrency goal, requires jurisdictions to “ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy...”⁷ This goal requires a jurisdiction to adopt policies and regulations that ensure that the jurisdiction phases growth such that “adequate facilities are available when the impacts of development occur.”⁸ A jurisdiction’s capital facilities plan element is one mechanism by which a jurisdiction complies with Goal 12.⁹ In particular, the financing plan that is part of the capital facilities plan element provides the assurance that those capital facilities necessary to support development are not illusory and will be both funded and available when the development occurs. Similarly, the transportation element is a mechanism by which a jurisdiction will achieve concurrency.

Skagit County Code Chapter 14.28 includes concurrency standards that development must meet and requirements for an annual concurrency assessment. A jurisdiction must achieve concurrency for only “those public facilities... necessary to support development,” not all public facilities which are included in a capital facilities plan element. It is within the jurisdiction’s discretion to identify which facilities are necessary to support development and must meet the concurrency requirement.¹⁰ The Department of Community Trade and Development “recommends” that “at least domestic water systems and sanitary sewer



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systems be added to concurrency lists applicable within urban growth areas and that at least domestic water systems be added for lands outside urban growth areas.”¹¹

Impact fees and REET

State law requires the County to adopt a Capital Facilities Plan as part of its Comprehensive Plan before it can collect impact fees,¹² including impact fees for school districts,¹³ and allows the County to spend impact fees and the first quarter percent of its Real Estate Excise Tax receipts (REET 1 revenue) solely on “capital projects” listed in the Capital Facilities Plan.¹⁴

Capital Facilities Planning Process

The GMA lays out the statutory requirements for planning capital facilities to ensure that they are, or can be, available when needed to accommodate forecasted growth. This includes the regular maintenance of the inventory of existing facilities; assessment of current and future needs based on adopted LOS standards or planning assumptions; and plans (including financing) for meeting the needs. The specificity of the needs assessments and plans varies as inventories, needs and capacity information is more certain for the immediate future and less so for the later years of the 20-year GMA horizon. WAC 365-196-415(2)(c)(ii) recommends a jurisdiction update its six-year financing plan at least biennially.

Skagit County reviews and updates the Capital Facilities Plan periodically to reflect official population estimates and projections by the State Office of Financial Management, revisions to the Countywide Planning Policies and population allocations, and any revisions to facility-specific plans or data. The update generally coincides with the annual budget process and includes:

- Revision of population projections.
- Updating the inventory and capacities of public facilities.
- Determining facilities needs based on adopted or desired level of service standards and planning assumptions.
- Updating the costs of public facilities.
- Updating capital improvements project needs for the next six fiscal years.
- Updating the revenue forecast and analysis of financial capacity.



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- Amending the CFP, and Comprehensive Plan (if necessary) including level of service standards, capital projects, and/or the financing plan sources of revenue.

How is the CFP developed?

- **Requests from departments** – County departments must submit any capital project the department wants to execute in the following year for inclusion in the CFP
- **Requests from Outside Agencies** – The County solicits capital facilities plans from non-county service providers to be included or referenced in the CFP
- **Public Review and Comment** – The County code (SCC 14.08) outlines the process for adoption of a comprehensive plan amendment, which includes a comment period and hearing.
- **Planning Commission Review & Recommendation** – The Planning Commission holds a hearing and makes a recommendation on adoption or modification of the draft CFP.
- **Board of Commissioners Adoption** – The Board adopts the CFP during their annual opportunity to amend the Comprehensive Plan or when it adopts or amends the County budget.

GMA Mandate

The GMA goal for capital facilities states:

- *Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.*

Based on the goal, the county and the cities and towns have adopted the following Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies:

- *Public facilities and services shall be integrated and consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans and implementing regulations.(CPP 12.1)*
- *All communities within a region shall fairly share the burden of regional public facilities. (The GMA defines regional public facilities as streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street and road lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water systems,*



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storm and sanitary sewer systems, parks, recreational facilities and schools.) (CPP 12.2)

- *Lands shall be identified for public purposes, such as: utility corridors, transportation corridors, landfill, sewage treatment facilities, recreation, schools, and other public uses. The County shall work with the state, cities, communities and utility providers to identify areas of shared need for public facilities. (CPP 12.4)*
- *Lands designated for urban growth by this Comprehensive Plan shall have an urban level of regional public facilities prior to or concurrent with development. (CPP 12.5)*
- *Development shall be allowed only when and where all public facilities are adequate, and only when and where such development can be adequately served by regional public services without reducing levels of service elsewhere. (CPP 12.6)*
- *Public facilities and services needed to support development shall be available concurrent with the impacts of development. (CPP 12.7)*
- *The financing for system improvements to public facilities to serve new development must provide for a balance between impact fees and other sources of public funds and cannot rely solely on impact fees. (CPP 12.8)*
- *New development shall pay for or provide for its share of new infrastructure through impact fees or as conditions of development through the environmental review process. (CPP 12.9)*
- *Public water supply for new development shall conform to or exceed the Coordinated Water System Plan for public water systems.(CPP 12.10)*
- *Future development of land adjacent to existing and proposed schools and other public facilities shall be compatible with such uses. (CPP 12.11)*
- *Library service within the county should be developed and coordinated to assure the delivery of comprehensive services throughout the County, with the county, cities and towns fairly sharing the burden. (CPP 12.12)*
- *A county-wide recycling program shall be developed. (CPP 12.13)*
- *Public drainage facilities shall be designed to control both stormwater quantity and quality impacts. (CPP 12.14)*



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- *Skagit County shall provide results of the required six year capital facilities plan, including a financing plan, and these shall be consistent with land use designations. (CPP 12.15)*
- *Citizens shall have the opportunity to participate in and comment on proposed capital facilities financing. (CPP 12.16)*
- *The Washington State Boundary Review Board for Skagit County should be disbanded pursuant to RCW 36.93.230 provided that the following tasks are accomplished: (a) that ALL cities and the County have adopted comprehensive plans and development regulations consistent with the requirements of these Countywide Planning Policies and RCW 36.70A, including appropriate urban levels of service for all public facilities and services; (b) that ALL cities and the County have adopted a concurrency ordinance that requires the adopted urban levels of service addressed in (a) above be accomplished in time frames that are consistent with RCW 36.70A.; (c) that special purpose districts that serve UGAs have adopted urban levels of service standards appropriate for their service areas; (d) that ALL cities and the County have an adopted capital facility plan for urban levels of service that indicates sources of revenue and a timeline for meeting such service; and (e) that ALL cities and special purpose districts have in place adopted “interlocal agreements” that discuss arrangements for transfer of assets and obligations that may be affected by transformance of governance or annexation of the service area consistent with the requirements of applicable RCWs. (CPP 12.17)*

Goals and Policies

Capital Facilities

- Goal 10A** Ensure that adequate public facilities are provided to accommodate the needs of Skagit County citizens for the next 20 years by:
- maintaining level of service standards for capital facilities;
 - providing consistency among functional plans;



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- ensuring timely provision and financing of facility improvements; and
- taking advantage of revenue sources such as impact mitigation, grants, and loans.

Capital Facility Needs

Goal 10A-1 Establish the baseline for the types of capital facilities to be addressed, levels of service, needed capital improvements to achieve and maintain the standards for existing and future populations, and to repair or replace existing capital facilities

- policy 10A-1.1 “Capital facility” is any publicly owned structure, improvement, or asset (including land) that meets all of the following criteria:
- (a) is related to providing one of the facilities or services identified above;
 - (b) exists now or may be needed during the current GMA 20-year planning period (2016 - 2036);¹⁵
 - (c) requires the expenditure of public funds over and above annual maintenance and operational expenses; and
 - (d) costs \$10,000 or more; and
 - (e) has a life expectancy of 10 years or more;
 - (f) but not existing vehicles and equipment, the replacement of which is programmatically funded by the County’s Equipment Rental & Repair fund.

policy 10A-1.2 **Capital Facilities Categories:** For the purpose of Skagit County’s Capital Facility planning efforts to support growth and ensure facilities necessary to support growth are provided, the following categories of capital facilities are defined:

- (a) Category A: Capital facilities owned or operated by Skagit County and subject to the requirement for concurrency including roads, Sheriff’s facilities, and county-owned drainage facilities.



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- (b) Category B: Capital facilities owned or operated by federal, state, or city governments, independent districts, or private organizations and subject to the requirement for concurrency including water, fire and sewer, and drainage facilities where applicable.
- (c) Category C: Capital facilities owned or operated by Skagit County but not subject to the requirement for concurrency including parks and recreation, general government, fair, senior services, public safety and solid waste.
- (d) Category D: Facilities owned or operated by Federal, State, or City governments, independent districts, or private organizations but not subject to the requirement for concurrency including schools.

policy 10A-1.3 **Application of Standards** – Based on the categories defined above, the following application of LOS standards shall be used by the county in assessing facility needs and financing:

- (a) Category A facility standards shall apply to development permits issued by the County and shall be used in evaluating future capital improvement programs and budgets.
- (b) Category-B standards shall apply to development permits issued by the County but shall not apply to the County's annual budget or its Capital Improvements Program.
- (c) Category-C & D standards shall be the basis for annual reporting but not for development permit review.

policy 10A-1.4 **Levels of Service (LOS):** Skagit County adopts the following LOS standards.

Facility or Service	 Level of Service for Rural Development	 Level of Service for Urban Development
---------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Commented [A144]: These are essentially our existing standards, but represented in a table, which was extracted from our yearly update.



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Facility or Service	 Level of Service for Rural Development	 Level of Service for Urban Development
Streets/Roads	<p>The LOS standard for County roads is C. LOS D is acceptable for all road segments that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have Annualized Average Daily Traffic (AADT) greater than 7,000 vehicles; and • are NOT federally functionally classified as an 09-Local Access Road; and • are designated as a County Freight and Goods Transportation Systems Route (FGTS). <p>The LOS standard for County road intersections is LOS D. Roads must be constructed consistent with latest County Roads Standards.</p>	
Domestic Water	<p><u>Rural water service provided by individual wells, community systems, or extensions of urban water systems shall be designed to meet the rural water supply needs of the rural area users consistent with the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and the Coordinated Water System Plan for rural domestic water supply and fire protection.</u> Urban water service provided by a utility and designed to meet the needs of the designated service areas consistent with the Skagit County or City Comprehensive Plan, the Coordinated Water System Plan, and the designated water utility's Water System Plan shall meet the design criteria of the Coordinated Water System Plan.</p>	<p><u>Urban water service provided by a utility and designed to meet the needs of the designated service areas consistent with the Skagit County or City Comprehensive Plan, the Coordinated Water System Plan, and the designated water utility's Water System Plan shall meet the design criteria of the Coordinated Water System Plan.</u> Rural water service provided by individual wells, community systems, or extensions of urban water systems shall be designed to meet the rural water supply needs of the rural area users consistent with the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and the Coordinated Water System Plan for rural domestic water supply and fire protection.</p>
Stormwater	<p>SCC 14.36.020: rural surface water management systems constructed consistent with SCC Chapter 14.32</p>	<p>SCC 14.36.020: urban surface water management systems constructed consistent with SCC Chapter 14.32</p>
Wastewater	<p>Sewer is generally prohibited in rural areas.</p>	<p>Except as determined by the County Health Department, urban sanitary sewer service shall only be provided in urban growth areas by cities or county-approved special districts.</p> <p>SCC 14.16.215(3)(d) and BVR SAP 6A-4.2: as established in the City of Burlington Comprehensive Sewer Plan.</p>
Fire Suppression	<p>Facilities must maintain a WSRB public protection classification No. 8 or better, and fire flow in accordance with the CWSP Section 4, Minimum Design Standards. See also CPP 1.7.</p>	<p>The County must ensure that adequate fire and emergency medical service facilities are located or planned to accommodate current and future population. See also CPP 1.7.</p>

Commented [A145]: The Planning Commission recommended moving the definitions of urban water service and rural water service to the correct columns for urban and rural services, based on public comment.



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Facility or Service	 Level of Service for Rural Development	 Level of Service for Urban Development
Law Enforcement	SCC 14.28.070(1)(c)(ii):1 officer per 2000 served	SCC 14.28.070(1)(c)(i): 1 officer per 1000 or 100 acres of developed commercial or industrial
Education	Educational and facility standards in district's CFP	Educational and facility standards in district's CFP
Parks and Rec	Facilities must be provided at the following population ratios:	
	Park Classification	LOS Standards (per 1,000 people)
	Regional Parks	11.93 acres
	Community Parks	1.12
	Neighborhood Parks	.19

policy 10A-1.5 **Determining Public Facility Needs** – Facility needs shall be determined by comparing existing facility capacity to adopted levels of service (LOS), national standards, regional averages, or assessments of a particular facility or service demand.

policy 10A-1.6 **Level of Service (LOS) Alternatives** – Factors in addition to LOS for calculating needs include:

- (a) Repair, renovation, or replacement of existing facilities;
- (b) Provision of facilities exceeding LOS;
- (c) Use of non-capital solutions such as programs that reduce needs or substitute for facilities; reduce demands;
- (d) Replacement of traditional LOS;
- (e) Creation of additional capacity within existing facilities; or
- (f) Support for the provision of services at the end users' locations.

policy 10A-1.7 **Prioritizing Improvements** - Capital improvement decisions shall be based on the following criteria:

- (a) Safety – elimination of hazards;



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- (b) Efficiency – reduction of operational costs;
- (c) LOS – achievement of adopted or desired standards;
- (d) Community – satisfaction of expressed desires; and
- (e) Funding – use of non-county funds.

policy 10A-1.8 **Coordination** - All facilities scheduled for construction or improvement in accordance with adopted policies shall be coordinated with any plans of the State, other local governments or junior taxing districts that may have an effect on the County's proposed capital improvement.

policy 10A-1.9 **Review of Other Providers' Plans** - The County shall acknowledge and incorporate the Capital Facilities Plans of other public facility and service providers that are consistent with this Comprehensive Plan.

Financial Feasibility

Goal 10A-2 Provide means to balance needs with available funding.

policy 10A-2.1 **Financial Feasibility** - The estimated costs of identified capital improvements shall not exceed dependable revenue sources that are available to the County.

policy 10A-2.2 **Financial Responsibility** - Funding for capital facilities shall be from both current and future users depending upon the timing of need.

policy 10A-2.3 **Current Needs** - Capital improvements that reduce or eliminate existing deficiencies; some or all of the replacement of obsolete or worn out facilities; and/or pay a portion of the cost of capital improvements needed by future growth shall be funded by user fees, service charges, special assessments and/or taxes.

policy 10A-2.4 **Future Needs** - New growth shall pay its fair share of capital improvements cost necessary to support its demands. This may include voluntary contributions for the benefit of any capital facility, impact fees, mitigation payments, capacity fees, dedications of land, provision of public facilities, and



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future payments of user fees, charges for services, special assessments and taxes. These revenue sources shall not be used to pay for the portion of any public facility that reduces or eliminates existing deficiencies.

- policy 10A-2.5 **Financing Policies – Enterprise Funds.** Capital improvements financed by County enterprise funds shall be financed by:
- (a) debt to be repaid by user fees and charges and/or connection or capacity fees for enterprise services;
 - (b) current assets (i.e., reserves, equity or surpluses, and current revenue, including grants, loans, donations and interlocal agreements), or a combination of debt and current assets.

- policy 10A-2.6 **Financing Policies: Non-enterprise Funds** Capital improvements financed by non-enterprise funds shall be financed from either current assets: (i.e., current revenue, fund equity and reserves), debt, private sources, or a combination thereof. Financing decisions shall include consideration for which funding source (current assets, debt, or both) will be the most cost effective; consistent with prudent asset and liability management; appropriate to the useful life of the project(s) to be financed and efficient use of the County's ability to borrow funds.

- policy 10A-2.7 **Funding by Referendum** - If projects requiring voter approval of funding remain unfunded for more than one year after listing in the CFP, the CFP shall be revised at the next annual amendment to adjust for the lack of such revenues. Adjustments can be made by reducing the level of service for one or more public facilities; increasing the use of other sources of revenue; decreasing the cost, and therefore the quality of some types of public facilities while retaining the quantity of the facilities that is inherent in the level of service standard; decreasing demand for and subsequent use of capital facilities; or by combining any of the above alternatives.

- policy 10A-2.8 **Uncommitted Revenue** - All development permits issued by the County, which require capital improvements that will be financed by sources of revenue which have not been approved or implemented (such as future debt requiring referenda) may be conditioned on the approval or implementation



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of the indicated revenue sources, or the substitution of a comparable amount of revenue from existing sources.

- policy 10A-2.9 **Available Revenue and Capital Facilities to Support Land Use** - The county must finance the six-year Capital Facilities Plan within the its financial capacity. If the projected costs exceed the financial capacity the county may elect to adjust level of service standards; revise the land use element; consider other sources of revenue; or select any combination of the preceding, to achieve a balance between available revenue and capital facilities needs.
- policy 10A-2.10 **Alternative Resources** - The county may consider alternative funding sources such as outside service contracts and joint use of capital facilities to supplement capital funding.
- policy 10A-2.11 **Implementation Schedule Changes** - Amendments to the schedule of capital facilities may be made in conjunction with Comprehensive Plan amendments or may be concurrent with adoption of or amendment to the County budget where the Board determines that such changes are warranted, and adequate public notice is given.
- policy 10A-2.12 **Project Delays** - Project implementation delays that affect concurrency provisions may only be allowed if other projects can substitute for addressing the need, or the adopted LOS can be reduced to be consistent with the shortfall.
- policy 10A-2.13 **Evaluation of Buildings and Space Improvements** - The annual review of the six-year CFP should include the evaluation of buildings and space improvements needed to provide workspace for projected staffing levels.
- policy 10A-2.14 **Ensuring Concurrency** - Impacts of development on capital facilities occur when development is constructed. The county may issue development permits only after it has determined that there is sufficient capacity of Category-A and Category-B public facilities to meet the LOS standards concurrent with the proposed development.
- policy 10A-2.15 **Concurrency Determination** - Concurrency of public facilities for new development may be determined only if the facilities and services are, or will



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be, in place, at the time of development, or if the conditions of the permit are that the facilities or services will be in place, or the County has a binding commitment for the cost of the facility or service.

policy 10A-2.16 **Capital Facilities and Concurrency in Municipal UGAs** – The County plans in partnership with cities on Municipal UGAs, and the Cities must plan and demonstrate the capability of providing services in the future. Until Municipal UGAs are annexed, urban development is not allowed. Capital facility requirements and concurrency within municipal Urban Growth Areas that allow urban development shall be governed by the Capital Facilities Plan and concurrency requirements of the respective municipality.

policy 10A-2.17 **Capital Facilities and Concurrency in Non-municipal UGAs** – Capital facility requirements and concurrency within county-governed, non-municipal UGAs shall be developed for the specific urban growth area using a combination of county- and non-county-provided services at adopted urban levels of service appropriate to the planned urban development.

policy 10A-2.18 **Land Use Compatibility of Category-A and Category-C Capital Facilities** - Public capital facility improvements should be consistent with the adopted land use map and the goals and policies of other elements of this Comprehensive Plan.

policy 10A-2.19 **Other Capital Facilities Plans** - For informational and coordinating purposes the capital facilities plans of cities and special purpose districts, including water purveyors, fire districts, port districts, public utility districts, and others as appropriate are resources for county planning.

