

Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Rural Element Update

Stakeholder Meeting

September 24, 2008

AGENDA

I. Introductions and Overview

- A. Review background information (over)
- B. Please share your name and the organization you represent
- C. Why are you here? What are the key issues for your organization?

II. Discussion:

- A. What is rural?
 1. What is rural character?
 2. What is a rural density?
 3. What kinds of land uses are appropriate in rural areas?
- B. LAMIRDs
 1. What function should a LAMIRD serve within a rural area?
 2. What non-rural uses or densities should be allowed in a LAMIRD?
 3. What size of commercial developments should be allowed in LAMIRDs?
 4. What types of areas should be LAMIRDs? Small towns? Crossroads commercial? Pre-1990 residential developments with higher densities than 1 du/5ac?
 5. What, if any, additional criteria should be considered in establishing LAMIRD boundaries?

III. Next Steps:

- A. Public Participation
 1. What is the best way for us to engage your community?
 2. Public meetings – review schedule
- B. Summarize 'what is rural'
- C. Define LAMIRD boundary criteria

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Background Information

Why are we here?

Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties to protect the character of its rural areas and prevent sprawling suburban type development. A 2005 Growth Management Hearings Board decision found the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan to be out of compliance with the GMA. Specifically, the policies and designation descriptors for Small Towns, Crossroads Commercial, Resort and Recreational Subdivisions, Suburban Enclaves, and Gateway Industrial land use designations did not minimize and contain development. In addition, the following rural zoning classifications were found to be too dense for rural lands: RR1, RR2, RR3, EI, R2A, and RRI.

The County must now update the Rural Element of its Comprehensive Plan to comply with the GMA. The County can do a number of things to bring its Comprehensive Plan and zoning into compliance:

- Revise the rural land use designations
- Change the non-compliant zones to promote appropriate rural densities and uses
- Designate LAMIRDs with clear outer boundaries using appropriate criteria to determine these boundaries.

Before the county takes action, it is important to gather input from the community to make sure the county's actions are consistent with the community's vision of rural character.

What is a LAMIRD?

The GMA allows counties to designate "limited areas of more intensive rural development" (LAMIRDs) to "minimize and contain" areas where more intensive uses and densities already existed when GMA took effect in 1990. [RCW 36.70A.070\(5\)\(d\)](#) defines three types of LAMIRDs, but in Whatcom County most LAMIRDs would be Type 1: "Rural development consisting of the infill, development, or redevelopment of existing commercial, industrial, residential, or mixed-use areas, whether characterized as shoreline development, villages, hamlets, rural activity centers, or crossroads developments."

The County, with your help, must define the criteria to decide where these LAMIRDs should be allowed and how their outer boundaries should be determined. The GMA requires the county to address the following when determining LAMIRD boundaries:

- The need to preserve the character of existing natural neighborhoods and communities
- Physical boundaries such as bodies of water, streets and highways, land forms and contours
- The prevention of abnormally irregular boundaries, and
- The ability to provide public facilities and public services in a manner that does not permit low-density sprawl;