

CHAPTER 11

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

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 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.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT 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:

- (5) *Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this 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.*
- (8) *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.*

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. (CPP5.2)*
- *Economic diversity should be encouraged in rural communities where special incentives and services can be provided. (CPP5.3)*
- *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)*
- *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 future needs.

The following goals and policies are supported by the analyses and strategies included in the Economic Development Profile.

GOAL A EMPLOYMENT

Encourage the creation and retention of diverse employment opportunities.

GOAL A1 INDUSTRY

Encourage resource-based industries as a major part of Skagit County's economy.

GOAL A2 LIVING WAGE JOBS

Encourage the creation and retention of living wage jobs to meet the needs and demands of Skagit County households.

GOAL A3 ENTREPRENEURS

Encourage diverse job options and entrepreneurial opportunities for persons interested in full-time and part-time employment or desiring to own their own business.

GOAL A4 SKILL BUILDING

Encourage educational opportunities for residents of all ages to develop and upgrade skills required for employment, advancement and entrepreneurship.

Policies

- 11A-1.1** Encourage local business investments that provide economic and employment opportunities for all county residents.
- 11A-1.2** Work cooperatively with local jurisdictions, the Economic Development Association of Skagit County, and federal and state agencies to promote economic development and employment opportunities consistent with countywide economic development policies.
- 11A-1.3** Accommodate home-based businesses that are compatible with the character of adjoining properties and neighborhoods.
- 11A-1.4** 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.

COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

GOAL B 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.

GOAL B1 DIVERSITY

Complement Skagit County's natural resource industries by encouraging a diversified base of non-resource businesses and industries.

GOAL B2 CAPACITY

Plan for sufficient buildable industrial lands with access to infrastructure and services to meet the evolving needs of industry.

GOAL B3 REDEVELOPMENT

Encourage the re-use of existing industrial sites that have potential for reuse or redevelopment.

GOAL B4 TELECOMMUNICATIONS

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.

GOAL B5 RECRUITMENT

Promote business recruitment and development of firms that will diversify the local economy and compete effectively in local, national and international markets.

GOAL B6 RETENTION

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.

GOAL B7 MARINE INDUSTRY

Recognize the importance of the marine-based economy of Skagit County in the County's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

GOAL B8 UPPER SKAGIT VALLEY

Strive to stimulate the economy of the upper Skagit Valley through protection of resource-based industry, compatible tourism, and community development strategies.

Policies

- 11B-1.1** Long term commercially significant natural resource industries and operations shall be protected from encroachment by incompatible uses
- 11B-1.2** In cooperation with the cities, ports, tribes, and users, conduct an inventory of buildable lands suitable for urban and rural commercial and industrial development.
- 11B-1.3** 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.

- 11B-1.4** Land designated as industrial shall accommodate a mix of uses, and include public and private ownership consistent with market demands and trends.
- 11B-1.5** 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.
- 11B-1.6** Participate in seeking grant funding for the following:
- Clean-up of contaminated sites;
 - Re-use and redevelopment of infill sites;
 - Improvement of infrastructure to support economic development; and
 - Strategic investment in business recruitment and expansion.

VISITOR SERVICES

GOAL C DESTINATION

Support Skagit County as a visitor destination by preserving and enhancing the unique qualities of both rural areas and urban communities.

GOAL C1 VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

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.

GOAL C2 TOURISM ATTRACTION

Promote the county's excellent regional location, lodging and retail opportunities and local public transportation options as attractions for tourism.

Policies

- 11C-1.1** 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.
- 11C-1.2** 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.
- 11C-1.3** Visitor facilities should be sited at locations that can be served with necessary public infrastructure and are compatible with surrounding uses.
- 11C-1.4** Plans for rural area visitor facilities and services shall not conflict with rural lifestyles, critical areas, and the long-term commercial significance of natural resources, and shall be coordinated with appropriate local, state, and federal agencies.

HUMAN SERVICES

GOAL D SERVICE SUPPORT

Support a full range of human and social services necessary to encourage a strong local economy.

GOAL D1 HUMAN SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Encourage the linkage of job creation needs and opportunities with human and social services including health care, education, transportation, employment assistance, and welfare.

GOAL D2 ACCESS TO SERVICES

Encourage sufficient sites for human and social services, and improved access to those services, to meet the needs of Skagit County employees and employers.

GOAL D3 FACILITIES

Support development and maintenance of human and social service facilities through funding decisions and land use codes.

CONSERVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GOAL E QUALITY OF LIFE

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.

Policies

- 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.
- 11E-1.2** 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

GOAL F TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

Acknowledge economic development needs in formulating recommendations for improvements to transportation facilities and services.

GOAL F1 INFRASTRUCTURE

Work with ports, economic development organizations, cities, transportation providers, and agencies to provide the infrastructure necessary to facilitate a sustainable county economy.

GOAL F2 MARINE ECONOMY

Recognize the importance of the marine-based economy of Skagit County in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS).

GOAL F3 PORTS

Support the economic and job-creating activities of the port districts to ensure their long-term viability.

Policies

- 11F-1.1** 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.
- 11F-1.2** Support the Port of Anacortes in its efforts to more fully utilize the Port's deep draft marine terminal for trade, commerce and related economic development.

- 11F-1.3** 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

GOAL G PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

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.

GOAL G1 PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Encourage public investments aimed at maintaining a high quality of life and attracting business investment.

GOAL G2 ANTICIPATE CHANGE

Recognize the need for flexibility in promoting economic development to be responsive to unforeseen or changing economic conditions and community expectations.

GOAL G3 INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

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.

GOAL G4 FISCAL IMPACT

Encourage economic development that creates a net positive fiscal impact for Skagit County.

Policies

- 11G-1.1** 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.
- 11G-1.2** 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. Coordinate with other (federal and state) permitting agencies to simplify procedures.
- 11G-1.3** 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 GMA update schedule.
- 11G-1.4** 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.
- 11G-1.5** 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 local economy.
- 11G-1.6** Implement the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to build local capacity for sustained economic development.

