

Whitman County

Comprehensive Plan Update

Virtual Public Meeting #3



June 30, 2021



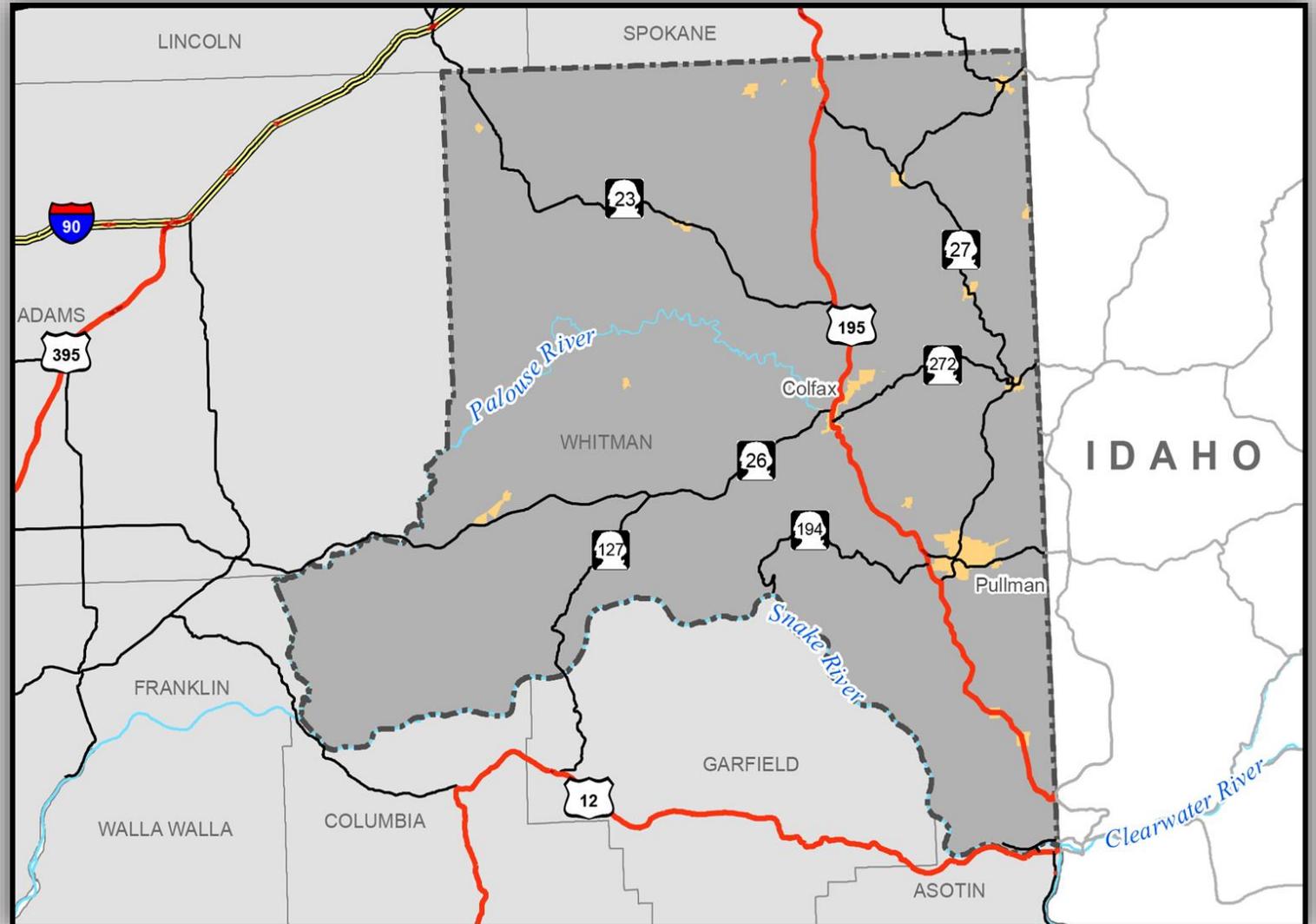
Welcome!

