

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - October 2, 2024

Roll Call

Chairperson Linda Martin called to order the Anacortes Planning Commission meeting of October 2, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners Jim Stoneman, William McCombs, Frank Jeretzky, Mike Mills and Luke Currier were present.

Commissioner Paul Ryan was absent.

Jim Stoneman moved to excuse Paul Ryan from meeting. William McCombs seconded. All Ayes.

Minutes

Minutes of 06/26/2024 were submitted for approval.

Jim Stoneman moved to approve the minutes of June 26, 2024 as submitted; Will McCombs seconded. All Ayes

Public Comment

There was no public comment taken.

Public Hearings

Other Business

Revised Skagit County 2045 Allocations of Population, Housing and Employment and Anacortes Land Capacity Analysis (2025 Comprehensive Plan Update)

John Coleman reviewed the upcoming Planning Commission meetings and topics that will be discussed. On October 30th, you'll hear from applicants that have requested Future Land Use Map (FLUM) amendments. Then there will be a public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan elements that have already come before the Planning Commission, which are the land use, housing and transportation goals and policies. We will also be looking for the Commission to make recommendations on the UGA annexation projects/FLUM.

Mr. Coleman moved on to the revised Skagit County population allocations. The numbers were updated due to the county being unable to accommodate the lower AMI growth projections. The overall population and employment projection numbers have not changed. The specific allocations in the various AMI ranges have changed. The 0-50% allocations are almost entirely accommodated in multifamily (MF) housing due to Department of Commerce updated language. Per the Growth Management Act, MF housing cannot be developed outside UGA's, so they have to be accounted for in the cities instead of the rural areas. Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) decided to eliminate the original housing allocations for Bayview Ridge and the Swinomish Tribe, so those figures were redistributed to the county and cities. This results in an additional 19 units needed in the 0-30% AMI and an additional 12 units in the 31-50% AMI; which resulted in decreasing the 120%+ AMI figures.

Frank Jeretzky wondered how accurate the figures were when we did the last Comprehensive Plan update 2 decades ago.

John Coleman clarified that the population projections from 2016 were projected to 2036. We are on target for those figures. The county has been consistently using the median figures.

Linda Martin said the population growth is based on solid data and methodology. The population is projected to grow by more than 27% and jobs are projected to grow by 33% in the next 20 years.

Mr. Coleman said now that we have the final population allocations, we can move on to the land capacity analysis. We had a presentation on May 22nd. The consultants double-checked some figures and measured them against land capacity and current zoning designations and determined that the 31 additional units did not change our ability to accommodate that growth. At the current zoning standards, we need to be able to accommodate 2942 units, and we have the capacity for 3589 new units. We have enough land without

changing zoning or increasing the UGA to accommodate the projected growth. There were some questions about developable and partially developable land, especially in the Skyline area, that were shown as re-developable, but those were all recently built-out with single family homes. Staff did not agree that these are truly re-developable, so that was updated.

Linda Martin said she reviewed version 3 from May 28th. The previous capacity showed more units available. There are 780 less units available. She wondered if that was all because of Skyline.

John Coleman agreed. If these are removed from being listed as re-developable, they will remain SFR and the figures reflect that. Staff understands this is a huge change.

Linda Martin referenced page 6, regarding the net new housing units needed. Even though the 31 units doesn't seem like much, it added 19 units to 0-30% AMI, not the 0-50% AMI range. She asked for clarification between permanent supported housing and non-permanent supported housing.

Mr. Coleman gave the example of the Anacortes Family Center as permanent supported housing that comes with support staff for those residents. Non-permanent supported housing is just the housing provided by an agency, but does not include services. An example of this is Anacortes Housing Authority. Emergency housing is not considered permanent housing.

Linda Martin asked if the reference to Port Orchard on page 22, table 17 should reference Anacortes.

Jim Stoneman pointed out that the staff report says Anacortes is already zoned to meet the goals. He wonders if there's a need to change anything.

Mr. Coleman stated that depends on the goals of the Planning Commission and City Council. Technically, we don't need to do anything. There's nothing stopping us from having more land in certain areas so that we have a "surplus". He reminded everyone that we can't go below those figures.

Mike Mills referenced page 6, a list of County use codes that are excluded from our analysis. He asked why #150 is excluded. He understands the others as they are not useful for housing. Whereas #150 is suitable for housing.

John Coleman said he is not sure if we have mobile home parks in Anacortes.

Mike Mills commented that if these don't exist in Anacortes, there's none to exclude.

John Coleman said staff will review this.

Mike Mills moved on to page 7 referencing "common areas of condominiums". He thinks this should also include Homeowners Associations.

