

**ORDINANCE NO. \_\_\_\_\_**

AN ORDINANCE relating to county planning; adopting updated Benton County Countywide Planning Policies.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF BENTON COUNTY, WASHINGTON:

Section 1. The following new section is hereby made part of Title 16 of the Benton County Code but will not be codified.

COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES. The attached Countywide Planning Policies are hereby adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.210 as the countywide planning policies for Benton County and the cities therein.

Section 2. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance is declared unconstitutional, or the applicability thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the constitutionality of the remainder of the ordinance and the applicability thereof to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.

Section 3. Effective Date. This ordinance shall take effect and be in full force upon its passage and adoption.

**ADOPTED AND PASSED this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2026.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman of the Board.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman Pro-Tem.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Member.

Approved as to Form:

Constituting the Board of  
County Commissioners of  
Benton County, Washington

\_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy Prosecuting Attorney

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Clerk of the Board

## **Exhibit A**

### **INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW:**

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that cities and counties adopt comprehensive plans. The GMA further requires that counties adopt Countywide Planning Policies (CWPPs), in cooperation with the cities located in whole or in part within the county. CWPPs establish a countywide framework for developing and adopting county and city comprehensive plans. The role of the CWPPs is to coordinate comprehensive plans of jurisdictions in the same county for regional issues or issues affecting common borders (RCW 36.70A.100). Under state law, RCW 36.70A.210(1) describes the relationship between comprehensive plans and CWPPs. It states:

*a 'countywide planning policy' is a written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted pursuant to this chapter. This framework shall ensure that city and county comprehensive plans are consistent as required in RCW 36.70A.100. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the land use powers of the cities.*

In order to achieve the objectives above, and to ensure that regional planning efforts and governmental actions are consistent with current legal requirements and information, these updated Benton County CWPPs are proposed. The updates were made through a collaborative process with the County and the cities.

### **HISTORY:**

In 1991, one year after the Washington State Legislature enacted the Growth Management Act (GMA), the GMA was amended to require that CWPPs be adopted within those counties subject to the GMA. The first Benton County Countywide Planning Policies were adopted on September 28, 1992.

### **AMENDMENTS AND ADOPTION:**

In the years since the last CWPPs were adopted in Benton County, the GMA has evolved through amendments and judicial interpretations provided by the GMA and the courts. The updated CWPPs attempt to provide procedures for County and city/town coordination to address the latest set of requirements.

The GMA does not specifically address amendments to the CWPPs; however, it has become apparent that the Benton County CWPPs should be updated to better address countywide planning concerns and coordination between jurisdictions in the County. A public hearing was held by the Benton County Planning Commission on MONTH DAY, 2026.

Benton County is the lead agency for this proposal and has determined that it does not have a significant adverse impact on the environment and a SEPA Determination of Non-Significance was issued on January 9, 2026.

In order to comply with GMA requirements and the adoption/amendment procedures identified below, all jurisdictions in Benton County must agree to the adoption of the revised CWPPs. This process will involve the planning departments, planning commissions, and elected representatives of each jurisdiction. In order to facilitate this process, Benton County, in consultation with the cities, has developed the following adoption/ratification process for the draft CWPPs:

1. Benton County Planning Commission recommendation on proposed CWPPs.
2. The Benton County Board of Commissioners (BOCC) adopts a resolution agreeing in principle to the proposed CWPPs, but acknowledging that changes may need to be made based on input from each jurisdiction. The BOCC's resolution will contain a statement requiring that each jurisdiction ratify the CWPPs adopted by Benton County and will lay out a schedule for future approval steps.
3. CWPPs approved by Benton County BOCC reviewed by each jurisdiction's Planning Commission.
4. The elected body of each jurisdiction passes a resolution which states that the jurisdiction either: (a) supports the CWPPs in their entirety, (b) rejects the CWPPs in their entirety, or (c) supports the CWPPs with specific changes.
5. If specific changes are identified by a jurisdiction in step four, the Benton County Planning Department and Planning Commission may amend the CWPPs and attempt to reconcile any conflicting changes.

6. The Benton County BOCC adopts, by ordinance, the final CWPPs.

**SECTION 1.** Countywide planning policy is a written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted. This framework is designed to ensure that city and county comprehensive plans are consistent with statewide planning policies.

