

**Skagit County Planning Commission  
Briefing: 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update  
July 23, 2024**

**Planning**

**Commissioners:** Kathy Mitchell, District 1 (absent)  
Vince Henley, District 1  
Angela Day, District 1  
Amy Hughes, District 2  
Tim Raschko, Chair, District 2  
Joe Woodmansee, District 2  
Tammy Candler, Vice Chair, District 3  
Martha Rose, District 3  
Jen Hutchison, District 3

**PDS Staff:** Jack Moore, Director  
Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner  
Tara Satushek, Senior Planner

**Consultants:** Clay White, Kimley>>>Horn  
Lisa Grueter, BERK

**Public Commenters:** Mike Fohn

Chair Tim Raschko: (gavel) Good evening. The July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024, meeting of the Skagit County Planning Commission is now in session. We are missing Commissioner Mitchell. I believe we have everybody else. And I call for a motion to approve the minutes from July 9.

Commissioner Jen Hutchison: I'll so move.

Commissioner Vince Henley: Second.

Chair Raschko: It's moved and seconded to approve the minutes on July 9. Is there any discussion of the minutes?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Okay, all those in favor, say "aye."

Multiple Commissioners: Aye.

Chair Raschko: Opposed?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: So that passes. Tonight we have Public Remarks. This time on the agenda is an opportunity for anybody to speak to the Planning Commission about any topic except items

scheduled on the agenda for a public hearing the same day – which would be today – or items that have had a public hearing and are still under Planning Commission deliberation. Public Remarks, which is *not* part of the formal public participation process, for any development regulation or Comprehensive Plan amendment project, is limited to three minutes per speaker and up to 15 minutes overall.

So is there anybody who wishes to – okay. If you would please state your name and address before you begin, it'd be appreciated.

Mike Fohn: Hello. My name is Mike Fohn. I'm from Bow, Washington. I spent 30 years being a small town CPA, primarily a tax accountant working with individuals and small business owners. I don't have much of an accounting practice left and I have more free time and I'm just curious about the Comp Plan review process. And I read the Kimberly>>>Horn memo that you received regarding the presentation this evening and I just had a few comments from an accountant's perspective.

The purpose of the Comp Plan update is to ensure consistency with legislative and regulatory changes, incorporate Best Available Science, and changes in local conditions. The fact that local conditions is the third objective was kind of surprising. It seemed like it would be the *most* important for Skagit County residents. The comments in the memo include having a robust engagement as part of the update will ensure the community vision is captured. Strong community engagement also ensures the Planning Commission and the Board of County Commissioners have the best information as updates to the plan are considered. We have 131,000 people in our county. The Commissioner districts are roughly divided by population, adjusted each 10 years by some census districts. It amazes me that we only had 717 responses. Seldom do I go to a cocktail party where the County isn't taking it on the chin from one side or the other for what they do or don't do. It just amazes me we can't get better participation than that.

Oh, so 717 is less than – or approximately ½ of 1% of the population. Eighty-three percent came from District 1. That's six times as much as District 2. It's 30 times as much as District 3. Nineteen responses from District 3 is not adequate. That does not represent those people's points of view. The approximate number of residents per response: District 1 had a response for every 76 residents; District 2 had a response for every 443 residents; and District 3 had a response for every 2200 residents. That's an average overall of one response per 200 residences.

Concerns I have is, Is the sample size statistically sufficient to base the Comp Plan update decisions on? Two, with the limited sample, some ratings of priorities are statistically equal. If you look at page 10 of 23, where it ranks – they give a score to each of the six areas – it's clearly farmland was one, was the first priority. But improving housing supply in the environmental presentation, that's a dead heat: 3.67 to 3.78. Statistically I don't think you can appreciate the difference between that small of a difference. And then there's a third category which has environmental preservation, economic growth, and – or excuse me. The third category is economic growth, community resilience, and transportation improvements. 2.88, 2.96, 2.97. When we read the rankings, we assume that there's a big difference between 3 and 4 or 4 and 5, but in reality they're very, very close.

Chair Raschko: Sir, your time is up.

Mr. Fohn: Oh, sorry.

Chair Raschko: That's all right. We appreciate your coming in and your comments. Thank you. Is there anybody else?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Is there anybody online that you know of?

Tara Satushek: (inaudible)

Robby Eckroth: So if you're online and on Zoom, if you'd like to speak please unmute and turn on your camera if you'd like, and you can start speaking and give your public comments.

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Looks like nobody.

Mr. Eckroth: Yeah, no one's unmuting.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Well, thank you. That ends Public Remarks.

(incomprehensible comments)

Chair Raschko: Oh, we have somebody?

Mr. Eckroth: Oh, I believe they're just connecting. So we're just ending our Public Remarks here. If anybody would like to speak, you can please – if you wouldn't mind unmuting by clicking in the left corner. There's an unmute button, if you'd like to give any public remarks. It doesn't look like anyone's unmuting.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Well, thank you. So we'll turn now to a Comprehensive Plan Update. It'll be first a Project Overview, then a Community Engagement Overview, then a Preliminary Draft Policy Amendments for Rural and Natural Resource Land Elements. This will be led by Clay White of Kimley>>>Horn and Lisa Grueter from BERK. So welcome.

Clay White: I'm not sure if these are on or not.

Chair Raschko: Would you like questions –

Mr. White: They are? Okay, just perfect. Hopefully everybody can hear me okay. For the record, my name is Clay White, consultant with Kimley>>>Horn, joined by my colleague Lisa Grueter with BERK, and she'll be joining in a few minutes. I'm going to do a little bit of an introduction and then we're going to talk a little bit about policies tonight and get things going.

I really appreciated the public comment tonight. I mean, I think it's really important that we engage the community as part of this process. We're going to talk a little bit about our strategy tonight to provide opportunities for people to connect. That community voice in terms of how things are listed, in terms of importance, certainly the, you know, how Skagit County wants to grow, the things that are important to you as most important is your planning and a comprehensive plan. So those are not listed in any particular order. And that's one of the reasons that we're here tonight, is to have that process to make sure that we're not just modifying policies or have plans to be looking at the Growth Management Act or state laws that you have to be looking at. But how

can you do it a way that fits Skagit County? Because this planning in Washington State is a bottoms-up planning process and we want to make sure that that's integrated into this plan update.

As we go through this tonight, know that both of us are here to answer any questions that you have. We want to make sure that we're responsive to any of your needs and any questions you have as part of this update.

So I know that the planning team has been here to provide some updates, giving a little bit of a basis for the purpose of a comprehensive plan. There was some information in your packet: the staff memo, some policy information to kind of tee up the conversation tonight so we can answer any questions that you have. But looking at just some pretty high level goals for tonight, because we're going to be with you for the next four or five months on deployment just on this preliminary draft set of policies, and then we're going to be coming back to you in the wintertime when we start really pulling drafts together. So this is a long process. It's intentional because we want to make sure there's plenty of opportunity for people to communicate with the Planning Commission and with the planning team in ways that they feel comfortable as policies are put together. So this isn't the first time we're going to be talking about policies. This will be one of many meetings that we'll be here with you.

