

ORDINANCE NO. _____

**ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO WHATCOM COUNTY CODE TITLE 20 (ZONING),
UNDER THE 2025-2026 PERIODIC UPDATE OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, PURSUANT TO THE
GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT**

WHEREAS, every ten years as part of the periodic update, RCW [36.70A.130](#)(1)(a) requires Whatcom County to take legislative action to review and, if needed, revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations to comply with the requirements of Chapter [36.70A](#) RCW (the Growth Management Act); and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services has proposed amendments to the official Whatcom County Zoning Map as part of the 2025-2026 periodic update to implement the plan's updated goals and policies, fulfill the mandatory elements required for Comprehensive Plans under the GMA, and ensure internal consistency pursuant to RCW [36.70A.130](#)(1)(a), RCW [36.70A.070](#), and WAC [365-196-500](#); and

WHEREAS, the County Council docketed PLN2023-00001 to implement development regulation updates associated with the 2025-26 periodic update of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan; ~~and.~~

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED that the Whatcom County Council adopts the recitals above and legislative record as findings and further makes the following additional findings:

~~**WHEREAS**, the County Council hereby adopts the following findings of fact:~~

Section 1. FINDINGS OF FACT.

1. The zoning code amendments were studied under the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan [Environmental Impact Statement](#) (EIS) issued on August 22, 2025, under file number SEPA2024-00001.
2. Notice of Intent to Adopt Development Amendment was submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on each of the proposed zoning code amendments as detailed below:
 - a. Periodic Update Related Housing & Concurrent Code Amendments:
 - i. 60-Day Notice of Intent to Adopt Amendment emailed 3-31-2026
 - ii. Assigned Submittal ID Number 2026-S-11662
 - b. Additional Adequate Provisions Code Amendments:

- i. Request for Expedited Review emailed 5-6-2026
 - ii. Assigned Submittal ID Number 2026-S-12796
 - iii. Granted 5-21-2026
3. The Whatcom County Planning Commission held duly noticed public hearings and work sessions regarding the proposed amendments on [April 9, 2026](#), [May 14, 2026](#), and [May 28, 2026](#).
4. The County Council encouraged early and continuous participation by the public and interested parties in the comprehensive plan update process by holding multiple public meetings, public comment periods and work sessions between February 10, 2026 and _____ as reflected in the legislative record, consistent with requirements for a public participation program required pursuant to the Growth Management Act. County Council futher held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed amendments contemplated by this ordinance on _____.
5. The amendments are consistent with the current Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. There are no policies that would be inconsistent with these amendments.
6. The amendments are consistent with the 2025-26 periodic update of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, and implement the updated goals and policies of the plan pursuant to WAC [365-196-500](#).
7. Adoption of the zoning code amendments implements applicable requirements under the Growth Management Act pursuant to RCW [36.70A.130\(1\)\(a\)](#), RCW [36.70A.070](#), and WAC [365-196-500](#).
8. The State legislature found that order to meet the goal of 1,000,000 new homes statewide by 2044, and enhanced quality of life and environmental protection, innovative housing policies will need to be adopted and that increasing housing options that are more affordable to various income levels is critical to achieving the state's housing goals, including those established by the legislature in Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1220 (chapter 254, Laws of 2021).
9. The State legislature further found:
 - a. There is continued need for the development of housing at all income levels, including middle housing that will provide a wider variety of housing options and configurations to allow Washingtonians to live near where they work;
 - b. Homes developed at higher densities are more affordable by design for Washington residents both in their construction and reduced household energy and transportation costs;
 - c. The state has made historic investments in subsidized affordable housing through the housing trust fund, yet even with these historic investments, the magnitude of the housing shortage requires both public and private investment; and

- d. In addition to addressing the housing shortage, allowing more housing options in areas already served by urban infrastructure will reduce the pressure to develop natural and working lands, support key strategies for climate change, food security, and Puget Sound recovery, and save taxpayers and ratepayers money.
10. The proposed recommended zoning code amendments are consistent with the following GMA Planning Goals under RCW 36.70A.020:
- a. Number 1: *Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner;*
 - b. Number 2: *Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;*
 - c. Number 4: *Housing. Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock;*
 - d. Number 5: *Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities; and*
 - e. Number 11: *Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.*

Section 2. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW. Whatcom County Council concludes the following in regards to the proposed amended ordinance:

1. The development regulation amendments are consistent with the approval criteria in WCC [22.10.060\(2\)](#)
2. The amendments are in the public interest.
3. The amendments implement and are consistent with the updated associated goals and policies of the 2025-2026 Comprehensive Plan pursuant to RCW [36.70A.130](#), and WAC [365-196-500](#).

4. The amendments are consistent with applicable approval requirements for zoning map amendments under WCC [22.10.060](#).
5. The amendments are consistent with the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW [36.70A](#)) and its Planning Goals (RCW [36.70A.020](#)).

~~BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED~~ by the Whatcom County Council that amendments to the Whatcom County Code Title 20 (Zoning) are hereby adopted as shown in Exhibits 1 through 4; and

BE IT FINALLY FURTHER ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that, should any part of this regulation be held to be illegal, unconstitutional, or otherwise unenforceable, the remainder of the regulation shall apply.

ADOPTED this ____ day of _____, 2026

ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

[Kimberly Thulin by email \(6.23.2026/ko\)](#)

Civil Deputy Prosecutor

Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

() Approved () Denied

Date Signed: _____