Libby Grage clarified that we excluded common areas of condos and other developments that have shared open spaces, native growth protection easements, etc. We can make sure they are correct.

Mike Mills pointed out on page 10, the MJB property should be purple and that is not on the map.

John Coleman said staff will correct that.

Mike Mills mentioned that "figure 15" on page 20 is repeated and needs to be removed.

Linda Martin stated that figure 18 includes the old housing needs figures and should be updated.

Mike Mills wondered if staff should add total figures to the various tables.

Mr. Coleman said that can be added.

Land Use & Housing Element Goals & Policies - continued discussion (2025 Comprehensive Plan Update)

Libby Grage said she will be reviewing the land use goals and policies.

Linda Martin referenced page 44 in the packet as the starting point. In LU 2.1 D, "character" was not removed. She commented that "character" is being removed in the rest of the document. She understands that this is different, so she wonders if there's better language to use for maritime character.

Libby Grage pointed out that "qualities" could be used.

Commissioner Martin said she loves the new language in LU 2.2 B.

John Coleman pointed out that Housing Affordability Community Services (HACS) had a presentation from a group that is requesting continued support of disabled persons in our Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Grage clarified that language was moved from LU 4.5 which is proposed to be removed as it's being consolidated in other policies.

Linda Martin moved on to LU 3.2, stating it seems to come to an abrupt end. She recommends adding something to the effect of "historic and cultural resources". She also asked for clarification on "air rights swap".

Libby Grage stated she will need to check.

Mr. Coleman commented that this is in reference to air rights related to airports and aerial navigation. He reviewed RCW 14.12.

Libby Grage agreed that applies to areas around the airport. This section is aimed at historic resources and structures, so it may be recommending purchasing the air rights over one building so those are preserved and then get an additional benefit on another development. She will check into this and report back.

Linda Martin said LU 4.5 is proposed to be removed, but those items seem to be covered in LU 4.2.

Commissioner Mills asked why the recommendation is to extend LU 5.1 instead of making the goal to complete it.

Linda Martin stated that "extend" is practical as there are many steps that need to happen to complete it.

John Coleman pointed out that the additional language in 5.1 talks about completing the trail.

Jim Stoneman referenced LU 6.1 A stating he prefers the original language. In his opinion, the new language makes this confusing.

Mr. Coleman said the "all residential districts" language implies only residential zoning designations. This change allows for expansion of the definition beyond just residential zones. This comes from State language when the ADU codes were updated.

Libby Grage clarified that currently code allows for an ADU on any lot that contains a SFR, so it's not restricted by zoning.

Commissioner Martin moved on to LU 6.1 B, C & D suggesting that these need their own conversations.

John Coleman said that regarding A & B, the specificity stands out. Comprehensive Plans are supposed to be broad, instead of calling out specific lot sizes and zones.

Linda Martin stated that medium density is equivalent to R3 and Old Town.

Ms. Grage said Old Town is it's own designation.

Mike Mills asked if the metrics for Old Town are consistent with medium density.

Libby Grage said they are similar. She reviewed the density requirements for Old Town and the medium density areas. Staff will clarify this.

Commissioner Mills recommends clarifying which zones are included and which are not.

John Coleman pointed out there are definitions. The broader categories are residential low density 1, which just includes the R1 zone. Then there is residential low density 2, which includes the R2 and R2A zones.

Residential medium density includes R3 and R3A (although this is not currently mapped) and lastly, residential high density. Attachment B shows land use designation and implementing zoning designations.

Linda Martin said she would like to come back to LU 6.1 and discuss those at a later time. She moved on to LU 6.3 which proposes to remove floor area ratio.

Libby Grage pointed out that in the past the Planning Commission decided not to move forward with the concept of floor area ratio due to complexity. The proposed change cleans up the policy.

Commissioner Martin referenced the new policy at the end of LU 7.1 asking what "partial pedestrianization" would look like.

Libby Grage clarified it could look like closing certain streets to vehicular traffic. For example, closing 4th or 5th Streets West of Commercial Ave so it's more of a pedestrian area where people could gather.

Frank Jeretzky asked how strengthening the visual appearance would work. He wonders if this only applies to remodels or redevelopment of those buildings. He asked how to motivate people to do that.

Libby Grage said this may look at codes that can affect how new development and redevelopment occurs. Having more of a pedestrian streetscape is the intent.

Mike Mills asked if this applies to signage as well.

Ms. Grage agreed. The last update removed "pole signs" as an option as they look cluttered and get in the way of street trees.