So we'll talk a little bit about the project schedule, overview, and provide a little bit of an update. That will key in a little bit on just kind of this is that beginning step. We're probably going to go through some of this at every Planning Commission meeting so that if there's people that are joining online for the first time or they're just interested in one or two elements but not the whole Comp Plan, they can understand our process that we're working through with all of you.

We'll do a little bit of a community engagement overview. We're working on the full draft summary of everything we've done thus far and that will come to you before your meeting next month, so we're just going to do a little high level overview for you. We'll talk about the policy revision approach so it just kind of – as we're reviewing policies to propose revisions that you can then help us shape as we go through that public engagement process. What's the process we're utilizing to get from where we are to where we want to be as a community? Just we're going to talk just about that really briefly. And then we have our first two elements tonight, preliminary drafts – that's a policy \_\_\_. Rural Element and your Natural Resources Land Element. There are a lot of policies. So it's a lot to go through. So, you know, our approach is to talk about the draft kind of policy changes that we're proposing very high level. We want to have a conversation with you to understand the types of policy changes you might want to see. That's going to help us along the way. We're also opening this up for public comment and so we'll talk about that as well.

So just a little bit of a project overview. So we kicked this project off in the late winter this year. I know work has been going on prior to that with the planning team. And this work's going to extend until probably around June of next year. So it's a long, long process. You can see from the slide where we are.

There's some steps that we kind of walk through when we're doing a comprehensive plan. The first kind of steps is you're looking at existing conditions. It's hard to plan for 2045 if you can't understand kind of what the existing conditions are: Where are we today? So that looks at things like reviewing your comprehensive plan policies for consistency with state law changes that have happened since the last update; completing a Land Capacity Analysis so you know how much capacity do you currently have to absorb the growth that you're planning for versus how much you need to be able to accommodate it, and where are those gaps. That's where you look at

zoning changes or map changes to be able to accommodate that growth. Looking at revisions to your Countywide Planning Policies. So those are policies that are shared between the County and all the Cities. That draft is still going through the legislative process but there's policy – there is policy amendments that are being considered by the County. And you're going to want consistency in your plan with any, like, regional strategic vision.

And, of course, as part of this, we're also doing a housing needs assessment, so we're looking at how affordable is housing in the community. It'll help us plan for the growth that we're planning for because of lots of changes to the Housing Element requirements under the Growth Management Act. So there's some baseline conditions information that's really, really important that allows us to kind of move forward. Because if we're proposing policy changes they're really focused on the things you might want to do to take you from where you are to where you want to plan for in the future. What are the things that are important to you? How do you want to plan and protect the things that are important to Skagit County?

In addition to the existing conditions information, we've done a lot of early community engagement. Community engagement is something that's going to happen throughout the project, but this is kind of the early steps to connect with the community and understand the things that are important to them, the things that we should focus on, the things that they'd like to see that are different. And so we've done a lot of community outreach so far to connect with people and communities and provide opportunities for them to connect. So we'll talk a little bit about that.

So that kind of sets the stage for starting to make changes. And so a lot of times with the comprehensive plan, the process that you could do is collect your existing conditions information and then propose a whole bunch of comprehensive plan amendments, take it through your public meeting process, take it through a public hearing process, and then you'd be complete. What we've done is we're breaking this up into a two-step process so where we're at right now is we've decided to kind of break this up to have an initial review of current elements. So this summer right now we're looking at the Rural and Natural Resource Elements and we're going to have a comment period for 30 days, and this is, like, on the preliminary set of policies. So these aren't final. You haven't had input; the community hasn't had input yet; 30-day comment period. We can then take all that public comment that we've heard from our initial community engagement – everything we're hearing is part of this process – and utilize that to prepare an official draft comprehensive plan this winter.

And so for the next few months we're going to be going through – next month, we'll talk about Land Use Element, Housing, and Economic Development; the following month, Transportation and Capital Facilities and Utilities; and the following month, Climate Resiliency and Environment. So what this does is break it up into smaller pieces. Sometimes if you – if you just released a draft, if we just had some meetings – we talked but we didn't release anything for the public to see – you release a very large document with all of these elements, it's *really* hard to participate. So what we're trying to do is break this up into pieces because some people might really care about housing or they might care about climate or environment or natural resource lands, and this gives them an opportunity to review in smaller pieces and provide comment. So we hope that that's really helpful. We don't have to be rushed as we're going through this process so we're just taking that in steps.

There's a – you know, we've got the link that's online here but through the County website, you know, we'll have all of these documents online. We've got a good website. People can not only comment but they can sign up to get informed of future processes, public meetings and hearings,

and be engaged, and all of the project information will be online. So if they want to find information we have all of that on the County website.

So in public comment we heard a little bit about perspectives on community engagement. We have done our first community survey. I know that the planning team provided you some feedback on what we heard from the community as part of that work. But we've also had pop-up events. We've gone and met the community where they are. We've had, you know, in trying to meet people who were there we've had folks that have been able to do translation services, trying to go to events where people attend – just trying to find ways to connect with people. We've done a number of stakeholder interviews that have focused on groups with agriculture, environment, housing, forestry, economic development. So meeting with different groups in the county. We've got questions that we put together just to interview these different groups. So we're going to summarize all the feedback that we heard from these groups. We've done three open houses that I think they were well attended, one in each of the Commissioner districts. We had one in Anacortes, one in Sedro-Woolley, and one in Concrete. So as a way to provide an early way for people to come and just ask questions. So for those open houses, we just set up stations by element and provided – and so people could walk around and ask questions about some of the things that we may be looking at. They could provide sticky notes where they could write on things that are important to them and put them up on the board. We've got a *lot* of responses, so we're summarizing all of those so you'll have those as we go through some of these drafts.

Public comment periods, obviously on these early drafts we're going to have public comment periods. We're going to have an open house later this year when we get close to the Environment and Climate Elements. We know that there's going to be people that will be interested in those topics so we're going to have an open house that will go directly with the release of those early draft policies. So it'll be an opportunity for people to come and ask questions about those particular elements. We'll also have a station for the Comprehensive Plan as a whole, so if somebody wants to come and talk about housing or land use or forestry or agriculture, they can certainly do that. I think we're planning on having that one in Mount Vernon so I think we're looking for that location on that. That'll happen this year. And then we'll have a survey as well.

So those are some of the things that we've done and are doing. We're summarizing all of this into a report for you so you can kind of see all the early feedback that we've received. And then engagement's going to happen throughout the process. Again, we'll be here every month, and then when we release the draft Comprehensive Plan there's going to be additional meetings and hearings as we go through the process, so I'm hoping that we'll continue to get good feedback from the community. And, obviously, we want as many responses that we can get to surveys and do as much outreach as we can and get the word out as much as we can. So, you know, especially when you're out in the community outside these meetings, anything you can help share the news that we're updating the Comprehensive Plan. Everything is helpful. But I think we're really focused on just trying to meet people where they are, not just within public meetings but going out to events so we \_\_\_.

