

# Planning Commission

## Public Hearing



Community Development • 2025 NE Kresky Ave, Chehalis, WA 98532 • Phone: (360) 740-1146

### STAFF REPORT

### PACKWOOD SUBAREA PLAN

**Date:** March 3, 2023  
**Staff:** Mindy Brooks, Senior Long Range Planner  
**Attachments:** [Packwood Subarea Plan](#)  
[Public Participation Results](#)  
[Existing Conditions Report](#)

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### SUMMARY

On January 10 and February 14, 2023, staff presented an overview of the Packwood Subarea Plan to the Planning Commission. The presentations are available on the webpage <https://lewiscountywa.gov/departments/community-development/rezones/comprehensive-plan-and-development-regulation-amendments/packwood-subarea-plan/>. The public hearing will take place on March 14, 2023 at 6:00 pm at the Packwood Community Hall. Prior to the hearing, there will be an Open House at 4:30 pm for the public to learn about the plan and ask questions of staff.

This memo includes main points about the Packwood Subarea Plan and responses questions from the Planning Commissioner.

### Take Home Messages

**1. The subarea plan does not drive growth, it manages and directs growth.**

Development is already occurring and has been at a fast rate for the past few years. This is because the existing zoning of Small Town Mixed Use (STMU) allows a lot of new uses and development. It is also because tourism has increased significantly since 2020. The plan manages the growth and directs how the growth happens.

**2. People who live and work in town need affordable housing.**

The price of a single family residence has gone up roughly 300% in Packwood (2012-2022). The price of single family residences are not likely to come down significantly. What is needed are other housing options that are more affordable such as duplexes, triplexes, quadplexes, rowhouses, ADUs, apartments, bunkhouses, etc. The plan will result in new guidance to allow more housing options and focusing higher density of housing in Downtown, preserving rural areas surrounding Packwood.

**3. Jobs, housing and quality education are needed for families to live in Packwood.**

When the mill and ranger station closed, good paying jobs left and so did families. Then the school closed. To retain the families in Packwood and to encourage more families to come back,

there needs to be jobs that pay a living wage, affordable housing options and educational opportunities. The plan includes goals to improve the local economy and creating jobs, as well as supporting continuing education.

**4. Services are needed to allow people to age in place.**

Packwood has a lot of residents that are over 60 years old. To continue to live in Packwood, people need services like doctor's office, pharmacy, affordable groceries, banking, etc. Driving a long distance to access those services can become less safe and feasible as we age. The plan encourages new supportive services to be located in Packwood and to concentrate new commercial uses, like a second grocery store along Highway 12.

**5. The local economy is now based on tourism.**

The primary economy in Packwood is tourism and more businesses are needed to take advantage of the hundreds of thousands of tourists that visit Packwood each year. But other jobs are needed as well to support the businesses and residents including electricians, plumbers, roofers, carpenters, etc. The plan has goals for creating a sustainable retail sector and growing the skilled labor sector of the economy.

**6. Highway 12 is not safe and needs improvements.**

The state highway needs many improvements to make it safer including traffic calming, designated on-street parking, lighting, crosswalks, etc. The improvements need to address peak tourism, but improvements also need to address local access. The plan includes concepts for Highway 12 that are supported by WSDOT.

**Commissioner Question – Should Packwood Incorporate?**

In order for a place like Packwood to incorporate it needs two things: 1) an urban growth area boundary and 2) a population of 1,500 residents. Packwood does not have either at this time. One of the potential implementation tools that will be considered during Phase II is placing an urban growth area (UGA) boundary around all or part of the subarea. In the future, *if* there is an UGA and *if* the population within that boundary reaches 1,500 residents, then Packwood could conduct an incorporation study to determine if the residents would like to incorporate as a city.

**NEXT STEPS**

After the hearing on March 14, 2023 staff recommend the Planning Commission close testimony and start the commissioner discussion, including asking staff questions. Following discussion, staff recommend the Planning Commission recess the hearing and continue it to March 28, 2023 for deliberation and vote. A continued hearing would take place at the regular location of the Lewis County Historic Courthouse in Chehalis and would be available on Zoom.

Following the Planning Commission vote, the BOCC will hold a public hearing in May to consider adoption of the Packwood Subarea Plan. The BOCC's calendar and agendas are available here <https://lewiscountywa.gov/offices/commissioners/agendas-calendar/>.