

Adam Zack

From: Linda Ann Kuller
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2017 3:17 PM
To: Adam Zack
Subject: FW: Transition Lopez Island Comments on Comp Plan Elements
Attachments: SJC Comp Plan Elements Letter.pdf

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From: Ande Finley [mailto:andefinley@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2017 2:30 PM
To: DL - Council <Council@sanjuanco.com>
Cc: Erika Shook <erikas@sanjuanco.com>; Linda Ann Kuller <lindak@sanjuanco.com>
Subject: Transition Lopez Island Comments on Comp Plan Elements

Attached please find a letter from the Steering Committee of Transition Lopez Island with our comments on the Comp Plan Elements due today.

Please let us know if you have any questions or need this in a different format (e.g. Word instead of pdf).

Respectfully,
Ande Finley
Chair



December 11, 2017

San Juan County Council
350 Court Street, No. 1
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Dear Council Members,

As promised in our November 30th letter to the Council, Transition Lopez Island is here providing input on six elements of the Comprehensive Plan. We recognize the importance of San Juan County residents functioning as stewards of the land, working to preserve the ecological functions of our forests, wetlands, grasslands, farmlands, shorelines, and all of the Salish Sea which are crucial to the continued thriving and resilience of our human and non-human communities. We also value the importance of preserving the freedom of residents to live modestly and affordably in harmony with the land, as well as the importance of preserving the island culture of openness, generosity and a rural sense of community.

Our membership comprises almost 140 Lopez residents and 16 of us, the undersigned, participate in the Steering Committee. We partner with many organizations in the San Juans, including the Lopez Community Land Trust, Lopez Locavores, Lopez Family Resource Center, Lopez Community Trails Network, Islands Energy, Friends of the San Juans, Islands Climate Resilience, and the San Juan Islands Conservation District.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. We have comments on the following six elements:

Land Use (Agriculture Resource Lands)

Due to our geography as an archipelago, food security in the San Juan Islands requires a much higher degree of local self-reliance than on the mainland. Local self-reliance requires a strong, sustainable, small-scale local food system. Furthermore, food grown by integrated, organic systems combining vegetable and animal production without synthetic inputs provides foods that are higher in nutritional value and flavor as well protecting the ecosystem and natural environment through regenerative practices. Local foods supplied to local communities are fresher and require fewer fossil fuels for long-distance shipping.

Therefore, to ensure food security and healthful, fresh and flavorful food supply for existing and future generations, we urge policies that will support the following:

- Safeguard the conservation of agricultural resource lands for commercial and noncommercial food production.
- Foster the development and expansion of a local food system by allowing flexibility to create and distribute locally produced products on island through promotion of small commercial kitchens, farm stores and farm stands.
- Safeguard and enhance soil fertility through integrated, organic practices.
- Support agricultural diversity by maintaining heritage seed sources.



- Protect agricultural lands from interference from adjacent uses which may affect the continued use of these lands for production of food and agricultural products.
- Provide incentives for carbon sequestration through no-till and other regenerative practices.
- Expand and encourage establishment of composting facilities on each island to process food and yard waste, to build soil fertility and fix carbon in agricultural soils.

In summary, we recommend that a local food system based on regenerative, integrated and organic small-scale farming be promoted and supported in San Juan County and that policies shall provide incentives to increase farming practices that sequester carbon and build healthy soils.

Water Resources

Water resources is the most critical issue of our time. How we manage water today will determine if community life is possible on the islands tomorrow. As an honored resource, effective water management must be center stage in our conversations and commitment to create a thriving future. With precipitation as our county's only source of water, and the reality that precipitation is being negatively impacted by climate change, we place the health of our water as the principal measure of how we live on the land.

Recognizing that the items below were addressed in the previous Comprehensive Plan, we would like to call out the increased importance of the following four issues and have them acted on as top priority to sustaining life on the islands:

- Immediately establish three dynamic and ongoing education programs regarding water use, conservation, and protection: one for year round residents, one for weekend home owners, and one for tourists. Establish a task force that evaluates the programs' effectiveness and recommends changes.
- To avoid exceeding the carrying capacity limits of our aquifers, efficient use and careful planning must guide all decisions regarding growth and development of our islands.
- Growth and development planning should be based on long term projections derived from up-to date water quality and availability information.
- Echoing the letter submitted by Islands Climate Resilience: "Establish a county resource management program that addresses all water use, including exempt wells and alternative sources, and includes decision making based on long-term development and analysis of resource information."

Housing

We have reviewed and are generally in agreement with the ideas on housing brought forward in the recent second draft of the *San Juan County Comp Plan Workgroup Document*.

Home prices generally, but especially in San Juan County, are expected to be beyond the reach of low-to moderate income families for the foreseeable future. This is equally true of home rental prices, and will have significant consequences for the demographics of the community. Fewer young families will be able to move here and many in lower income groups currently living here may be forced to move elsewhere. We will become increasingly an elderly, retired population, and will find it difficult to recruit



and retain workers, including filling essential service positions like teachers, nurses or law enforcement officers. More jobs will be filled by workers commuting from outlying areas, producing more air pollution and greenhouse gas, as well as stressing health and personal relationships. The short-term rental market, such as Airbnb, has drawn many owners of cabins or ADU's away from renting their units out long term. An affordable housing stock for year-round residents will be essential to maintaining a healthy balance in our way of life here.

According to the *Preliminary Draft Housing Needs Analysis* published 8/9/17, at least 124 additional housing units, affordable to very-low, moderate- and middle-income households, will be needed each year for a period of 17 years. This is a large challenge that will require some innovative thinking and the collective effort of many. We cannot build our way out of affordable housing issues. We have plenty of housing units but nearly half of them in the county are not available to full-time residents. Below are some of our suggestions.