So just really quickly on our policy revision approach. So as we kind of just put together in our memo – and this is where I'm hoping that we can start the conversation tonight and have this as we continue to meet through next spring – is that there are some things – and the reason we kind of listed these state law requirements first is because I want to just talk through those and then you get to the good stuff. Because a comprehensive plan, you think about it it's – we're starting this, we're going to adopt this in 2025, and it's your road map to 2045. You know, what are the things that you're wanting to protect and \_\_\_? As you're planning for growth, how do you have infrastructure, schools, all the things that you need to make it successful? How do you have a

transportation network that works? While there *are* things that you have to do, so much of this comes from community vision. I mean, and what we're really focused on is as you go through these policies – I said this before – there are currently *a lot of* policies. And what we really want to do is make sure that we can turn these policies into an action plan for you. They really – policies really should provide direction. What do we want to accomplish and *how* are we going to do it and *who's* going to do it and *when* are we going to do it? You know, it *has* to be things where you're talking about coordinating with other agencies to accomplish goals. *Which* agencies? *How* are you going to do it? *What* are you trying to achieve? So we're really trying to take a deeper look with this comprehensive plan so that when we take a look at all the policies in your elements we can extract your to-do list, and that can be focused with the County as they're talking about their budget or they're talking about how they spend their time with their work programs. So think about this as you can do some visioning to really think about: like, what are the things that are important to you that you want to accomplish during the planning period to get you from where you are to where you want to go? And the policy direction can really help you get there.

So we *are* looking for a consistency with the Growth Management Act. There *are* laws that have changed since the last time you updated your Comprehensive Plan. We're really just looking at that small gap between those ten years. There isn't as much as there has been in your first couple of planning updates. So when the Growth Management first came in there was a lot of change. And as you did your first update – you know, 20 years ago – there was a lot of case law, a lot of things that have changed. It's more nuanced now. There're some specific focus areas that we're going to be on but there's not a ton that's changing.

We want to make sure there's consistency with your region, your Countywide Planning Policies. So those are those shared policies. What do you want to accomplish between a County and the Cities if you're working together on common goals? Making sure we have consistency there. And then streamlining policy language. So making sure that – terminology if really important. If you say you *should* do something, what does that mean? If you say you *shall* do something, that means something completely different. If you *consider* something, you know – so sometimes there's very passive language in policies that will – probably you probably won't do anything with it. Consider thinking about how you're going to accomplish a certain goal if it doesn't give any direction to what department would need to take that up or when would they take it up or what are they really trying to accomplish. So you'll see some over the next few months just cleaning up policies to try to provide them so they have – they're more directionally focused. And then, of course, we talked about creating an action plan, a policy. So it may not be tonight, but as we continue to come to you over the next few months, I mean, that's really what we're looking for from you at this first stage – is, you know, what ideas do you have when we're talking about the rural natural environment/ natural resource lands on the things that are really important? What did we hear from the community members? And then we can start structuring policies that align with what you want to accomplish. And hopefully by the time we get to next winter and we have a full draft comprehensive plan – that's the big book that will go out for public comment – you can really start to see and envision, like, what are the things we're going to accomplish in the next decade before we update our plan again? So that's what we hope to be working with you on in the next couple months.

But tonight we're just focused on two elements: Rural Element and preliminary draft amendments, and then our Natural Resource Lands. And I'll turn it over to Lisa to start our conversation.

Lisa Grueter: Thank you and good evening to the Commission. So as Clay mentioned, we focused on the Rural and Natural Resource Elements first, and I want to give an overview of what things we took a look at that kind of fit the list that Clay described.

The urban areas are sized for the growth – for the majority of growth. That’s been the policy in the County and with the Cities, that the majority of growth goes in urban areas. You’re required to protect natural resource lands for agriculture, forestry, and mining. And then the rest is typically rural that – I don’t know how I got there; sorry about that. The rest is rural and needs to protect rural character, and that’s part of what Skagit County gets to define. There are some parameters.

So there’s generally those three broad areas. So the rural lands are designated for lands that are compatible with rural character and provide for a variety of rural densities. And the idea is densities that don’t promote sprawl; that are distinct from urban areas; and are not reliant on urban services – and typically urban services are things like sewer, for example; and that you’re still protecting those natural resource lands. Some of the new changes in the state law were to – there are some exceptions in the rural lands for more intense areas of development. It’s called Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development. Those are things like villages that may have existed before the Growth Management Act. They’re communities that are at crossroads or in – surrounded maybe by agricultural lands but that have long-standing communities. And those are sort of villagelike. Sometimes you have crossroads where you have sort of tourist kinds of uses or rural business. So there *are* some exceptions to that sort of broader, low density rural areas versus urban areas. And in the state law, it’s allowed for a little more flexibility on what you can do within those defined Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development. It’s identifying the sizes of some of the commercial and retail areas and it’s also allowing for more intensity *within* those initial boundaries, provided there’s public services like water. So that’s where some of the proposed changes are coming from, is to recognize those new changes.

We did also take a look through for opportunities to streamline some of the goals and policies by moving some of the language into discussion. Like, it could be a text box on the same page to describe things but it could streamline the policy, keep the intent, and put some of the discussion-like language in the Element but maybe not as part of the policy, because then the policy is hard to interpret, and trying to keep to the intent is a way that you can make the plan more implementable. So that’s on the Rural side.

On the Natural Resource Lands side, we also did take a look. The state has criteria for the counties to – and it’s counties that are basically designating the Natural Resource Lands because typically those are not inside the city limits. But they are criteria in the state rules that implement the Growth Management Act that talk about what are the criteria for designating agriculture lands of long-term significance, forestlands, and mineral lands. And those same criteria that you used to designate are the same criteria by which if somebody makes a request to de-designate, you have to go through those same criteria and say why those criteria are no longer applicable to that area. The state didn’t do a *ton* of changes to the rules, but one of the things they clarified for all the types of Natural Resource Lands was they want a countywide evaluation and not to do sort of individual requests but to group them. And as you’re considering potential de-designation requests, that you’re considering everything cumulatively and those changes in the context of the countywide supply of agriculture lands of long-term significance or forestlands or mineral lands. They do give a little bit more flexibility for mineral lands when they are under reclamation. So when there’s a mine site, they have to under the state laws – Department of Natural Resources – they have to have a reclamation plan on file. So if they’re finished mining and they’re working towards reclamation the County has a little more flexibility if somebody comes in and wants to do something different.

So there’s been some adjustments in those criteria so we’re proposing to amend those policies. And then there’s some new language that came in under the House Bill 1181 that set up the Climate Element requirements. It also put some suggestions or requirements really in the other



Elements – Land Use, Parks, and other elements – and one of those is to address the wildland-urban interface. So where the tree cover is intermixing a bit with rural or urban lands. So those are the main categories of changes for those two elements.

So I think, Clay, that's it for our slides.

Mr. White: (inaudible)

Ms. Grueter: Okay, great.

