



ISLAND COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA  
January 17, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.  
BOCC HEARING ROOM, ROOM 102B, 1 NE 6<sup>TH</sup> ST COUPEVILLE, WA  
ONLINE VIA ZOOM

**Meeting to be held in the Board of Island County Commissioners Hearing Room,  
Room 102B, 1NE 6<sup>th</sup> St., Coupeville, WA and online. Interested parties can attend or join  
remotely at the link or via phone number listed below:**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/93636892599?pwd=Y3NicFcrc203OVZBTjBUenJyc21MQT09>

Meeting ID: 936 3689 2599

Passcode: 122086

**+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma, WA)**

Meeting ID: 936 3689 2599

Passcode: 122086

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. ROLL CALL
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES –
4. PUBLIC COMMENT – *Submittal of written comments are encouraged prior to the day of the meeting. Public Comment may be submitted via email to [PlanningCommission@IslandCountyWA.gov](mailto:PlanningCommission@IslandCountyWA.gov). Planning Commission will accept public comment for items not on the agenda. Public comments are limited to 3 minutes per person.*
5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT –
6. WORKSHOP – Staff to review potential changes to the housing allocations in the Countywide Planning Policies
7. WORKSHOP – Review the 2016 Vision Statement and discussion
8. ADJOURN

Please visit our website for related documents: <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/235/Planning-Commission>  
The public may submit comments in writing to Planning & Community Development at 1 NE 7<sup>th</sup> St., Coupeville, WA 98239 or [PlanningCommission@IslandCountyWA.gov](mailto:PlanningCommission@IslandCountyWA.gov).



## Island County Planning and Community Development

*Mary Engle, Director*

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Physical Address: 1 NE 6<sup>th</sup> St, Coupeville, WA 98239 Mailing Address: 1 NE 7<sup>th</sup> St, Coupeville, WA 98239

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~MEMORANDUM~

**TO:** Island County Planning Commissioners

**FROM:** Emily Neff, Long Range Planning  
Island County Planning & Community Development

**DATE:** 1/8/2024

**SUBJECT:** Planning Commission Meeting 1/17/2024

The Planning Commission meeting on January 17, 2024, will include the following items:

**Workshop:** Long Range staff have been directed by the Board of Island County Commissioners to meet with the Countywide Planning Group to reevaluate the housing allocations in the Countywide Planning Policies. Staff will present any new information to the Planning Commission at this work session. Information is not available in advance for this discussion, a presentation will be given at the meeting and posted to the agenda center following the meeting.

**Workshop:** To launch the review of the Comprehensive Plan elements, staff will lead a discussion and review of the 2016 Vision Statement and associated values statements with the Planning Commission. Examples from other jurisdictions are included in the packet for background reading and comparison.

For more information, please contact:

Emily Neff (360) 678-7807 or [e.neff@islandcountywa.gov](mailto:e.neff@islandcountywa.gov)

### Attachments:

- 2016 Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement
- Example: Draft Kitsap County Introduction and Vision Statement
- Example: Draft Snohomish County Introduction and Vision Statement



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### EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## **I.III ISLAND COUNTY VISION STATEMENT**

Through comprehensive planning, the County will balance the goals of the GMA to ensure that Island County's rural character and natural beauty is protected, while meeting the housing and service needs of both existing and future county residents.

### **I.III.I THE FUTURE OF ISLAND COUNTY: A VISION FOR 2036**

#### **A. Open Space**

When traveling through Island County one will see forests, farmlands with crops and livestock, and open space that provides for varied wildlife and flora as well as hiking and biking trails, beach access, and other open spaces for recreation.

#### **B. Transportation**

A safe transportation system will continue to be improved to first meet the needs of county residents as well as visitors and tourists. Two-lane roads that offer views of forests, farms, fields, snow-capped mountains, and water characterize the transportation system in the rural area.

#### **C. Agriculture**

Farming plays a very important role in Island County, even though many farms are small in scale. Large or small, throughout both islands, all farms in Island County, including tree farms, have unique value by contributing to the County's rural character as well as contributing to the local and state economy.

#### **D. Rural Character**

Though it is hard to describe in words, "rural character" is a crucial element of the County's economy and culture – and one of the few things virtually all residents agree is essential to the quality of life here. Rural character not only makes people "feel

## EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

good" about the place where they live and provides a cultural connection to the County's past – it also has a very clear dollars-and-cents benefit. Rural character (which would not exist without the County's farms and forests) is the basis for the County's important tourist industry. It also is very attractive for retirees and for businesses that consider locating here to provide a higher quality of life for their employees.

For all these reasons, it is important as a matter of policy for the County to preserve agriculture, including those on limited acreage, especially in the face of growing pressures for residential and commercial development. Tax incentives, extension programs and "Right-to-Farm" measures help. So too does a regulatory approach that is based on best available science that protects the environment as mandated by the State's Growth Management Act, but does so in a way that is flexible that give farmers the most options in the management of their lands.

Under zoning standards, only farmland in the agricultural tax program is classified by the County as "commercial." However, both commercial and non-commercial farming play an important role in preserving the rural character of Island County. Commercial farming is significant to both the character and economy of the County. Noncommercial farming, including raising of livestock, continues to be a wide spread activity of local importance in the rural area of the County, providing a cultural connection to both the historic past and future of Island County.

### E. Critical Areas

Standards have been established that protect critical areas, such as wetlands, streams, steep slopes, beaches if designated a critical area, wildlife habitat, and other critical areas. Public funding for open space acquisition has continued. Restoration and enhancement of important ecological features has occurred throughout the County, primarily along shorelines, and low-impact recreation has been added in certain locations for public beaches and forests, hiking trails, and bicycle paths.

