

Appendix C

# GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT PLANNING GOALS COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES VISIONING VALUE STATEMENTS

## GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT PLANNING GOALS (RCW 36.70A.020)

The following goals are adopted to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations of those counties and cities that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040. The following goals are not listed in order of priority and shall be used exclusively for the purpose of guiding the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations:

**(1) Urban Growth.** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.

**(2) Reduce Sprawl.** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.

**(3) Transportation.** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

**(4) Housing.** Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

**(5) Economic Development.** Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

**(6) Property Rights.** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

**(7) Permits.** Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

**(8) Natural Resource Industries.** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation

of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.

**(9) Open Space and Recreation.** Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks

**(10) Environment.** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

**(11) Citizen Participation and Coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

**(12) Public Facilities and Services.** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

**(13) Historic Preservation.** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.

**(14) Shoreline Management.** Per RCW 36.70A.480 Shorelines of the State, the goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act, as set forth in RCW 90.58.020, are added as one of the goals of the Growth Management Act.

**WHATCOM COUNTY  
COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES  
Adopted April 1993, Revised March 11, 1997**

**A. CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT**

1. The county and the cities shall cooperate to provide public education on the requirements of the Growth Management Act.
2. The county and the cities shall provide opportunities for citizens to become involved in the growth management planning process through various mechanisms, such as surveys, public workshops, meetings, hearings, and advisory committees. The method of citizen involvement may vary based on the needs and constituents in various communities and shall include representation of both rural and urban interests on those issues that affect both urban and rural areas.
3. Citizens shall be notified in a timely manner of opportunities to have input and key decision points in the planning process. This should include actions such as use of telephone hotlines, notification to interest groups, pre-development meetings, early incorporation of public comments and broader notification of property owners and residents during a planning process as well as working more extensively with community and neighborhood groups. The cities shall also develop a public participation process to solicit and incorporate comments from residents outside city limits but within proposed Urban Growth Areas.
4. Citizen comments and viewpoints shall be incorporated into the decision-making process in development of draft plans and regulations. Consideration of citizen comments shall be evident in the decision-making process.
5. The county and the cities shall establish a system for subarea, community and neighborhood liaison to foster communication between the respective government and its neighborhoods. This system would also provide a point of contact for issues that may affect subareas, the community, or neighborhoods.
6. Various planning techniques, such as overlay maps and Geographic Information Systems, shall be utilized to allow citizens and public officials the ability to make accurate comparison of issues so appropriate trade-offs can be consciously made.

**B. URBAN VERSUS RURAL DISTINCTIONS\***

1. Whatcom County shall primarily become a government of rural areas in land use matters directed towards agriculture, forestry and other natural resources and natural resource based industries. The county shall work with citizens to define a variety of types of rural areas based on the characteristics and needs of different areas. This Section shall not preclude county governance of large urban industrial areas outside of the city UGA's (see Cherry Point below), developed urban areas within urban growth areas not yet annexed, and developed rural areas where the "urban" designation is inappropriate.

2. The county shall discourage urban level development outside Urban Growth Areas and outside of areas currently characterized by a development threshold greater than a rural development density.
3. Whatcom County shall promote appropriate land uses and allow for infill within rural settlements characterized by existing commercial, industrial and intensive residential development greater than a rural development density. These areas should be clearly delineated, and not expanded beyond logical outer boundaries in accordance with RCW 36.70.070(5). Impacts on rural character, critical areas and other economic considerations as well as the availability of capital facilities and rural levels of service must be considered before allowing infill in these areas.
4. In the next 20 years, Whatcom County should discourage "new fully contained communities" (as defined and authorized by RCW 36.70A.350) outside designated Urban Growth Areas.
5. Whatcom County should undertake a public process to define rural areas and rural growth as distinct from urban areas and urban growth.

### **C. URBAN GROWTH AREAS**

1. Urban growth needs shall be met by a combination of in-fill within cities and by growth within designated municipal and non-municipal Urban Growth Areas.
2. The size and location of Urban Growth Areas shall be consistent with adopted local policies and with the capital facilities plans.
- 3a. The most current, accurate population projections based on a range provided for Whatcom County by the Office of Financial Management shall be used as the basis for determining that Urban Growth Areas shall include sufficient area to permit the urban growth that is projected to occur in the county for the succeeding twenty-year period.
- 3b. The County and Cities shall develop a consistent approach to calculating the land supply needed within an urban growth area. This approach shall consider limitations imposed by critical area regulations, infrastructure needs, open space, existing uses, local market factors and the ability of the jurisdiction to provide services. It is recognized that the above limitations may vary by jurisdiction, but the method for applying them shall be consistent. Urban growth areas shall permit a range of densities and uses; however, in recognition of community character, these uses and densities may vary among jurisdictions.
4. Urban Growth Areas shall be evaluated at least every ten years to determine if they contain sufficient area to accommodate the urban growth that is projected for the succeeding twenty-year period. The market factor for each Urban Growth Area shall also be evaluated to determine whether the land supply is adequate to meet the needs of the community or whether the land supply is excessive and -contributing to sprawl.
5. Urban Growth areas should be established in a way that preserves agricultural land, forestry, mineral resources, water resources, and critical areas. Urban growth shall

