



## SAN JUAN COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

135 Rhone Street, PO Box 947, Friday Harbor, WA 98250

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DATE RECEIVED

### Comprehensive Plan Text/SJC Code\* Amendment Request

\*San Juan County Code Titles 15, 16 & 18  
(Annual Docket)

#### APPLICANT INFORMATION:

Name of Applicant:	<u>Joe Symons</u>	Name of Agent:	<u>n/a</u>
Address	<u>3222 Pt. Lawrence Rd</u>	Address	<u></u>
City, State, Zip	<u>Olga, WA 98279</u>	City, State, Zip	<u></u>
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Email	<u>joesymons@me.com</u>	E-mail	<u></u>

This request is for a text amendment to the Comprehensive Plan or development regulations, not a comprehensive plan map amendment. I understand that this request will be reviewed according to the County's annual docket process.

<u>J. Symons</u> Signature	<u>Joe Symons</u> Printed Name	<u>18 Feb 2019</u> Date
<u></u> Signature	<u>See Attached List (Exhibit A)</u> Printed Name	<u>18 Feb 2019</u> Date

#### Please Describe the Proposed Amendments (attach additional pages if you need more space):

1. Comprehensive Plan – Describe proposed amendment and/or attach proposed text changes. List Comprehensive plan section, page numbers, title and policies proposed for amendment.

**Background:** In 2001 I submitted a formal request to the Planning Commission via the annual Docket process. The request did not ask for a specific change in the SJC Comprehensive Plan (CP). Rather, the request asked for a thorough and comprehensive explanation of the CP in layman's terms. This could be described as a "truth in planning" document. The formal request, conforming to the docket format at the time, is available at <http://www.doebay.net/forthcoming.html> (and is attached as Exhibit B). The PC reviewed the request and unanimously voted that it should be done and be given the highest priority of county government. The PC finding is available at <http://www.doebay.net/SJCPCfindingsOct2001.pdf> (and is attached as Exhibit C). The BOCC (former term for the County Council) ignored the PC recommendation. Subsequent to this request, no action has been taken by DCD, PC or CC to re-explore, consider, implement or otherwise achieve the intent of this request.

Given that there have been significant changes experienced by SJC in the past 18 years since the request was made, and that County Council rejected my 2018 docket application without notifying me or any co-applicants regarding the hearing where we might have testified, I re-submit a request for a comprehensive "truth in planning" component of the CP specifically geared to communicate in language understood by residents not formally trained in law or land use planning. The current request builds upon but is not limited to the previous requests. The current request explicitly requests a new component to be added to the CP, analogous to an "executive summary", which would include a summarized "build-out analysis" or BOA in which the impacts on county finances, community cohesiveness, environmental challenges and experience of living in the San Juan Islands



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is examined. That is, the Build Out Analysis (the full documentation of which would be located as Exhibit 1 in the CP Appendix) would not be limited to the 20 year planning horizon but would run forward to illuminate what the full set of impacts are likely to be when all development potential currently on the books (i.e., the current density map) is exhausted.

The BOA includes by definition an impact analysis. These impacts focus on themes, expressed in the official Vision Statement, that the residents of San Juan County care about: impacts such as, but not limited to, the environment, transportation, housing, sense of community cohesiveness and the fiscal implications of new development on government services. All of this information should be described with a variety of easily understood maps, charts, graphics, photographs, spreadsheets, narratives, etc.

A "truth in planning" presentation is a layman-friendly term for a BOA. These analyses do not involve rocket science. An excellent article reviewing what a BOA can do is found at <http://conservationtools.org/guides/42-build-out-analysis> (and is attached as Exhibit D). San Juan County has a sophisticated GIS system and highly professional staff that can perform this task.

Inexpensive and powerful off-the-shelf software exists that would sit atop (be an extension of) SJC's GIS data; this software generates easy to understand graphics and information and includes a powerful capability to facilitate a Build Out Analysis. Note that additional work beyond the capability of the suggested software is likely to be required to ensure that the full set of impacts called for in this request is included.

The company producing the software is

<http://communityviz.city-explained.com/index.html>

and the software with many explanatory videos and materials is at

<http://communityviz.city-explained.com/communityviz/index.html>

An example of the use of this software in a real-world environment is at

[https://www.upstateforever.org/files/files/2017.7.20\\_SOF\\_FINAL\\_Report.pdf](https://www.upstateforever.org/files/files/2017.7.20_SOF_FINAL_Report.pdf)

The tool is here, the staff is competent, the data exists, the price is affordable and *the need is essential*.

Supportive material for this request includes the 2004 Cost of Community Services study, funded by American Farmland Trust and the Friends of the San Juans (at: <http://www.doebay.net/appeal/COCS%20Report%20Exec%20Sum%20%205%2018%2004.pdf>). This document demonstrates the tax implications on existing residents for new residential development. The short version is that for every dollar of new tax revenue from a new residence, it costs the county \$1.32. That \$0.32 shortfall is paid for by existing tax payers, who are effectively subsidizing wealthy new second homers.

In addition, in 2000 SJC funded a "Study of Socioeconomic Impacts of Growth Pressure in Selected Seasonal/Resort Communities. "

(located at <http://www.doebay.net/appeal/socioeconomicgrowth.pdf>). This has been identified as the "Nantucket" study. It's conclusion is stark: SJC is not an exception to the transformation of beautiful





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small rural communities into havens for the wealthy, but is simply about 20 years behind. We are now almost 20 years further down the road than when the study was authored.

