

### Project Title

Whatcom County (County) 10-Year Urban Growth Area (UGA) Review

### Proposed Action and Alternatives

The Proposed Action is the 10-Year UGA Review of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan as required by the Washington Growth Management Act (GMA). This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) considers two No Action alternatives and two Action alternatives. A No Action alternative is required by the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and provides a baseline for comparison of impacts with the Action alternatives. The Action alternatives test the differing growth patterns, including scenarios that redirect rural growth to the urban areas and shift growth away from the Bellingham UGA to the smaller urban communities. Each alternative is briefly described below.

#### No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative

The No Action Current Comprehensive Plan Alternative assumes growth similar to the adopted comprehensive plan.

#### No Action Trends Alternative

The No Action Trends Alternative assumes future growth that matches the historic pattern of urban and rural growth.

#### Action Alternative X

Action Alternative X would shift future growth from the rural areas and resource lands into the UGAs and would continue to focus on Bellingham as the primary employment and population center in the County. Action Alternative X would emphasize infill development in the existing UGAs and assumes that planned densities would be achieved.

#### Action Alternative Y

Action Alternative Y would shift rural future growth from the rural areas and resource lands into the UGAs to a lesser degree than Action Alternative X or the adopted comprehensive plan. Growth would be shifted away from Bellingham to other small urban areas. Densities would be similar to the patterns achieved in the last 5 years.

## Location

The proposal addresses population and employment growth allocations for the County and land use designations and growth patterns in unincorporated Whatcom County.

## Proponent

Whatcom County

## Date of Implementation

December 2009

## Lead Agency

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

## Responsible Official

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## Required Reviews and Approvals

Recommendations by the Whatcom County Planning Commission; adoption of Comprehensive Plan and development regulation amendments associated with the 10-Year UGA Review by the Whatcom County Council; review by Washington State

Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development as required by GMA; and Whatcom Council of Governments consultation and transportation element certification.

## EIS Authors and Principal Contributors

The Draft EIS has been prepared under the direction of Whatcom County Planning and Development Services.

### Principal Authors

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(EIS management; Earth; Air Quality; Water Resources; Plants and Animals; Land and Shoreline Use; Plans and Policies; Population and Employment; Cultural Resources; Transportation; and Public Services and Utilities)

### Contributing Authors

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## Date of Draft Environmental Impact Statement Issuance

The Draft EIS was issued on May 8, 2009.

## Date Comments Due

A 45-day comment period is being held on the Draft EIS. Written comments on the Draft EIS are due by 4:30 p.m., Monday, June 22, 2009.

## Date Final Action Is Scheduled by Lead Agency

The County plans to take final action on the 10-year UGA Review no later than December 1, 2009.

## Previous Environmental Documents

Prior environmental review was conducted during the preparation and amendment of the comprehensive plan over the last 10 years as documented below.

- *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Foothills Subarea Plan.* December 19, 2008. Prepared by Whatcom County Planning and Development Services.
- *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the City of Bellingham; Bellingham Urban Growth Area; Five-Year Review Areas; and Whatcom County Urban Fringe Subarea Plan.* July 1, 2004. Issued by Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham.
- *Final EIS for the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.* September 1996. Prepared for Whatcom County by Berryman & Hennigar.

Relevant information from these documents was incorporated in this Draft EIS, where appropriate. This Draft EIS incorporates by reference the *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, Foothills Subarea Plan, December 19, 2008*, which contains environmental analysis of the proposed Foothills Subarea Plan. Similarly, the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the City of Bellingham; Bellingham Urban Growth Area; Five-Year Review Areas; and Whatcom County Urban Fringe Subarea Plan, July 1, 2004*, is incorporated by reference. All components of these documents are incorporated, with the exception of land capacity analyses, socioeconomic information, and cumulative countywide analyses, which are updated in this Draft EIS.

## Location of Background Information

See Lead Agency and Responsible Official Address above. Additional information about the Comprehensive Plan Update can be found on the County's website at <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/pds/2031/>.

## Draft Environmental Impact Statement Availability

The Draft EIS is available on the County's website at <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/pds/2031/>.

Paper copies of the Draft EIS may be purchased for approximately \$65 to \$105 (plus tax) depending on how many color pages are printed and whether the appendices are printed. A compact disc copy of the document may be purchased for \$10.00. Final

costs will be based on the actual print cost. See “Lead Agency and Responsible Official Address” above.

Reference copies are also available at Whatcom County libraries shown below:

Bellingham Library  
210 Central Avenue  
Bellingham, WA 98227

Blaine Library  
610 3rd Street  
Blaine, WA 98230

Lynden Library  
216 4th Street  
Lynden, WA 98264

Deming Library  
5044 Mt. Baker Highway  
Deming, WA 98244