

PREFACE					
#	Page	Section/Policy	Proposed Amendment	Sponsor	Meeting
1.		Preface: Add a Land Acknowledgement	Whatcom County Government acknowledges that present day Whatcom County is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe, as well as other Coast Salish peoples who have lived in and stewarded this land since time immemorial. We honor their enduring connection to the lands and waters of this region — including the Salish Sea, rivers, forests, and mountains — and recognize their continued presence, sovereignty, and cultural traditions. We express our respect and gratitude for their stewardship of this place and commit to learning from and supporting Indigenous communities today. Truth and acknowledgment are critical to building mutual respect and connection across all barriers of heritage and difference. We begin this effort to acknowledge what has been buried by honoring the truth. We pay respect to the elders past and present. We take a moment to consider the many legacies of violence, displacement, migration, and settlement that bring us together here today and seek to uncover such truths in all that we do.	Galloway/Rienstra	
2.		Preface: Add a labor Acknowledgement	Whatcom County as it stands today is only possible because of ancestors, elders, and those who have gone before us. The Whatcom County government acknowledges the labor that built our county, institutions, and infrastructures. Our region depended on the labor, dehumanization, exploitation, suffering, wisdom, and skills of: enslaved people primarily of African descent, Indigenous peoples of this land, the Chinese immigrants who built railroads that allowed for westward American development, Japanese Americans whose properties and livelihoods were taken from them while incarcerated during World War II, and migrant workers from the Philippines, Mexico, South Asia, and Central and South America who have worked lumber mills, farms, and canneries within harsh and unjust systems. We recognize the immigrant and American-born workers of African, Asian, and Central and South American descent whose labor often remains unseen yet contributes to the wellbeing of our collective community. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor.	Galloway/Rienstra	

**CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION & GROWTH PROJECTIONS**

3.	1-2	How the Plan was Created	<p>“Third, extensive community participation was facilitated through meetings, presentations, public hearings, and written comments made throughout this process, consistent with the Public Participation Plan.”</p> <p>Hyperlink Public Participation Plan or add to the appendix:  <a href="https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/85488/Approved-Public-Participation-Plan-June-4-2024---2025-Update">https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/85488/Approved-Public-Participation-Plan-June-4-2024---2025-Update</a></p>	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW
4.	1-3	Countywide Planning Policies	<p>During the Comprehensive Plan process, the Whatcom County Council, in conjunction with the cities, adopted a set of Countywide Planning Policies (see Appendix C). The framework provided by the adopted Countywide Planning Policies ensures that local planning efforts will be consistent with one another and supportive of regional goals.</p>	Donovan	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW
5.	1-3	Introducing Whatcom County	<p><b>Introducing Whatcom County</b></p> <p>Whatcom County lies in the northwest corner of both the State of Washington and the coterminous United States. It is bounded on the north by the Canadian border, on the east by Okanogan County, on the south by Skagit County, and on the west by the Strait of Georgia and Bellingham Bay. These borders enclose large parts of the Mount Baker National Forest and the North Cascades National Park, which take up about two-thirds of Whatcom County's total area. All but a few residents live in the western third of the county. Bellingham is Whatcom County's largest city. Other cities include Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas, and there are three unincorporated UGAs and several smaller unincorporated communities.</p> <p><b>Tribal Land and Sovereignty</b></p> <p>Whatcom County is built on the ancestral homelands and waterways of the Coast Salish peoples, including Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe, who have lived on, cared for, and protected these lands and waters since time immemorial. Their culture, values, and teachings are intertwined in the waters, lands, and resources that sustain our life ways. The Whatcom County government acknowledges the Tribes’ treaty rights, as guaranteed by the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliott between the United States government and the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Indian Tribe, and commit to honoring and upholding the Treaty as the supreme law of the land <b>per the United States Constitution</b>. We respect their sovereignty and their right to self-determination.</p> <p>There are two reservations and associated trust lands located within Whatcom County's borders. The Lummi Nation reservation is on the Lummi Peninsula and Portage Island on the western side of the county. The Nooksack Indian Tribe reservation and trust lands include parcels along the Nooksack River in the west-central area of the county.</p>	Galloway /Rienstra	APPROVED SCOTW 3.3.26

