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May 28, 2021

The Honorable Clint Didier  
The Honorable Rocky Mullen  
The Honorable Brad Peck  
1016 N. 4th Avenue  
Pasco, WA 99301

Dear Commissioners Didier, Mullen and Peck:

**Subject: Comments on the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038 Update (Draft for Public Hearing – May 2021), Franklin County files CPA 2018-01, CPA 2018-02 and CPA 2018-03 CPA 2018-04 for the Board of County Commissioners Public Hearing.**

Via email: [cdidier@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:cdidier@co.franklin.wa.us); [kmilham@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:kmilham@co.franklin.wa.us); [rmullen@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:rmullen@co.franklin.wa.us); [bpeck@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:bpeck@co.franklin.wa.us); [planninginquiry@co.franklin.wa.us](mailto:planninginquiry@co.franklin.wa.us)

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038 Update. Futurewise works throughout Washington State on the implementation of the Growth Management Act (GMA). We work with local communities to support land-use policies that encourage healthy, equitable and opportunity-rich communities, and that protect our most valuable farmlands, forests and water resources. We have members across Washington State including Franklin County.

Many of the comments in this letter have been provided to the County staff and Planning Commission members in previous comment letters and are available, with supporting documentation, on the County's project web site. Our recommendations focus on protecting the County's rural character and valuable farmlands, other economic assets, and cultural resources. Overall, we support the update and appreciate the significant improvements to the comprehensive plan. Thank you for those improvements. We do we have some suggestions to further improve the comprehensive plan explained below.

## Summary of Comments

- Do not expand the Pasco urban growth area (UGA) in locations that will allow urban development on productive farmland and block the future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport. Please see Item I of this letter for more information.
- Futurewise supports the adoption and implementation of Policies 14 and 15 to save taxpayers and ratepayers money and result in more attractive urban areas.



- Wildfire is a significant and growing hazard in Washington State including Franklin County. We support the addition of the wildfire protection policies for rural areas and recommend that similar policies also apply to unincorporated urban areas.
- Please include a policy protecting cultural and archaeological resources in the Historical & Cultural Resources Element. This policy will protect these resources from inadvertent and unnecessary damage.

## Detailed Comments on the Comprehensive Plan Update

- I. Do not expand the Pasco urban growth area (UGA) in locations that will allow paving over productive farmland and block the future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport. Please see Map 9: Pasco Urban Growth Area on page 31 and other maps showing the UGA expansion.

Before the criteria were amended, Franklin County designated most of the land in the proposed UGA expansions as Agricultural Resource Lands.<sup>1</sup> The American Farmland Trust has identified much of the UGA expansions as “nationally significant agricultural land.”<sup>2</sup> Nationally significant agricultural land is a designation for farmland that is best suited for long-term cultivation and food production.<sup>3</sup> It was developed by the *Farms Under Threat* study in consultation with experts.<sup>4</sup> The report exposes the threats facing working farms and policy efforts, state by state, to slow the pace. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service identifies 2,898.6 acres, 83.5 percent of the proposed UGA expansions, as prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance.<sup>5</sup> These are U.S. Department of Agriculture classifications for highly productive

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<sup>1</sup> *Franklin County Growth Management Comprehensive Plan* p. 96 (Agricultural Lands map) (Adopted Feb. 27, 2008 Resolution Number 2008-089) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at:

[http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2008ComprehensivePlan-Entirepdfwebsite\\_000.pdf](http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2008ComprehensivePlan-Entirepdfwebsite_000.pdf) and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “2008ComprehensivePlan-EntirepdfwebsiteFranklin Cty.pdf.”

<sup>2</sup> American Farmland Trust, *Farms Under Threat Washington* webpage last accessed on May 27, 2021 at: <https://csp-fut.appspot.com/> and the map of nationally significant farmland is on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “ATF National Significant Farmland North of Pasco.pdf.”

<sup>3</sup> Julia Freedgood, Mitch Hunter, Jennifer Dempsey, and Ann Sorensen, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* p. 64 (American Farmland Trust: 2020) last accessed on May 27, 2021 at: [https://s30428.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/AFT\\_FUT\\_StateoftheStates\\_rev.pdf](https://s30428.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/AFT_FUT_StateoftheStates_rev.pdf) and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “AFT\_FUT\_StateoftheStates\_rev.pdf.”

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> Soils Pasco Proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion June 2020 on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Soils Pasco Proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion June 2020.xlsx;” Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NW Part) pp. 1 – 23 (6/4/2020) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Pasco NW UGA Expansion Soil\_Map.pdf” and in a separate email; Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NE Part) pp. 1 – 28 (6/4/2020) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin

farmland.<sup>6</sup> Most of the land in the UGA expansion alternatives are also currently used for agricultural production.<sup>7</sup>

“Since before statehood, fertile soils, available irrigation water, sunny skies and long summer daylight hours have made agriculture a cornerstone for economic development” in Franklin County.<sup>8</sup> The American Farmland Trust estimates that between 2001 and 2016, 97,800 acres of agricultural land was converted in Washington State “enough land to generate \$61 million in annual revenue.”<sup>9</sup> Given the economic value of agriculture to the City of Pasco and Franklin County and the productivity of the farmland in the proposed UGA expansions, we urge the County Commissioners to deny the proposed UGA expansions.

