



# Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
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## Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2025-637

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<b>File Created:</b>	09/03/2025	<b>Entered by:</b>	Matt Aamot		
<b>Department:</b>	Planning and Development Services Department	<b>File Type:</b>	Ordinance Requiring a Public Hearing		
<b>Assigned to:</b>	Council	<b>Final Action:</b>	10/21/2025		
<b>Agenda Date:</b>	10/21/2025	<b>Enactment #:</b>	ORD 2025-049		
<b>Related Files:</b>					

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### TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Ordinance amending the Countywide Planning Policies, which reside in Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Appendix C

### SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

Ordinance amending the Countywide Planning Policies, which are used for establishing a countywide framework from which County and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted. The Countywide Planning Policy amendments relate to a number of topics including public involvement, urban growth areas, rural areas, housing, open space and greenbelt corridors, economic development and employment, transportation, public facilities, impact fees, intergovernmental cooperation, water quality and quantity, buildable lands, Tribal cultural resources, and climate change and community resilience.

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### HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

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Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
10/07/2025	Council	INTRODUCED FOR PUBLIC HEARING	Council
		Aye: 7 Buchanan, Byrd, Donovan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Scanlon, and Stremier	
		Nay: 0	

10/21/2025 Council

ADOPTED

Aye: 4 Buchanan, Donovan, Galloway, and Scanlon

Nay: 3 Byrd, Elenbaas, and Stremier

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**Attachments:** Staff Memo, Proposed Ordinance, Notice of Hearing after 10.7.2025

PROPOSED BY: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
INTRODUCTION DATE: OCTOBER 7, 2025

**ORDINANCE NO.** 2025-049

**ADOPTING AMENDMENTS TO  
THE COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES**

**WHEREAS,** The Whatcom County Planning Commission held a public hearing and issued recommendations on the proposed amendments; and

**WHEREAS,** The County Council considered Planning Commission recommendations; and

**WHEREAS,** The County Council approved final draft Countywide Planning Policy amendments on May 27, 2025; and

**WHEREAS,** The County Council's final draft Countywide Planning Policy amendments were transmitted, via email, to the seven cities in Whatcom County on June 3, 2025; and

**WHEREAS,** All seven city councils have reviewed and approved the Countywide Planning Policy amendments;

**WHEREAS,** The County Council held a public hearing; and

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

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Growth Management Act (GMA) was originally adopted by the State Legislature in 1990. The Legislature amended the GMA in 1991 to require counties to adopt county wide planning policies in cooperation with cities.
2. The GMA states that ". . . a 'countywide planning policy' is a written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted. . . ." (RCW 36.70A.210).

3. The Countywide Planning Policies reside in Appendix C of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.
4. Whatcom County's Countywide Planning Policies were originally adopted by the County Council in 1993 and last amended in 2021.
5. The County Council adopted the original Countywide Planning Policies in April 1993 (Resolution 93-024).
6. The County Council amended the Countywide Planning Policies in March 1997 (Resolution 97-011).
7. The County Council amended the Countywide Planning Policies in January 2005 (Ordinance 2005-022).
8. The County Council amended the Countywide Planning Policies in February 2021 by adding provisions relating to the Review and Evaluation Program (Buildable Lands) and Dispute Resolution Procedures (Ordinance 2021-003).
9. The City/County Planner Group formulated the subject Countywide Planning Policy amendments (with assistance from the consultant, the County's Climate Action Manager, and agencies on certain topics).
10. The City/County Planner Group formulated Countywide Planning Policy M.1 relating to Intergovernmental Coordination after receiving a request from the County Executive relating to this topic.
11. The subject amendments would modify the following sections of the Countywide Planning Policies: Citizen Involvement, Urban Verses Rural Distinctions, Urban Growth Areas, City Urban Growth Areas, Non-City Urban Growth Areas, Contiguous Orderly Development and Planning in Urban Growth Areas, Affordable Housing, Open Space/Greenbelt Corridors, Economic Development and Employment, Countywide Transportation Facilities and Strategies, Siting of Public Facilities, Impact Fees, Intergovernmental Cooperation, Water Quality and Quantity, Fiscal Impact, Private Property Rights, and the Review and Evaluation Program (Buildable Lands). The subject amendments would add new sections to the Countywide Planning Policies relating to: Tribal Cultural Resources and Climate Change/Community Resilience.
12. Whatcom County and the seven cities entered into an Interlocal Agreement concerning procedures for amending the Countywide Planning Policies, which became effective in March 2023 (Whatcom County Contract No. 202301033).

