

Please speak out at a **public hearing on July 13th, 7 P.M. at the County Council Chambers** to oppose unnecessary urban expansions!

The Single Most Important Thing You Can Do to Prevent Sprawl Is Speak Out!

- 1. Speak at the Public Hearing and arrive early to get signed up!** Stand up during the Public Hearing, state your name and address, and give your 3 minutes (or less) of comments. Personal feelings and opinions, as well as these talking points, are good to combine for compelling testimony.
- 2. Send your comments in for the public record.** If you are planning to speak at the hearing this is your opportunity to fully voice your concerns, and then use the hearing to briefly mention a few highlights. If you are unable to attend the public hearing, this is your chance to still be heard. You may send your written comment to Council@co.whatcom.wa.us. *Comments matter!*
- 3. Contact a County Council member** by telephone and talk with them about your opinion and concerns. The telephone number of County Council members is listed on the [County website](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council/whatcomcountycouncilcontactinfo.jsp#phone) at <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council/whatcomcountycouncilcontactinfo.jsp#phone>.
- 4. Share your view with the Bellingham Herald & Cascadia Weekly.** Next week Futurewise Whatcom will have an Op-Ed published in both papers. Please take a few minutes to write a letter to the editor to respond by emailing letters@cascadiaweekly.com or scott.ayers@bellinghamherald.com

TALKING POINTS

A copy of the Ordinance Amending Ordinance 2009-071, the Official Whatcom County Zoning Map, and the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan and Maps can be found by [CLICKING HERE](#), or at <http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/council/news/ab2010-054c.pdf>.

Please pick and choose what resonates for you – you'll only have 3 minutes!

- 1. FOCUS LIMITED COUNTY RESOURCES ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE FIXED NOW**
 - Whatcom County is currently in compliance with Urban Growth Areas required under the state Growth Management Act (GMA)
 - We are currently NOT in compliance with the Rural Element required under the GMA and the County has a December 29th deadline
 - The County has already set out a plan to review our urban areas in 2011, there's not a lot of demand right now and the County shouldn't use our limited planning dollars to duplicate these efforts.
 - We should direct our limited resources to bringing the Rural Element into compliance, **NOT** redoing urban work that is already in compliance with state law and going to be addressed again in the coming months

Protecting Rural & Resource Land + Promoting Compact, Livable Cities = Preventing Sprawl

Steering Committee: Ramona Abbott, Allison Aurand, Vanessa Blackburn, Todd Donovan, Bob Kelly, Wendy Harris, Dan McShane **Chapter Director:** Cathy Lehman
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MORE INFO: Our UGAs were deemed compliant in February of this year, following the adoption of the November 24th, 2009 Ordinance 2009-071 to revise Whatcom County’s UGAs. However, the Rural Element of our Comprehensive Plan is still illegal, and needs to be fixed by December 29th, 2010. We should be focusing all of our limited planning resources to find the right vision for our rural areas, not redoing work we just completed last year..

2. PROPOSED EXPANSIONS OF UGA BOUNDARIES LACK ROBUST PUBLIC PROCESS

- The November 2009 UGA boundary determinations involved over a year and a half of public process
- Today’s proposed urban expansions provide the public with one opportunity to weigh in and participate, which is inadequate and unnecessarily rushed
- These expansions and population increases are significant changes to our County’s 20 year blueprint for growth, the public should have a greater opportunity to decide whether or not it’s the right vision for Whatcom County

MORE INFO: The November UGA boundaries represent data-driven planning that had undergone a complete public process over the previous year and a half., Accurate data-driven planning should be respected and properly sized UGAs should be established only after an equally rigorous public process before doing so. The GMA calls for early and continuous public participation, but this July 13th hearing is the only opportunity for public comment on the amended ordinance which makes sweeping changes to four UGAs, adjusts the population projection for Whatcom County, and opens hundreds of acres of rural land for urban development. Such significant changes should be going through a complete planning process with a hearing in front of the Planning Commission, as required by Whatcom County Code and state law, before coming before County Council.

3. AS UGA BOUNDARIES GROW, SO DO COSTS TO TAXPAYERS

- Proposed UGA expansions are unnecessary and frivolous use of tax payer money
- Sprawl style development is expensive and does not pay for itself, in fact the costs are passed along to tax payers. Since economic conditions have slowed growth in Whatcom County, increased UGAs will increase costs to existing residents
- Expanding UGAs improperly exposes the County to further noncompliance with state law and delay our ability to apply for state money – money we’ve paid for as citizens and need to come back to Whatcom County

MORE INFO: Sprawl style growth is expensive, and by establishing overly large UGA boundaries the County contributes to tax payer and rate payer expenses for year to come. While expansions are justified by population increases, a July 1st, 2010 [Bellingham Herald article](#) states that Whatcom County is growing “at a slower rate than in past years, according to numbers released Wednesday, June 30, by the state Office of Financial Management.” Meanwhile Whatcom County loses more of its rural land, puts more pressure on farmers to convert to development, creates greater environmental impacts, and contributes to water quantity and quality issues – all costs of great magnitude to local citizens. Additionally, the proposed UGA expansions are a frivolous use of planning staff resources, as it revisits work already completed 8 short months ago, to benefit a few developers at a large cost to all Whatcom County citizens. At a time when planning staff are being laid off, this results in other critical work mandated under the GMA, like the Rural Element Update due on December 29th, being delayed.