maintain proper buffers from natural resource areas to minimize conflicts with natural resources and industries based on them.

#### **D. CITY URBAN GROWTH AREAS**

1. The Urban Growth Areas for the small cities shall be of an adequate size to allow them to become viable economic centers with a balance of jobs and housing. The small cities shall do appropriate planning to ensure adequate distribution of land uses and services at a range of urban densities and zoning classifications.
2. Urban Growth Areas for cities shall include those areas contiguous to cities and with urban characteristics as defined by the Act. The Geneva area in Bellingham's UGA is characterized by urban development, but is also identified by the city and county as a Water Resource Protection UGA because of its location in the Lake Whatcom Watershed. Lake Whatcom is the drinking water source for much of the Bellingham urban area. Geneva is appropriate to include in an urban growth area, but is not an area where additional urban development is desirable.
3. Cities shall develop a plan to provide urban level water and sewer services within their Urban Growth Areas. This plan should be developed in cooperation with existing water purveyors and other municipal corporations providing water or sewer services within each city's Urban Area, and should be implemented through interlocal agreements. Short term and long term boundaries may be used to facilitate provision of urban levels of service and to not preclude future urban densities as defined within the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.
4. Existing cities should absorb additional population at a range of densities appropriately responsive to the city's community vision before extending city Urban Growth Areas into areas where growth would adversely impact critical areas and resource lands. In those small cities entirely surrounded by flood plains, critical area and resource lands or within Shellfish Protection Districts, the county and the city shall seek to negotiate a balance between protection of resources and the allocation of adequate land area to meet the growth needs of the city and to maintain the desired character of the community.
5. All cities should grow in an efficient manner while maintaining their character and, where reasonable, shall provide for adequate open space between cities to prevent strip development.
6. Cities should be encouraged to provide positive incentives for in-fill.

#### **E. NON-CITY URBAN GROWTH AREAS**

1. Urban Growth Areas may also be established in areas that are not contiguous to existing cities, and are already characterized by urban growth where adequate facilities and services can be provided and which are intended to meet needs not met by cities and their Urban Growth Areas.

2. Non-city urban growth areas, for already urbanized unincorporated residential areas shall be encouraged to infill in a way that will facilitate efficient provision of facilities and services consistent with the scale of development.
3. Cherry Point shall be designated as an unincorporated industrial urban growth area in recognition of existing large scale industrial land uses. Additional large scale development shall be encouraged consistent with the ability to provide needed services and consistent with protecting critical areas along with other environmental protection considerations. The Cherry Point industrial area is an important and appropriate area for industry due to its access to deep water shipping, rail, all-weather roads, its location near the Canadian border, and its contribution to the County's goal of providing family wage jobs.
4. The County shall assure that there are plans to provide appropriate levels of urban facilities and services within non-city Urban Growth Areas. These plans should be developed by special purpose districts, water associations and private service providers within each of these Areas, and should be implemented, where appropriate, through interlocal agreements. Short term and long term boundaries may be used to facilitate provision of urban levels of service.
5. The Sudden Valley Provisional UGA is characterized by urban development, but is also identified as a Water Resource Protection area because of its location in the Lake Whatcom Watershed. Because Lake Whatcom is the drinking water source for much of the Bellingham urban area, Sudden Valley is appropriate for development on existing platted lots, but is not an area where expansion or increased density is desirable

**F. CONTIGUOUS, ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING IN URBAN GROWTH AREAS\***

1. Cities, the county and special districts shall execute interlocal agreements to coordinate plans for and manage growth in Urban Growth Areas prior to annexations. Interlocal agreements shall acknowledge and implement the County-wide Planning Policies.
2. Interlocal agreements shall incorporate clear and reasonable criteria for orderly annexation. The county and the cities shall establish a process to incorporate representative citizen input into interlocal agreement and encourage appropriate districts to participate. If adequate procedures are developed to replace it, the Boundary Review Board may be replaced.
3. All urbanized areas currently within urban growth boundaries associated with cities should be encouraged to annex to cities. Orderly annexations with logical boundaries shall be encouraged. Interlocal agreements shall specify guidelines on size, timing of annexations and urban levels of development, and tax revenue sharing when appropriate.
4. Within Urban Growth Areas, cities shall not extend water and sewer utilities without an adopted program for annexation and an adopted Capital Facilities Plan. Exceptions may be made in cases where human health is threatened as determined by the