Mr. White: I mean, I think one of the main things as we've done early engagement is – and we brought these elements to you first – there's only a few state laws, things that have changed. And we've done community engagement. What we've heard from meeting with a variety of community groups and our open houses is, you know, protection of those things that are really important to the community like our ag-forest communities; protection of our rural lands and wanting to keep them rural. And so I don't think you're going to see a lot of policy changes here. There's certainly just not a lot of things that have changed in state laws. We're not looking at making changes to any resource land designations. We don't have any requests that have been considered and we know that it's really important to protect those lands that – where our farmers farm and our forestry is supported, so, you know, we may be looking at things that can help support those industries. One of the things we did here in our rural area is a lack of affordable housing in rural areas. That's a really big challenge. We'll talk about that some in the Housing Element as well. But, you know, the ability to rent has gone down in rural areas. There's fewer people that are renting homes where they own more than one. Because things are in rural areas, housing is very expensive. And so, you know, we'll be looking at those little growth areas, those little communities in the county. Are there maybe options to provide some more affordable housing at a density that still it remains to be a rural kind of character and consistency? So there may be opportunities to try to find ways of providing a few more housing options for people making different incomes that need more housing, but still in a way that kind of fits that rural character of those communities so they don't change. Those are big challenges. So there's some key kind of issues that we might be looking at.

I guess the other thing, that we'd love some – there's some proposed amendments that Lisa and our team put together, but one of the things we'd also like to be able to do is there's a lot of very long policies that restate state laws or state rules. It makes it a very long set plan. I mean, you have almost 100 pages of policies in front of you and that's only two elements. We'd like to find ways of being able to cut down on the length of some of these policies where they just are restating rules or state laws. I think there's also opportunities for some policy language that would be better in the development regulations than a policy language, and it would make a clearer, more concise document. We want to be careful when we're doing those things because we're not trying to convey that we're reducing a requirement or we're changing something. It would be conveying to the public, you know, we might be modifying – taking some language out of a policy. It doesn't mean you don't have to do those things any longer, they're not important. They're just – we don't necessarily have to have that in a policy in the Comprehensive Plan. So there may be some opportunities to kind of tighten things up a little bit and make it a more readable, useable document. Because what we really want to get to in the end, like we've kind of talked about, is where you can find things and you can find what the actions are and you can find what you're trying to accomplish in it, so it really provides a roadmap for you and stuff.

With that, I think we can just open it up to questions if you have them, or some early feedback.

Chair Raschko: Go ahead.

Commissioner Martha Rose: So I have a question about expanding housing in the LAMIRD areas, which I think is an excellent idea. But I'm puzzled as to what do you do with the sewage. Like Clear Lake, for example, has a lot of houses already and I'm thinking there could be more, but the lots are pretty small, and it's my understanding that they're all on septic. So do you combine expanding those areas with some sort of suggestion or mandate that new innovations be used to handle the sewage, like the processing plants of Janicki's, for example, has developed? Or do you just assume it'll be the same program that's been used for decades, which would be septic, which tend to fail, especially when they're in small, compact areas. So I don't know if the changes will speak broadly to that or be specific or make suggestions. How will that be handled?

Mr. White: Do you want to go first?

Ms. Grueter: Sure. I think we're looking at the land capacity within the LAMIRDs right now and for the housing types that could potentially be provided, and then where there might be some opportunities to address alternative forms. So like, for example, Kitsap County's done a lot of work – policies around community septic, different forms of onsite sewage treatment – because of their topography and the challenges that they face. They were able to get the legislature to make some additional flexibilities in providing those alternative types. That doesn't mean they're not expensive and may take some implementation – some focused implementation.

Commissioner Rose: So a follow-up would be and where do – will there be an allowance for using composting toilets, for example? In other words, my understanding is that today if I want to build a house and I want composting toilets I still have to have one regular flush toilet. But I know that these technologies are getting better and better and so is it likely that there will be allowances for that? Because that's the black water. Gray water's not as much of an issue, right?

Mr. White: Yeah. I mean, I think that's something – so I appreciate you brought that up because I think that we need to just – those are things we have to talk about with the Health Department and the Building Department. But we're looking for, like, innovation programs that we can utilize for these areas. Because here's the problem. What you've identified is true. You know on septics, there's a limited amount of land if you really want to do something. Also, we can create all the programs in the world but if they're not economically feasible to do then no one's going to utilize them. And we'd rather have policies that work well than just sound good.

Commissioner Rose: Right.

Mr. White: That's our goal. So I think that we have to get creative with the zoning. The nice thing is the state law has changed since the last update, which provides you more flexibility for having more housing types in these areas. But we have to demonstrate you have the public facilities and services to serve them. So, you know, I've talked to the planning team about, Do we create a demonstration program for certain housing types? Like, it would be something that maybe it's not permanent but it would be something to show, like maybe it would be – there's a – like, you have park model trailers that can be put on foundations that are very small homes that are manufactured. You know, could you get smaller densities in LAMIRDs? Or you could use a community facility, have smaller homes that would provide a more affordable housing option. Maybe it would provide an option for people to downsize their homes, too. So I think we have to get – and some of it might be We're going to do this. Some of this might be: What do we want to

explore to do to get to this place? I mean, things like that we have – I think we *have* to get really creative.

Commissioner Rose: Right. And, you know, we have some good examples. There's the **Bullock Center** in Seattle. It's all composting toilets. An office building. For example.

Mr. White: Yes.

Commissioner Rose: Yeah. So, all right. I think that's the end of my question. Thanks.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Woodmansee?

Commissioner Joe Woodmansee: To tag onto the conversation there, I don't – I think that a focus should be placed on the tiny home type of a situation, because you're not going to get there in traditional housing. You're never going to get to affordable in a rural \_\_\_\_. But community utilities, services in tiny homes – I know a person right now that the house they live in is being sold. It's an elderly lady, still works, literally nowhere to go, and nowhere – could probably do a tiny home but nowhere to put it. And so it seems to me like the lowest end of the area is where the focus should be, because other areas – to take a swipe at the mid and on up \_\_\_\_ affordable – even in affordable, there's bottom, middle, up – right?

Mr. White: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Woodmansee: But now where I think it would be a conflict is people would not like the density that comes with the tiny home.

Mr. White: Yeah.

Commissioner Woodmansee: But I don't think you can – I think that's your best opportunity to provide affordable housing. You have to get over the tiny home mentality and realize that to be affordable – if you consider, you know, somebody trying to live on Social Security and you know, maybe a parttime job, maybe some other small pension. I mean, there's a *lot* of people that they have very little coming in. And tiny homes is an area that they could have a chance to have their little spot and either own it fee simple or rent a spot. But it seems to me like these policies, that we should take a good, hard look at the lowest end of the low. Because it's very difficult and it's very hard to – there's a huge population that actually needs your traditional mobile home park, RV park. I mean, that's all they can really afford and – but there's almost nowhere you can do it – county, city, wherever you're at. So just some food for thought about the lowest end is maybe the most achievable but it might have the biggest argument against. Because to be achievable, you have to have some density to go with it.

Commissioner Rose: Yep.

Mr. White: When you – just to dig in a little further – would you like to see more options for housing types in these areas, like smaller homes and things where you could actually get more density because there's not very much land \_\_\_\_? Are you looking at wanting – should we be looking at things like incentives to try to incentivize certain things like affordability? It may be hard because I don't know how well it'll pencil, but, you know, how do we try to get, you know, housing at price points that, you know, different people can afford?

Commissioner Rose: So a piece of this conversation has to include a discussion about impact fees. Impact fees have been a culprit in the spiraling cost of housing, both existing housing and new. Because if I build a new house, whether it's tiny or big – whatever – these impact fees add 20 to \$30,000 to the cost of the house. And then pretty soon all the houses in the neighborhood have increased by the same amount, simply by the proximity.