### F. Urban Growth in Urban Areas

Island County continues to develop strategies and policies achieve more growth in urban growth areas and defined areas of more intensive rural development. Langley and Coupeville

## **EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

have maintained their unique small town character and Oak Harbor has accepted the majority of UGA growth in Island County.

Island County has instituted measures which allow for the continuing utilization of existing lots without unnecessary sacrifice of rural character, a strong economy, and environmental protection. Island County's tradition remains evident as new development occurs. Large tracts of land, providing wildlife habitat and assistance with aquifer recharge, surround compact, dispersed settlements. Compact settlements are moderately dense and tend to reduce development pressure in more rural areas, which dominate the landscape while providing connectivity of natural areas for wildlife habitat.

### **G. Housing**

Innovative affordable housing and clustering techniques allow for the efficient placement of services, protection of critical areas, and provide high-quality open space, while not detracting from the County's rural character. Land use and housing policies, including affordable housing density bonuses provide for the development of housing units for that segment of the population which could otherwise be priced out of the County.

### **H. Economy**

The County continues to diversify its economy while Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey remains the largest economic engine of the County and light manufacturing has increased as an important economic factor. The County land use controls have successfully expanded job opportunities so that more local residents have the opportunity to live and work in the County. These actions have helped to relieve the pressures in off-island transportation linkages. Island County has become increasingly attractive to low-impact, appropriately scaled manufacturing, professional and service businesses, and craftspeople and artists. New businesses fit easily into both urban and rural lifestyles and provide improved wages, advancement, and career opportunities for our youth.

### **I. Inter-Jurisdictional Planning**

Island County coordinates and cooperates with its incorporated towns and cities, as well as the special purpose districts that serve the County. Regulatory and non-regulatory options and incentives that respect the property rights of owners as well as community needs are balanced.

## **I.III.II VALUE STATEMENTS**

### **A. Allure of the County**

Island County's natural beauty and unique character are powerful magnets. Many lifestyles mesh well in a cohesive rural environment. Residents comprise a diversified population representing many nationalities, spanning all age groups. Some residents are from local families have been part of the county for generations, and other residents are relatively new to Island County. Reflecting consistency and change at the same time is part of what makes Island County unique.

### **B. Comprehensive Planning**

Through comprehensive planning, Island County has taken measures to manage growth. This will ensure that the quality of life, traditional values, desirable rural lifestyle, and small town character which have created a "feeling of community" throughout Island County for over a hundred years, are protected and maintained for current and future generations.

### **C. Impact of Past Decisions**

Many of the options available to Island County have been shaped by the land use decisions made in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Very few large parcels of land remain in the County. Parcel sizes are mixed, with smaller lots predominating along the shoreline. Most of these small lots are developed. While the County has large areas that are forested and appear undeveloped with an average density less than one person per acre, the average County lot size is less than three acres. Thus, traditional zoning actions (such as large lot zoning) will be ineffectual in preserving rural character.

### **D. Challenge**

Planning through the year 2036 poses a significant challenge: containing existing areas of more intensive development, experiencing continuous growth, and attempting to maintain rural character. The overall goals seek to preserve the historic, rural economy and character, protect the environment, conserve critical areas, build a strong modern economy and provide for affordable housing

## **EXERPT FROM ISLAND COUNTY 2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

- all the while finding a proper balance between government regulations and private property rights.

Rural character is one of Island County's most valued assets, providing diversity, a sense of community, and the quality of life desired by many island residents. Longtime residents and newcomers agree that a slow-paced, rural character has attracted and kept them here. Rural lifestyles provide privacy and individuality, allow people to set their own pace, bring people closer to nature and their neighbors, and offer the opportunity for family development in a safe environment. Many of the families who own and manage the county's farms and forest properties hope to see their livelihoods continue for generations to come, but view certain development regulations as an interference to their continued way of life.

## Land Acknowledgement

Kitsap County is located on 396 square miles of land within the ancestral territory of the suqʷabs̕ “People of Clear Salt Water” (Suquamish Tribe) and the Nux Sklai Yem “the Strong People” (Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe). The Suquamish people live in harmony with the lands and waterways along Washington’s Central Salish Sea as they have for thousands of years. The Port Gamble S’Klallam people are the descendants of the Salish people who have been well established in the Puget Sound basin and surrounding areas since 2400 B.C. In Kitsap County, the Suquamish and the Port Gamble S’Klallam people live on and protect the land and waters of their ancestors for future generations as guaranteed by the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855. In addition, the Treaty of Point No Point of 1855 ensures that the Jamestown S’Klallam, Skokomish, and Chimakum People maintain their hunting, fishing, and gathering rights on “usual and accustomed” grounds which include land and waterways within Kitsap County. With a deep historical connection and legacy of respect for the land and natural resources, these Tribal nations enrich Kitsap County through environmental stewardship, cultural heritage, and economic development, as well as collaboration with local governments to shape Kitsap County’s future.

## Kitsap County Mission

Kitsap County government exists to protect and promote the safety, health, and welfare of our residents in an efficient, accessible, equitable, and effective manner.

## Kitsap County Vision Statement

**Effective and Efficient County Services** - County government continuously assesses its purpose, promotes and rewards innovation and improvement, fosters employee development, and uses effective methods and technologies to produce significant positive results and lasting benefits for all residents.

**Responsible, Thriving Local Economy** - A well-educated workforce and strategic investment in county infrastructure prompt businesses to expand or locate in Kitsap County, creating well-paying jobs for all, the ability to live and work in one’s community, and enhancing our quality of life.

**Safe and Healthy Communities** - People are protected and secure, have a connected sense of community, care about their neighborhoods, and are proud of where they live, work, shop, and play.

**Inclusive and Equitable Government** - County government conducts all activities in a manner that encourages community member involvement, enhances public trust through equitable and comprehensive outreach, and promotes understanding of our diverse communities.

