



Memorandum

TO: The Whatcom County Council
FROM: Maddie Schacht, Senior Planner
THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director
DATE: June 5, 2026
SUBJECT: Periodic Update Related Zoning Code Amendments

Background:

Every ten years, as part of the periodic update, RCW [36.70A.130](#)(1) requires Whatcom County to take legislative action to review and, if needed, revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations to comply with the Growth Management Act codified under RCW [36.70A](#).

These proposed amendments to the Title 20 Zoning Ordinance are part of the periodic review process and update under the Growth Management Act (GMA), and ensure internal consistency with the updated goals and policies of the pending 2025-2026 Comprehensive Plan, as required pursuant to WAC [365-196-500](#).

The Whatcom County Council has already reviewed and approved the first set of Comprehensive Plan-related code amendments regarding Accessory Dwelling Units and Co-Living Housing, which the Council adopted on December 9, 2025, under [Ordinance Number 2025-60](#).

Summary:

This proposal presents the second and final set of code amendments required to satisfy the mandatory elements of the periodic update to ensure consistency with the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.

The proposed amendments relate to updates under the GMA since the last periodic update related to housing availability and accommodation of adequate provisions for the existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community, Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs), Essential Public Facilities (EPFs), siting of organic materials management facilities, and buffer standards within the Heavy Impact Industrial zoning district relating to Cherry Point Urban Growth Area to align with Council's recommendation on related UGA proposal.

Affected Zoning Districts:

- Urban Residential (UR) – WCC [20.20](#)
- Urban Residential-Medium (URM) – WCC [20.22](#)
- Urban Residential-Mixed (UR-MX) – WCC [20.24](#)
- Residential Rural (RR) – WCC [20.32](#)
- Rural Residential-Island (RR-I) – WCC [20.34](#)
- Eliza Island (EI) – WCC [20.35](#)
- Rural (R) – WCC [20.36](#)
- Point Roberts Transitional Zone (TZ) – WCC [20.37](#)
- Agriculture (AG) – WCC [20.40](#)
- Rural Forestry (RF) – WCC [20.42](#)
- Rural General Commercial (RGC) – [20.59](#)
- Neighborhood Commercial Center (NC) – WCC [20.60](#)
- Small Town Commercial (STC) – WCC [20.61](#)
- General Commercial (GC) – WCC [20.62](#)
- Tourist Commercial (TC) – [20.63](#)
- Resort Commercial (RC) – WCC [20.64](#)
- Light Impact Industrial (LII) – WCC [20.66](#)
- General Manufacturing (GM) – WCC [20.67](#)
- Heavy Impact Industrial (HII) – WCC [20.68](#)
- Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs)

Amendment Topics:

Exhibit 1 - Adequate Provisions Amendments - RCW [36.70A.070\(2\)\(d\)](#)

- a. Addition and amendment of "Middle Housing" Definitions.
- b. Amendment of "Family" definition to comply with RCW 36.01.227.
- c. Amendment of "Accessory Dwelling Unit" definition to comply with RCW 36.70A.696.
- d. Amendment of "Tandem Parking" definition to comply with RCW 36.70A.622.
- e. Allowance and amendment of Middle Housing standards in Urban Growth Areas.
- f. Allowance and amendment of Middle Housing standards in Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development
- g. Allowance and recategorization of "Mobile Home Parks" in UGAs
- h. Amendment of residential parking standards to comply with RCW 36.70A.070(2)(d) (Adequate Provisions) & RCW 36.70A.622 (Off-Street Parking & Loading Requirements)

Exhibit 2 – Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development (LAMIRDs) Amendments - RCW [36.70A.070](#).

- a. Amendment of LAMIRD standards to comply with RCW 36.70A.070(5)(d)

Exhibit 3 – Essential Public Facilities (EPFs) Amendments – RCW 36.70A.200.

- a. Amendment of Essential Public Facility standards to comply with RCW 36.70A.200

Exhibit 4 – Other Concurrent Code Amendments – WAC 365-196-500

- a. To align with the Cherry Point UGA proposal (which re-designates a portion of the UGA north of Grandview Rd. to Rural) and prevent the 660' buffer standard of the HII zoning district from encroaching into BP's main plant area at Cherry Point.
- b. To comply with RCW 36.70A.142, to allow for the siting of organic materials management facilities in the areas identified in Whatcom County's Solid Waste Management Plan (SWMP).

Whatcom County Planning and Development Services (PDS) collaborated with B.P. representatives on proposed amendments to buffer standards in the Heavy Impact Industrial zoning district, which affect the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area.

In addition, the Whatcom County Planning Commission held three (3) properly noticed open public hearings and work sessions regarding the proposed amendments on [April 9, 2026](#), [May 14, 2026](#), and [May 28, 2026](#). Please click the links to view the full staff reports, which include Charter Section 9.70 analysis, for each proposed amendment.

All proposed amendments, as shown in Exhibits 1 through 4, are recommended for approval by the Whatcom County Planning Commission (PC) as amended; see the PC Findings for more information.

Recommendation:

PDS recommends that the County Council make a motion to preliminarily approve the proposed Zoning Code Amendments, as part of the 2025-2026 periodic update, as detailed in Exhibits 1-4, including the associated Ordinance with Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to discussing it with you.