



WHATCOM COUNTY

WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services

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August 22, 2025

TO: The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Mark Personius, Director

RE: 2025 Comp Plan Update – Chapter 9 (Parks & Recreation)

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County to review and revise its Comprehensive Plan and development regulations in 2025 ([RCW 36.70A.130](#)). The updated Comprehensive Plan will contain the following chapters:

1. Introduction and Growth Projections
2. Land Use
3. Housing
4. Capital Facilities
5. Utilities
6. Transportation
7. Economics
8. Resource Lands
9. Parks and Recreation
10. Environment
11. Shorelines¹
12. Climate Change and Resilience (new Chapter)

The Parks and Recreation chapter has undergone extensive review and recommended amendments by the Whatcom County Parks & Recreation Department, the Whatcom County Parks Commission, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and PDS staff and consultants. The chapter includes recommended changes in underline and strikethrough format as well as comments to help identify rationale for changes.

Chapter 9 generally includes:

- Background information on the County's park and recreational planning processes and types of recreational services and facilities provided in the county;

¹ The Shorelines Chapter was approved by the State Department of Ecology in 2025 after previous Planning Commission review and County Council approval. Therefore, it will not be reviewed again in this update cycle.

- Goals and policies relating to planning, establishing and managing a wide range of recreational facilities in the county;
- Goals and policies addressing consistency between this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, the Capital Facilities and Climate chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, the Comprehensive Park, Recreation and Open Space Plan (CPROS) and the County's Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Significant proposed changes to Chapter 9 include:

- Identifying Regional Park Improvement Needs – such as siting and design standards for the location and user needs of regional park facilities and planning for potential future park expansion and improvements.
- Expand and Improve the Regional Trails Network – to explore opportunities to improve connectivity and expand recreational trails for walking, hiking, bicycling and horseback riding.
- Increase Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Coordination – to increase regional opportunities for inter-governmental and public-private partnership approaches to meeting park and recreational demand countywide.
- Focus on Financial Feasibility– to explore opportunities to strengthen the County's financial ability to fund future park and recreational needs.
- Addressing New Requirements of [House Bill 1181](#) - passed in the 2023 legislative session, requires the Comprehensive Plan to address climate change and resiliency in several different chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Whatcom County Planning Commission conducted a public hearing and held a work session on July 10, 2025 on the proposed update to Chapter 9— Parks and Recreation.

The Planning Commission reviewed and recommended preliminary modifications to Map 9-2 (Conceptual Trail Corridors) which are included in this packet.

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