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Comprehensive Plan Process

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Photo courtesy Alan Fritzberg

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

The Comprehensive Plan, due for completion in 2016, will contain the goals and policies that will guide growth and development in Whatcom County over the next 20 years. All local regulations flow from, and must be consistent with, the vision expressed in the comprehensive plan. The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide growth in unincorporated areas in coordination with the new plans of its cities. The fundamental purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to establish a framework of goals, policies and action items for the more detailed growth planning and implementation actions which will occur in the near future in designated urban growth areas and in the county's rural areas.

[Click here for the current comprehensive plan and proposed updates.](#)

Why update the Comprehensive Plan?

In order to ensure that we are protecting our natural systems and quality of life we must periodically check in with and update the policies and regulations that address how and where we grow. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the County to review and revise its comprehensive plan and development regulations. Whatcom County is required to update its comprehensive plan by June 30, 2016.

Why should I care about the Comprehensive Plan update process?

Engaging in the update process and advocating for new and improved policies will create a strong framework for protecting critical areas, wildlife, fish, water resources for Whatcom County's future.

How can I engage in the update process?

There will be several opportunities for the public to comment on the Comprehensive Plan, to submit new policy suggestions, and to make suggestions that strengthen existing policies.

To stay up to date on RE Sources' work on the Comprehensive Plan, join the [WaterWork email list](#). For detailed information on the current Comprehensive Plan, proposed amendments, and the most recent meeting schedule, visit the [Whatcom County website](#).

Stand up for what you value. You are the leading voice. Your action will make the difference in enacting your values into law.

1. **Become a campaign funder.** The 2016 budget to do this work is \$125,000, covering both enactment and implementation of critical policies. This project depends on your support. [Click here](#) to donate today.

2. **Become a key messenger.** We need leaders like you to speak up for long-term solutions to our county's growing concerns. [Contact us](#) today to meet one-on-one with RE Sources' staff.

Your voice is essential. The Whatcom County Council needs to know that our community is ready to move

forward – not just to close the door on coal and oil export projects for good, but also to bring about a sustainable, equitable, and healthy future for our local economy. The best way to get your voice heard is to attend a public hearing or comment workshop. Contact Karlee at karleed@re-sources.org or 360-733-8307 for more information.

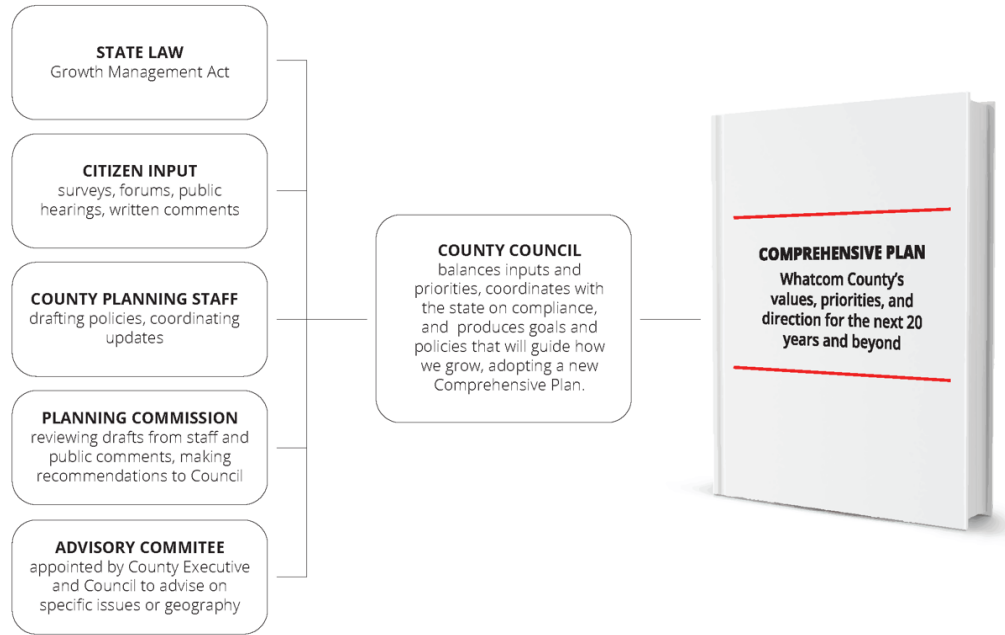


How does the update process work?

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan update process began in 2014 with planners and elected officials from the County and cities working together on where Whatcom County's projected population and employment growth should be directed.

The bulk of the work to update the Comp Plan and incorporate public input is done by the Whatcom County Planning Commission. In a series of work sessions that started in mid-March 2015 and ran through the summer, the Planning Commission received written and oral comments from the public on the draft Comp Plan Chapters submitted to them by County staff.

The Commission will submit their recommendations to the Whatcom County Council. The Council will have plenty of opportunities for the public to submit oral and written comments throughout the Spring and Summer of 2016. The update must be completed and adopted by Council by June 30, 2016.



What is the timeline for the update process?

This 2015-2016 public participation timeline is subject to change. Please [join the WaterWork email list](#) to receive updates on public participation opportunities. View the meeting schedule on the [Planning Commission's website](#).



Winter 2015

County releases Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). An EIS is a tool for decision making. It describes the positive and negative environmental effects of a proposed action, and it usually also lists one or more alternative actions that may be chosen instead of the action described in the EIS.

Opportunity for public input - The County will issue a Draft EIS in February 2015. There will be a 30 day (or more) public comment period on the Draft EIS to be issued in summer 2015.

Spring 2015

Draft EIS comment period continues and wraps up.

Opportunity for public input - County staff release draft Comp Plan Chapters to the County Planning Commission. The Planning Commission will receive written comments from the public over the spring and summer of 2015.

Summer 2015

Cities submit Urban Growth Area proposals to County staff.

Opportunity for public input - The public may comment on the UGA proposals at City Planning Commission meetings and City Council review processes before the June 2015 submittal. After submittal, the public can comment during the County Planning Commission review process and during the County Council final Comp Plan review and adoption process.

Final EIS is completed.

Fall 2015 – Winter 2016

The Planning Commission submits its recommendations to the County Council.

Opportunity for public input - The County Council reviews the Planning Commission's recommendations. The Council will hear and receive public comments during this process.

Spring – Summer 2016

The County Council finishes their review and adopts the final 2016 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan by summer 2016.

Opportunity for public input - During its review, the County Council will be conducting public hearings and accepting public comment on the proposed goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. For the most recent meeting schedule, visit the [Whatcom County website](#).

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