



816 Second Ave, Suite 200, Seattle, WA 98104
p. (206) 343-0681 f. (206) 709-8218
futurewise.org

March 25, 2021

Mr. Claude Pierret, Chairperson
Franklin County Planning Commission
Franklin County Planning and Development Department
502 W Boeing Street
Pasco, Washington 99301

Dear Chairperson Pierret and Planning Commissioners:

Subject: Comments on the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038 Update (Draft for Public Hearing – Jan. 2021), Franklin County files CPA 2018-01, CPA 2018-02 and CPA 2018-03 CPA 2018-04.

Via email: dbraaten@co.franklin.wa.us; planninginquiry@co.franklin.wa.us

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Franklin County Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038 Update. Overall, we support the update and appreciate the significant improvements to the comprehensive plan. Thank you for those improvements. We do we have some suggestions to improve the comprehensive plan explained below.

Futurewise works throughout Washington State on the implementation of the Growth Management Act (GMA). We work with local communities to support land-use policies that encourage healthy, equitable and opportunity-rich communities, and that protect our most valuable farmlands, forests and water resources. We have members across Washington State including Franklin County.

Summary of Comments

- Do not expand the Pasco urban growth area (UGA) in locations that pave over productive farmland and block the future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport. Please see page 2 of this letter for more information.
- Futurewise supports the adoption and implementation of Policies 14 and 15 to save taxpayers and ratepayers money and result in more attractive urban areas. Please see page 5 of this letter.
- Wildfire is a significant and growing hazard in Washington State including Franklin County. We support the addition of the wildfire protection policies for rural areas and recommend that similar policies also apply to unincorporated urban areas. Please see page 5 of this letter for more information.
- Please do not delete Purpose Statement 14 and the associated policies on pages 57 and 58 to protect agricultural operations and comply with the Growth Management Act. Please see page 5 of this letter for more information.



- Please clarify the criteria for Agricultural Resource Lands so they better conserve agricultural land and comply with the Growth Management Act. Please see page 6 of this letter for more information.
- Please include a policy protecting cultural and archaeological resources in the Historical & Cultural Resources Element. This policy will protect these resources from inadvertent and unnecessary damage. Please see page 7 of this letter for more information.

Detailed Comments on the Comprehensive Plan Update

Do not expand the Pasco urban growth area (UGA) in locations that pave over productive farmland and block the future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport. Please see Map 9: Pasco Urban Growth Area on page 32 of the Comprehensive Plan Update and other maps showing the UGA expansion.

The proposed UGA expansion paves over working farms and productive soils.

Before the criteria were amended, Franklin County designated most of the land in the proposed UGA expansions as Agricultural Resource Lands.¹ The American Farmland Trust has identified much of the UGA expansions as “nationally significant agricultural land.”² Nationally significant agricultural land is a designation for farmland that is best suited for long-term cultivation and food production.³ It was developed by the *Farms Under Threat* study in consultation with experts.⁴ The report exposes the threats facing working farms and policy efforts, state by state, to slow the pace. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service identifies 2,898.6 acres, 83.5 percent of the proposed UGA expansions, as prime farmland and farmland of statewide importance.⁵ These are U.S. Department of Agriculture classifications for highly productive

¹ *Franklin County Growth Management Comprehensive Plan* p. 96 (Agricultural Lands map) (Adopted Feb. 27, 2008 Resolution Number 2008-089) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at:

http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2008ComprehensivePlan-Entirepdfwebsite_000.pdf and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “2008ComprehensivePlan-EntirepdfwebsiteFranklin Cty.pdf.”

² American Farmland Trust, *Farms Under Threat Washington* webpage last accessed on March 24, 2021 at: <https://csp-fut.appspot.com/> and the map of nationally significant farmland is on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “ATF National Significant Farmland North of Pasco.pdf.”

³ Julia Freedgood, Mitch Hunter, Jennifer Dempsey, and Ann Sorensen, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States* p. 64 (American Farmland Trust: 2020) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at: https://s30428.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/09/AFT_FUT_StateoftheStates_rev.pdf and on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “AFT_FUT_StateoftheStates_rev.pdf.”