Will McCombs pointed out that LU 8.1 is redundant to LU 5.1 in regard to Guemes channel.

Linda Martin stated that the example given in LU 9.4 is not helpful.

John Coleman clarified that this adds indoor recreation. Staff wants to change industrial standards to allow for small indoor gyms. This language helps to support that idea. This language promotes smaller scale indoor recreation.

Commissioner McCombs said he likes this. This could include other services that are convenient for people in this area.

John Coleman asked if the Commissioners want to change LU 10.1 to multi-modal transportation.

Mike Mills commented that multi-modal includes more than just non-motorized. He recommended changing that.

Will McCombs asked what the intent is for LU 10.4.

Mr. Coleman stated they tried to clarify the existing policy. The Commissioners can suggest additional language to clarify.

Will McCombs pointed out that we have fantastic recreational amenities (trails, open space, water access, etc). There are hardly any places to go when the weather is inclement. He wonders if the policy is to create those spaces.

John Coleman clarified this is under the goal of promoting healthy communities which encourages healthy living & good connectivity between compatible uses.

Will McCombs expressed concern with the word "access". He asked if this is vehicle access or the opportunity for recreational amenities.

Linda Martin said there is a difference between increasing access and integrating public recreational amenities. She gave the example of the Pars course on Lopez Island that is open to the entire community, which shows integration.

Frank Jeretzky suggested changing it to "integrate and increase".

Will McCombs expressed concern that he's not sure what we are integrating or increasing.

Libby Grage commented that the change gives specificity to who is doing the integrating or increasing access. The original language doesn't specify if that is provided by private development or public.

Will McCombs said people want a place for kids to go when the weather is bad.

John Coleman reminded the Commissioners that they can change the language to "provide recreational opportunities for people during inclement weather".

Commissioner McCombs said he will draft new language.

Linda Martin referenced the Climate element, stating cities have the option to (1) have it stand on it's own or (2) integrate it with other elements.

Libby Grage said staff is not sure what that will look like, but it's coming back for your review. There will be a way to cross-reference.

John Coleman clarified that we are creating a separate Climate element. The policies and intent of that is integrated into the rest of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Grage moved on to attachment B, the Future Land Use Map. The applicants will give presentations on October 30th regarding the proposed FLUM changes. She wondered if the Planning Commission would like to talk about this along with the land use section you tabled earlier.

Linda Martin suggested going through it quickly, but understanding that the Commission may want to review it at a later date.

Libby Grage said there are no changes proposed for residential low density designation.

Commissioner Martin suggested tweaking the language "under certain circumstances" since ADU's are allowed in all residential zones. She expressed concern that there are more hoops to go through for ADU's in this area.

Libby Grage stated that the Department Commerce put out new language regarding ADU's having to meet the critical areas regulations.

John Coleman pointed out that all development has to meet critical areas regulations in all zones. He understands this is redundant.

Will McCombs recommended removing the reference to ADU's since they are allowed per the new state law

in all residential zones. He doesn't think we need to call them out.

Linda Martin said it should either be included in all or removed. She moved on to residential low density 2, stating she understands removing "the established character of the area", but recommends saying "character" another way. The character of the area does matter.

Frank Jeretzky recommended using "equivalent curb appeal to the existing homes in the area".

Linda Martin suggested using "established qualities".

Will McCombs said "similar qualities and style" could be used instead of character.

John Coleman stated what they are trying to achieve is describing the area. It's not about what should or shouldn't be there. He recommended "existing lower density land uses" for the stricken language.

Commissioner Martin said she prefers "similar quality and style" just because this is about mostly established neighborhoods and their flavor.

Libby Grage said staff can bring back some ideas for this one.

Linda Martin referenced page 2 for residential low density 2. The permitted density that's listed in each area don't match up to the land use summary document.

Libby Grage clarified that this states a range of densities and then each specific zone has a maximum density within that range. The land use analysis used an assumed density for each zone to determine the capacity for housing. Part of how the land capacity analysis was developed was to look at past trends and what density was actually built, which could account for the disparity.

Linda Martin moved on to Old Town. This section has the language about "certain circumstances".

Ms. Grage stated this is to provide room for adding specific design standards for these housing types to be compatible in these zoning designations. It was left as a broad placeholder for that reason.

Linda Martin pointed out it's "by right" in the other designations, but Old Town and L1 seem like they are special places. She moved on to residential high density. The proposal adds permitted densities.

Libby Grage clarified this proposes a minimum density for new development in the high density areas for lots that are 6000 sq ft or more.

Linda Martin said there are no proposed changes to CBD, Commercial, Marine Mixed Use; and one minor change to Commercial Marine to remove a designation that doesn't exist. There's no change to Light Manufacturing, Manufacturing & Shipping, and Industrial.

