

# Benton County Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan 2026 Update

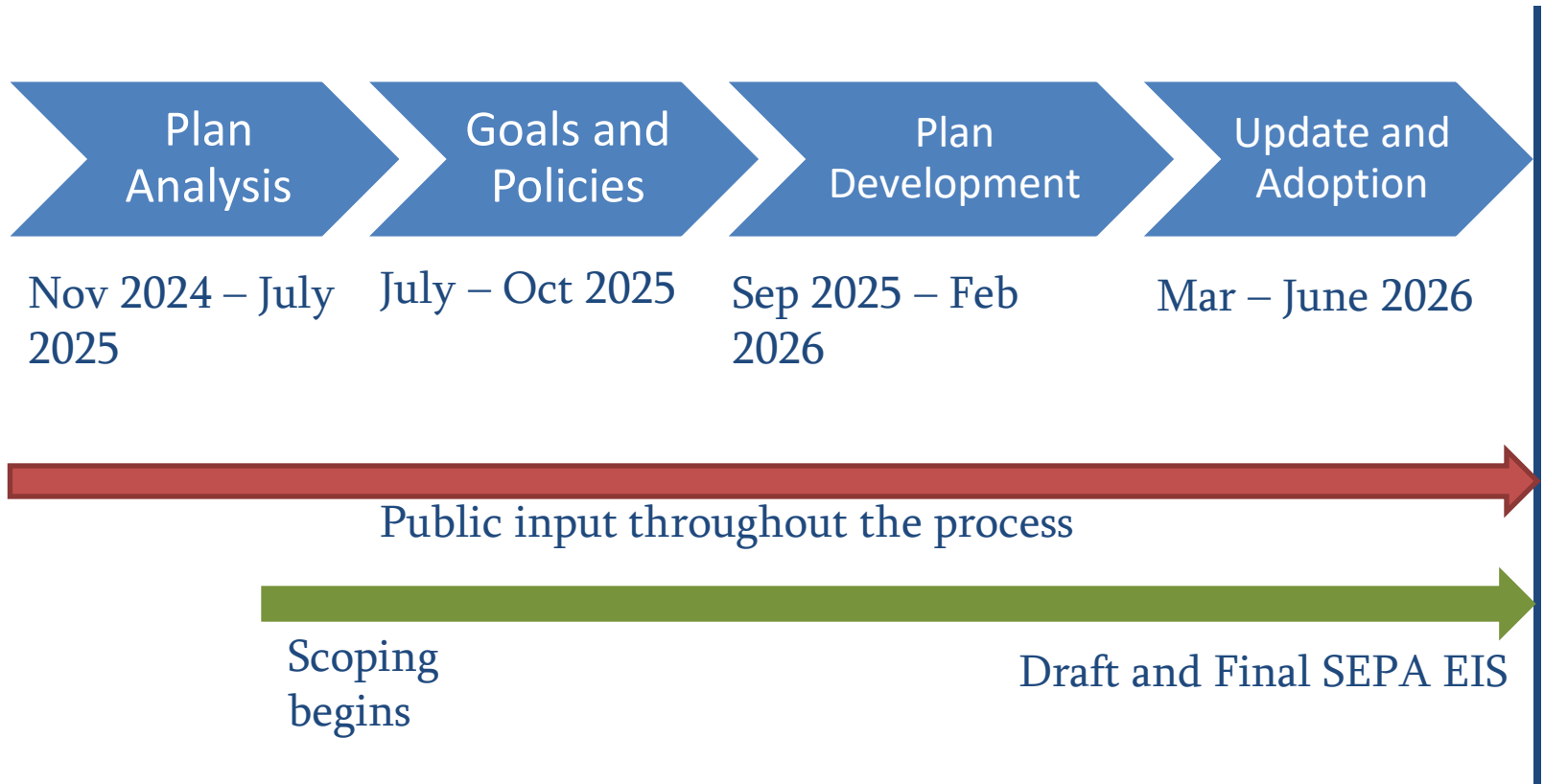


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# Public Scoping Meeting Agenda