**Protected and Respected Natural Resources and Systems** - Education, land use planning, and coordinated efforts assure that the ecosystems, the forests, clean air, and water, that Kitsap is known for are protected and sustained for the benefit of current and future generations and natural systems.

## Introduction

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires cities and counties to update their Comprehensive Plans every ten years. The Kitsap County Comprehensive Plan 2024-2044 (“Comp Plan”) serves as the policy document that helps guide decisions on services for a wide range of critical County programs, such as building roads, ensuring land for housing is available, and protecting the environment.

The Comp Plan is released concurrently with the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and the Capital Facilities Plan (CFP). This document includes the intent, background information, existing conditions, and various goals, policies, and strategies for the following eight elements: Land Use, Economic Development, Environment, Housing, Transportation, Parks, Recreation and Open Space, Capital Facilities and Utilities, and Climate Change. The Comp Plan elements are organized and presented in the following manner:

- **Vision:** Provides an overview and description of the element and its relation to the Comp Plan.
- **Intent:** Explains how the element fits into the Comp Plan and why the element is important.
- **GMA Goals/Requirements:** Indicates the policy directives on how growth management planning will occur. These requirements establish overarching practices and explain the section’s importance to planning Kitsap County’s future. This section supports the goals and policies.
- **Relationship to Other Elements:** Demonstrates how the elements are interconnected, dependent, and supportive of one another.
- **Background Information/Existing Conditions:** Provides the foundational context necessary to develop an understanding of where the County has been and where it is currently, to appreciate where the County is intending to go.
- **Key Terms:** Uncommon terms or phrases used within the element.
- **Goals and Policies:** Goals provide guidance to the County for the desired accomplishments within the element, while policies direct how these goals may be accomplished.
- **Strategies for Implementation:** Strategies are descriptions of how and when certain actions will be prioritized. Many strategies are tied with budget decisions and other annual program plans. Strategies from non-County plans may be considered, adopted, or not implemented dependent on priorities and available resources.

The Comprehensive Plan emphasizes growth and future development in a sustainable manner. Kitsap County Leadership and staff use an inclusive and equitable approach to planning and decision-making that aims to balance housing needs, employment opportunities, transportation enhancements, and the protection of the natural environment. The Comp Plan demonstrates the County’s deep commitment to maintaining and restoring ecosystems via habitat conservation, restoration of waterways, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The Comp Plan establishes requirements that support and encourage a healthy environment, affordable living, and ample resources that are attainable and sustainable for residents now and in the future. The Comp Plan was updated based on residential and employment targets that align with the regional growth strategy (VISION 2050) provided by the Puget Sound Regional

Council (PSRC). The Comp Plan addresses each of the important policy areas presented in VISION 2050, such as:

- Provide opportunities for all.
- Increase housing choices and affordability.
- Sustain a strong economy.
- Significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Keep the region moving.
- Restore the health of the Puget Sound.
- Protect a network of open spaces.
- Grow in centers and near transit.
- Act collaboratively and support local efforts.

Climate change is a new, but key, focus area for the Comprehensive Plan 2024-2044. The Climate Change element takes a proactive approach to addressing impacts on infrastructure and natural systems, while increasing the County's resiliency by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and advancing environmental justice. The Comp Plan encourages environmental protection through the lens that the environment is an asset and promotes environmentally sound development methods, such as low-impact landscaping and green building. The Comp Plan encourages compact urban development and includes design guidelines for mixed-use and transit-oriented development, while also prioritizing funding and investments to the Silverdale Regional Center.

The Housing element is committed to increasing and expanding housing production at all income levels to meet the diverse needs of current and future residents. The Economic Development element strives for increased employment opportunities, attracting new businesses, and maximizing local resources to positively affect the residents within Kitsap County. The Transportation element directly recognizes the importance of cleaner and more sustainable mobility, neighborhoods less dependent on cars, and supports complete streets. Kitsap County supports important transportation lines with coordinated transportation planning via partnerships with cities and neighboring counties, including, but not limited to, level-of-service standards and concurrency provisions. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space element prioritizes recreational opportunities for all residents while preserving natural resources and providing stewardship. The Capital Facilities and Utilities element provides a framework for public services and facilities to be monitored, maintained, and enhanced to meet the County's level of service standards, as well as forecast future needs for unincorporated Kitsap County.

Throughout each element of the Comp Plan, special attention was paid to the diversity and equity implications of the goals, policies, and strategies to ensure that all residents within Kitsap County benefit from the intentions set forth. There is a special focus on purposeful and inclusive outreach for public engagement and involvement. The Comprehensive Plan 2024-2044 strives for an equitable distribution of county resources and opportunities for all residents who work, live, play, or visit Kitsap County.

NOTE: The goals and policies included in this draft document apply to all alternatives unless otherwise noted as alternative specific.

# Introduction

The Snohomish County Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan (“Plan”) provides policy direction for ongoing and future county planning efforts and development regulations. This direction comes from the County’s Vision Statement; the goals, objectives, and policies; the level of service and other programming; and maps such as the Future Land Use Map (FLUM). The goals, objectives, policies, programs, and associated maps serve as a set of blueprints to guide growth, preservation, and development in Snohomish County over a 20-year planning period. The planning horizon for the Plan is between 2024 and 2044.

The County is required to comprehensively review and update the Plan as needed every 10 years per the GMA (chapter 36.70A RCW). It is essential to update the Plan periodically to integrate the state’s forecasted population and employment growth, and any changes to state law.

This introduction lays out the County’s Vision Statement, provides a general overview of the Plan, describes several shifts that have occurred since the last update in 2015, and discusses trends expected for future growth in the county. Analysis of these shifts and trends provides insight into the background and context related to the development of the Plan.

