

Public Participation Plan

Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Amendments ■ July 2011

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction	1-1
1.1. Public Participation Plan Format.....	1-3
Chapter 2. The Issues.....	2-1
2.1. Statutory Requirements.....	2-1
2.2. Reconciliation Items	2-3
2.3. Docketed Amendment Requests.....	2-4
2.4. Comp Plan and Development Regulation Appeals.....	2-5
Chapter 3. Project Participants	3-1
3.1. The Public	3-1
3.1.1. Interested Property Owners and Developers.....	3-1
3.1.2. Community Organizations	3-1
3.1.3. Other Groups and Individuals	3-2
3.2. Governmental/Quasi-Governmental Groups	3-2
3.2.1. Planning Commission.....	3-3
3.3. The Cities	3-3
Chapter 4. Public Participation Approach	4-1
4.1. Overall Approach.....	4-1
4.2. Level 1 Issues.....	4-1
4.2.1. Approach	4-2
4.2.2. Level 1 Projects	4-2
4.3. Level 2 Issues.....	4-3
4.3.1. Approach	4-3
4.3.2. Level 2 Projects	4-3
4.4. Level 3 Issues.....	4-4
4.4.1. Approach	4-4
4.4.2. Level 3 Projects	4-5
Chapter 5. Conclusion.....	5-1

Chapter 1. Introduction

Whatcom County has initiated a multi-year project to update its Comprehensive Plan. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the County to review and revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations periodically [RCW 36.70A.130(1)]. The GMA states:

“...Except as otherwise provided, a county or city shall take legislative action to review and, if needed, revise its comprehensive land use plan and development regulations to ensure the plan and regulations comply with the requirements of this chapter...”

According to RCW 36.70A.130(5), Whatcom County is required to complete its next review and update by June 30, 2016.¹ The update will represent the county’s vision for the next twenty years and will be done in phases between 2012 and 2016.

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is intended to guide the County in completing the comprehensive plan update and other amendments. The Plan is required by state law (RCW 36.70A.140), which indicates:

*“Comprehensive plans – Ensure public participation. Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program identifying procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans. **The procedures shall provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments. . . .**”*

¹ Per Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1478, signed by the Governor May 16, 2011.

The bolded sentence of RCW 36.70A.140 above guided the County in developing this PPP. Prior to implementation, this plan will have crossed the eyes of the public, the planning commission, and the county council. The plan will be implemented as adopted.

The issues that will be considered as part of County's review and amendment of the comprehensive plan and development regulations are divergent and far-reaching. A one-size-fits-all approach to this public participation plan for all of these very different types of issues would not be effective and would do a disservice to the residents of Whatcom County.

This PPP outlines the public participation approach that will be taken with each issue rather than a generic overall approach. Some issues will require a lot of public participation, while others will require a different approach for various reasons. The objective of this plan is to provide a clear process for each issue so residents can easily determine how best to be involved in the issues they care about most.

There are other planning issues that require public participation that may not be mentioned in this plan, including standard map and text amendments to Title 20 Zoning. At minimum, these items will be processed as Level 1 projects. If additional public participation is required or another approach is appropriate, the Planning and Development Services Department will upgrade the item to a more vigorous approach. Please see Chapter 4 for more information about public participation approaches.

Ongoing programs administered through the Planning Department, including the Agricultural program, also provide opportunities for public participation through their respective advisory committees. The Agricultural Advisory Committee and Purchase of Development Rights Oversight Committee meet regularly to assist in the administration of their programs, and may recommend additional items to be docketed for consideration in the future. These advisory committee meetings are open to the public. More information on these Agricultural programs can be found at: http://www.whatcomcounty.us/pds/planning/agricultural_program.jsp.

The PPP is designed to meet the following objectives:

- Provide a roadmap for the public, outlining a clear and accessible public process for the comprehensive plan and development regulation update;
- Ensure input is sought from a broad base of public participants and is elicited in a timely fashion, considered, and incorporated as appropriate into the Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation updates; and
- Make a concerted and continuous effort to ensure that elected officials and staff are fully aware of and understand community and stakeholder concerns.

