



**Snohomish County**

**Planning and Development Services**

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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Snohomish County Planning Commission

**Dave Somers**  
*County Executive*

FROM: Michael Saponaro, Senior Planner

SUBJECT: Economic Development Element, Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan

DATE: March 8, 2023

**INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this staff report is to provide information on the updates to the Economic Development element of Snohomish County's Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan ("Plan"). A briefing on the recommended language is scheduled for the March 28, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.

**BACKGROUND**

The main purpose of this element is to establish goals, objectives, policies, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and high quality of life, and the main purpose of this staff report is to provide background and context to understand all relevant Economic Development goals, objectives, and policies. The proposed amendments were primarily developed based on a recent policy implementation review by County staff; the recent update process for the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs); conversations with the County Executive Office, business interests, and the Snohomish County Arts Commission; and through public input after making the proposed amendments available online. The proposed updates provide consistency with the CPPs, the Vision 2050 Multi-County Planning Policies (MPPs), and other Plan policies, and provide more sensitive language choices.

**PROPOSED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS**

The policy table attached to this staff report as Attachment B shows the amendments staff are proposing to the Economic Development element. The proposed 2024 updates within the Economic Development element have seven minor amendments based on wording or numbering changes and fourteen more substantial changes based on the following themes (and corresponding definitions).

- Comparative Advantage
  - the ability of an individual or group to carry out a particular economic activity or product more efficiently than another activity
- Specialization
  - concentrating on a particular industry or skill
- Freight
  - goods transported in bulk by truck, train, ship, or aircraft

- Creative Placemaking
  - the use of arts and culture to strategically shape the physical and social character of a place to spur economic development
- Innovation
  - the action or process of introducing a new method, idea, or product
- Sustainability
  - an ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level.
- Green Industries
  - industries that provide products or services related to renewable energy, increased energy efficiency, clean transportation and fuels, agriculture and natural resource conservation, and pollution prevention or environmental cleanup
- Economic Resiliency
  - ability & speed of an economic system to recover
- Regulatory Reform
  - improvements to the quality of government regulation
- Workforce Training
  - postsecondary activities (seminar, workshop, course, customized training) that develop or enhance the skills of existing employees or members of any business or industry
- Human Services
  - programs or facilities for meeting basic health, welfare, and other needs of a society or group, such as the poor, sick, or elderly
- Displacement Mitigation
  - Minimizing instances where residents can no longer afford to remain in their residence or business
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion
  - conceptual framework that claims to promote the fair treatment and full participation of all people, especially in the workplace, including populations who have historically been under-represented or subject to discrimination because of their background, identity, disability, etc.

**ANALYSIS**

The following analysis provides a summary of the proposed amendments’ compliance with state law, regional planning, and countywide planning policies.

**Compliance with State Law**

The GMA planning goals adopted in RCW 36.70A.020 guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans, and the GMA requirements of RCW 36.70A.070(7) guide the components of an economic development element in a comprehensive plan. The proposed amendments to the Economic Development Element further the GMA planning goals, especially Goal 5 as shown below.

**Table 1 Compliance with GMA**

GMA Code	Findings
RCW 36.70A.020(5) GMA Goal 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	The proposed amendments comply with GMA RCW 36.70A.020(5) by adopting policy that: i) considers economic opportunity for all citizens including historically marginalized populations and disproportionately burdened communities,

<p>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.</p>	<p>ii) promote business retention and expansion while also recognizing threats of displacement</p> <p>iii) recognizes differences in economic development opportunities within varying urban and rural contexts, and</p> <p>iv) encourages growth in areas within the capacities of the state's natural resources, social services, and capital facilities.</p>
<p>RCW 36.70A.070 (7)  Comprehensive plans—Mandatory elements: An economic development element establishing local goals, policies, objectives, and provisions for economic growth and vitality and a high quality of life. A city that has chosen to be a residential community is exempt from the economic development element requirement of this subsection.</p>	<p>The proposed amendments comply with GMA RCW 36.70A.070 (7) by:  emphasizing provisions and policies for economic growth and development with business retention and expansion efforts and recognizes the importance of quality of life via creative placemaking efforts.</p>

**Compliance with the Multi-County Planning Policies**

The proposed amendments to the Economic Development comply with the Vision 2050 Multi-County Planning Policies (MPPs) by adopting policies that conform to the following MPPs:

- MPP-Ec-1 “Support economic development activities that help to recruit, retain, expand, or diversify the region’s businesses, targeted towards businesses that provide living-wage jobs.”
- MPP-Ec-13 “Promote equity and access to opportunity in economic development policies and programs. Expand employment opportunity to improve the region’s shared economic future.”
- MPP-Ec-16 “Ensure that economic development sustains and respects the region’s environment and encourages development of established and emerging industries, technologies, and services that promote environmental sustainability, especially those addressing climate change and resilience.”