13. The County Executive initiated the Countywide Planning Policy amendments for review on October 29, 2024 and December 19, 2024 pursuant to the Interlocal Agreement.
14. The County sent correspondence to the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe, and Federal agencies on December 20, 2024 inviting them to participate in and cooperate with the Countywide Planning Policy adoption process.
15. WAC 197-11-800(19) categorically exempts procedural actions from State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review. The SEPA Official determined that the subject amendments are exempt as a procedural action on December 11, 2025.
16. The subject Countywide Planning Policy amendments were posted on the County website on December 20, 2025.
17. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was posted on the County website on January 7, 2025.
18. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was published in the Bellingham Herald on January 8, 2025.
19. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was sent to citizens, media, cities, and other groups on the County's e-mail list as of January 10, 2025.
20. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the subject amendments on January 23, 2025. The Planning Commission held a work session on the subject amendments on February 27, 2025.
21. The GMA was amended by the State Legislature in 2022 (House Bill 1717) to require that Countywide Planning Policies must include "Policies that address the protection of tribal cultural resources in collaboration with federally recognized Indian tribes that are invited pursuant to subsection (4) of this section, provided that a tribe, or more than one tribe, chooses to participate in the process" (RCW 36.70A.210(3)(i)).
22. The Countywide Planning Policies include new Section S "Tribal Cultural Resources." This Section addresses identification and protection of cultural resources in accordance with the GMA.

23. The GMA was amended by the State Legislature in 2023 (House Bill 1181) to adopt a new GMA Planning Goal relating to climate change and resiliency. This goal is to:

Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice (RCW 36.70A.020(14)).

24. The Countywide Planning Policies include new Section T "Climate Change/Community Resilience." This Section addresses changing climate in accordance with the GMA.

### **CONCLUSION**

The subject Countywide Planning Policy amendments are consistent with applicable provisions of GMA.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Whatcom County Council that:

Section 1. The Countywide Planning Policies are hereby adopted as shown on Exhibit A.

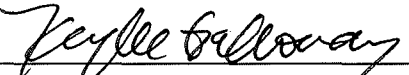
Section 2. Adjudication of invalidity of any of the sections, clauses, or provisions of this ordinance shall not affect or impair the validity of the ordinance as a whole or any part thereof other than the part so declared to be invalid.

**ADOPTED** this 21st day of October, 2025.

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL  
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

ATTEST

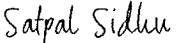
  
Cathy Haika, Clerk of the Council

  
Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

APPROVED as to form:

Approved     Denied

Greg Greenan, per 9/22/25 email  
Civil Deputy Prosecutor

DocuSigned by:  
  
1192C7C18B664E3...  
Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

Date: 10/22/2025

**Appendix C**  
**Countywide Planning Policies**

**Whatcom County**  
**Countywide Planning Policies**  
**Adopted April 1993**  
**(Revised March 11, 1997, January 25, 2005,**  
**February 9, 2021, and October 21, 2025)**

**A. Public Involvement**

1. The County and the cities shall cooperate to provide public education on the requirements of the Growth Management Act.
2. The County and the cities shall provide opportunities for the public to become involved in the growth management planning process through various mechanisms, such as surveys, public workshops, meetings, hearings, and advisory committees. The method of public involvement may vary based on the needs and constituents in various communities and shall include representation of both rural and urban interests on those issues that affect both urban and rural areas.
3. The public shall be notified in a timely manner of opportunities to have input and key decision points in the planning process. This should include actions such as use of on-line resources, notification lists, timely consideration of public comments, broad notification of property owners and residents during a planning process, and notification to community and neighborhood groups. The cities shall also develop a public participation process to solicit and consider comments from residents outside city limits but within existing and proposed Urban Growth Areas.
4. Public comments and viewpoints shall be considered in the decision-making process in development of draft plans and regulations. Consideration of public comments shall be evident in the decision-making process.
5. The County and the cities shall establish a system for community and neighborhood liaison to foster communication between the respective government and its neighborhoods. This system would also provide a point of contact for issues that may affect the community or neighborhoods.
6. Various planning techniques, such as overlay maps and Geographic Information Systems, shall be utilized to allow the public and public officials to evaluate planning proposals and provide the ability to make accurate comparison of issues so appropriate trade-offs can be consciously made.