1.1. Public Participation Plan Format

To meet PPP objectives consistent with GMA goals this document:

- Outlines the **issues** that will be considered (Chapter 2);
- Identifies the potential project **participants** in the comprehensive planning process (Chapter 3), and;
- States the **approach** that will be taken with each issue (Chapter 4).

Chapter 2. The Issues

The issues that Comprehensive Plan and development regulation amendments will address can be divided into three categories: statutory requirements, reconciliation items, and docketed requests. This section of the PPP outlines these issues, within these categories. Each issue has been assigned a number beginning first with an “S”, “R” or “D” for “statutory”, “reconciliation” or “docket” respectively. These numbers will carry with each issue to Chapter 4 of this document. Chapter 4 will go into greater detail on the public participation approach that the County will take on each of these issues.

2.1. Statutory Requirements

The County has identified the following issues as those requiring attention during the comprehensive plan and development regulation update process in order to comply with the changes in state Growth Management law that have occurred between the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2004 and the conclusion of the 2010 state legislative session. This section also addresses amendments required by Growth Management Hearings Board orders. This list will be updated each year with new statutory requirements, passed during the prior year, the County must address as part of the comprehensive plan update. The following is a current list of identified statutory requirements:

- S-1. **Transportation** – The Transportation Chapter of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan will be updated. This update will consider provisions of the GMA and changes to the law, including the physical activity amendments (RCW 36.70A.070, SSB 5186) and the multimodal concurrency amendments (RCW 36.70A.108, 2SHB 1565). The physical activity amendments indicate that transportation element of the comprehensive plan must contain a pedestrian and bicycle component that includes identified planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors to enhance community access and promote healthy lifestyles. The multimodal concurrency amendments

specify that concurrency compliance improvements or strategies may include qualifying multimodal transportation improvements or strategies. This update will involve coordination with Cities, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and other governmental and quasi-governmental groups, including the Whatcom Council of Governments (including the Citizens Transportation Advisory Group) and Tribal governments.

- S-2. **Mineral Resource Lands** (RCW 36.70A.131) – Review of mineral resource land designations and development regulations (see Item D-6 in section 2.3 below).
- S-3. **Land for Facilities** (RCW 36.70A.110, .115, .210, SHB 1825) – Identifying specific facilities planning requirements under the Growth Management Act. Each city and county fully planning under the Growth Management Act must identify areas sufficient to accommodate the full range of needs and uses that will accompany projected growth.
- S-4. **Accessory Uses in Agricultural Lands** (RCW 36.70A.177, SHB 2917) – SHB 2917 clarifies that any accessory use a city or county may allow on designated agricultural lands of long-term significance must not interfere with and must support continuation of the overall agricultural use of the property and neighboring properties.
- S-5. **Family Day-Care Providers in Home** (RCW 36.70A.450 Amended, SB 5952) – No county or city may enact, enforce, or maintain an ordinance, development regulation, zoning regulation, or official control, policy, or administrative practice that prohibits the use of a residential dwelling, located in an area zoned for residential or commercial use, as a family day-care provider’s home facility.
- S-6. **Housing** (RCW 36.70A.070(2)) – Review and update housing inventory as part of the required Housing Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Review new provisions governing affordable housing incentive programs that may be enacted or expanded in jurisdictions planning under the GMA (RCW 36.70A.540, EHB 1464).
- S-7. **Forest Practices** (RCW 36.70A.570, SHB 1409) – Relating to the transfer of jurisdiction over conversion-related forest practices to local governments. For counties planning under the GMA, if more than 25 Class IV applications had been filed to the DNR between those dates for properties within a specific county, then that county, and the cities within it, are required to adopt forest practices approval ordinances.
- S-8. **Critical Areas/Best Available Science** (RCW 36.70A.130(1)(c)) – The GMA was amended in 1995 to include the requirement that the county include the best available science (BAS) in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas. State law requires the county to consider the critical areas ordinance and best available science as part of this update. See also EHB 1653 and SSB 6520.
- S-9. **Population Analysis** (RCW 36.70A.130(1)(c))- An analysis of the population allocated to a city or county from the most recent ten-year population forecast by State Office of Financial Management (OFM).