The Growth Management Act requires counties planning under the GMA to adopt a countywide planning policy in cooperation with the cities located in the county. The countywide planning policy is to be a written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted pursuant to this [GMA] chapter." The purpose for the Benton County Countywide Planning Policies is to meet this requirement of the GMA

**Section 2: How to Read Countywide Planning Policies**

The policies within the CWPPs have equal importance, and each one should be understood in the context of the entire document. The CPPs specify how directive a policy should be. Many of the policies utilize one of three different words to do this; shall, should, and may and are defined as follows:

- "Shall" means implementation of the policy is mandatory and imparts a higher degree of substantive direction than "should." "Shall" is used for policies that repeat State of Washington requirements or where the intent is to mandate action. However, "shall" cannot be used when it is largely a subjective determination of whether a policy's objective has been met.
- "Should" means implementation of the policy is expected, but its completion is not mandatory. The policy is directive with substantive meaning, although to a lesser degree than "shall" for two reasons. (1) "Should" policies recognize the policy might not be applicable or appropriate for all municipalities due to special circumstances. The decision to not implement a "should" policy is appropriate only if the implementation of the policy is either inappropriate or not feasible. (2) Some "should" policies are subjective; hence, it is not possible to demonstrate that a jurisdiction has implemented

them.

- "May" means the actions described in the policy are either advisable or are allowed. "May" gives permission and implies a preference. Because "may" does not have a directive meaning, there is no expectation that the described action will be implemented.

**SECTION 3. POLICIES TO IMPLEMENT RCW 36.70A.020;**

**Policy #1:** The Comprehensive Plans of Benton County and each of the cities therein shall be prepared and adopted with the objective of facilitating economic prosperity by accommodating growth consistent with the following:

1. Urban Growth Areas: Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities exist or can be provided in a cost-efficient manner consistent with RCW 36.70A.115 & WAC 365-196-325.

2. Reduce Sprawl: Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into low density development lacking adequate services, injurious to ground and surface water quality, destructive to the area's agricultural lands base and less than cost effective relative to public service costs.

3. Transportation. Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that may reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled and are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans subject to RCW 36.70A.070 (6) (b) and RCW.70A.070 (6) (a) and WAC 365.196-840.

4. Housing. Plan for and accommodate housing affordable for the range of low to moderate income households and other income levels defined as follows in WAC 365-196-410 (2) (3) (i)(c, RCW 36.70A.536, and RCW 36.70.030 of the County population within the cities and unincorporated Benton County, and consistent with the County/cities developed housing allocation plan. Promote a variety of residential densities and housing types and encourage preservation of existing housing stock in concert with RCW 36.70A.635 and RCW 36.70A.680.

5. Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the County and cities that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans. Promote economic opportunity for all citizens, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons. Promote the

retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the County's natural resources, public services, and public facilities subject to RCW 36.70A.020(5). Countywide planning policies are required to include consideration of commercial and industrial facilities.

6. Property rights. Private property rights shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made, consistent with the Washington State Constitution, Section 16. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.

7. Permits. Maintain a permit review process that provides for integrated and consolidated review and are processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.

8. Rural and Resource Lands. Maintain and encourage natural resource-based industries, including agricultural, fisheries and mineral industries subject to RCW 36.70A.170 and RCW 36.70A.030(36). Encourage the conservation and improvement of productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.

9. Open space<sup>1</sup> and recreation. Encourage the retention of open space and the development of recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat and increase access to natural resource lands and water.

10. Environment. Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the region's high quality of life, including air and water quality and the availability of water.

11. Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of all citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

12. Public Capital facilities and Essential Public Facilities. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without

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<sup>1</sup> Per RCW 36,70A.160, "Open Space" is defined as lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas.

decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards. With the exception of water, sewer, and local access streets, which shall be available at the time of occupancy, the term "adequate" shall be defined as either available at the time of occupancy, or shown on the current Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), as a funded project within six years subject to RCW 36.70A.210 (3) (c), RCW 36.70A.200, RCW 36.70A.130, and WAC 365-196-415.

13. Cultural and historic resources protection and preservation. Identify, preserve, and protect historic, cultural, and archaeological resources in collaboration with federally recognized Indian tribes and applicable federal, state and local agencies through land protection, avoidance, mitigation and other related strategies.

14. Climate change and resiliency. Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under RCW 36.70A.210 and chapter 47.80 RCW adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.

15. Shorelines of the state. For shorelines of the state, the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 shall be considered an element of the county and city comprehensive plans.