Citizen Involvement

Goal 10A-3 Ensure that capital facility planning involves citizens.

policy 10A-3.1 **Public Participation in Capital Facility Proposals** – A public process that informs, notifies and encourages participation in formulating significant capital facility proposals shall be part of the on-going comprehensive plan amendment or budget processes.



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policy 10A-3.2 **Capital Facilities Financing** - Citizens shall have the opportunity to participate in and comment on proposed capital facilities financing.

¹ RCW 36.70A.020(12).

² RCW 36.70A.070(3).

³ "Public facilities" are defined by RCW 36.70A.030(12). See also WAC 365-196-415.

⁴ "Public services" are defined by RCW 36.70A.030(13).

⁶ A capital facilities element that only forecasts future needs and proposed locations and capacities of new capital facilities on a 6-year projection does not comply with the GMA requirement that such a forecast be done on a 20-year cycle. *Cotton v. Jefferson County* 98-2-0017 (Amended FDO, 4-5-99).

⁷ RCW 36.70A.020(12).

⁸ WAC 365-195-070(3).

⁹ See e.g., *Taxpayers for Responsible Government v. City of Oak Harbor*, WWGMHB 96-2-0002 (Final Decision and Order, July 16, 1996); *McVittie v. Snohomish County*, CPSGMHB 99-3-0016c (Final Decision and Order, Feb. 9, 2000).

¹⁰ Id. See also *Oak Harbor*, 96-2-0002 (FDO) (quoting RCW 36.70A.020(12)).

¹¹ WAC 365-195-070(3). See also *Sedro-Woolley v. Skagit County*, WWGMHB 03-2-0013c (Final Decision and Order, June 18, 2004) (finding County's failure to make adequate provision for sewer and water prior to urban development in the UGA did not comply with GMA).

¹² RCW 82.02.050(4).

¹³ RCW 82.02.050(4), last line.

¹⁴ See spending limitation at RCW 82.46.010(2)(b) and definition of "capital project" at RCW 82.46.010(6). Recent legislation also allows the County to spend limited REET 1 revenue on operations and maintenance through 2016. RCW 82.46.010(7).

¹⁵ Only the financing plans for fulfilling those needs may be limited to the next six years.



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Introduction

This ~~profile~~ [chapter](#) includes a summary of analysis and strategies that support the goals and policies in the Economic Development Element. ~~The source of this information is the Skagit County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, maintained by the Skagit Council of Governments. This profile~~ [chapter](#), together with the economic development chapter ~~containing goals and policies~~, fulfills the County’s obligations under the GMA to include an economic development element in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Economic Development Element of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan is a companion to the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* that is maintained by the Skagit Council of Governments. The Council is a regional government body charged



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with a number of activities including the coordination of local economic analysis and planning. The *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* is updated periodically by the Skagit Council of Governments in partnership with the Economic Development Association of Skagit County to address requirement of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the U.S. Economic Development Administration. The Community Economic Development Strategy provides information on trends, needs, problems and opportunities, and identifies strategies for implementing the goals in this Element. ~~The Economic Development Profile contains a summary of that material.~~

Demographic Profile

As of ~~2005~~[2010](#), Skagit County's population was estimated at ~~110,900~~[116,901](#) by the state Office of Financial Management (OFM).[U.S. Census Bureau](#). This represents an average annual increase of ~~1.5~~[3](#)% since the 2000 Census, significantly slower than the 2.6% average annual population growth rate the county realized during the 1990s. The county's largest cities are Mount Vernon (~~over 26,200~~[33,659](#) residents in ~~2000~~[2010](#)), Anacortes (14,600[15,861](#)), Sedro-Woolley (8,700[12,335](#)) and Burlington (6,800). Growth projections for 2036 allocate the highest growth rates to Mount Vernon and Sedro Woolley, and the significantly smaller East County towns of Concrete and Hamilton. Table ~~1~~[10,312](#). Table 1 below shows average annual growth rates [historically by decade and projections going forward through the year 2040](#). The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) [Medium forecast represents a "most likely" scenario and assumes a slightly lower average annual growth rate through the year 2040 than has occurred recently](#).

Table 1 Skagit County Population Trends (~~1980~~ [by Urban Growth Area \(2000\)-2010](#))

Jurisdiction	1980	1990	2000	Average Annual Growth Rate	
				1980-1990	1990-2000
Cities & Towns					
Anacortes	9,013	11,451	14,557	2.4%	2.4%
Burlington	3,894	4,349	6,757	1.1%	4.5%
Concrete	592	735	790	2.2%	0.7%
Hamilton	283	228	309	2.1%	3.1%
La Conner	660	686	761	0.4%	1.0%
Lyman	285	275	409	0.4%	4.0%
Mount Vernon	13,009	17,647	26,232	3.1%	4.0%
Sedro Woolley	6,110	6,333	8,658	0.4%	3.2%
Unincorporated Area	30,292	37,841	44,506	2.3%	1.6%
Skagit County	64,138	79,545	102,979	2.2%	2.6%
State of Washington	4,132,156	4,866,663	5,894,121	1.6%	1.9%



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	Skagit County			Washington State	
	Population	Avg Annual Pop Growth	Avg Annual Growth Rate	Population	10-year Avg Annual Growth Rate
Historical Data					
1970	52,381	103	0.2%	3,413,250	1.8%
1980	64,138	1,176	2.0%	4,132,353	1.9%
1990	79,545	1,541	2.2%	4,866,663	1.6%
2000	102,979	2,343	2.6%	5,894,143	1.9%
2010	116,901	1,392	1.3%	6,724,540	1.3%
OFM Projections					
Low Projection					
2020	112,268	-463	-0.4%	6,650,247	-0.1%
2030	121,918	965	0.8%	7,014,757	0.5%
2040	132,558	1,064	0.8%	7,291,723	0.4%
Medium Projection					
2020	128,249	1,135	0.9%	7,411,977	1.0%
2030	144,953	1,670	1.2%	8,154,193	1.0%
2040	162,738	1,779	1.2%	8,790,981	0.8%
High Projection					
2020	150,196	3,330	2.5%	8,323,502	2.2%
2030	179,930	2,973	1.8%	9,545,795	1.4%
2040	210,828	3,090	1.6%	10,676,166	1.1%

Source: Skagit County OEDP 2000, U.S. Census Bureau, OFM 2012; BERK Consulting, 2014.

Average annual projected growth shares for the 2015- 2036 period are based on the OFM Medium forecast and current population growth is generally expected to slow for all jurisdictions after 2000. Annual projected growth rates from 2000 – 2025 shares for the year 2012, and range from around 1.0% (Anacortes, La Conner, and unincorporated regions of the County) to 2.1% for Mount Vernon and 3. less than 1% for smaller towns to above 15% for larger cities such as Anacortes and Mount Vernon. The Rural area would take a 20% share consistent with the County’s unincorporated urban policy of directing most growth areas (to UGAs). The County average annual growth rate is projected to be 1.5% through 2036. Table 2. Table 1 below shows populations projections through 2036 for Skagit County.

Table 1 Skagit County Population Projections (2025)2036)

Jurisdiction	2000 Population	Location	Adopted 2025 Allocation	Increase by 2025	
				Number	Percent
Cities					
Anacortes	14,647		18,300	3,653	25%
Burlington	8,728	I-5 Corridor	12,000	3,272	37%
Concrete	960		1,350	390	41%



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Hamilton	309	450	141	46%	
La Conner	761	950	189	25%	
Lyman	409	550	141	34%	
Mount Vernon	28,232	I-5 Corridor	47,900	10,568	69%
Sedro-Woolley	10,358	I-5 Corridor	15,000	4,642	45%
Subtotal Cities & UGAs	64,504		96,500	31,996	50%
UGAs					
Swinomish	2,664		3,650	986	37%
Bayview	1,700	I-5 Corridor	5,600	3,900	229%
Subtotal UGAs	4,364		9,250	4,886	112%
Total Urban	68,868		105,750	36,882	54%
Total Rural	34,110		43,330	9,220	27%
Total Skagit County	102,978		149,080	46,102	45%

Source: Growth Management Act Steering Committee, March 2003.

UGA	2012 Population	2012-2015 Population Growth Forecast	2015-2036 Population Growth Forecast	2015-2036 Population Growth Forecast Allocation Percent	2036 Population Growth Forecast Allocation
Anacortes	16,090	308	5,895	16.5%	22,293
Burlington	10,393	71	3,808	10.7%	14,272
Mount Vernon	33,935	1,034	12,434	34.8%	47,403
Sedro-Woolley	12,431	83	4,555	12.7%	17,069
Concrete	873	0	320	0.9%	1,193
Hamilton	310	3	114	0.3%	427
La Conner	898	-1	329	0.9%	1,226
Lyman	441	2	162	0.5%	605
Bayview Ridge	1,812	-1	72	0.2%	1,883
Swinomish	2,489	15	912	2.6%	3,416
Rural (outside UGAs)	38,277	238	7,150	20.0%	45,665
Total	117,949	1,752	35,751	100.0%	155,452

Notes: The figures apply to cities/towns including their associated UGAs.

Source: OFM 2012; BERK Consulting, 2014.

The County's housing costs have responded to its rapid 1990s growth rate, with [continue to climb after bottoming out in 2012](#). Median home values [were](#) rising 88% in that decade (compared with 70% for the state as a whole). Rents have also increased dramatically, more than double the rate of any other I-5 corridor county. This is in part due to the county's low rental costs [are estimated by Zillow to be at \\$225,000 in 1990-November 2014, up 11.9% over 2013](#). However, foreclosures continue to be a factor affecting home values. At 5.6%, the share of delinquent mortgages in the county is less than the national average (6.9%). Median rents are currently at [\\$1,175](#). More information on housing costs is located in the Housing Profile in [Chapter 7](#).



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Incomes have also risen rapidly in comparison. In 2002, [Household income growth rates have slowed even in nominal terms from 2000 to the five year 2009-2013 period. The five year \(2009-2013\) county median household income averaged \\$42,400. This was 93% of the statewide median income, up from 91% in 1990. The largest household income gains were seen in Burlington, La-Conner and Sedro-Woolley. 93% in 2000. Poverty declined](#) [increased](#) in almost all Skagit County jurisdictions during the ~~1990s~~ [2000s](#), with the exception of Concrete, Hamilton and La-Conner. ~~Table 3.~~ [Table 2](#) below shows household income and percentage of households below poverty [level](#).

Commented [A146]: Increases in incomes in nominal terms should not be presented without adjusting for inflation; otherwise the results are misleading. Therefore we removed the increases in income in percentage terms compared to the original element.

Table 2 Household Income & Households Below Poverty Level (1990, 2000), 2009-13)

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income			% HHs Below Poverty Level		
	1990	2000	Increase	1990	2000	Change
Anacortes	\$28,919	\$41,930	45%	11.6%	7.8%	33%
Burlington	\$22,437	\$37,848	69%	12.8%	12.2%	4%
Concrete	\$23,529	\$29,375	25%	13.4%	14.2%	6%
Hamilton	\$19,844	\$31,500	59%	16.1%	24.1%	50%
La-Conner	\$25,054	\$42,344	69%	6.4%	8.8%	37%
Lyman	\$23,125	\$34,318	48%	13.6%	13.4%	1%
Mount Vernon	\$27,022	\$37,999	41%	13.2%	13.2%	0%
Sedro-Woolley	\$23,606	\$37,914	61%	13.7%	11.9%	13%
Skagit County	\$28,389	\$42,381	49%	11.5%	9.5%	17%
Washington State	\$31,183	\$45,776	47%	10.9%	9.8%	10%

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income			% of HH Below Poverty Level				
	1990	2000	2009-2013	1990	2000	2009-2013	Change (1990 to 2000)	Change (2000 to 2009-13)
Anacortes	\$28,919	\$41,930	\$55,116	11.60%	7.80%	9.1%	-33%	17%
Burlington	\$22,437	\$37,848	\$44,740	12.80%	12.20%	19.6%*	-4%	61%
Concrete	\$23,529	\$29,375	\$37,639	13.40%	14.20%	30.9%*	6%	118%
Hamilton	\$19,844	\$31,500	\$42,344	16.10%	24.10%	22.4%*	50%	-7%
La-Conner	\$25,054	\$42,344	\$33,194	6.40%	8.80%	15.0%*	37%	70%
Lyman	\$23,125	\$34,318	\$47,212	13.60%	13.40%	15.8%*	-1%	18%
Mount Vernon	\$27,022	\$37,999	\$48,240	13.20%	13.20%	19.0%	0%	44%
Sedro-Woolley	\$23,606	\$37,914	\$50,121	13.70%	11.90%	16.6%	-13%	39%
Skagit County	\$28,389	\$42,381	\$55,925	11.50%	9.50%	13.4%	-17%	41%
Washington State	\$31,183	\$45,776	\$59,478	10.90%	9.80%	13.5%	-10%	38%

Note: 2009 to 2013 data is a five year average from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey. Data for cities marked with an * is considered unreliable due to high coefficients of variation.

Source: ~~1990~~ U.S. Census Bureau



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Trends

Skagit County remains tied to the natural resource industries that were the basis of its early economic activity – [but](#) today less so than in past years. This natural resource based legacy led to high unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s, an era that saw downturns in the timber products and food processing industries. [While agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting continue to be important, they have experienced declines in terms of annual average employment. The recently released *Skagit County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, Data Supplement 2013* prepared for the SCOG, showed declines \(in terms of number of jobs\) in agriculture and forestry and manufacturing and increases in retail, finance, and wholesale trade. In terms of average annual wages, construction \(\\$58,911 in 2012\), manufacturing \(\\$58,589\) and management of companies and enterprises \(\\$72,031\) are the highest paid sectors.](#)

Employment

Skagit County has diversified since then, with the largest sectors [\(in terms of total employment\)](#) now being retail, government and services. These sectors, along with finance, insurance [manufacturing, and health care](#) and real estate, were also the fastest growing sectors during the 1990s. Jobs increased at an [social assistance. Retail trade employment has yet to return to the 2006 peak level of 7,504 employees and has average annual rate of 3.2% during wages](#) that period, down slightly from the 1980s rate of 3.6%. Both rates were higher than population growth rates. [are \\$11,000 below the county average of \\$39,328.](#)

In ~~December 2004~~ [July 2013](#), county unemployment was ~~6~~ [8.4%](#), above the average for the state and other I-5 corridor counties. However, the gap between unemployment in Skagit County and surrounding geographies has narrowed over the past several years. All non-agricultural employment sectors except wholesale trade had net increases in employment over ~~December 2003~~ [Since 1990, the county has experienced higher unemployment rates than the state with some years over 3% higher.](#)

When compared to surrounding Northern Puget Sound counties, Skagit County's manufacturing base has done well: 3.7% growth from 1990-2001, versus 0.9% for the Northern Puget Sound, and a jobs decline of 1.0% for the I-5 corridor counties. In fact, the only sectors that grew more rapidly in surrounding counties were wholesale trade, construction and mining – also true for all of the I-5 corridor counties.



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The largest factor affecting the Northern Puget Sound region is Boeing, given that transportation manufacturing jobs account for half of all manufacturing jobs in the Seattle metro area. Employee cuts due to the post-September 11 travel downturn and increased competition from Airbus ripple through the state at an estimated rate of 2.8 jobs for every Boeing job. The state's economic recovery is expected to be tied to manufacturing, high technology and international trade activities. Table 4 below shows Skagit County employment trends by industry from 1980 to 2001.

[Manufacturing employment in the county fell by 15% from the 2007 peak to the 2010 trough. From 2010 to 2013, 600 jobs \(13%\) have been recovered. In terms of employment, the three largest manufacturing industries are food processing, machinery, and petroleum and coal products. The county has oil refineries in Anacortes as well as yacht and tugboat builders.](#)

[Government employment is concentrated in local government and public K-12 education.](#)

Table 4 Skagit County Covered Employment Trends by Industry (1980-2001)

Employment Sector	Actual Employment Totals				Average Annual Increase (%)		
	Actual	1980-1990	1990-2001	Change	1980-2001	2001-2013	1980-2013
Agriculture *	2,132	2,817	3,621	1,489	2.8%	2.3%	2.6%
Mining	17	28	34	17	5.1%	1.8%	3.4%
Construction	1,406	2,302	2,815	1,409	5.1%	1.8%	3.4%
Manufacturing	3,777	4,081	5,813	2,036	0.8%	3.3%	2.1%
TCPU **	1,044	1,427	1,704	660	3.2%	1.6%	2.4%
Wholesale Trade	751	1,092	1,300	549	3.8%	1.6%	2.6%
Retail Trade	4,462	7,129	9,300	4,838	4.8%	2.4%	3.6%
FIRE **	661	945	1,298	637	3.6%	2.9%	3.3%
Services	3,218	5,408	8,789	5,571	5.3%	4.5%	4.9%
Government	4,536	5,782	9,296	4,760	2.5%	4.4%	3.5%
Total Employment	22,004	31,011	43,970	21,966	3.5%	3.2%	3.4%

Employment Sector	Actual Employment Totals			Actual Change (1990-2013)	Average Annual Increase (%)		
	1990	2001	2013		1990-2001 (11 years)	2001-2013 (12 years)	1990-2013 (23 years)
Agriculture *	2,817	3,621	2,744	-73	2.3%	-2.3%	-0.1%
Mining	28	34	29	1	1.8%	-1.3%	0.2%
Construction	2,302	2,815	2,690	388	1.8%	-0.4%	0.7%
Manufacturing	4,081	5,813	5,546	1,465	3.3%	-0.4%	1.3%
TCPU **	1,427	1,704	1,667	240	1.6%	-0.2%	0.7%
Wholesale Trade	1,092	1,300	1,224	132	1.6%	-0.5%	0.5%



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Employment Sector	Actual Employment Totals			Actual Change (1990-2013)	Average Annual Increase (%)		
	1990	2001	2013		1990-2001 (11 years)	2001-2013 (12 years)	1990-2013 (23 years)
Retail Trade	7,129	9,300	6,655	-474	2.4%	-2.8%	-0.3%
FIRE **	945	1,298	1,963	1,018	2.9%	3.5%	3.2%
Services **	5,408	8,789	13,899	8,491	4.5%	3.9%	4.2%
Government	5,782	9,296	10,856	5,074	4.4%	1.3%	2.8%
Total Employment	31,011	43,970	47,273	16,262	3.2%	0.6%	1.8%

Note: * A significant part of the increase in agricultural employment may be attributed to extension of unemployment insurance to cover a higher proportion of agricultural workers, an ongoing process that began in the mid-90s.

