



May 15, 2015

Whatcom County Planning Department
Matt Aamot, Senior Planner
Planning and Development Services
5280 Northwest Drive
Bellingham, Washington 98226

To County Planning Director & Staff, County Planning Commission, and County Council,

On behalf of the Board of Directors and members of the Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce and Industry, we ask you to strongly consider the needs of a robust business community while adopting the upcoming County Comprehensive Plan (along with the more timely Draft EIS for the document).

It is and has always been the Chamber's prerogative to insist our local elected officials and policy makers contribute to the creation and ongoing support of a community that is a great place to live, work and play. To accomplish this, we must value the importance of our business climate as well as the importance of our environment — and we shouldn't sacrifice either for the other.

In the most recent draft EIS for the Comprehensive Plan, our community is presented with a 600 page document that outlines environmental concerns and regulations with very little acknowledgment of the impacts on the business community. A healthy business community is one that includes a diverse accompaniment of industries, sectors and geographical locations.

In this county, we pride ourselves on our environmental awareness. We are not proposing to change this attribute, but rather encourage all of you to have the same passion regarding our business community — from our industries to our local “mom-and-pops.” The diversity of our community is one of our greatest assets, and it is important that we protect the diversity of our business community as well. Just as we want to protect the diversity of thoughts, ideas, and cultures throughout this community, it is important to diversify our employment options. We can only do this by being willing to have a conversation. So when you are adopting policies that will lead this community for decades, please be willing to listen to all sides and seek out those perspectives.

We respect the time you have put into this and we want to make sure adequate time is provided to review it. Chamber staff and other business organizations are working collaboratively to make sure this review is thoughtful and timely.



As the Chamber, we are committed to working towards building a community we all want, and doing so while having a factually grounded dialogue with both the business community and our municipalities and agencies.

Best Regards.

Guy Occhiogrosso

President & CEO

Bellingham Whatcom Chamber of Commerce & Industry