

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
2026-2027 Strategic Focus
and Key Actions



WHATCOM COUNTY
WASHINGTON

DRAFT as of July 23, 2026

AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Prepare legislation for County Council consideration pertaining to an open and transparent government.			Complete by 12/31/2026	Staff Lead and Council Staff to meet to define desired outcome.
Develop proposed County Council outreach and stakeholder engagement strategies for consideration by the County Council.			Complete by 12/31/2026	Ben R. is doing research on what other jurisdictions are doing on outreach to the public. Schedule a Council Lead discussion to determine what Councilmembers want, cost/resources, and whether how best to allocate staff time to it.

AN EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT COUNTY GOVERNMENT: MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Adopt Performance Audit Ordinance		Exec Office	Complete by 11/30/2026	Anticipated adoption date is by Nov. 24 or earlier if budget impacts.
Conduct work session with County Executive to understand and identify actions the County Council can consider to support workforce development and retention for permit technicians, planners, building inspectors, and other positions to assure full staffing of Department of Planning and Development Services.		Exec Office PDS HR	Complete by 9/30/2026	Requires coordination with Administration – with Council making overall policy.
Prepare new County procurement ordinance to assure transparency and accountability in all county offices and department procurement activities.		Exec Office Finance	Complete by 6/30/2027	Coordination with Administration

HOUSING

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Identify at least one public or privately owned property to support additional emergency housing.		Exec Office HCS Facilities (if county-owned)	Complete by 8/1/2026	Coordinate with Administration
Support programs and services in the 2026-2027 County Biennial Budget to increase year-round sheltering by __ percent by December 2027.		Exec Office HCS Finance	Complete by 12/31/2026	Coordinate with Administration
Identify at least one public or privately owned property for potential affordable housing purposes.		Exec Office HCS Facilities (if county-owned)	Complete by 12/31/2026	Coordinate with Administration
Review and identify potential additional funding opportunities to support housing and homelessness programs and services in Whatcom County.		Exec Office HCS Finance	Complete by 6/30/2027	Coordinate with Administration
Work with the County Executive and Planning and Development Services to review existing County Code associated with “tiny homes” and modify as necessary to support and expedite permitting and construction of “tiny homes”.		Exec Office PDS HCS	Complete by 12/31/26	Coordinate with Administration

WATER RESOURCES

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Invite representatives of interested and affected parties to present to Council on the development of collaborative processes to respond to challenges in the Nooksack Adjudication process. Invite Superior Court or other County representatives to present to Council on the status of the Nooksack Adjudication process.		Exec Office PW Superior Court		
All seven Council members advocate to state legislature during the 2027 legislative session regarding funding for adjudication, collaborative processes, and flood mitigation projects.			Complete by 4/26/2027	

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Receive regular updates and progress report on the Healthy Children's Fund implementation and provide guidance and look for opportunities to increase funds and capacity for childcare slots to support employers and employees in Whatcom County. Review current policies established by the voters and the Council to understand methods and opportunities to increase childcare slots.		Exec Office HCS CFWB Task Force		Council currently receives updates on the following schedule: - Quarterly reports by HCS - Annual report by CFWBTF
Review data and findings from Port of Bellingham Comprehensive Economic Development Study to assist County Council on determining steps to take to support economic development in Whatcom County.		Exec Office Port (external)	Complete by 3/31/2027	Coordinate with Exec Office – on role of administration in conjunction with Council setting overall policy direction.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Board of Health to hold public hearing/community meeting on Community Health Assessment following open houses.		HCS	Complete by 12/31/2027	
Review the outcomes of the Senior Centers Work Group to determine what, if any, Council action is warranted.		Exec Office PARKS	Initiate by 7/1/2026	Coordinate with Administration; receive information from B. Knox on timing.

PUBLIC SAFETY AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
County Council to vote on debt authorization for new County Jail and Behavioral Health Center.		Exec Office	Complete by 6/30/2027	Coordinate with Administration
Conduct a Council work session to review opportunities and methods to ensure behavioral health provider response is improved and eliminate response gaps in service.		Exec Office HCS		Coordinate with Administration
Establish a meeting schedule to receive updates and make appropriate decisions prescribed by enabling ordinance pertaining to the schedule for the design, construction, and operation of the new County Jail and Behavioral Care Center.		Exec Office	Initiate by 8/1/2026	Coordinate meeting schedule with Administration

WHATCOM COUNTY BIENNIAL BUDGET

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Council staff work with Executive's Office to prepare budget overview document/presentation that each Councilmember can use to deliver a consistent message and information on the preliminary 2027-2028 Biennial Budget.		Exec Office Finance	Complete by 9/21/2026	Coordinate with Administration
Councilmembers to share preliminary 2027-2028 Biennial Budget updates during each of the "Community Conversations".			September - November 2026	
Councilmembers should share preliminary 2027-2028 Biennial Budget updates to assigned committees and boards.			September – December 2026	
Schedule Council work session to discuss County Advisory Groups to determine which are required or optional by State Statute/County Charter/Code/Policy and identify which ones must continue to be staffed and budgeted. Review both the effectiveness and continued relevance of County Advisory Groups given the current County fiscal challenges.		Exec Office Dept. Heads	Complete 9/30/2026	To be effective this activity must start prior to budgeting process, engage administration and stakeholders, and plan established prior to budget adoption.

WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Key Actions	Council Lead	Internal Stakeholder	Timeframe	Status
Council should work with the County Executive and Planning and Development Services to implement the Comprehensive Plan and update associated policies and codes		Exec Office PDS		Coordinate with Administration