- County Health Department. If water extensions are made, they shall be consistent with the service area boundaries and other provisions within the adopted Coordinated Water System Plan.
5. In the areas where utilities presently extend beyond city limits, but are within Urban Growth Areas, the city, county, and the existing water purveyors for the area should jointly plan with the county. The County shall adopt zoning which reflects this joint planning.
  6. Unless specifically provided for by state statutes, Cities, other municipal corporations, and other public and private utilities shall not extend urban levels of water service to serve urban uses outside Urban Growth Areas. If legally allowed water extensions are made outside of Urban Growth Areas, the maximum number of connections shall not exceed the density allowed under the associated zoning. The number of connections shall be specified in a legally binding document at the time the extension is approved. Property contiguous to extension of utilities necessary to solve existing water deficiencies, but which cannot benefit from them because of zoning constraints, shall not be assessed for those improvements.
  7. The availability of pipeline capacity required to meet local needs and/or supply shall not be used to justify development counter to the county-wide land development pattern and shall not be considered in conversions of agricultural land, forestry, and rural areas.
  8. The cities, other municipal corporations, public utilities, and the county shall cooperate to identify and balance the needs of each jurisdiction and entity when planning for transition of services and annexation within Urban Growth Areas. This intergovernmental cooperation and coordination should be reflected in revenue agreements, work programs for joint projects, and regional solutions adopted by the affected parties.
  9. Major transportation, utility and greenway corridors shall be planned within Urban Growth Areas. Development shall be consistent with these corridors. The county shall ensure conformance through the permit process and incentive programs.
  10. Interlocal agreements shall include provisions for agreed upon development standards within Urban Growth Areas. Unless a different standard is negotiated, the more rigorous of the standards shall be enforced by the county.
  11. The county and the City of Bellingham shall establish, through the Urban Fringe Subarea Plan update, the policies, zoning and criteria to comply with current state Growth Management law.
  12. To encourage contiguous, orderly development and annexation in Urban Growth Areas around cities, the county shall designate Urban Residential zones limiting density to a maximum of one dwelling unit per five acres in undeveloped areas until urban level utilities are provided. Developed or partially developed areas presently zoned Residential-Rural shall retain that zoning. In the Bellingham Urban Growth Area, substantial development and subdivisions already have occurred without annexation. The revised Urban Fringe Subarea Plan and a new Interlocal Agreement

between the City of Bellingham and the county will address sequence and timing for annexations, subdivisions, and urban levels of development.

13. In Urban Growth Areas where development is occurring based on the presence of utilities, urban development shall meet common urban standards including fire flow requirements and supply. The county and the cities will work together to develop reasonable standards over time.

#### **G. AFFORDABLE HOUSING\***

1. The county and the cities shall take actions to ensure a balance of housing and economic growth consistent with each jurisdictions' employment base and diverse income levels and to reduce commuting times and traffic congestion.
2. The county and the cities shall plan for a range of housing types and costs commensurate with their affordable housing needs.
3. Affordable housing should be convenient to major employment centers and public services or be designed to accommodate public transportation.
4. The county and the cities shall promote innovative techniques and develop strategies to provide for affordable housing with design, density, lot sizes and development standards that provide for a variety of housing types.
5. The county and the cities shall review existing regulations and policies that exclude or discourage affordable housing in their communities and shall not adopt regulations and policies which do so. Mobile, modular, and manufactured homes on individual lots, mobile home parks, accessory units, inclusionary zoning, mixed use, and increased densities shall be reviewed as affordable housing alternatives.
6. The county and the cities should work with the private sector, other public and non-profit agencies, citizen groups, and trade representatives to assure that there is an adequate supply of sites available for affordable housing and to encourage housing design that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.
7. Low income housing shall not be concentrated in only a few communities or neighborhoods.
8. The county and the cities shall consider reducing impact and/or mitigation fees for affordable housing provided in a proposed development.
9. Each jurisdiction should explore options for providing shelter for the homeless.