Mr. White: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Rose: And so – and I was told once – I don't know if it's true – that it's a state mandate to charge impact fees. Is that true?

Ms. Grueter: No.

Commissioner Rose: Okay. So what I propose is to look at that whole discussion differently and to recognize that it doesn't matter whether it's an old house or a new house, everybody should share equally in the cost of maintaining and installing water systems, sewer systems, schools, roads. It's not – it should not be placed on new homes being built. And I know that in some jurisdictions they've kind of heard this conversation a little bit because then they say, Okay, tiny homes only have to pay half of the impact fees. But a mansion and a little home right now pay the same impact fees. But I believe the whole idea of impact fees is misplaced. Okay, let's say you buy an old house. You have to make an assumption that the plumbing and wiring and sewer system and hearing system probably need work and you have to allow for that. So one of the arguments that I've heard people make for impact fees is that, Well, it's the new houses that are affecting the infrastructure. And I say that's not true. Everybody's using those things. It's that *everybody* is impacting those things. And simply by raising utility bills a modest amount to cover that would take away that whole big chunk of money that has raised the cost of houses a big chunk.

Granted, labor and materials are another big cost that is outside of the impact fees that is also responsible for escalating housing prices. But I've talked to people who are in the affordable housing industry and subsidized housing, and they agree with this idea about the impact fees. They say it's one of the biggest culprits out there. At any rate, that's something that's really important. I think Joe is right that the low hanging fruit could be these small houses but I believe it's more efficient, both land-wise and material-wise, to build apartments, and even if they're small apartments. But they take up less room than a bunch of tiny houses and ultimately they're more energy-efficient and they use fewer resources. And so I know that tiny homes have a place but maybe zoning in the LAMIRDs could include smaller apartments that could be up to three stories or something so that they're not six stories in the rural area but three stories. You can build a three-story house in those areas so why not be able to build a three-story, say six-plex, for example, with an elevator or not, that could utilize some – save, you know, some different technologies for sewer, you know, and stuff like that. So, you know, because the tiny homes are – even if you buy them, they're not cheap. They're still really expensive.

Chair Raschko: Okay, we have Vince next. But if you don't mind, Vince, I just wanted to –

Commissioner Henley: Go ahead.

Chair Raschko: – say a few comments since we were just talking about impact fees. But and my opinion is an impact fee is if they're going to be relieved have to be done in such a way that the home buyer benefits. And I'll give an example, and that's they have these places where if you're 55 and up the builder doesn't have to pay impact fees for schools. So I looked online and Mount

Vernon was 6,000 \_\_\_\_\_ per lot at a time. I live in a place with 84 houses. If you take 84 and then round the other up to 7 that's \$560,000 in impact fees that were not paid. And not one penny went to the homebuyer. Those houses were sold at market value. And what it was is just a big landfall for the developer. I totally agree that impact fees really can drive the cost of housing up, but if that is going to be remedied, it should be done so, I think, in such a way that the eventual homebuyer is the beneficiary of that rather than the developer. Okay.

Mr. Eckroth: Chair, if I may?

Chair Raschko: Yes.

Mr. Eckroth: I just want the Commission and anyone listening to know that the County itself does not have impact fees. The Cities do, in some instances, and school districts do. So when talking about policies relating to housing affordability, we really need to just look at the levers that the County can pull specifically. I totally understand. Everything that all of you are saying completely makes sense. I think impact fees do create some issues with housing affordability but, unfortunately from the County's perspective, there's not a whole lot that the County can do in creating goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Raschko: Okay. I appreciate you clarifying that because I had no idea that that was the case.

Commissioner Rose: Yeah, thank you. Yeah.

Chair Raschko: Well, we got by that one. Okay, Commissioner Henley and then Commissioner Hutchison.

Commissioner Henley: Yeah, just a quick question. I'm not sure how we're defining "affordable" these days in terms of houses, but I've noticed along the southern edge of Anacortes, for example, there seems to be a whole slew of very small footprint houses that are going into some of the neighborhoods. And when I started to inquire about those, they're pushing about \$700,000. And these are *really* relatively small homes, and I can't imagine that that meets the criteria of affordable.

Mr. White: Correct.

Ms. Grueter: Right. Under the amendments made to the Housing Element, there's definitions for "extremely low," "very low" – you know, different income bands. And then the County and each of the Cities have targets *by* income band, and so one of the things we'll be bringing to you at some point with the Housing Element is: First, we're going to focus on what the County can control. The Cities are doing their own work for the city limits and the UGAs. Eventually the County will have a responsibility to review what the Cities are doing, but right now we'll bring you first what's going on in the LAMIRDs and the rural areas and the income bands that you're assigned. And part of our job is to say, Well, how much of the housing stock that's generally built in those areas could fit in which – you know, the zones will produce a certain housing type. Those tend to be fitting into certain income bands. So we'll bring you that. And where there's a gap, then we would identify if there's barriers to getting to those other affordability levels and what could the County do. And if it's not fully the County's responsibility, what could the Cities do to improve the situation?

Mr. White: And one of the things that we're working on is taking those affordability levels and then translating them to the types of housing that might fit within those different levels. So at the

very high level, higher income, you'd be single-family homes that are detached. At the low end at zero-thirty it would be subsidized multifamily housing. One of the reasons you're going to see fewer changes within the County Comprehensive Plan this update, is because that focus on growth has been focused on \_\_\_ growth within the cities. We're not focusing – you know, our target for the County for, like, people making between zero and 50% of the area median income, we can't plan for that because we don't those urban areas to plan for. That's going to happen in cities. So, you know, 20% of the growth is being planned for areas outside of incorporated cities, but most of that's pretty spread out growth over a long period of time in our rural areas, and you're going to see a lot more planning in cities that are going to have to plan not for – just for higher growth percentages but for specific housing types that align with different income bands to ensure housing can meet what people make. But a lot of that burden falls upon Cities because in the county we – you know, the County can't plan for urban growth in rural areas.

That's why, like this conversation about LAMIRDs, it's like okay, so we have a *few* areas and if we only plan for housing in cities there's so many places where you have people living or jobs and you're trying to get people closer to jobs. So, like, what *can* we do in those areas? What *can* we do that's creative, innovative? And the feedback you've provided tonight and that we've heard from the community and in talking with the planning team, I think we can't just pull something from the playbook. I think we have to, like, figure out, like: What *could* work here? And when I talked about like a demonstration program – maybe you try something. It doesn't have to be forever. You try it as a program to try to incentivize certain housing types. But the line we have to cross with like the multifamily in those areas, there's a line where you cross between growth that is rural in nature and growth that starts falling on the side of urban growth. And there's a line there. I'm going to have to figure out where that is for Skagit County. There's case law and there's some other things, but we have to kind of figure out how could we make it feel and look rural so that it doesn't change your communities and start leading to kind of what they would say is urban sprawl or rural sprawl. So this is good feedback on things that we'll kind of be thinking about to bring back to you.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Hutchison?

