

Notes from Friends

Friends of Skagit County

Summer, 2010

Managing Growth Series by June Kite, Vice President, Friends of Skagit County

Most readers who read the *Friends* newsletter know that the Growth Management Act (GMA) was adopted by Washington State in 1990. However, the beginning of managing growth actually got its start in the early 1960's when the State mandated that planning must control the undesired loss of the resource lands in the State, including Skagit County.

To understand the events of today regarding planning and regulating growth the newsletters will be bringing the events of the past together with current events in a series of articles. The first newsletter will focus on the first Comprehensive Plan and Comprehensive Planning of today.

Skagit County Comprehensive Plan

In May of 1963 a report was published describing the first stage of the Skagit County long-range planning program, analysis and recommendations, listing land uses, problems, maps, population statistics, and including proposed County Regulations. The Land Problems listed included areas of poor drainage, a deterrent to residential development, and subdivisions being developed on prime agricultural land.

The stated purpose of the regulations “*is protection, not restriction, for future homeowners from building homes on lots too small for satisfactory septic drainage; prevent subdivision of land that is not acceptable for residential development*”. . . . This work was done by M.G. Poole & Associates with the Board of County Commissioners, Public works, Health department, Planning Commission, and Port District.

The first Planning Department was established in 1964 with a director and one secretary. The planning work continued and the first Comprehensive plan and subdivision ordinance in 1965, development regulations (1966), amended 1968, as required by State law. This set the stage for farmland preservation, identified areas for industrial and residential uses.

The 1970's saw adoption of District Plans, the first forestry large tracts, and five-acre rural zoning regulations (1979). The 1980's saw a Joint Sphere of Influence agreement with cities and joint planning with the Swinomish Tribe.

Early in 1990 the Board of County Commissioners directed Planning to recommend changes to District Plans and to recommend “**County Wide Comprehensive Planning Policies**”. Therefore, today the comprehensive plan remains the guide and framework, provides for unified county wide Planning Policies and the implementing zoning regulations for managing land use and population growth.

Visioning and Alternative Futures

The GMA was formally adopted July 1990 including Mandatory Elements to be consistent with the Planning Policies. As a result the Comprehensive Plan is organized in Chapters to address each of the elements and the corresponding Policies.

In 1990 and 1991 two “Vision for the Future” documents were published that began the educational campaign encouraging citizen participation in the Comprehensive Plan updating process. This included public comments, hearings and citizen committees working on each section of the Plan. Individual members of *Friends of Skagit County* have participated in Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) learning the public process that is involved in making the adopted plan.

In 1993 the Temporary **Interim Zoning established 5-acre minimum** lot size for Rural zones and adoption of **Interim Urban Growth Areas** (UGA's). In 1994 and 1995 planning involved Planning Commission reviews, study sessions and public comment periods. Copies of the Draft Plan and maps were released for a comment period and for Planning Commission reviews. In 1996 the **Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO)** and the revised Planning Policies were adopted. In 1997 Skagit County's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted.

*** It is my personal opinion that the

Comprehensive Plan is only as good (or bad) as the enforcement of the policies and regulations.
jk

GMA provides for amendment requests on an annual basis and to a periodic review of the Comprehensive plan on a periodic time, therefore the Comp Plan, Comp Plan Maps, and Development Regulations were updated in 2000, the Comp Plan again in 2007. Development regulations may be amended as an emergent situation arises.

In order to be prepared for the next update, the County has initiated a program funded by a multi-year EPA grant, originally called the Alternative Futures Project, now called Envision Skagit. This project seeks to develop a 50-year plan to protect the Skagit and Samish River watersheds' many environmental values and resources. An appointed steering committee worked with county staff and staff from University of Washington on the first phase, which created 4 views of Skagit using computer modeling. A Citizen Advisory Committee will be appointed for the second phase of the project to recommend which view of Skagit should go forward. The third phase of Envision Skagit will incorporate the "preferred" changes to the Comprehensive Plan, development regulations and programs to protect natural resource lands and the environment.

I will write more in coming newsletters on public participation processes and background on land use and planning.

Mount Vernon Shoreline Master Program Planning Commission Public Hearing - Tuesday, August 3, 2010, 7:00 pm at the Police Campus Multi-Purpose Room, 1805 Continental Pl., Mount Vernon. For more on the draft program go to <http://www.ci.mount-vernion.wa.us/imageuploads/Media-4730.pdf>. The deadline for written comments is Monday, August 2, 2010 at 4:30 pm by fax (360) 336-6283; regular mail to City of MV, Community & Economic Development Dept., Box 809, Mount Vernon, WA 98273; delivered to MV City Hall at 910 Cleveland Ave., between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, Monday to Friday; or email to elizabethh@mountvernonwa.gov.

Friends of Skagit County is seeking people who would serve a 2 year term on the Board of Directors. A willingness to learn about land use and planning, environment, farms and forests is a qualification. Members, staff and board members work together on projects of interest. If you are interested or know someone who might be suited to serving on the board, please contact us at 360-419-0988 or friends@fidalgo.net.

E-mail From: Skagit County Planning and Development Services
Date: July 15, 2010 2:37:09 PM PDT
Subject: Notice of Adoption of Ordinance No. O20100004 - An Interim Ordinance Establishing Interim Controls on the Permitting of Solid Waste Handling Facilities

Notice is hereby given that on July 6, 2008, the Skagit County Board of Commissioners adopted Ordinance No. O20100004, approving amendments to Skagit County Code (SCC) 14.04 Definitions and SCC 14.16.600 Unclassified Uses. The amendments relate to the siting and operation of solid waste handling facilities within all unincorporated areas of Skagit County. The purpose of these regulations is to protect the health, safety and welfare of both the environment and humans within the County.

Copies of Ordinance No. O20100004 are available at Skagit County Planning & Development Services, 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA , 98273, (360) 336-9410. The Ordinance is also available on the website at www.skagitcounty.net.

Contact: Carly Ruacho, Senior Planner, Skagit County Planning & Development Services, Telephone 336-9410, x5582.

SUMMER CHALLENGE GRANT! DONATE TODAY! Friends' donors have offered to match your donations, so send your check today or go to Network for Good and double your contribution! Thanks to both the "challengers" and members.