#### **H. OPEN SPACE/GREENBELT CORRIDORS**

1. Adequate open space is vital to the quality of life and sense of place in Whatcom County. The county, cities, Port of Bellingham, and other appropriate jurisdictions should coordinate protection of linked greenbelts, within and between Urban Growth Areas, parks, and open space to protect wildlife corridors and to enhance recreational opportunities, public access and trail development.

2. The county and the cities shall plan for greenbelts and open space in their Comprehensive Planning processes and coordinate with each other. Open space systems should include lands which contain natural areas, habitat lands, natural drainage features, and/or other environmental, cultural and scenic resources. With increased residential densities, jurisdictions also should ensure provision of adequate neighborhood parks and play areas within safe bicycling and walking distance for children.
3. The county and the cities shall encourage, to the extent it is feasible, separation of Urban Growth Areas through planning, zoning, development regulations, open space purchase, conservation easements and other mechanisms which may be appropriate. Also, an array of incentives such as density bonuses, design flexibility and transferable development rights shall be offered to affected land owners.
4. The County and Cities should work cooperatively to protect and restore stream corridors within Urban Growth Areas that support anadromous fish.

#### **I. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT\***

1. Whatcom County recognizes that a healthy economy, which provides opportunity for diverse segments of the community, is important to the quality of life in the area. The Greater Whatcom Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) “is intended to put forth economic development alternatives for Whatcom County that will support jobs creation, with an emphasis on higher wage jobs and diversification”
2. New business development and expansion of existing businesses are key factors in providing “family wage” jobs and a strong tax base. Economic development that pays family wage rates should be encouraged. Industrial land designations must be sufficient to permit the concentration of industry in appropriate locations beyond 20 years. In order to attract new industry and provide for expansion of existing industries, the county and the cities will designate land supply of sufficient size and diversity to provide a range of suitable locations for industrial development. The designation of this land shall be established in a way that preserves natural resource based industries and critical areas.
3. To provide sufficient land supply for industrial growth and development, industrial designations must not only include lands suitable for development, but also lands suitably zoned to provide adequate buffers. It is also important that these lands and buffers be conserved with appropriate land use and zoning provisions to ensure that they will be available for future use
4. Encourage business location, retention, and expansion according to city and county comprehensive plans in order to meet current and future demand for diverse business and industry. Work with funding agencies and the private sector to facilitate extension of adequate sewer, water, telecommunications and road access to existing commercial and industrial-zoned properties, creating shovel-ready sites. Cities and county may utilize the “Quick Sites” economic development program through OTED, which links strategic elements of planning, zoning, environmental review, and permitting with the business-siting effort.

5. The county and the cities should include an economic development element in their Comprehensive Plans. Economic development elements should be consistent with the CEDS. Economic development shall be coordinated with environmental concerns to protect the quality of life. Planning efforts should address economic sustainability. As part of the comprehensive planning process and through implementation of the comprehensive plan, the County shall develop and adopt goals, policies and regulations that protect resource land industries and support and encourage resource-based industries.
6. The county and the cities should continue to cooperate through the Partnership for a Sustainable Economy to maintain the CEDS for infrastructure funding. Other appropriate organizations, businesses, and individuals should be involved in the process.
7. Economic vitality and job development shall be encouraged in all the cities and in designated areas of the county consistent with community growth policies, particularly addressing adequacy of transportation corridors, public transportation, impacts on the environment, and the ability of the area to provide urban services.
8. Economic development should be encouraged that: a) does not adversely impact the environment; b) is consistent with community values stated in local comprehensive plans; c) encourages development that provides jobs to county residents d) addresses unemployment problems in the county and seeks innovative techniques to attract different industries for a more diversified economic base; e) promotes reinvestment in the local economy, and f) supports retention and expansion of existing businesses.
9. The County and the cities recognize the need for the protection and utilization of natural resources and resource lands including agricultural, mineral, forestry and fishing. As part of a broad based economy, productive timber, agriculture and fisheries industries should be supported in a sustainable manner.
10. The cities and county agree to set policies for approving proposals to authorize siting of Major Industrial Developments for large or resource-based industries outside of Urban Growth Areas (as per RCW 36.70A.365). The master planning process for specific manufacturing, industrial, or commercial businesses shall address infrastructure, buffers, environmental protection, sprawl, resource lands, critical areas, and land supply.
11. Whatcom County encourages siting of industrial uses in proximity to and to further utilization of our access to deep water and port facilities for shipping, rail, airports, roadways, utility corridors and the international border.

