

16 March, 2022

Dear Planning Commissioners,

It is my understanding that climate and environment considerations are to be incorporated into all elements of the Comprehensive Plan. To view the housing element from the perspective of urgent human need without considering the long term impact on climate and environment misses the point of *planning*.

We humans have long since exceeded the carrying capacity of these islands for our species. All economic growth and development of housing and the accompanying infrastructure now comes at the expense of the biodiversity and numbers of other species. *This biodiversity and these numbers are what are critical for a stable climate, regardless of any and all other action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions or global temperature.*

We need to take a completely different approach to our current situation from that we have pursued for the past several hundred years, and certainly since we chose, as a county, to engage with the Growth Management Act. We need to immediately enact a moratorium on building permits for new construction so County Council, DCD and other county staff and planning commissioners can direct all of their attention to creating a just transition away from the current economic model that depends on new construction and tourism, and instead repurpose the construction and other development already in place for the needs of a working community.

This means changing the county narrative that our county is "a great place to move to retire," "a great place to build a vacation home," and "a great place to visit." Instead, we need to put all resources to work to figure out how we can become a regenerative economy that is a great place to live, work, raise a family, and be part of a community that lives in harmony with the rest of nature.

I realize that this would be a huge shift from the demand-based thinking of many people here, in which we are always behind, trying to figure out how to meet market demand and manage the county budget in a legal and economic system hugely biased toward accumulation of wealth at the expense of life.

It would mean intentionally creating ordinances, policies and strategies to direct our government to create this regenerative economy while meeting the letter of the law. It would mean repurposing existing buildings to meet the needs of workers and their families, rather than continuing to develop new land and crowd out every other species that depends on our land and waters as we attempt to meet only human demand.

It would mean educating the public on the need to make this shift, and engaging all of us on how to do it, rather than remain caught in a perpetual war about whether or not climate change even exists, and responding to protests from those who are profiting from the current unsustainable model at the expense of all of us.

I refer you to <https://climatejusticealliance.org> for an illustrated explanation of what such a transition involves.

Thank you for your consideration of this perspective as you review proposals to address the affordable housing crisis, land use decisions, and all other planning.

With appreciation,
Alexandra Gayek, Orcas Island