



Community Development Department

To: City of Burlington, Planning Commission

From: Brad Johnson, Community Development Director

Date: August 16, 2024

Subject: Long Range Planning Update

1. Comprehensive Plan Update – General

As discussed at the Planning Commission’s July meeting, the Growth Management Act Steering Committee (GMASC), a group comprised of elected officials from each local government in Skagit County, has issued recommended population, housing, and employment allocations. The GMASC’s recommendations will now be forwarded to the Skagit County Board of Commissioners for adoption as a revision to the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs).

As a precursor to adoption by the Skagit County Board of Commissioners, the elected body of each city and town in Skagit County is provided with an opportunity to review, and comment on, the population, housing, and employment allocations adopted by the GMASC. For reference, the adopted allocations are attached to this memo. To help guide Burlington City Council’s review of the adopted allocations, the Planning Commission should consider issuing a recommendation. A formal recommendation will be presented for Planning Commission action on September 18, 2024.

In developing a recommendation for Council, it may be advisable for the Planning Commission to consider the following issues:

- *Support for allocation process, particularly with respect to diverse housing types.*

Burlington has taken tremendous steps to promote the development of more affordable housing types, such as duplexes, townhomes, and multiunit buildings. Many of the steps taken by Burlington have proven to be highly effective, and since 2019 the City has seen over 1,400 housing units constructed, permitted, or in the permit review process. While other cities have taken, or are taking, similar steps, it is important that every city in Skagit County adopt robust and effective measures to

promote housing development, particularly for higher density housing types in centrally located areas. Unless each city adopts effective measures to promote housing development, a disproportionate amount of housing development could occur in Burlington. This could result in serious job/housing imbalances, longer commute distances, and undermine Burlington's efforts to address housing costs through by better balancing supply and demand.

- *Consider the environmental impacts of regional growth patterns.*

Burlington's Comprehensive Plan articulates a vision of leveraging its compact footprint to reduce travel distance (and pollution associated with vehicle travel), protect agricultural land in surrounding areas, minimize the loss of open space, and promote a more convenient and economically viable community. Again, there is a risk that these efforts could be undermined unless the other cities in Skagit County manage development using similar principles.

- *Emphasize the need for affordable housing funding.*

In reviewing the housing allocations adopted by the GMASC, the Planning Commission will note the very large number of units required to meet the needs of households with incomes below 50 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). Providing these units will require some form of public support, only a fraction of which exists today. Meeting the region's future housing needs will require a high level of commitment and cooperation among Skagit County's governments and non-profit organizations and more support from the State of Washington.

2. Public Outreach and Needs Assessment

This is a joint project of the Community Development Department, Library, and Parks and Recreation Department. The purpose of this project is to conduct in-depth public outreach, involve underrepresented communities and people, and gather information on the public's priorities and views, particularly with respect to planning and public services and facilities.

A consultant team has been selected (Conсор) and the City Council is currently scheduled to review and approve the contract and scope of work authorizing the project to proceed.

3. Non-Motorized and Transportation Safety Plan

A consultant team (Transpo) has been selected and the Community Development staff are currently negotiating a contract and scope of work.

4. Climate Planning.

City staff have reviewed RFP responses, conducted interviews, and may select a climate planning consultant team.