

November 2024

# DOUGLAS COUNTY 2046 Comprehensive Plan



## Frequently Asked Questions

### WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a long-term (20-year) document that articulates a community's vision through a series of goals, objectives, policies and strategies that guide day-to-day decisions of elected officials and local government staff. Comprehensive plans are used to guide growth and land development and are the basis for land use regulations. The most effective Comprehensive Plans are those that have the support of the broader community.

### WHAT IS THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)?

The Growth Management Act (GMA) is a series of state statutes, first adopted in 1990, that requires fast-growing cities and counties to develop a comprehensive plan to manage their population growth. Plans are required to meet a list of goals which include, but are not limited to, encouraging development in urban areas, reducing sprawl, protecting agricultural and rural areas and providing for all levels of housing. The GMA is primarily codified under Chapter 36.70A RCW, although it has been amended and added to in several other parts of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW).

### WHAT ARE THE REQUIREMENTS FOR GROWTH PLANNING IN DOUGLAS COUNTY?

Douglas County is considered a "fully planning county" which means it must comply with GMA requirements and adopt a Comprehensive Plan that sets the vision for growth in the unincorporated areas of Douglas County over the next 20 years. The County adopted its first plan under the GMA in 1995 which has been updated on various occasions. The plan must be periodically reviewed (every ten years) and, if needed, revised to respond to changes in state law and to address new information about land use, community needs, and population growth. The next major update to the Douglas County Comprehensive Plan is required to be completed by June 30, 2026.

### WHAT WILL THE UPDATE TO DOUGLAS COUNTY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ENTAIL?

The 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update will plan for population and employment growth through the year 2046. The County's Comprehensive Plan, and implementing regulations, will be updated to reflect state, regional, and local requirements as well as the community's priorities and vision. It will also conduct necessary updates to required elements listed in the table

on page 2. To complete this body of work, County staff will be reviewing and updating information and reaching out to residents, community groups, and businesses to inform, engage, and obtain input.

### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION AND ZONING?

Land use is determined by the County's comprehensive plan, which governs the future use of property within the boundaries of unincorporated Douglas County. Zoning, on the other hand, represents the current permissible uses of specific properties within the County. The Douglas County Comprehensive Plan assigns land use and zoning designations for every parcel within the unincorporated area. Zoning establishes where a building can be located on a property, how many homes are allowed based on the size of the property and permitted uses on each parcel. You can determine the land use and zoning for a parcel by visiting the County's mapping [webpage](#) and use the interactive parcel search function

### WHAT IS DOUGLAS COUNTY'S PROJECTED POPULATION BY 2046?

Douglas County's total projected 2046 population is approximately 54,762 people, an increase of 10,762 people over the 2022 population of 44,000. This includes residents living in urban growth areas (cities and unincorporated UGAs). Current estimates show about 82% of Douglas County residents live in urban growth areas, with the remaining 18% in rural areas. This means that approximately 2,000 new people (about 100 per year) will move into unincorporated Douglas County over the next 20 years.

### WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND WHAT GEOGRAPHIC AREA DOES IT COVER?

The Douglas County 2046 Comprehensive Plan builds on the most recent update, which was adopted in 2021. That update will include legislative updates under GMA, revised and/or new goals and policies, and land use map updates to provide enough capacity for planned growth through 2046. The County's Plan covers the unincorporated areas outside of cities and towns.



*The Douglas County Comprehensive Plan includes 11 elements:*

| ELEMENT                              | DESCRIPTION   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Land Use</b>                      | Outlines a broad vision for development in urban and rural areas, including guidelines for density and determining where various uses, such as residential, commercial, and industrial will be allowed.   |
| <b>Rural Land Use</b>                | Establishes broad goals and policies guiding residential, commercial, and industrial uses in unincorporated Douglas County consistent with the GMA's allowance of development in the rural area.  |
| <b>Housing</b>                       | Provides goals, policies and objectives and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This includes accommodating housing affordable to all economic segments of the population and promoting a variety of housing types ( <a href="#">RCW 36.70A.070</a> ).         |
| <b>Resource Lands</b>                | Establishes a framework to protect agriculture, forest, and other resource lands.   |
| <b>Transportation</b>                | Sets a plan for transportation facilities and services, including for freight, public transit, vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, to support the needs of current residents and projected population in 2046.   |
| <b>Capital Facilities (CFP)</b>      | Provides long-term plans for public facilities in Douglas County, both those provided by the County and non-County service providers. Annually, and as part of the budget, the CFP Plan and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) are reviewed for the 6-year funding plan for capital projects and programs. |
| <b>Utilities</b>                     | Describes locations, capacities, and need for utilities, including private natural gas, telecommunications, electric utilities, public solid waste, sewer, water, and surface water utilities.  |
| <b>Economic Development</b>          | Economic development is the combination of jobs, services, facilities, urban design, and other features that contribute to the ability to make a living wage, and the desire to want to live and work in Douglas County. This element compiles strategies to further the economy in the County.               |
| <b>Critical Areas</b>                | Provides the policy basis for the protection and regulation of critical areas as required by the GMA.   |
| <b>Essential Public Facilities</b>   | Provides guidance for identifying and siting of essential public facilities that are typically difficult to site, such as airports, state or regional facilities, correctional facilities, and others.  |
| <b>Shoreline Master Program(SMP)</b> | The SMP is a combined planning and regulatory document that contains policies, goals, and specific land use regulations for shoreline areas (those within aquatic water bodies of a certain size and roughly within 200-feet of said bodies).   |

**WHAT IS AN URBAN GROWTH AREA?**

The GMA requires that each city and town within each fully planning County be included in urban growth areas. These can include unincorporated areas that are characterized by urban growth and/or adjacent to areas in which urban services are provided and/or planned for over a 20-year period. Areas designated as UGA's include Waterville, Greater East Wenatchee (includes City of E. Wenatchee), Bridgeport, Rock Island, Mansfield, Coulee Dam (part) and the Pangborn Industrial Service Area (PISA).

**WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES TO THE COUNTY FOR NOT COMPLYING WITH GMA?**

The Governor has the authority, under RCW 36.70A.345, to impose sanctions against cities and counties that do not comply with GMA, as determined by the Growth Management Hearings Board. Sanctions may include withholding or temporarily rescinding the

authority to collect portions of motor vehicle tax, sales tax, and various other revenue sources. Further, if not updated by June 30, 2026, the County may not be able to secure future grant funding at the state level.

**HOW CAN RESIDENTS PARTICIPATE IN THE PROCESS AND PROVIDE INPUT?**

We want to hear from you! There will be a variety of ways to participate, from attending in-person and virtual meetings to online participation through our online open house and story map, social media platforms and conversations with staff members at special events. As always, we welcome letters by mail and email during the length of this project.

To learn more, check out our project webpage at: <https://www.douglascountywa.net/684/Douglas-County-2046-Comprehensive-Plan-U>