- S-10. **Ferndale UGA** (PLN2011-00017) - Amend the Ferndale Urban Growth Area boundary and make changes to the capital facilities plan to address the Growth Management Hearings Board decision in *Stalheim et al v. Whatcom County*, Case No. 10-2-0016c, Final Decision and Order (April 11, 2011).

2.2. Reconciliation Items

The items in this section were identified to be reconciled as part of the periodic review during 2009 Urban Growth Area review and revision.

- R-1. **Public Facility and Service Plan Consistency** (Policy 2C-5): A review of public facilities and services must be completed for the unincorporated UGAs – Birch Bay, Columbia Valley, and Cherry Point – as part of the periodic review to ensure that plans are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The cities are expected to complete their own reviews as part of their respective growth management processes.
- R-2. **Subarea Plan Updates** (Policy 2L-2): The adopted subarea plans are of varying ages and applicability. Policy 2L-2 defines a process for revising these subarea plans. The timelines established for revision of subarea plans, however, may need to be reconsidered. Staff is currently limited and more time is needed to revise subarea plans.
- R-3. **Bellingham Population Allocation**: Bellingham has been asked to return as part of their comprehensive plan and development regulation update in 2011 with a proposal for how they would accommodate a total of approximately 116,200 people, either through infill, changes in densities within the city and UGA, or expansion (see Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 2, p. 2-24).
- R-4. **Bellingham UGA Land Use** (Policy 2T-12): Evaluate the feasibility of changing zoning from General Commercial to Light Impact Industrial in the Bellingham UGA in the vicinity of Interstate 5, north of the Bellingham International Airport.
- R-5. **Agricultural Lands Mitigation, UGA Reserve**: UGA Reserves in Everson, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas included agricultural lands. The city and county are expected to work on strategies and plans to ensure protection of at least 100,000 acres of agricultural land in Whatcom County.
- R-6. **City UGA Implementation** (Goal 2Q): The County will work with the cities to establish interlocal agreements for inter-jurisdictional planning within the UGAs.

2.3. Docketed Amendment Requests

The items in this section were docketed amendment requests in 2011. These were items initiated for further review by the County Council under Resolution 2011-009. As with statutory requirements in the previous section, this list will be updated as new items are docketed.

- D-1. **Birch Bay Fire Protection & Emergency Services** (CMP2007-00014) - Amend the Birch Bay Community Plan and Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan regarding fire protection facilities and level of service standards.
- D-2. **MRL Expansion – Saxon Rd. Area** (PLN2009-00013) - Amend the comprehensive plan designation from Commercial Forestry to Mineral Resource Lands (MRL) and amend the zoning map to create a MRL overlay zone on approximately 280 acres in the vicinity of Saxon Rd. The underlying zoning is Commercial Forestry.
- D-3. **Wind Energy Systems** (PLN2010-00026) - Review and amend the Wind Energy System chapter of the Whatcom County Zoning Code (WCC 20.14).
- D-4. **Capital Facility Amendments** (PLN2011-00003) – Review and amend provisions of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan relating to capital facilities. Potential amendments include adopting by reference or incorporating information from updated water, sewer, fire and school plans, and modifications related to Ordinance 2010-037, which amended the Ferndale and Birch Bay Urban Growth Areas.
- D-5. **Title 20 Amendments** (PLN2011-00004) - Review and, as needed, amend portions of the Whatcom County Zoning Code (Title 20) to ensure consistency with the Growth Management Act and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan, and address issues identified in the administration of the code.
- D-6. **Periodic Update Comp Plan Chapter 8, Mineral Resources/Forestry Sections** (PLN2011-00005) - Review and, as needed, revise the comprehensive plan and development regulations to ensure the plan and regulations comply with the requirements of the GMA.
- D-7. **Periodic Update Comp Plan Chapter 9, Recreation** (PLN2011-00006) - Review and, as needed, revise the comprehensive plan and development regulations to ensure the plan and regulations comply with the requirements of the GMA.
- D-8. **Periodic Update Comp Plan Chapter 10, Design** (PLN2011-00007) - Review and, as needed, revise the comprehensive plan and development regulations to ensure the plan and regulations comply with the requirements of the GMA.
- D-9. **Concurrency Amendment** (PLN2011-00008)– Remove section 20.80.212 of the Whatcom County Zoning Code, which states that no subdivision, commercial development or conditional uses shall be approved without a written finding that:

(1) All providers of water, sewage disposal, schools, and fire protection serving the development have issued a letter that adequate capacity exists or arrangements have been made to provide adequate services for the development.

