

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: David Stalheim, Whatcom Environmental Council

LINK: www.whatcomenvirocouncil.org or whatcomec@gmail.com

To Ensure Affordable Housing, Prevent Sprawl, and Protect Drinking Water, Whatcom Environmental Council Appeals Provisions of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan That Fail to Comply with the Growth Management Act

BELLINGHAM, WA — The Whatcom Environmental Council (WEC) announced today that it has filed an appeal under the [Washington State Growth Management Act \(GMA\)](#). The appeal highlights critical failures to ensure affordable, transit-oriented development and watershed protection in the City of Bellingham’s Comprehensive Plan adopted by Council in December.

“Bellingham has committed to accommodating a greater share of Whatcom County’s future population growth, and we applaud that commitment” said David Stalheim of the [Whatcom Environmental Council](#). “Making sure that the City’s plan lives up to the City’s commitment is essential to protecting our rural areas, forests and wildlife, and agricultural lands while focusing our tax dollars on efficient roads, sewers, police and fire service, and other city services in urban areas, as we reduce wasteful sprawl.”

Unfortunately, the City’s plan misses the mark on climate and conservation goals. WEC points out that the plan needs to provide for increased housing densities while protecting the environment:

- **Misaligned Growth:** The plan fails to adequately direct more housing and development to areas served by frequent transit and accessible bike routes. Without this focus, the City risks missing [greenhouse gas emission targets](#) and inadvertently encourages sprawl.
- **Threats to Drinking Water:** WEC is deeply concerned that the plan accommodates excessive development in the [Lake Whatcom Watershed](#), the primary drinking water source for over 100,000 residents. This move contradicts years of community effort to pass watershed protection ordinances.

“This is a step backward,” Stalheim continued. “After years of the community drafting language to protect our drinking water, this plan weakens those safeguards.”

This is the City’s chance to provide for transit-oriented, affordable housing while protecting water quality and reducing sprawl into agricultural land and natural areas. The next Plan Update is not for ten years, so WEC is acting **now** to help ensure our community moves forward on affordability and quality of life.

Follow our appeal and other WEC efforts on behalf of our community at:

www.whatcomenvirocouncil.org.

About Whatcom Environmental Council:

The WEC is a grassroots organization dedicated to ensuring that local land-use decisions prioritize ecological health, climate resilience, and the protection of natural resources.