

Phase II Growth Allocation Policy Questions

REGIONAL AND COUNTY-WIDE GROWTH ALLOCATION

Policy Question: How much deference should be given to local proposals for growth allocation?

Background:

- Each jurisdiction has proposed a growth allocation that nearly equals the county-wide forecast of growth from the Growth Management Coordinating Council.
- Bellingham has requested a low growth rate, while most of the smaller cities have requested a high growth rate.

Policy Considerations:

- Local proposals may impact regional or county-wide issues, such as expansion into resource lands, growth into rural areas, and transportation impacts to employment centers.

TAG Discussion:

- Provide strong preference to local proposals unless conflicting with regional or county-wide issues.
- Recognize input held through hearings and other opportunities by cities. County process may not be as applicable to the individual cities and their character or vision.

Policy Question: Does the overall growth forecast require adjustment?

Background:

- The current population requests equal 61,971 additional people, slightly higher than the GMCC recommended 2031 forecast of 60,490 additional people.
- The current employment requests amount to 33,069, slightly lower than the GMCC recommended 2031 forecast of 33,909 additional employees

Policy Considerations:

- Adjust the overall county forecast of growth
- Adjust growth allocation requests to meet original forecast
- Reallocate additional employment to UGAs

TAG Discussion:

- The general discussion from the TAG was that growth allocation proposals could be adjusted to meet original forecast; an area of particular discussion was the growth allocation to the unincorporated area of Birch Bay without the same capital facility requirements as other urban growth areas.
- The balance of employment allocation is not significant, except if needed to justify retaining existing land supply for employment, particularly in smaller cities.

Policy Question: Is the initial pattern of growth distribution as proposed by the various entities the most desirable alternative?

Background:

- The current allocation proposals reflect higher growth rate for small cities and lower rate for Bellingham.
- The allocation requests vary from current growth distribution patterns.

Policy Considerations:

- Recommend a shift of growth as needed to provide a desired balance between UGAs and rural areas.
- Look at jobs – housing ratio and consider adjustment as necessary between population and employment.
- Explore ways to transfer even more growth out of rural areas into urban areas.

TAG Discussion:

- The growth pattern supports early public input that growth should be distributed out to smaller communities, allowing these communities to fully serve their populations.
- Consideration might be given to housing to jobs ratio to minimize commuting to employment centers, but a standardized approach to all UGAs does not recognize local differences.

AGRICULTURAL/RURAL

Policy Question: Should Urban Growth Area expansion or annexations into agricultural lands include mitigation for the loss of agricultural lands?

Background:

- Lynden and Sumas have no where to grow outside the current UGA that will not impact agricultural lands; Everson, Nooksack and Ferndale are also all up against agricultural lands.
- Five of the seven existing city urban growth areas include land designated agricultural.

<u>UGA</u>	<u>Ag Lands in Current UGA</u>
Everson	330 ac.
Ferndale	125 ac.
Lynden	320 ac.
Nooksack	145 ac.
Sumas	119 ac.

- There are an estimated 2,132 (2,075 existing and 57 potential) development rights within agricultural zoned lands and another 1,766 (926 existing and 840 potential) development rights within rural areas that are considered prime agricultural lands

Policy Considerations:

- Expansion of UGAs and/or city limits could acquire development rights out of agricultural zones comparable to the loss of agricultural lands.
- Creation of “receiving areas” within cities to send development rights out of agricultural areas.
- Consider ways to ensure that any irrigation water rights on lands designated as agricultural within urban growth areas are used to benefit agricultural lands and not transferred for municipal purposes.
- If urban area costs increase to pay for acquisition of development rights, development in rural areas might become more attractive due to affordability.
- County should focus on agricultural protection in other ways that do not impact urban growth, such as purchase of development rights, lot consolidation, rezoning of rural lands to agriculture, etc.

TAG Discussion:

- The TAG did not spend any time exploring the issue in depth.

Policy Question: Is the allocation of growth to rural areas reasonable?

Background:

- Current comprehensive plan allocated rural growth at 6.3%.
- The current rural population is 30% of total county population, and the growth rate in the rural areas over the past 18 years is estimated at 22.8%.
- The County is reviewing 20,000 acres of rural lands to comply with GMA requirement for “Limited Areas of More Intense Rural Development”, or LAMIRD

Policy Considerations:

- Explore ways to transfer even more growth out of rural areas into urban areas.
- Ensure that urban growth areas are adequately sized to accommodate growth and a variety of housing choices to serve the local population.
- County decision on LAMIRDs will affect overall county growth rate.
- Limitations on rural growth, such as the use of exempt wells, impact fees, etc., that could impact growth rates

TAG Discussion:

- The proposed growth allocation to rural areas appears reasonable and closer to expectation.
- Support for efforts to encourage growth into urban areas and limit within rural areas.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Policy Question: What expectations are there for demonstrating adequate public facilities and services for all urban growth areas as part of this review process?