**B. Urban Versus Rural Distinctions**

1. Whatcom County shall primarily become a government of rural areas in land use matters directed towards agriculture, forestry and other natural resources and natural resource based industries. The county may work with the public to further define or modify types of rural areas based on the characteristics and needs of different areas. This Section shall not preclude County governance of large urban industrial areas outside of the city UGA's (see Cherry Point below), urban growth areas not yet annexed or incorporated, and developed rural areas where the "urban" designation is inappropriate.
2. The County shall discourage urban level or high intensity development outside Urban Growth Areas, limited areas of more intensive rural development (LAMIRDS), and vested plats.
3. Whatcom County shall promote appropriate land uses and allow for infill within LAMIRDS. These areas have been delineated, and will not be expanded beyond logical outer boundaries in accordance with RCW 36.70.070(5).
4. In the next 20 years, Whatcom County should discourage "new fully contained communities" (as defined and authorized by RCW 36.70A.350) outside designated Urban Growth Areas.
5. Whatcom County may undertake a public process to further define or modify rural areas and rural growth as distinct from urban growth areas.

**C. Urban Growth Areas**

1. Urban growth needs shall be met by a combination of in-fill within cities and by growth within designated city and non-city Urban Growth Areas.
2. The size and location of Urban Growth Areas shall be consistent with the Growth Management Act, adopted local policies and capital facilities plans.
- 3a. The County and Cities will work together to develop countywide population and housing need projections, and associated allocations to Urban Growth Areas, that are within the range of the Washington State Office of Financial Management projections. The County and Cities will also work together to develop countywide employment projections and associated allocations to Urban Growth Areas. These allocations will be used to determine whether Urban Growth Areas include sufficient land capacity to permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in the County for the succeeding twenty-year period.
- 3b. The County and Cities shall develop a Land Capacity Analysis Methodology, which is a consistent approach to calculating the land supply needed within an urban growth area. The Land Capacity Analysis Methodology will consider limitations imposed by critical area regulations, infrastructure needs, open space, existing uses, local market factors and the ability of the jurisdiction to provide services. It is recognized that the above limitations may vary by jurisdiction, but the method for applying them shall be consistent. Urban

growth areas shall permit a range of densities and uses; however, these uses and densities may vary among jurisdictions.

4. Urban Growth Areas shall be evaluated in the timeframes set forth in the Growth Management Act to determine if they contain sufficient land capacity to accommodate the urban growth that is projected for the succeeding twenty-year period. The market factor for each Urban Growth Area shall also be evaluated. The Land Capacity Analysis will be used to determine whether the land supply is adequate to meet the needs of the community or whether the land supply is excessive.
5. Urban Growth Areas should be established in a way that preserves agricultural land, forestry, mineral resources, treaty natural resources (e.g. salmon, wildlife, traditional foods), tribal cultural resources, water resources, and critical areas. Urban growth shall maintain proper buffers from natural resource areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources and industries based on them. Any proposed UGA expansion in the 100 year floodplain must comply with RCW 36.70A.110. Any proposed UGA expansion should minimize risks posed by natural hazards.

**D. City Urban Growth Areas**

1. The Urban Growth Areas for the small cities shall be of an adequate size to allow them to become viable economic centers with a balance of jobs and housing. The small cities shall do appropriate planning to ensure adequate distribution of land uses and services at a range of urban densities and zoning classifications.
2. Urban Growth Areas for cities shall include those areas contiguous to cities that are suitable for urban growth as set forth in the Growth Management Act.
3. Cities shall develop plans to provide urban level water and sewer services within their Urban Growth Areas. These plans should be developed in cooperation with existing water and sewer purveyors within each city's Urban Area, and may be implemented through interlocal agreements.
4. Existing cities should accommodate additional housing at a range of densities appropriately responsive to the city's community vision before extending city Urban Growth Areas into areas where growth would adversely impact critical areas and resource lands. In those small cities entirely or almost entirely surrounded by flood plains, critical area and resource lands or within Shellfish Protection Districts, the County and cities shall seek to negotiate a balance between protection of resources and the allocation of adequate land area to meet the growth needs of the city.
5. All cities should grow in an efficient manner and, where reasonable, shall provide for adequate open space between cities.
6. Cities should be encouraged to provide positive incentives for in-fill.

