



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2026-490

File ID:	AB2026-490	Version:	1	Status:	Substitute Adopted
File Created:	06/15/2026	Entered by:	KOos@co.whatcom.wa.us		
Department:	Council Office	File Type:	Ordinance Requiring a Public Hearing		
Assigned to:	Council	Final Action:	07/28/2026		
Agenda Date:	07/28/2026	Enactment #:	ORD 2026-040		
Related Files:					

Primary Contact Email: koos@co.whatcom.wa.us

TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Ordinance amending the official Whatcom County Zoning Map under the 2025-2026 Periodic Update of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan under the Growth Management Act (for concurrent review with other Comprehensive Plan amendment proposals)

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

Visit www.whatcomcounty.us/4373 for information on the comprehensive plan update.

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
06/23/2026	Council	SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED FOR PUBLIC HEARING	Council
		Aye: 5 Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon	
		Nay: 2 Elenbaas, and Stremler	
07/14/2026	Council	PUBLIC TESTIMONY RECEIVED (file not final)	
07/14/2026	Council	HELD IN COUNCIL	Council
		Aye: 7 Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler	
		Nay: 0	
07/14/2026	Council	NOT ACTED UPON	
07/28/2026	Council	PUBLIC TESTIMONY RECEIVED (file not final)	
07/28/2026	Council	SUBSTITUTE ADOPTED	

Agenda Bill Master Report Continued (AB2026-490)

Aye: 5 Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 Elenbaas, and Stremmer

07/28/2026 Council

FORWARDED FOR
CONCURRENT REVIEW

Council

07/28/2026 Council

APPROVED
CONCURRENTLY

Aye: 5 Boyle, Buchanan, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon

Nay: 2 Elenbaas, and Stremmer

Attachments: Staff Memo, Proposed Ordinance, Substitute Ordinance as Introduced 6.23.2026, Revised
Substitute Ordinance for 7.14.2026, Planning Commission Findings of Fact, Notice of Hearing after
6.23.2026, Notice of Hearing after 7.14.2026

PROPOSED BY: PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
INTRODUCED: JUNE 23, 2026

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-040

AMENDING THE OFFICIAL WHATCOM COUNTY ZONING MAP UNDER THE 2025-2026 PERIODIC UPDATE OF THE WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UNDER THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

WHEREAS, every ten years as part of the periodic update, RCW 36.70A.130(1)(a) requires Whatcom County to take legislative action to review and, if needed, revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations to comply with the requirements of Chapter 36.70A RCW (the Growth Management Act); and

WHEREAS, this ordinance reflects Whatcom County has completed its 2025-2026 periodic review of the development regulations as required pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services has proposed amendments to the official Whatcom County Zoning Map as part of this periodic update to implement the plan's updated goals and policies, fulfill the mandatory elements required for comprehensive plans under the GMA, and ensure internal consistency pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130(1)(a), RCW 36.70A.070, and WAC 365-196-500; and

WHEREAS, the County Council docketed PLN2023-00001 to implement development regulation updates associated with the 2025-26 periodic update of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED that the Whatcom County Council adopts the recitals above and legislative record and makes the following additional findings:

Section 1. FINDINGS OF FACT.

1. The zoning map amendments were studied under the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) issued on August 22, 2025, under file number SEPA2024-00001.
2. Notice of Intent to Adopt Development Amendment was submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on each of the proposed zoning map amendments as detailed below:
 - a. Blaine Zoning Map Amendments:
 - i. 60-Day Notice of Intent to Adopt Amendment emailed 2-17-2026
 - ii. Assigned Submittal ID Number 2026-S-11522

- b. Bellingham UGA, Everson UGA, Nooksack UGA, Cherry Point UGA, Birch Bay UGA, Columbia Valley UGA, Hinote's Corner, Pole & Guide Meridian, and Custer LAMIRDS Zoning Map Amendments:
 - i. Request for Expedited Review emailed 4-14-2026
 - ii. Assigned Submittal ID Number 2026-S-12706
 - iii. Granted 4-28-2026
 - c. Lummi Island Zoning Map Amendments:
 - i. Request for Expedited Review emailed 5-6-2026
 - ii. Assigned Submittal ID Number 2026-S-12796
 - iii. Granted 5-21-2026.
- 3. The Whatcom County Planning Commission held a duly noticed public hearing on the proposed zoning map amendments on February 26, 2026, April 23, 2026, and May 14, 2026.
- 4. The County Council engaged in its periodic review of the comprehensive plan and encouraged early and continuous participation by the public and interested parties in the comprehensive plan update process by holding multiple public meetings, public comment periods and work sessions between June 2024 and July 14 2026 as reflected in the legislative record, consistent with requirements for a public participation program adopted by the County as required pursuant to the Growth Management Act. County Council further held duly noticed public hearings on the proposed amendments contemplated by this ordinance on July 14 2026 and July 28, 2026.
- 5. Adoption of the proposed zoning map amendments implements applicable requirements under the Growth Management Act pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130(1)(a), RCW 36.70A.070, and WAC 365-196-500.
- 6. The subject zoning map amendments are consistent with the GMA Planning Goals under RCW 36.70A.020 including but not limited to:
 - a. Number 1: *Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner;*
 - b. Number 2: *Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development;*
 - c. Number 5: *Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and*

encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities;

- d. *Number 8: Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses;*
- e. *Number 9: Open space and recreation. Retain open space and green space, enhance recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities;*
- f. *Number 10: Environment. Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water;*
- g. *Number 11: Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.*

- 7. These amendments are consistent with the current and amended goals and policies of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW. Whatcom County Council concludes the following in regards to this proposed ordinance amending the official Whatcom County Zoning Map:

- 1. These amendments are in the public interest as they promote the public health, safety and general welfare of Whatcom County.
- 2. These amendments do not include or facilitate spot zoning.
- 3. These amendments are consistent with applicable approval requirements for zoning map amendments under WCC 22.10.060.
- 4. These amendments implement and are internally consistent with the updated associated goals and policies of the 2025-2026 Comprehensive Plan pursuant to RCW 36.70A.130, and WAC 365-196-500.
- 5. The amendments are consistent with the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) and its Planning Goals (RCW 36.70A.020).

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that the zoning map amendment relating to the pending City of Blaine de-annexation area, of approximately 573

acres, shall only take effect upon finalization of de-annexation and returning the land to the unincorporated Whatcom County land base; and

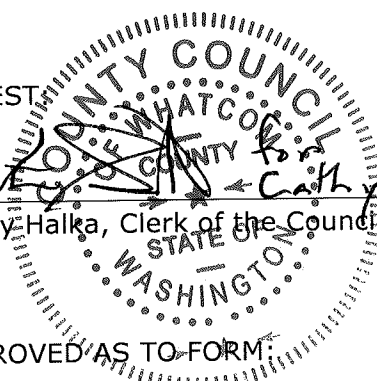
BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that amendments to the official Whatcom County Zoning Map are hereby adopted as shown in Exhibits 1 through 11; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council this ordinance shall be in full force and effect following its adoption and approval as provided by law, following submission to the Washington State Department of Commerce and publication; and

BE IT FINALLY ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that, should any part of this regulation be held to be illegal, unconstitutional, or otherwise unenforceable, the remainder of the regulation shall apply.

ADOPTED this 28th day of July, 2026

ATTEST:


Cathy Halka
Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kimberly Thulin by email (7.2.2026/ko)

Civil Deputy Prosecutor

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Kaylee Galloway
Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Satpal Sidhu
Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

☒ Approved () Denied

Date Signed: 8-7-2026