

Anacortes Planning Commission Minutes - August 27, 2025

Roll Call

Chairperson Linda Martin called to order the Anacortes Planning Commission meeting of August 27, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. Commissioners Jim Stoneman, Frank Jeretzky, Paul Ryan, Luke Carrier, and Mike Mills were present. Jim Stoneman moved to excuse Will McCombs, Paul Ryan seconded. All ayes.

Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes

There were no minutes submitted for approval.

Public Comment

No comment received.

Public Hearings

2025 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Public Hearing on the Draft Proposed 2025-2045

Comprehensive Plan

John Coleman gave an overview of the Comprehensive Plan process to date. It is a required update per the Growth Management Act (GMA). It looks at the next 20-years of projected growth, 2025-2045. We are required to project the increase in population, housing, and jobs that we will need to accommodate over the next 20 years. In 2024, the County looked at their growth projections and determined how much of that growth will go to each community in Skagit County. We are expecting just under 5000 new residents in the 20-year period. We looked at our population growth and that is similar to past growth. To accommodate those residents we need 2942 homes and 3145 jobs. The land capacity analysis determined that we have enough space to accommodate the growth without expanding into the UGA. He reminded everyone that the numbers are just projections, not targets. This is so we can be prepared to accommodate the growth. We want to avoid unplanned growth so that our sewer, water, transportation, etc systems can accommodate that growth. The Comprehensive Plan is the vision statement on how we want the community to look in 20 years. We will also update the development regulations to implement the Comprehensive Plan changes. Staff is tasked with balancing what the community wants with the regulations from the state and the GMA. For example, Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) regulations changed at the state level; there's a new Climate element to the Comprehensive Plan. We have to make sure that we have a variety of zoning to accommodate the growth. We need a mix of housing types for a mix of income levels. The Department of Commerce provided information about housing types based on the area median income (AMI). We need to have zoning and policies in place to accommodate a variety of housing types; such as, duplex, triplex, ADU's, cottages, etc. The public comment period was supposed to be closed tomorrow, but we are keeping it open until staff brings the development regulations to the Planning Commission.

Libby Grage said the purpose of tonight's hearing is for the public to provide input on the Comprehensive Plan. She reviewed the background of the Comprehensive Plan and the elements included in the plan. The GMA has 15 planning goals that are the framework for developing the Comprehensive Plan. The last Comprehensive Plan update was 2016 and the development regulations were updated in 2019. This update is also to make sure that our policies are consistent with state law. There are some mandatory requirements for the update; including the growth projections, changes in state law and consistency between elements and regulations. She reviewed the growth projections for population, employment and housing. She reviewed the projected housing needs by income band. Anacortes' greatest need is for additional housing in the 0-30% AMI. In addition to the mandatory updates, we also have resolution 3161 in which the City Council docketed a list of development regulations and Comprehensive Plan amendments. Also included are policy revisions to housing, walkability, and historic preservation. There were also citizen-initiated Future Land

Use Map changes and UGA boundary changes requested by the City to bring additional land into the Anacortes Community Forest Lands. The draft development regulations will soon be published for review. These include the zoning regulations, permitted uses, subdivision standards, parking, etc. The Critical Areas regulations are also going to be updated. We hired a consulting firm to look at best available science to see what has changed since the last update. We should have the draft available soon. There will also be public engagement and a public review process. The Comprehensive Plan and development regulations are to be adopted by December 31, 2025 and the Critical Areas by December 31, 2026.

Ms. Grage reviewed the process to date. Phase 1 included information gathering; analysis; public outreach; climate team meetings and review; draft goals and policy amendments released; Planning Commission meetings; public comment on goals & policies for each element and FLUM changes. All of these went through public comment. Staff then compiled the complete draft Comprehensive Plan (volume 1 & 2). This is where we are! She reviewed the upcoming Planning Commission meeting schedule. She reviewed ways to provide comments.

Public hearing opened

Vicki Stasch, Anacortes, referenced the housing element. She supports the need for all types of housing. She has worked with all types of people and sees a large need for the "middle area", such as, families and seniors wanting to downsize. We have good examples of variety of housing already being developed. She encouraged the city to move forward in that direction. Don't want to continue to be known as "can't afford us".

Stan Shimkus, Anacortes, expressed concerned because there are vacant lots around his property. He understands that the zoning on the vacant lots could be changed from residential to multi-family (MF) He is not quite sure what that means. He expressed concern about the lack of upkeep on vacant lots.

Ron Johnson, Anacortes, pointed out that he submitted written comments. He expressed concern that the state government is trying to discourage business and investment in the state, so he's not sure the growth predictions are still accurate.

Mark Lione, Anacortes, said he owns a small business. His workers have a difficult time finding places to live in Anacortes. He said it's important to allow for affordable housing.