#### **J. COUNTY-WIDE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND STRATEGIES\***

1. A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) has been established in Whatcom County to conduct regional, cooperative transportation planning. The RTPO has completed a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) including County-wide transportation policies. The RTP has been approved by a regional transportation Policy Board consisting of elected representatives of most area jurisdictions. The Transportation Chapter of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and the Comprehensive Plans for each of the City's must be consistent with the RTP as it is

amended. The county and the cities will continue to support the RTPO on an on-going basis to coordinate transportation planning across Whatcom County.

2. Whatcom County jurisdictions shall encourage alternative modes of transportation to the single occupancy vehicle. Each jurisdiction shall encourage: 1) Use of public transportation; 2) Development of linked on-street bicycle routes and pedestrian and bicycle trail corridors; 3) Adequate pedestrian facilities; 4) Connections between different modes of transportation; and 5) Intermodal connection of freight transportation. Public transportation includes fixed route transit, car pools, van pools, and other demand responsive modes.
3. To encourage use of single occupant vehicle alternatives and development of pedestrian scale neighborhoods, high density residential development shall be encouraged in urban growth areas with particular attention to those locations within cities and in close proximity to arterials and main transit routes.
4. Cities are particularly encouraged to support transit and pedestrian friendly mixed use developments within their UGAs to help achieve the goals supported in these policies.
5. Where the roadway level of service (LOS) adopted in local comprehensive plans cannot be maintained as a result of proposed new development, that development shall be denied, unless the proponents agree to pay a proportionate share of the cost of maintaining the LOS.
6. Strategies for maintaining established levels of service may include transportation demand management techniques, project impact mitigation fees, enhanced access to public transportation service, and/or other steps to reduce or limit traffic congestion.
7. Priorities shall be established and expenditures coordinated for county-wide bicycle and trail corridors. Bicycle and pedestrian-specific trails and other facilities shall be included during project planning and review. Coordinated corridors and cost sharing should be explored among all responsible and interested parties.
8. Whatcom County should work cooperatively with the Whatcom County Council of Governments, Cities, Whatcom Transit Authority and other agencies with jurisdiction to plan for inter-county and international transportation links, such as airports, border crossings, passenger rail, freight rail, transit, ferries, and other transportation facilities.

#### **K. SITING OF PUBLIC FACILITIES\***

1. As part of the comprehensive planning process, the county and the cities shall identify appropriate land for public facilities which meets the needs of the community, such as schools, recreation, transportation and utility corridors, human service facilities, and airport and other port facilities. In order to reduce land use conflicts, policies related to a design component shall be incorporated in the comprehensive plans.
2. The county and the cities will implement a cooperative and structured process, which includes early and continuous public involvement, to consider siting of essential public

facilities of a regional and statewide nature. State facilities shall conform to local siting procedures.

3. Public facilities that generate substantial travel demand should be sited along or near major transportation and public transit corridors, where available.
4. The county and the cities shall work with their respective school district to encourage siting of schools in conjunction with areas where substantial development exists or is projected and near public transportation corridors.
5. Sharing of corridors for major utilities, trails and other transportation rights-of-way is encouraged when not in conflict with goals to protect wildlife, public health and safety.

#### **L. IMPACT FEES**

1. The county and the cities are encouraged to adopt fair and reasonable impact and/or mitigation fee ordinances to ensure that new growth pays its fair share of the cost of capital facilities, such as transportation improvements, parks, and schools.
2. The county and cities shall work with their school districts to develop impact fee formulas as appropriate to the district's capital needs.

#### **M. INTERGOVERNMENTAL COOPERATION**

1. To adequately plan for growth and implement the policies of the Growth Management Act, the governmental jurisdictions in Whatcom County, including the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, and the Port of Bellingham shall work together to establish on-going mechanisms to improve communication, information sharing and coordinated approaches to common problems.
2. Whatcom County governments should communicate with neighboring counties and governments in British Columbia and work cooperatively on growth management issues that cross county and national borders.

#### **N. WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY**

1. The cities, and the county, in cooperation with other municipal corporations, tribal governments, federal and state agencies, and public and private utilities shall cooperate in the protection of water resources and in drawing upon said water to support growth.
2. The Cities and the County in cooperation with other municipal corporations and tribal governments, shall adopt zoning regulations and development standards to protect water resources. Where there are potential conflicts with designations required by the Growth Management Act, such as natural resource lands and critical areas, water resource protection shall generally have priority.
3. Jurisdictions shall cooperate to protect and restore water resources and fish habitat within UGA's and across jurisdictional boundaries to maintain quality of life and economic health in Whatcom County.