Introductions:

- Matt Covert, Planner
- Todd Hall, Planning Manager

- Alan Thomson, County Planner
- Mark Storey, County Public Works Director

LDC | Surveying
Engineering
Planning



Why does Whitman County need a Comprehensive Plan?

- Washington State Growth Management Act (1990) (RCW 36.70A) – management of land and resources
- Whitman County is **NOT** a fully planning county under the GMA. Only **required** plan topics are **Critical Areas and Natural Resource Lands**.
- **Critical Areas (Environmental Quality)** = Wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife conservation areas, climate change, etc.
- **Natural Resource and Agricultural Conservation** = forestry, agriculture, fisheries, and mining

- By choice, Whitman County is also planning for the following elements:
 - Land Use
 - Transportation
 - Economic Development
 - Public Services
 - Facilities & Utilities (including renewable energy)
 - Parks, Trails, & Recreation



Washington State
Department of
Commerce

What issues are included in the Comprehensive Plan?

Introduction



Land use, Natural Resources & Agricultural Conservation



Transportation



Parks, Trails, and Recreation



Economic Development



Environmental Protection & Climate Change



Public Services, Facilities and Utilities



Land Use

Goals, objectives, policies, and actions supporting the kinds of uses that should be protected, emphasized, and encouraged as the county changes over the next 20 years

Analysis of existing population and land use:

- Agriculture
- Rural residential
- Urban and Suburban residential
- Industrial
- Commercial

Analysis of future development and uses:

- Future of cluster zoning in Pullman area
- Siting of renewable energy facilities
- Further development of Pullman/Moscow corridor
- Commercial and residential uses within ag zone

RCW 36.70A.040 and .060 – Requirements for partially planning counties and cities (including Whitman County)

- Counties not fully planning under the GMA must still designate critical areas and natural resource lands and adopt development regulations that protect these resources
- Whitman County Code of Ordinances – Title 9 (Environment) and Title 19 (Zoning) contain regulations protecting these resources



Land Use

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECTION OF PRIVATE PROPERTY RIGHTS

All policies and decisions made by the County, and as guided by the Comprehensive Plan, will strive to protect fundamental property rights of individuals and ensure that Whitman County land use policies and regulations balance the private property rights of all landowners to the degree possible.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE RURAL CHARACTER AND FAMILY FARMS

Preserve and protect the county's rural character, which includes productive agricultural lands, large open spaces, and sweeping views of the Palouse hills. This preservation of rural character shall not only include the county's scenic beauty but also the protection and sustainability of the rural way of life, providing opportunities for employment, income and a tax base while also limiting growth to rural community centers (RCC's) and near urban centers.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE AND PROTECT EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCES

In cooperation with farmers, businesses, landowners and State and Federal partners, preserve and protect natural resources, which will reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce flooding and other natural disasters.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – EFFECTIVE LAND USE PLANNING

Develop countywide goals and policies that promote effective and consistent land use decisions that are responsive to local growth but also protect the unique character of Whitman County.

