



WHATCOM COUNTY

WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services

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August 19, 2025

TO: The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

RE: 2025 Comp Plan Update – Chapter 4 (Capital Facilities)

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County to review and revise its Comprehensive Plan and development regulations in 2025 ([RCW 36.70A.130](#)). The updated Comprehensive Plan will contain the following chapters:

1. Introduction and Growth Projections
2. Land Use
3. Housing
4. Capital Facilities
5. Utilities
6. Transportation
7. Economics
8. Resource Lands
9. Recreation
10. Environment
11. Shorelines¹
12. Climate Change and Resilience (new Chapter)

The Whatcom County Planning Commission issued preliminary recommendations on Chapter 4 on July 24. It is anticipated that the County Council's Committee of the Whole will discuss this Chapter on September 9.

Chapter 4 generally includes:

- Background information, including GMA requirements; and
- Goals and Policies relating to County and special purpose district capital facilities. County capital facilities include law enforcement, corrections,

¹ The Shorelines Chapter was approved by the State Department of Ecology in 2025 after previous Planning Commission review and County Council approval. Therefore, it will not be reviewed again in this update cycle.

juvenile detention, emergency management, general government buildings, parks, trails, and activity centers. Special purpose districts include school districts, fire districts, and water & sewer districts.

Proposed changes to Chapter 4 include:

- GMA Provisions – Updating text to reflect GMA changes made by the State legislature in recent years relating to climate change and resilience, green infrastructure, and impact fees.
- Activity Centers - Updating methods for providing services at activity centers, including senior centers, as recommended by the County Parks Department.
- Special District Plans – Chapter 4 adopts various school district, fire district, and water & sewer district plans by reference. Some of these special district plans have been updated since the last County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2016. Therefore, the most recent special district plans have been referenced in the Chapter 4 amendments. It is anticipated that other special district plans will be updated in 2025. The references to these plans will be updated in Chapter 4 as they are approved by the respective districts.
- Mitigation Fees/Impact Fees – The Planning Commission added text to Goal 4K relating to the effect of school and fire district fees on home affordability.
- Climate Goal and Policies – Chapter 4 include new goal 4M and related policies to address greenhouse gas emission reduction and climate resilience for County facilities. The Planning Commission made two changes to these policies.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to discussing it with you.