

Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:
Futurewise

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Organization's General Goals:
Futurewise works throughout Washington state to encourage healthy, equitable and opportunity-rich communities and to protect our most valuable farmlands, forests, and water resources through wise land use policies and practices.

Date of Award:	Level:
2023 Q3	\$2,501 to \$5,000

For more information, please read the attached report from Futurewise.

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271
TulalipCares.org



FINAL REPORT TO TULALIP TRIBES FOR GRANT January 2024 – December 2024

Code: Q3 2023 14.2

URL: www.futurewise.org

Number of people impacted: 833,540 (population of Snohomish County)

This is the final report for the grant given to Futurewise in January 2024 for work in Snohomish County, focusing on Snohomish County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update and other land use issues that impact water quality, climate change, wildlife habitat, housing affordability, food systems, salmon recovery, transportation, and racial equity.

Funding from the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund supported Futurewise's work to shape the comprehensive plan and Critical Areas Ordinance under consideration in Snohomish County. Our work on these plans aimed to improve water quality in the Sauk, Skagit, Stillaguamish, and Snohomish river basins, as well as protect wildlife habitat throughout the county.

During the grant period, Futurewise activated 272 supporters in Snohomish County who contacted decision-makers regarding the comprehensive plan and Critical Areas Ordinance. We worked with our supporters to advocate for a comprehensive plan that concentrated growth, reduced sprawl, protected rural character and water quality.

The Snohomish County Council officially adopted the comprehensive plan on December 4th, 2024. The County Council has not yet adopted a final Critical Areas Ordinance – adoption is expected in early 2025. Many of the actions taken by the County Council in adopting the comprehensive plan reflect priorities that Futurewise supported and advocated for through numerous meetings, hearings, collaboration with many organizations and groups throughout Snohomish County, and with outreach with our membership.

Goal 1: Ensure that Snohomish County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update includes new policies for saving and restoring urban tree canopy, and policies to help slow and mitigate the impacts from climate change.

The Snohomish County Council adopted Urban Tree Canopy Policies, with a no net loss requirement. These policies once implemented will protect human life and the environment and are cost-effective. These new policies came about through a collaboration between Futurewise, the League of Women Voters of Snohomish County and Council Member Megan Dunn. These policies will need to be implemented through new regulations that the county will need to put into place over the course of several years. The main focus was to ensure more significant trees remain and more trees also replaced in new developments in the unincorporated land that the development community is anxious to develop, to help mitigate for flooding, water quality impacts and climate change.





Goal 2: Ensure that Snohomish County's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update concentrates growth in designated urban centers, directs growth away from the rural areas, connects new housing development with multi-modal transportation options, and prevents urban growth area expansions which deteriorate air and water quality and fish and wildlife habitat.

The Snohomish County Council adopted Alternative 2 – Medium Growth – Focus on High-Capacity Transit Communities. This was the alternative advocated for by Futurewise and our supporters. This alternative best protects the environment, including salmon habitat and protects working farms and forests. By focusing growth in existing cities, towns, and urban growth areas, this will protect water quality, reduce costs for taxpayers and ratepayers, generate less greenhouse gas pollution from transportation, will result in a 28 percent reduction from transportation sources and intends that the rural area and natural resource lands would accommodate no more than 4.5 percent of county population growth.


While the County Council adopted alternative 2, they also adopted several unneeded urban growth area expansions. The Snohomish County Executive is evaluating whether to veto some of these expansions. Futurewise is also evaluating whether the urban growth area expansion should be appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board, a state agency that hears appeals alleging comprehensive plans and development regulations do not comply with the Growth Management Act.


Goal 3: Ensure that the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update, including other changes to policies and development regulations that might be proposed during 2024 will reduce greenhouse gas emissions from transportation and mitigate climate impacts on communities and habitats, such as higher stream temperatures.

Futurewise and our allies secured a few key victories in the comprehensive plan in promoting transit-oriented development and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, including:

- Reduction of housing costs to ensure more affordable housing by eliminating parking requirements for housing close to transit stops and transit corridors, and will encourage infill development and multi-modal transportation.
- Mixed Use Corridor (MUC) regulations, new regulations which will provide more opportunities for housing near transit thereby reducing congestion and greenhouse gas pollution from transportation and building heating, and protecting working farms and forests by expanding the County's transfer of development rights receiving areas. The Mixed Use Corridor will also help protect water resources and reduce sprawl development into our rural areas.

Unfortunately, in addition to the many good policies adopted by the County Council, the council also adopted a Rural Clusters ordinance that will increase sprawl, increase population density in rural areas and strain limited water resources. Futurewise appealed the rural clusters ordinance to the Growth Management Hearings Board, highlighting the following concerns:



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- Increase rural density and capacity: The ordinance allows more lots per cluster, leading to increased population density in rural areas. This raises concerns about the strain on water resources, especially given the potential for larger subdivisions facilitated by
 - Individual wells and septic systems: Permitting these in open spaces reduces lot sizes, increases density, and potentially allows for larger subdivisions due to relaxed well protection zones and setback requirements. This raises concerns about groundwater depletion and potential contamination.
 - Water line extensions: Larger clusters and greater density bonuses may make extending water lines more economically feasible, further promoting development and increasing water demand in areas previously reliant on limited-capacity permit-exempt wells.
 - Erosion of Rural Character: Allowing clusters of up to 30 homes creates an appearance of suburban neighborhoods, eroding the rural character these regulations are supposed to protect. Reduced buffer sizes and the substitution of natural buffers with landscaping further diminish the rural landscape.
 - Reduced Buffers: Reducing buffer sizes and allowing landscape screening to replace natural buffers further compromises rural character.
 - Inconsistency with VISION 2050 and the Countywide Planning Policies: The increased density and potential for sprawling development enabled by the ordinance directly conflict with goals to manage and reduce rural growth rates, protect rural character, and preserve resource lands.
 - Wildfire Risk: The ordinance permits existing utility lines to remain above ground, increasing the risk of wildfires in these rural areas. This contradicts wildfire mitigation efforts and puts both residents and the natural environment at greater risk.

Conclusion

Futurewise is grateful for the continued support of the Tulalip Tribes Charitable Fund for supporting our advocacy in Snohomish County to advance livable communities and protect the county's rural areas, and fish and wildlife habitat from sprawl. In 2025, Futurewise's work in Snohomish County to protect water quality will include continued advocacy on the Critical Areas Ordinance and legal work on our appeal of the Rural Clusters ordinance.

We look forward to continued collaboration.

Thank you,



Alex Brennan
Executive Director