

Whatcom County Planning & Development Services Staff Report

Lummi Island Community Kitchen

I. File Information

File # PLN2025-00004, SEPA2025-00065

File Name: Lummi Island Community Kitchen

Applicants: Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS)

Summary of Request: Proposed amendment to Title 20 (Zoning). This amendment will allow food preparation for off-site consumption when accessory to and located within an approved community center.

Location: Rural Residential Island

Planning Commission Recommendation: Approve

Staff Recommendation: Approve

Background: Rebecca Rettmer of The Gathering Place has requested a code update to add off-site food prep as a conditional use. The kitchen at the Gathering Place is currently utilized for on-site events and for preparing Meals on Wheels. For outside food service retailers, such as local food trucks or The Galley (a local restaurant), to use the space for food preparation, a code update is needed. The code update would allow The Gathering Place to expand the use of its existing kitchen for off-premises retail food sales outside of the community center.

[The Gathering Place](#) is a modern, fully accessible community center on Lummi Island, at 3913 Legoe Bay Rd. The venue includes a main hall with a capacity of 191, a commercial kitchen, two restrooms, an outdoor patio, and access to the beach. Completed in 2023, the venue has been widely used by Lummi Islanders.

The Rural Residential Island (RRI) District is specific to Lummi Island. It applies only to the north half of Lummi, which is generally rural. Some commercial uses are permitted through a conditional use permit under Whatcom County Code WCC 20.34.150. Due in part to its ferry-only access, Lummi Island is a unique district with geographic barriers to affordable and accessible food. This code change will allow food preparation for off-site consumption when accessory to and located within an approved community center as a conditional use.

II. Code Amendments

The proposed code amendment is found in Exhibit A. Please refer to that attachment; explanations are provided therein.

III. Comprehensive Plan Evaluation

The proposed amendment is consistent with Comprehensive Plan's Goal 2D to "Refine the regulatory system to ensure accomplishment of desired land use goals in a fair and equitable manner." Staff finds no policies that would be inconsistent with this amendment. The proposed amendment is consistent with the Lummi Island Subarea plan, which states that the RRI is essentially a mixed-use rural zone that allows commercial activities by conditional use permit.

IV. Proposed Findings of Fact and Reasons for Action

It is recommended the Planning Commission adopt the following findings of fact and reasons for action:

1. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services submitted an application to make an amendment to Title 20 (Zoning).
2. A determination of non-significance (DNS) was issued under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) on November 11th, 2025. No comments have been received to date.
3. Notice of the subject amendment was submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on November 6th, 2025 for their 10-day expedited review. No comments were received.
4. The Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed amendments on December 11th, 2025.
5. On December 11th, 2025 the Whatcom County Planning Commission recommended the proposed Zoning Code changes to The County Council.
6. The County Council held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed amendments on [REDACTED].
7. The amendments are consistent with Comprehensive Plan Policy Goal 2D to *"refine the regulatory system to ensure accomplishment of desired land use goals in a fair and equitable manner."* There are no policies with which these amendments would be inconsistent.
8. In reference to Exhibit A: This amendment is to revise Chapter 20.34. Rural Residential Island (RRI) through adding food service as a conditional use for off-site consumption when accessory to and located within an approved community center.

V. Proposed Conclusions

1. The amendments are in the public interest.
2. The amendments are consistent with the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.

VI. Recommendation

The Planning Commission and the Department of Planning and Development Services recommend that the County Council approve the proposed amendments.

Attachments

1. Exhibit A – Proposed Code Amendment