Land Use

GOAL LU-1

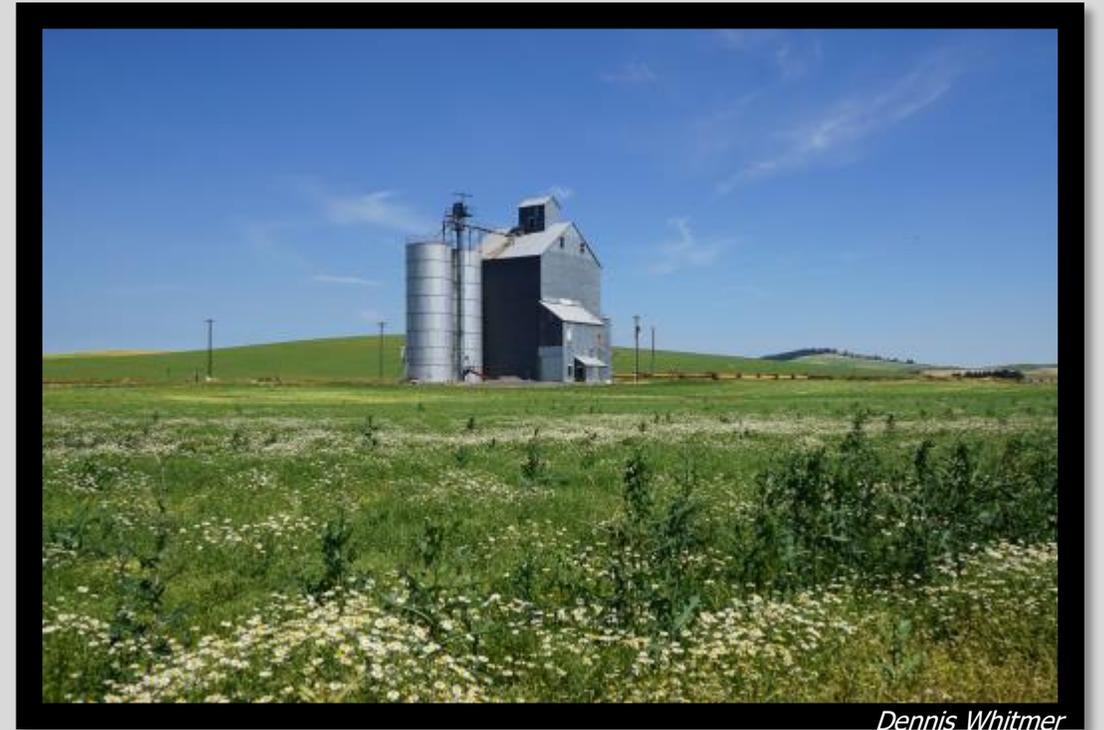
Preserve productive agricultural land and the family farm as the primary social and economic base of Whitman County by minimizing conversion of agricultural land to other uses.

Policy LU 1.1 – The County shall maintain, to the greatest extent feasible, an up-to-date map of agricultural land and prime agricultural land in the County to accurately assess impacts of proposed land use changes.

Policy LU 1.2 – Non-farm residential uses should be kept separate from agricultural uses to the maximum extent feasible to prevent increasing the legal liability of agricultural uses.

Policy LU 1.3 – The county shall prohibit residential subdivision of lands in all unincorporated areas except designated unincorporated communities and those areas designated for Cluster Residential development.

Policy LU 1.4 – The county should discourage non-agricultural residential land use on agricultural lands, except in cases where a rural accessory dwelling unit is permitted and except those areas designated for Cluster Residential development.



Dennis Whitmer

Policy LU 1.5 – The county should require that all levels of governments and their agencies consider the impact their programs and projects may have on agricultural activities and seek to minimize any impacts that threaten the viability of agriculture and the family farm.

Policy LU 1.6 – The county should create a conditional use process to allow for rural accessory residential uses within the footprint of existing farm home sites to allow flexibility for farm residents and strengthen family farm enterprises.

Land Use

GOAL LU-2

Allow and encourage development of compatible businesses in agricultural areas to serve farmers as well as to diversify employment opportunities in the region.

Policy LU 2.1 – The county should encourage creative, compatible, and beneficial use of resource lands other than agriculture to supplement the income of farm families. Such uses may include: tourism, mining, quarrying, boating, hunting/fishing, recreation, nursery, and renewable energy development.

Policy LU 2.2 – The county should allow and encourage home-based businesses as an accessory use in agricultural and rural residential areas through administrative use or conditional use permits, depending on the extent of potential impact on surrounding properties.



Policy LU 2.3 – The county should encourage the development of renewable energy facilities where appropriate and in accordance with viewshed policies and regulations. *Proposed policy on renewable energy. Viewshed issue gives the county the ability to evaluate viewshed regulations at a later date.*

Land Use

GOAL LU-3

Provide limited, low-density living opportunities in unincorporated areas on non-agricultural lands for individual households whose needs are not addressed by land use opportunities within incorporated areas.

Policy LU 3.1 – The county should continue supporting Rural Community zoning in unincorporated communities and evaluate whether the existing areas with these zoning designations are sufficient to meet demand.

Goal LU-4

Discourage urban and suburban development outside incorporated areas in Whitman County, except within designated unincorporated communities and those areas designated by the Plan as suitable for Cluster Residential zoning districts.