**SECTION 4. POLICIES FOR PROMOTION OF CONTIGUOUS AND ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROVISION OF URBAN SERVICES TO SUCH DEVELOPMENT;**

**Policy #2:** The County, in consultation with the cities, shall allocate future projected populations to support comprehensive plan amendments and updates using the latest population projections published by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). Allocation of future populations shall be based on the OFM data and projection ranges (Low, Medium and High) but also consider recent year housing and development trends, land capacity analysis and other related information identified in RCW 36.70A.070 (2) (c).

**Policy #3:** Locating Urban Growth Areas within the County shall be accomplished using accepted planning practices which provide sufficient land and service capacity, up to the determined need, to meet projected populations at urban densities and service standards within the cities, and urban densities for those portions of the County located within the urban growth areas.

If, during the County's review of UGA areas with cities or during the County's annual amendment process, the County determines that revision of the urban growth areas are not required to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the county for the succeeding 20-year period, but does determine that patterns of development have created pressure in areas that exceed available, developable lands within the urban growth area, the urban growth area or areas may be revised (UGA swaps) to accommodate identified patterns of development and likely future development pressure for the succeeding 20-year period if the following requirements per RCW 26.70A.110 (8) (or as amended) (*annual amendment process*) or RCW 36.70A.130 (3) (c) (or as amended) (*periodic update process*) are met:

- The revised urban growth area may not result in an increase in the total surface areas of the urban growth area or areas
- The areas added to the urban growth area are not or have not been designated as agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance
- If the areas added to the urban growth area have previously been designated as agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance, either an equivalent amount of agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands of long-term commercial significance must be added to the area outside of the urban growth area, or the county must wait a minimum of two years before another swap may occur (***annual amendment process only***)
- Less than 15 percent of the areas added to the urban growth area are critical areas
- The areas added to the urban growth areas are suitable for urban growth
- The transportation element and capital facility plan element have identified the transportation facilities, and public facilities and services needed to serve the urban growth area and the funding to provide the transportation facilities and public facilities and services
- The urban growth area is not larger than needed to accommodate the growth planned for the succeeding 20-year planning period and a reasonable land market supply factor (***periodic update***)

***process only***)

- The areas removed from the urban growth area do not include urban growth or urban densities
- The revised urban growth area is contiguous, does not include holes or gaps, and will not increase pressures to urbanize rural or natural resource lands
- The county's proposed urban growth area revision has been reviewed according to the process and procedure in the countywide planning policies adopted and approved according to RCW 36.70A.210 (***annual amendment process only***)

**Policy #4:** Urban Growth Areas for each city shall be based upon official and accepted population projections for a minimum of 20 years (see also policy #2). The gross undeveloped and underdeveloped acreage within the city limits and the Urban Growth Area shall be sufficient to meet all the land requirements, for the following: community and essential public facilities, population projection, commercial and industrial activities, employment projections, infill and to prevent inflation of land cost due to a limited land supply.

- a. The jurisdictions within the county shall use a uniform formula for identifying the land area necessary per capita for each community. Each jurisdiction's population projection shall be multiplied by its gross per capita land area requirement, which in the aggregate will define total land needs within the Urban Growth Area (UGA).

The uniform formula is as follows:

$A + B + C + D + E + F + G + H + I + J + K = \text{acreage/per capita (or acreage per dwelling unit if per capita is divided by average household size) where:}$

- A = residential land per capita; (or DU)
- B = parks and recreational area per capita;
- C = area required for public facilities (fire stations, jails, etc.,) per capita;
- D = area required for schools per capita;
- E = commercial area per capita, or per employee;
- F = industrial/manufacturing area per capita;
- G = open space (golf courses, etc.) per capita;
- H = public service lands required for transportation network, easements and R.O.W.s per DU;
- I\* = use 70% build-out for all residential lands;

J = add 25% to the total of A Through I for land supply/demand balance;

K = land credit for undevelopable lands i.e. Critical Areas including steep slopes, wetlands, habitat, etc. within the UGA.

\* The same factor should be used for all jurisdictions.

**Policy #5 :** Within the urban growth area, urban uses shall be concentrated in and adjacent to existing urban services or where they are shown on a Capital Improvement Plan to be available within 6 years.

**Policy #6:** Cities will limit the extension of service district boundaries and water and sewer infrastructure to areas within each jurisdiction's urban growth area contained in their adopted Comprehensive Plan. Utility plans should attempt to reflect possible needs for a minimum of 20 years.

