

# PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date		Staff Contact	
6/2/2011		GREG AUCUTT	
Subject:			
Periodic update of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan - Introduction and Framework Goals and Policies chapters .			
Attachments:			
1. Staff Memo			
2. Draft chapter updates			
3.			
4.			
5.			
Meeting Type		Category	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Legislative		
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Meeting	<input type="checkbox"/> Quasi-judicial		
<input type="checkbox"/> Work Session	<input type="checkbox"/> Information Only		
<input type="checkbox"/> Briefing			
Clearances		Initials	Date
Jeff Thomas, Interim Director		JST	5-17-2011
Alan Marriner, Legal		AMM	5/20/11
Previous Commission Meeting or Action:			
Recommended Action:			
Review the proposed updates and suggest changes/additions as appropriate.			



## PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

Planning Division

210 Lottie Street, Bellingham, WA 98225

Telephone: (360) 778-8300 Fax: (360) 778-8302

### MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Commission

From: Greg Aucutt, Senior Planner *GA*

Date: May 16, 2011

Re: *Comprehensive Plan Update*

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#### Background

The State Growth Management Act requires the city to periodically update the city-wide comprehensive plan. In our case, an updated plan must be approved by December 1, 2014 to comply with the GMA. Bellingham's plan was last updated in 2006. We are beginning the process to update the plan in 2011. The first two chapters of the plan are the subject of the Commission's June 2 meeting.

Bellingham's comprehensive plan has been kept up to date with many of the changes that have occurred since it was adopted. Even so, there are several changes that must be made to the plan:

- a new 20-year planning period (2011-2031);
- new 2031 population, housing and employment growth forecasts;
- new Shoreline Management Plan goals;
- recent annexations and changes made by the County to the city's urban growth area boundary.

#### Planning Commission Role

The plan is being updated using the required Type VI process. The Commission's role in is to hold public hearings and evaluate the various chapters and updates proposed by staff, and make recommendations to the City Council.

#### Key Assumptions

Several key assumptions were used by staff while updating the chapters. These assumptions were reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council before we began the update process:

Assumption 1. The project includes a "strategic" update to the 2006 plan, focusing on new GMA requirements and implementation of the existing goals and policies.

Assumption 2. The foundation of the 2006 plan, the framework goals and policies, are still relevant and appropriate. The current plan was developed over a 3-year period (2002-2005) with extensive public participation. The plan includes:

- moderate growth forecasts, focusing on infill and development at the edge as annexations occur to accommodate population/employment growth;
- protection of neighborhood character;
- goals and policies for urban village planning/development;
- protection of environmentally sensitive areas (including Lake Whatcom);
- transportation mode split goals and policies that emphasize walking, biking and public transportation, and
- capital facilities planning for public services such as police, fire, library, etc., and public facilities such as parks, trails and open spaces.

Assumption 3. No additional staff or other resources will be available for the project. Originally there was to be state grant funding made available to cities and counties for the update. We were notified in early in 2010 that the grant funds were eliminated due to budget constraints at the state level. The Planning Department has no professional services funds available to devote to this project. As a result, the update will be completed using existing staff. A project team including representatives from the Planning, Public Works, Parks, Police, Fire, and Legal departments will devote time in 2011 and 2012 to complete the update process.

Assumption 4. Environmental review for the project will rely in large part on the City's 2004 Comprehensive plan EIS and on the County's 2009 EIS for the urban growth areas, supplemented by additional studies as needed. This is appropriate because: 1) the planning area is smaller since the last plan update in 2006; 2) the City's share of total county growth is less than in the current plan; 3) the employment growth forecast is also less than the number used in the current plan.

Assumption 5. Because the scope of the update is relatively minor, the review process will focus on the Planning Commission and City Council. The public will be able to provide comments at hearings before both bodies. Also the Transportation Advisory Committee, the Capital Facilities Advisory Task Force and the Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission will provide input/recommendations in the process.

In addition, staff will use the Department's web site to disseminate information about the project, including meeting schedules, meeting agendas, and other project materials. The web site will also provide an opportunity for the public to provide comments to staff, the Planning Commission and City Council through use of a "comment tracker".

## The Introduction Chapter

The first chapter of the plan contains background information, an explanation of the format and content, and other general information. The attached updated document is shown in legislative format, with suggested new text underlined and deleted text crossed out.

## Framework Goals and Policies Chapter

This chapter contains the goals and policies that reflect the long-term values and preferences held by the community. As stated in the chapter, the values and preferences are expressed through:

- Goals that summarize the intent of the plan
- Visions that describe what our community will look like in 20 years if the goals are achieved
- Framework policies that the City will use to work towards achieving the goals

Changes to this chapter are also shown in legislative format. You will note that staff is proposing very few changes to this chapter.

## Review Process

Staff will schedule additional meeting dates if necessary for the Commission to complete review of these chapters.

Next up for review will be the Land Use and Transportation chapters. This is scheduled to begin in August or September. Other chapters, including the new Environmental and Economic Development chapters, will follow.

## Attachments:

1. Draft Introduction chapter
2. Draft Framework Goals and Policies chapter