Policy LU 4.1 – The county should prohibit urban and suburban development outside incorporated areas (except within designated rural communities and areas zoned for cluster residential) through prohibiting plats (subdivisions) and short ^{Whitmer} plats of more than two lots (inclusive of the original parcel) for residential land use within the agriculture district.

Environmental Protection and Climate Change

With its steep hills and valleys and winding streams, Whitman County's environmental resources provide essential services and habitat.

Critical areas include:

- Wetlands
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Fish & wildlife habitat conservation areas
- Frequently flooded areas
- Geologically hazardous areas

The County updated its critical areas regulations in 2019 to reflect the best available science and comply with requirements from state agencies. This gave a strong head start, so the Plan's critical areas policies are updated to reflect this.

Additionally, with its reliance on dryland agriculture and low to moderate rainfall, Whitman County is vulnerable to the effects of climate change and can take important policy steps to support actions to mitigate climate change.



Environmental Protection & Climate Change

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PROTECT ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY AND RESPOND TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Anticipate and respond to impacts related to climate change by exploring and adopting land use strategies that foster the protection of clean air and water, fish and wildlife habitats, and healthy and productive ecosystems.

FRAMEWORK GOAL – PRESERVE AND PROTECT EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCES

In cooperation with farmers, businesses, landowners and State and Federal partners, preserve and protect natural resources, which will reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce flooding and other natural disasters.



Environmental Protection & Climate Change

GOAL EP-1

Maintain or improve air and water quality.

Policy EP 1.1 – The county should work with state and federal agencies to monitor air and water quality to ensure that regulations are working as intended.

GOAL EP-2

Minimize degradation of existing natural resources where feasible, and preserve critical environmental areas where designated.

Policy EP 2.1 – The county should work with state and federal agencies to monitor air and water quality to ensure that regulations are working as intended.



Environmental Protection & Climate Change

Goal EP-3

Use best available science to guide and regularly update development regulations.

Policy EP-3.1 – The county should coordinate with and monitor guidance produced by state and federal agencies that could affect how up-to-date the county’s development regulations are.

Policy EP-3.2 – The county should consider refining the use of SEPA by raising the threshold exemptions for when SEPA is required to account for the development of detailed and effective critical areas regulations. The State Environmental Policy Act of 1973 placed a requirement on both local government and private developers to conduct environmental reviews of all significant actions. In the last Comprehensive Plan Revision, it was determined that overall County policies should be developed for guiding use of SEPA as a tool for local decision-making. Consequently, it was determined that actions having a significant impact on water resources, critical environmental areas, or agriculture should all be given closer evaluation at the local level through the SEPA process. However, the creation of critical areas regulations and other elements of the development regulations make SEPA less useful for small projects or developments with limited impact beyond what is already mitigated through the development regulations.



Environmental Protection & Climate Change

GOAL CC-1

Encourage the development of long-term, sustainable and renewable energy generation within Whitman County.

Policy CC 1.1 – The county should ensure that viewshed regulations do not unnecessarily hamper the development of future commercial wind energy projects.

Policy CC 1.2 – The county should ensure that development regulations related to facilities and utilities allow for and encourage upgrades to the electric grid, including battery storage and aquifer storage and recovery (ASR) where appropriate, that are key to developing sustainable renewable energy generation in Whitman County.



Environmental Protection & Climate Change

GOAL CC-2

Encourage rapid build-out of electric vehicle infrastructure.

Policy CC 2.1 – The county should work with cities, the Port of Whitman, Washington State University, and other private partners to coordinate build-out of electric vehicle charging stations at institutional property county-wide.

Policy CC 2.2 – The county should consider replacing aging vehicles with electric vehicles when appropriate and cost-effective.