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ Soils Pasco Proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion June 2020 on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Soils Pasco Proposed Urban Growth Area (UGA) Expansion June 2020.xlsx;” Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NW Part) pp. 1 – 23 (6/4/2020) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Pasco NW UGA Expansion Soil_Map.pdf” and in a separate email; Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion

farmland.⁶ Most of the land in the UGA expansion alternatives are also currently used for agricultural production.⁷

“Since before statehood, fertile soils, available irrigation water, sunny skies and long summer daylight hours have made agriculture a cornerstone for economic development” in Franklin County.⁸ The American Farmland Trust estimates that between 2001 and 2016, 97,800 acres of agricultural land was converted in Washington State “enough land to generate \$61 million in annual revenue.”⁹ Given the economic value of agriculture to the City of Pasco and Franklin County and the productivity of the farmland in the proposed UGA expansions, we urge the Planning Commission to recommend denial of the proposed UGA expansions.

The proposed UGA expansions will interfere with future expansion of the Tri-Cities Airport and bring residences closer to the airport, making operations more difficult and adversely impacting the new residents.

Like the high-quality farmland, the Tri-Cities Airport is an important regional economic asset.¹⁰ Unfortunately the UGA expansion will cutoff future expansion opportunities at the north end of the runway.¹¹ The area at the end of the airport immediately west of Road 44 and north of Burns is designated Low Density Residential by the City of Pasco.¹² The planned residential uses close to the airport will adversely impact the operations of the airport and the airport operations will adversely

NE Part) pp. 1 – 28 (6/4/2020) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Pasco NE UGA Expansion Soil_Map.pdf” and in a separate email.

⁶ 7 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 657.5(a) & (c) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at: https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ebf87e4dc9365c2e9d37eb7410cc4510&mc=true&node=se7.6.657_15&rgn=div8 and enclosed in a separate email with this letter with the filename: “eCFR 7 CFR § 657 5.pdf.”

⁷ Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NW Part) p. 1 (6/4/2020); Soil Map—Franklin County, Washington (Pasco UGA Expansion NE Part) p. 1; American Farmland Trust, Land Cover and Use (2016) on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “AFT Existing Use 2016.pdf.”

⁸ *Economic Development Plan Franklin County, Washington* Res. 2016-211 p. 5 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: http://www.co.franklin.wa.us/planning/documents/2016EconDevPlan_May_2019.pdf on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “2016EconDevPlan_May_2019.pdf.”

⁹ American Farmland Trust, *Farms Under Threat: The State of the States Agricultural Land Conversion Highlight Summary Washington* p. *2 (2020) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: https://storage.googleapis.com/csp-fut.appspot.com/reports/spatial/Washington_spatial.pdf on the data CD enclosed with the paper version of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Washington_spatial.pdf.”

¹⁰ “The Tri-Cities Airport (PSC) is the largest airport in the Southeastern Washington and Northeastern Oregon region and the fourth largest air carrier airport in the state of Washington with connections to eight major hubs.” Port of Pasco, Tri-Cities Airport • PSC webpage accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.flytricity.com/> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Tri-Cities Airport webpage part.pdf.”

¹¹ City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/62156/Map-Folio-Updated> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Map Folio Updated.pdf.”

¹² City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map.

impact the residential uses.¹³ In contrast to residential uses, agricultural uses are compatible with airport operations.¹⁴ “Agricultural use of land near an airport permits the owner of the property to efficiently use land while providing an additional benefit to the community for airport protection.”¹⁵ This is another reason to recommend denial of the UGA expansion.

The City of Pasco is considering development regulation amendments that will increase residential capacity and will reduce or, potentially, eliminate the need for the UGA expansions.

The Washington State Supreme Court has held that a “UGA designation cannot exceed the amount of land necessary to accommodate the urban growth projected by the [State of Washington Office of Financial Management] OFM, plus a reasonable land market supply factor.”¹⁶ In other words, the UGA expansion must be needed to accommodate Pasco’s growth. The City of Pasco is considering development regulation amendments that have the potential to substantially increase the city’s zoning capacity.¹⁷

These changes could substantially increase the residential capacity of the City because much of the City of Pasco is zoned for low-density single-family dwellings.¹⁸ The City of Pasco Land Capacity Analysis did not include any of this increased capacity.¹⁹ The City must decide whether to adopt these amendments by June 15, 2021.²⁰ Given the large size of the proposed UGA expansions, 3,488 acres, that these amendments will be decided in six months, and that some or all of these