	1-4		<p><b>The Labor that Built Whatcom County</b></p> <p>Whatcom County as it stands today is only possible because of those who have come before us. The Whatcom County government acknowledges the labor that built our <b>country</b>, institutions, and infrastructures. Our county has depended upon the labor, wisdom, and skills of enslaved peoples, Indigenous <b>Peoples</b>, immigrants, and migrants who have often worked within harsh and unjust systems. We recognize the immigrant and American-born workers whose labor often remains unseen yet contribute to the wellbeing of our collective community.</p>		APPROVED SCOTW 3.3.26
6.	1-4	Whatcom County Government	The following goals and policies are intended to ensure good County government that serves all residents. This includes accessibility, transparency, accountability, robust public involvement, ongoing process and performance improvement, enhanced tribal engagement and coordination, and fostering inclusion and belonging for all who call Whatcom County home.	Galloway	
7.	1-4	Goal 1A	“Ensure that government activities, regulations and policies are transparent, accountable, accessible, and easy to understand.”	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW
8.	1-5/6	Add a NEW Goal 1B and associated policies	<p><b>Goal 1B: Take concrete steps to facilitate tribal engagement and coordination with Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe on all relevant county government activities, regulations, and policies to ensure the opportunity for tribal partners to have a voice in moving the county towards a shared vision for the future.</b></p> <p>Policy 1B-1: Recognize the Tribes’ sovereignty and right to self-determination; honor and uphold tribal treaty rights including their rights to fish, hunt, and gather.</p> <p>Policy 1B-2: Work collaboratively with the Tribes <b>in an effort</b> to develop a mutually agreed upon engagement and coordination framework that incorporates regular and meaningful <b>Whatcom County government-to-Tribal government-to-</b>government cooperation promoting open lines of communication, information sharing, and collaborative decision making.</p> <p>Policy 1B-3: Recognize and support tribal cultures, taking steps that include promoting education and outreach materials and programs that honor tribal history, culture, treaty rights, and sovereignty.</p> <p>Policy 1B-4: <b>Conserve</b> cultural and natural resources that sustain <b>I</b>ndigenous <b>Peoples’</b> way of life. These include watersheds, shorelines, forests, and other culturally significant areas critical to tribal cultural practices and treaty protected resources.</p>	Galloway /Rienstra	Green APPROVED SCOTW 3.3.26

			<p>Policy 1B-5: Coordinate and collaborate with Tribes on all relevant public works and development projects to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on tribal archaeological and cultural resources.</p> <p>Policy 1B-6: Acknowledge that water is integral to tribal culture and treaty rights; coordinate with tribal governments on the facilitation of the WRIA 1 Nooksack Adjudication, identify and implement methods of protecting streams, rivers, estuaries, groundwater, surface water, aquifer recharge areas, and water related infrastructure.</p> <p>Policy 1B-7: Acknowledge that the effects of climate change, including extreme weather events, natural hazards such as flooding and wildfires, increasing temperature, and rising sea levels, disproportionately threaten the rights, livelihood, and cultural practices of Indigenous Peoples.</p>		
9.	1-6	Add NEW Goal 1C and associated policies	<p><b>Goal 1C: The Whatcom County Government, in all that it does, shall work towards the elimination of economic and racial disparities and inequities so that all residents of Whatcom County, regardless of identity, citizenship status, socioeconomic status, and/or geography, can live, thrive, and belong for who they are, as they are, without fear, every day.</b></p> <p>Policy 1C-1: Acknowledge the historical harm caused to communities of color by Whatcom County Government’s actions through planning, housing, and development and identify the connections between the actions and local racially disparate outcomes.</p> <p>Policy 1C-2: Acknowledge and uplift the culture, diverse values, and cultural resources of communities of color as valuable community assets.</p> <p>Policy 1C-3: Coordinate and increase the participation of communities facing racial disparities and inequities in County civic processes and decision-making. Design equitable decision-making structures that allow for community engagement at every step.</p> <p>Policy 1C-4: Develop and implement an equity and equality of opportunity framework and toolkit to inform decision making and to evaluate how budget, policy, and programmatic decisions impact marginalized and underserved communities.</p> <p>Policy 1C-5: Invest County staff time and resources to develop environments, capital projects, and initiatives that enhance opportunities for communities currently experiencing racial disparities through public amenities, access to affordable housing, childcare, healthy and culturally relevant food, and health programs. Policy 1C-6: Leverage county resources and investments in public work to empower and uplift a local and diverse workforce, including supporting job opportunities for women, minorities, veterans, and those economically distressed, marginalized, and underserved.</p>	Galloway /Rienstra	Green APPROVED SCOTW 3.3.26