**Policy #7:** Within each Comprehensive Plan, the Land Use Plan for urban growth areas shall designate urban densities and indicate the general locations of greenbelt and critical areas.

**Policy #8:** Consider other variables, such as existing unused service infrastructure. Also, avoid placing an urban growth line into an area of designated resource lands.

**Policy #9:** Appropriate lands for urban growth expansion are typically those unincorporated lands with existing service infrastructure adjacent to corporate limits.

**Policy #10:** All policies within each jurisdiction's Comprehensive Plans shall be modified to be consistent with adopted Countywide Policies.

**SECTION 5. POLICIES FOR SITING PUBLIC FACILITIES OF A COUNTYWIDE OR STATEWIDE NATURE;**

**Policy #11:** The county and cities shall develop a cooperative regional process, including public participation (see Policy #1, item 11), to site essential public facilities of regional and statewide importance. The objective of the process shall be to ensure that such facilities are located with appropriate provisions that protect environmental quality, optimize access and usefulness to all jurisdictions, and equitably distribute economic benefits/burdens throughout the region or county.

At the Countywide and multi-county level, the following action should be accomplished:

- a. Develop a uniform siting procedure which enables selection of optimum project sites and appropriate size and scale relative to intended benefit area.

**Policy #12:** Support the existing solid waste program that promotes and maintains a high level of public health and safety, protects the natural and human environment of Benton County and encourages public involvement in the planning process.

**Policy #13:** Encourage and expand coordination and communication among all jurisdictions and solid waste agencies/firms in Benton and Franklin Counties in order to develop consistent and cost-effective programs that avoid duplication of effort and gaps in program activities.

- a. Utilize the existing Benton-Franklin Solid Waste Advisory Committee.

**SECTION 6. POLICIES FOR COUNTYWIDE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES AND STRATEGIES;**

**Policy #14:** Maintain active county-city participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Organization in order to facilitate city, county, and State coordination in planning regional transportation facilities and infrastructure improvements to serve essential public facilities including Port District facilities and properties subject to RCW 47.80.030.

**SECTION 7. POLICIES THAT CONSIDER THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING, SUCH AS HOUSING FOR ALL ECONOMIC SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION AND PARAMETERS FOR ITS DISTRIBUTION;**

**Policy #15:** The county and cities shall work together to provide housing for all economic segments of the population within the cities and unincorporated Benton County (RCW 36.70A.070 (2) (c) (d)). All jurisdictions shall seek to create the conditions necessary for the construction of middle,<sup>2</sup> accessory dwelling units (ADU) and other housing, at the appropriate densities within the cities and County, including UGAs. The following actions should be

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<sup>2</sup> Middle housing is a range of housing types, from duplexes to sixplexes, townhomes, courtyard apartments and cottage housing, intended to be compatible with single-family neighborhoods.

accomplished:

- a. Jointly quantify and project total Countywide housing need by income level and housing type (i.e. rental, ownership, senior, farm worker housing, group housing.)
- b. Allocate the Countywide housing need through developing and updating a housing allocation plan that provides housing allocations to each jurisdiction and develop and update housing elements for each jurisdiction to address how to meet each jurisdiction's individual allocation of the projected Countywide need.
- c. Accommodate moderate, low, very low, and extremely low-income households within unincorporated areas of the County and cities according to the housing allocation plan.
- d. Conduct an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs by income band, consistent with each jurisdiction's share of the determined Countywide housing need.
- e. Provide for the preservation, improvement and development of housing.
- f. Provide moderate density housing options within urban growth area boundaries, including a range of middle housing types.

**SECTION 8. POLICIES FOR JOINT COUNTY AND CITY PLANNING WITHIN URBAN GROWTH AREAS;**

**Policy #16:** Urban growth areas may include territory located outside of a city if such territory may be characterized by urban growth or is adjacent to territory already characterized by urban growth. Within urban growth areas, only urban development may occur. For the purposes of locating urban growth areas, and permitting new development within them, "Urban" is defined as:

- a. Having dedicated and improved (surfaced) streets, with dimension, design and construction standards for new development determined by "joint city/county standards" and;
- b. For new development, road, street and intersection right-of-way widths located and sized to accommodate projected local and regional average daily traffic (ADT) as determined by each jurisdictions Land Use Plan Transportation Element and,

where relevant, projections of the Benton Franklin Council of Governments.

