

**WHATCOM COUNTY
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**Capital Facility
Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

PROPOSED FINDINGS OF FACT AND REASONS FOR ACTION

Background Information

1. The proposal is to amend the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan) as follows:
 - a. Add the Central Plaza Public Defender Tenant Improvement project.
2. Notice of the subject amendments was submitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on August 6, 2021.
3. The SEPA Official determined on August 6, 2021 that the determination of non-significance (DNS) issued in 2020 for the Six-Year CIP update is sufficient for the subject amendments.
4. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was posted on the County website on August 11, 2021.
5. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing for the subject amendments was published in the Bellingham Herald on August 26, 2021.
6. Notice of the Planning Commission hearing was sent to the County's e-mail list on August 26, 2021.
7. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the subject amendments on September 9, 2021.
8. Pursuant to WCC 22.10.060(1), in order to approve the proposed comprehensive plan amendments the County must find all of the following:

- a. The amendment conforms to the requirements of the Growth Management Act, is internally consistent with the county-wide planning policies and is consistent with any interlocal planning agreements.
- b. Further studies made or accepted by the Department of Planning and Development Services indicate changed conditions that show need for the amendment.
- c. The public interest will be served by approving the amendment. In determining whether the public interest will be served, factors including but not limited to the following shall be considered:
 - i. The anticipated effect upon the rate or distribution of population growth, employment growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the comprehensive plan.
 - ii. The anticipated effect on the ability of the county and/or other service providers, such as cities, schools, water and/or sewer purveyors, fire districts, and others as applicable, to provide adequate services and public facilities including transportation facilities.
 - iii. Anticipated impact upon designated agricultural, forest and mineral resource lands.
- d. The amendment does not include or facilitate spot zoning.

Growth Management Act

9. The Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes planning goals in RCW 36.70A.020 to guide adoption of comprehensive plan amendments.
10. GMA planning goal # 12 is to "Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards" (RCW 36.70A.020(12)).
11. The subject amendments consist of updating the Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities for the 2021-2026 planning period by adding a tenant improvement project to accommodate staffing/meeting space needs of the Public Defender's Office. Updating the CIP is one step in the process of planning capital facilities, including general government buildings and sites, to serve the people of Whatcom County.

County-Wide Planning Policies

12. County-Wide Planning Policy K-1 indicates that, as part of the comprehensive planning process, the County must identify appropriate land for public facilities that meets the needs of the community including recreation, transportation and human service facilities.
13. The Six-Year CIP identifies such improvements as contemplated by the County Wide Planning Policies.

Interlocal Agreements

14. There are no known interlocal agreements relating to the subject amendments.

Further Studies/Changed Conditions

15. An updated Six-Year CIP was adopted for County owned or operated facilities in 2020. The subject proposal is a minor amendment to the CIP to address an identified need of the Public Defender's Office.

Public Interest

16. The goal of the Six-Year CIP for Whatcom County Facilities is to plan for County owned or operated facilities. Improving the Central Plaza building to meet the needs of the Public Defender's Office is in the public interest.

Spot Zoning

17. The subject proposal does not involve rezoning property.

PROPOSED CONCLUSION

The subject Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan amendments are consistent with the approval criteria in WCC 22.10.060.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon the above findings and conclusions, staff recommends approval of Exhibit A, amending the General Government Buildings and Sites Chapter of the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program for Whatcom County Facilities 2021-2026 (Appendix F of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan).