



WHATCOM COUNTY

WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services

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Memorandum

TO: The Honorable Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive
The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Lucas Clark, Planner II

THROUGH: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

DATE: February 27, 2025

SUBJECT: Docketing Comp Plan & Development Regulation Amendments

Pursuant to state and local law, proposed comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments are docketed for further review by the County Council each year. This year, there are five (5) new applications and a number of previous applications (initiated in past years) on the proposed docket.

New Applications

Whatcom County has submitted or received five (5) new proposals relating to the following topics for consideration of adding to the annual docket of potential comprehensive plan and development regulation amendments in 2025:

- Birch Bay UGA Expansion, 4.77 Acres (7850 Blaine Road). Privately initiated, see map.
- Birch Bay UGA Expansion, 37.66 Acres (Koehn Road Area). Privately initiated, see map.
- Impervious Surface Code Amendments- Wade King Elementary school is proposing an amendment that removes the impervious surface limitations with in certain watersheds as it relates to public schools.
- Capital Facilities Planning- Yearly amendments to the capital facilities element of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. Appendix F.
- Whatcom County Code Amendments- allows annual code scrub and other compliance type items necessary throughout the year.

Brief descriptions of these proposed amendments are included in the attached draft Exhibit A—Docket.

A fee waiver has been requested for both the privately initiated Birch Bay UGA Expansions, and Wade King Elementary Impervious Surface Code Amendments. WCC 22.10.020(3)(b) states: “. . . When docketing an application, the county council may waive the application fees if it finds the proposed amendment would clearly benefit the community as a whole.”

The Council may docket these amendments without waiving the approximately \$9,600 per docketed item in fees, docket these amendments and waive the fees, or choose not to docket the applications. The Council may choose to waive the fees or not for each of the proposed amendments.

The Council should determine which of the above proposals to docket for further review. Docketed amendments, as required and appropriate, will be submitted for SEPA review, evaluated by the Planning Department, and go to a public hearing before the Planning Commission prior to returning to the County Council for a final decision. If an amendment is not docketed by Council, it will not go forward.

Completed Items Removed from the Docket

PDS completed review of six (6) items from last year's docket.

- Lummi Island Height Limitations

Status: On 1/28/2025 Council adopted Ordinance #2025-004

- Review/Revise Heavy Impact Industrial (HII) Zone Uses within City UGA

Status: On 12/3/2024 Council adopted Ordinance #2024-071

- Seven-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2025-2031

Status: on 11/19/2024 Council adopted Ordinance #2024-058

- Cannabis Retail in LII within UGA

Status: On 09/24/2024 Council adopted Ordinance #2024-046

- Allow Propane Reload, Storage, and Distribution Facilities in AG Zone Under Certain Circumstances

Status: On 04/09/2024 Council adopted Ordinance #2024-021

- New Permit Review Process and Timelines (SSB 5290)

Status: On 2/25/2025 Council adopted Ordinance #2025-005

Previous Docket Items

In addition to the new proposed docket items, the following projects were docketed for review in previous years. They remain active docket items and are included in the proposed resolution, as review has not been completed:

- 2025 Comprehensive Plan, Development Regulation, and UGA Update

Status: In progress.

- Vacation Rental Regulations

Status: On 07/25/2023 Council adopted Ordinance #2023-041 regarding zoning and definitions. Awaiting Department of Ecology final approval of SMP Update.

- Home-Based Businesses

Status: Recommendation made 05/25/2023 to Council Planning and Development Committee. The Hearing Examiner provided additional input and met with PDS and the Council P&D Committee chair to review. Currently held in P&D Committee by the Chair.

- Clean Energy Code Amendments

Status: In progress.

- North Bellingham UGA Expansion (Current Urban Reserve)

Status: Addressed through Comprehensive Plan process.

- Mineral Resource Lands Expansion – Breckenridge Rd.

Status: Addressed through Comprehensive Plan process.

- Mineral Resource Lands – County-wide Designation Process

Status: Addressed through Comprehensive Plan process.

- Code Enforcement Amendments

Status: In Progress

- Agricultural Strategic Plan Implementation

Status: Addressed through Comprehensive Plan process and ongoing.

- Mineral Resource Lands Expansion – North Star Rd.

Status: Addressed through Comprehensive Plan process.

Thank you for your consideration of the proposed resolution. We look forward to discussing it with you.