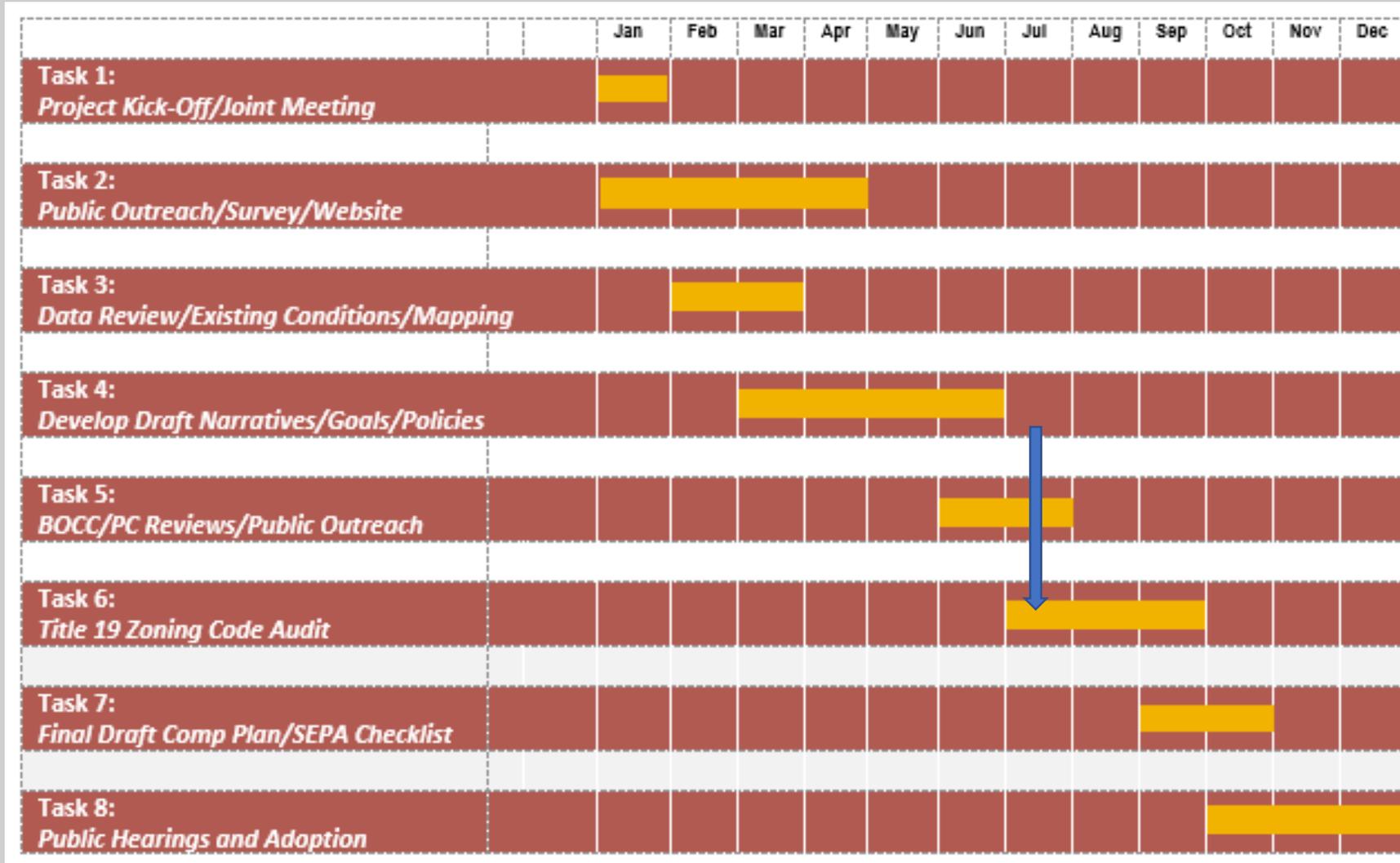
GOAL CC-3

Encourage multimodal transportation.

Policy CC 3.1 – The county should work with jurisdictions and community partners to appropriately site trails and paths where appropriate to encourage travel by ways other than private automobile.



Whitman County Comprehensive Plan - Next Steps



This is the last of three virtual public meetings scheduled for the Comprehensive Plan update

LDC will work with county staff over the next 3 months to revise the plan and identify areas of the development regulations (zoning code) where updates may be needed to conform with the comprehensive plan

We will work on a final draft of the plan and a SEPA checklist by the end of Fall 2021, aiming to conduct public hearings and adopt the plan by the end of 2021

Thank you!