**E. Non-City Urban Growth Areas**

1. Urban Growth Areas have been established in areas that are not contiguous to existing cities, and are already characterized by urban growth where adequate facilities and services can be provided. These are the Birch Bay, Cherry Point, and Columbia Valley UGAs.
2. Non-city urban growth areas, for already urbanized unincorporated residential areas, shall be encouraged to infill in a way that will facilitate efficient provision of facilities and services consistent with the scale of development.
3. Cherry Point shall be designated as an unincorporated industrial urban growth area in recognition of existing large scale industrial land uses. Additional large scale development shall be encouraged consistent with the ability to provide needed services and consistent with protecting critical areas along with other environmental protection considerations. The Cherry Point industrial area is an important and appropriate area for industry due to its access to deep water shipping, rail, all-weather roads, its location near the Canadian border, and its contribution to the County's goal of providing family wage jobs.
4. The County shall assure that there are plans to provide appropriate levels of urban facilities and services within non-city Urban Growth Areas. These plans should be developed by special purpose districts, water associations and private service providers within each of these Areas, and may be implemented, where appropriate, through interlocal agreements.

**F. Contiguous, Orderly Development and Planning in Urban Growth Areas**

1. Cities and the County shall execute interlocal agreements to coordinate plans for and manage growth in Urban Growth Areas prior to annexations. Interlocal agreements shall acknowledge and implement the Countywide Planning Policies.
2. Interlocal agreements shall incorporate clear and reasonable criteria for orderly annexation. The County and the cities shall establish a process to consider public input as part of the interlocal agreement approval processes and, if appropriate, encourage districts to participate. If adequate procedures are developed to replace it, the Boundary Review Board may be replaced.
3. All urbanized areas currently within urban growth boundaries associated with cities should be encouraged to annex to cities. Orderly annexations with logical boundaries are encouraged. Interlocal agreements shall specify guidelines on size, timing of annexations and urban levels of development, and tax revenue sharing when appropriate.
4. Within Urban Growth Areas, cities shall not extend water and sewer utilities without an adopted program for annexation and an adopted Capital Facilities Plan. Exceptions may be made in cases where human health is threatened as determined by the County Health Department. If water extensions are made,

they shall be consistent with the service area boundaries and other provisions within the adopted Coordinated Water System Plan.

5. In the areas where utilities presently extend beyond city limits, but are within Urban Growth Areas, the city, County, and the existing water purveyors for the area should coordinate planning efforts.
6. Unless specifically provided for by state statutes, Cities shall not extend urban levels of water service to serve urban uses outside Urban Growth Areas. If legally allowed water extensions are made outside of Urban Growth Areas, the maximum number of connections shall not exceed the density allowed under the associated zoning. The number of connections shall be specified in a legally binding document at the time the extension is approved. Property contiguous to extension of utilities necessary to solve existing water deficiencies, but which cannot benefit from them because of zoning constraints, shall not be assessed for those improvements.
7. The availability of pipeline capacity required to meet local needs and/or supply shall not be used to justify comprehensive plan and/or rezone applications that propose more intensive land use in agricultural land, forestry, and rural areas.
8. The cities and the County shall cooperate to identify and balance the needs of each jurisdiction and entity when planning for transition of services and annexation within Urban Growth Areas. The cities and the County should coordinate with special purpose districts and other service providers in this process. This intergovernmental cooperation and coordination may be reflected in revenue agreements, work programs for joint projects, and regional solutions adopted by the affected parties.
9. Major transportation, utility and greenway corridors shall be planned within Urban Growth Areas.
10. Interlocal agreements shall include a process for reviewing development standards within Urban Growth Areas.
11. To encourage contiguous, orderly development and annexation of residential lands in Urban Growth Areas around cities, the County shall designate Urban Residential or other zones limiting density to a maximum of one dwelling unit per ten acres until public water and sewer are provided.
12. The County and the cities shall coordinate drainage, stormwater management and flood control in Urban Growth Areas.