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## **A VISION FOR SNOHOMISH COUNTY**

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Snohomish County’s Vision is an aspirational statement of where the county wants to be in 2044. It unites the many elements of the Plan and will guide the county over the 20-year planning horizon. Each element discusses the Vision and how the goals, objectives, policies, and other programs within the element will help bring the county closer to realizing the vision. It is also a tool for government leaders to consider when they make decisions today. If decision makers understand where the county wants to be in 2044, they can review each major decision through that lens to determine if it will help or hinder the county’s efforts to move closer to that future.

### **Snohomish County's Vision for 2044**

We're all in this together. In 2044 Snohomish County is a resilient, vibrant, and inclusive place to live with a high-quality of life where all residents can thrive.

In 2044...

**Community:** The County has a range of healthy, safe, and affordable housing options for all economic segments of the population and in all stages of life. Communities around light rail stations and high-capacity transit service have flourished. Neighborhoods have access to local markets, businesses, healthcare, and recreational opportunities. Displacement from development pressure is minimized to ensure that businesses and affordable housing options remain in communities. Rural areas maintain their rural character with rural businesses and services that support local needs while being stewards of the natural environment.

**Growth, Livability, and Equity:** The County has focused the majority of growth in urban areas while protecting rural, resource, and open areas. All residents in urban and rural areas can attain resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life and reach their full potential. The county is a welcoming and inclusive place to work, live, and recreate. Health and wellbeing are priorities, and the community has vibrant arts, music, and diverse cultures throughout.

**Natural Environment:** The County values its beautiful landscapes and fiercely protects the natural environment for its ecosystem services, recreational opportunities, and habitat. There are many connected greenways, open spaces, and wildlife corridors throughout the county providing habitat, flood mitigation, and tree canopy. Regional and neighborhood parks, trails, and open spaces offer recreational opportunities that are accessible and inclusive to all.

**Resilience and Conservation:** Communities are resilient to the changing climate. Special efforts continue to support our most vulnerable populations. The regional greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction target is being met and the County has implemented transportation and building practices that conserve resources and promote healthy living. The County is well-prepared to respond to natural disasters and emergency events to keep communities safe.

**Transportation and Mobility:** People and goods move reliably, efficiently, and effectively throughout the county. There is a well-planned interconnected transportation network for all users, including walkers, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers. Public transportation is well-

integrated into the transportation system and offers affordable and useful transportation options.

**Economy:** The County has a strong and diversified economy that provides ample, living wage local employment. Snohomish County's economy is anchored in part by its commercial and industrial centers, tourism, robust agricultural enterprises, and investments in aerospace, green building, and alternative energy businesses. The airports, ports, and educational institutions maintain a critical role in ensuring the county's economic strength. The County continues to be a leader in emerging trends in employment and evolving business models.

**Infrastructure and Services:** The County is served by well-maintained efficient, and coordinated public infrastructure systems and services, including roadways, schools, energy, water, wastewater treatment, and broadband service. Long-range plans consider our changing environment and advances in technology. Social services are easily accessible and provide resources and support ensuring basic needs are met with assistance to develop human potential.

## **HOW THE VISION STATEMENT GUIDES THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The Snohomish County Vision Statement reflects the values and aspirations of community members, is grounded in an understanding of current conditions, and is informed by the regional vision - VISION 2050 - and Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). The County synthesized input from the public, elected officials, and other local and regional bodies into one aspirational Vision Statement and seven guiding principles. Public participation during the visioning process, and throughout the entire update process for the Plan, focused on engagement with a diversity of community members, and especially with historically and currently marginalized communities.

## **PLANNING UNDER THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT**

### **BALANCING PRIORITIES**

The GMA requires jurisdictions to consider 14 goals within [RCW 36.70A.020](#) and [RCW 36.70A.480](#) to help guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations (see Table 1). The goals are not listed in order of priority, and it is up

to Snohomish County to balance these goals within the Plan. The Plan addresses each of the GMA goals and applies them to unincorporated Snohomish County in a balanced manner.

**Table 1. GMA Planning Goals (RCW 36.70A.020 and RCW 36.70A.480)<sup>1</sup>**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Concentrated urban growth</u></li> <li>• <u>Sprawl reduction</u></li> <li>• <u>Regional transportation</u></li> <li>• <u>Affordable housing</u></li> <li>• <u>Economic development</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Property rights</u></li> <li>• <u>Permit processing</u></li> <li>• <u>Natural resource industries</u></li> <li>• <u>Open space and recreation</u></li> <li>• <u>Environmental protection</u></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Early and continuous public participation</u></li> <li>• <u>Public facilities and services</u></li> <li>• <u>Historic preservation</u></li> <li>• <u>Shoreline management</u></li> </ul>
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Planning is not a zero-sum game. For instance, if affordable housing is incentivized in certain locations to fulfill GMA goals around housing, urban growth, and reducing sprawl, this is not necessarily at the expense of GMA goals surrounding the protection of the environment and open space. Housing and the environment are not always at odds because, for example, open space can be designed into developments that provide recreational opportunities as well as habitat for wildlife. Further, focusing growth within already developed urban areas can protect existing resource areas from conversion, and reduce the need for expansion of infrastructure for transportation and utility networks. However, planning does sometimes require trade-offs. The aim is to find a way to balance these goals by mitigating potential negative impacts and spreading positive results equitably.

## **PLANNING TOGETHER**

The first Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995, and the last major update occurred in 2015. Updates to the Plan are essential to accommodate projected growth, remain in compliance with the GMA, and incorporate changes to other state, regional, or local policies.