**II. The proposed UGA expansions will interfere with future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport and bring residences closer to the airport, making operations more difficult and adversely impacting the new residents.**

Like the high-quality farmland, the Tri-Cities Airport is an important regional economic asset.<sup>10</sup> We support the proposal to remove 32 acres designated “Airport Reserve” from the UGA. However, we agree with WSDOT recommendations to plan for the future by convening stakeholders and ensuring compatible land use near the runway. We further concur with the Department of Commerce that, “the City and County can meet the growth allocation without expanding the UGA in a manner that could impact future airport operations by increasing densities elsewhere in the proposed expansion area, or changing some of the commercial land use designations to mixed-use designations. We understand recently adopted development regulations are designed to mitigate

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County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Pasco NE UGA Expansion Soil\_Map.pdf” and in a separate email.

<sup>6</sup> 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 657.5(a) & (c) last accessed on May 27, 2021 at: [https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ebf87e4dc9365c2e9d37eb7410cc4510&mc=true&node=se7.6.657\\_15&rgn=div8](https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ebf87e4dc9365c2e9d37eb7410cc4510&mc=true&node=se7.6.657_15&rgn=div8) and enclosed in a separate email with Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (March 25, 2021) with the filename: “eCFR 7 CFR § 657 5.pdf.”

<sup>7</sup> Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NW Part) p. 1 (6/4/2020); Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NE Part) p. 1; American Farmland Trust, Land Cover and Use (2016) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “AFT Existing Use 2016.pdf.”

<sup>8</sup> *Economic Development Plan Franklin County, Washington* Res. 2016-211 p. 5 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: [http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2016EconDevPlan\\_May\\_2019.pdf](http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2016EconDevPlan_May_2019.pdf) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “2016EconDevPlan\_May\_2019.pdf.”

<sup>9</sup> American Farmland Trust, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States Agricultural Land Conversion Highlight Summary* Washington p. \*2 (2020) last accessed on May 27, 2021 at: [https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut.appspot.com/reports/spatial/Washington\\_spatial.pdf](https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut.appspot.com/reports/spatial/Washington_spatial.pdf) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Washington\_spatial.pdf.”

<sup>10</sup> “The Tri-Cities Airport (PSC) is the largest airport in the Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon region and the fourth largest air carrier airport in the state of Washington with connections to eight major hubs.” Port of Pasco, Tri-Cities Airport • PSC webpage last accessed on May 27, 2021 at: <https://www.flytricity.com/> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Tri-Cities Airport webpage part.pdf.”

impacts from the airport, however, WSDOT and Commerce recommend local governments practice a philosophy of “do no more harm” in regards to land use and aviation planning.”<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately the UGA expansion will cutoff future expansion opportunities at the north end of the runway.<sup>12</sup> The area at the end of the airport immediately west of Road 44 and north of Burns is designated Low Density Residential by the City of Pasco.<sup>13</sup> The planned residential uses close to the airport will adversely impact the operations of the airport and the airport operations will adversely impact the residential uses.<sup>14</sup> In contrast to residential uses, agricultural uses are compatible with airport operations.<sup>15</sup> “Agricultural use of land near an airport permits the owner of the property to efficiently use land while providing an additional benefit to the community for airport protection.”<sup>16</sup> This is another reason to deny the UGA expansion.

### III. The City of Pasco is considering development regulation amendments that will increase residential capacity and will reduce or, potentially, eliminate the need for the UGA expansions.

The Washington State Supreme Court has held that a “UGA designation cannot exceed the amount of land necessary to accommodate the urban growth projected by the [State of Washington Office of Financial Management] OFM, plus a reasonable land market supply factor.”<sup>17</sup> In other words, the UGA expansion must be needed to accommodate Pasco’s growth. The City of Pasco is considering development regulation amendments that have the potential to substantially increase the city’s zoning capacity.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> W. Simpson, Department of Commerce, Page 4 of comment letter March 22, 2021, <https://www.ezview.wa.gov/DesktopModules/Documents2/View.aspx?tabID=37235&alias=1967&mid=69377&ItemID=16458>.

<sup>12</sup> City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map last accessed on May 27, 2021 at <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62156/Map-Folio-Updated> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Map Folio Updated.pdf.”

<sup>13</sup> City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map.

<sup>14</sup> FAA Southern Region Compatible Land Use Planning Task Force, *Land Use Compatibility and Airports* p. i, pp. V-10 – V-11, p. V-30 last accessed on May 27, 2021 at:

[https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/apl/noise\\_emissions/planning\\_toolkit/](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/planning_toolkit/) and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Land Use Compatibility and Airports.pdf;” Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation Division, *Airports and Compatible Land Use Volume 1* pp. 38 – 43 (Feb. 1999) last accessed on May 27, 2021 at: [https://www.faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices/apl/noise\\_emissions/planning\\_toolkit/](https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/planning_toolkit/) and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) letter with the filename: “WSDOT Airports and Compatible Land Use Vol 1.pdf.”