- Overview
  - Introductions
  - Growth Management Act (GMA) and Comprehensive Plan Update
  - New Requirements
  - Public Input
  - Scoping for EIS
  - Next steps

# Timeline



# Growth Management Act (GMA)



# What is the GMA?

- RCW 36.70A / WAC 365-196
- Mandatory elements, but based on local conditions
- Framework to plan for 6 and 20-year growth
- Update by June 30, 2026

# Growth Management Act

## 15 Planning Goals:

- Urban Growth
- Reduce Sprawl
- Transportation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Property Rights
- Permits
- Natural Resources
- Open Space and Recreation
- Environment
- Citizen Participation
- Public Facilities and Services
- Historic Preservation
- Climate Resiliency
- Shoreline Master Program



# New State Requirements

- Climate Change/Climate Resiliency as a new plan element (different consultant)
  - Regional effort
- Updated Housing requirements
  - Plan for housing by income band
  - Provide housing capacity for emergency housing, emergency shelters, permanent supportive housing

# New State Requirements

- Updated Housing requirements continued:
  - Implement policies and regulations to address and begin to undo racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion in housing caused by local policies, plans and actions
  - Close coordination with cities
- Tribal participation/coordination - Yakama Nation and CTUIR

# Additional Local Priorities

- Energy overlay
- Shrub steppe habitat protection and mitigation program
- Industrial lands review and update
- Refined Capital Improvement planning process
- More targeted outreach strategies/Spanish translation services



# Comprehensive Plan

# Comprehensive Plan Update

- Plan update - not a wholesale re-write of the existing Plan. Extend planning horizon and recognize changes to:
  - State laws/case law since the last update
- Development regulations
  - Updates to state law/requirements
  - Best Available Science (BAS) for incorporation into critical areas regulations



# Why We Plan

- To reflect community values and input on the future
- To accommodate future growth
- To determine where new housing, shopping, jobs and infrastructure will be located over the next 6 and 20 years
- To identify how to deliver services compatible with growth