Policy 1C-7: Modernize county code, policies, and processes to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and equal protection and provision of county services to all people.

**Table 3. Estimated Population Growth in Whatcom County, ~~2020-2050~~ 2025-2045**

YEAR	Natural Increase		Net Migration		Total <del>5-Year</del> Annual Growth
	Pop. Increase	% of Growth	Pop. Increase	% of Growth	
<del>2020-</del> 2025	1,706		11,768		<del>13,474</del>
<del>2025-</del> 2030	2,795	20.20%	11,042	79.80%	13,837
<del>2030-</del> 2035	889	6.68%	12,415	93.32%	13,304
<del>2035-</del> 2040	-595	-4.64%	13,408	104.64%	12,813
<del>2040-</del> 2045	-1119	-9.00%	13,558	109.00%	12,439
<del>2045-</del> 2050	-916	-7.56%	13,038	107.57%	12,121

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10. 1-10 Table 3

11. 1-11 Population Projections

The County's 2045 population projection of 303,438 is within OFM's range . The rationale for using this figure, which is above OFM's medium projection, include: ensuring an adequate land supply to accommodate growth, the need to plan for growth, and the need to protect the quality of life and natural resources in Whatcom County

Galloway

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12. 1-11 Population Projections

“The County's 2045 population projection of 303,438 is within OFM's range and therefore requires no further justification. The rationale for using this figure, which is above OFM's medium projection, include: ensuring an adequate land supply to accommodate growth, the need to plan for growth, and the need to protect the quality of life and natural resources in Whatcom County. This population projection is selected for planning purposes. Given past population trends and the requirements of GMA, planning for population growth—whether it occurs or not—is critical for the quality of life, protection of natural resources, and economic health of Whatcom County.”

“This population projection is selected for planning purposes.”

