

Community Development Department

Director: Lauren Prentice

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Date: May 22, 2025
Prepared: May 20, 2025
To: Board of County Commissioners
From: Lauren Prentice, Director
RE: 2026 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update – Proposed Attalia Subarea Plan and Planned Action EIS

Summary

In addition to the State-required scope of work for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, County staff have proposed that we partner with the Port of Walla Walla to conduct proactive long-range planning for the Attalia Urban Growth Area (UGA) in the form of an Attalia Subarea Plan. Our hope is that this would be the first step in a joint effort to refresh plans, zoning, and code for this area and facilitate expedited environmental and permitting reviews in the future. The second phase of the project, after the Attalia Subarea Plan is created, would be to do Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), thus eliminating the need for time-consuming and expensive project level reviews.

We presented this idea to the Port Commissioners and Walla Walla County Commissioners in a joint meeting on March 25, 2025 ([Audio available online, discussion begins at 57:52](#)). The discussion was good, and the consensus was that a proposal would be drafted for consideration by both bodies. The group was advised that decisions would need to be made within about 60 days to do this as part of the Periodic Update. A proposal and draft scope of work was provided to Port staff on April 11 (attached).

Attachments

- A. Draft Scope of Work for Attalia Subarea Plan, dated April 4, 2025

Proposal

County staff have proposed to leverage the work and resources that is already being invested by the County, and the State, in the Periodic Update. There are cost savings to do this work now, as part of the update.

Scope of work is attached. We proposed the following to the Port of Walla Walla.

1. County can do a contract amendment with consultant Kimley-Horn who we have contracted with for the Comprehensive Plan Update.
2. County and Port can do a MOU under an existing attached Interlocal Agreement.

3. Cost-sharing – The rough budget is about \$100,000. We propose that the County contribute 10% and the Port covers the rest as the main driver is the Port’s development work.

Phase 2: SEPA Planned Action

The final step would be a project-level [SEPA Planned Action](#). The proposed Attalia Subarea Plan would lay the groundwork for the Planned Action EIS. We would do the long-range planning, code updates, etc. now, as part of the work plan for the Periodic update.

The purpose of doing a SEPA Planned Action is to shift environmental review to the planning stage, rather than doing it at development review (permitting). This is a tool under the Growth Management Act that streamlines reviewing/permitting and provides more certainty in the review process.

Early environmental review provides more certainty to permit applicants with respect to what will be required, and to the public with respect to how the environmental impacts will be addressed (i.e. mitigation). This would mean if we did the planning and review up front, development projects do not need individual SEPA determinations, and it could also mean that the Port and other agencies do not have to do SEPA for infrastructure projects. Environmental review at the time of permit submittal would be limited to reviewing for conformance with the planned action. Assuming the project/development is consistent with the planned action, a new threshold determination would not be needed.

Permit processing time would be reduced because there would be no SEPA public notice requirements or appeal periods. One of the most common complaints about County permitting from the Port of Walla Walla and applicants is the time it takes to complete SEPA review. This would front-load this review and eliminate, or significantly streamline, this requirement.

Why a Subarea Plan? Why long-range planning?

The fact that the Attalia UGA is unique makes it a good candidate for a subarea plan. A subarea plan is an opportunity to address the specific needs and priorities of a geographic area. A subarea plan provides certainty to residents, property owners, and developers.

Permitting is reactive and planning (including sub-area planning) is proactive. Permits are processed according to the zoning map, codes, and plans in place at the time of permit submittal. Permit processes react to existing capital facility and utility limitations or mitigation that may exceed what a project can pencil to. Planning (including sub-area planning) is proactive. It sets a vision for the uses and densities a community should have and then appropriately plans for the capital facilities and utilities to ensure the practice plan can be implemented. A Planned Action, which would occur after the subarea plan, would provide applicants with certainty over project mitigation and would in fact make permit processes more predictable and faster.

Our proposal is to work with the Port of Walla Walla, incorporate the work they have already done, and plan for a common vision, rather than continuing to react on a permit-by-permit basis.

Development Regulations

The scope includes reviewing and amending, if necessary, land use and zoning maps and development regulations to ensure regulations align with policy direction.