**G. Affordable Housing**

1. The County and the cities shall take actions to ensure a balance of housing and economic growth consistent with each jurisdiction’s employment base and diverse income levels and to reduce commuting times and traffic congestion.
2. The County and the cities shall identify sufficient capacity of land for a healthy mix of home types, sizes, and prices, including but not limited to ownership

opportunities for the widest possible range of incomes, income-restricted housing, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, co-living housing, farmworker housing, group homes, foster care facilities, emergency housing, emergency shelters, and permanent supportive housing and other supportive housing types.

3. Affordable housing should be convenient to major employment centers and public services or be designed to accommodate public transportation.
4. The County and the cities shall promote innovative techniques and develop strategies to provide for affordable housing with design, density, lot sizes and development standards that provide for a variety of housing types.
5. The County and the cities shall review existing regulations and policies that exclude or discourage multi-family, co-living housing, farmworker housing, low-income, and permanent supportive housing and emergency housing and shelter in their communities and reduce any identified barriers; they shall not adopt regulations and policies which do so. Mobile, modular, and manufactured homes on individual lots, mobile home parks, accessory units, inclusionary zoning, mixed use, and increased densities shall be reviewed as affordable housing alternatives.
6. The County and the cities shall work together, and with the private sector, other public and non-profit agencies, community groups, and trade representatives to plan for a regional distribution of housing for all income levels, including permanent supportive housing types and emergency housing and shelter for very low-income households.
7. Low income, multi-family and diverse and supportive housing options shall not be concentrated in only a few communities or neighborhoods.
8. The County and the cities shall consider reducing impact and/or mitigation fees for affordable housing provided in a proposed development.

**H. Open Space/Greenbelt Corridors**

1. Adequate open space is vital to the quality of life and sense of place in Whatcom County. The County, cities, Port of Bellingham, and other appropriate jurisdictions should coordinate protection of linked greenbelts, within and between Urban Growth Areas, parks, and open space to protect wildlife corridors, provide flood resilience, support infiltration of water, and to enhance recreational opportunities, public access and trail development.
2. The County and the cities shall plan for greenbelts and open space in their Comprehensive Planning processes and coordinate with each other. Open space systems should include lands which contain natural areas, habitat lands, natural drainage features, and/or other environmental, cultural and scenic resources. With increased residential densities, jurisdictions also should ensure provision of adequate neighborhood parks and play areas within safe bicycling and walking distance for children.

3. The County and the cities shall encourage, to the extent it is feasible, separation of Urban Growth Areas through planning, zoning, development regulations, open space purchase, conservation easements and other mechanisms which may be appropriate. Incentives such as density bonuses, design flexibility, density credit/fee in lieu and transferable development rights may be offered to affected land owners.
4. The County and cities should work cooperatively to protect and restore stream corridors within Urban Growth Areas that support anadromous fish.

**I. Economic Development and Employment**

1. Whatcom County recognizes that a healthy economy, which provides opportunity for diverse segments of the community, is important to the quality of life in the area. The Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) “is a long-term planning document that is intended to guide economic development throughout a region.”
2. New business development and expansion of existing businesses are key factors in providing “family wage” jobs and a strong tax base. Economic development that pays family wage rates should be encouraged. Industrial land designations must be sufficient to permit the concentration of industry in appropriate locations for the 20 year planning period. In order to attract new industry and provide for expansion of existing industries, the County and the cities will designate land supply of sufficient size and diversity to provide a range of suitable locations for industrial development. The designation of this land shall be established in a way that preserves natural resource based industries and critical areas.
3. To provide sufficient land supply for industrial growth and development, industrial designations must not only include lands suitable for development, but also lands suitably zoned to provide adequate buffers. It is also important that these lands and buffers be conserved with appropriate land use and zoning provisions to ensure that they will be available for future use.
4. Encourage workforce education and training and responsible and sustainable business recruitment, retention, and expansion according to city and County comprehensive plans and current Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in order to support diverse and resilient business and industry. Work with funding agencies and the private sector to facilitate extension of adequate electric, sewer, water, telecommunications and road access to existing commercial and industrial-zoned properties, creating shovel-ready sites.
5. The County and the cities should include an economic development element in their Comprehensive Plans. Economic development elements should be consistent with the CEDS. Economic development shall be coordinated with environmental concerns to protect the quality of life. Planning efforts should address economic sustainability. As part of the comprehensive planning

process and through implementation of the comprehensive plan, the County has adopted goals, policies and regulations that protect resource lands and support and encourage resource-based industries.