It should be noted that neither of these documents is either mentioned or available on the SJC website.

These supportive materials reinforce the need for a transparent, comprehensive, easily understood executive summary, located in the CP's Introduction referencing the full BOA located in the Appendix. This executive summary explicitly and accurately describes the likely conditions at buildout using best available technologies and communication channels and methods.

Specifically, the Introduction to the CP (page 1) at <http://www.sanjuanco.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/1052> states "The Vision Statement (Table 1) is the foundation upon which the entire Comprehensive Plan is based" (please read all of page 1 for additional context).

Given that the CP is being updated, the Introduction should be significantly re-written. The current Introduction speaks largely to the past process (~1992-1999), avoids mentioning the BOCC decision regarding prohibiting committee conversations about density, says nothing about the litigation and the County's multi-year failure to meet CP compliance under GMA, and fails to describe the current status of the CP. The Introduction was written in 1998, now >20 years ago. San Juan County's institutional memory regarding the CP's evolution is essentially non-existent. Multiple staff, PC and CC changes have taken place; virtually no one knows how we got to where we are. A thorough portrait of this history exists only at [doebay.net/appeal](http://doebay.net/appeal) which includes a detailed record of the litigation, of the political processes and of the context within which the current CP can be interpreted. A glance at the SJC's two paragraph description of the history of the county (at <http://www.sanjuanco.com/668/History>) is entirely inadequate and little short of absurd.

It is essential that this proposed addition to the CP be located in the Introduction, preferably following page two (currently showing the SJC Vision Statement), so that a time-challenged reader can get to the real meat of the CP immediately.

The executive summary component requested would *explicitly demonstrate* precisely how the goals, policies and UDC regulations *fulfill and/or fail to fulfill* the SJC certified Vision Statement. Options for how to bring the CP into compliance with the Vision Statement would be offered as part of this 'truth in planning' summary. Given that the CP has been, and will continue to be, crafted under the provisions of the Growth Management Act, the BOA and the executive summary would additionally specifically identify how the CP meets, or fails to meet, the 14 principles of GMA, with particular attention to the Act's first and second principles.

My request specifically and additionally asks that any future CP policy or UDC changes would have to explicitly and comprehensively demonstrate that they account for and ensure that the Vision Statement and GMA goals are specifically referenced and reviewed for compliance and do not remain unmentioned, diluted, ignored, bypassed or marginalized. All future CP modifications would be so identified and concomitantly incorporated in a revised executive summary to insure clarity and consistency with the intent of this addition to the CP.



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2. San Juan County Code Title 15, Title 16 or Title 18. Describe proposed amendment and/or attach proposed text changes. List code sections proposed for amendment.

**No specific county code changes are requested at this time.**

3. Why is the amendment being proposed?

The current SJC CP fails to communicate the full extent of the development potential inherent in the density map created in 1979. The BOCC "opted in" to create the current CP under GMA in 1992 and established citizen committess in each District to craft a new CP; however, the BOCC prohibited committee discussion of the 1979 density designations. Petitioners challenged the CP before the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board over a several year period from 1999-2007; in almost all cases, SJC lost. Under duress, SJC made modifications to the density map in order to remove the burden of non-compliance under GMA. The resulting changes, however, have never been articulated in any easy-to-understand summary document and included in the CP. The explosive growth of second homes and tourist accommodations since 1999 shows no sign of deceleration. A first-approximation estimate of the buildout potential under the existing density regulations suggests a buildout population in excess of 70,000 for SJC; this population estimate does not include the impact of visitors (studies have demonstrated that the seasonal impact of visitors more than doubles the resident population). By reference the current estimated population of SJC in 2019 is ~16,000.

Consequently it is imperative that the residents of SJC have a comprehensive and thorough portrait of what their future is likely to be, explicitly including the full range of impacts generated by visitors. This portrait needs to be compared with the resident-chosen Vision and GMA and all deficiencies explicitly documented.

4. How is the proposed amendment consistent with the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A), Comprehensive Plan and development regulations?

**GMA requires** that a county's CP be internally consistent. As a specific example, SJC has an obligation to ensure that rural lands in the county are not characterized by sprawl, generally defined by the GMA Hearings Boards as average rural lands densities less than 1 dwelling unit/5 acres. Of the ~17000 legal tax parcels in SJC in 2019, 8500 are non-conforming in rural land designations, creating an estimated rural lands buildout density of 1 du/3 acres. By GMA standards, this is sprawl. Current SJC rural lands densities are approximately 1 du/4 acres, which is also by definition sprawl (this can be validated at <http://www.doebay.net/appeal/SJC%20CP%20index%20rural%20lands.pdf>; this legal document was generated, under duress, by SJC during the litigation period.)

Separately, SJC has an obligation to ensure that there is consistency between the vision statement, describing a small rural county not wanting to change much, and its development potential. A truth in planning component as requested would explicitly illuminate these and other discrepancies and provide a solid fact-based platform for public conversation.

5. Does this proposal impact an Urban Growth Area (UGA)? Lopez Village, Eastsound and the Town of Friday Harbor are the only UGAs in the County.

☐ Yes, indicate UGA\_\_\_\_\_

☒ No

6. Does this proposal increase population or employment capacity?

**No.**