Galloway

			<p><b>Question:</b></p> <p>Need help understanding the budget and policy implications of opting for a projection higher than OFM medium. Given RCW 36.70A.110, what are the County’s obligations to designating new UGAs or areas within which urban growth shall be encouraged?</p> <p>How do we reconcile what we are hearing from jurisdictions, that infrastructure cost will be a significant financial barrier to accommodating growth even within the UGAs and that the cost of over-planning and building more infrastructure to accommodate a higher projection than actual growth experienced is ultimately passed on to tax payers and residents, and further impacts affordability and cost of living?</p>		
13.	1-12	Table 5	<p><b>Proposed Amendment:</b></p> <p>Revert to OFM Medium for Birch Bay UGA (2,313 rather than 2,662) and Columbia Valley UGA (988 rather than 1,137)</p> <p>Area outside UGAs Growth Allocation changed to 7,243; Total Whatcom County changed to 65,881.</p>	Galloway	<p>REJECTED SCOTW 3.3.26</p> <p>Green APPROVED SCOTW 3.3.26</p>
14.	1-13	Employment Projections	<p>Employment Projections</p> <p><i>Note: The title to this section used to say Employment Projections, in the preliminary planning commission draft, the word projections is removed. Councilmember Donovan moved to preserve the word “projections.”</i></p>	Donovan	<p>APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW</p>
15.	1-13	Employment Projections	<p>Employment allocations were based largely on the local request recognizing the incentives that cities have for larger employment areas (sales tax, property tax). Most of the employment projections displayed in Table 5 for the Urban Growth Areas and the area outside UGAs greatly exceed the “high” projections provided in the Technical Analysis (Leland Report).</p>	Donovan	<p>APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW</p>
16.	1-14	Table 6	<p><b>Question:</b> Most of the employment projections/allocations are OFM high or above high. What are the implications? Are these reasonable? Do we want to consider something more reasonable or closer to OFM medium? Have we engaged Cherry Point industries/landowners to see if these projections are reasonable within their plans for industrial growth?</p> <p>And with these employment allocations being not proportionate to population growth allocations within the UGA, are there unintended consequences we should be tracking such as are we further exacerbating the issues related to increased vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by increasing need for commute to other areas?</p>	Galloway	
17.	1-15	Demographics	<p>“The culturally diverse demographic makeup of the county's population has an effect on land use patterns. For example, Whatcom County residents with children may choose different kinds of</p>	Galloway	

			transportation and recreation than retired people. Single-parent families and large extended families need different kinds of housing. Another influence on county demographics is the cyclical influx of seasonal residents, primarily from Canada, who maintain recreational homes in parts of the county. Areas most influenced by seasonal residency include Point Roberts, Birch Bay, and the Foothills Subarea. Students attending local colleges and universities are another significant seasonal demographic group.		
18.	1-17	Current Land Use	The majority of single-family homes are concentrated in the cities, Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development (LAMIRDS), such as Sudden Valley, Columbia Valley, Glacier, Lake Samish, Lake Whatcom (north end), Cain Lake, Birch Bay, and Sandy Point. Lower density residential development is scattered throughout the rural areas of the County. As may be expected, single-family homes are also located along the valley floors of the three forks of the Nooksack. The Cherry Point industrial area, the agriculturally dominated area north of Lynden and the forested foothills in the eastern part of the county have very low to zero residential density.	Galloway	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW
19.	1-17	Current Land Use	A prominent characteristic of Whatcom County housing is the high number of vacation, resort, and second-home units found throughout the county. In 2020, approximately 50% of the "vacant" units were occupied part of the year for seasonal, recreational or occasional use (2023 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B25004). Over 1000 single-family housing units in the unincorporated areas are used as short-term vacation rentals (cite the study PDS provided Council).	Donovan	APPROVED TO SEND TO PC 6/24/25 COTW
<b>ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS FOR 3/10</b>					
20.		Preface: Add a labor Acknowledgement	Whatcom County as it stands today is only possible because of ancestors, elders, and those who have gone before us. The Whatcom County government acknowledges the labor that built our county, institutions, and infrastructures. Our region depended on the labor, dehumanization, exploitation, suffering, wisdom, and skills of: enslaved people primarily of African descent, Indigenous peoples of this land, the Chinese immigrants who built railroads that allowed for westward American development, Japanese Americans whose properties and livelihoods were taken from them while incarcerated during World War II, and migrant workers from the Philippines, Mexico, South Asia, and Central and South America who have worked lumber mills, farms, and canneries within harsh and unjust systems. <b>We recognize the Dutch community with their wisdom and skills to develop agriculture lands which remains a vital part of Whatcom County's economy.</b> We recognize the immigrant and American-born workers of African, Asian, and Central and South American descent whose labor often remains unseen yet contributes to the wellbeing of our collective community. We acknowledge all unpaid care-giving labor.	Strempler	

21.	1-6	Policy 1C-6	Through fair and open competition, leverage county resources and investments in public works to empower and uplift a local and diverse workforce for all.	Stremler	
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