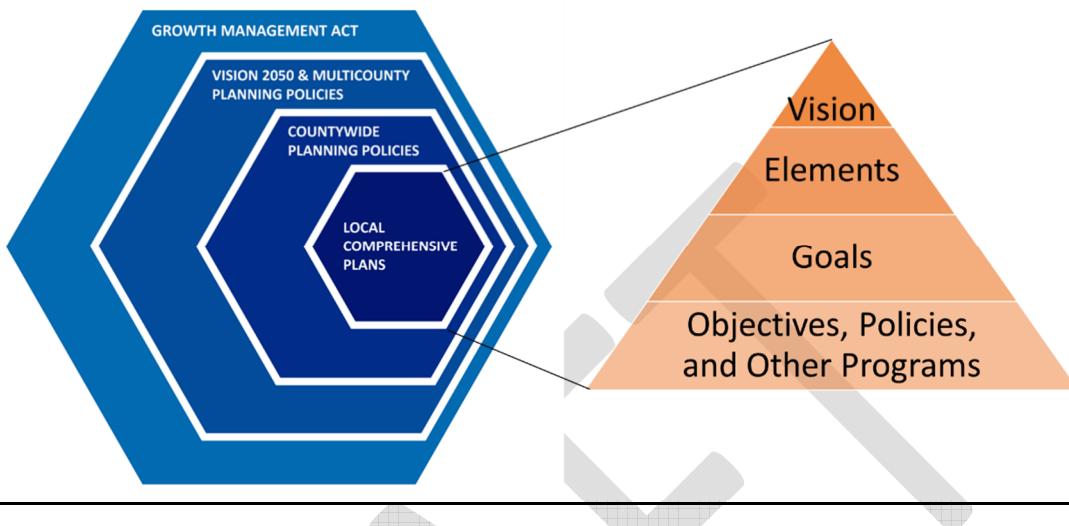
The Plan meets the requirements of a GMA comprehensive plan from chapter 36.70A RCW. The Plan includes the mandatory elements as well as optional elements that work together to guide population and employment growth for Snohomish County, and each element addresses specific GMA requirements for a local comprehensive plan.

The Plan also implements the general policy guidance of the multicounty planning policies (MPPs) and Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) that represent regional and countywide priorities. The MPPs are found within VISION 2050, adopted by the Puget Sound Regional

<sup>1</sup> Table adapted from “Growth Management Act.” *Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington*. February 28, 2023, <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/planning/general-planning-and-growth-management/growth-management-act>

Council (PSRC), and the CPPs are guided by Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT) and adopted by County Council.

**Figure 1. Placing the Comprehensive Plan within the state and regional context**



The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) in VISION 2050 outlines a strategic framework for accommodating future population and employment growth in the four-county region of Snohomish, King, Pierce, and Kitsap by shifting the geographic distribution of future growth, especially population, towards urban areas and away from rural areas. The RGS is reflected in the various elements of the Plan such as Population and Employment, Transportation, Land Use, and the Urban Core Subarea Plan Elements. There is also a new focus within VISION 2050 on social equity and addressing climate change, and this new emphasis was carried forward into the CPPs, as well as the Plan as described below within *Planning for Growth*.

The CPPs are policy statements that establish a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed. Original adoption of the CPPs was in 1993 and there have been several amendments since that time to meet changing GMA requirements, address new city and county ideas, and align with regional policy such as VISION 2050. The Plan is consistent with both the MPPs and CPPs.

The Plan also strives for consistency with the plans of adjacent jurisdictions as discussed within the Interjurisdictional Coordination Element as well as the new Tribal Coordination Element. As many cities have not completed their own updates at the time of county Plan consideration and adoption, a reconciliation process as described in the CPPs is possible.

## **PLANNING FOR GROWTH**

The Plan is composed of 12 elements that together meet the requirements of a GMA comprehensive plan and guide population and employment growth for the county.<sup>2</sup> The 12 elements include:

- Population and Employment,
- Land Use,
- Housing,
- Transportation,
- Parks and Recreation,
- Capital Facilities and Utilities,
- Economic Development,
- Natural Environment,
- Interjurisdictional Coordination,
- Climate Change,
- Urban Core Subarea Plan, and
- Tribal Coordination.

Like the GMA goals, the elements are not in priority order, and they are interrelated. An effective transportation system, for example, must consider other factors such as housing and economic development.

Each element is composed of goals, objectives, and policies. Goals speak to broad desired outcomes for the element based on the Vision for the county. The goals are further clarified with more specific objectives that once implemented will help achieve the goal. Policies are actions the County will take to implement the objectives and, by extension, the goals and Vision. The policies provide specific direction for planning processes and decision-making within the county. The Transportation, Parks and Recreation, and Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements also include specific plans, programs, inventories, forecasted needs, level of service requirements, and project lists. These three elements are different because they discuss infrastructure, both county and publicly owned, that is essential for a high quality of life as well as future growth. To effectively manage existing infrastructure and plan for the future, it is necessary to understand what currently exists, what needs repair, what will be needed in the

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<sup>2</sup> The 2015 Plan consisted of five components each located in separate volumes. These included the General Policy Plan (GPP), Transportation Element, Capital Facilities Plan, Capital Improvement Program, and the Parks and Recreation Element. The GPP included the elements of population and employment, land use, housing, transportation, parks and recreation, capital facilities, utilities, economic development, natural environment, and interjurisdictional coordination. The GPP also included the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) and other supporting maps. Within the 2024 Plan, all elements that were previously within the GPP, as well as the other previously separate components of the Plan, are incorporated into one comprehensive plan document as elements.

future, and how those projects will be prioritized and paid for moving forward. In this way, the Plan includes policies to inform future decision making as well as more immediate actions.

