

BEFORE THE WHITMAN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan was first adopted in 1960. It was updated in 1970 to address major changes, including Pullman's rapid growth at the time, development of industrial and commercial sites along the Snake River, and the creation of new County parks. In 1978, the Comprehensive Plan saw a more thorough update, assessing issues and adopting policies in three broad categories: land use, transportation, and coordination and plan implementation.
2. Since 1978, the Comprehensive Plan has received minor amendments over the years but has not seen a major update to reflect current issues, goals, and vision for the future.
3. The 2022 revision of the Comprehensive Plan serves as an opportunity to respond to recognized trends and anticipated changes and to produce a more accurate depiction of current conditions and assessment of service-related needs for residents.
4. The Comprehensive Plan has been developed pursuant to Chapter 36.70 of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the purpose of which is to authorize and describe how counties in Washington are to engage in planning activities. Specifically, this chapter, known as the "Planning Enabling Act.
5. The purpose and intent of the Planning Enabling Act is to provide the authority for, and the procedures to be followed in, guiding and regulating the physical development of a county or region through correlating both public and private projects and coordinating their execution with respect to all subject matters utilized in developing and servicing land, all to the end of assuring the highest standards of environment for living, and the operation of commerce, industry, agriculture and recreation, and assuring maximum economies and conserving the highest degree of public health, safety, morals and welfare. (RCW 36.70.010)

6. City and County planning in Washington is also governed by RCW 36.70A, known as the Growth Management Act (GMA). This law outlines planning requirements for all jurisdictions to coordinate development and growth, protect resources and the environment, and lay the groundwork for sustainable economic development and quality of life. Only some counties and the cities within those counties are required to “fully plan” under the GMA.
7. Whitman County, which is predominately rural and has experienced modest population growth, is identified as a “Partially Planning County” by the State of Washington. This means the County is not required to fully plan under the GMA. However, the GMA does require all counties (including Whitman County) to identify and protect resource lands and critical areas. Additionally, all counties must have development regulations (zoning and subdivision codes) that are consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan.
8. The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan is the primary policy document of the County, which decision-makers use to guide critical decisions on the overall operations, maintenance, and future development of the County.
9. The Whitman County Comprehensive Plan is organized into the following elements: Land Use, Natural Resources & Agricultural Conservation; Transportation; Parks, Recreation & Trails; Economic Development; Environmental Protection and Climate Change; and Facilities and Utilities.
10. These six elements are vital to the function of Whitman County. Each element contains a purpose statement and introduction, followed by findings and broadly defined goals that will help bring the Comprehensive Plan’s vision statement into focus. Each element also contains specific policies that will be used to guide the development or modification of standards and procedures that implement the Plan in Titles 9, 18, and 19 of the Whitman County Code.
11. On September 3, 2020, the County advertised in the Whitman County Gazette a notice to consultants to help with updating the Comprehensive Plan.
12. On November 30, 2020, the County hired LDC, Inc. from Woodinville, WA, to guide the Comprehensive Plan update.
13. On January 6, 2021, at a regularly scheduled Planning Commission meeting, the consultant introduced themselves and laid out a schedule for the Comprehensive Plan update. All three members of the Board of County Commissioners were present. The meeting was virtual through the Zoom App.
14. A resident survey was created and posted on the County webpage in January 2021. The objective of the survey was to help identify residents’ priorities for the future of the County. Over 300 responses were received.

15. On March 10, 2021, at a regular Planning Commission meeting, LDC gave a PowerPoint presentation to introduce the plan to update the Comprehensive Plan.
16. On April 21, 2021, LDC gave a PowerPoint presentation updating progress on the Plan. All three County Commissioners were present.
17. Three virtual “open house” public meetings were held on June 2, 16, and 30, 2021, to present work completed on the Plan and obtain feedback from the public.
18. After the three virtual open houses held in June, the Planning Commission conducted a number of workshops to go over the Plan line-by-line. Those workshops were held on July 7, August 4, September 1, September 15, October 6, November 3, November 17, December 1, December 15, 2021, January 5, January 19, and February 16, 2022.
19. As required by the State Environmental Policy Act, a SEPA Environmental Checklist for this non-project action was prepared, and a DNS (Determination of Nonsignificance) was issued on February 24, 2022. The comment period ended March 10, 2022, and no comment was received.
20. A legal notice regarding this hearing and the SEPA decision was published in the Whitman County Gazette on February 24, 2022, and another legal notice regarding the hearing was published in the Gazette on March 10, 2022.
21. Adopted into the record are a list of public comments received through the update process. (**See Exhibit 1**, Public comments)
22. On March 16, 2022, a public hearing was held by the Planning Commission and additional public comment was taken. (**See Exhibit 2**, Meeting minutes)
23. On March 16, 2022, the Whitman County Planning Commission unanimously approved the Findings of Fact and the Comprehensive Plan and made a motion to send the Findings of Fact to the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) with a recommendation that the BOCC approve the Comprehensive Plan as written.
24. On March 21, 2022, an unofficial transmittal containing the Comprehensive Plan and the Findings of Fact with the Planning Commission’s recommendation to approve the Plan was sent to the BOCC.
25. On April 4, 2022, the BOCC considered the Comprehensive Plan and the Planning Commission’s recommendation at a public meeting and decided to hold their own public hearing to further discuss the proposed Comprehensive Plan. The hearing was set for June 21, 2022.
26. On June 21, 2022, the BOCC held a public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan draft and made several changes to the draft.

27. In the Table of Contents under Chapter 2, Land Use, Natural Resources & Agricultural Conservation Element, and on page 20 under Railways and Railbanking, the word railbanking was changed from two words to one word.
28. On page 20 under Railways and Railbanking, some language was struck. At the end of the first paragraph the words **and those measures needed to keep the railroads viable** were eliminated. At the beginning of the second paragraph the following was inserted: **Railbanking is consistent with the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan** and the rest of the second paragraph and the entire third paragraph were eliminated.
29. All the maps, Maps 1-8, were amended. (**See Exhibit 3**, Map updates)
30. On page 35 in the Transportation section, Rose Creek Preserve Nature Trail was eliminated and Elberton Park Trails added.
31. On page 49 in the Parks, Recreation, and Trails section under Railbanking, the statement **consistent with the Whitman County Comprehensive Plan** was added and the words **a potential option for the County to explore** were eliminated. In the second paragraph the words **rails lines** were altered to read **rail lines**. The words **and Palouse to Cascades Trail** was added at the end of the third sentence under Railbanking with the remaining dialog eliminated.
32. On page 51 under Policy PR-4.2 the words **or abandoned** were eliminated.
33. On page 70 under the Environmental Protection and Climate Change section, under Policy CC-3.1, the words **Whitman County supports multi-modal alternatives that reduce harmful emissions** were added and the rest of the language was eliminated.
34. On page 77 under the Facilities and Utilities section, Policy F-6.1, the words **and improve or enhance the water supply** were added.