4. Jurisdictions involved in the development of ground and/or surface water management plans shall pursue the adoption and implementation of the plans, as well as coordination and integration of the plans into local comprehensive plans as appropriate. Examples of such plans include the Lake Whatcom Management Plan, WRIA 1 Watershed Management Plan, Shellfish Protection District Plans and drinking water source protection plans.
5. All jurisdictions should participate in the process to establish a county-wide water resource management body in accordance with the Watershed Management Act and other applicable federal, state and local regulations to inform GMA planning efforts.
6. All jurisdictions shall maximize reduction of water pollutants from stormwater runoff and combined sewer overflows.

#### **O. FISCAL IMPACT\***

1. It is recognized that if the Growth Management Act and these policies are implemented to their maximum extent, county government may eventually lose the tax base needed to operate essential services, including the criminal justice function and the Offices of Treasurer, Assessor, and Auditor, which serve all jurisdictions in the area. Revenue-sharing shall be addressed in inter-local agreements between Cities and the County.

#### **P. PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS**

1. As required in the Growth Management Act, private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. It is not the purpose of this paragraph to expand or reduce the scope of private property already provided in local, state and federal law.
2. The county as required by Whatcom County Home Rule Charter Section 1.11, and cities should establish a pro-active process to anticipate potential takings and other private property issues and resolve them out of court.

### **GLOSSARY**

**Affordable Housing:** In this document the definition of "affordable housing" is to be developed by each community as part of the Comprehensive Planning process.

**Capital Facilities Plan:** A required element of the Comprehensive Plan designed to form a better match between development and provision of services. It must include an inventory of existing facilities, forecast of future needs and a six-year financing plan.

**Critical Areas:** As defined by each jurisdiction, including at least the following areas and ecosystems: (a) wetlands; (b) areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water; (c) fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas; (d) frequently flooded areas; and (e) geologically hazardous areas.

**Greenbelts/Greenways:** These are undeveloped open space, natural areas, including agricultural lands, golf courses and other recreational uses, wildlife corridors and similar uses.

**Impact/Mitigation Fees:** A payment of money imposed upon new development as a condition of approval as defined and provided by RCW 82.02 and/or 43.21c. This fee must be used exclusively to finance improvements in capital facilities that are necessitated by the development.

**Inclusionary Zoning:** Zoning that requires developers to provide a portion of housing units in a specific project or area to meet the needs of low and moderate income people.

**In-fill:** The practice of using developable land that lies within a city, UGA, or developed area outside resource lands, where services are available rather than passing over such parcels in favor of land farther out or farther from available services.

**Interlocal Agreements:** An agreement intended to apply within designated Urban Growth Areas to set clear and reasonable criteria for orderly annexations including guidelines on size and timing of annexations and urban levels of development, appropriate development standards and tax revenue sharing provisions. Participants in the agreement could include the county, any adjacent city, affected fire districts (if applicable) and any other utility provider.

**Level of Service (LOS):**

An established minimum capacity of public facilities or services that must be provided per unit of demand or other appropriate measure of need. Level of Service for transportation is usually expressed as a proportion derived by comparing a roadway's current volume to it's capacity.

**Low Income Housing:** The federal government defines low income housing as housing provided for individuals earning 50% or less of the average family wage of the local jurisdiction.

**Natural Resource Lands:** Natural Resource Lands include agricultural, forestry, and mineral resource lands that are not already characterized by urban growth and that have long-term significance for the commercial production of food or other agricultural products, for the commercial production of timber, and that have long-term significance for the extraction of minerals.

**Private Utilities:** Water and/or sewer service owned and operated by an entity other than a political subdivision of the federal, state or tribal governments.

**Public Utilities:** Water and/or sewer services owned and operated by a political subdivision of federal, state or tribal governments (includes water and sewer districts and public utility districts).

**Regional Transportation Planning Organization:** An organization created by the Growth Management Act to coordinate regional transportation efforts and to foster cooperation among state and local jurisdictions. The Whatcom Council of Governments has been designated as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization for Whatcom County.

**Resource Based Industry:** A business or industry that has a direct relationship to natural resources such as agriculture, minerals, forestry and fishing. This type of industry is generally located in close proximity to the resource or resource land.

**Short-Term/Long Term Boundaries:** Short Term boundaries are used as a tool for facilitating provision of urban levels of services and preventing sprawl. The Long Term boundary includes the short term boundary as well as areas that have unresolved issues within the identified 20 year Urban Growth Boundary.

**Urban Fringe Subarea Plan:** A plan pertaining to the Bellingham Urban Growth Area and a portion of Whatcom County immediately north of Bellingham and containing most of Bellingham's suburban growth. It is a plan designating the interface between urban and rural land uses. Some part of the Urban Fringe Area will be included in an Urban Growth Area. Some of the area already lies within Bellingham's Urban Service Area.