Our hope is that we can update the code to reflect County and Port priorities, and new technologies and industries. We have had situations recently where development is pursued that is not specifically addressed in county development regulations. When it comes to determining whether a proposed land use is allowed, it is county zoning that controls. It does not matter if it is in another agency's plan.

We have heard feedback from the Port about challenges with existing zoning, like that some uses require a conditional use permit when they could be administratively reviewed. This could be considered. County staff have other ideas about changes.

Does a Subarea Plan and Planned Action allow flexibility?

If done well, yes. A project like this will be successful if we define a good, broad scope and range of uses. If something comes along that is outside the scope of the Planned Action, or has a larger impact on one specific aspect, like emissions, then the added review would be limited to supplementing the Planned Action.

The Subarea Plan and future SEPA Planned Action would provide a foundation. Like any plan, there may be something not contemplated, but it would provide a much better starting point than what we have now. The existing Comprehensive Plan and code are out of date – to be as up to date as possible, a Subarea Plan that incorporates existing plans and studies the Port has completed is the best option.

Summary of benefits

- Develop comprehensive plan policies specific to Attalia.
- Incorporate planning and studies already done by Port of Walla Walla into the County's Comprehensive Plan and zoning, which is what controls. Align County plans with Port plans and public needs.
- Assess impacts and the ability to serve future planned growth.
- Amend zoning to address uses that are not currently outright permitted uses? Combine zones? Change conditional uses to outright permitted uses?
- Shift environmental review to the long-range planning stage. Provides certainty for public and applicants on mitigation, more predictability for permitting.

- Connect with property owners, the general public, Planning Commission, and other agencies to get input on long-range plans.
- Faster permit reviews if projects are consistent with Planned Action.

Alternatives

If a Subarea Plan is not done, Comprehensive Plan and zoning changes would likely still be needed if there is a desire to make permitting easier.

The Port of Walla Walla could prepare and submit Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulation Amendment applications. This is what has been done in the past. This approach would be less efficient and could be more costly to the Port. We are offering to work together and leverage the resources the County is already spending on our update. Our proposal is to collaborate with the Port, combining County staff, consultant, and Planning Commission land use planning expertise, with Port of Walla Walla economic development expertise.

Recommendation

If the project is initiated as proposed, by the Board of County Commissioners, and Port of Walla Walla, the amendments would come to the Planning Commission for review and recommendation alongside the Periodic Update.

A recommendation by the Planning Commission is not needed for the project to be initiated, but staff were hoping to get feedback and support from the Planning Commission.

Recommended Motion

I move that the Planning Commission recommend to the Board of County Commissioners that they partner with the Port of Walla Walla on developing an Attalia Urban Growth Area (UGA) Subarea Plan as part of the 2026 Periodic Update.

ATTACHMENT A

April 4, 2025

Lauren Prentice
Walla Walla County - Community Development Director
310 W. Poplar Street, Suite 200
Walla Walla, WA 99362
Proposal sent via email to: lprentice@wwcowa.gov

Re: Letter Agreement for Planning Professional Services
Attalia Sub-area plan

Dear: Ms. Prentice:

Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. (“Kimley-Horn” or “Consultant”) is pleased to submit this Letter Agreement (the “Agreement”) to Walla Walla County (“Client”) for providing planning services related to the preparation of a sub-area plan for the Attalia Industrial Urban Growth Area (UGA) as part of the 2026 Walla Walla County Periodic Comprehensive Plan update.