# Plan Relationship with Other Documents

## Growth Management Act

RCW 36.70A, 36.70B; WAC 365-195 to 199

## Comprehensive Plan

Vision, goals and policies, analysis, environmental review

## Development Regulations

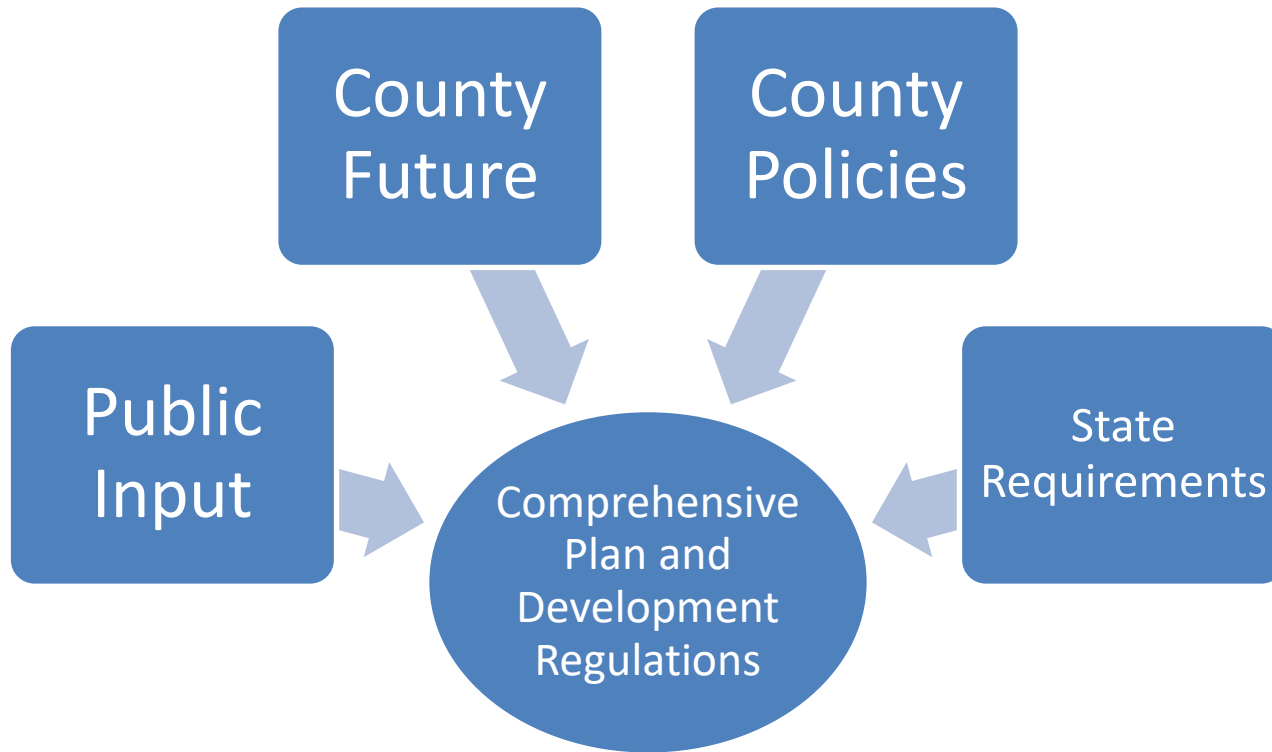
County Codes

## Implementation

Permits, action plans, budget, CIP, administrative provisions