**Urban growth:** growth that makes intensive use of land for the location of buildings, structures, and impermeable surfaces to such a degree as to be incompatible with the primary use of land for the production of food, other agricultural products, or fiber, or the extraction of mineral resources, rural uses, rural development, and natural resource lands designated pursuant to RCW 36.70A.170.

**Urban Growth Area:** An area designated within which urban growth will be encouraged and outside of which growth can occur only if it is not urban in nature.

**Urban Level of Service:** The minimum level of urban facilities and services, including sanitary sewer, water service, police protection, fire protection and emergency medical services, parks and recreation programs, solid waste management, electric service, land use controls, communication facilities and public schools, to support urban levels of development. A full range of services would add urban public transit, natural gas, storm drainage facilities, street lighting, libraries, local parks, local recreation facilities and services, and health services.

***\*Those headings with an asterisk (\*) are the elements required by the Growth Management Act. The title was expanded for the first required category (Urban Growth Areas) to better reflect the content as the policies developed.***

## COMMUNITY VALUE STATEMENTS

as derived from Visioning Public Process by Visioning Committee February 1994

### TRANSPORTATION

1. More lanes on major roads and more frequent public transit service with additional routes are the most important transportation issues for Whatcom County. The following transportation issues are of secondary importance:
  - A. Need for bike lanes and footpaths
  - B. Enhancement of safety measures along County roads, for example, wider shoulders and signals at busy intersections
  - C. The desire for carpooling
  - D. Integration of various transportation modes (ie.: ferry/ bus link)
2. Financing transportation improvements need to be addressed because the public is only somewhat willing to pay additional taxes for roads and transit.

### URBAN GROWTH

1. Given that roughly 75% - 90% of the land base in Whatcom county (excluding public land) should be designated for rural, agricultural and forestry use 50 years hence, urban sprawl should be discouraged. To prevent sprawl, we should infill where possible, allow for growth where the infrastructure exists (sewer, water, etc.) and encourage upward not outward growth, particularly in Bellingham. Cluster housing should be allowed in rural areas. The objective is to increase housing densities in urban areas so that the elements which contribute to a rural lifestyle, including privacy, peace and quiet, open space, and little or no traffic are preserved.
2. Urban growth should not pollute or deplete water supplies and should not be allowed to encroach on lands needed to sustain our natural-resource based industries, including agriculture, forestry, mining and fishing. Infill should occur in existing urban areas before annexation is considered. Both annexations and infilling should be subject to local citizen review and input. The costs of urban growth, including infrastructure and services (fire, sewer, schools, roads, etc.) should be paid for primarily by developers and secondarily by cities and public agencies (which are funded by taxpayers).
3. As Whatcom County continues to grow it is important to retain individual town and community character.

## **PROPERTY RIGHTS**

1. Preserving private property rights and protecting Whatcom County's natural environment and resources need not conflict with one another. Private property rights go hand in hand with private property responsibilities. People should be allowed to utilize their land as they wish, so long as their actions do not unduly impact affected property owners. The interests of the community outweigh a single individual's property rights, however, in instances where property rights are infringed upon through public action, some form of compensation should be available to the landowner.

## **HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

1. Whatcom County should preserve and maintain historical sites and artifacts.
2. As the County population continues to grow, the cultural composition of the County will become more diverse. Accepting these cultures in coming years will be important.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

1. In the social services sector, first priority should be given to providing quality basic education and vocational training. Law enforcement, crime prevention, and other social services are also although to a lesser extent, services which the community is willing to support.
2. While there was general consensus that expanding our county parks system is a worthwhile investment, financing such expansion through additional taxes should be approved by a vote of the people.

## **HOUSING**

1. The ability to purchase or rent affordable housing (Mean price: \$90,000) is important.
2. While affordable housing should be located in urban areas it should also exist throughout the County and there should be latitude and flexibility in zoning to allow for affordable housing in rural areas.
3. There was support for a mix of housing types that reflect different income and age levels.

## **NATURAL RESOURCE INDUSTRIES**

1. Productive resource based industries like agriculture, forestry, and fisheries should be encouraged and protected.
2. Gravel mining was a contentious issue, with some people supporting and others opposing gravel mining.
3. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries industries should be sustained through good conservation practices.
4. Farmers should be given first priority when allocating water supplies, even if this has an impact on the volume of water available to future residential and industrial users.