Commissioner Hutchison: Thank you. I just wanted to follow up on Joe's comment about the tiny homes. I know a lot of time often people immediately think of trailer parks when they think of smaller, affordable housing opportunities. I believe that if they're properly planned and developed creatively that these little properties can be scattered – more of a cottage feel – and could fit in a town like Bow or Clear Lake more easily than, say, the money that it would have to take to go into, like, conversion of an old, commercial property into apartments. Like, that's going to cost so much, as neat as it would be. I feel like those smaller units that are attracting a different level of income, where the tiny homes create possibilities, especially with the services, where you might be able to share a septic tank amongst two or three dwellings because there're single-occupant units versus raising a family and having two dogs, necessarily all needing to use one bathroom.

So there's just a lot of opportunity, and I don't know that you could restrict occupancy but it's just ideas. You're looking for some creativity. I believe that you can get that cottage feel within some tiny homes and really develop out. Maybe a smaller, communal type of property, probably less than 30 units in any cluster. But I feel like they would be more highly acceptable in our county than trying to put up a three-story apartment, like \_\_\_\_\_ or however you get units into new construction. I would just – like *visibly* I feel like it would be a nice complement to some of the artsy community areas that we kind of have in our rural environment. So I just wanted to add on to that.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Day?

Commissioner Angela Day: Yeah, I agree with that. I see your vision and I think it fits in this county. I do have a question, I guess, about the policy language. And so in the memo it says one of the goals is to use active verbs. And so not that I want to have a grammar exercise, but what does the policy language look like ideally? I mean, I see this – a policy as a north star that's kind of like a guiding – is it a principle? Is it a statement of priorities? What should that look like and how is it that we have 100 pages of policies in currently? Because the little bit that you gave us tonight is just a paragraph?

Mr. White: Yeah. So I'll \_\_\_\_; you can add in to \_\_\_\_\_. I think why you have a lot of policies – and this is not unique to Skagit County – is you started with the first update and you're complying with state law and you put in policies to address all of those things that you have to address and you add in community vision. Then you do a next update. Maybe you don't look at trying to take out the policies you've already completed or modify things, and there's more policies that are added because there's more state law changes or there's more – so you just – sometimes you're just adding to that and so you just keep adding to those. And so we're trying to take that step back to say, Hey, are there ones that maybe we're not utilizing anymore? It said we're going to complete a program and did we complete that? So, I mean, I think there's things in there.

In terms of active verbs, I think – you have goals and policies. Goals are usually higher level. You know, expression of, like, an overall intent to accomplish something. Your policies should be more directive. I mean, sometimes you're saying things because you – it's implementing a state law and you're just \_\_\_\_\_. But a lot of times you want it to – like, how are you going to do that? When are you going to do that? What are you trying to accomplish? So when I'm reading policies, I'm acting and I'm asking myself – I'm reading them and I'm asking myself those questions, like, How would you *do* this? How would you *know* to do it? How would a staff member in PDS know, Oh, this is the year we're going to start this program? I mean, I think when you can get those actions in your policies too, there are great conversations with you and with the Board of County Commissioners because if you're going to actually take action on things there's a cost to them. It may be staff time. It could be needing staff to be able to accomplish them. I mean, there – or, and sometimes there's not. But, you know, having that conversation is like, How can we realistically set policies that are going to actually accomplish what we're going to do? I mean, I think those are really good conversations up front. And then you can set things in long-term, short-term, medium-term kind of goals and then you can use that as part of your work program.

And we also want to do things like you have a County strategic plan. There should be alignment between your County strategic priorities and the things that align with your Comprehensive Plan. You have Countywide Planning Policies. You have subarea plans. A lot of policies, but, like, how do you sort through all of that to go, like – we're already – well, we heard from the community a lot. You're already doing a lot of things really well. Don't change those things – protecting ag lands and our resource lands. But, you know, how do we sort through all those policies? And then it says, like, That is our north star. Like, what *is* that north star? It can be really confusing because there is so much that the policies say. So that would be trying to get some action in there. \_\_\_\_ not every policy has an action. But if then you take those, you extract out the ones that do within each Element, then you could pull those out. We can highlight those ones that would have an action associated with them, and then at the end of the Comprehensive Plan we can have a section that just outlines them in totality. So you can just start moving those into that work program as you exit the Comp Plan.

Commissioner Day: May I follow up? Thank you for that.

Mr. White: Of course.

Commissioner Day: That's helpful. And I'm trying to think about the really rich discussion we just had and how you kind of capture that, you know, into policies. I could send some comments in. I think that would be easier. But just as an example in the agricultural lands: So the existing policy language that you gave to us in my mind has a kind of – you can organize it. It starts with a definition: Agricultural lands are lands that. Then it kind of discusses a problem to be addressed, you know. You know, something like in the Housing Element we don't have the density that we need, we don't have the opportunity to be creative – or, you know, whatever. This describes a problem to be addressed related to agricultural lands and the challenges that are faced with preserving it. And then there is sort of a goal that the County wants to preserve the farmland. And then, like, other actions you can see would flow from this policy, and this kind of makes sense to me as an organizing theme. And so if there's a way to shorten it or make things more accessible, I would almost suggest that we try to do things like that. You know, this is the definition; this is the problem that we're trying to address; this is how we're addressing it; this is a state law precedent or the legislative mandate. Just something that makes it more so you can find what you're looking for, I guess. If not shorter, easier to track down.

But I think the new language loses some of that organizing principle. So, for example, it says "designate agricultural resource lands." Well, I think we've already designated them, if I'm understanding correctly, so I would think you would not want to just rework that sentence. You would say something like "preserve and protect agricultural lands," or something, if you're trying to get an active verb in.

Mr. White: Mm-hmm.

Commissioner Day: But I also think it helps to have a definition of what it is, too, so I understand you were trying to capture that. But I think it did lose a lot in translation.

Ms. Grueter: I hear you on the preserve and protect. That's a more active way of saying it than designate. I would say some of those things like putting a definition in the middle of a goal or policy. And then there is also a glossary. You can lose track of those definitions and so putting the definitions all in one place in the glossary, or a sidebar. So I think some of the things we're suggesting we're definitely open to revising. But some of the explanation of the problem statement could go in, like, a text box or be right below the main thrust of the policy, so you still get that explanation of, Why is this policy there? But having something that is three, four, five sentences long, it makes it harder to find the kernel of what's happening and implement that in a more consistent way. So that's all I think we're hoping for is to kind of maybe break it up but not necessarily lose the ultimate goal or the ultimate approach.

Commissioner Day: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Mr. White: Commissioner, maybe just add on to that?

Commissioner Day: Yeah.

Mr. White: One of the things you mentioned that I liked was this transitioning of your approach to policy language too, because you went through a process in the '90s and early 2000s of designating agricultural lands. So, like, We're going to protect agricultural land. How do we do that? We designate it. There's only certain uses that are allowed on it – okay. Well, you've accomplished that. I mean, what I'm getting (at) is you're doing those things, so it would be, We're



going to continue to do that, and then what do we want to do now? You know, what are the things that are now important to you? So sometimes we get even like restating, We're going to protect agricultural lands a lot. Well, you're already doing those things. You've done those things. This is how you're doing them. But then it's like, you know, What are the things that we want to do over the next 20 years to enhance ag or provide programs that support it or forestry programs and things? So, you know, also looking at, How can we take that next step in the process as well?