Background:

- The Growth Management Act sets priority for urban growth areas based on public facilities and services:
 - First, in areas already characterized by urban growth that have adequate existing public facilities and service capacities to serve such development
 - Second, in areas already characterized by urban growth that will be served adequately by a combination of both existing public facilities and services and any additional needed public facilities and services
 - Third, in remaining portions of the urban growth areas.
- The new planning horizon (2031) is not consistent with all public facility and capital improvement plans, and additional work is needed to ensure consistency.
- UGAs originally designated in 1997 for a 20-year period; city and county plans updated in 2004 for a planning horizon year of 2022.
- Growth Management Hearings Board cases have increasingly questioned UGAs and the adequacy of public facilities and services to accommodate the growth, especially in consideration of the 20-year planning horizon from the first UGA designation.

Policy Considerations:

- Phased planning approach with UGA proposals and designations, followed by planning and development regulations.
- Distinguish this UGA review process from the 2011 comprehensive plan and development regulation update process; allow for reconciliation of public facility and service issues through the 2011 planning process.
- Consider the fiscal impact to local jurisdictions for having to complete water, sewer and other public facility and service plans.

TAG Discussion:

- Generally supportive of the notion to allow for reconciliation of these issues.

Table 1: Alternative Population Growth Projections

	2029	2030	2031
OFM Low-range	216,300	217,628	
OFM Mid-range	258,448	261,416	
OFM High-range	318,832	324,156	
Berk Report	251,490	254,228	256,952
GMCC			251,490
EIS Range:	234,917 to 258,448		

Table 2: Population Allocation Requests

Study Area	2008 Population	Phase II Requested Allocation	2029-31 Total
Bellingham UGA	89,284	23,771	113,055
Birch Bay UGA	5,290	4,329	9,619
Blaine UGA	5,754	3,720	9,474
Columbia Valley UGA	3,924	1,076	5,000
Everson UGA	2,395	1,948	4,343
Ferndale UGA	12,019	8,687	20,706
Lynden UGA	11,613	7,414	19,027
Nooksack UGA	1,137	1,159	2,296
Sumas UGA	1,279	793	2,072
<i>Rural</i>	58,305	9,074	67,379
TOTALS	191,000	61,971	252,971
GMCC Recommendation		60,490	251,490
Difference		1,481	1,481

Table 3: Population Allocation – Shares of Growth

Study Area	Share of Existing Population	Current Comp Plan Share of Future Growth	Historic (90 - 08) Share of Growth	Phase II Requested Share of Growth
Bellingham UGA	46.7%	51.4%	44.5%	38.4%
Birch Bay UGA	2.8%	7.5%	4.8%	7.0%
Blaine UGA	3.0%	4.6%	3.7%	6.0%
Columbia Valley UGA	2.1%	3.7%	5.5%	1.7%
Everson UGA	1.3%	2.4%	1.0%	3.1%
Ferndale UGA	6.3%	10.8%	8.0%	14.0%
Lynden UGA	6.1%	10.7%	8.2%	12.0%
Nooksack UGA	0.6%	1.4%	0.8%	1.9%
Sumas UGA	0.7%	1.0%	0.8%	1.3%
<i>Rural</i>	30.5%	6.3%	22.8%	14.6%
TOTALS	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 4: Alternative Employment Growth Projections

	2029	2030	2031
OFM Mid-range	OFM does not do employment projections		
Berk Report	33,909	35,202	36,488
GMCC			33,909
EIS Range:	26,083 to 37,194		

Table 5: Employment Allocation Requests

Study Area	2008 Employment	Requested Allocation	2029-31 Total
Bellingham UGA	51,153	18,829	69,982
Birch Bay UGA	436	213	649
Blaine UGA	2,971	1,903	4,874
Cherry Point UGA	1,182	760	1,942
Columbia Valley UGA	90	90	180
Everson UGA	638	446	1,084
Ferndale UGA	5,534	3,669	9,203
Lynden UGA	4,832	3,200	8,032
Nooksack UGA	206	266	472
Sumas UGA	254	182	436
<i>Rural</i>	10,130	3,510	13,640
TOTALS	77,426	33,068	110,494
GMCC Recommendation		33,909	111,335
Difference		(841)	(841)