(2) No county facilities will be reduced below applicable levels of service as a result of the development.

- D-10. **MRL Expansion - Lummi Island** (PLN2011-00009) – Amend the comprehensive plan designation from Rural Forestry to Mineral Resource Lands (MRL) and amend the zoning map to expand the MRL overlay zone on approximately 27.5 acres.
- D-11. **MRL Removal - Aldrich Rd** (PLN2011-00010) – Amend the comprehensive plan designation from MRL to Rural and amend the zoning map by removing a MRL overlay zone on approximately 90 acres on Aldrich Rd near the intersection with West King Tut.
- D-12. **Birch Bay Watershed Action Plan** (PLN2011-00012) – Propose Low Impact Development (LID) criteria and an offsite buffer mitigation program. As part of the Birch Bay Watershed Action Plan, these optional tools are aimed at facilitating community supported development and improving the success of stream and wetland buffer mitigation. Changes to Title 20 will include defining criteria for LID practices, formally recognizing the LID manual, and allowing code flexibility.
- D-13. **Drayton Harbor/Lincoln Rd. Rezone** (PLN2011-00014) – Rezone approximately 492 acres south of Drayton Harbor, west of Harborview Rd., north of Lincoln Rd. and east of the Blaine City limits from Rural one dwelling/10 acres (R10) to Rural one dwelling/ five acres (R5). The existing Rural Comprehensive Plan designation would not be changed.
- D-14. **Stormwater and Land Clearing Amendments** (PLN2011-00015) - Modify WCC 20.80.634, .636, and .735 related to stormwater management, vegetation retention, re-vegetation options, erosion and sediment control, etc. in order to address the Washington State Department of Ecology's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Findings for Lake Whatcom, the future Water Quality Cleanup Plan, and the 2010-2014 Lake Whatcom Management Program Work Plan tasks.

2.4. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Appeals

The Whatcom County Council may continue to address appeals brought to the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB). Public participation for settlement activities that will result in an ordinance amending the comprehensive plan and/or development regulations will include, at a minimum:

- Posting a draft proposal on the County website and, if urban growth areas are being modified, sending it to cities, any citizen planning groups for non-City UGA's, and anyone requesting notification, at least 30 days prior to the public hearing.
- Publishing notice of the hearing in the newspaper and, if urban growth areas are being modified, e-mailing notice to cities at least 10 days prior to the public hearing; and
- Holding a public hearing.

Chapter 3. Project Participants

The Public Participation Plan is designed to reach all audiences that may have an interest in the Comprehensive Plan Update process. It is also designed to reach out to other groups and individuals – those that may not yet have an interest or be inclined to participate – to encourage their awareness, understanding and involvement in the process. The PPP also promotes use of existing communication networks to encourage involvement in the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Update process.

3.1. The Public

The general public is defined as members of the community including residents, groups, property owners, farmers, business owners and any others that might be interested in the Comprehensive Plan update process. The following sections contain a breakdown of some specific types of community groups and organizations that the County will attempt to engage in the Comprehensive Plan update process.

3.1.1. Interested Property Owners and Developers

Interested property owners and developers are defined as members of the community that have an interest in growth and development regulations, especially as they relate to their private property rights. They may have an interest in developing or preserving their property. This might include farmers, real estate and development groups and other related professionals.

3.1.2. Community Organizations

Community organizations are loosely defined as groups, associations, or committees that come together for a common interest or cause. This includes service groups, environmental groups, chambers of commerce, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, community councils, neighborhood associations, local granges, social service organizations, religious organizations,

and others. Community organizations also include groups that are centered around non-city UGAs like the Birch Bay steering committee and others.

3.1.3. Other Groups and Individuals

WAC 365-196-900(4) states that “Each county or city should try to involve a broad cross-section of the community so groups not previously involved in planning become involved.” The County will continue to expand our email list when people request to be added to the list and as new groups come to the County’s attention, we will work to include them as appropriate.

