



# WHATCOM COUNTY

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## WASHINGTON

### Planning & Development Services

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June 2, 2025

TO: The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

RE: 2025 Comp Plan Update – Chapter 1 (Introduction and Growth Projections)

The last Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan update was completed in 2016. 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. Shorelines<sup>1</sup>
12. Climate Change and Resilience (new Chapter)

The Whatcom County Planning Commission issued preliminary recommendations on Chapter 1 on May 22. It is anticipated that the County Council's Committee of the Whole will discuss this Chapter on June 10.

Chapter 1 generally includes:

- Background information, including GMA goals ([RCW 36.70A.020](#)), land use history, and current land use;

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

- A goal and related policies relating to government activities, regulations and policies;
- Historical and projected future population; and
- Historical and projected future employment.

Proposed changes to Chapter 1 include:

- GMA Goals - Updating GMA goals to reflect changes made by the State legislature in recent years. [House Bill 1220](#), passed in the 2021 legislative session, places more emphasis on planning for and accommodating housing that is affordable to all economic segments of the community (this will be addressed in the Housing Chapter). [House Bill 1181](#), passed in the 2023 legislative session, requires that the Comprehensive Plan must address climate change and resiliency (this will be addressed in a new Chapter 12 and other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan).
- Population - Updating historical population and Office of Financial Management low, medium and high population projections. Inserting population growth projections for the new 2023-2045 planning period for urban growth areas (UGAs), areas outside UGAs (Rural and Resource Lands), and a countywide total. The population growth projections reflect the preliminary numbers approved by the County Council on March 11, 2025 in [Resolution 2025-011](#).
- Employment - Updating historical employment and inserting employment growth projections for the new 2023-2045 planning period for UGAs, areas outside UGAs (Rural and Resource Lands), and a countywide total. The employment growth projections reflect the preliminary numbers approved by the County Council on March 11, 2025 in Resolution 2025-011.
- Other Changes – Miscellaneous modifications updating, correcting or improving language.

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