Commissioner Day: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, yeah. I think that makes sense but I think you don't want to lose the main intent, too, which is to preserve and protect. It's sort of like just using the existing language and trying to wordsmith it. It almost needs a wholesale rewrite, based on what I hear you saying.

Ms. Grueter: Some of this is coming from case law and from the state rules, and so that – if you could put some of that in your code and focus on the preserve and protect and what are the programs, you could still apply those same requirements from state law and move them into the code. Some of the reasons why it's probably still in the plan are what Clay described. Another reason could be you have fewer opportunities to amend the Comprehensive Plan than the development codes. The County over time might have just said, We want the details in here. It's harder to change. But in the end, a lot of this is repeating the state rules. But there are some places where the County has interpreted the state rules and how they apply to agricultural land in the county. So I think it's just – there's a variety of reasons why it happened.

Mr. White: I think one thing we wanted to be careful coming tonight is if we had come in and just done a wholesale rewrite to come in and then you said, I don't like that approach. That wouldn't be – so I think we're – you'll see more light touches because we really did hear from the community that there's a lot of things that are going very well in terms of rural and resource lands. And so we're – we really wanted to just come in and go, like, Hey, what does the public think about some light changes? And they go, You didn't touch these 12 things, or You're not looking at – great, that's the feedback that we want! And then we'll come back when we come with the actual draft of the Comprehensive Plan; we can say we took some initial feedback. Let's head in this direction here. So if you do written comments after this, that would be fantastic.

Commissioner Day: Yeah. I'll send you \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Woodmansee, and then Commissioner Rose.

Commissioner Woodmansee: So I'm going to circle back to housing in this area that we addressed here at the beginning. So I just want to say this: I agree with Commissioner Rose that the apartment style building is going to be the most affordable in the big picture. But the whole conversation has me wondering. In the state laws, in the planning that we're doing, would it be fair to say that essentially true affordable housing is just not going to happen in the 20%? I mean, in our 20%, how much of that housing would we be trying to hit an affordable ration? Because based on everything that I've heard in some of the comments that you made, it makes me think maybe that you're never going to hit it in the county because it's, you know, typically in an urban area where you have more tools and stuff like that. So I like the concept of units over businesses and stuff in these little rural areas and stuff like that, which none of that's in place now but it sounds like they're going to maybe soften – the law has softened up to allow maybe something like that. And the question is, How much can we do that?

Ms. Grueter: That's right.

Mr. White: Yeah.

Commissioner Woodmansee: I mean, I think that that's a good tool. When I'm thinking tiny houses, here's one thing I'm picturing, and this would be probably rural sprawl to somebody: But you've got 10 acres. It's wooded. You could plug four or five tiny houses in there and never see them, and there's four or five affordable units. There's no zone, no anything that's going to allow that right now. But I think that that's where I'm thinking on this tiny house thing is more like, we've got to be more creative and allow something that's – you know, I was in Tennessee last summer for a little while and, I mean, there's cabins up in that trees and that trees and that tree and – not literal tree but in the trees – and you can't see them. And then at night you drive down the road and, Oh, there's one. There's one. There's one. And the impact of a small unit like that is minimal. And you could even argue that if you're in the trees you could have a zero storm impact because the trees are going to soak up all the water that hits the ground. And you might even be under a canopy and it barely hits your house. But so I just want to say that I'm not sure if it's even possible to hit true affordability in the county, but is there even a goal of true affordable housing within the county's 20%, or possible?

Mr. White: Well, I think that the County is going to be focusing on housing at 51% area median income. So zero to 50 is going to be half – the Cities are going to have to take that for sure. So anything between 51% and maybe 80% or even 100% is a challenge. And I think from the state guides, I think, like, ADUs maybe qualify in that and we could get tiny homes. I mean, the hard thing about within rural areas – like, true rural areas and doing a few homes – is you still have the land costs are going to be really high and then you have certain things the County has control over and you have certain things like building codes, drainage – you know, you're going to have to have septic, you're going to have to have power, you're going to have to have road standards, so they end up being real costly and that's why I think in LAMIRDs, are there ways where we could take a look at what standards exist? Are there ways that we could get to 80% AMI or some programs to do that to incentivize best practices that might actually work? Get as many homes as you can in one place but have it still feel rural? Like, how do we – but I think that that 50 to 80% for the County is probably the biggest challenge. You could put in any programs that you're going to do up there, but we want it to work well. I mean, you've been studying this at the state level for a long time. Any other additional thoughts?

Ms. Grueter: No, I think you've covered it pretty well and I think we'll just provide a continuum of housing types and where they could potentially fit. And the rural areas, I think it *is* the LAMIRDs. Maybe some attached Accessory Dwelling Units. There's some case law we have to be careful about on accessory units. And then, you know, manufactured homes might be lower cost, affordable, but then there's the land cost. We're doing some research on where the housing today fits – the housing that's already existing, where does it fit and where are those opportunities. And we'll do our best.

Mr. White: Yeah. So, like, so much over the last 30 years there's been case law or – that has settled certain issues, you know. They've gone to the – this is one where it's, like, and Cities are in a bigger pickle. You're telling us we have to provide housing at different segments and affordability. It's really difficult to do this. But, like, for the County that you also want us to stay rural. Like, you know, how do we find that sweet spot of maintaining rural character but also you're saying we have to provide housing choices to people making different incomes? And when we complete the housing needs assessment, it will kind of dive into, Here are the housing types that might fit those buckets. Well, how does it all match up? So I think we have to just do our best to, like, get there. And it has to be something that makes sense and works, too, which then it's even harder. It's not just a planning exercise. We want it to work at the front counter.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Yeah, and you mentioned that, you know, this gets done from the bottom up, but it's the *fix* that gets done from the bottom up. The requirement comes from the top down.

Mr. White: Yes.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Without fixes.

Mr. White: Correct. I always – I mean, I honed in on the bottoms up process because I started my career at a very rural county where my commissioners told me I had to share the nexus and proportionality of every regulation we were proposing. So I still very much believe that you have a lot of control in your process. You've got these guideposts, but it takes intentionality to have that. You know, intentionality of the community engagement; intentionality to think creatively; to really want to make these changes or to really want to engage with the Cities or nonprofits to get to a goal. Because you can say a lot of things and there's a difference between being able to say them and do them, so, I mean, so I'm an optimist so you'll see that come through. But I really think that you really can drive change, but you have to set up the Comp Plan in the right way to do that.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Rose?