## **PERMITS**

1. Many residents in the County believe that they are over-regulated. A comprehensive review of the building permit process needs to be undertaken to ensure that the rules and regulations imposed are simpler to understand, less redundant, and above all, more flexible and more user friendly. Government agencies need to be more responsive to the public and more efficient and consistent in the processing of building permit applications. Wherever possible economic incentives rather than additional regulations should be used. There also needs to be better coordination between the regulatory requirements of federal, state and local agencies so that building permit applications are not unduly delayed. Moreover, there needs to be greater, uniform enforcement of existing land use rules and regulations.
2. Fewer building restrictions should apply to those property owners who want to build or enhance a single primary residence or accessory buildings on land zoned rural.
3. Rural residents should not be constrained by unnecessary and inflexible urban regulations, including land use regulations, dog leash laws, and burn bans.

## **CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND COORDINATION**

1. Respondents felt that government needs to be more responsive to its' citizens and that people want to be able to exercise local control (ie. neighborhoods/subareas) in all land-use decisions.
2. Property owners want personal notification prior to land-use decisions which impact them.
3. People want more opportunity for public input prior to passage of regulations, taxes, etc.

4. More issues should be subject to a vote of the people.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

1. Allow free market solutions to economic development problems.
2. Business and industrial development should be encouraged.
3. Attracting high paying jobs is more important than the quantity of jobs, but the County should, none the less, plan for service related jobs such as tourism and recreation.
4. Allow for small and cottage businesses in rural areas that don't remove productive agricultural and forest land.
5. Business and industrial development should occur primarily in designated areas including the I-5 corridor.
6. Maintaining water quality and quantity take priority over economic development.
7. Resource jobs should be encouraged.
8. Commercial development should occur along Guide Meridian corridor at key intersections.

### **SPRAWL**

1. New growth should be located in existing business and residential areas, so that we can prevent urban sprawl.
2. Urban sprawl should be discouraged in Whatcom County. As a means to prevent sprawl we should infill where possible, grow where infrastructure is available, encourage growth to go up, not out, encourage clustering in rural areas, and 75-90% of the land area in Whatcom County designated for rural, agricultural, and forestry use in 50 years.

### **ENVIRONMENT**

1. Protecting water quality and quantity and associated natural features like watersheds and aquifers is extremely important.
2. It is essential to protect Whatcom County's rivers, streams. and natural beauty.
3. Our natural environment should be protected while at the same time ensuring our natural resource industries remain an important segment of our economy.

4. Residential, industrial, and commercial development should be discouraged on productive agricultural and forested lands.

### **OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

1. Encourage open space designation, retention/development of recreational opportunities and conservation of fish and wildlife habitat.
2. Land purchased for open space or greenbelts should be purchased with existing County and state funds and other sources as appropriate.
3. Purchase of park land, greenbelts, and open space should be imposed only upon vote of the people.

### **LAND USE/ZONING**

1. Zoning should provide consistency and predictability for property owners. At the same time, however, zoning designations are subject to change because the variable that dictate zoning designations are dynamic (population increase, building restrictions, transitions in the economy, etc.) and not static.
2. Clearly, zoning should conform to the best use of the land and allow for flexibility, latitude, and creativity in its application (cluster housing, accessory housing, etc.).
3. Citizens want to exercise more control in determining how their community will develop and grow including review of large-scale commercial, industrial, and residential projects.
4. 75% - 90% of our land supply (excluding National Forest and Park land) should be designated as rural, agricultural, and forestry land in the year 2040.
5. Residents want to maintain the rural character of Whatcom County and protect agriculture and forest lands. However, they also want greater self-determination on their property.
6. Three units or more per acre should be located only in urban areas.
7. New development should be prohibited in areas prone to flooding and discouraged on productive agricultural and forest lands.

### **RURAL LIFESTYLE**

1. Maintaining rural character is very important to County residents. The elements making up a rural lifestyle include:  
Rank 1--Open Space

Rank 2--Quiet areas/Private

Rank 3--Largely agriculture and forestry oriented

Rank 4--Low density population

--Crossroads-gathering places

--Enjoy natural features of landscape

--Freedom

2. Open space is an important element of rural lifestyle.

## **TAXES**

1. Current taxes are high. Spend tax money wisely and eliminate government waste.
2. If money must be spent to preserve land that provides significant public benefit, then current local funds should be used to compensate property owners.
3. People are more willing to be taxed for schools than for other services.
4. Some rural areas should have greater revenue generating tax bases.
5. Use tax breaks to encourage positive stewardship of land, protect critical areas and resource lands, and provide relief to residents on a fixed income.
6. New taxes should be imposed only upon the vote of the people.
7. County residents do not want city residents to control the amount of taxes levied on them.