**Policy #17:** To encourage logical expansions of corporate boundaries into urban growth areas, and to enable the most cost efficient expenditure of public funds for the provision of urban services into newly annexed areas. The County and each city may jointly develop and implement development, land division and building standards, and coordinated permit procedures for the review and permitting of new subdivisions within Urban Growth Areas.

- a. Joint development standards may be adopted by all jurisdictions. Standards may vary between the County and various incorporated jurisdictions.

**SECTION 9. POLICIES FOR COUNTYWIDE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT;**

**Policy #18:** Comprehensive Plans shall jointly and individually support the County and region's economic prosperity in order to promote employment and economic opportunity for all citizens consistent with the protection of public health, safety, welfare, and the use of natural resources on a long-term sustainable basis, the ability of service capacity to accommodate demands, and the expressed desires of each community, .

**Policy #19:** The county and cities have historically partnered with each other as well as with other organizations to achieve economic development throughout the region. The county and cities intend to continue to actively pursue mutually beneficial partnerships that promote growth in all sectors of business and industry, including but not limited to: areas of agriculture, agri-business, industrial, commercial, public schools, recreation and tourism. Key strategies will include promoting family wage jobs, increasing income and reducing poverty, increase business formation, expansion and retention, and creating jobs and financial investment to improve the economic conditions within our communities.

- a. An economic development element should be integrated into the comprehensive plan of each jurisdiction, with particular attention being given to coordination with the land use and capital facility elements. The economic development element should establish goals and policies for each jurisdiction; actively promote employment opportunities for family-wage

jobs; support the retention and expansion of businesses and industry in Benton County; support development of public schools; encourage the development of tourist-related businesses, including those that capitalize on area agricultural and other resources.

- b. Comprehensive Plans should foster and promote a natural environment that conserves resources and contributes to economic growth and prosperity, and a business environment that offers diverse economic opportunities for businesses of all types and sizes in the region.
- c. The county and cities should encourage public and private agency cooperation and participation in the comprehensive planning process. These agencies should cooperatively evaluate trends and opportunities to identify strategies meeting long-term economic needs for the County and Cities.
- d. The county and cities agree that Benton County may establish economic development strategies and implementation criteria for siting major industrial and resource-based development within rural areas of the County in accordance with RCW 36.70A.365.
- e. The provision of utilities and other supporting urban governmental services to commercial and industrial areas should be coordinated and assigned a high priority by utility purveyors and service providers.
- f. Subject to funding availability, a Countywide land use inventory may be developed and periodically updated to monitor commercial and industrial land supply and future needs, and support adjustments in land use designations, as applicable.

**SECTION 10. AN ANALYSIS OF THE FISCAL IMPACT.**

**Policy #20:** Capital Improvement Plans and Land Use Plans, shall conduct fiscal analyses as identified in RCW 36.70A.070 (3) (4) which identify and refine the most cost effective use of regional and local public services. This should be accomplished through actions including the following:

- a. City's six-year CIPs for transportation and utility (stormwater, wastewater, water, and broadband) infrastructure sized to accommodate build-out of service areas within the

20-year urban growth area, at a minimum.

- b. Construction design and placement standards for roads, intersections and streets (with provisions for storm water conveyance), sewer, water and lighting infrastructure, should be determined based upon an analysis which identifies the lowest public expenditure over extended periods of time. Utilities should be incorporated into such analyses.
- c. Build out scenarios should be factored into school, fire/emergency medical services (EMS) and police service demand projections.

#### **SECTION 11. Coordination with Tribal Governments**

**Policy #21:** Benton County and cities will coordinate with area tribal governments in accordance with RCW 36.70A.210(4) and RCW 36.70A. (3) (i) tied to the Washington Growth Management Act.

#### **SECTION 12. AMENDING POLICIES.**

**Policy #22:** This document is a tool that will provide the necessary guidance to achieve consistency during the updating of comprehensive plans for the county and the cities/towns consistent with the GMA.

The County Commissioners will review the policies and cause a final proposal to be transmitted to the cities for ratification and ultimately back to the Board of Commissioners for final action. The County Wide Planning Policies will be considered adopted when ratified by the cities and approved by the Board of Commissioners. Cities agree to take action within 45 days of the transmittal of the proposal and to submit resolutions of ratification to the county to document the action taken by the city.

The Board of Commissioners agrees to adopt the ratified policies without modification upon receipt of notice that at least three cities have acted affirmatively. The Commissioners will consider possible modifications to these policies if ratification is not accomplished.

Future amendments to the County Wide Planning Policies may be considered when proposed by the County or a city.