

PROPOSED BY: **DONOVAN & SCANLON**
INTRODUCED: _____

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**~~REGARDING ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE REQUESTING INFORMATION FROM
THE COUNTY COUNCIL TO THE EXECUTIVE AND PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES ON THE POPULATION, HOUSING AND
EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATIONS~~ REGARDING THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
UPDATE**

WHEREAS, the Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County and the cities to review and, if needed, update their respective comprehensive plans; and

WHEREAS, the GMA requires county and city comprehensive plans to be coordinated and consistent; and

WHEREAS, the GMA states that urban growth areas (UGAs) must be revised to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the succeeding 20-year planning period that extends through 2045 (RCW 36.70A.130); and

WHEREAS, population, housing, and employment allocations are a critical component in the comprehensive plan update and UGA review processes; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County's ~~Countywide Planning Policies~~ policies encourage placing a larger share of population growth and housing allocations in Bellingham and urban areas, and less in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, the GMA encourages placing a larger share of population growth and housing allocations in urban areas, and less in rural areas; and

WHEREAS, the County and cities' climate action and sustainability goals include minimizing vehicle trips from rural areas to urban areas; and

WHEREAS, Transit Oriented Development is key to these climate action and sustainability goals including minimizing vehicle trips from rural areas to urban areas; and

WHEREAS, Transit Oriented Development is more practical when housing and employment growth is concentrated in urban areas; and

WHEREAS, On March 11, 2025, the County Council approved Resolution 2025-011, "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution Regarding Population, Housing and Employment Allocations," agreeing to preliminary allocations for initial review of urban growth areas by the County and cities; and

WHEREAS, while final decisions on population, housing, and employment allocations will not be made until the ~~next comprehensive plan~~ 2025 Comprehensive Plan is adopted, it is important for the County and cities to agree upon preliminary

allocations in order to coordinate transportation modeling, capital facility planning, environmental review, and UGA recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the final population and employment allocations may affect how accurately the cities and County plan for investing substantial amounts of capital into infrastructure needed for achieving housing and employment growth; and

WHEREAS, the preliminary population, housing, and employment growth allocations shown in Exhibit A ~~to of~~ the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution" plan for population growth ~~above~~ 19% greater than the State Office of Financial Management's (OFM's) most likely projection for growth through 2045; and

WHEREAS, higher city and UGA population projections will allow for increased housing supply and densities to help address the County's affordable housing needs, and increase capacity and feasibility for Transit Oriented Development, ~~but may direct and compel responsible and~~ capital facility planning and ~~potential~~ capital facilities investments to areas ~~that may not be developed within the 20-year planning period projecting longer term development windows~~; and

~~WHEREAS, population and employment proposals in Exhibit A to the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution" include levels above the medium-growth projections in some UGAs not adjacent to major projected employment areas, such as Columbia Valley; and~~

WHEREAS, providing additional employment capacity in such UGAs as Columbia Valley may ~~also~~ reduce vehicle trips from such areas to other major employment centers; and

WHEREAS, the County's current land use policies may ~~lead be re-evaluated to~~ limit piecemeal development in unincorporated areas that cities may seek to annex in the future, to guard against making future annexations ~~more~~ difficult and ~~housing even more expensive provide protections against rural sprawl into non-urban growth areas and reserves.~~

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Whatcom County Council acknowledges that a range of population, housing, and employment allocations are being studied in the environmental impact statement and UGA review process and the final UGA growth allocations may be different than what is set forth in Exhibit A to the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution;" and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED the Whatcom County Council requests that ~~as part of the development of prior to adoption of the Final Environmental Impact Statement associated with~~ the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update, the Executive and Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) provide Council with information about:

- 1) ~~Coordinate with Avenues for coordination between~~ the cities and County Council to ~~recommend develop~~ tools for improving development potential upon annexation in municipal unincorporated UGAs (e.g., annexation incentives) where cities do not extend public sewer and water prior to annexation. ~~Furthermore, consider if policies such as the following might address those concerns Policies associated with this could include:~~

- ~~a.~~ Modifying County zoning in existing and city-proposed urban growth areas ~~to allow a maximum of one dwelling/20 acres.~~
 - ~~b.a.~~ ~~Modifying County zoning in existing and city-proposed urban growth area~~and reserves ~~to allow a maximum of one dwelling/20 acres.~~
 - ~~c.b.~~ ~~Encourage the~~Encouraging cities to develop or review future land use designations that would take effect in the UGAs upon annexation.
 - ~~d.c.~~ ~~Encourage~~Encouraging alternative funding mechanisms such as impact fees and other mechanisms to pay for infrastructure needs in the UGAs to enable cities and other urban service providers more feasible means to extend these services into municipal unincorporated UGAs.
- 2) ~~Present options and~~Options for an analysis of the pros and cons of reducing or mitigating potential population growth impacts to the County's rural and resource lands.
 - 3) ~~Encourage~~Options for increasing transit from outlying small cities and rural areas into major employment areas to reduce vehicle miles traveled.
 - 4) ~~Study~~Opportunities to study street standards in municipal UGA and UGA reserves to align bicycle, pedestrian, and mobility infrastructure to connect with similar adjacent municipal infrastructure.
 - 5) ~~Provide County Council information~~Information on how employment projections in Exhibit A to the "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution" for rural and rural resource areas, and for UGAs not associated with incorporated cities, align with planned commercial and industrial land capacity and zoning in those areas.
 - 6) ~~Present~~Information about options to County Council to discourage and/or mitigate potential risks from growth in vulnerable floodplains and coastal areas projected to experience sea level rise and to encourage growth in safer locations~~low flood or no flood zones.~~
 - ~~7) Establish and publish goals and metrics to expedite and reduce the cost of permitting.~~
 - ~~8) Develop a work program to conduct a full code simplification process.~~
 - ~~9) Establish a policy to ensure that when permit applicants receive responses from Planning and Development Services all county requests must be justified by citing a specific and publicly accessible county code or state or federal law or regulation.~~
 - ~~10) Update the County Council on discussion between the County, City of Bellingham, City of Ferndale, and other cities that work toward addressing these issues.~~

7) Information in the form of maps that show what future UGAs would look like under each alternative scoped in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including maps that detail where UGAs will be added and / or deleted, and detail how UGA changes may extend into critical areas, resource lands, and flood prone areas.

APPROVED this _____ day of _____ 2025.

ATTEST

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Civil Deputy Prosecutor