Commissioner Rose: So land trusts. To me, that takes away the land costs for the buyer of the home. That's assuming these aren't rentals. These would be for that 51% of the income or whatever that lower end of the upper end would be. And I see a couple of ways to finance the land that would go into the land trust, and that would either be a levy that's passed that people vote on because they want to see more affordable housing, or it would be some sort of incentive to a property owner who maybe owns a parcel next to a LAMIRD where a piece of it – just a smaller piece could be chunked up. But I don't have broad knowledge of how the land trusts work but I do have some. The Kulshan Land Trust up in Bellingham is an example. People can buy the house, so it's the house minus the land cost, and they can improve it, they can eventually sell it, but they can't – there's a restricted amount of appreciation that they're allowed. And the idea is a lot of people who move into those and buy those houses then move out of them. It's a stepping stone for some. It doesn't have to be but it can be. And it seems to me that that could be tied to some sort of a request for proposals from builders to see which – this would solve the problem that Tim brought up. Which builder is proposing to put in the most affordable houses on this land ahead of time? Like, you know, you'd say I can put in 16 houses here. You know, Joe says, I'm going to put them in and they're going to cost whatever. No land – you know, just the houses. And then I come along and say, Well, I'm going to do it for this – right? And so you'd pick not necessarily the lowest bidder but the bid that makes the most sense for what it's giving. So that way it's not an open-ended, runaway market situation during a hot spell. Like, when the market is hot it's hot, and people pay more. That would bypass that from happening.

So it's just a suggestion or another way to think about how to get some affordable housing on the ground. Because it's been done in a lot of places. And there's the Evergreen Land Trust that I think it's in – based in Seattle, or it used to be. I don't know. But it's not a new idea. But I haven't heard that – that to me seems like such an obvious thing. The question is, How do you get the land locked up where it doesn't go – so it's – you know, so it doesn't go with the houses?

Ms. Grueter: I think in 2016, if I remember right, the Health Department and Community Development and PDS were working together on some housing strategies and the      Trust was one of those strategies. And I don't know, Jack or Robby, if you have more to say. We can

investigate where that landed. That was something that was being talked about in a strategic plan for housing.

Commissioner Rose: You know, maybe that the County owns some land in or near a LAMIRD that they don't need, and so they would simply donate it. You know? Yeah, so it can come from different areas. Like you say: Open up your mind and figure it out.

Mr. White: Yeah.

Commissioner Rose: Yeah.

Chair Raschko: Commissioner Hughes?

Commissioner Amy Hughes: There's a community in – a rural community – in eastern Washington in Okanogan County that is working on this concept. And I don't know – I read about it when it first started about a year-and-a-half ago. I don't know where they're landing right now. But it seemed like it was workable for that community. So just throwing that out there, if you want to investigate.

Ms. Grueter: There's one in Chelan in the Manson area also.

Commissioner Hughes: Okay.

Ms. Grueter: That got off the ground in the last five years and they've built housing both in Manson and Chelan.

Commissioner Hughes: Yeah, it's a way to start turning properties over to affordable housing rather than other housing. There's incentives for someone who is selling a house to – I think they actually – the land trust pays them to sell it at a certain amount so then that is locked in to an affordable house for the future. And then as people move in and out that property still stays affordable and doesn't get to go out on the open market per se.

Ms. Grueter: There's also some examples in San Juan County. We can bring back some of those ideas.

Commissioner Hughes: Yeah.

Commissioner Rose: I want to add one thing. Not to be confused with \_\_\_ housing, which has a tendency to start out seemingly affordable and then quickly spiral out of control. I know of one right now being planned in Arlington, and it started out where the houses were going to be 400,000 and now they're a million. They're not even built yet and the process has been going on for a least five years, the *planning* process. So not to be confused with land trust-built housing by builder without a committee of buyers influencing the cost.

Mr. Eckroth: I'll look and see if the Health Department knows of any status of any discussions that have had – Jack, I'm not aware of any; are you?

Jack Moore: Not at this time. I know it's an ongoing conversation in our current strategic plan, so I'm not sure where that's at right now with the Health Department.

Chair Raschko: Okay, has anybody anything else to ask?

(silence)

Chair Raschko: Well, great. Well, this has been a very helpful meeting. I appreciate everything you've done. And is there anything else?

Mr. White: I'd just like to say so next month – so we're going to take comments on the rural and natural resource lands, any comments that you have. You provide us a lot of good comments. We'll summarize what we receive from the public and provide that to you in a summary in the next couple of months. So every month as we take \_\_\_, we'll summarize those for you and then we'll be back this winter as we get that full Comprehensive Plan. But next month we'll talk about Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development. We kind of go through the same exercise – getting your ideas; we'll take public comment; come back the next month on Transportation and Capital Facilities, Utilities, and then we've got Climate Resiliency and Environment coming in October. All of these will have that 30-day comment period. We're also looking to schedule a Planning Commission meeting if we can on an overview of development regulation changes. So some will depend on the policies we choose, but there are some code changes that'll be driven by state law changes, so we'll probably want to have at some point before we start drafting of just giving you a heads-up in the community of just the minor types of changes that we're going to be looking at, so we'll try to work that in as a briefing at some point. And then public meetings and hearings will be in the winter on the full draft Comprehensive Plan. So we'll see you next month.

Chair Raschko: I have one last question –

Mr. White: Of course.

Chair Raschko: – based on this gentleman's comments earlier this morning – this evening. And I should probably know this, but how many surveys went out to people?

Mr. White: Do you want to go through – I mean, I don't know if it's a – we didn't do just paper surveys so do you want to –

Chair Raschko: Were they sent to everybody or just –

Mr. White: They were not sent to the – I mean, one thing just to separate the number of people that live in Skagit County, separating out the Cities, because they're going through their own planning process. But there wasn't a mailer to every home in Skagit County, just – I mean, there's a lot of cost that would go through that. So it was online, it was spread through social media – through the County's social media, which has good reach. We talked about it when we went to community pop-up events, when we had our open houses. So I guess my response on this from a survey where we're starting out at the visioning process, it's a fairly good response rate. Unfortunately, if you wanted to talk about – if we had something major changing and everybody knew about it, then you'd get more response. This Comprehensive Plan *is* lighter. The bigger things that we know we're going to hear – that we want to talk about are housing, but a lot of housing's going to be going in the cities. We have the new Climate Element Environment. But that's why we're developing an engagement process around those because there's a lot of new things. When we're doing the critical areas update and we're looking at the new Climate Element, that's when we're going to have a specific open house on that.

But again, a survey is one thing, but it's also try to do open houses to provide if you want to come and talk to us, if you want to come to a community pop-up event and just try to go to where people go and just be able to provide opportunities to talk to them about things they care about. So it's

a lot of different ways we're trying to connect. So we get information that you can utilize as you're making recommendations. We'll continue to do the best job that we can to connect. I mean, you've got some pretty robust social media that connects, and we're doing everything we can to make sure that we hear from the community.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Well, thank you. All right, well, that ends this session. I appreciate the presentations and the information. We'll move on then to Planning Commissioner Comments and Announcements. So Amy, what have you?

Commissioner Hughes: I have nothing.

Chair Raschko: Angela?

Commissioner Day: I don't have anything, but thank you for your presentations.

Vice Chair Tammy Candler: Thank you. That was helpful. I don't have anything.

Chair Raschko: Vince?

Commissioner Henley: I'm good.

Commissioner Woodmansee: Nothing tonight.

Chair Raschko: Okay. Martha?

Commissioner Rose: I'm good too. Yeah, thanks.

Chair Raschko: Jen?

Commissioner Hutchison: No. Thank you.

Chair Raschko: Wow. Okay. Well, I don't either. So with that, we will stand adjourned. Thank you. Have a good night (gavel).