¹³ FAA Southern Region Compatible Land Use Planning Task Force, *Land Use Compatibility and Airports* p. i, pp. V-10 – V-11, p. V-30 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/planning_toolkit/ and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Land Use Compatibility and Airports.pdf;” Washington State Department of Transportation Aviation Division, *Airports and Compatible Land Use Volume 1* pp. 38 – 43 (Feb. 1999) last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: https://www.faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices/apl/noise_emissions/planning_toolkit/ and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) letter with the filename: “WSDOT Airports and Compatible Land Use Vol 1.pdf.”

¹⁴ FAA Southern Region Compatible Land Use Planning Task Force, *Land Use Compatibility and Airports* p. V-11.
¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Thurston County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Bd.*, 164 Wn.2d 329, 351 – 52, 190 P.3d 38, 48 – 49 (2008) (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Memorandum to Planning Commission from City of Pasco Subject: CA2020-001- House Bill 1923 (Duplex, Triplex & Courtyard Apartments) & CA2020-002- House Bill 1923 (Average Lot Size) pp. 1 (Oct. 15, 2020) accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://egov-pasco.com/weblink/DocView.aspx?id=914872&dbid=0&cr=1> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “10-15-2020 Pasco PC Meeting Packet Memo on CA2020-001 & CA2020-002.pdf.”

¹⁸ *Id.* pp. 4 – 6.

¹⁹ *City of Pasco Comprehensive Plan 2018-2038* Appendix C Land Capacity Analysis City of Pasco, Washington pp. 3 – 6 last accessed on Dec. 17, 2020 at: <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61799/Appendix-C-City-of-Pasco-Land-Capacity-Analysis> and enclosed on the data CD included with the paper original of Futurewise’s letter to the Franklin County Planning Commission (Dec. 17, 2020) with the filename: “Appendix C City of Pasco Land Capacity Analysis_20200514.pdf.”

²⁰ Memorandum to Planning Commission from City of Pasco Subject: CA2020-001- House Bill 1923 (Duplex, Triplex & Courtyard Apartments) & CA2020-002- House Bill 1923 (Average Lot Size) pp. 1 (Oct. 15, 2020).

amendments may be applied to the residential UGA expansion area,²¹ the Planning Commission should not recommend adoption of the UGA expansions until the additional capacity to be created by these amendments is known. This will help determine whether the full UGA expansion is needed.

Futurewise supports the additions to the land use policies on page 35 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The adoption and implementation of Policies 14 and 15 will save taxpayers and ratepayers money and result in more attractive urban areas. We support adding the policies.

Please correct the small typographical error in the “rural character” citation on page 40 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

The correct citation is RCW 36.70A.030(20).

Futurewise supports the addition to rural policies to address wildfires on page 57 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Residential growth in both urban and rural Franklin County has increased the exposure of residents on the Wildland Urban Interface to wildfires.²² We support the added policies on page 57 to help reduce wildfire danger in rural areas. This danger also exists in cities and towns. We recommend the adoption of policies to reduce wildfire danger in unincorporated urban areas too.

Futurewise recommended that Purpose Statement 14 and the associated policies on pages 57 and 58 of the Comprehensive Plan Update not be deleted.

RCW 36.70A.070(5)(c) provides in relevant part that the “rural element shall include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area, as established by the county, by: ... (v) Protecting against conflicts with the use of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated under RCW 36.70A.170.” Purpose Statement 14 and the associated policies on pages 57 and 58 addressed this requirement, but they have been deleted. Rural residential and agricultural uses often conflict.²³ The Purpose Statement 14 and the associated policies are needed to reduce potential incompatibilities and to comply with RCW 36.70A.070(5)(c)(v). We recommend they not be deleted.

²¹ City of Pasco, LU-1 Future Land Use Map.

²² *Franklin County, Washington Community Wildfire Protection Plan* pp. 48 – 51 (Approved by the Franklin County Commissioners 2014) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at: https://www.dnr.wa.gov/publications/rp_burn_cwpp_franklin_co.pdf.