3.2. Governmental/Quasi-Governmental Groups

Governmental and quasi-governmental groups are defined as organizations that have a connection to local government, including Whatcom Council of Governments; Whatcom County Council; City Councils; Whatcom County and individual cities’ Planning Commissions; area tribes; local special purpose districts; citizen advisory committees and others. Groups typically consist of elected officials, appointed or volunteer community members, or jurisdictional staff. Table 2.1 below shows a selected group of advisory committees that may be asked to comment on portions of amendments required to update the comprehensive plan. It will be important to ensure continued coordination with these groups throughout the entire Comprehensive Plan Update process.

Table 2.1: Selected Whatcom County Advisory Boards/Committees and Commissions

Agricultural Advisory Committee	Parks and Recreation Committee
Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee	Portage Bay Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee
Birch Bay Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee	Public Health Advisory Board
Birch Bay Watershed and Aquatic Resources Management Advisory Committee	Purchase of Development Rights Oversight Committee
Development Standards Technical Advisory Committee	Rural Library Board
Drayton Harbor Shellfish Protection District Advisory Committee	Surface Mining Advisory Committee ²
Flood Control Zone District Advisory Committee	Whatcom County Community Network
Flood Control Sub-Zone District Advisory Committee	Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee
Lake Management District #1	Whatcom Council of Governments: Community Transportation Advisory Group
Marine Resource Committee	WRIA 1 – Joint Management Team

² This advisory committee has been inactive. The committee will need additional appointments to form a complete committee before they will be able to actively engage in any projects in this program.

3.2.1. Planning Commission

Recently, the Washington State Department of Commerce issued revisions to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). Implementation of the GMA as it relates to public participation is covered within WAC 365-196-600 “Public Participation.” WAC 365-196-600(3)(c) states: “The public participation program should clearly describe the role of the planning commission, ensuring consistency with requirements of chapter 36.70, 35.63, or 35A.63 RCW.”

For purposes of this process, the Planning Commission will be more involved throughout each of the projects within the larger process. The Planning Commission is an appointed group of citizens that work directly with Planning and Development Services to craft legislation and make recommendations to the County Council. They also hear and make recommendations on applications for amendments to the Whatcom County Code and the Comprehensive Plan from private individuals, agencies and other applicants. Currently, the Planning Commission hears from the public primarily during public hearings and through written correspondence.

It is the goal that most town hall meetings, open houses and other public participation activities will occur with some involvement with the Planning Commission. In this way, the Planning Commission will hear straight from the public on each issue and will be more involved in crafting policies, earlier in the process. The public is encouraged to communicate with planning commissioners through the email and mailing address listed in Chapter 5 of this document in addition to attending planning commission meetings.

3.3. The Cities

Whatcom County will continue to engage with the Cities on issues that need to be reconciled as part of the periodic review. For example, the County will work with the cities on crafting new interlocal agreements to formalize discussions during the UGA review and revision. The Cities will be conducting their own periodic reviews as required by state law and any public participation regarding issues associated with their planning area will be an effort of each city.

Chapter 4. Public Participation Approach

4.1. Overall Approach

The Washington state Administrative Code (WAC) provides guidelines and rules for public involvement in comprehensive planning. WAC 365-196-600 “Public Participation” states that “The public participation program should clearly describe the role of the planning commission, ensuring consistency with requirements of chapter 36.70, 35.63, or 35A.63 RCW.”

Through this public participation program the planning commission will act as a central hub for many public participation activities. In this way, the planning commission will have maximum exposure to the public perspective no matter how complex or minute the issue.

Starting in section 4.2, issues are broken down into 3 types for the purposes of public participation. Each type of issue has a different approach and the approach is described in each section. All the issues retain the numbers assigned to them in Chapter 2, so if more information is needed about an issue, the reader may refer back to Chapter 2.

4.2. Level 1 Issues

Level 1 issues are generally less complicated, have already been through extensive public process or are quasi-judicial actions³. This level is also appropriate for most standard map and text amendments to Title 20 Zoning. A more aggressive public participation approach may be assigned at the discretion of the Planning and Development Services Department.