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING

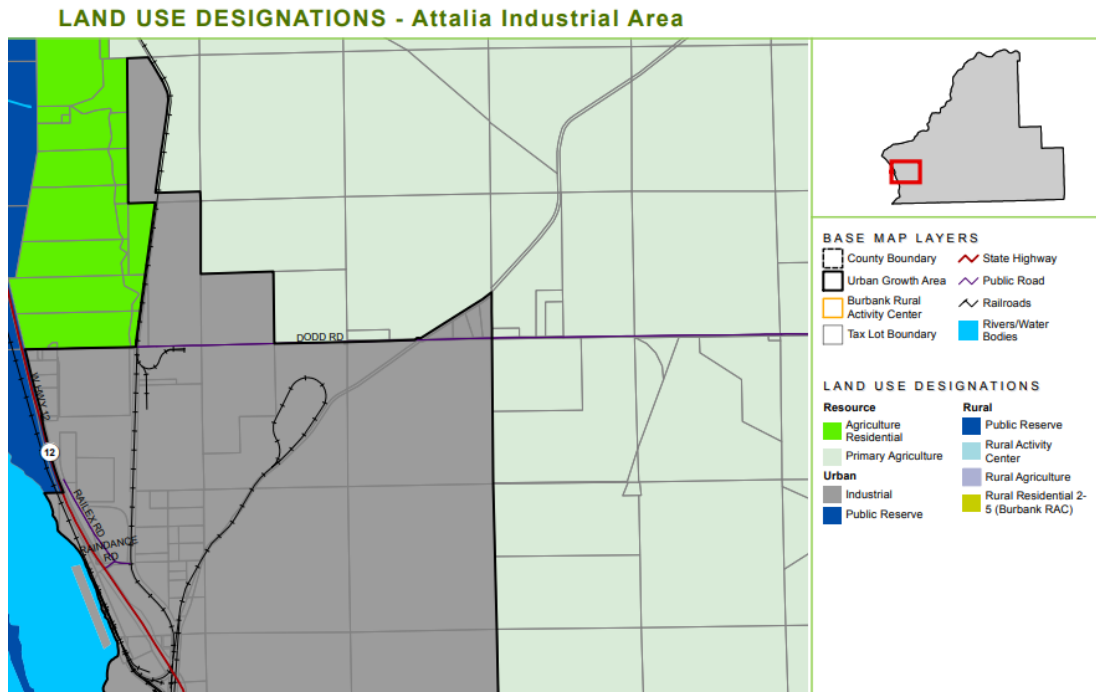
The Attalia Industrial Area Urban Growth Area (UGA) is located along the Columbia River in western Walla Walla County. The UGA is located near population and job centers in the Tri-Cities and has employment capacity for future growth.

Walla Walla County is beginning the 2026 Walla Walla County Comprehensive Plan update. This process provides an opportunity to complete a sub-area plan for Attalia and facilitate the process as part of the 2026 Walla Walla County Periodic Comprehensive Plan update.

The sub-area plan will provide a process for closely coordinating with the Port of Walla Walla on planning for Attalia along with other property owners and the community. The sub-area plan will provide a process to:

- Engage the community to proactively plan for future growth in Attalia.
- Develop comprehensive plan policies specific to Attalia.
- Review and amend, if necessary, land use and zoning maps and development regulations to ensure regulations align with policy direction.
- Through inclusion in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the 2026 Walla Walla County Periodic Comprehensive Plan update, assess impacts and the ability to serve future planned growth.

Walla Walla County and the Port of Walla Walla have also discussed preparing a Planned Action EIS for Attalia once the 2026 Walla Walla County Periodic Comprehensive Plan update is complete. This process will provide a foundation for that effort.



Attalia Industrial Area includes the planned sub-area boundaries.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

Task 1 – Coordination, meetings, and engagement

Task will include:

- Ongoing meetings and coordination with Walla Walla County and the Port of Walla Walla.
- Preparation of materials and attendance at Planning Commission and/or Board of County Commissioner meetings focused on the sub-area plan.
- One open house or one-on-one meetings with property owners to assist in framing up draft policies.

Assumptions:

- Initial budget assumes 8 hours of coordination and meetings per month for 12 months.
- Initial budget assumes two in person meetings in total with either the Planning Commission and/or Board of County Commissioners.
- Assumes one open house with up to three consultant team members in attendance. Open house to be completed in conjunction with other in person engagement events associated with the 2026 Walla Walla County Periodic Comprehensive Plan update. If community based one-on-one

meetings are selected, task includes up to 8 remote interviews of up to one hour in length. With two consultant team members.

Task 2 – Draft Attalia Sub-Area Plan

This Task will focus on development of sub-area plan policies for Attalia. This Task will include working with the community to vision, set policy priorities, and provide feedback on how the community should develop in the future. Based on community input, a short sub-area plan section for the comprehensive plan will be developed consistent with other subarea plans, such as the Burbank sub-area plan. It will include defining the planning area, sub-area goals and policies, and options to continue efforts to implement sub-area plan goals after the comprehensive plan update process. It will also include land use, zoning, and development regulation changes, if necessary. Engagement with the community is scoped separately.