** TCPU denotes transportation, communications and public utilities; FIRE is an abbreviation for finance, insurance and real estate. Services includes: professional and technical; management of companies and enterprises; administrative and waste; education; health care and social assistance; arts, entertainment, and recreation; accommodation and food services; and other services, except public administration.

Source: State of Washington Employment Security Department. Data is for employees covered by unemployment insurance and excludes proprietors.

Table 5 shows the proposed 2015-2036 job allocations. Countywide employment projections are similar to but greater than Washington State Employment Security Division (ESD) growth rates, reflecting local policy choices that emphasize more family wage jobs and industrial growth. The total growth selected is about 18,850 jobs over 2015-2036. Initial allocations reflect trends in the Rural area at 8%, a share of jobs in Anacortes at 11% reflecting that local jurisdiction's review of employment data and discussions with local businesses, the I-5 Corridor communities' share predominating at 77%, and a smaller Towns & Tribal Land share of 4%.

Table 5 Skagit County 2012-2036 Job Allocations: Planners' Preferred, July 09, 2014

UGA	2012	Net Growth 2012-2015	Resource	Retail	Industrial	Services	GovEdu	Additional Allocation: Northern State	Net Growth 2015-2036	Total 2036	Percent: 2015-2036
Anacortes	8,166	238	0	92	702	806	476	-	2,076	10,480	11.0%
Burlington	9,467	429	0	305	1,141	1,360	710	-	3,516	13,412	18.6%
Mount Vernon	16,024	479	0	201	874	1,936	1,774	-	4,785	21,288	25.4%
Sedro-Woolley	4,594	158	0	46	368	592	566	2,746	4,427	9,179	23.5%
Concrete	347	11	0	9	7	8	85	-	109	467	0.6%
Hamilton	214	8	0	1	47	11	7	-	66	288	0.4%
La Conner	1,053	38	0	26	63	115	125	-	329	1,420	1.7%
Lyman	28	1	0	0	4	3	2	-	9	38	0.0%
Bayview Ridge	1,434	222	0	1	1,436	305	57	-	1,799	3,455	9.5%
Swinomish	925	32	0	9	22	150	109	-	290	1,247	1.5%
Rural	7,749	147	0	47	558	379	463	-	1,447	9,343	7.7%
Total 2015-2036	50,001	1,763	0	737	5,222	5,665	4,374	2,746	18,853	70,617	
Percent	-	-	0.0%	4.6%	32.6%	35.4%	27.3%	14.6%	100.0%	-	100.0%



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Notes: The figures for cities/towns include their associated UGAs. Sector splits are based on Employment Security Division (ESD) projections. ESD mid-term growth rates were applied to 2012 base employment. ESD Projections are for non-farm jobs and exclude proprietors, self-employed, unpaid family or volunteer workers, farm workers, and domestic workers.

Net growth allocations are considered the growth target. Sector splits are for informational purposes only.

Source: ESD 2012; Skagit Council of Governments 2015; BERK Consulting 2014

Agriculture

Agriculture is the county's largest industry, with an estimated 2001 production value of more than \$260 million. While the region is well known for agriculture, as of 2013, it is no longer the county's largest sector. In 2013, agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting accounted for about 4.5% of gross domestic product (GDP).⁴ In 2007, the county's 1,215 farms (operations that produced or sold \$1,000 of products) produced crops and livestock products worth \$256 million. In 2012, this decreased to 1,074 farms with a market value of \$272 million.

Historically, the county has generated 50% of the world's cabbage seed production, upwards of 85% of the nation's beet seed production, and 75% of the world's spinach seed production. Other significant crops include raspberries, strawberries, broccoli, potatoes, tulips, and daffodils. Skagit County ranks fourth in the state for number of dairy cows, and fifth for commercial broiler chickens. More recently, the number of small farms has increased and demand for organic, locally grown food has diversified the mix of products.

Agricultural trends over the last two reported Censuses of Agriculture (1997 and 1992) indicate both continued strength and some threats to the industry. Total acreage in farmland increased over this time period, and while farms grew larger — resulting in a smaller total number of farms — Skagit County farms are still on average far smaller than farms elsewhere in Washington (an average of 131 acres, versus 523). Farmland is also valued much higher, at an average estimated market value of \$4,600 per acre (for both land and buildings), versus the statewide average of \$1,200 per acre.

A troubling trend is the economic loss experienced by 50% of all farms between 1992 and 1997. In 2003, a drop in the market value of milk, below the break-even production price, threatens to prolong economic losses, and will likely result in the closure of some of the county's many dairy farms.

⁴ Employment Security Department. September 2015. Skagit County Profile. Available: <https://fortress.wa.gov/esd/employmentdata/reports-publications/regional-reports/county-profiles/skagit-county-profile>.



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[Less than 2 percent of the county's farms are larger than 1,000 acres and 41 percent of the farms are categorized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as "residential or lifestyle" farms meaning the owner's primary occupation is something other than farming. Skagit County has designated almost 90,000 acres as agricultural lands, though less than that is in full production in any given year.⁵](#)

Forestry [and Fishing](#)

In terms of land area, forest resources are the county's dominant natural resource (over 53% of county land). The county's timber harvest peaked in 1986; the 2001 harvest yield was 62% or 122 million board feet below the 1986 peak. Forest jobs have dropped by a lower percentage (43%) from their peak in 1989; 685 jobs were reported for 2001.

Fishing

Fishing is a third natural resource industry of importance to the county. However, commercial fisheries activity has declined significantly in recent years, due to low market prices, overfishing, and catch restrictions. Restoration of habitat cooperative projects has been on-going and will continue in the future.

[In terms of land area, forest resources take up a large share with 315,000 acres designated as Industrial Forest Lands and another almost 39,000 acres designated as Secondary Forest Lands \(lands that are harvested and also provide buffers between industrial forestry and rural residential areas\). According to the Washington Regional Economic Analysis Project, forestry and fishing experienced the fifth fastest employment decline between 2002 and 2010, falling by 0.5%. This decline in the strength of the forestry sector has occurred over the last two decades with declining harvests on federal and state lands, along with other economic and market factors. While fishing is not as viable as it once was, there are Alaska fishers with home ports in Anacortes and La Conner along with boat builders, service and repair facilities.](#)

Commercial and Industrial Activity

Ensuring sufficient available land for industrial development is a key objective of economic development and of the county's 2002 Growth Management Indicators Report. In 1996—the

⁵ Skagit Conservation District, 5 Year Plan (2009-2014). Available at: http://scc.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Skagit-LRP-2009_2014.pdf



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most recent inventory available — there were 2,256 developable industrial and commercial acres, meaning the land is accessible, served by appropriate infrastructure, and lacking significant environmental constraints.

Primary industrial properties in the county include the Bayview Industrial Park (roughly 240 vacant acres), Bouslog Business Park, Skagit Air Industrial Development, Burlington Hill Industrial Park, the City of Anacortes Industrial Park, the former Crown Pacific Mill site (with up to about 60 acres near Hamilton), and 400 commercial industrial acres in south Mount Vernon. As part of the 2005 Growth Management Update, the county and cities have updated the estimated land demand for commercial and industrial uses to the year 2025. These are described in the Land Use Element.

The Port of Skagit, Skagit County, and the Skagit Council of Governments commissioned the Skagit County Industrial Land Study by ECONorthwest in 2014. The final report (December 2014) found an available supply of about 1,767 acres of land zoned to accommodate industrial uses, and a demand for about 525 to 1,675 acres of buildable land:

Skagit County has 1,767 buildable industrial acres. Of these, 307 acres are in tax lots that are partially vacant, and 1,461 acres are in vacant tax lots. Bayview Ridge, Anacortes, and Mount Vernon have the largest shares of buildable industrial land.

Skagit County will need between approximately 400 to 1,300 acres of land for WTCU [Wholesale, Transportation, Communications and Utilities] employment and between approximately 125 and 375 acres of manufacturing employment.

Various Skagit County governmental and economic development organizations will use the inventory to assess the future need for ready-to-build industrial land in the county, and to serve as the basis of a property search/marketing tool for economic development interests in the County.

The industrial and buildable lands inventory identifies a limited supply of large-lot industrial land to meet the needs for larger development projects in Skagit County. Given its location out of the floodplain and its proximity to transportation and other urban services, the Bayview Ridge UGA is uniquely well suited to meet that need. New employment forecasts approved by the Growth Management Act Steering Committee for county and city planning through their 2016 comprehensive plan updates place a greater emphasis on job growth than has been the case with previous adopted forecasts. One important piece of meeting those job growth projections through 2036 is having an adequate supply of commercial and industrial land, particularly in the large-lot category.



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[Expanding the amount of industrial land at the Bayview Ridge UGA was a key recommendation from the Envision Skagit 2060 Citizen Committee Final Recommendations report \(October 2011\). Those recommendations generated support for the countywide industrial lands inventory and for significant policy changes at Bayview Ridge, which downplayed future residential development in favor of a stronger focus on industrial development. Amendments to the Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan made by the County in 2013 and 2014 increased the amount of land available for development in the Bayview Ridge-Light Industrial zone by nearly 300 acres.](#)

Infrastructure

Skagit County's sewer service is provided by six cities, three communities, and two sewer districts; all entities either have or are in the process of obtaining sufficient capacity through 2015. In 2005, the City of Sedro-Woolley instituted a building moratorium in parts of the city due to insufficient sewer capacity. The county's water supply is also generally good, in terms of groundwater quality. However, many of the county's independent water systems have insufficient fire flows. In 2005, the state Department of Ecology proposed draft rules for "low flow" water wells that may further affect water availability in the rural area. Many of the capital improvement projects listed in the Capital Facilities Element address this issue.

Transportation infrastructure now serves higher traffic levels, especially of passenger vehicles, than in 1990. This increase is associated in part with new residential and commercial development, and the dispersed pattern of that development, as well as increased tourism. The most significant infrastructure needs are investments to I-5 and Highway 20, and increased bridge capacity over the Skagit River.

[Skagit Public Utility District operates the county's largest water system serving an area from Conway to Alger/Lake Samish in the north/south direction and from Fidalgo Island in the west to Marblemount in the east. The cities of Burlington, Mount Vernon and Sedro-Woolley receive the majority of the PUD water. The Skagit PUD provides nine million gallons of water each day to about 65,000 people and maintains nearly 600 pipeline miles. Resource conservation and stewardship are increasing concerns and the PUD is a member of the Skagit Watershed Council actively participating in efforts to protect in-stream flows.](#)

[The Skagit County road system is made up of over 800 miles of roads and 110 bridges. The County also operates the Guemes Island Ferry. As noted in the Transportation Element](#)



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[Technical Appendix Systems Plan](#), the most pressing state highway need is improvements to SR 20 between I-5 and Fredonia; there are needs to improve Cook Road; it is anticipated that existing traffic congestion along Cook Road between I-5 and Green Road will worsen with additional intersection volumes and with increased railroad crossing delays. Other improvements are proposed for non-motorized modes. Other needs include the Deception Pass bridge which is close to capacity, increasing capacity through the Anacortes ferry terminal, and increasing capacity through Burlington and Sedro Woolley.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy planning process included an assessment of factors that form the basis for the overall economic development strategy.

This assessment produced the following conclusions [in the 2003 CEDs as updated based on the 2013 CEDs Data Supplement, US Census Bureau, and State information.](#)

County Strengths

Community characteristics that make Skagit County a good place to do business or invest, as well as to live, work and recreate, also are a good basis from which to achieve the community's vision for economic development. These include:

1. *Diverse natural resources make Skagit County a good place to live and continue to provide economic opportunity.*
2. *Location midway between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C., has placed Skagit County at the heart of the Pacific Northwest's most dynamic growth corridor.*
3. *A skilled local workforce is available to support a wide variety of industrial, commercial and institutional activities.*
4. *Skagit County's commitment to environmental protection provides a quality of life not available elsewhere on the Puget Sound/I-5 corridor.*
5. *Strong interjurisdictional and public-private partnerships have been forged to facilitate coordinated delivery of public services.*



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County Weaknesses

Local conditions may limit the extent or speed with which countywide objectives for economic development can be realized. Six [Several](#) weaknesses or areas of concern are noted:

1. *Housing is becoming less available and affordable as Skagit County faces increasing population growth pressures.*
- ~~2. *Despite strong growth in labor force and the local job base, out commuting has increased.*~~
- ~~3. *Educational attainment and social issues are growing sources of concern in the face of employer demands for a more skilled workforce.*~~
- ~~4. *Physical infrastructure remains inadequate to remedy existing deficiencies and address new needs from growth.*~~
- ~~4.5. *Faced with difficult and complex issues, it is more challenging to build consensus on a common course for the future.*~~
- ~~6. *Recent job growth has been concentrated in the lowest paying industrial sectors.*~~

Commented [A147]: Census data (**Census Transportation Planning Package or CTPP**) shows the share of out-commuting has decreased since 2000.

Commented [A148]: Based on the 2013 CEDs data supplement, this does not appear to be the case

External Opportunities

The following include major characteristics of Skagit County’s location and economic potential that are important in the larger region:

1. *Puget Sound and Pacific Rim markets.*
2. *Footloose business and industrial firms.*
3. *Recreation, convention and resort development.*
4. *Value-added natural resource business.*
5. [High-tech industries, aviation industries, industries related to trade and commerce, and specialty manufacturing.](#)

Commented [A149]: As summarized in Industrial Land Study which draws on CEDs.



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External Threats

Five Conditions or concerns that could undermine local economic stability are identified as posing potentially significant issues for Skagit County's economic development both short and long-term:

1. Federal, state, and local regulatory requirements.
2. Urban sprawl [\(though this can be managed through this Comprehensive Plan\)](#).
3. Federal endangered species listings [of such as Puget Sound Chinook Salmon](#).
4. ~~Passage of Initiative 695 – Reduction of Automobile License Tab Fees.~~
5. ~~National Frozen Foods Relocation.~~
6. ~~5. Declining public revenues, increased costs, and challenging County regional and local service delivery roles, leading to diminishing public sector budgets.~~
7. ~~Potential limitations on rural water rights.~~

Commented [A150]: Provides more information on why public sector budgets are diminishing.

Development Strategy

Skagit County's *development strategy* links the assessment of local economic potentials, goals and objectives with resulting programs, activities and projects described by the *implementation plan*. The development strategy also is an overall guide to future actions, recognizing that specific projects in the implementation plan may change on an annual basis in response to changing needs or opportunities.

This development strategy represents a multi-year course of action for economic development and diversification activities in Skagit County. This *countywide* development strategy also reflects a continuing planning process, which seeks to balance governmental jurisdiction, private business and citizen interests.

This development strategy sets a multi-year course of action for meeting stated economic development goals and objectives as well as countywide planning policies. Growth and development occur in incremental steps, and there are only limited public and private resources to address economic needs and opportunities throughout Skagit County.



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Consequently, implementation of this strategy by governmental jurisdictions, the Skagit Council of Governments, the Economic Development Association of Skagit County, and private and community interests will also occur incrementally.

The ~~2003~~2013 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy ([CEDS Implementation Plan](#)) lists ~~222~~over 230 economic development project proposals. This is more than twice [Implementation Plan shows how local governments are implementing the number of CEDS through capital](#) projects included in the 2000 update. All projects in this listing may be forwarded for further consideration by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), the Washington Community Economic Revitalization Team (WA CERT), [plans](#) and other funding entities. [studies](#).

The County identified ~~five strategic proposals and two joint sponsorship proposals:~~ ([shown below](#)) and 37 local proposals in Tables 6 and 7. [The other projects were submitted by the Skagit Council of Governments and cities.](#)

[Table 6 Skagit County CEDS Joint Sponsorship Implementation Projects 2013](#)

Joint Sponsorship Project	Priority	Cost	Funding
1. Three Skagit River Bridge Corridor Modification and 1-5 Protection Project	Mid Long-Term	\$ 35,000,000	Federal, State Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and Local
2. Flood Protection/Salmon Restoration 2. Transfer Station Sweeper Vector Waste Facility	Mid-Term Immediate (2014)	\$8,345 250,000 Feasibility; \$221,000,000 Design & Construction	Federal, State, Local (WA Ecology Grant)



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Table 7 Skagit County CEDS Local Implementation Projects 2013

3. Northern State Complex Development	Mid Term	\$15,000,000 (Phase 1) Phase 2 to be determined	Federal, State, Local, Private
4. Josh Wilson Road	Long Term	\$920,000	State, Local
5. Peterson Road	Mid Term	\$2,500,000	State, Local
1. South Bayview UGA Sewer Extension & McFarland Road Extension		\$1,946,168	Public Facility Grants, Private
2. WSU Mount Vernon Research & Extension Unit Revitalization		\$5,000,000	Public Facility Grants, WSU, Private

The other projects were submitted by the ports and cities.

The County, the Economic Development Administration, and the Skagit Council of Governments should work together to update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and further engage in monitoring of progress.