³ Quasi-judicial actions of local decision-making bodies are those actions of the legislative body, planning commission, hearing examiner, zoning adjuster, board of adjustment, or boards which determine the legal rights, duties, or privileges of specific parties in a hearing or other contested case proceeding (RCW 42.36.010). These require adjudication in a court-like process, in which the guidelines for public participation are different from other actions.

4.2.1. Approach

Level 1 issues will travel through the process with the public process required by the code. Typically, they will follow this process:

- 1) **Proposal:** Staff generates a proposal or a recommendation on an application.
- 2) **Proposal posted:** Proposal is posted to the website and announced through email list. Legal notice will be given as required and applicable. Public may make comment to the Planning Commission via email and/or US mail.
- 3) **Public hearing:** Planning Commission holds public hearing on issue.
- 4) **Work session and recommendation:** Planning Commission conducts work session on issue and recommends action to the County Council. Public may make comment to the County Council via email and/or US mail.
- 5) **County Council:** County Council will review the recommendation of the Planning Commission and hold a work session in committee. The Council will approve the recommendation, modify, or deny. If the Planning Commission recommendation is substantively modified, another hearing will be held on that modification and then the Council will act.

4.2.2. Level 1 Projects

- S-3. **Land for Facilities** (RCW 36.70A.110, .115, .210, SHB 1825)
- S-5. **Family Day-Care Providers in Home** (RCW 36.70A.450 Amended, SB 5952)
- S-7. **Forest Practices** (RCW 36.70A.570, SHB 1409)
- S-10. **Ferndale UGA** (PLN2011-00017)
- R-1. **Public Facility and Service Plan Consistency** (Policy 2C-5)
- R-6. **City UGA Implementation** (Goal 2Q)
- D-2. **MRL Expansion – Saxon Rd. Area** (PLN2009-00013) *Note: This item is quasi-judicial.*
- D-3. **Wind Energy Systems** (PLN2010-00026)
- D-4. **Capital Facility Amendments** (PLN2011-00003)
- D-5. **Title 20 Amendments** (PLN2011-00004)
- D-8. **Periodic Update Chapter 10, Design** (PLN2011-00007)
- D-10. **MRL Expansion, Lummi Island** (PLN2011-00009) *Note: This item is quasi-judicial.*
- D-11. **MRL Removal, Aldrich Rd** (PLN2011-00010) *Note: This item is quasi-judicial.*
- D-13. **Drayton Harbor/Lincoln Rd. Rezone** (PLN2011-00014)

4.3. Level 2 Issues

Level 2 issues require a little more than the code-required public process. The issues in this category are of a sensitive or political nature and/or the public has come out to oppose or support them in the past. They are generally more complicated.

4.3.1. Approach

Typically, level 2 issues will follow this process:

- 1) **Alternatives:** Staff generates alternative approaches to the issue, when applicable.
- 2) **Alternatives posted:** Alternatives are posted to the website and announced through email list.
- 3) **Advisory Committee/Agency/City Review and Comment:** The alternatives will be submitted to the appropriate advisory committee, department, city or agency for review and comment.
- 4) **Proposal:** Staff generates a proposal considering any feedback received on the alternatives.
- 5) **Proposal posted:** Proposal is posted to the website and announced through email list and legal notice as required and applicable. Public may make comment to the Planning Commission via email and/or US mail.
- 6) **Public hearing:** Planning Commission holds public hearing on issue.
- 7) **Work session:** Planning Commission conducts work session on issue and recommends action to the County Council. Public may make comment to the County Council via email and/or US mail.
- 8) **County Council:** County Council will review the recommendation of the Planning Commission and hold a work session in committee. The Council will approve the recommendation, modify, or deny. If the Planning Commission recommendation is substantively modified, another hearing will be held on that modification and then the Council will act.

