



Technical Memo

To: Mason County Planning Advisory Commission (PAC)

From: Kirsten Peterson, Laura Barker

Date: November 6, 2024

Project: Mason County 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update

Subject: Countywide Planning Policies – Recommendations

As part of its 2025 periodic Comprehensive Plan update, Mason County is reviewing and updating its Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). Required under Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA), CPPs are a set of principles and policies developed by counties in collaboration with their cities to guide land use, development, and growth within the county. These policies create a cohesive framework for coordination among jurisdictions and stakeholders within the county.

CPPs guide the development of local comprehensive plans and other planning documents. Local governments must consider CPPs when making land use decisions, updating policies, or planning for new infrastructure. The CPPs can be updated periodically to reflect changes in community priorities and conditions.

Comment Matrix

The CAP has received numerous comments from various agencies and stakeholders suggesting language adjustments and other edits to the CPPs. To streamline the review, we’ve reorganized these comments thematically. This organization is intended to promote a transparent review process and ensure that each comment is addressed in a way that aligns with the scope and purpose of both the CPPs and the Comprehensive Plan.

Comment Organization

Comments are categorized to facilitate PAC’s review as follows:

- **PAC Decision Needed – Open for Discussion:** Requires PAC input for direction. These comments are further sorted by topic to facilitate review (as outlined in the “Comment Topics” table below).
- **Staff Recommends Exclusion:** Staff strongly recommends not incorporating these comments into the CPPs, but seeks PAC’s decision.
- **Hold for Consideration in Comprehensive Plan Update:** Suggestions or comments that are more detailed or specific and are better suited for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan rather than the CPPs. Additional detail on why these comments are more appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan can be found in the following section.
- **Hold for Consideration Later in Update Process:** Items for later review, once other components are more fully developed.
- **No Action Needed:** Comments that are already addressed in the current draft of the CPP update or are simply informational in nature, requiring no further action.

Comment Topics (Comments for Which a PAC Decision is Needed)

Topic	Summary of Comments
Environmental and Open Space Protections	Comments focused on the preservation of natural resources, conservation efforts, and the protection of open spaces within the county.
Climate Change and Resiliency	Suggestions related to mitigating and adapting to climate change, building climate resilience, and incorporating sustainability practices into planning.
Public Participation and Accessibility	Feedback on improving engagement with the community, ensuring inclusive planning processes, and increasing accessibility for all residents, especially vulnerable groups
Environmental Justice (EJ)	Comments related to ensuring fair and equitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, and addressing the needs of underserved communities.
Housing Policies and Affordability	Comments focused on strategies for affordable housing development, equitable housing policies, and addressing housing shortages and affordability challenges.
Growth and Development	Feedback on managing population growth, urban expansion, zoning, land use policies, and promoting sustainable development that aligns with the community’s needs.
Transportation and Connectivity	Suggestions for improving transportation infrastructure, promoting multimodal options, enhancing connectivity between communities, and supporting sustainable mobility solutions.

Additional Context for Shifting Certain Suggestions to the Comprehensive Plan

Some comments are more appropriate for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan policies rather than the CPPs, each of which serve distinct functions in regional planning with different implications for local governance. While CPPs provide a high-level framework for collaboration and consistency among jurisdictions within the county (i.e., between Mason County and Shelton), the Comprehensive Plan policies offer more detailed, actionable strategies for local governance and development.

Incorporating these suggestions within Mason County’s Comprehensive Plan rather than the CPPs allows the county to develop targeted policies that respond to its unique community dynamics and environmental contexts. The Comprehensive Plan offers a more actionable platform for addressing the detailed, often location-specific needs raised in these particular recommendations.

Comments recommended for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan will be set aside for later review by the PAC. The table below provides a summary of the reasons for recommending certain types of comments for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan.

Comment Topics (Comments for Which a PAC Decision is Needed)

Suggestions/Comments	Rationale for Moving to Comprehensive Plan
Climate-Aware Infrastructure and Resiliency	Infrastructure planning accounting for climate vulnerabilities, such as sea-level rise, and equitable maintenance across the county, aligns with the Comprehensive Plan’s detailed infrastructure resilience framework.
Expanded Public Participation	Given that Mason County’s Comprehensive Plan can offer a tailored approach to local community needs, it would be effective to clarify public participation efforts there. This could allow for practical application of public engagement methods that specifically target underrepresented groups within Mason County.
Historic Preservation for Ecological and Cultural Sites	The Comprehensive Plan can more feasibly integrate policies that address specific cultural and ecological preservation needs, incorporating local context and partnerships with tribes and ecological groups to identify and preserve these areas.
Public Services and Environmental Justice	EJ provisions, like fair access to services for vulnerable communities, are better addressed in the Comprehensive Plan, where county-specific data and community characteristics can inform equitable service distribution and facility siting.
Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction and Natural Climate Solutions	Specific GHG reduction strategies and local food initiatives align with Comprehensive Plan goals, allowing Mason County to prioritize these efforts through policies on economic development, transportation, and conservation. These localized strategies benefit from detailed, actionable policies within the Comprehensive Plan’s framework.

Conclusion

The thematic organization of comments and alignment with either the CPPs or the Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide the PAC in making informed and strategic decisions about the comments received. This will help ensure that the CPPs and the Comprehensive Plan are aligned, comprehensive, and reflective of Mason County's evolving needs.

The next steps for the PAC include:

- Review the categorized comments and discuss the suggestions that need PAC input.
- **Vote** on recommendations to either include, exclude, or defer specific comments and suggestions based on their relevance to the CPPs or Comprehensive Plan.
- Finalize the review of the current CPP draft, making any necessary revisions before the next phase of the update process.
- Provide guidance on recommendations for the Comprehensive Plan updates at a future date, ensuring alignment with Mason County's long-term planning goals.