John Coleman pointed out that in Industrial we need to determine if we want to allow for the broad uses you discussed in the goals and policies section; such as indoor recreation. Staff will review this to make sure that goal is supported.

Linda Martin said Heavy Manufacturing had no proposed changes. She reviewed the changes to Public Use.

Libby Grage clarified these changes are a requirement from HB1181. The public green space needs to be added in along with a definition. This is for properties that are less than one acre in size. She referenced the note, which requires jurisdictions to designate lands that are urban and community forests. We are looking to see if they need their own land use designation or if they can be incorporated into an existing designation. Staff will bring additional information to the Planning Commission.

Commissioner Martin moved on to Aeronautical zone. There were no concerns from the Commissioners.

Libby Grage said the last thing to review are the housing goals and policies.

Mike Mills asked what is included in the H1.3, medium density residential. He wonders if this includes Old Town.

Mr. Coleman stated technically it is not because Old Town is its own designation.

Linda Martin wondered if this allows duplexes and townhomes in R1.

Libby Grage said staff will look at that.

John Coleman clarified the HAP recommendations included cottages in R1, but not duplexes or townhomes.

Mike Mills expressed concern at incorporating more and more "by right" while avoiding conditional uses.

That's a broad statement.

John Coleman pointed out that City Council recommended this and it was docketed.

Linda Martin brought up H1.4 regarding tiny houses. The recommendation from the City Council planning

committee was to eliminate tiny houses from the discussion.

John Coleman said he is unsure if we are required by the state to include tiny houses. If not, he recommends removing it.

Commissioner McCombs asked if tiny homes are a bad idea.

Libby Grage expressed her understanding that Council is not saying they don't want to consider them, but given the limited capacity to complete the update, they provided a list that they consider priorities.

Will McCombs commented that if we are increasing density, this is one way to do it. If we are considering cottages, we should also look at tiny homes.

Frank Jeretzky asked what the difference is between them.

Ms. Grage clarified we have a definition for cottages in our code, but don't have one for tiny homes.

Linda Martin said we have the capacity for the density we are required to have and growth we are projecting. Affordable housing is always the question. She wonders if tiny homes are the way to get to affordability.

Luke Currier referenced page 23 in HAP, which has the definition of tiny homes.

John Coleman reminded the Commissioners that tiny homes are also used as a form of permanent supported housing in other jurisdictions, so he recommends being cautious if recommending removal.

Jim Stoneman said it should be kept, especially since it only says to considered them.

Linda Martin commented that in H1.7 and other places, "high opportunity areas" is used. If we are keeping this language it needs to be defined. In H1.8, she recommends striking only "character" instead of striking "enhance neighborhood character". She moved on to H1.9 asking if the Commissioners like the existing or proposed language.

Mr. Coleman clarified that we have a few projects that fit into this, so we are no longer demonstrating the projects. This is to encourage innovative housing.

Linda Martin circled back to the new policy regarding allowing by right versus CUP. Conditional uses allow the community to provide input as compared to permitted by right.

Libby Grage clarified that the CUP process has specific criteria in code. If the applicant meets those criteria, they are approved.

John Coleman said the CUP process can be misleading to the community. They come out in droves when they don't like a proposal, but it ends up being allowed because it meets the criteria. This leads to frustration because people don't feel like they were heard.

Commissioner Mills stated he is not advocating that nothing is allowed by right, but there needs to be a balance. Public input is essential on some projects.

John Coleman said CUP's require a lot of staff time coordinating public meetings, several staff meetings, hearings, etc. This can be an extensive process.

Linda Martin expressed concern that it feels like this is either / or. She wonders if there is a way to allow the public to feel heard without the CUP process.

Will McCombs agreed that the public wants a voice. People don't like surprises in their neighborhoods. He wonders if the CUP process can be streamlined.

Libby Grage pointed out that other jurisdictions have administrative decisions for CUP's.

Mike Mills is concerned about moving the line too far. He understands the need to make some of this easier for the applicant by changing to by right. He's concerned about making it all by right.

John Coleman said there is a new policy that supports incremental changes. These could go hand in hand.

Linda Martin recommended stopping at "new policy" and discussing the rest at the next meeting. The Commissioners agreed.

Housing Action Plan (HAP) Recommended Development Regulation Changes - continued discussion (2025 Comprehensive Plan Update)

This item was tabled to a future meeting.

Planning Department Update

John Coleman stated that there is nothing new to report since the last meeting.

Adjournment

Linda Martin adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m.