Table 6: Population Allocation – Shares of Growth

Study Area	2008 share of Employment	Requested Allocation Share
Bellingham UGA	66.1%	56.9%
Birch Bay UGA	0.6%	0.6%
Blaine UGA	3.8%	5.8%
Cherry Point UGA	1.5%	2.3%
Columbia Valley UGA	0.1%	0.3%
Everson UGA	0.8%	1.3%
Ferndale UGA	7.1%	11.1%
Lynden UGA	6.2%	9.7%
Nooksack UGA	0.3%	0.8%
Sumas UGA	0.3%	0.6%
<i>Rural</i>	13.1%	10.6%

Table 7: Jobs-housing Ratio

	2008 Jobs/Populat ion Ratio	Additional Growth Ratio	Total Allocation Request Ratio
Bellingham UGA	57.3%	79.2%	61.9%
Birch Bay UGA	8.2%	4.9%	6.7%
Blaine UGA	51.6%	51.2%	51.4%
Cherry Point UGA			
Columbia Valley UGA	2.3%	8.4%	3.6%
Everson UGA	26.6%	22.9%	25.0%
Ferndale UGA	46.0%	42.2%	44.4%
Lynden UGA	41.6%	43.2%	42.2%
Nooksack UGA	18.1%	23.0%	20.6%
Sumas UGA	19.9%	23.0%	21.0%
<i>Rural</i>	17.4%	38.7%	20.2%

Chart 1: Share of Population Growth

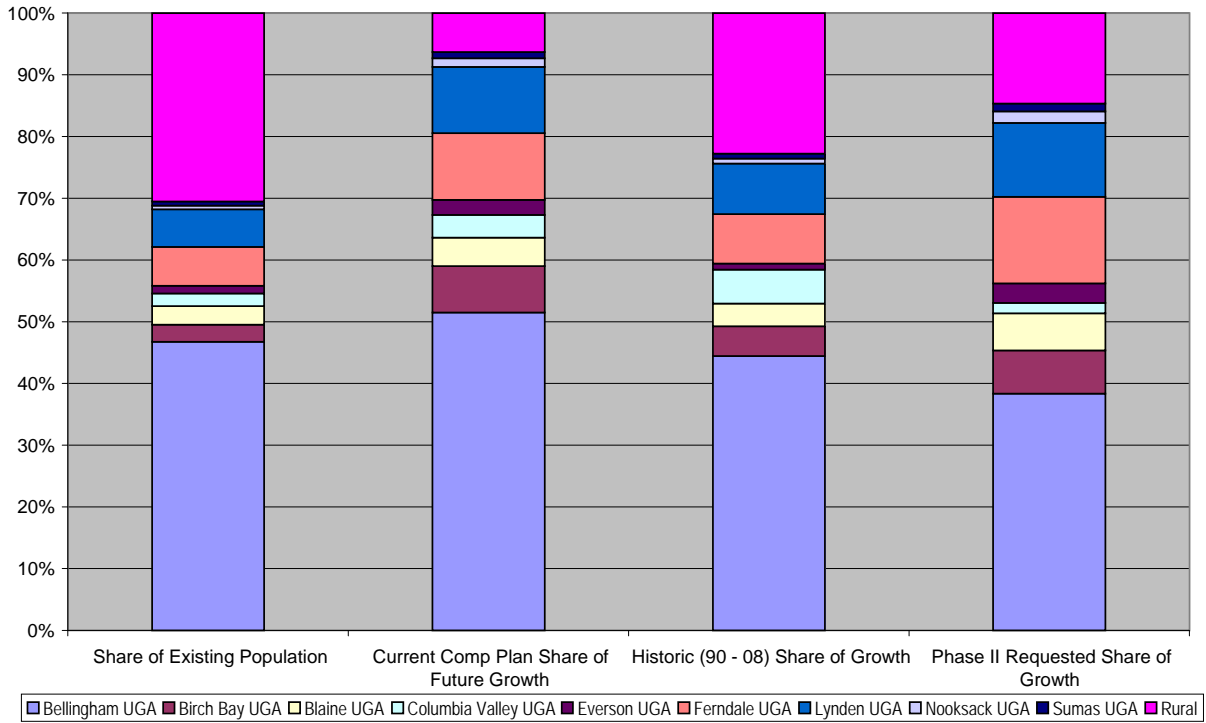


Chart 2: Share of Employment Growth