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<u>Local County Projects</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Funding</u>
1. Jail	Immediate-mid-term (2014-2017)	\$60,000,000	Local
2. Administration Building Roof Replacement	Immediate (2014)	\$300,000	Local
3. Burlington Complex	Mid-term (2017)	\$150,000	Local (Road Fund)
4. Concrete Shop Building	Mid-term (2016)	\$250,000	Local (Road Fund)
5. Marblemount Shop Complex	Immediate (2014)	\$90,000	Local (Road Fund)
6. Indoor Recreation Facilities	Immediate-mid-term (2014-2016)	\$60,000	Local
7. Outdoor Recreation Facilities	Continuous	\$30,000	Local
8. Indoor Recreation Facilities	Continuous	\$30,000	Local
9. Skagit Valley Playfields/ Dream Field	Continuous	\$60,000	Local
10. Clear Lake Beach	Continuous	\$350,000	Local
11. Howard Miller Steelhead Park	Continuous	\$750,000	Local
12. Northern State Recreation Area	Continuous	\$450,000	Local
13. System wide Park Amenities and Infrastructure	Continuous	\$600,000	Local
14. Cascade Trail	Continuous	\$525,000	Local
15. Padilla Bay Shore Trail	Continuous	\$150,000	Local
16. Centennial Trail	Continuous	\$350,000	Local
17. Highway 20 Trail	Continuous	\$100,000	Local
18. Pressentin Park	Immediate-long-term (2015-2019)	\$50,000	Local
19. Fair	Continuous	\$325,000	Local
20. Bayview Ridge	Continuous	\$95,000	Local
21. Salmon Beach Conveyance Improvements	Immediate (2014-2015)	\$300,000	Local
22. Similk Golf Course Drainage System Retrofit	Immediate (2014)	\$300,000	Local
23. Biz Point Conveyance and Detention Improvements	Immediate-mid-term (2015-2017)	\$1,500,000	Local
24. Yokeko Drive Conveyance	Immediate	\$300,000	Local



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<u>Local County Projects</u>	<u>Priority</u>	<u>Cost</u>	<u>Funding</u>
<u>Improvement</u>	<u>(2014)</u>		
<u>25. Marihugh Pond</u>	<u>Immediate-mid-term (2015-2016)</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>26. Edison Slough Culvert Replacement - future</u>	<u>Immediate (2014-2015)</u>	<u>\$350,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>27. Bow Drainage Improvements</u>	<u>Immediate (2015)</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>28. Colony Creek Driveway Crossing</u>	<u>Immediate (2014-2015)</u>	<u>\$125,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>29. W. Gilligan Rd. / Salmon Creek</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$15,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>30. Regional Street Waste Disposal Facility</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$25,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>31. Dairy Creek Culvert Replacement</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$30,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>32. North Similk Pump Improvements</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$50,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>33. Edison Flapgate</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$5,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>34. Sky Ridge Drainage Correction</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>35. Gibraltar Slide Repair</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>36. Hamilton Cemetery Road Drainage Correction</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$100,000</u>	<u>Local</u>
<u>37. Gardiner Pump Repair</u>	<u>Immediate (2014)</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>	<u>Local</u>

GMA Mandate

The GMA goals are highly interrelated with respect to economic prosperity. For example, transportation is crucial to ensuring the free flow of goods and employees, as discussed further in the Transportation Element. The two GMA goals related most directly to Economic Development are:

- Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this



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state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities. (Goal 5)

- *Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses. (Goal 8)*

These goals led to the following Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this Element:

- *The development of environmentally sensitive industries shall be encouraged. (CPP 5.1)*
- *Home occupations that do not significantly change or impact neighborhood character shall be permitted. (CPP 5.2)*
- *Economic diversity should be encouraged in rural communities where special incentives and services can be provided. (CPP 5.3)*
- *Commercial and industrial activities directly related to local natural resource production may be allowed in designated natural resource areas provided they can demonstrate their location and existence as natural resource area dependent businesses. (CPP 5.4)*
- *A diversified economic base shall be encouraged to minimize the vulnerability of the local economy to economic fluctuations. (CPP 5.5)*
- *Commercial, industrial and residential acreage shall be designated to meet future needs without adversely affecting natural resource lands, critical areas, and rural character and life styles. (CPP 5.6)*
- *Tourism, recreation and land preservation shall be promoted provided they do not conflict with the long term commercial significance of natural resources and critical areas or rural life styles. (CPP 5.7)*
- *Agriculture, forestry, aquatic resources and mineral extraction shall be encouraged both within and outside of designated resource lands. (CPP 5.8)*



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- *The primary land use within designated forest resource lands shall be commercial forestry. Residential development shall be strongly discouraged within designated forest resource lands. (CPP 5.9)*
- *Lands within designated agricultural resource areas should remain in large parcels and ownership patterns conducive to commercial agricultural operations and production. (CPP 5.10)*
- *Skagit County shall conserve agriculture, aquaculture, forest and mineral resources for productive use by designating natural resource lands and aquatic resource areas, where the principal and preferred land uses will be long term commercial resource management. (CPP 5.11)*
- *Value added natural resource industries shall be encouraged. (CPP 5.12)*
- *Skagit County shall increase the availability of renewable resources and encourage the maximum attainable recycling of non-renewable resources. (CPP 5.13)*
- *Commercial and industrial activities directly related to or dependent on local aquatic resource areas should be encouraged in shoreline areas provided they are shoreline dependent and/or related. (CPP 5.14)*
- *The Comprehensive Plan shall support and encourage economic development and employment to provide opportunities for prosperity (CPP 5.15)*

Countywide Planning Policies for natural resource industries are included in the Natural Resource Lands Element.

The GMA was amended in 2002 to require local comprehensive plans to contain economic development elements. While this requirement will not be enforced until state funding is made available, Skagit County has included within the Comprehensive Plan an element consistent with the following GMA language:

An economic development element establishing local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life. The element shall include: (a) A summary of the local economy such as population, employment, payroll, sectors, businesses, sales, and other information as appropriate; (b) a summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy defined as the commercial and industrial sectors and supporting factors such as land use, transportation, utilities, education, work force, housing, and natural/cultural resources; and (c) an identification of policies, programs, and projects to foster economic growth and development and to address



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future needs.

Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies are supported by the analyses and strategies included in the Economic Development Profile [narrative above](#).

Commented [A151]: Minor changes are made below to put the policy format into verb first format that predominates.

Employment

Goal 11A Encourage the creation and retention of diverse employment opportunities.

Industry

Goal 11A-1 Encourage resource-based industries as a major part of Skagit County's economy.

Living Wage Jobs

Goal 11A-2 Encourage the creation and retention of living wage jobs to meet the needs and demands of Skagit County households.

Entrepreneurs

Goal 11A-3 Encourage diverse job options and entrepreneurial opportunities for persons interested in full-time and part-time employment or desiring to own their own business.

Skill Building

Goal 11A-4 Encourage educational opportunities for residents of all ages to develop and upgrade skills required for employment, advancement and entrepreneurship.



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- policy 11A-4.1 Encourage local business investments that provide economic and employment opportunities for all county residents.
- policy 11A-4.2 Work cooperatively with local jurisdictions, [the Skagit Council of Governments](#), the Economic Development Association of Skagit County, [the ports of Skagit and Anacortes](#), and federal and state agencies to promote economic development and employment opportunities consistent with countywide economic development policies.
- policy 11A-4.3 Accommodate home-based businesses that are compatible with the character of adjoining properties and neighborhoods.
- policy 11A-4.4 Cooperate with education providers and employers to ensure the availability of facilities and programs necessary to meet the needs of K-12, college, vocational and continuing education levels.

Commented [A152]: SCOG is the keeper of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Commercial and Industrial Development

Goal 11B Economic Viability: Promote the continued economic viability of Skagit County's natural resources and encourage related value-added production of agricultural, fishery, and forestry resources.

Diversity

Goal 11B-1 Complement Skagit County's natural resource industries by encouraging a diversified base of non-resource businesses and industries.

Capacity

Goal 11B-2 Plan for sufficient buildable industrial lands with access to infrastructure and services to meet the evolving needs of industry.



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Redevelopment

Goal 11B-3 Encourage the re-use of existing industrial sites that have potential for reuse or redevelopment.

Telecommunications

Goal 11B-4 Encourage low cost, easily accessible, state of the art telecommunications services throughout the county with linkages to nearby counties that are economically tied to Skagit County.

Recruitment

Goal 11B-5 Promote business recruitment and development of firms that will diversify the local economy and compete effectively in local, national and international markets.

Retention

Goal 11B-6 Promote the retention and expansion of existing local businesses as a first priority while also promoting the start-up of new businesses particularly those providing living wage jobs.

Marine Industry

Goal 11B-7 Recognize the importance of the marine-based economy of Skagit County in the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

Upper Skagit Valley

Goal 11B-8 Strive to stimulate the economy of the upper Skagit Valley through protection of resource-based industry, compatible tourism, and community development strategies.

policy 11B-8.1 [Protect Long long](#) term commercially significant natural resource industries and operations shall be protected from encroachment by incompatible uses



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policy 11B-8.2 In cooperation with the cities, ports, tribes, and users, conduct, and maintain an inventory of buildable lands suitable for urban and rural commercial and industrial development.

policy 11B-8.3 Locate lands Lands designated for industrial use ~~should be located~~ where they will have ready access to appropriate infrastructure, ~~where~~ environmental constraints will be minimized, and ~~where~~ permitting can be expedited.

policy 11B-8.4 Ensure lands Land designated as industrial ~~shall accommodate~~ a mix of uses, and ~~includes~~ public and private ownership consistent with market demands and trends.

policy 11B-8.5 Maintain cooperative working relationships with local, tribal, regional, statewide, federal and international organizations that pursue economic development activities consistent with the goals and objectives of this economic development element.

policy 11B-8.6 Participate in seeking grant funding for the following:

- (a) Clean-up of contaminated sites;
- (b) Re-use and redevelopment of infill sites;
- (c) Improvement of infrastructure to support economic development; and
- (d) Strategic investment in business recruitment and expansion.



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Visitor Services

Destination

Goal 11C Support Skagit County as a visitor destination by preserving and enhancing the unique qualities of both rural areas and urban communities.

Visitor Opportunities

Goal 11C-1 Promote visitor opportunities that do not negatively impact the rural lifestyles of Skagit County residents, critical areas, or long-term commercial significance of natural resources.

Tourism Attraction

Goal 11C-2 Promote the county's excellent regional location, lodging and retail opportunities and local public transportation options as attractions for tourism.

policy 11C-2.1 Encourage the establishment and maintenance of a countywide convention and visitors' bureau. The bureau would support city efforts to develop and market visitor services and promote of the county's regional location, amenities, and services.

policy 11C-2.2 Through adopted parks, transportation, and community plans, implement strategic efforts to develop and maintain scenic open space and cultural and heritage resources that are attractive to residents and visitors alike.

policy 11C-2.3 Site visitor Visitor facilities should be sited at locations that can be served with necessary public infrastructure and are compatible with surrounding uses.

policy 11C-2.4 Ensure that plans Plans for rural area visitor facilities and services shall do not conflict with rural lifestyles, critical areas, and the long-term commercial



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significance of natural resources, and shall be are coordinated with appropriate local, state, and federal agencies.

Human Services

Service Support

Goal 11D Support a full range of human and social services necessary to encourage a strong local economy.

Human Service Opportunities

Goal 11D-1 Encourage the linkage of job creation needs and opportunities with human and social services including health care, education, transportation, employment assistance, and welfare.

Access to Services

Goal 11D-2 Encourage sufficient sites for human and social services, and improved access to those services, to meet the needs of Skagit County employees and employers.

Facilities

Goal 11D-3 Support development and maintenance of human and social service facilities through funding decisions and land use codes.



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Conservation and Economic Development

Quality of Life

Goal 11E Encourage economic development that supports sustainable natural resource industry, protects valued open space and environmental quality and enhances Skagit County's overall quality of life.

policy 11E-1.1 Encourage businesses to recycle, use, or manufacture products made from recycled materials and use innovative processes that conserve natural resources and protect or enhance environmental quality.

policy 11E-1.2 [As appropriate, use the](#) community planning process may be used to address conflicts between development and environmental objectives. These processes shall involve participants representing all interests and viewpoints.

Transportation and Economic Development

Transportation Improvements

Goal 11F Acknowledge economic development needs in formulating recommendations for improvements to transportation facilities and services.

Infrastructure

Goal 11F-1 Work with ports, economic development organizations, cities, transportation providers, and agencies to provide the infrastructure necessary to facilitate a sustainable county economy.

Marine Economy

Goal 11F-2 Recognize the importance of the marine-based economy of Skagit County in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).



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Ports

Goal 11F-3 Support the economic and job-creating activities of the port districts to ensure their long-term viability.

policy 11F-3.1 Encourage the Washington State Ferry System to maintain ferry services from Anacortes to the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island, B.C., in order to provide for commerce and tourist trade in and through Skagit County.

policy 11F-3.2 Support the Port of [Skagit in its economic development activities across the County, particularly at the Skagit Regional Airport and North Cascades Gateway Center \(the former Northern State Hospital campus\) areas, and the Port of Anacortes](#) in its efforts to more fully utilize the Port's [its](#) deep draft marine terminal for trade, commerce and related economic development.

policy 11F-3.3 Strive to keep Highway 20 open to eastern Washington throughout the year, if economically feasible, in order to stimulate the economy of the economically distressed upper Skagit Valley.

Business and Investment Climate

Public-Private Partnerships

Goal 11G Foster a public-private cooperative partnership involving government and tribal organizations through the Skagit Council of Governments, and private stakeholders through the Economic Development Association of Skagit County, to support diverse business operations and investments throughout Skagit County.

Public Investment

Goal 11G-1 Encourage public investments aimed at maintaining a high quality of life and attracting business investment.



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Anticipate Change

Goal 11G-2 Recognize the need for flexibility in promoting economic development to be responsive to unforeseen or changing economic conditions and community expectations.

Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal 11G-3 Implement permitting procedures that are understandable, predictable and can be accomplished within time periods that meet or exceed statutory requirements. Procedures for permitting that require approvals of both the County and other jurisdictions should be consistent.

Fiscal Impact

Goal 11G-4 Encourage economic development that creates a net positive fiscal impact for Skagit County.

policy 11G-4.1 Link County capital facility planning and programming to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) to sustain a high quality of life and attract business investment.

policy 11G-4.2 Monitor and evaluate constraints to economic development caused by regulations and permitting procedures and implement revisions, if necessary, ~~at least every seven years as part of the GMA update~~ [as part of annual or periodic comprehensive plan and development regulation updates](#). Coordinate with other (federal and state) permitting agencies to simplify procedures.

policy 11G-4.3 Maintain a growth management indicators monitoring program to measure progress in economic development initiatives in coordination with the Skagit Council of Governments and the Economic Development Association of Skagit County. The indicators program report should be updated at least every 3 ½ years to coincide with the ~~seven-year~~ [periodic](#) GMA update schedule.



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- policy 11G-4.4 Consider as part of the County’s budgeting process outside funding sources such as grants, as well as careful fiscal needs analyses in order to ensure that tax revenue generation is competitive with other jurisdictions.
- policy 11G-4.5 Support the work program of the Skagit Council of Governments to update the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy as least every three years to identify needs and solutions for transportation, human services, environmental protection, community development and other elements that support improvements to the location economy
- policy 11G-4.6 Implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to build local capacity for sustained economic development.



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Putting the Plan into Action

The Skagit County Comprehensive Plan provides a legally recognized framework for making decisions about land use in the unincorporated areas of Skagit County. It is intended to aid a broad range of public and private users, including property owners, the general public, community groups, developers, Skagit County officials, and other government agencies in making choices and decisions that may affect the quality of life in Skagit County. Responsibility for putting the Plan’s policies into action relies on an understanding of several characteristics of the Comprehensive Plan:



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It is a declaration of the community’s vision, standards and expectations for future growth and development. The Plan’s general goals and policies inform the purpose and intent of more specific land use and development regulations, and contribute to a more stable and predictable setting for economic and community development.

It guides the development of additional community plans and implementing regulations. The Plan is the framework for more detailed plans and regulations for Rural Villages and other limited areas of more intensive rural development. These more detailed community plans and regulations consider specific local circumstances that may be unique to certain areas of unincorporated Skagit County.

It guides the provision of public facilities and services by integrating land use, infrastructure and human service delivery. The Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for decisions about public facilities and services (such as where facilities should be located to support planned growth). The Plan directs public spending to areas where growth is targeted.

It provides regional coordination and consistency with other jurisdictional planning efforts. The intent is that other public agencies (local, regional, state, federal, and tribal), in cooperation with Skagit County, use the Comprehensive Plan in conjunction with the Countywide Planning Policies as a regional perspective or guidepost when developing other plans and growth policies, and when making project decisions.

It allows for citizen participation and involvement. Comprehensive planning is an evolving process which allows for periodic review and updates in response to changing community goals and vision as articulated by citizens, businesses, and interested organizations.

It protects citizen property rights while achieving countywide goals and policies. Implementation of the comprehensive plan is carried out through a process that assures regulatory or administrative actions do not result in unconstitutional taking of private property. The land use plan and implementing zoning provide reasonable use of private properties. A permit process system implements the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that there is consideration of applications in a timely manner. Comment and appeal procedures are included as appropriate to provide avenues for public and property owner input.

Commented [A153]: Language added to address RCW 36.70A.370 to ensure proposed regulatory or administrative actions do not result in any unconstitutional taking of private property.



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Implementation Themes

The County's role in the overall regional growth management implementation process involves several major activities, all of which are discussed further in various sections of the Plan:

- **City/County coordination:** *Within an agreed-upon framework, the County works with the cities and towns to address growth and development in the Urban Growth Areas through the coordination of public infrastructure investment and permitting activities, and the forecasting and monitoring of growth to ensure that adequate land is available for future urban needs.*
- **Regional economic development:** *The County is a partner with the Skagit Council of Governments and the Economic Development Association of Skagit County in maintaining a program for retaining and attracting businesses that generate revenue and jobs.*
- **Regional transportation planning:** *The County is a partner in the Skagit Council of Governments Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Metropolitan Planning Organization, charged with planning for public investment in highways and other facilities.*
- **Community planning:** *The County works with the various rural communities within unincorporated Skagit County to establish planning priorities and timelines for developing more detailed community plans.*
- **Monitoring:** *Within the limits of available funding and technology Skagit County monitors and collects new data, or acquires existing data to establish meaningful benchmarks and indicators to assist in planning decisions. Public input plays a significant role in this process.*

Periodic Review of the Comprehensive Plan

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must retain the broad perspectives articulated by the community, and remain consistent with the intent of the Growth Management Act. Over time, changes in law, population and growth trends, economic conditions, and public



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perspectives and opinions may change. Periodic review of the Comprehensive Plan ensures, to the extent possible, that the Plan reflects and acts upon these changing circumstances.

The Comprehensive Plan is reviewed and amended periodically, according to several review cycles:

- ~~Seven-year~~Periodic Urban Growth Area Review: ~~Beginning in 2006, and at least every 7 years thereafter~~On a periodic basis established by the Growth Management Act, the County and cities and towns are to review designated UGA boundaries, densities, and patterns of urban growth, and revise the boundaries and permitted densities as needed to accommodate the urban growth projected in Skagit County for the succeeding 20 years.
- ~~Seven-year~~Periodic Update: ~~Beginning in 2005, and every 7 years thereafter~~On a periodic basis established by the Growth Management Act, the Comprehensive Plan, the land-use/zoning map, and implementing development regulations are to be reviewed, and if needed, revised to ensure they comply with the Growth Management Act. This review incorporates new data, changes in law, or changes in local circumstances that come to light through early and continuous public participation.
- Annual Amendments: Incremental changes to the Comprehensive Plan may be necessary to address unforeseen circumstances, or to re-balance land-use designation criteria for a particular parcel or area of land. The Comprehensive Plan may only be amended once annually, except for exceptions allowed by the Growth Management Act.