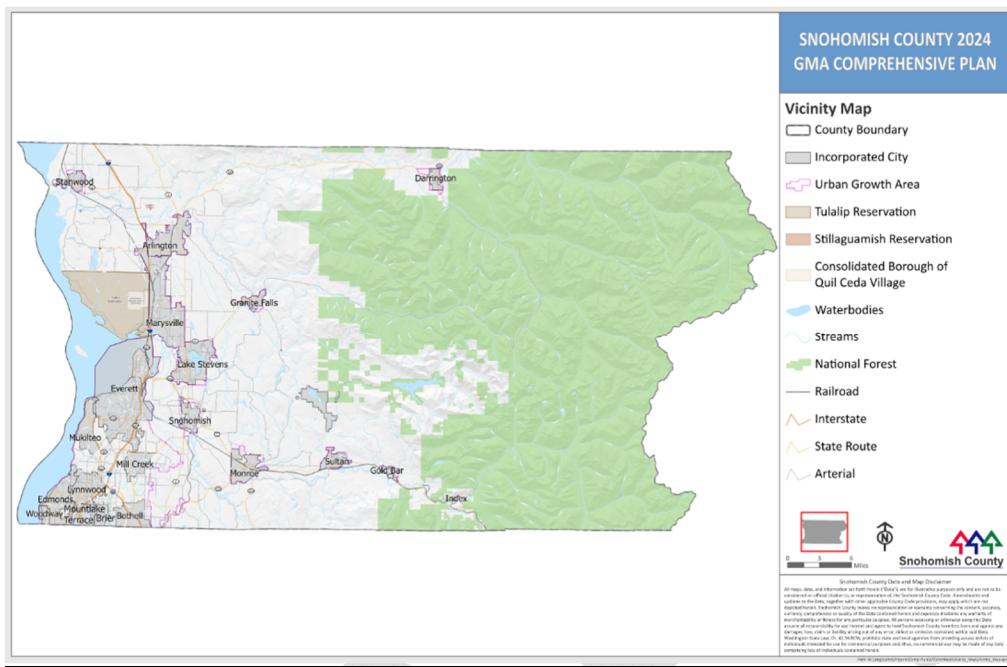
Social equity is an overarching theme present in each element because of policy changes at the state, regional, and countywide level in addition to public interest. Social equity is not a new concept, although it has a more substantial and overt role in the Plan to help move the County towards its Vision, represent the people of Snohomish County, and plan for an inclusive and accessible future necessary for our diverse county to thrive. Other themes such as climate change, housing affordability, and mobility are also discussed in multiple elements, although they are primarily focused on in the Climate Change and Resiliency, Housing, Transportation, and Urban Core Subarea Plan Elements.

Each element focuses on a specific topic, although there is cross-over between elements. This is true in particular for the Urban Core Subarea Plan Element that concentrates on a specific geographic area, and includes goals, objectives, and policies to form a planning framework for future growth there that encompasses housing, economic development, climate change, the natural environment, parks, and transportation. There is not duplication between elements where there is cross-over, although the Urban Core Subarea Plan Element is nested within those other elements with information focused on the geographic area. More information about the Urban Core Subarea Plan, and other areas of relationship in the Plan can be found in the specific narratives for each element.

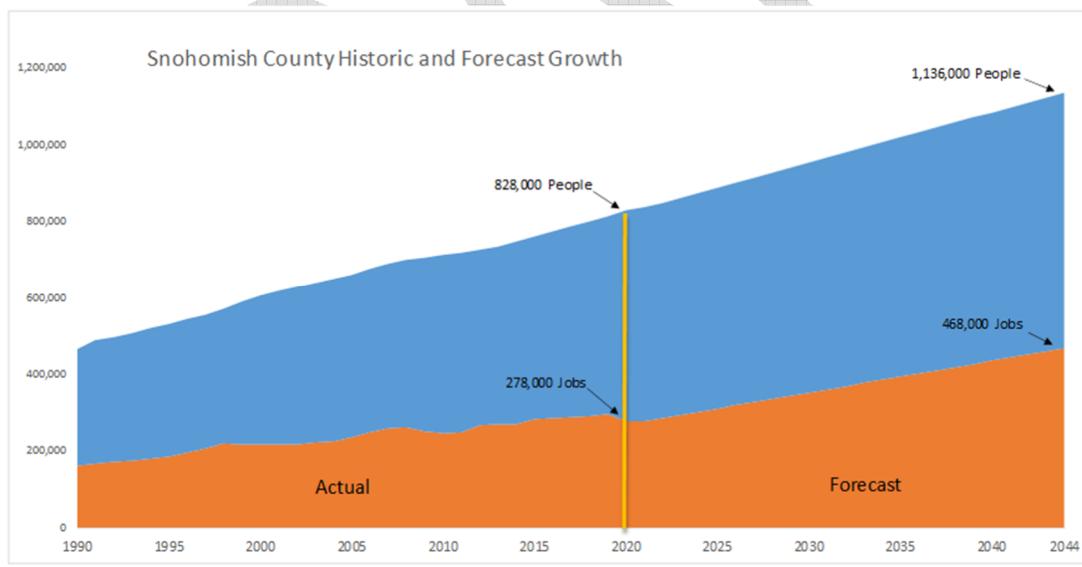
## **FORECASTED GROWTH**

Snohomish County is 2,090 square miles in size and the 2020 population was 828,000 people. The County's Plan must plan for the current population as well as those forecasted to be here in 2044. Forecasting future growth is tricky as many factors impact migration and natural increase through births. Some of the factors include where jobs are available and if individuals can work remotely or need to commute to work; the price of housing; the location of neighborhood amenities; climate change, weather patterns, and natural disasters; urban versus rural preferences; and much, much more.

## **Figure 2. Map of Snohomish County**



### Figure 3. Snohomish County Population and Employment history and forecasts utilizing PSRC data.



Despite the potential variability, the Plan must look toward the future utilizing the best available information to plan in a responsible, equitable, and orderly fashion. As displayed in Figure 3, the forecasted total population for Snohomish County in 2044 is 1,136,000 people, and the forecasted employment is 468,000 jobs. This represents a potential increase of 308,000 people and 190,000 jobs between 2020 and 2044. Each element of the Plan aims to address this forecasted growth.

