

July 1, 2004

To: Recipients of the Joint City-County FEIS

From: The City of Bellingham and Whatcom County

Attached is the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that will be used for required updates to the 1995 Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the Bellingham Urban Growth Area, several Five-Year Review Areas, and the 1997 Whatcom County Urban Fringe Subarea. This FEIS is the result of a joint planning effort by City and County staff and has been prepared in accordance with WAC 197-11.

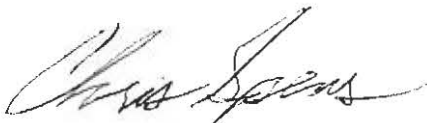
A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for these plan updates was issued on March 26, 2004 and a 30-day public comment period followed. A public hearing for the DEIS was advertised and held at the Bellingham Municipal Court Building on April 21, 2004.

Appendix D of this FEIS contains all of the public comment received regarding the DEIS, including letters, faxes, email, and testimony recorded at the public hearing. Responses are provided for each comment, including those that do not address the scope or adequacy of the DEIS document. Minor revisions have been made to some sections of Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 as a result of public comment as indicated by staff response.

The FEIS will serve as an important reference document for discussing alternative methods of accommodating population growth in Bellingham and the UGA. The public will have additional opportunities to participate in the planning process through the City-County- WTA sponsored Community Forum on Growth Management, the City's Comprehensive Plan update process, and the City/County update to the Urban Fringe Subarea Plan. It is anticipated that a preferred alternative for accommodating growth will emerge from this community planning process and, if warranted, a Supplemental EIS could be produced to examine additional or modified alternatives.

Specific changes to zoning and development regulations within the City limits of Bellingham will occur as part of the process to adopt an updated Bellingham Comprehensive Plan. Specific changes to zoning and development regulations for the Urban Fringe Subarea Plan, which encompasses both the Bellingham UGA and the Five-Year Review Areas, will occur as part of the process to adopt an updated Urban Fringe Subarea Plan.

Thank you for your interest in the joint City-County planning process.



Chris Spens, AICP, Senior Planner
SEPA Responsible Official