



WHATCOM COUNTY

WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services

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September 9, 2025

TO: The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

RE: 2025 Comp Plan Update – Chapter 7 (Economic Development)

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. Economic Development
8. Resource Lands
9. Recreation
10. Environment
11. Shorelines¹
12. Climate Change and Resilience (new Chapter)

Chapter 7 generally includes:

- Background information relating to labor force, employment and unemployment, employment by sector, median household income, the Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), the Port of Bellingham's role at the "Associate Development Organization", and other topics; and
- Goals and Policies relating to a diversified economy, coordination, cooperation, and public/private partnerships, infrastructure, regulations and

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.

permit processing, proximity to Canada, business retention and expansion, economic growth and environmental quality, natural resource based industries, unemployment and underemployment, geographic diversity, and the local food system.

The Port of Bellingham assisted with drafting of many of the modifications to Chapter 7. Comments on the Chapter were submitted by the Business and Commerce Advisory Committee, the Child & Family Well-Being Task Force, the Climate Impact Advisory Committee, and the Food System Committee.

The Whatcom County Planning Commission issued preliminary recommendations on Chapter 7 on August 28.

Proposed changes to Chapter 7 include:

- Background Information – Updating background information, including text, stats, and figures.
- Goal and Policies - Updating goals and policies relating to a variety of topics including but not limited to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, housing that is affordable, economic security, Canadian businesses, water rights adjudication, infrastructure, child care, wetland mitigation, climate resilience, and the local food system.

It is anticipated that the County Council's Committee of the Whole will discuss this Chapter on September 23. Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to discussing it with you.