Commented [A154]: The requirement was every 7 years; now it's every 8 years; the proposed change to "periodic" will accommodate any future changes in state law regarding frequency of required UGA and Comp Plan updates.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

General Requirements

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must be supported by findings from monitoring of growth management and economic indicators, changes in law, omissions or errors, or declared emergency. Comprehensive Plan amendments may be initiated by the County or by other entities, organizations, or individuals according to the process and procedures specified in Skagit County Code.

The docketing cycle for these amendments is initiated by an official notice that specifies the requirements for public participation; submittal requirements; procedures for determining



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Seven-year Periodic Urban Growth Area Review

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the docket of amendment proposals to be reviewed in a given amendment cycle; and the steps that will be taken to reach the final amendment decision.

Comprehensive Plan amendments will be considered no more frequently than once per year, except for the adoption or amendment of a shoreline master program pursuant to RCW 90.58, the initial adoption of a community plan (subarea plan), or other exceptions as may be allowed by law. [exceptions allowed by RCW 36.70A.130](#). The County may consider adopting amendments more frequently than once per year if a declared emergency exists. An emergency amendment may only be adopted if the Board of County Commissioners finds that the amendment is necessary to address an immediate situation of federal, state, countywide, or local concern, as opposed to a personal emergency on the part of the applicant or property owner, and if the situation cannot adequately be addressed by waiting until the annual comprehensive plan amendment process.

The boundaries separating the Urban Growth Area, Rural and Natural Resource Lands designations are intended to be long-term and unchanging. Amendments or changes to natural resource lands and critical area designations should be based on changes in law or local circumstances, errors in designation, or new information on natural resource lands or critical areas.

Seven-year [Periodic](#) Urban Growth Area Review

Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) include incorporated cities and towns, combined with whatever surrounding unincorporated area is necessary to accommodate urban growth projected to occur over 20 years. ~~Beginning in 2006, and every 7 years thereafter,~~ Skagit County and its cities and towns must [periodically](#) assess the respective Urban Growth Area boundaries and densities, and revise their comprehensive plans and development regulations as necessary to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in Skagit County for the succeeding 20-year period.

Skagit County and the cities and towns periodically review and update a 20-year population and employment forecast. Timing of this update may be adjusted as necessary to best utilize U.S. Census and Washington State Office of Financial Management data, and for the convenience and benefit of other update cycles requiring such data.

Procedures, timelines, and fees for requesting an amendment to an Urban Growth Area are specified in Skagit County Code. Generally, Skagit County requires that:



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Seven-year Periodic GMA Update

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- *Proposals to amend an Urban Growth Area boundary may generally only be accepted once every 7 years every periodic update cycle. More frequent amendments to Urban Growth Areas may be requested by a city or town to address errors or omissions, or in response to a declared emergency based on a list of exceptions in Skagit County Code.*
- *Proposals must be submitted to Skagit County at least six months in advance of the regular annual amendment deadline specified in Skagit County Code. Skagit County will transmit petitions to the respective cities and towns for their review. Urban Growth Area boundary amendments are due by the same deadline as all other annual Comprehensive Plan amendments, and may only be submitted by the jurisdiction (county, city, town or tribe) whose UGA is proposed to be modified.*
- *Applicants for Urban Growth Area boundary changes must demonstrate compliance and consistency with the Land Use Element requirements for designating Urban Growth Areas.*

Commented [A155]: Ensures consistency with existing code.

Seven-year Periodic GMA Update

The update of the Comprehensive Plan, map and development regulations is made official through legislative action of the Board of County Commissioners. However, the planning process leading up to the Board’s action is ongoing – the next cycle beginning shortly after the last one ends.

Comprehensive Plan policies guide the establishment of more detailed facility plans, regulations, and programs, which may require ~~periodic~~ updates and review according to timelines that may not always coincide with the ~~7-year~~ GMA-required periodic update. Between each ~~7-year~~ periodic update, new laws and policies, legal decisions, implementation measures, data and other information may raise the need to amend or update certain portions of the Comprehensive Plan, the land-use/zoning map, development regulations, or supporting plans and studies to maintain consistency and relevance.

Amendments that occur between the ~~7-year~~ periodic updates, in effect, keep the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations continuously up to date. At the end of the ~~7-year~~ periodic update cycle, these various amendments are reviewed and incorporated into the official action by the Board of County Commissioners to affirm that the Plan and regulations are updated. Any actions that may be further necessary, but cannot be completed by the end of the ~~7-year~~ periodic update cycle, are identified in a work program for the succeeding ~~7~~ subsequent years.



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Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments

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The final year of a 7-year [GMA-required periodic](#) update cycle may be combined with the coinciding regular annual amendment cycle to ensure cumulative review, consistency and convenience. Flexible submittal requirements, suspension of application fees and other measures may be used during this 7th [periodic update](#) year to encourage broad public participation. Such flexible requirements may not supersede State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioner public notification and other procedural requirements and deadlines. Depending on staffing and budget constraints, Skagit County may choose to not initiate other major planning projects or programs during this final year of the update cycle.

Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments

The Comprehensive Plan may be amended once annually (with exceptions as allowed by law) to ensure consistency with development regulations and supporting plans, such as community, facility and other functional plans. Amendments may also be necessary to address changes in local circumstances, and to rebalance existing land-use designation criteria for a specific parcel or group of parcels in light of new information.

Figure 1 outlines the general steps in amending the Comprehensive Plan. These steps are discussed below, and are described in more detail in Skagit County Code.

Figure 1 – Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process



General Amendment Process Requirements

- **Fees.** *The petitioner shall pay the application fees specified in an adopted fee schedule, unless waived by the Board of County Commissioners during the 7-year [periodic update](#).*
- **Petition.** *The petitioner shall submit a written application, on forms provided by the County, containing appropriate amendatory language and, if applicable, a map showing the proposed change. The petitioner shall also address how the proposal is consistent with Comprehensive Plan policies or land-use designation criteria.*
- **Timing.** *Petitions shall be submitted by the date specified in the docketing announcement. Petitions received after the deadline will be processed with proposed amendments in the following year.*



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- **Docketing for Further Consideration.** *According to procedures and timelines specified in Skagit County Code, the Department will evaluate each complete application to determine whether the proposal, if included in the annual docket for further consideration, would:*
 - -adversely affect the County’s budget;
 - require additional amendments to policies or regulations;
 - be more appropriately addressed as part of a separate work program;
 - or not be approvable due to some legal or procedural flaw in the proposal.
- *Following the Department’s recommendation on these considerations, the Board of County Commissioners will conduct a public meeting or hearing to consider whether or not to include each proposal in the year’s docket of proposed amendments. A decision by the Board to include or exclude an amendment from the annual docket is final, procedural only, and does not constitute a decision by the Board as to whether the amendment will ultimately be approved. Applicants whose proposals were not included in the docket are free to resubmit the same or modified proposal in a future year’s amendment cycle.*
- **Environmental Review.** *If the Board approves for the docket the amendment proposal, the petitioner shall submit an environmental checklist, and fees as specified in an adopted fee schedule, within a time specified in Skagit County Code. After receipt of the environmental checklist, fees, and supporting documentation the County will issue an environmental threshold determination on the proposed amendment(s). If the threshold determination finds that there may be significant adverse environmental impacts, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement may be required.*
- **Process.** *Amendment docketing, processing, public and agency review and participation, notification, public hearings, and final actions shall be as specified in Skagit County Code, an in accordance with other local and state laws, and this Comprehensive Plan.*



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Monitoring Plan Effectiveness

The effectiveness or success of the Comprehensive Plan is measured or monitored in several ways, including through the collection and evaluation of land use development trends and policies. Certain data, such as population, age, family size, cost and number of housing units, school enrollments, building permits, and others, contribute to an understanding of how these factors relate to public policies and programs.

Regular collection, evaluation, and reporting of data assists County policy- and decision-makers, and the public, in identifying whether the Plan's policies are furthering their intended goals, and whether programs and public services are meeting the public's needs. When measured over time such data can become "indicators" that may signal changing trends, or reveal successes or needed adjustments in comprehensive plan policies.

The County is committed to working collaboratively with cities and towns to collect, monitor and evaluate meaningful and mutually beneficial data, particularly in the sizing and density of UGAs. The County is also committed to continued cooperation with other jurisdictions in data sharing, and maintaining a current database of growth management information.

In 2002, Skagit County initiated the Growth Management Indicators (GMI) reporting program ~~in 2002~~, resulting in a report describing the status of the Comprehensive Plan's performance up to 2001. The GMI report ~~is~~ was intended to be renewed periodically to provide information in advance of each ~~7-year~~ periodic GMA update cycle. The GMI reporting program ~~is~~ was based on or ~~seeks~~ sought to carry out the following:

- *Measure progress towards meeting the goals and objectives of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan.*
- *Encourage public participation in the development and review of Review of the growth management indicators data.*
- *Document data of countywide concern, including but not limited to: land capacity, density, permit processing, housing costs, economic strength and diversity, natural resource consumption, solid waste, transportation, open space, and water quality.*
- *Consider growth management indicators data as part of the County's annual budget review process.*
- *Identify alternatives to achieving those goals, objectives, or policies that are not demonstrating progress toward their implementation.*



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- *Maintain a status report regarding the implementation of policies, including policies that have been implemented successfully.*

[The County did not have resources to continue the Growth Management Indicators reporting program by itself. However, the County and other jurisdictions are now proposing to establish an annual land use monitoring program in coordination with the Growth Management Act Steering Committee. The program will seek to accomplish many of the same goals as the County’s Growth Management Indicators Program initiated in 2002.](#)

Community Plans

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan envisions a hands-on approach to how the Plan and its development regulations will be applied at the community scale. Community plans exemplify how the community vision statements, goals, objectives and policies of this Comprehensive Plan are applied to detailed and specific conditions. Community plans may indicate specific land use designations, appropriate densities, and the design standards that should apply in community planning areas. Preserving and building community character while ensuring an efficient and predictable development approval process is a central theme.

Subarea or community planning may be considered under the provisions of the Growth Management Act provided the community plan is consistent with the comprehensive plan (RCW 36.70A.080). During the development of the countywide comprehensive plan, many rural communities and residents expressed an interest in developing their own community plans. Policies within this element relate to administrative processes: initiation and development of community plans, and the relationship between each community development plan and the Comprehensive Plan.

Development of this chapter was guided in particular by the following GMA Planning Goal: “Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.”

This Goal, in the context of all of the GMA Planning Goals, led to the following Countywide Planning Policy that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this chapter:



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- *Skagit County shall encourage citizen participation throughout the planning process as mandated by state statute and codes for environmental, land use, and development permits. (CPP 11.5)*
- *Skagit County shall utilize broad based citizen advisory committees to participate and assist in the development of the Comprehensive Plan Elements, sub-area plans, and functional plans. (CPP 11.6)*

Function of Community Plans

The community planning process seeks to enhance community values and assure sensible growth and development. Community plans result from partnerships uniting the County, other jurisdictions, and citizens of a planning area. A community plan puts into action the general policies of the Comprehensive Plan at a much finer scale and level of detail.

Community plans may address issues at the local level that are not covered in a general comprehensive plan. Patterns of land use, design, traffic circulation, and services expressed within the community plan are a function of local economic, social, physical health, safety and welfare issues of the people who live and work within the community planning area.

Community plans also consider compatibility and consistency with surrounding land uses and jurisdictions. Community plans focus on enhancing individual communities in a manner that benefits the entire county. Citizens decide what they want to nurture and what they want to change at a level that they are knowledgeable about and comfortable relating to.

The Comprehensive Plan serves as an "umbrella" document and provides a foundation upon which community plans are developed. Community plans may vary considerably depending upon local issues, problems, and opportunities. They will generally include mapping, policy, and capital facilities amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Consistency Between the Comprehensive Plan and Community Plans

Community plans must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Growth Management Act, and other federal and state laws. They may explore areas where flexibility exists in the application of Comprehensive Plan policies to a given community, or where the Comprehensive Plan is silent on an issue. Ensuring consistency requires analyzing proposed community plans against each policy of the Comprehensive Plan. If a proposed community plan or policy conflicts with the Comprehensive Plan, the proposed plan or policy is



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inconsistent. Modifications would need to be made to any such community plan, or to the Comprehensive Plan, through the amendment process described earlier in this chapter.

Completed Community Plans

Alger. The Alger Community Plan was developed with the assistance of a Citizen Advisory Committee and extensive public outreach and was adopted in December 2008. Some of the plan recommendations are to:

- Maintain the rural character of the area with modest additions to the Rural Freeway Service and Rural Intermediate land use designations;
- Maintain and enhance the open space areas;
- Minimize the impact of large-scale special uses;
- Increase opportunities for small-scale businesses in the Alger Rural Village.

Bayview Ridge. The Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, originally adopted in 2006, was most recently updated in November 2014. The 3,586-acre non-municipal Urban Growth Area is located approximately one mile west of the City of Burlington. The 2014 update to the plan, development regulations and land use designations expanded the area within the UGA available for industrial development; rezoned or removed land previously intended for new urban residential development; and adopted measures to ensure compatibility with continued development of the Skagit Regional Airport.

Guemes Island. The Guemes Island Subarea Plan, adopted in January 2011, contains recommendations to protect the sole-source aquifer, shoreline environs, open space and natural resource lands, and transportation, among other topics. Some of those recommendations are proposed for implementation through code as part of the 2016 periodic update to the comprehensive plan and development regulations.

Town of Hamilton. In 2008, Skagit County approved the Town of Hamilton Subarea Plan and an expansion of its Urban Growth, both important steps in the town’s efforts to relocate itself out of the Skagit River floodway. The Hamilton UGA expansion provided the town with 48 acres outside of the floodway for the relocation of its old town commercial center and residential areas; added 59 acres owned by Janicki Industries for construction of a high-tech manufacturing facility; and designated 157 acres to the northeast of the new UGA as “Hamilton Urban Reserve,” indicating the town’s long-term plans to expand into that area.

Commented [RW-P156]: Text in this section was moved from policy 12A-4.1 to implement PC recommendation 26.

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Goals and Policies

Plan Implementation

Goal 12A Create opportunities for citizens to participate in developing community plans at a local level that protect and conserve community character while ensuring consistency and compatibility with the comprehensive plan.

policy 12A-1.1 There are two fundamental steps in community planning: plan development and plan adoption.

(a) The development of a community plan may be initiated by the County, by community groups in collaboration with the County, or by community groups or other entities working largely or entirely with their own resources. Groups that may initiate a community planning processes should consult with the County on timing, priorities, Comprehensive Plan policies and procedures, and other factors that may affect the development, consideration, and adoption of the proposed community plan.

(i) Skagit County is not obligated to provide financial support, staff support, or technical assistance to a community planning effort if the Board of County Commissioners has not determined it to be a priority per policy 12A-1.2 below.

(b) Adoption of a community plan proposal shall follow the legislative procedures described earlier in this chapter. A community group that has initiated and completed a community plan per this policy may submit the plan to the County for consideration through the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process.

policy 12A-1.2 The County may initiate a community plan; provide assistance and guidance in the community planning process; or advance a community plan proposal through the legislative process, according to an annual determination of



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priorities by the Board of County Commissioners. In establishing priorities the Board may consider numerous factors, including:

- (a) legislative mandates;
- (b) threats to public health and safety;
- (c) major environmental or economic threats or opportunities;
- (d) major development proposals;
- (e) community initiatives;
- (f) availability of staff and financial resources; and
- (g) the need to update an adopted community plan.

Goal 12A-2 Provide for early and ongoing citizen involvement in the development of community plans.

policy 12A-2.1 Establish citizen advisory committees (CACs), consistent with the County's public participation program, to make recommendations on land use designations, development and design standards, transportation improvements, capital facility improvements, densities, and other land use matters within the community planning area which are consistent with the policies of this Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

policy 12A-2.2 Design and conduct public outreach and communication procedures to inform citizens interested in community plans of proposed policy decisions and land use matters that would affect the community plan or planning area.

Goal 12A-3 Use community plans to protect and conserve community character while maintaining consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.

policy 12A-3.1 Community plans may identify design characteristics and design standards that, if adopted, will be used to review development and construction projects within the jurisdiction of the adopted community plan.



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policy 12A-3.2 Common elements of a community planning process and the resulting plan include the following:

- (a) Preparation of a community vision statement;
- (b) Assessment of current adopted County Comprehensive Plan goals, policies and strategies and development code provisions as they apply to the subarea;
- (c) Inventory, analysis, and mapping of current land uses, characteristics of the physical environment, and availability of utilities;
- (d) Assessment of current community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats including special studies such as market- and traffic analyses;
- (e) Development and evaluation of area-specific recommendations for problem solutions; and
- (f) Continuous public outreach and communication throughout the process tailored to the size, demographics, and interests of the community.

policy 12A-3.3 Community plans should develop a range of alternatives that are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan while protecting community property values; economic vitality; affordable housing; the natural and built environment; natural resource lands; historic buildings, districts, and sites; and, character of the community.

policy 12A-3.4 Community plans should include findings of fact to accompany the adoption of the plan that either

- (a) demonstrate that community vision statements, goals and policies, and land use designations are consistent with this comprehensive plan, or
- (b) identify inconsistencies between the Comprehensive Plan and the community plan which must be resolved by amending the Comprehensive Plan.



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Goal 12A-4 Implement and maintain an ongoing program of community planning to address the specific issues and concerns of Skagit County communities.

~~policy 12A-4.1~~ ~~Develop a long-term schedule for conducting community plans for the various Rural Villages designated in this Comprehensive Plan, and for other local areas of more detailed planning as identified herein. Community plans have been initiated and in some cases completed for the following areas, addressing the issues identified below and others:~~

~~(a) Alger. A community plan for the The Alger Community Plan area had been was developed with the assistance of a Citizen Advisory Committee and extensive public outreach by mid-2007 and was adopted in December 2008. Some of the plan recommendations are to:~~

- ~~• Maintain the rural character of the area with modest additions to the Rural Freeway Service and Rural Intermediate land use designations;~~
- ~~• Maintain and enhance the open space areas;~~
- ~~• Minimize the impact of large-scale special uses;~~
- ~~• Increase opportunities for small scale businesses in the Alger Rural Village.~~

~~(b) Bayview Ridge. The Bayview Ridge Subarea Plan, originally adopted in 2006, was most recently updated in November 2014. The is 4,011 3,586 acres, which includes a 3,633-acre non-municipal Urban Growth Area, is located approximately one mile west of the City of Burlington. The remaining undeveloped properties are generally large, providing an opportunity for master planning. This planning will help to create a cohesive and more self-sufficient urban community, while insuring The 2014 update to the plan, development regulations and land use designations expanded the area within the UGA available for industrial development; rezoned or removed land previously intended for new urban residential development; and adopted measures to ensure~~

Commented [RW-P157]: This text moved to narrative because the plans have been completed. Fidalgo plan moved to next policy. Change implements PC recommendations 26-28.