- Encourage higher density, mixed-use and infill development. Loosen restrictions on and actively promote development of accessory dwelling units (ADU's) as affordable housing. Infill development saves money because it is generally smaller and makes sustainable use of existing infrastructure.
- Require that any UGA expansions that include housing include a permanent affordability requirement for at least 50% of the units created.
- Create multiple funding sources to accomplish the SJC housing objectives, goals and policies. Any permanent funding mechanism should not rely solely on local residents. Consider taxing those purchasing real estate or visitors, such as additional sales tax or impact fees. This includes funding of the San Juan County Housing Bank through support of a permanent, voter approved, funding mechanism for Affordable Housing, such as Real Estate Excise Tax.
- Establish county-wide metrics and standards for energy savings, renewable targets and climate resiliency, and incentivize small building footprints and promote renewable energy sources to keep utility costs low.
- Consider placing restrictions on vacation rental permits and encourage conversion from short-term rentals to permanent, affordable housing by imposing a fee for each night rented. This, coupled with a rebate or tax incentive for conversion to permanent rental housing at affordable rent, may be the incentive needed for many to make the conversion.

Transportation

Due to its unique geography, San Juan County must plan for the future in a proactive way. The current Transportation Element lays out goals and policies related to non-motorized transportation that should be brought forward and expanded in this update. Overall transportation goals and policies must address a reduction in carbon emissions, including:

- Prioritizing investment in and providing incentives for the use of electric vehicles for private and public transportation and other low and/or no carbon-emitting transport or ride sharing options.
- Implementation of the concept of "Complete Streets," a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.



- Walking, biking and equestrian paths, as essential elements of future road re-designs, planned with the goal of connecting ferry terminals, town centers and points of interest.
- Ensuring that existing and new roads, trails, and other transportation infrastructure are sited appropriately and protected from sea level rise and the impacts of extreme weather events.
- Working with Washington State to electrify the ferry fleet and to ensure that ferry docks and services are resilient to climate change impacts, and opportunities are maximized to reduce emissions and waste from the ferry service.
- Consideration of some form of tax (i.e. lodging, gasoline carbon tax) to fund the above goals.

Utilities (Environmental Protection & Energy Conservation)

Looking forward, climate change will have local impacts on our islands and may also create added pressure on our housing market as climate refugees from elsewhere seek mild weather and the relatively sheltered environment of the San Juans. It is therefore important that we steward the growth in a way that is consistent with our values. As a county, we support a growth towards energy independence, energy efficiency, a green energy economy and a low-carbon future. We wish to see San Juan County take leadership in meeting and even exceeding the targets of the U.S. Climate Alliance, led by Washington State, New York and California, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

We wish to echo our support of the submission by the *San Juan County Comp Plan Workgroup Document*, led by OPALCO (<http://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/13597>). Specifically, we support the following changes in the plan:

- Adopt the goal to reduce San Juan County Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2035 and 50% by 2050.
- Increase local energy resilience through continuous improvements in energy efficiency and conservation (EE&C) and development of local renewable energy production to allow the County to reach net-zero by 2050.
- Encourage carbon-free, non-motorized modes of transportation and replacement of gas vehicles with electric vehicles by promoting charging stations, and supporting development of electric transit and shuttle services.
- Establish goals and policies to build awareness and commitment to continually improve the efficiency of existing and new housing stock, through establishing efficiency building standards, codes, and best practices, and providing education, well-targeted incentives and technical assistance.
- Require every building listed for sale to complete an energy audit with an energy score, like the Home Energy Rating System audit. Make the results of the energy audits available to potential buyers.
- Set renewable energy goals to continue to encourage development of these energy sources and incorporate into the building code for new construction the plan to require that an increasing portion of the housing units are net-zero energy homes.
- Urge the state legislature to extend the production incentive program by making the case that the solar industry creates quality jobs, helps develop a skilled workforce and helps the state reach its greenhouse-gas emission targets.



Economic Development

We support development of a thriving, sustainable, localized economy that minimizes cyclical downturns, provides living wage jobs, and increases sales tax revenue. Environmental conservation should be the primary consideration in any commitment to sustainable development. We support and encourage traditional industries including forestry, GMO-Free farming, aquaculture, construction, fishing and tourism without jeopardizing the resources on which they depend as well as an innovative economy based on green jobs and jobs enabled by communication infrastructure.

Development of new policies for this element should include:

- Working with the County and Port Commissions to encourage industries that can provide sustainable jobs with living wages and benefits (health insurance, sick leave, maternity and paternity leave, vacations, etc.), preferably community- and worker-owned businesses when possible.
- Working closely with the Visitor's Bureau, move tourism in a more sustainable direction, with an emphasis on ecotourism and experiential or educational activities, such as bike and farm tours, farm dinners and agricultural or craft internships and trainings.
- Actively attracting "green" businesses, enterprises that have an enduring commitment to environmental principles in their business operations with positive or no-negative impacts on the environment, community, or economy;
- Establishing a County-wide group that would act as a sustainable business incubator, providing facilities, services, technical assistance, local lending and other resources that support the development of startup companies.

Thank you for your kind consideration. We are available to provide further clarification and respond to questions if needed. Our contact person is Ande Finley (email: andefinley@gmail.com, tel. 468-5199).

Yours sincerely,

Transition Lopez Island Steering Committee

Ande Finley – Chair
Erika Davis
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