²³ Tom Daniels, *What to Do About Rural Sprawl?* p. 3 (Paper Presented at the American Planning Association Conference: Seattle, WA: April 28, 1999) last accessed on March 24, 2021 at: <http://mrsc.org/getmedia/40790EA0-E824-4F83-939E-C06A3AB1056D/ruralsprawl.aspx> and enclosed in a separate email with the filename: “ruralsprawl.pdf.”

Clarify the criteria for Agricultural Resource Lands. Please see page 62 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Overall, we support the proposed comprehensive plan's designation criteria for Agricultural Resource Lands on pages 61 and 62. We believe they provide guidance to the county and landowners for the designation of Agricultural Resource Lands.

We do recommend that the first criterion that the “[t]he land is not within a UGA and is not currently characterized by urban growth” be clarified. As the comprehensive plan indicates, the Washington State Supreme Court has held that there is a three-part test for agricultural land of long-term commercial significance:

¶ 17 In sum, based on the plain language of the GMA and its interpretation in *Benaroya I*, we hold that agricultural land is land: (a) not already characterized by urban growth (b) that is primarily devoted to the commercial production of agricultural products enumerated in RCW 36.70A.030(2), including land in areas used or capable of being used for production based on land characteristics, and (c) that has long-term commercial significance for agricultural production, as indicated by soil, growing capacity, productivity, and whether it is near population areas or vulnerable to more intense uses.²⁴

The Growth Management Act specifically allows Agricultural Resource Lands in urban growth areas as long as a jurisdiction has a purchase or transfer of development rights program.²⁵ So just because land is in an urban growth area does not disqualify it from being designated as Agricultural Resource Lands. So the first criteria should read as follows with our deletion double struck through:

1. The land is ~~not within a UGA and~~ is not currently characterized by urban growth

We strongly support the revised Natural Environment Goals and Policies on pages 90 through 93 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Futurewise strongly supports the revised Natural Environment goals and policies. These goals and policies will help protect people, property, and the environment.

We strongly support the revised Economic Development Chapter on pages 90 through 93 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Futurewise strongly supports the revised Economic Development Chapter. In particular, we appreciate the updated information on the economic trends and industries in the Franklin County.

²⁴ *Lewis County v. Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Bd.*, 157 Wn.2d 488, 502, 139 P.3d 1096, 1103 (2006).

²⁵ RCW 36.70A.060(4); *City of Redmond v. Cent. Puget Sound Growth Mgmt. Hearings Bd. (Benaroya I)*, 136 Wn.2d 38, 55 – 57, 959 P.2d 1091, 1099 (1998).

The Historical & Cultural Resources Element should include a policy protecting Cultural and Archaeological Resources. Please see pages 119 and 120 of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

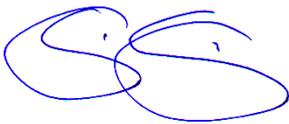
We support including an Historical & Cultural Resources Element in the comprehensive plan. The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation has developed an archaeological predictive model that can predict where archaeological resources, a type of cultural resource, are likely to be located and where the department recommends archaeological surveys should be completed before earth disturbing activities and other uses and activities that can damage archaeological sites are undertaken.²⁶ The predictive model shows significant areas having a “high risk” and “very high risk” of cultural resources in the county.²⁷ Land development can adversely impact these resources. We recommend that the element include a policy requiring a professional evaluation of earth disturbing development and other uses and activities that can damage archaeological sites in areas having a “high risk” and “very high risk” of cultural resources. The evaluation should determine if additional studies or mitigation is necessary.

Thank you for considering our comments. If you require additional information, please contact Alison Cable at telephone (206) 343-0681 Ext. 114 and email: alison@futurewise.org or Tim Trohimovich at telephone (206) 343-0681 Ext. 102 and email: tim@futurewise.org.

Very Truly Yours,



Alison Cable
Tri-Cities Program Manager



Tim Trohimovich, AICP
Director of Planning & Law

cc: Mr. Rick White, City of Pasco Community & Economic Development Director via email: whiter@pasco-wa.gov

²⁶ Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation WISAARD webpage accessed on March 24, 2021 at: <https://dahp.wa.gov/historic-preservation/find-a-historic-place>.

²⁷ *Id.*