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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Growth-related public process improvements planned for 2006

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Bellingham Mayor Mark Asmundson described today preliminary plans to better inform and involve community members in city growth management issues.

Asmundson said he has identified \$500,000 in his preliminary 2006 budget for growth-related projects that focus on improving public processes for dealing with growth issues. He said proposed activities, which he expects to begin early in 2006 if approved by Council, originated from citizen input during the past year as city officials tackled updating the city Comprehensive Plan and other growth-related issues.

"I expect this proposal to address many of the concerns that have been expressed by the public and elected officials during the past year," he said.

He said the proposal will focus on four key areas:

- Ensuring on-going public consideration of the city Comprehensive Plan;
- Facilitating a neighborhood-led process to update neighborhood plans and integrate them into the city Comprehensive Plan;
- Partnering with Whatcom County government officials in long-term planning, to provide broad context for city planning that complements regional planning;
- Stepping up efforts to educate citizens about what city government can realistically do to manage growth and the trade-offs associated with alternative growth management philosophies.

Asmundson said he expects to make a formal proposal with additional details to City Council in mid-December, but wanted to let them know about the proposal as they discussed other 2006 budget items at Monday's Council meeting.

He said the proposal is the work of an ad-hoc citizen task force that includes Joan Beardsley, Barbara Ryan, Tris Shirley, Iain Davidson, Ken Hertz, Michelle Long, Mike Mcauley, Ted Mischaikov and Bill Hager.

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