## **A MOMENT IN TIME**

A lot has happened within Snohomish County and the rest of the world since the last major update of the Plan in 2015. The full influence of each change is not fully understood yet, although these changes have impacted how the County plans. Some of the major shifts the county experienced are described below to provide context for factors that shaped the development of the Plan. Throughout the shifts and changes, the County's planning efforts that began in 2018 were informed by listening to the community, and utilizing forecasts and professional expertise.

### **COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

As the development of the 2024 Plan began, the county and world entered the COVID-19 pandemic that upended people's lives in big and small ways. As of February 2023, 1,436 individuals have died due to COVID-19 in Snohomish County, 15,531 have died in Washington State,<sup>3</sup> and over 1.1 million people have passed away because of this pandemic in the United States.<sup>4</sup> This health disaster has also impacted the economy, transportation systems, and how people think about their homes, public services, and open spaces. The U.S. Census reports that in 2019, 6 percent of Snohomish County residents worked remotely, and by 2021 that percentage had increased to 24.6 percent.<sup>5</sup> This represents a 302 percent increase in people working from home in Snohomish County in just 2 years. This increase in remote work decreased the demand on transportation systems, although traffic volumes in Snohomish County do appear to be returning since the height of COVID-19. It is unclear if this represents a stable trend or a short-term blip because of limited data.

It is too soon to know what the lasting impacts of COVID-19 will be, although it is clear that the pandemic amplified existing inequities. For instance, statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicate that American Indian or Alaska Native, Non-Hispanic persons are 1.6 times more likely to get COVID-19, 2.5 times more likely to be hospitalized, and 2.0 times more likely to die from COVID-19 than a white, non-Hispanic person.<sup>6</sup> The United Nations also notes that COVID-19 "is particularly detrimental to members of those social groups in the most vulnerable situations, ... including people living in poverty situations, older persons,

<sup>3</sup> "COVID-19 Data Dashboard." *Washington State Department of Health*. February 22, 2023, <https://doh.wa.gov/emergencies/covid-19/data-dashboard>

<sup>4</sup> "Trends in Number of COVID-19 Cases and Deaths in the US Reported to CDC, by State/Territory." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. February 28, 2023, [https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends\\_totaldeaths\\_select\\_00](https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#trends_totaldeaths_select_00)

<sup>5</sup> "DP03 Selected Economic Characteristics, 2021: ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles." *United States Census Bureau*. February 28, 2023, <https://data.census.gov/table?q=employment+status&g=0500000US53061&tid=ACSDP1Y2021.DP03>.

<sup>6</sup> "Risk for COVID-19 Infection, Hospitalization, and Death by Race/Ethnicity." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. December 28, 2022, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html>.

persons with disabilities, youth, and indigenous peoples. Early evidence indicates that the health and economic impacts of the virus are being borne disproportionately by poor people. For example, homeless people, because they may be unable to safely shelter in place, are highly exposed to the danger of the virus.”<sup>7</sup> COVID-19 has also changed the way we do business, think about public safety and health, and participate in community events.

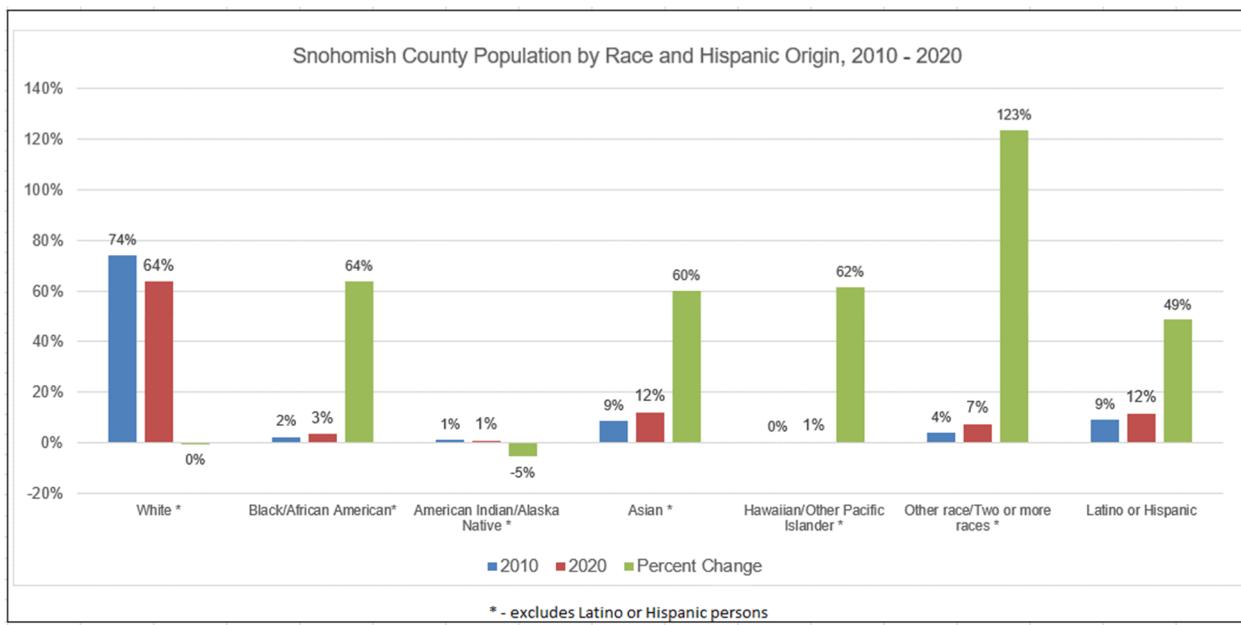
Consideration of COVID-19 impacts is incorporated into the Plan in several ways, from amendments to existing policies within the Transportation Element, to the addition of new broadband policies in the Capital Facilities and Utilities Element. COVID-19 also affected public participation for the Plan. While staff were unable to do as many in-person public meetings as in past updates when work on the Plan began, staff could focus more heavily on online and virtual engagement. Virtual engagement can be more inclusive as it does not require residents to travel from their homes. Overall, staff created in person, virtual, and hybrid opportunities to engage with the Plan update process.