# Plan Relationship with Other Documents

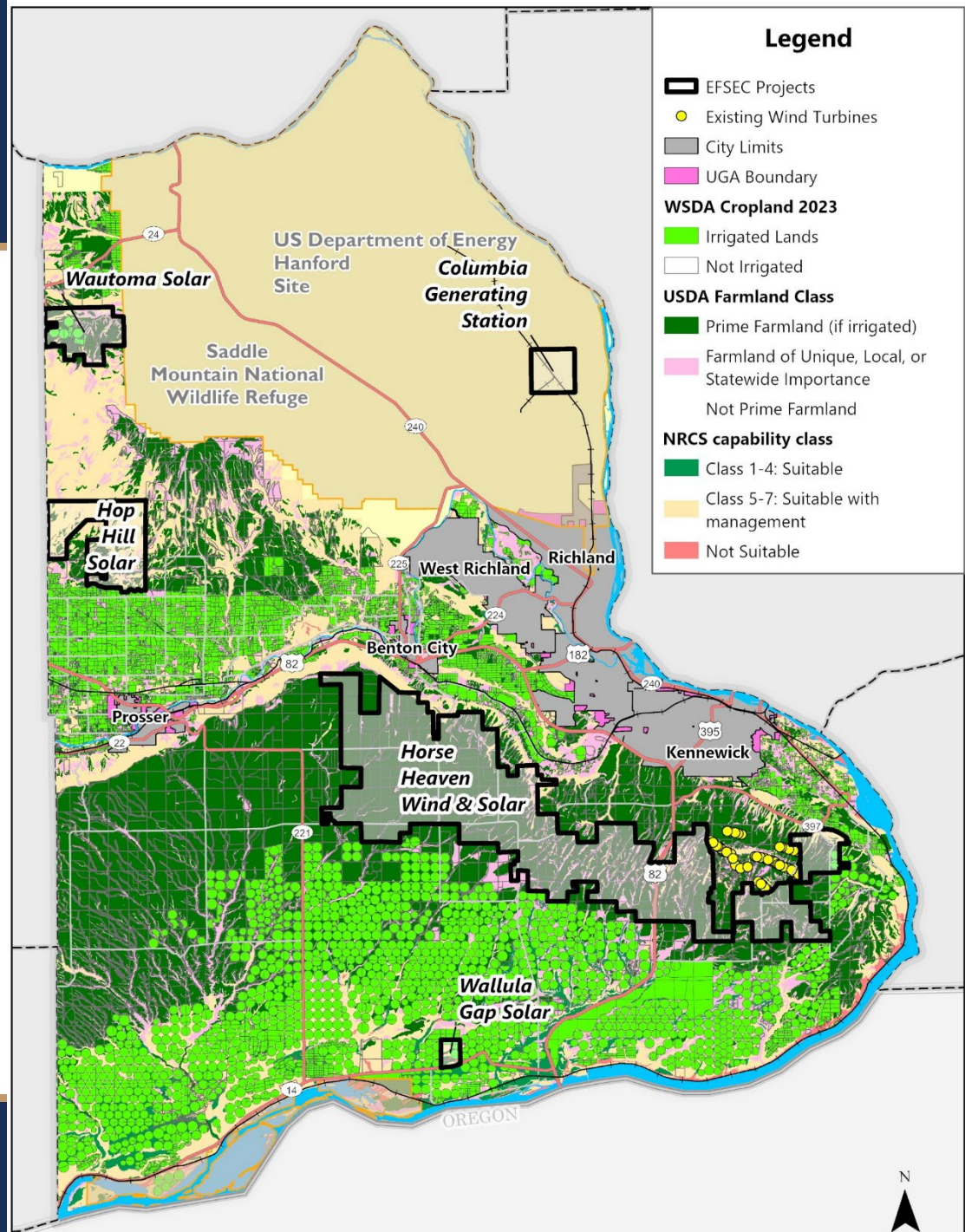


# Draft Population Projections

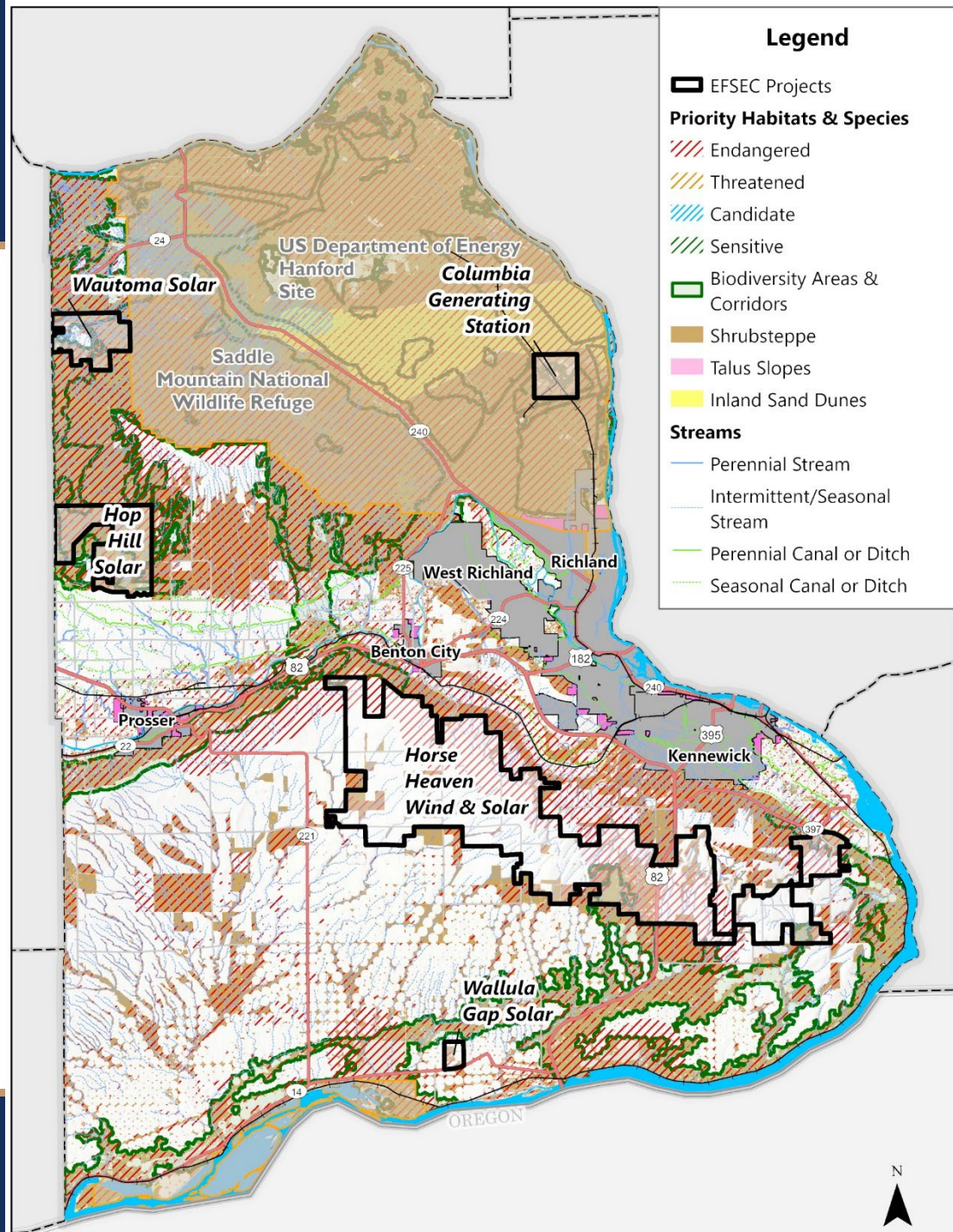
Jurisdiction	2024 Population	2050 Allocation	Projected 2050 Pop
Kennewick	87,120	36%	103,999
Richland	64,190	33%	95,333
County	37,805	14%	40,444
West Richland	18,280	12%	34,666
Prosser	6,610	3%	8,667
Benton City	3,845	2%	5,778
Total	217,850	100%	288,887



