



Preserving Our Heritage, Shaping Our Future

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Dear County Commissioners and Mayors:

We feel privileged to have been chosen by you to serve on the Envision Skagit 2060 Citizen Committee. We have had the rare opportunity to learn things about Skagit County that only a look behind the 50-year curtain could unveil. More importantly, beyond the reams of technical data, field trips, and expert testimony, we have learned from the people who live and work here what they really value. We have learned what they want to preserve for their children and grandchildren a half century from now.

In 10 public visioning meetings from Concrete to Anacortes, we heard Skagit residents express the same set of priorities and values again and again. The people in Skagit County most want to preserve diverse local agriculture, our other healthy and diverse natural systems (including forests, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat), and the access and connections to nature that they find here. People value the beauty of Skagit County and the opportunity to make a living here. They also appreciate the global significance of these natural systems, open space, and the working ag lands that make our home unique. We also heard what they don't want Skagit County to become, with apologies to its fine citizens – that is, the Kent Valley.

How do we preserve these deeply expressed values with our population expected to double—another 100,000 folks—over the next 50 years? Coming up with the preferred land use future was our challenge. It will be your challenge as elected leaders to work together to make this preferred future happen.

The essence of our concept is to steer most of the new population into existing cities – 90% of the new growth – to avoid development in ag lands, floodplains, and forestlands. We cannot preserve what people value by sprawling over it.

We recognize that making our cities more populous creates financial and political challenges, and yet also offers opportunities for vibrant, desirable neighborhoods, positive examples of which abound here and in nearby communities. We offer specific recommendations to help with the future costs of growing our cities.

We also offer a recommendation – actually a plea as citizens – to work together more collaboratively toward a common vision for Skagit County. Our increasing population can only be ignored or avoided at the peril of what we all care about here.



Envision Skagit 2060 works with Skagit County residents to develop a broadly-supported, 50-year vision to protect our environment, sustain our natural resource industries, and accommodate population growth in livable, walkable and economically-vibrant communities.

Our recommendations are organized as goal statements under the following headings:

- I. Regional Coordination, Collaboration, and Cooperation;
- II. Natural Resource Lands and Industries;
- III. Environmental Resources and Values;
- IV. Compact Communities and Conservation Development;
- V. Sustainable Transportation System;
- VI. Water [in progress];
- VII. Housing Variety and Affordability;
- VIII. Economics [in progress]; and
- IX. Climate Change

Attached is a summary highlighting some of our key recommendations. Also attached is a comprehensive set of all of our draft recommendations.

We look forward to speaking with you about our work on Thursday.

John Cheney, Mount Vernon
Kerri Cook, Alger
Cory Ertel, Anacortes
Peggy Flynn, Anacortes
Jim Meyer, Rockport
Kim Mower, Hamilton area

Grace Popoff, Concrete area
Gustavo Ramos, Jr., Mount Vernon
Doris Robbins, Edison
Tim Rosenhan, Samish Island
Ryan Sakuma, Burlington
Nate Youngquist, West of Mount Vernon