6. The County and the cities should continue to cooperate with the Port of Bellingham's Economic Development Division, Regional Economic Partnership to maintain the CEDS for infrastructure funding. Other appropriate organizations, businesses, and individuals should be involved in the process.
7. Economic vitality and job development shall be encouraged in all the cities and in designated areas of the County consistent with County and city comprehensive plan policies, particularly addressing adequacy of transportation corridors, public transportation, impacts on the environment, and the ability of the area to provide urban services in UGAs and rural services outside UGAs.
8. Economic development should be encouraged that:
  - a. Does not adversely impact the environment;
  - b. Is consistent with local comprehensive plans;
  - c. Provides jobs to County residents;
  - d. Addresses unemployment problems in the County and seeks innovative techniques to attract different industries for a more diversified economic base;
  - e. Promotes reinvestment in the local economy;
  - f. Supports retention and expansion of existing businesses.
  - g. Promotes transition to and development of renewable energy sources.
9. The County and the cities recognize the need for the protection and utilization of natural resources and resource lands including agricultural, mineral, forestry and fishing. As part of a broad based economy, productive timber, agriculture, fisheries, and mineral resource industries should be supported to operate in a sustainable manner.
10. The cities and County may set policies for approving proposals to authorize siting of Major Industrial Developments for large or resource-based industries outside of Urban Growth Areas (as per RCW 36.70A.365). The master planning process for specific manufacturing, industrial, or commercial businesses shall address infrastructure, buffers, environmental protection, sprawl, resource lands, critical areas, and land supply.
11. Whatcom County and the cities encourage siting of industrial uses in proximity to and to further utilization of our access to deep water and port facilities for shipping, rail, airports, roadways, utility corridors and the international border.

**J. Countywide Transportation Facilities and Strategies**

1. The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), composed primarily of elected officials appointed from all area jurisdictions, is the designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Whatcom County. Under the Growth Management Act (GMA), RTPOs are directed to conduct regional, cooperative transportation planning. WCOG is also the region's federally-recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). As a combined RTPO/MPO, WCOG regularly updates a 20-year Regional/Metropolitan Transportation Plan (R/MTP) including contents required by GMA (and by federal, MPO planning laws and regulations). The R/MTP includes regional transportation goals, projected system conditions, strategies, and investment priorities. WCOG has adopted the R/MTP. The GMA requires RTPOs to review and certify that updates to local comprehensive plans' transportation elements (counties and cities) and changes to county-wide planning policies 1) conform with GMA requirements and 2) are consistent with the current R/MTP. The County and the cities will continue to support the RTPO on an on-going basis to coordinate transportation planning across Whatcom County.
2. Whatcom County jurisdictions shall encourage multimodal transportation, including alternative modes of transportation to the single occupancy vehicle. Each jurisdiction shall encourage:
  - a. Use of public transportation;
  - b. Development of on-street bicycle routes and pedestrian and bicycle trail corridors;
  - c. Adequate pedestrian facilities;
  - d. Connections between different modes of transportation;
  - e. Intermodal connection of freight transportation.
3. To encourage multimodal transportation, single occupant vehicle alternatives and development of pedestrian scale neighborhoods, high density residential development shall be encouraged in urban growth areas with particular attention to those locations within cities and in close proximity to arterials and main transit routes.
4. Cities are particularly encouraged to support transit and pedestrian friendly mixed use developments within their UGAs to help achieve the goals supported in these policies.
5. Where the level of service (LOS) for a locally owned transportation facility adopted in a County or city comprehensive plan cannot be maintained as a result of proposed new development, that development shall be denied, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development.
6. Strategies for maintaining established levels of service may include transportation demand management techniques, impact or mitigation fees,

enhanced access to public transportation service, and/or other steps to reduce or limit traffic congestion.

7. Priorities shall be established and expenditures coordinated for countywide bicycle and trail corridors. Bicycle and pedestrian-specific trails and other facilities shall be included during project planning and review. Coordinated corridors and cost sharing should be explored among all responsible and interested parties.
8. Whatcom County and the cities should work cooperatively with the Whatcom Council of Governments, Whatcom Transportation Authority, WSDOT and other agencies with jurisdiction to plan for inter-county and international transportation links, such as airports, border crossings, passenger rail, freight rail, transit, ferries, and other transportation facilities.
9. Encourage “complete streets” principles. Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users, including people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers/passengers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.