Heather McPhail, Anacortes, stated she supports a few policies; such as H-46 Emergency shelters, especially for youth. There are over 200 children that are couch-surfing in Anacortes. That shouldn't happen. She also supports T2.32 & T2.33. I would have to walk over a mile to get to a bus stop close to my home.

Mary Stahl, Anacortes, said she has questions about a particular piece of property. She's heard that they want to develop a triplex there. That would be out of character if that were developed. She's not against housing, but not if we are sacrificing the surrounding neighborhood.

Pat Barrett, Anacortes, stated he echos Mark's comments regarding housing. He is active in the community and businesses. The biggest risk to small business in this town is housing. We can't hire workers because they cannot afford to live here. Employees are having trouble finding a rental. We need more small, single-person housing. He appreciates changing the Olson building to CBD as proposed in the update.

Dustin Johnson, Anacortes Family Center Director, commented there is a need for more access to housing for low-income people. Senior citizens can't afford to downsize to age in place. Medium income range equates to a person making \$20-25 per hour. We want those people to be able to live here. We don't really have the ability for families to move here, so registration rates for the schools is dropping. He recommends making planning easier especially at the lower income levels; reduce the barriers to affordable housing.

Tarn Ohana, Anacortes, commented he loves the planacortes website. We need more homes of different types everywhere in the city. He expressed concern about putting high-density housing on high-transportation corridors due to safety concerns. We should be capable of handling transportation without needing to operate a motor vehicle. He feels that goal H2 is wish washy. He referenced T-1.10 regarding damage to the road surface is dependent on the weight of the vehicles traveled. We really need a goal to reduce vehicle miles traveled per person. He does not agree that we should invest in public parking referenced in T3.22.

Darlene Follett, Anacortes, works with intellectually disabled persons. Group housing is not available for these individuals. The housing need for this type of person is usually an ADU, or small home due to the requirement for non-group home setting. We need more affordable housing. Excited that the Habitat for Humanity houses are being built, but many people still don't qualify for them. We need more housing in those income levels. She expressed concern about the lack of services for children.

Marlene Finley, Anacortes, representing Evergreen Islands (non-profit). She pointed out that they submitted written comments. We have been actively participating in this process. Although there have been several comments provided, we are not seeing the staff responses to those. In the Climate element, she wants the city to take a leadership role for the March Point refineries. Although they are not within the city limits, they are within the UGA and have emissions that affect Anacortes. She's worried that there is not good coordination between the city and the county for the refineries. Another concern of hers is infill on undeveloped parcels. She wants to see stormwater and sewer capacity to accommodate that development. Michelle Shaw, Anacortes, said pedestrian safety is a concern due to increase in growth. Walking into town is not feasible for many residents.

Sarah Roberts, Anacortes, stated she supports a lot of the comments tonight about housing. She expressed concern that we won't actually get the lower and mid-income housing without incentivizing developers. She would like to see more mixed housing instead of stratifying the housing. This could result in lower crime too. She would like more access to parks, shopping and schools. She would like more trees required in development.

Terry Schoenthal, Anacortes, pointed out that we have 100's of people who work here everyday that cannot afford housing here. We really need lots of different housing types. Housing becomes more affordable when more homes are developed. He would prefer avoiding the conditional use process whenever possible. He recommends removing the hurdles to construction. The way to avoid "nimby" is to permit outright. Development will change over time. He reminded everyone that Anacortes has changed over time.

Kris Yaun, Anacortes, local developer. He said he understands the concerns raised, but Anacortes has changed over time. Regarding affordability, we need to determine who this is affordable for. He stated that the costs of development have substantially increased, especially MF housing. He recommends reducing permit fees for MF housing. As a builder, he can't provide low & mid-housing due to the costs of construction.

Trina Wherry, Anacortes, agrees that we need vision and a goal to figure out where we are going. We need affordable housing. We need to be able to provide housing for people that work in Anacortes.

Betsy Braun, Anacortes, said she's excited about this draft plan. She referenced barriers to development stating she lives on a parcel that has a covenant that restricts development. She knows it is not being followed because development is happening. She recommends reviewing and removing those covenants when possible. She expressed concern that the draft plan is difficult to follow.

Jordan Hay, Downtown Anacortes Alliance Board, said she strongly supports gathering places, workforce housing, pedestrian-friendly streets, and the creative district.

Linda Martin clarified that the public comment period will remain open.

Libby Grage pointed out that tonight's packet contains a supplemental staff report regarding the amendment requests for the Olson building and the Museum property.

Other Business

Planning Department Update

John Coleman said there is no department update.

Linda Martin pointed out that there is a meeting on September 9th regarding housing.

John Coleman stated that is the NorthStar symposium to talk about the importance of housing. There is a correlation between affordable housing and homelessness.

The Commissioners reviewed the upcoming schedule and their availability.

Adjournment

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Chairperson Martin adjourned the meeting at 7.28p.m.