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compatibility with continued development of the Skagit County airport Regional Airport.

- (c) Fidalgo Island. The community plan for Fidalgo Island should include the following: provisions for maintaining the existing rural character and lifestyles of the island; an assessment of the natural and built environment such as, but not limited to: shoreline environs, geologically hazardous areas, drainage, marine and upland water quality, suitability of soils and geology for development, fish and wildlife habitat, open space areas/corridors, transportation networks, and availability and cost of public facilities and services. The Fidalgo Island Community Plan should also consider previous land use studies and reports in determining whether additional rural density is appropriate to minimize large lot sprawl and to create more logical boundaries incorporating the existing Rural Intermediate designations. An initial subarea planning process began in 2003. The County appointed a Citizen Advisory Committee and Technical Advisory Committee, held open houses, conducted a survey, and gathered background information about Fidalgo Island. As part of a draft Subarea Plan, released in January 2006, the Citizen Advisory Committee recommended rezoning much of the island to 2.5 acres (Rural Intermediate). That recommendation generated significant community opposition and concerns about consistency with the Growth Management Act. The 2.5 acre recommendation, and the original draft Subarea Plan as a whole, are not under active consideration by the County although much of the background information gathered about the island remains of value. Drainage was one of many concerns expressed by island residents before and during the public process. In 2010, the County completed the South Fidalgo Island Stormwater Management Plan to evaluate and where possible address the community's drainage concerns.

- (d) Guemes Island. The community plan for Guemes Island Subarea Plan, drafted in mid 2007 adopted in January 2011, contains recommendations to protect the sole source aquifer, shoreline environs, open space and natural resource lands, and transportation, among other topics. Some of these recommendations are proposed for implementation through code



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as part of the 2016 periodic update to the comprehensive plan and development regulations.

(e) Town of Hamilton. The community plan is evaluating expansion of the Urban Growth Area for long term future growth of the Town of Hamilton, including relocation of existing Hamilton residences out of the floodway, purchase and transfer of floodway development rights from identified surrounding areas, restoration of the Skagit River floodway, and development of vacant industrial land. In 2008, Skagit County approved the Town of Hamilton Subarea Plan and an expansion of its Urban Growth, both important steps in the town's efforts to relocate itself out of the Skagit River floodway. The Hamilton UGA expansion provided the town with 48 acres outside of the floodway for the relocation of its old town commercial center and residential areas; added 59 acres owned by Janicki Industries for construction of a high tech manufacturing facility; and designated 157 acres to the northeast of the new UGA as "Hamilton Urban Reserve," indicating the town's long term plans to expand into that area.

policy 12A-4.1 The adopted Alger, Bayview Ridge, Guemes Island, and Hamilton Subarea Plans, which are part of this Comprehensive Plan, will help to guide growth and development within those subareas.

policy 12A-4.2 The following areas and issues have been identified for future community planning, although no specific timing or order of priority has been established. Other areas may be identified in the future.

(a) Big Lake Rural Village. The community plan for the Big Lake Rural Village shall include consideration and recommendations on logical Rural Village boundaries that preserve the character of the neighborhood and the community based on: existing development, land use patterns, and parcel density; natural land forms, contours, and topography; and, infrastructure capital improvement plans that are intended to serve the community, including roads, sewer and water lines. The Big Lake Rural Village is unique in that it is the only Rural Village in Skagit County served by both public water and sanitary sewer. The community plan for the Big Lake Rural Village is to consider Sewer District No. 2's comprehensive



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plan and capital improvement plan and its service area as a way to allow for additional infill and more intensive rural residential development while protecting the Lake's fragile watershed, water quality and recreational activities. The Big Lake Rural Village Community Plan should develop residential densities that reflect these unique features of the Big Lake community. Clustering requirements for larger undeveloped properties shall be considered that create compatible rural densities and a non-expanding Rural Village boundary.

- (b) Birdsvie. The community plan for Birdsvie shall include consideration of: appropriate land use designations for the existing camping resort properties and travel trailer parks; whether additional Rural commercial or industrial land use designations are appropriate and necessary to serve not only the rural residents in this area, but the traveling public; and whether additional rural density is appropriate to minimize large-lot sprawl in this area and to create more logical boundaries incorporating the existing RI designations.
- (c) Day Creek. The community plan for Day Creek shall consider possible expansion of the Rural Center designation beyond the existing Day Creek Store to include other adjacent parcels with existing non-resource development. This community plan shall recognize the relative isolation of this area and this Rural Center from any other retail or service uses. In addition, to help ensure long-term vitality of this Day Creek Rural Center, and to minimize the impetus for new, more scattered rural commercial or industrial development in this area of the County, this community plan shall also evaluate whether additional rural density is appropriate adjacent to this Rural Center, thereby minimizing the potential for large-lot sprawl in this resource area of the County. If not completed before this Community Plan, the MRO designations in this Day Creek area shall be reevaluated to be sure they match the actual locations of the mineral resource and take into account existing critical area characteristics including ancient landslides.
- (d) Upper Samish Valley. The community plan for the Upper Samish Valley shall include consideration of whether an area along Highway 9 north of



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Sedro-Woolley should be designated as a new Rural Center. This is one of the few populated areas of the County that is not included within a 2.5 mile radius service area of an existing Rural Village Commercial District or Rural Center. There are several existing public uses, including a school, fire station, and grange hall, that could serve as the core of a new Rural Center.

(e) Lake Cavanaugh Rural Village. No commercial services currently exist within the Lake Cavanaugh Rural Village. A limited scope, or phased community planning process may be necessary to assess the feasibility of establishing commercial services, including a community store, within the existing boundaries of the Rural Village. The feasibility study would include an assessment of the community's need for commercial services, whether there are suitable properties for such uses within the Rural Village, and property-owner interest in establishing such uses. If the establishment of commercial services within the boundaries of the Rural Village is determined infeasible, then consideration should be given to the feasibility of expanding the Rural Village to accommodate the commercial needs of the community.

(f) Fidalgo Island. The community plan for Fidalgo Island should include the following: provisions for maintaining the existing rural character and lifestyles of the island; an assessment of the natural and built environment such as, but not limited to: shoreline environs, geologically hazardous areas, drainage, marine and upland water quality, suitability of soils and geology for development, fish and wildlife habitat, open space areas/corridors, transportation networks, and availability and cost of public facilities and services. The Fidalgo Island Community Plan should also consider previous land use studies and reports in determining whether additional rural density is appropriate to minimize largelot sprawl and to create more logical boundaries incorporating the existing Rural Intermediate designations.



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Appendix A Acronyms and Definitions

List of Acronyms

- ADT** average daily traffic
- BMP** best management practice
- CAC** Citizen Advisory Committee
- CAO** Critical Areas Ordinance
- CEDS** Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
- CFP** Capital Facilities Plan
- CIP** capital improvement program
- CaRD** Conservation and Reserve Development
- CCR** Conditions, Covenants, and/or Restrictions
- CTED** Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (State of Washington)
- CPP** Countywide Planning Policies
- CWSP** Coordinated Water System Plan
- DEIS** Draft Environmental Impact Statement (see also FEIS, DEIS, SEIS, DSEIS)
- DNR** Department of Natural Resources (State of Washington)
- DOE** Department of Ecology (State of Washington)
- DSEIS** Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (see also FEIS, DEIS, SEIS, DSEIS)
- EDASC** Economic Development Association of Skagit County
- EES** Economic and Engineering Services (private consulting firm)

Commented [A158]: Now called Dept of Commerce.

Commented [A159]: No longer used in the plan.



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EIS	Environmental Impact Statement (see also FEIS, DEIS, SEIS, DSEIS)
ELF	extremely low frequency
EMF	electric and magnetic fields or electromagnetic field
FEIS	Final Environmental Impact Statement (see also FEIS, DEIS, SEIS, DSEIS)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission
FGTS	freight goods transportation system
FPA	forest practice application
GMA	Growth Management Act
HCA	habitat conservation area
IVM	integrated vegetation management
JOA	joint operating agreement
LID	local improvement district
LOS	level of service
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPR	Master Planned Resort
MRO	Mineral Resource Overlay
NRL	Natural Resource Land
NWCAA	Northwest Clean Air Agency
OFM	Office of Financial Management (State of Washington)
OHWM	ordinary high water mark
PCA	Protected Critical Area
PDR	purchase of development rights
PFLG	private forest land grade
PUD, Skagit	Skagit Public Utility District
PUD	planned unit development



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- RCW** Revised Code of Washington
- RTPO** Regional Transportation Planning Organization
- SCC** Skagit County Code
- SCOG** Skagit Council of Governments
- SEIS** Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (see also FEIS, DEIS, SEIS, DSEIS)
- SEPA** State Environmental Policy Act
- SRS** scientific resource site
- TDM** transportation demand management
- TDR** transfer of development rights
- TIP** transportation improvement program
- TSP** Transportation Systems Plan
- UGA** Urban Growth Area
- USDA** United States Department of Agriculture
- WAC** Washington Administrative Code
- WSDOT** Washington State Department of Transportation
- WUTC** Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Definitions

Accessory

As applied to a use, building or structure, means customarily subordinate or incidental to, and located on the same lot with a principal use, building, or structure.

Act

the Growth Management Act as enacted in chapter 17, Laws of 1990, 1st Ex. Session, and chapter 32, Laws of 1991, 1st Special Session, State of Washington.

Adequate Public Facilities

Facilities that have the capacity to serve development without decreasing levels of service below locally established minimums.

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Affordable Housing

Housing where the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for gross housing costs, including utility costs. In the case of ownership housing, the purchase costs of a housing unit is equal to or less than three times a household's annual gross income.

Agriculture

The use of land for commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees (not subject to [the state excise tax on timber harvest](#) imposed by RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140), or livestock.

Agricultural Advisory Board

A formally established board that reviews and monitors agricultural policies and programs, and advises the Skagit County Board of Commissioners, the Planning Commission, and the Planning and Development Services Department on issues regarding agriculture lands in Skagit County.

Agricultural Land

Land primarily devoted to the commercial production of horticultural, viticultural, floricultural, dairy, apiary, vegetable, or animal products or of berries, grain, hay, straw, turf, seed, Christmas trees not subject to the [state excise tax on timber harvest](#) imposed by RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140, or livestock and that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production.

Agricultural Support Services

Any non-agricultural use which is directly related to agriculture and directly dependent upon agriculture for its existence. These support services generally exist off-site and within districts that are intended to facilitate the production, marketing and distribution of agricultural products. Agricultural support services are separate and distinct from Farm-based businesses (see Farm-Based Business).

All Weather Road System

Roadway not normally subject to Winter Weight Restrictions.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

Ensures access for the disabled for publicly used facilities, employment, public transportation and public communication.



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Annual Program

This is similar to the six year program, except it covers only the projects that will be constructed within the next year (see Six Year Transportation Program).

Aquatic Resource Areas

An area providing assets and functions that is of or related to water.

Commented [A161]: a new term in the Environment Element.

Aquifers

Any geologic formation that will yield water to a well or other withdrawal works in sufficient quantity for beneficial use.

Aquifer Recharge Areas

areas where an aquifer that is a source of drinking water is vulnerable to contamination that would affect the potability of the water.

Arterial roadways

A class of roadway serving major movements of traffic not served by freeways. Arterial roadways are functionally classed depending on the degree to which they serve through traffic movements ~~verses~~ versus access to land.

Available Public Facilities

means that facilities or services are in place or that a financial commitment is in place to provide the facilities or services within a specified time. In the case of transportation, the specified time is six years from the time of development.

Average Daily Traffic (ADT)/Annualized Average Daily Traffic (AADT)

Average Daily Traffic (ADT) is the average amount of traffic (average number of vehicles) crossing one location of a roadway within a 24 hour period. Annualized Average Daily Traffic (AADT) is a yearly average.

Benchmarks

A strategic planning tool to measure policy outcomes across time and space.

Best Management Practices (BMP)

Practices or structures designed to reduce the quantities of pollutants - such as sediment, nitrogen, phosphorus, and animal wastes - that are washed by rain and snow melt ~~from farms~~ into nearby surface waters, such as lakes, creeks, streams, rivers, and estuaries. ~~Agricultural~~

Commented [A162]: The Natural Resources Element uses BMPs to describe agricultural, forestry, and water quality practices, so this definition is broadened.



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BMPs can include fairly simple changes in practices such as fencing cows out of streams (to keep animal waste out of streams), planting grass in gullies where water flows off of a planted field (to reduce the amount of sediment that runoff water picks up as it flows to rivers and lakes), reducing the amount of plowing in fields where row crops are planted (in order to reduce soil erosion and loss of nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizers applied to the crop land). BMPs can also involve building structures, such as large animal waste storage tanks that allow farmers to choose when to spread manure on their fields as opposed to having to spread it based on the volume accumulated.

Buffer

An area contiguous with a critical area, natural resource land, or urban growth area that is required for the integrity, maintenance, function, and stability of the area or land.

Business Park

A development providing for a mix of light industrial distribution and related commercial retail, office and service uses.

Calibration

The procedure used to adjust travel models to simulate base year travel.

Capacity

The maximum number of vehicles that can pass over a given section of a lane or roadway in one direction (or in both direction for a two- or three-lane facility) during a given time period under prevailing roadway and traffic conditions. It is the maximum rate of flow that has a reasonable expectation of occurring.

Capital cost

Costs of transportation systems ~~systems~~ [building, improving, or acquiring long term assets or infrastructure](#) such as purchase of land, construction of roadways, and acquisition of ~~vehicles~~ [buildings](#). Distinguished from operating costs.

Capital facilities

As a general definition, public structures, improvements, pieces of equipment or other major assets, including land, that have a useful life of at least 10 years. Capital facilities are provided by and for public purposes and services. For the purposes of the capital facilities element, capital facilities are surface water management, solid waste disposal, law and justice, general

Commented [A163]: This term is used generally for capital facilities other than transportation in the plan introduction.



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government, parks and recreation, airport, transportation, education, fire protection, sanitary sewer and public water supply systems.

Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

A plan that matches the costs of capital improvements to anticipated revenue and a time line. CIPs are usually prepared for six or more years, updated annually, and coordinated with the comprehensive planning process.

City

Generally refers to any city or town within Skagit County.

Coastal High Hazard Area

The area subject to high velocity and/or volume of waters, including but not limited to storm surge or tsunamis. The area is designated on a Flood Insurance Rate Map as Zone V1-30.

Collector System

In Rural Areas Principal Arterials, Minor Arterial Roads, Collector Roads, Local Roads. In Urbanized Areas Principal Arterials, Minor Arterial Streets, Collector Streets, and Local Streets. In Small Urban Areas Principal Arterials, Minor Arterial Streets, Collector Streets, and Local Streets.

Commuter Rail

Rail service targeted for daily commuters traveling under 40 miles. The service tends to be frequent, at least every half-hour during rush periods, and stops are often spaced from 5 to 10 miles apart.

Compatible

Capable of existing together without discord or in a state of mutual tolerance.

Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Comprehensive Plan, or Plan

The policies and proposals approved and recommended by the planning agency or initiated by the Board of County Commissioners (the Board) and approved by motion of the Board (a) as a beginning step in planning for the physical development of the county; (b) as the means for coordinating county programs and services; (c) as a source of reference to aid in developing, correlating and coordinating official regulations and controls, and; (d) as a means for promoting the general welfare. Such plan shall consist of the required elements set forth in R-C-W- 36.70A.070 and may also include the optional elements set forth in R-C-W- 36.70A.080 which shall serve as a policy guide for the subsequent public and private development and official



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controls so as to present all proposed developments in a balanced and orderly relationship to existing physical features and governmental functions.

Comprehensive Plan Amendment

An amendment or change to the text or maps of the Comprehensive Plan.

Concurrency

means that adequate public facilities are available when the impacts of development occur. This definition includes the two concepts of "adequate public facilities" and of "available public facilities" as defined above.

Concurrency Management System

An financial and accounting system that keeps track of cumulative impacts of developments, impact fees, level of service on impacted roads, and timing for road improvements in order to ensure that the concurrency requirements of GMA are met.

Congestion management

~~A process whereby multi-modal solutions to critical traffic congestion problems are identified, coordinated among affected jurisdictions, and programmed for funding or implementation. Solutions are wide ranging and could involve physical improvements to the arterial network, traffic signalization, transit service enhancements, programs to reduce commuter travel and travel information systems. The affected jurisdictions would be the county, cities, Washington State Department of Transportation.~~

Conservation and Reserve Development (CaRD)

A technique of land division characterized by the placement of dwellings and accessory buildings in a pattern of development which reduces impervious surface area, lowers costs of development and maintenance and retains larger expanses of property available for agriculture, forestry, or continuity of ecological functions characteristic of the property to be developed.

Contiguous development

Development of areas immediately adjacent to one another.

Coordination

Consultation and cooperation among jurisdictions.



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Countywide planning Policies

Written policy statements used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted. (RCW 36.70.210)

Covenants

Private restrictions placed on land regulating land use activities.

Critical Areas

Areas of environmental sensitivity, which include the following areas and ecosystems (a) wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas.

Critical Facilities

Schools, hospitals, police, fire, emergency response installations, nursing homes, and installations which produce, use or store hazardous materials or hazardous waste.

Current Use Open Space Taxation

Current Use Open Space Taxation Program includes properties utilized for agriculture, timber and open space uses as provided in RCW 84.34.

Demand Management Strategies or Transportation Demand Management Strategies (TDM)

Strategies aimed at changing travel behavior rather than at expanding the transportation network to meet travel demand. Such strategies can include the promotion of work hour changes, ride-sharing options, parking policies, telecommuting.

Density

The ratio between the number of families, individuals, housing units, or residential dwelling units per land surface area (usually acreage). Gross density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the total land area of the site or area, excluding nothing. Net density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the net area of the lot or site. The net area excludes roads, public open spaces, community facilities, and critical areas.

Density Bonuses

Where a proposed development is designed and constructed at a level of quality in excess of the minimum, additional development rights may be allowed in locations where added density can



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be accomplished while still providing appropriate protection to neighboring properties and the general public.

Development

Any manmade change to improved or unimproved real estate, including but not limited to buildings or other structures, mining, dredging, filling, grading, paving, excavation, or drilling operations. Any action requiring a land use permit or approval regulated by Titles 14 and 15, SCC, including, but not limited to, subdivisions, binding site plans, site specific rezones, unclassified special use permits, variances, building permits, shoreline permits, or flood area development permits.

Development Code

Skagit County Code (SCC) Titles 14 and 15.