# Ag Lands/ Energy



# Habitats/ Energy



# Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

- Programmatic EIS Required:
  - Benton County has determined that this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment.
  - A programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under RCW 43.21C.030 (2)(c) and will be prepared.
- Three (3) draft alternatives have been formulated for evaluation in the draft EIS

# Preliminary Draft Alternatives

## *Alternative 1, No Action/No Change in Current Growth Patterns:*

- Maintain the County's existing Comprehensive Plan
- Growth would be expected based on past trends, but no land use changes (densities, designations, etc.) or regulation changes (e.g., zoning) would occur

## *Alternative 2, Aggressive Growth Target with Emphasis on Affordable Housing, Industry and Energy:*

- More multi-family housing/affordable housing in higher density areas and UGAs
- Designation of additional industrial areas
- Several energy projects to potentially develop/energy overlay for County rural areas

## *Alternative 3, Moderate Growth Target with More Limited Emphasis on Industry and Energy:*

- Smaller renewable energy projects with energy overlay
- Add some industrial designated lands (but less than in Alternative 2).

# EIS Elements

Consider potential impacts on the following elements of the environment:

- Earth
- Water
- Plants and Animals
- Land Use
- Environmental Health (Land and Air Quality)
- Shoreline Use
- Population, Housing, and Employment
- Parks and Recreation
- Transportation
- Public Services and Utilities
- Heritage Conservation



# Next Steps

# EIS Scoping Schedule

Benton County will determine the full scope of the EIS, including the range of alternatives to be analyzed by June (after comments are received and reviewed).

- Comments must be postmarked on or before April 25, 2025
- Mailing Address: Benton County Planning Division, 102206 E. Wiser Parkway, Kennewick, WA 99338
- Email Address: [Planning.Department@co.benton.wa.us](mailto:Planning.Department@co.benton.wa.us)

Future meeting dates, times and locations will be available at <http://tinyurl.com/BCpublicnotice>

# Coordination with the Planning Commission

## 2025 Meetings and Workshops

- April 8 – Scoping for Comprehensive Plan Programmatic EIS
- June/July - Findings from Housing and Energy Overlay analysis, Critical Areas review and SEPA scoping
- Sep/Oct – Public open houses, Updates on alternative land use scenarios, goals/policies
- Dec – Updated, review updates to Land Use and other plan elements



Additional Questions/Comments?



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