Deliverables:

- Draft sub-area plan.

Assumptions:

- Includes two sets of review comments and edits.
- Comment periods will coincide with draft comprehensive plan release.
- Changes to UGA boundaries not included within the scope.
- Prior to draft Sub-Area plan development, preliminary land use and zoning map changes will be developed and evaluated by Walla Walla County. Feedback will also be provided by early engagement. Most likely range of zoning and land use changes will be evaluated within the EIS for the project in addition to the no action alternative.
- Draft sub-area plan to follow outline and structure of [2019 Burbank sub-area plan](#).
- Sub-area plan not to exceed 20 pages.

Task 3– Final Attalia sub-area Plan

The Task will include an updated Plan which responds to comments on the review of the draft Attalia sub-area plan.

Deliverables:

- Update draft Attalia Sub-area plan based upon comments from Walla Walla County, The Port of Walla Walla, and in response to public comments received.
- Prepare a final Attalia Sub-area plan for adoption.
- Prepare land use and zoning map changes and code changes to ensure sub-area plan consistency.

Assumptions:

- Commerce 60-day notice on sub-area plan will be part of overall notice provided on Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update.
- Includes one round of review and edits.
- Includes minor code changes. If new zones or major code changes are proposed, additional scope may be necessary.

Task 4 – SEPA – DEIS/FEIS

Task will include evaluation of the Draft Attalia sub-area Plan within the 2026 Walla Walla County Comprehensive Plan update SEPA EIS.

Deliverables:

- Include within scoping notice for EIS
- Preparation of response to comments on the Draft SEIS.
- Selection of a preferred alternative will include Attalia sub-area with preferred policy and land use and zoning changes as directed by the client.
- Preparation of a FEIS for Walla Walla County review and comment with discussion of Attalia sub-area plan.
- Preparation of the notice of availability for publication by Walla Walla County.

Assumptions:

- Budget assumes responses to 15 unique comments on the DSEIS focused on Attalia.
- Budget assumes two rounds of review by Walla Walla County on both the DEIS and FEIS.
- This is a non-project EIS and the DSEIS will utilize readily and available existing information and studies for the DEIS. If updates to existing studies, new studies or additional data is required, this will be scoped separately.
- Assumes Attalia sub-area plan will be included within EIS being prepared for the 2026 Walla Walla County Comprehensive Plan update.
- Assumes Attalia sub-area plan will follow the project schedule for the overall comprehensive plan update.

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY CLIENT

We shall be entitled to rely on the completeness and accuracy of all information provided by the Client or the Client’s consultants or representatives.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLIENT

In addition to other responsibilities set out in this Agreement, the Client shall pay any fees that are due to Walla Walla County or other agencies.

SCHEDULE

We will provide our services as expeditiously as practicable with the goal of providing responsive materials and information during the comment periods in this scope of work.

FEE AND EXPENSES

Kimley-Horn will perform the Services on a labor fee plus expense basis. Labor fee will be billed on an hourly basis according to our then-current rates.

Task 1 – Project kickoff, meetings, and engagement	\$26,400 (Hourly)
Task 2 – Draft Attalia sub-area plan	\$23,580 (Hourly)
Task 3 – Final Attalia sub-area plan	\$14,860 (Hourly)
Task 4 – SEPA EIS	<u>\$33,680 (Hourly)</u>
Total	\$98,520 (Hourly)

Labor Fee will be billed on an hourly basis according to our then-current rates. Where noted, an estimated number of hours and/or fee is provided for reference only. Actual fees may be more or less based upon the

effort required. As to these tasks, direct reimbursable expenses such as express delivery services, fees, air travel, and other direct expenses will be billed at 1.15 times cost. Administrative time related to the project may be billed hourly. All permitting, application, and similar project fees will be paid directly by the Client. Should the Client request Kimley-Horn to advance any such project fees on the Client's behalf, an invoice for such fees, with a fifteen percent (15%) markup, will immediately issue to and paid by the client.

Payment will be due within 25 days of your receipt of the invoice and should include the invoice number and Kimley-Horn project number.