



# WHATCOM COUNTY

---

## WASHINGTON

### Planning & Development Services

5280 Northwest Drive  
Bellingham, WA 98226  
[PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:PDS@co.whatcom.wa.us)  
360-778-5900

September 22, 2025

TO: The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

RE: Countywide Planning Policy Amendments

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was amended in 1991 to require counties to adopt county wide planning policies in cooperation with cities. 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).

The Whatcom County Countywide Planning Policies were originally adopted by the County Council in 1993 and last amended in 2021. The GMA was amended in 2022 and 2023 to require that Countywide Planning Policies must address:

- Tribal cultural resources; and
- Climate change and resiliency.

Proposed Countywide Planning Policy amendments have been developed to address these two topics and otherwise update the Policies.

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](#)). The County Executive initiated the Countywide Planning Policy amendments in accordance with the Interlocal agreement.

The County Council issued "final draft" Countywide Planning Policy amendments on May 27, 2025. All 7 cities have now approved the "final draft" Countywide Planning Policy amendments under the Interlocal Agreement. Therefore, the County Council will hold a public hearing and consider final adoption of the Policies in October.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.