



Planning & Development Services

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Memorandum: Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Housing Element Policy 7A-1.2

To: Planning Commission
From: Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner
Date: November 11, 2025
Re: Comprehensive Plan Policy 7A-1.2

Recommendation

The Department recommends **approval** of this proposed amendment.

Summary

Planning and Development Services (PDS) is providing this staff report in advance of the November 18, 2025, Planning Commission work session. This report summarizes a proposed amendment to the 2025 Comprehensive Plan: the removal of Policy 7A-1.2. The proposed change is intended to facilitate a settlement agreement in Growth Management Hearings Board Case No. 25-2-0003.

Background and History

In 2021, the Washington State legislature passed HB 1220 which requires all counties and cities planning under the Growth Management Act to plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all income levels. Skagit County's Countywide Planning Policies require that 20 percent of the housing and population growth go to rural areas in Skagit County. As a result, the County is required to plan for and accommodate affordable housing in the rural areas.

In 2025, Skagit County amended the Housing Element of its Comprehensive Plan to meet the new state requirements. Given the constraints of the GMA and the limited sewer infrastructure in rural areas, the County identified Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) as a feasible and appropriate form of affordable housing in these locations. To reinforce this approach, the County amended the Comprehensive Plan to include Policy 7A-1.2, explicitly supporting the use of ADUs as an affordable housing strategy in rural areas.

On June 23, 2025, the Board of County Commissioners adopted the 2025 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update. On August 18, 2025, Evergreen Islands submitted an appeal to the Growth Management Hearings Board challenging the inclusion of Policy 7A-1.2. This policy states:

Policy 7A-1.2 Permit accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in rural residential zones to provide additional housing choices for all economic levels, multi-generational, and smaller households. Allow at least two ADUs in UGAs where single family homes are permitted.

The appeal asserts that the policy “fail[s] to prevent urban sprawl and contain rural development and thereby fail[s] to comply with Growth Management Act Planning Goal 2...”.

On September 19, 2025, both Skagit County and Evergreen Islands jointly filed a Request for Settlement Extension requesting a 90-day extension of the appeal schedule to pursue settlement. On September 24, 2025, the Growth Management Hearings Board granted the joint motion for a 90-day settlement.

Overview of Proposed Amendments

Skagit County PDS is proposing to amend the 2025 Comprehensive Plan by removing Policy 7A-1.2 to facilitate a settlement agreement in response to an appeal before the Growth Management Hearings Board. While PDS disagrees with Evergreen Island’s view that Policy 7A-1.2 does not comply with the GMA, PDS and Evergreen Islands agree removal of the policy is a good resolution to the dispute. This amendment will not impact the County’s overall approach to affordable housing in rural areas, as numerous other policies continue to support this effort. Additionally, no changes are being proposed to the County’s development regulations.

Therefore, this amendment is not expected to negatively affect the County’s ability to meet the affordable housing requirements of the Growth Management Act and PDS recommends approval of the proposed amendment.

How to Comment

The public may submit written comments via email to pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us (preferred) or via US mail starting **November 20, 2025**. All paper comments must be submitted on 8½" x 11" paper to the address below:

Skagit County Planning & Development Services
re: Comments “Comprehensive Plan amendment to remove Policy 7A-1.2”
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

All comments must be received by **December 5, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.** and include (1) your full name, (2) your mailing address. Comments not meeting these requirements will not be considered. You may also provide verbal comments at the Public Hearing. The public hearing is scheduled for **December 16, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.** in the Skagit County Commissioners Hearing Room at 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

If you wish to provide testimony via the online meeting option, please send an email to pdscomments@co.skagit.wa.us, with your name, phone number, and include a request to be added to the speakers list in the body of the email. Public hearing testimony is usually limited to three minutes, so written comments are preferred.