Development Regulation(s)

The controls placed on development or land use activities by a county or city, including, but not limited to, zoning ordinances, critical area ordinances, shoreline master programs, official controls, planned unit development ordinances, subdivision ordinances, and binding site plan ordinances together with any amendments thereto. A development regulation does not include a decision to approve a project permit application, as defined in RCW 36.70B.020, even though the decision may be expressed in a resolution or ordinance of the legislative body of the county or city.

Ecological Functions

Those uses of land that are part of a larger related natural system. These functions include, but are not limited to, storm water detention; floodway/floodplain; drainway; sediment collection area; aquifer recharge area; fish and wildlife habitat conservation area; wind break; noise, sight, or dust barrier; shade; erosion control; waste disposal; and, maintenance of slope stability.

Erosion Hazard Areas

Those areas containing soils which, according to the United States Department of Agriculture Soil conservation Service soil Classification System, may experience severe to very severe erosion.



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Essential public facilities

Facilities that are typically difficult to site, such as airports, state education facilities, and state or regional transportation facilities, state and local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and in-patient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities and group homes. (RCW 36.70A.200)

Extremely Low Income

Households whose income is less than 35% of the median income for the area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Commented [A164]: Added for consistency with the Housing Element

Facilities

The physical structure or structures in which a service is provided.

Farm-Based Business

An on-farm commercial enterprise devoted to the direct marketing of unprocessed and/or value-added and soil-dependent agricultural products that are produced, processed, and sold on-site. Farm-based businesses are intended to supplement farm income, improve the efficiency of farming, and provide employment to farm family members. Farm-based businesses are separate and distinct from Agricultural support services (see Agriculture Support Services).

Farm-Worker Housing

Permanent housing for seasonal and year around farm workers and their families.

Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS)

A system of streets, roads, and highways formally designated by the State as current truck routes.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas and their networks shall be classified as follows:

Areas with which endangered, threatened, and sensitive species have a primary association;

Habitats and species of local importance that have been designated by the County at the time of application;

All public and private tidelands suitable for shellfish harvest;

Kelp and eelgrass beds, herring and smelt spawning areas;



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Naturally occurring ponds under twenty acres and their submerged aquatic beds that provide fish or wildlife habitat;

Waters of the state as defined by WAC 222-16;

Lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers planted with game fish by a governmental or tribal entity;

Areas with which anadromous fish species have a primary association;

State Natural Area Preserves and Natural Resource Conservation Areas; and

Other aquatic resource areas.

Fixed-route service

Transportation service operated over a set route on a regular schedule.

Forest Resource Land

~~Land primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production, including Christmas trees subject to the excise tax imposed under RCW 84.33.100 through 84.33.140 and that has long-term commercial significance. In determining whether forest land is primarily devoted to growing trees for long-term commercial timber production on land that can be economically and practically managed for such production, the following factors shall be considered (a) the proximity of the land to urban, suburban, and rural settlements; (b) surrounding parcel size and the compatibility and intensity of adjacent and nearby land uses; (c) long-term local economic conditions that affect the ability to manage for timber production; and (d) the availability of public facilities and services conducive to conversion of forest land to other uses.~~ Forest Resource Lands are those lands that due to soils, climate, topography, parcel size, and location have long-term commercial significance for forestry.

Frequently Flooded Areas

Lands in the floodplain subject to a one- percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year. These areas include, but are not limited to, streams, rivers, lakes, coastal areas, wetlands, and the like.

Functional Classification

Functional Classification is the grouping of highways, roads, and streets that serve similar functions into distinct systems or classes. Functional Classification defines the primary role a

Commented [A165]: Matches definition provided in the Natural Resource Lands Element.



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road or street serves within the total existing or future highway network (see Collector System above).

Geologically Hazardous Areas

Areas that, because of their susceptibility to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events, are not suited to the siting of commercial, residential, or industrial development consistent with public health or safety concerns.

Goal

A goal is a direction setter. It is an ideal future end, condition, or state related to the public health, safety, or general welfare toward which planning and implementation measures are directed. A goal is a general expression of community values and, therefore, is abstract in nature. Consequently, a goal is generally not quantifiable, time-dependent, or suggestive of specific actions for its achievement.

Gross Density

Gross density means the total number of dwelling units divided by the total land area of the site or area, excluding nothing.

Growth Management Act (GMA)

The Growth Management Act as enacted in chapter 17, Laws of 1990, 1st Ex. Session, and chapter 32, Laws of 1991, 1st Special Session, State of Washington, and as amended [codified in RCW 36.70A](#).

Habitats of Local Importance

These include a seasonal range or habitat element with which a given species has a primary association, and which, if altered, may reduce the likelihood that the species will maintain and reproduce over the long-term. These might include areas of high relative density or species richness, breeding habitat, winter range, and movement corridors. These might also include habitats that are of limited availability or high vulnerability to alteration, such as cliffs, talus, and wetlands.

Highway Heritage

An expansion of the scenic highways concept to include highways with scenic, cultural, historic, archeological and/ or other environmental resources.

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Highway-Oriented Commercial Uses

Food service, fuel and repair service for motorists, transient lodging.

Home Based Business

Home based businesses are home occupations that remain incidental to the use of a residence for general dwelling purposes and are compatible with rural character. Different categories of home based businesses may be regulated.

Impact Fees

Standard fees for development impacts on governmental facilities. Impact fees are often levied per housing unit and usually include transportation impacts.

Implementation measure

Regulatory and non-regulatory measures used to carry out the plan.

Infrastructure

Facilities and services needed to sustain land use activities. Infrastructure includes water, sewer, roads, parks, schools and other such public facilities.

Joint Planning

Plans that address small geographic areas and focus on issues of local concern. Joint plans may be developed with other planning jurisdictions and communities for urban growth areas (UGAs), rural villages (RVs), and tribal community plans (Swinomish Tribal Community).

Land Conservation

The placement of dwellings and accessory buildings in a pattern of development which reduces impervious surface area, lowers costs of development and maintenance and retains larger expanses of property available for agriculture, forestry, or continuity of ecological functions characteristic of the property to development.

Landslide Hazard Areas

Areas potentially subject to risk of mass movement due to a combination of geologic, topographic, and hydrologic factors.

Level of Service

A measure of the amount of a public facility or service that is being or will be provided.



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Local Improvement District (LID)

A quasi-governmental organization formed by landowners to finance and construct a variety of physical infrastructure improvements beneficial to its members. A Road Improvement District is a specific type of LID that is formed to finance road improvements.

Local road

A class of roadway with the primary function of providing access to abutting properties. Traffic control is usually limited with slow speeds and numerous driveways. This roadway class typically carries low traffic loads and is usually 1 to 2 lanes. They can be paved or gravel and don't often extend over much distance.

Long-term Commercial Significance

Includes the growing capacity, productivity, and soil composition of the land for long-term commercial production, in consideration with the land's proximity to population areas, and the possibility of more intense uses of the land.

Low-Income

Households whose income is between 51% and 80% of the median income for the area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Manufactured Housing

A manufactured building or major portion of a building designed for long-term residential use. It is designed and constructed for transportation to a site for installation and occupancy when connected to required utilities.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

A federally mandated organization, in urbanized areas, responsible for planning, programming and coordination of federal highway and transit investments. The Skagit Council of Governments is the lead agency for the local MPO.

Multi-modal

Two or more modes or methods of transportation.

Middle Income

~~Between 96% and 120% of median income.~~ [Households whose income is between 80% and 95% of the median income for the area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\).](#)



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Mine Hazard Areas

Areas underlain by or affected by underground mine workings such as adits, tunnels, air shafts and those areas adjacent to steep slopes produced by open pit mining or quarrying, but excluding any areas where the mine workings have been properly stabilized and closed and made safe consistent with all applicable federal, state and local laws.

Minerals

Clay, coal, gravel, industrial mineral, valuable metallic substances, sand, stone, and other similar solid materials or substances excavated from natural deposits on or in the earth for commercial, industrial, or construction use.

Mineral Resource Lands

Lands containing mineral deposits, both active and inactive, that have known or potential long-term commercial significance for the extraction of minerals and which are in close, economic proximity to locations where the deposits are likely to be used.

Mixed-Use

Typically, buildings with residential units above or beside a story or two of commercial spaces.

Moderate Income

~~Between 81% and 95% of median income.~~ [Households whose income is between 80% and 95% of the median income for the area, as determined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\).](#)

Multi-modal

Two or more modes or methods of transportation.

Natural Resource Lands

Lands designated on the official Skagit County Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map as Agricultural (Ag-NRL), Industrial Forest (IF-NRL), Secondary Forest (SF-NRL), Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO-NRL), and Rural Resource (RRC-NRL) which have long-term commercial significance.

Nonconformance or nonconforming

Any use, improvement or structure established in conformance with Skagit County rules and regulations in effect at the time of establishment that no longer conforms to the range of uses permitted in the site's current zone or to the current development standards of the Code due to changes in the Code or its application to the subject property.



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Non-Motorized Transportation

Bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian transportation modes.

Official Controls

Legislatively defined and enacted policies, standards, precise detailed maps and other criteria, all of which control the physical development of a county or any part thereof or any detail thereof, and are the means of translating into regulations and ordinances all or any part of the general objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Such official controls may include, but are not limited to, ordinances establishing zoning, subdivision control, platting, and adoption of detailed maps.

One-Hundred-Year Floodplain

Land within a community subject to a one (1) percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year. Designation on maps always includes the letters A or V.

Open Space

Any land area, the preservation of which in its present use would conserve and enhance natural or scenic resources; or, protect streams or water supplies; or, promote conservation of soils, wetlands, beaches or tidal marshes; or, enhance the value to the public of abutting or neighboring parks, forests, wildlife preserves, nature reservations; or, sanctuaries or other open space; or, enhance recreation opportunities; or, preserve historic sites. Public Open Space are public owned lands that have been or will be set aside for open space and recreational use.

Private Open Space are privately owned lands that have been or will be set aside by operation of the Critical Areas Ordinance, by voluntary conservation, or by land reserve easements. Current Use Open Space Taxation Program includes properties utilized for agriculture, timber, and open space uses as provided in RCW 84.34.

Operating costs

Those recurring costs in a transportation system, such as salaries and wages, maintenance, energy, taxes, insurance, and supplies. Distinguished from capital cost.

Objective

An objective is a specific end, condition, or state that is an intermediate step toward attaining a goal. It should be achievable and, when possible, measurable time-specific. An objective may only pertain to one particular aspect of a goal or it may be one of several successive steps toward goal achievement. Consequently, there may be more than one objective for each goal.

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Pedestrian Friendly Development

Development designs that encourage walking be providing site amenities for pedestrians. Pedestrian friendly environments reduce auto dependence and may encourage the use of public transportation.

Performance Standards

These provide criteria for testing the degree of hazard, environmental damage, or nuisance from land use activities creating smoke, dust, noise, glare, odor, erosion and sediment, runoff, liquid, solid, or airborne wastes, fumes or traffic.

Policy

A policy is a specific statement that guides decision-making. It indicates a clear commitment of the local legislative body. A policy is based on a comprehensive plan's goals and objectives as well as the analysis of data. A policy is effectuated by implementation measures (such as zoning, land division, and environmental ordinances).

Private Open Space

Private Open Space are privately owned lands that have been or will be set aside by operation of the Critical Areas Ordinance, by voluntary conservation, or by land reserve easements.

Public Facilities

Include streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street and road lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water systems, storm and sanitary sewer systems, parks and recreational facilities, and schools.

Public Open Space

Public owned lands that have been or will be set aside for open space and recreational use.

Public Services

include fire protection and suppression, law enforcement, public health, education, recreation, environmental protection, and other governmental services.

Public transportation

A wide variety of passenger transportation services available to the public including buses, ferries, rideshare, and rail transit.



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Public water

Any system providing water intended for, or used for, human consumption or other domestic uses. It includes, but is not limited to... facilities where water is furnished to any community, or number of individuals, or is made available to the public for human consumption or domestic use, but excluding water systems serving one single family residence (RCW 70.116.030).

Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO)

A State authorized organization of local governments responsible for transportation planning, growth management compliance, and the development and adoption of regional transportation plans. The Skagit Council of Governments is the lead agency for the Skagit RTPO.

Roadway

An open, generally public way for the passage of vehicles, persons, and animals. Limits include the outside edge of sidewalks, curbs and gutters, or side ditches.

Rural Character

The patterns of land use and development established by a county in the rural element of its comprehensive plan:

- (a) In which open space, the natural landscape, and vegetation predominate over the built environment;
- (b) That foster traditional rural lifestyles, rural-based economies, and opportunities to both live and work in rural areas;
- (c) That provide visual landscapes that are traditionally found in rural areas and communities;
- (d) That are compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat;
- (e) That reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;
- (f) That generally do not require the extension of urban governmental services; and
- (g) That are consistent with the protection of natural surface water flows and groundwater and surface water recharge and discharge areas.

Rural Development

Development outside the urban growth area and outside agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. Rural development can consist of a variety of uses and residential densities, including clustered residential development, at levels

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[that are consistent with the preservation of rural character and the requirements of the rural element. Rural development does not refer to agriculture or forestry activities that may be conducted in rural areas.](#)

[Rural Government Services](#)

[Rural Government Services, or "rural services," include those public services and public facilities historically and typically delivered at an intensity usually found in rural areas, and may include domestic water systems, fire and police protection services, transportation and public transit services, and other public utilities associated with rural development and normally not associated with urban areas. Rural services do not include storm or sanitary sewers, except as otherwise authorized by RCW 36.70A.110\(4\).](#)

Rural Lands

All lands which are not within an urban growth area and are not designated as natural resource lands having long term commercial significance for production of agricultural products, timber, or the extraction of minerals.

Rural Village

Predominantly residential unincorporated rural communities or centers supported by limited commercial and compatible industrial, and community services which typically include a post office, church, elementary school, fire hall, grocery store, service station, tavern, restaurant, or other small retail business catering to local rural needs. Compact development within designated boundaries distinguishes a village from surrounding undeveloped land.

Sanitary Sewer Systems

all facilities, including approved on-site disposal facilities, used in the collection, transmission, storage, treatment or discharge of any waterborne waste, whether domestic in origin or a combination of domestic, commercial or industrial waste.

Scenic Highways

A Washington State designation for highways that have particular scenic characteristics. This designation was originally initiated to control billboards.

Scenic Resources

Includes, among other things, the historical pattern of land use (including logging and farming activities).

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Seismic Hazard Areas

areas subject to severe risk of damage as a result of earthquake induced ground shaking, slope failure, settlement, or soil liquefaction.

Sensitive Species

A species native to the State of Washington, that is vulnerable or declining and is likely to become endangered or threatened in a significant portion of its range within the State without cooperative management or the removal of threats as designated by WAC 232-12-011.

Shoreline Master Program

A program [first](#) adopted in 1976 to promote the public health, safety and general welfare by providing long range, comprehensive policies and effective, reasonable regulations for development and use of Skagit County shorelines. ~~Definitions specifically addressing shorelines terminology may be located within the Skagit County Shoreline Master Program document.~~

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program

A plan that shows road and other transportation projects planned for the next six years. Both cities and counties are required to update the six-year program each year.

Sole Source Aquifer

Sole Source Aquifer is an EPA definition. It defines those areas where more than 50 percent of the drinking water is obtained from the groundwater.

Species of Local Importance

Those species that may not be endangered, threatened or sensitive from a statewide perspective, but are of local concern due to their population status, sensitivity to habitat manipulation, or other educational, cultural or historic attributes.

Special Needs Populations

Populations with special needs in Skagit County include the mentally ill, with chemical dependency, developmentally disabled, persons with drug and/or alcohol addiction, victims of domestic violence, youth, the elderly and farmworkers.

Suburban

Blending or characterized by the blending of the urban and the rural. A land use development pattern that is dispersed as opposed to decentralized.



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Sub-Area Planning/Community Planning

Subarea plans, also called community plans, are more detailed plans for smaller geographic areas within the County. Community plans focus on local issues, problems and opportunities, and may address land use, economic, social and other issues of local concern, at a finer level of detail than in the general policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

The transfer of the right to develop or build, expressed in dwelling units per acre, either on land within one zoning district under contiguous ownership, or from land in one zoning district to land in another district where such density/development is permitted.

Transit

A general term applied to passenger rail and bus service available for the use by the public and generally operated on fixed routes with fixed schedules.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

Methods or strategies aimed at changing travel behavior by reducing the demand for single occupancy vehicle travel rather than by expanding transportation facilities to meet travel demand. The strategies can include such things as expanding transit or ride-sharing options, changing parking policies, promoting work hour changes, and providing for telecommuting.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

A plan or schedule showing specific expenditures for transportation capital projects over a specific time period, often for six years.

Transportation Facilities

includes capital facilities related to air, water or land transportation.

Transportation Level of Service Standards

A measure that describes the operational condition of the travel stream and acceptable adequacy requirements. Such standards may be expressed in terms such as speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort, convenience, geographic accessibility, and safety.

Transportation System Management (TSM)

The use of inexpensive capital expenditures and other methods to increase the efficiency and capacity of the transportation system. TSM strategies include such things as intersection



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signalization, synchronization of traffic signals, the provision of left turn lanes, and the designation of one way streets.

Trip

A one-direction movement, which begins at the origin at the start time, ends at the destination at the arrival time, and is conducted for a specific purpose.

Trip generation

A general term describing the analysis and application of the relationships between the trip makers, the urban area, and the trip making.

Urban Density

Density equal to or higher than four dwelling units per one acre.

Urban Governmental Services

include those governmental services historically and typically delivered by cities, and include storm and sanitary sewer systems, domestic water systems, street cleaning services, fire and police protection services, public transit services, and other public utilities associated with urban areas and normally not associated with ~~non-urban~~ rural areas.

Urban Growth

refers to growth (commercial, industrial, and residential) that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of such land for the production of food, other agricultural products, or fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources, rural uses, rural development, and natural resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170. A pattern of more intensive rural development, as provided in RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d), is not urban growth. When allowed to spread over wide areas, urban growth typically requires urban governmental services.

"Characterized by urban growth" refers to land having urban growth located on it, or to land located in relationship to an area with urban growth on it as to be appropriate for urban growth.

Urban Growth Area

An area designated by the County pursuant to RCW 36.70A.110 within which most new growth is planned for and encouraged to locate. Urban Growth Areas include incorporated cities and towns (municipalities) along with any unincorporated area designated for future urban growth and annexation into the municipality's corporate limits. Urban Growth Areas also may be non-

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municipal, such as the Bayview Ridge UGA and the Swinomish UGA. Regulatory control of land within unincorporated Urban Growth Areas remains with the County until annexed into a city. The land and development controls within unincorporated Urban Growth Areas, however, may be subject to joint county/city or tribal interlocal planning agreements and concurrency.