**K. Siting of Public Facilities**

1. As part of the comprehensive planning process, the County and the cities shall identify appropriate land for public facilities which meets the needs of the community, such as schools, recreation, transportation and utility corridors, human service facilities, and airport and other port facilities.
2. The County and the cities will implement a cooperative and structured process, which includes early and continuous public involvement, to consider siting of essential public facilities of a regional and statewide nature. State facilities shall conform to local siting procedures.
3. Public facilities that generate substantial travel demand should be sited along or near major transportation and public transit corridors, where available.
4. The County and the cities shall work with their respective school district to encourage siting of schools in areas where substantial development exists or is projected and near public transportation corridors.
5. Sharing of corridors for major utilities, trails and other transportation rights-of-way is encouraged when not in conflict with goals to protect wildlife, public health and safety.

**L. Impact Fees**

1. The County and the cities are encouraged to adopt fair and reasonable impact and/or mitigation fee ordinances to ensure that new growth pays its fair share of the cost of capital facilities, such as transportation improvements, parks, schools, and fire protection facilities.

2. When requested by a school district or fire district, the County and cities should work with the district to develop impact fees as appropriate to the district's capital needs.

**M. Intergovernmental Cooperation**

1. The County and the cities will coordinate and cooperate throughout the comprehensive plan, development regulations and urban growth area reviews and updates undertaken pursuant to the Growth Management Act, RCW 36.70A. This coordination and cooperation will address topics including but not limited to amount and location of population, housing, and employment growth, capital facilities, transportation, climate change and community resilience. As a component of this coordination and cooperation, the County Executive may convene a Growth Management Planning Committee comprised of elected officials from the County and the cities, representatives of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe and, where deemed appropriate, representatives from other agencies and Tribes.
2. To adequately plan for growth and implement the policies of the Growth Management Act, the County and Cities will work with other governmental jurisdictions in Whatcom County, including the Lummi Nation, Nooksack Tribe, and the Port of Bellingham, to establish on-going mechanisms to improve communication, information sharing and coordinated approaches to common issues and concerns.
3. Whatcom County and the cities should communicate with neighboring counties and governments in British Columbia and work cooperatively on growth management issues that cross county and national borders.

**N. Water Quality and Quantity**

1. The cities and the County, in coordination with other municipal corporations, tribal governments, federal and state agencies, and public and private utilities, shall cooperate in the protection of water resources and in drawing upon said water to support growth.
2. The Cities and the County in cooperation with other municipal corporations and tribal governments shall adopt zoning regulations and development standards to protect water resources. Where there are potential conflicts with designations required by the Growth Management Act, such as natural resource lands and critical areas, water resource protection shall generally have priority.
3. Jurisdictions shall cooperate to protect and restore water resources and fish habitat within UGAs and across jurisdictional boundaries to maintain quality of life, economic health, and protect treaty natural resources in Whatcom County.
4. Jurisdictions involved in the development of ground and/or surface water management plans shall pursue the adoption and implementation of the plans, as well as coordination and integration of the plans into local comprehensive

plans as appropriate. Examples of such plans include the Lake Whatcom Management Plan, WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan, Shellfish Protection District Plans and drinking water source protection plans.

5. To inform Growth Management Act planning efforts, water resources management should be coordinated through participation in the Water Resources Inventory Area (WRIA) 1 Watershed Management Board process and in accordance with applicable federal, state and local regulations.
6. All jurisdictions shall maximize reduction of water pollutants from stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows.

**O. Fiscal Impact**

1. It is recognized that if the Growth Management Act and these policies are implemented to their maximum extent, County government may eventually lose the tax base needed to operate essential services, including the criminal justice function and the Offices of Treasurer, Assessor, and Auditor, which serve all jurisdictions in the area. Revenue-sharing shall be addressed in inter-local agreements between Cities and the County.

**P. Private Property Rights**

1. As required in the Growth Management Act, private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. It is not the purpose of this paragraph to expand or reduce the scope of private property already provided in local, state and federal law.
2. The County as required by Whatcom County Home Rule Charter Section 1.11, and cities should establish a pro-active process to anticipate potential takings.