**Compliance with the Countywide Planning Policies**

The proposed amendments to the Economic Development element comply with the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) for Snohomish County by adopting policies that conform to the following CPPs:

- CPP ED-1 “The County and cities, through Snohomish County Tomorrow, should support the Regional Growth Strategy of VISION 2050 and the Regional Economic Strategy. Jurisdictions should utilize comprehensive plan policies, infrastructure investments, and regulations to support the existing and emerging industry clusters that play an important role in growing and sustaining Snohomish County’s economy.”
- CPP ED-2 “The County and cities should foster an equitable business and regulatory environment that supports and encourages the establishment and growth of small and startup businesses, especially those that are woman- and minority-owned.”
- CPP ED-3 “Jurisdictions should prioritize multi-modal transportation system linkages between growth centers, manufacturing/industrial centers, and residential areas to support economic development and improve access to a wide variety of job opportunities and employment.”

- CPP ED-5 “Jurisdictions should promote economic and employment growth that creates a countywide economy that consists of a diverse range of living wage jobs for all of the county’s residents.”
- CPP ED-6 “As a part of the overall countywide economic development strategy, jurisdictions should target economic development activities that improve access to economic opportunity for residents that historically have low and very low access to opportunity.”
- CPP ED-11 “In cooperation with school districts, other education providers, and each other, jurisdictions should ensure the availability of sufficient land and services for future K-20 school needs and support high-quality education and job training resources for all residents, such as a 4-year university or technical college in Snohomish County.”
- CPP ED-14 “The County and cities should promote an appropriate balance of jobs-to-housing to:
  - Support economic activity;
  - Encourage local economic opportunities and housing choice;
  - Improve mobility; and
  - Respond to the challenge of climate change.”
- CPP ED-15 “Jurisdictions should ensure that economic development sustains and respects the county’s natural environment and encourages the development of existing and emerging industries, technologies, and services that promote environmental sustainability, especially those addressing climate change and resilience.”
- CPP ED-18 “Jurisdictions should identify the potential for physical, economic, and cultural displacement of existing locally owned, small businesses as a result of development or redevelopment and market pressure. Jurisdictions should consider a range of mitigation strategies to mitigate the impacts of displacement to the extent feasible.”

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

RCW 36.70A.140 requires early and continuous public participation (GOAL 11). Public participation for The Interjurisdictional Coordination element has been provided to date through:

- The Draft amendments to the Interjurisdictional Element were posted for 30-day public comment from 11/1/2022 to 11/30/2022.
- Public comments were received from postings placed on the 2024 Update project website, eleven comments were received, some supporting the amendments and some opposing some aspects of the amendments. Many public comments agreed with the new policies that emphasize growth in green jobs, mitigation displacement, and creative placemaking. Some expressed concerns that economic growth may threaten “ED 1.B. Snohomish County shall balance economic and environmental concerns.” Others expressed concern that regulatory reform may also threaten environmental concerns. Some commenters felt that the County should have less government interference with the economy, while others had very direct requests from it including the support of fiber optic infrastructure, flight infrastructure, and freight infrastructure. No revisions were made based on the public comment received, although some comments were directed to other staff members to inform updates of their respective elements, for example, matters of freight and distribution logistics may be covered in the Transportation Element.

All public comments are available in the index of records.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The County issued a Determination of Significance (DS) for the 2024 Update to the Plan on November 1, 2021. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will likely be issued in September 2023, satisfying State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review.

### **NOTIFICATION OF STATE AGENCIES**

Pursuant to RCW 36.70A.106, a notice of intent to adopt the proposed regulations and standards will be transmitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce for the entirety of the 2024 Update to the Plan in September 2023.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the proposed comprehensive plan amendments and findings contained in this staff report.

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

The Planning Commission is requested to hold a public hearing, consider the proposed comprehensive plan element, and provide a recommendation to the County Council. The Planning Commission can recommend approval of the element with supporting findings of fact as proposed or modified, deny the proposal with findings, or amend the proposal with appropriate findings.

cc: Ken Klein, Executive Director  
Mike McCrary, PDS Director  
David Killingstad, PDS Manager  
Ryan Countryman, Legislative Analyst

### **Attachments**

**Attachment A – Draft Economic Development Element Narrative**

**Attachment B – Economic Development Element Policy Summary Table**