

# Final Environmental Impact Statement

## Whatcom County 10-Year Urban Growth Area Review

Prepared for:



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### 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). The County considered the following No Action and Action alternatives for review in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) based on State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) rules, scoping, public workshop input, and coordination with the cities.

**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. This alternative would emphasize infill development in the existing UGAs and assumes that planned densities would be achieved.

**Action Alternative Y.** Action Alternative Y would shift 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.

This Final EIS studies the Executive Recommendations:

**Executive Recommendations.** The Executive Recommendations continue to consider Bellingham as the primary employment and population center in the County, but also allocate substantive growth to small urban areas to allow more efficient delivery of public services and facilities and reduce future increases in vehicle miles traveled compared to alternatives that focus more growth in Bellingham. Growth is primarily allocated to urban areas, and growth allocated outside the UGAs is approximately 14% to 15% of total population growth. UGA boundaries are reduced in eight of the

10 UGAs to better balance growth allocations and land capacity as well as to better protect sensitive watersheds and agricultural resource lands. The Cherry Point Industrial UGA is retained to recognize the unique nature of heavy industrial uses and logical boundaries. The Lynden UGA is expanded.

UGA Reserve comprehensive plan designations are established for Bellingham, Birch Bay, Columbia Valley, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, and Sumas to allow for future UGA expansion. UGA Reserves are adjacent and contiguous to a UGA and appear to be suitable for future inclusion in the respective UGA if growth rates change or if more detailed planning occurs documenting the need and appropriateness of the land. UGA Reserves are either not warranted at present, based on growth rates and land supply for the respective urban area, or they include areas and resources that require conservation and protection before urban growth is expanded.

## 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  
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## 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 Commerce as required by GMA; and Whatcom Council of Governments consultation and transportation element certification.

## EIS Authors and Principal Contributors

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

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## Date of Final Environmental Impact Statement Issuance

The Final EIS was issued on October 23, 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 EIS, where appropriate. This 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 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 web site at <http://www.whatcomcounty.us/pds/2031/>.

## Final Environmental Impact Statement Availability

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

Paper copies of the Final EIS may be purchased for approximately \$100 plus tax. This cost could be reduced, 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 Mount Baker Highway  
Deming, WA 98244



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- Appendix A: Fiscal Assessment of Comprehensive Plan Alternatives
- Appendix B: Transportation Data
- Appendix C: Alternative Growth Estimates by Service Provider

# Acronyms

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CERB	Community Economic Revitalization Board
CO	carbon monoxide
County	Whatcom County
CPSGMHB	Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board
CPTED	Crime Prevention through Environmental Design
CWPPs	Countywide Planning Policies
DNS	Determinations of Non-Significance
DS	Determination of Significance

Ecology	Washington State Department of Ecology
EDI	Economic Development Initiative
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
EPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ESD	Washington State Employment Security Department
GHG	greenhouse gas
GMA	Growth Management Act
GMCC	Growth Management County Council
I&I	inflow and infiltration
LAMIRD	Limited Areas of More Intensive Rural Development
LID	Low impact development
LOS	level of service
mgd	million gallons per day
MOA	memorandum of agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDPES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
NVD	Nooksack Valley Disposal
OFM	Office of Financial Management
OSPI	Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Plan	Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan
PUD	Public Utility District
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RPAs	reasonable and prudent alternatives

SEIS	Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SR	State Route
SSC	Sanitary Service Company
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
UGA	Urban Growth Area
V/C	volume to capacity
V/C	volume to capacity
VMT	vehicle-miles traveled
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WCOG	Whatcom Council of Governments
WSP	water system plans