**Q. Review and Evaluation Program**

1. The County and cities will cooperate to implement and maintain a program that meets the review and evaluation requirements of RCW 36.70A.215, unless the Growth Management Act no longer contains these requirements or sufficient funds are not appropriated by the state.
2. The purposes of this program are to:
  - a. Compare actual (achieved) development densities with planned development densities and determine whether the County and cities are achieving planned urban densities within urban growth areas and have sufficient suitable land to accommodate housing needs and planned employment growth through the remainder of the 20-year planning period.
  - b. Identify and adopt reasonable measures, if necessary, to reduce the differences between actual development patterns and growth and development assumptions contained in the County comprehensive plan and/or city comprehensive plans.

3. The County, in conjunction with the cities, will develop and maintain a Review and Evaluation Program Methodology, taking into consideration the State Department of Commerce Review & Evaluation Program Buildable Lands Guidelines.
4. The County, in conjunction with the cities, will prepare, adopt, and publish a Buildable Lands Report in accordance with the timeframes set forth in the Growth Management Act.
5. The County and cities will follow the Review and Evaluation Program Methodology for the collection, monitoring, and analysis of development activity data, and comparing actual growth and development patterns with growth and development assumptions. As part of this process, the cities and County will collect data annually. The cities will provide collected data to the County upon request.
6. When the Buildable Lands Report identifies inconsistencies between actual development patterns and growth and development assumptions and targets contained in the County comprehensive plan and/or city comprehensive plans, the County and cities will discuss whether reasonable measures are necessary and appropriate to address such inconsistencies before considering adjusting urban growth areas. Each jurisdiction will individually determine whether reasonable measures are required under the Growth Management Act for their jurisdiction.
7. The County and cities will cooperate, and make every effort at the staff level, to resolve disputes regarding inconsistencies in collection and analysis of data.
8. Nothing in this policy will be construed as altering the land use power of any Whatcom County jurisdiction under established law.

**R. Dispute Resolution Procedures**

1. The County and cities will work cooperatively to implement the countywide planning policies. The County and cities will work together to attempt to resolve any disputes regarding implementation of the countywide planning policies.
2. In the event of an impasse, the jurisdictions involved may mutually agree to use mediation for a minimum of 90 days. After the 90 day period, the parties may, by mutual agreement, elect to utilize binding arbitration. In the event that the parties agree to use arbitration, a three member arbitration panel will be selected by mutual agreement. If the parties cannot agree on membership of the panel, each party will select one member and those two members will select the third member. The decision of the arbitration panel on the issue will be final.
3. If mediation, arbitration, or both are used, each jurisdiction will be responsible for its own legal costs, but the jurisdictions involved will split the costs of a mediator or arbitrators evenly.

4. Nothing in this policy will be construed as altering the land use power of any Whatcom County jurisdiction under established law.

**S. Tribal Cultural Resources**

1. The County and cities shall work individually and cooperatively with the affected tribe(s) to protect natural and cultural resources through individual and joint efforts. Opportunities for open communication and early government-to-government consultation regarding resource identification, management and protection protocols should be established.
2. Federal, state and local laws pertaining to cultural resources and human remains should be followed.
3. The County and cities should establish a clear and fair process for resolving any disagreements regarding the identification, protection, or management of tribal cultural resources. This process should involve mediation and conflict resolution techniques that respect and affirm tribal sovereignty, treaty rights and traditional practices.
4. The County and cities will work with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and affected tribes to identify, protect and manage historic, archaeological, and cultural sites as well as sites and structures of significance in compliance with federal, state, and local laws. Tribal cultural resources include sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places and objects with cultural value.

**T. Climate Change/Community Resilience**

1. The County and the cities will work individually and cooperatively to limit and address impacts from climate change and increase community resilience.
2. As determined to be appropriate by each jurisdiction consistent with the Growth Management Act, County and city comprehensive plans will include policies to adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resilience to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.
3. The County and cities will incorporate comprehensive plan policies to support the net zero greenhouse gas emissions target by 2050 consistent with the Washington statewide target set by the State Legislature (RCW 70A.45.020).
4. The County and cities will incorporate comprehensive plan policies to address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change, protect natural areas to foster climate resilience, and enhance community resilience to climate impacts.

5. The County and cities will incorporate comprehensive plan policies to identify vulnerable populations and overburdened communities and address their exposure to climate impacts.