



WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL

TO: Whatcom County Councilmembers

CC: Executive Satpal Sidhu

FROM: Kaylee Galloway and Carol Frazey

DATE: March 22, 2022

RE: Comprehensive Plan Priorities

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County to develop a comprehensive plan for managing population growth and development, accommodating projected growth for a 20-year planning period. The last major update and UGA review was approved August 9, 2016. The GMA requires cities and counties to periodically review and revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations. Whatcom County's update is due on or before June 30, 2025, and every 10 years thereafter ([HB 1241](#)). We must begin to work towards our 2025 update now, which presents a timely opportunity to update our priorities ensuring our comprehensive plan meets all current and future needs of Whatcom County. We cannot afford to wait another 10 years.

Over the last several years, the Washington State Legislature has considered several bills that address GMA reform. Notable ones include [HB 1099](#) (incorporating climate change), [HB 1117](#) (incorporating salmon recovery and net ecological gain), and [HB 1717](#) (creating framework for tribal participation). While HB 1717 passed this year, HB 1099 and HB 1117 did not, but this does not preclude Whatcom County from proactively and voluntarily incorporating these and other components into our updated comprehensive plan.

Given Whatcom County is committed to addressing climate change, as well as equity and upholding tribal treaty rights, we believe these shared values and priorities should be reflected in our updated comprehensive plan. As such, we wish to be proactive partners in updating the comprehensive plan and plan to bring forward a resolution that would outline four major priorities:

1. Follow the framework established in HB 1099 (2021-22), adding a goal of climate change mitigation to planning, addressing the adverse impacts of climate change on people, property, infrastructure, and ecological systems, and reducing overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
2. Follow the framework established in HB 1117 (2021-22), adding a goal of salmon recovery to planning, work towards net ecological gain of salmon habitat, and work towards eliminating fish passage barrier culverts.
3. Incorporate equity and environmental justice considerations throughout the comprehensive plan.
4. Follow the framework established in HB 1717, providing a participation process for Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe to engage government-to-government in our comprehensive planning.

Updating our comprehensive plan will require significant interdepartmental, intergovernmental, and community coordination and collaboration. We hope that this can be done so through a refreshed lens given updated values and priorities focused on our future needs.