<sup>15</sup> FAA Southern Region Compatible Land Use Planning Task Force, *Land Use Compatibility and Airports* p. V-11.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> *Thurston County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Bd.*, 164 Wn.2d 329, 351 – 52, 190 P.3d 38, 48 – 49 (2008) (emphasis added).

<sup>18</sup> Memorandum to Planning Commission from City of Pasco Subject: CA2020-001- House Bill 1923 (Duplex, Triplex & Courtyard Apartments) & CA2020-002- House Bill 1923 (Average Lot Size) pp. 1 (Oct. 15, 2020) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://egov-pasco.com/weblink/DocView.aspx?id=914872&dbid=0&cr=1> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “10-15-2020 Pasco PC Meeting Packet Memo on CA2020-001 & CA2020-002.pdf.”

These changes could substantially increase the residential capacity of the City because much of the City of Pasco is zoned for low-density single-family dwellings.<sup>19</sup> The City of Pasco Land Capacity Analysis did not include any of this increased capacity.<sup>20</sup> The City must decide whether to adopt these amendments by June 15, 2021.<sup>21</sup> Given the large size of the proposed UGA expansions, 3,488 acres, that these amendments will be decided in six months, and that some or all of these amendments may be applied to the residential UGA expansion area,<sup>22</sup> the County should not adopt the UGA expansion until the additional capacity to be created by these amendments is known.

**IV. Futurewise supports the additions to the land use policies on page 34.**

The adoption and implementation of Policies 14 and 15 will save taxpayers and ratepayers money and result in more attractive urban areas. We support adding the policies.

**V. We strongly support the revised Natural Environment Goals and Policies on page 86.**

Futurewise strongly supports the revised Natural Environment goals and policies. These goals and policies will help protect people, property, and the environment.

**VI. Futurewise supports the addition to rural policies to address wildfires on page 88.**

Residential growth in both urban and rural Franklin County has increased the exposure of residents on the Wildland Urban Interface to wildfires.<sup>24</sup> We support the added policies to help reduce wildfire danger in rural areas. This danger also exists in cities and towns. We recommend the adoption of policies to reduce wildfire danger in unincorporated urban areas too.

**VII. We strongly support the revised Economic Development Chapter.**

Futurewise strongly supports the revised Economic Development Chapter. In particular, we appreciate the updated information on the economic trends and industries in the Franklin County.

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<sup>19</sup> *Id.* pp. 4 – 6.

<sup>20</sup> *City of Pasco Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038* Appendix C Land Capacity Analysis City of Pasco, Washington pp. 3 – 6 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61799/Appendix-C-City-of-Pasco-Land-Capacity-Analysis> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Appendix C City of Pasco Land Capacity Analysis\_20200514.pdf.”

<sup>21</sup> Memorandum to Planning Commission from City of Pasco Subject: CA2020-001- House Bill 1923 (Duplex, Triplex & Courtyard Apartments) & CA2020-002- House Bill 1923 (Average Lot Size) pp. 1 (Oct. 15, 2020).

<sup>22</sup> City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map.

<sup>24</sup> *Franklin County, Washington Community Wildfire Protection Plan* pp. 48 – 51 (Approved by the Franklin County Commissioners 2014) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at: [https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp\\_burn\\_cwpp\\_franklin\\_co.pdf](https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp_burn_cwpp_franklin_co.pdf).



**VIII. The Historical & Cultural Resources Element should include a policy protecting Cultural and Archaeological Resources. Please see page 111.**

We support including an Historical & Cultural Resources Element in the comprehensive plan. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation has developed an archaeological predictive model that can predict where archaeological resources, a type of cultural resource, are likely to be located and where the department recommends archaeological surveys should be completed before earth disturbing activities and other uses and activities that can damage archaeological sites are undertaken.<sup>25</sup> The predictive model shows significant areas having a “high risk” and “very high risk” of cultural resources in the county.<sup>26</sup> Land development can adversely impact these resources. We recommend that the element include a policy requiring a professional evaluation of earth disturbing development and other uses and activities that can damage archaeological sites in areas having a “high risk” and “very high risk” of cultural resources. The evaluation should determine if additional studies or mitigation is necessary.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you require additional information, please contact Alison Cable at telephone (206) 343-0681 Ext.114 and email: [alison@futurewise.org](mailto:alison@futurewise.org) or Tim Trohimovich at telephone (206) 343-0681 Ext. 102 and email: [tim@futurewise.org](mailto:tim@futurewise.org).

Very Truly Yours,

Alison Cable  
**Tri-Cities Program Manager**

Tim Trohimovich, AICP  
**Director of Planning & Law**

cc: Mr. Rick White, City of Pasco Community & Economic Development Director

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<sup>25</sup> Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation WISAARD webpage accessed on March 24, 2021 at: <https://dahp.wa.gov/historic-preservation/find-a-historic-place>.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