Urban Sprawl

Urban sprawl manifests it self in one or more of the following patterns (a) Leapfrog development which bypasses vacant parcels located closer to the urban area that are suitable for development and instead locates away from existing urban areas; (b) strip development which allows commercial, retail, and multi-family residential developments to locate in a linear pattern along both sides of a major arterial; and (c) large expanses of low density, single-family dwelling development.

Use

The specific purpose for which land or a building is designated, arranged, intended, or for which it is or may be occupied or maintained.

Utilities or Public Utilities

enterprises or facilities serving the public by means of an integrated system of collection, transmission, distribution, and processing facilities through more or less permanent physical connections between the plant of the serving entity and the premises of the customer. Included are systems for the delivery of natural gas, electricity, and telecommunications services.

Visioning

A process of citizen involvement to determine values and ideals for the future of a community and to transform those values and ideals into manageable and feasible community goals.

Volcanic Hazard Areas

Areas subject to pyroclastic flows, lava flows, and inundation by debris flows, mudflows, or related flooding resulting from volcanic activity.

[Voluntary Stewardship Program](#)

[An alternative to traditional GMA for protecting critical areas in areas of agricultural activity, codified at RCW 36.70A.700-760.](#)



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Wetland or Wetlands

areas that are inundated or saturated by surface water or ground water at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, ~~and that under normal circumstances do support, and that under normal circumstances do support,~~ a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Wetlands generally include swamps, marshes, bogs, and similar areas. Wetlands do not include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland sites, including, but not limited to irrigation and drainage ditches, grass-lined swales, canals, detention facilities, wastewater treatment facilities, farm ponds, and landscape amenities, or those wetlands created after July 1, 1990, that were unintentionally created as a result of the construction of a road, street, or highway. Wetlands may include those artificial wetlands intentionally created from non-wetland areas created to mitigate conversion of wetlands.

Zone and Zoning District

A legislatively defined and enacted policy, including standards, a detailed map and other criteria, all of which control and define areas of physical development of the county or any part thereof or any detail thereof and which are classified by the zoning ordinance as available for certain uses and unavailable for certain other uses.

Zoning

The demarcation of an area by ordinance (text and map) into zones and the establishment of regulations to govern the uses within those zones (commercial, industrial, residential) and the location, bulk, height, shape and coverage of structures within each zone.



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Appendix B Milestones in the Comprehensive Planning Process

Timeline

Following is an overview of Skagit County's comprehensive planning between 1965 and the adoption of its first comprehensive plan under the Growth Management Act (GMA):

March 1965 Skagit County adopts its first Comprehensive Plan.

September 1968 Comprehensive Plan is amended.

1970 - 1980 Sphere-of-Influence agreement passed. County/city cooperative efforts define lands surrounding city limits.

1973 Resource Management begins with adoption of large tract zoning requirements for agriculture lands.

December 1973 North Central District Plan is adopted.

September 1974 Northwest District Plan is adopted.

August 1975 Islands District Plan is adopted.

1976 First forestry large tract requirements are passed.

1979 Five acre rural zoning district is adopted.

July 1979 Southwest and South Central District Plans are adopted.

April 1981 Resolution 8854 is passed enabling Joint Sphere of Influence agreements with cities.

June 1981 Amendment to Resolution 8854 is passed.

June 1981 Resolution 9312 is passed adopting Joint Sphere of Influence areas.

May 1982 Eastern District Plan is adopted.

1987 Ordinance No. 11158 established a Memorandum of Understanding to initiate joint comprehensive planning with Swinomish Tribe.



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- February 1990** Board of County Commissioners direct Skagit County Department of Planning and Community Development to review and recommend changes to district policies, including the recommendation of county-wide Comprehensive Plan policies.
- 1990** Formal establishment of environmental review SEPA co-lead status in the interim urban growth areas.
- April 1990** Growth Management Act passes House and Senate.
- June 1990** Growth Management Act planning team established.
- July 1990** Growth Management Act of 1990 formally adopted.
- September 1990** Vision for the Future, Vol. I published. Beginning of educational media campaign encouraging citizen participation in the Comprehensive Plan updating process. Thirty thousand (30,000) tabloid copies carried by Skagit Valley newspapers.
- October 1990 -
March 1991** Comprehensive Plan Policy Review and Update. Twenty-six community-wide meetings generated approximately 1,500 community values, statements and proposed policies.
- April 1991** A Vision for the Future, Vol. II published. Contained County's GMA Progress Report and update on watershed and shoreline plans, wetlands, natural resource areas, interim urban growth areas, and building permit information.
- July 1991** Passage of Re-engrossed House Bill 1025 requiring that policies be compatible with both city and County Comprehensive Plans.
- October 1991** Public Hearing on proposed Draft Comprehensive Plan Policies.
- October 1991** Planning Commission holds six policy study sessions over six months with
- March 1992** County and city staff to review public comment and recommendations for changes to existing Comprehensive Plan policies as proposed on October 14, 1991 in draft form.
- March 1992** Second Draft Comprehensive Plan County-wide Regional Policy document sent to all interested parties, 1,500 participants on the GMA mailing list, and outside agencies for review and comment.
- April 1992** Public Hearing to take formal public testimony regarding proposed countywide Regional Comprehensive Plan policies.



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- April 1992** Citizen Participation Newsletter mailed. Provided an update on GMA and comprehensive planning policy development and discussed upcoming citizen participation opportunities.
- July 1992** Adoption of the Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies by County and cities.
- September 1992** Informational Update Public Meetings (September 21, 23 and 30th). To discuss the development of and encourage citizen participation in the Housing, Forestry, Rural, Utilities, and Mineral Elements for Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan. Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) application forms made available through media and meetings.
- October 1992** Citizen Participation Newsletter mailed throughout Skagit County informing readers of the Board of County Commissioner's appointments to the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Element Citizen Advisory Committees.
- October 1992** Citizen Advisory Committee Orientation meeting held.
- October 1992 - August 1993** Ongoing Citizen Advisory Committee meetings for the Rural, Housing, Forestry, Agriculture, Utilities and Mineral elements.
- December 1992** In the winter of 1992, county-city discussions began relating to the establishment of Interim Growth Areas.
- July 1993** Adopting Temporary Interim Zoning for Unincorporated Skagit County which established 5 acre minimum lot sizes for multi-family residential, residential, residential reserve and rural intermediate zoning districts.
- September 1993** Citizen Participation Newsletter mailed. Information on upcoming citizen participation opportunities. Update on County activities on urban growth areas, land use designations, CAC activities, additional comprehensive plan elements and the environmental review process on proposed Comprehensive Plan.
- September 1993** Growth Management Act and State Environment Policy Act (SEPA) Comprehensive Plan informational meetings held in Concrete, Fidalgo Island and Mount Vernon.
- October 1993** Passage of Ordinance 15038 adopting Interim Urban Growth Areas.
- November 1993** Citizen Advisory Committee Open House for community review of proposed comprehensive plan element policies on rural, forestry, minerals, housing and agriculture.



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- December 1993** Planning Commission study session on proposed Comprehensive Plan Policies.
- 1994** County ordinance recognizes Swinomish Tribal Community, the Upper Skagit, and the Sauk-Suiattle Tribes as sovereign governments which created a government to government relationship.
- January 1994** A Vision for the Future, Vol. III published. Forty-five thousand (45,000) copies included in all newspapers within Skagit County. Provided an overview of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), a programmatic, non-project approach used to address the impacts of anticipated population increases in Skagit County consistent with Growth Management Act requirements. Department invites comments on the alternatives presented in the DEIS. Timeline outlined additional opportunities for public comment during the comprehensive plan adoption process.
- January 1994** Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) is published.
- January 1994** Planning Commission Study Session on Land Use Designation Element held.
- January 1994** Planning Commission Study Session on Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).
- January 1994** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Draft Land Use Element and DEIS.
- February 1994** Planning Commission Study Session on review of Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) draft Natural Resource Conservation Element.
- February 1994** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Natural Resource Conservation Element.
- March 1994** Adoption of Ordinance 15280 amending Ordinance 15038 regarding Interim UGAs.
- March 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to review Public Hearing public comments and staff report.
- March 1994** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Planning Commission proposed Natural Resource Conservation Element (Agriculture, Forestry and Minerals).
- April 1994** Planning Commission Study Session for deliberations and recommendations on Agriculture, Forest and Mineral elements.



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- April 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to review Citizen Advisory Committee's Draft Urban Growth Areas, Rural and Housing Elements
- April 1994** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Urban Growth Area, Rural and Housing Elements.
- April 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to review Citizen Advisory Committee Draft Utility and Transportation Elements.
- April 1994** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Citizen Advisory Committee Draft Capital Facilities, Utilities and Transportation Elements.
- May 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to deliberate on public comments and testimony on UGA draft element policies and CAC proposed Rural and Housing policies.
- May 1994** Passage of Ordinance 15372 extending Temporary Interim Zoning Regulations.
- May 1994** Planning Commission Study Session on review of public comments and staff report.
- May 1994** Planning Commission Public Hearing on Utility and Transportation Elements.
- May 1994** Planning Commission Study Session on deliberations and recommendations on Forest Resource Element.
- May 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to consider and begin deliberations on Capital Facilities Element.
- May 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to review and deliberate on proposed Mineral Element.
- June 1994** Planning Commission Study Session to review and deliberate on proposed Capital Facilities Element.
- June 1994** Planning Commission Study Session for deliberations and recommendations on proposed Mineral Element.
- June 1994** Publication of Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Use Element.
- June 1994** Copies of the policies of the Natural Resource Conservation Element, Rural, UGA, Housing, Transportation, and Utilities Element available for comment.
- June 1994** Planning Commission Study Session on UGA policy document.



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June 1994 Citizen Participation Newsletter mailed. Informed public of upcoming dates on the Comprehensive Plan proposed element policy documents.

June 1994 Passage of Ordinance No. 15432 authorizing the collection of impact fees.

July 1994 A Vision for the Future, Vol. IV published. Forty-eight thousand (48,000) copies included in all Skagit County newspapers. Tabloid presented information on the proposed Land Use Element, plan concept, objectives and designations; the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Land Use Element; a summary of land use actions which are part of proposal, maps of proposed Urban Growth Areas and Rural Villages; and the Executive Summary of the Skagit County Planning Commission Proposed Comprehensive Plan Element Policy document. Invited public and agency comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

July 1994 Planning Commission Study Session to discuss the process and timeline for reviewing public comments and written correspondence on proposed Comprehensive Plan Elements.

July 1994 Public Hearings on July 11 and 12 on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Use Element and the Planning Commission Proposed Comprehensive Plan Element Policy Document.

August 1994 All written correspondence on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Use Element of Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan and the Skagit County Planning Commission Proposed Comprehensive Plan Element Policy document are made available to the Planning Commission and public. Materials photocopied included all letters received during the extended comment period of June 17, 1994 through July 29, 1994.

August 1994 All exhibits submitted at the Skagit County Planning Commission Public Hearings on July 11 and 12, 1994 on the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Land Use Element for Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan and Skagit County Planning Commission Proposed comprehensive Plan Element Policy Document made available to Planning Commission and public.

August 1994 Planning Commission Study Sessions on the Economic and Utility elements and on Urban Growth Areas.



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- September 1994** Planning Commission Study Sessions on Urban Growth Areas, and the Rural and Forestry Elements.
- October 1994** Publication of the Skagit County Planning Commission Revised Comprehensive Plan Element Policy Document and Revised Land Use Element.
- October 1994** Planning Commission Study Sessions on the Rural, Transportation, and Land Use Elements.
- November 1994** Planning Commission Study Sessions on the Land Use Element.
- December 1994** Planning Commission Study Sessions on Rural Villages.
- January 1995** Planning Commission Study Session on Land Use Element, Goal B.
- January 1995** Planning Commission Study Session on Environment and Capital Facilities Elements.
- January 1995** Public Hearing on Environment, Economic Development and Capital Facilities Elements.
- January 1995** Planning Commission Study Session to review public comments and written correspondence on Environment, Economic Development and Capital Facilities Elements.
- February 1995** Planning Commission Study Sessions on the Environment, Capital Facilities and Economic Elements.
- March 1995** Planning Commission Study Sessions on draft elements of the Comprehensive Plan.
- April 1995** Planning Commission Study Sessions to review draft Comprehensive Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) on Skagit County's Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Element.
- May 1995** Review of the draft Planning Commission Review Copy of the Comprehensive Plan, Map Portfolio and Addendum to the Final EIS.
- May 1995** Release of above documents for a 30 day comment period.
- May 1995** Determination of Non-Significance and adoption of existing environmental documents (to consider draft elements of the Comprehensive Plan on Natural Resource Conservation)
- May 1995** Notice of Availability on the Addendum to the FEIS for the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan



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- July 1995** Planning Commission Study Session to review and discuss Skagit County's 6 year Transportation Improvement Plan
- August – December 1995** Planning Commission reviews Public Comments of draft Comprehensive Plan
- November 1995** Board of Commissioners' adoption of Revised IUGAs, moving boundaries to existing city limits.
- December 1995** Planning Commission completes review of draft Comprehensive Plan
- February 1996** Critical Areas Ordinance before Planning Commission
- February - April 1996** Planning Commission review of Critical Areas Ordinance
- April 1996** Draft Critical Areas Ordinance
- May 1996** Board of County Commissioner public hearing on draft CAO
- May 1966** Critical Areas Ordinance adopted
- May 1996** Addendum to EIS issued on Skagit County classification and designation of Natural Resource Lands
- June 1996** Board of County Commissioners and Planning Commission hold public hearing on Natural Resource Lands
- June- July 1996** Planning Commission reviews public comments on Natural Resource Lands. deliberates and forwards recommendation
- July 1996** Planning Commission holds public hearing and recommends approval of Countywide planning policies
- August 1996** Board of County Commissioners holds public hearing on draft Natural Resource Lands Ordinance and map
- August 1996** Board of County Commissioners approves amendments to Countywide Planning Policies
- August- October 1996** Interlocal Agreements re: Urban Growth Areas executed between County and cities of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and La Conner
- September 1996** Natural Resource Lands Ordinance adopted
- November 1996** Draft 1996 Comprehensive Plan and Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement made available for public review and comment



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December 1996 Planning Commission public hearing on Draft 1996 Comprehensive Plan and Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact.

January – March 1997 Planning Commission conducts twice a week study sessions to review public comment on the Draft Plan and DSEIS.

March 1997 Planning Commission forwards recommendation on Comprehensive Plan to Board of County Commissioners.

April 1997 In early April 1997, the Board of County Commissioners after review of the Planning Commission's recommendation identified several issues that warranted further public debate and remanded the draft Plan back to the Planning Commission for additional public review and comment. Later in April 1997, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the draft Plan, reviewed public comment and written correspondence, deliberated and forwarded a revised Plan to the Board of County Commissioners for review and action.

May 1997 In May 1997, the county issued the FSEIS on the draft Plan. On May 19, 1997 the Board of County Commissioners reviewed the Planning Commission's recommended draft Plan, deliberated, made revisions and passed Ordinance No. 16550 initially adopting this Comprehensive Plan.

Citizen Advisory Committees in the Development of the 1997 Plan

Natural Resource Conservation

Agricultural

Andy Anderson, Earl Angevine, Cheryl Bishop, Allen Bush, Serena Campbell, Chuck Dynes, Carolyn Kelly, Roger Knutzen, Jim Koetje, Don Kruse, Carl Loeb, Danny Miller, Joe Von Moos, Marvin Omdal, Lyle Wesen, Don Wick, Chip Wiles (Staff: Rob Knable, Kraig Olason)

Forestry

Greg Arris, Donna Butler, Dave Chamberlain, Jim Chu, Don Van Etten, Jim Harris, James Karcher, Paul Kreigel, Doyle McClure, Ken Osborn, Tim Raschko, George Shelton, Gerald Steel, Keith Wyman, (Staff: Jim Cahill)



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Mineral

Garth Anderson, Doug Argo, Mike Crawford, Doug Dillenberger, Mark Hitchcock, Kenny Portis, Dick Threet, Rick Van Pelt, Shirley Viscalla (Staff: Pat Bunting)

Rural

Mike Adkinson, Gary Arentzen, Dr. Herbert Goldston, Dean Hayes, Sr., Willard Hendrickson, Gary Jones, Susan Meyer, Carol Oglesbee, Louis Requa, Ed Stauffer, Paul Taylor, Andrea Xaver (Staff: Gary Christensen)

Housing

Kathleen Brown, Susan Corsden, Cecelia Johnson, Al Jongsma, Brian McGuinness, Judy Montoya, Geneal Posey-Fox, Stephen Story, José Viscalla, Mike Youngquist (Staff: Edwyna Fong)

Utilities

Peter Avondo, Martin Corin, Gary Dickinson, Jerry Kaufman, Marianne Kooiman, Jim Loop, Kelley Molstad, Linda Storbakken, Craig Swenter, John Weiss (Staff: Pat Bunting)

Transportation

Bob Boudinot, Bill Carlisle, Robert Eakins, James Falk, Dale Fisher, Harland Forrest, Steve Hood, Donald Hoye, Chuck McConnell, Bruce Wells (Staff: Jim Cahill)

Economic

Ruth Aven, Peter Avondo, Dan Davis, Don Fero, Dave Hedlin, Stewart Jones, Patsy Martin, Kelley Molstad, Danielle Mullen, Ian Munce, Harry Ota, Pat Pearce, John Piazza, Don Slocum, Bill Taylor, Bob Vozar, Don Wick, Bert Williamson (Consultant: Eric Hovee, Staff: Edwyna Fong)

Environment

Dave Chamberlain, John Day, Woody Deryckx, Lorna Ellestad, Elsa Gruber, Ranger Kidwell-Ross, Anita Klein, Roger Knutzen, Bobbi Krebs-McMullen, George McFadden, Brian McGuinness, Ian Munce, Allan Olson, Bill Reinard, Jim Scott, Paul Taylor, Don Van Etten, Don Wick, Margaret Yeoman, Nancy Paine-Donovan (Facilitator: Claire S. Reiner, Staff: Gary Christensen, Oscar Graham, Edwyna Fong)



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Environment Technical Advisory Committee

Jon Aarstad, Jim Beaster, Martha Bray, Dave Brookings, Kurt Buchanan, Jim Chu, Mike Davison, Terry Doran, David Fredrick, Noel Gilbrough, Jerry Heller, Carolyn Kelly, Steve Nissley, Terry Nyman, Bill Paleck, Britt Pfaff, Zoë Pfahl, Ann Remsburg, Alice Schisel, Brad Spangler, Art Stendal, Terry Stevens, Gary Voorman, Larry Wasserman

Editor's Note: existing Appendices C and D are deleted.