4.3.2. Level 2 Projects

- S-1. **Transportation** (RCW 36.70A.070 and RCW 36.70A.108)
- S-2. **Mineral Resource Lands** (RCW 36.70A.131)
- S-6. **Housing** (RCW 36.70A.070(2)) and (RCW 36.70A.540, EHB 1464)
- S-9. **Population Analysis** (RCW 36.70A.130(1)(c)) .
- R-5. **Agricultural Lands Mitigation, UGA Reserve:** Coordination with Everson, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas, and the Agricultural Advisory Committee

- D-1. **Birch Bay Fire Protection & Emergency Services** (CMP2007-00014)
- D-6. **Periodic Update Chapter 8, Mineral Resources/Forestry Sections** (PLN2011-00005)
- D-7. **Periodic Update Chapter 9, Recreation** (PLN2011-00006)
- D-9. **Concurrency Amendment** (PLN2011-00008)

4.4. Level 3 Issues

These issues are generally more complicated and are of interest to the general public. All of these issues will have many opportunities for public comment, including a town-hall style meeting where they are able to openly share their feelings on the alternatives proposed or just the issue in general. When appropriate, town hall meetings will be planned close to areas that will be or are being impacted by the issue.

4.4.1. Approach

Typically, level 3 issues will follow this process:

- 1) **Alternatives:** Staff generates alternative approaches to the issue, when appropriate.
- 2) **Alternatives posted:** Alternatives are posted to the website and announced through email list.
- 3) **Advisory Committee Review/Agency Comment:** The alternatives will be submitted to the appropriate advisory committee, department, city or agency for review and comment.
- 4) **Town hall meeting:** A town hall style meeting is held to seek public input on the issue and the proposed alternatives. When appropriate, the meeting is held in a location that is reasonably located near an area affected by the issue. Planning Commission may be in attendance at this town hall meeting. Announcements of town hall meetings will be done through the website, email list, media releases, and local postings as appropriate.
- 5) **Proposal:** Staff generates a proposal with consideration for the feedback heard at the town hall meeting.
- 6) **Proposal posted:** Proposal is posted to the website and announced through email list. Legal notice will be given as required and as appropriate. Public may make comment to the Planning Commission via email and/or US mail.
- 7) **Public hearing:** Planning Commission holds public hearing on issue.
- 8) **Work session:** Planning Commission conducts work session on issue and recommends action to the County Council. Public may make comment to the County Council via email and/or US mail.
- 9) **County Council:** County Council will review the recommendation of the Planning Commission and hold a work session in committee. The Council will approve the

recommendation, modify, or deny. If the Planning Commission recommendation is substantively modified, another hearing will be held on that modification and then the Council will act.

4.4.2. Level 3 Projects

- S-4. **Accessory Uses in Agricultural Lands** (RCW 36.70A.177, SHB 2917). Agriculture Advisory Committee.
- S-8. **Critical Areas/Best Available Science** (RCW 36.70A.130(1)(c)). A review committee will be reactivated for this effort. However, many of the existing advisory committees will make recommendations including, as applicable, the Agriculture Advisory Committee, Lake Whatcom Watershed Advisory Committee, Shellfish and Marine advisory committees and others who are impacted by Best Available Science.
- R-2. **Subarea Plan Updates** (Policy 2L-2). Activate subarea/community plan groups, if appropriate and in consideration of work plan priorities.
- R-3. **Bellingham Population Allocation**: Coordination with the City of Bellingham.
- R-4. **Bellingham UGA Land Use** (Policy 2T-12): Coordination with the City of Bellingham.
- D-12. **Birch Bay Watershed Action Plan** (PLN2011-00012).
- D-14. **Stormwater and Land Clearing Amendments** (PLN2011-00015). Coordination with the Department of Ecology.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

This public participation plan was initially crafted at the beginning of the comprehensive planning process. It is a living document that should be updated as conditions change or new methods are discovered. This public participation plan meets the requirements of the RCW and the recently revised requirements of the WAC. Specifically, the Planning and Development Services Department hopes that this public participation program will “involve a broad cross-section of the community, so groups not previously involved in planning become involved” as WAC 365-196-600(4) suggests it should.

To provide written feedback on this public participation plan, please contact Planning and Development Services at rboxx@co.whatcom.wa.us. If you wish to provide comment on any issue to the Planning Commission or County Council, please utilize the following addresses:

Whatcom County Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226

Planning Commission
c/o Becky Boxx, coordinator
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, WA 98226
PDS_Planning_Commission@co.whatcom.wa.us

County Council
311 Grand Ave, Ste 105
Bellingham, WA 98225
council@co.whatcom.wa.us