

Comments of Ed Suij for the Planning Record
Vision Statement Meeting, October 3, 2017

I participated in the planning process of San Juan County, attending most of the meetings that produced the county's first Comprehensive Plan. I was trained as an engineer of planning and worked as a professional regional planner. I have spent hundreds of hours composing comments to and participating in the planning process and record. I include here my own analysis and opinions but also a few points made by others. Please do not assume that by doing so I do not care about or take seriously the county's update of the CP. I do not have time to spend hours composing yet another wholly original comment. I care deeply about our islands' human and biological community and have thought deeply about it. My life is rooted here, where I have lived for 3 decades, built my house and planted my now-mature fruit farm.

I support the existing Vision Statement (VS), which has not been implemented in our CP. I envision a community that is "primarily rural", as stated in our VS. While for the past 20+ years we have liked to imagine that our CP will steer development such that our community remains primarily rural, we are creating a community that is characterized by sprawl in our rural areas and crowded in our activity centers. Our rural farms and forests look little different from urban area suburbs.

Our current VS envisions that "Our islands have exceptional natural beauty and healthy diverse ecosystems surrounded by pollution-free marine waters. The air is fresh and clean, the water quality is excellent, and the soil is uncontaminated. As careful stewards of these islands, we conserve resources, preserve open space, and take appropriate action to assure healthy land and marine environments. Native plants and animals of the islands thrive, and are identified, appreciated and conserved."

While we have created and sustained several organizations to serve as stewardship vehicles to preserve open space and natural resources, the reality is that our efforts are sadly minimal and often depend on the unpredictable contributions of the very wealthy. As we grow, we consume and transform the resources upon which our main industries of tourism and construction rely such that we degrade the very basis for their success. **The updated CP should implement our existing VS by more appropriately guiding development to conserve the natural resources and values as expressed in the quoted paragraph on healthy diverse ecosystems.**

The updated CP should implement our existing VS and include, goals, policies, and regulations that support sustainable, low impact development; that maintain a vibrant, diverse, healthy community and environment; and that protect our rural quality of life, including by the transfer and extinction of development rights and the regulation of the rate of development (the speed at which development takes place.) These mechanisms are most likely necessary for our community to remain rural.

Carrying Capacity/Rural Quality of Life (Planning for peak visitor use of our resources):

- Protect farms, forests, and wildlife habitat — from subdivision, development and pollution — that are essential to our well-being and quality of life. **Protect the primarily rural quality of the islands.**
- Provide adequate services to support new development and increased tourism without negatively affecting existing residents. The only formal cost of community services study performed in the county found that new development at that time cost \$1.30 for every dollar in services that it paid for with real property tax. **It is appropriate for new development to pay its own way rather than burdening existing residents.**
- **Ensure that allowable densities are compatible with the adopted community vision of a primarily rural community.**

Water:

- Support sustainable water supply and use without relying on costly, carbon emitting, energy intensive approaches such as hauling and desalination.
- **Prevent new development from causing water shortages in existing wells and surface water systems.**

Housing:

- **Encourage low impact, sustainable housing development that is modest in size** (to minimize carbon footprint associated with construction materials and long term energy use), with minimal clearing, grading and removal of native vegetation (to reduce stormwater runoff and protect wildlife habitat).
- Ensure adequate and affordable housing for all income levels.
- **Limit allowable vacation rentals** so they do not adversely affect existing residents, neighborhoods or the community.

Climate Resiliency:

- Incorporate climate change policies and goals in each element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Build the resilience of our community, economy, and ecosystems in regard to climate change impacts.**
- **Plan for high impact climate events like fire, drought, sea level rise/increased storm surge. Don't rebuild**

infrastructure in areas that flood.

- **Promote low-emissions pathways in all elements, making sure that our development and way of life helps to mitigate global climate change.**

Transportation:

- **Promote safe non-car transportation alternatives that connect our communities (walking/bike paths).**
- **Promote mass transit on each island; and connect it to mainland buses and trains.**



Ed Stij
PO Box 125
Orcas, WA 98280