## **DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS**

Between 2010 and 2020, the population of Snohomish County increased by 17 percent and the demographics indicate that the county became more diverse. More specifically, the White population decreased from 74 to 64 percent of the overall county population between 2010 and 2020, whereas the population of Black or African American residents in the county increased by 64 percent, the percentage of Asian residents increased by 60 percent, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander residents increased by 62 percent, and the Latino or Hispanic residents increased by 49 percent (see Figure 4). The biggest increase was in the category of residents identifying as two or more races, which increased by 123 percent between 2010 and 2020. The percentage of residents identifying as American Indian and Alaska Native decreased by 5 percent between 2010 and 2020.

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<sup>7</sup> “Everyone Included: Social Impact of COVID-19.” *United Nations*. February 28, 2023, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/everyone-included-covid-19.html>.

**Figure 4. Snohomish County population by race and Hispanic origin, Census 2020.<sup>8</sup>**

As the County plans for the next 20 years, it is expected that the population will continue to increase and to diversify. The goals, objectives, policies, and programs within the Plan are inclusive and create a safe place for its increasingly diverse population, workforce, and visitors. Further, the Plan includes a Tribal Coordination Element that focuses on ways the county will coordinate with the Tribes present in the county.

Planning decisions have historically upheld and instituted social and racial inequities. The elements of the Plan each address equity within their goals, objectives, and policies, and part of the Plan's Vision includes that the county is an inclusive place to live where all can thrive. The County will plan for all residents, workers, and visitors and is committed to equitably and meaningfully engage and plan with Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) as well as other historically and currently marginalized communities, such as veterans, seniors, youth, immigrants and refugees, people with low income, and people living with disabilities. The definition of equity utilized in the Plan comes from the CPPs:

All people can attain the resources and opportunities that improve their quality of life and enable them to reach full potential. Those affected by poverty, communities of color, and historically and currently marginalized communities are engaged in decision-making processes, planning, and policy making.

<sup>8</sup> "2020 and 2010 Census Redistricting Data (Public Law 94-171) Summary File." U.S. Census Bureau. September 16, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/about/rdo/summary-files.2020.html#list-tab-ZZWKJDURNFSGBG03L8>.

## **ECONOMIC SHIFTS**

In addition to a global pandemic and demographic shifts in the county, there have also been economic changes. In particular, the Paine Field Passenger Terminal was finalized in 2018 and according to the airport, supports “158,227 jobs and has a total economic impact/business revenue of \$59.9 billion annually.”<sup>9</sup> This new, privately-owned passenger terminal is bringing awareness, travelers, jobs, and traffic to Snohomish County. In 2019 another large potential employment area was added to the county. The Cascade Industrial Center (CIC) received its official designation as a Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC) by the PSRC.<sup>10</sup> The CIC is located within the cities of Arlington and Marysville and according to the City of Arlington, “includes just over 4,000 acres of manufacturing and industrial zoned land with more than 1,700 developable acres...the CIC supports a wide range of mechanized and technology-driven industries due to its distinctive and abundantly qualified advanced manufacturing workforce, smart manufacturing practices, and access to emerging platform technologies offered via a concentration of mechanical engineering, instrumentation and fabrication experts. We expect to add 20,000 more family-wage jobs in the CIC over the next decade, helping residents work close to home and boosting our local economy.”<sup>11</sup> The Plan examines these economic drivers within the Economic Development, Interjurisdictional Coordination, Transportation, and Land Use Elements.

## **HOUSING SHIFTS**

Access to safe and affordable housing is fundamental to the success of our communities, and Snohomish County is in an affordability crisis. The median home price in the County increased by 117 percent between 2000 and 2021, whereas the median household income only increased by 9 percent. One major contributor to the rising cost of housing in Snohomish County is a shortage in supply. The PSRC estimates that the region (Snohomish, King, Kitsap, and Pierce counties) currently needs an additional 50,000 homes, and that by 2050 Snohomish County alone will have a deficit of 187,000 homes if the county does not plan for an increased supply of housing. The Housing and Land Use Elements aim to address the affordability crisis by incentivizing a wide variety of housing types and densities in the urban areas.

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## **A LIVING PLAN**

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An effective comprehensive plan cannot be a static document. It must be a dynamic guide to the future, a living document that the county monitors and refines in response to changing circumstances and events. Adjustments and refinements over the coming years may be needed

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<sup>9</sup> “By the numbers.” *Paine Field Airport*. February 28, 2023, <https://www.painefieldmasterplan.com/>.

<sup>10</sup> “Cascade Manufacturing Industrial Center designated by PSRC.” *Puget Sound Regional Council*. July 1, 2019, <https://www.psrc.org/about-us/media-hub/cascade-manufacturing-industrial-center-designated-psrc>.

<sup>11</sup> “Cascade Industrial Center.” *City of Arlington*. February 28, 2023, <https://www.arlingtonwa.gov/575/Cascade-Industrial-Center>

to respond to changes in the GMA, new decisions from the Growth Management Hearings Board and courts, direction from policy makers, and input from the public.

The docketing process ensures that the general public – as well as the county itself – has a regular opportunity to propose plan amendments for formal consideration.

The Plan provides policy direction to decision makers utilizing the best available information to help the county move toward its Vision for 2044. The goals, objectives, policies, and other programs of the 12 elements serve as a set of blueprints to guide growth, preservation, and development in Snohomish County over a 20-year planning period.

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