

For Immediate Release – Friday, December 30, 2005

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Executive Reardon Signs Comprehensive Plan

Assures Balanced, Sustainable Growth

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon signed the County's Comprehensive Plan creating a blueprint for managing growth over the next 20 years.

The Comprehensive Plan was a product of 3-years of public hearings, studies and debate, the culmination of which resulted in the County Council having approved, with few exceptions, Reardon's Preferred Plan.

"While not perfect, the plan balances sustainable growth with preservation of our most important natural assets." said Reardon.

The County Council had at one time, proposed the inclusion of over 7 square miles of rural land into the Urban Growth Area (UGA) boundaries without enough essential County infrastructure to sustain the growth. Reardon's plan called for 3.5 square miles. In the end, after much negotiation, the County Council agreed to an increase of 3.94 square miles into the Urban Growth Area, a half-mile more than Reardon's recommended plan.

Another disappointment was the County Council's choice to not designate the Wellington Hills area for economic development.

Reardon was able to hold the line on expansion of the UGA boundaries into rural areas of Sultan, Gold Bar and Granite Falls until those cities can demonstrate a feasible plan for urban services. In addition, the Council relented on expansion of the Southwest UGA to include Little Bear Creek, which could have suffered impacts to environmentally sensitive areas of salmon habitat. In, addition, conversion of existing agricultural land was minimized and the Harvey Field area

by Snohomish will be sustained pending resolution with the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA).

Reardon's economic development plans remain part of the Comprehensive Plan for areas of, North Marysville, Cathcart and the Southwest Technology Corridor.

According to Reardon, "these business corridors will be the drivers of the future. Economic development in these areas will mean more jobs for local residents, reducing long travel times and increasing revenue for local businesses."

The final result is that the Comprehensive Plan continues the county's traditional distribution of population and employment which meets the requirements of the State Growth Management Act, with 85% in urban areas and 15% in rural areas. Within the urban areas, 37% of the population growth is expected inside existing cities, and the rest is expected in unincorporated urban areas.

"Finalization of the new Comprehensive Plan is particularly timely," says Reardon. "Being ahead of the growth curve is critical to ensuring a legacy of future prosperity for Snohomish County."

By 2025, residential growth in Snohomish County is expected to increase by nearly one-third, for a total of about 932,951. That is the equivalent of nearly three more cities the size of Everett. At the same time, new businesses will bring about 133,000 more jobs to the County. Much of this growth is on the near horizon. Currently, \$1.7 billion worth of commercial construction projects are already planned or are in progress in Snohomish County. In light of the recent economic turn, existing local business such as Boeing are gearing up as new job orders reach a near record high.

"The Comprehensive Plan is both realistic and sustainable," says Reardon. "It keeps urban sprawl in check, limiting future population and job growth to areas where capital infrastructure already exists or is at a lower cost to develop. Parks, recreation and sports fields are increasing and our streams, tributaries and fish habitat are being reclaimed, restored and improved. The Comprehensive Plan ensures as best possible, a quality of life at least, if not better than what we currently experience."

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