

III. Existing Facilities

An extensive network of park, recreation, trails and open space facilities is provided by the City and other agencies including County, School District, Port and State and is available to Bellingham citizens. The inventory of existing facilities is organized into all those that are owned or managed by the City along with other agency facilities available to the general public within the City/UGA planning area. These are included in the City's level-of-service metrics.

The inventory of existing facilities is divided into the following park classifications:

- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Special Use Site
- Open Space
- Trail

"The nation behaves well if it treats its natural resources as assets which it must turn over to the next generation increased, and not impaired, in value." – Theodore Roosevelt

Each classification is described along with a map locating and identifying each facility. A more detailed description of each park classification type, including approximate size, service area, development, and acquisition guidelines is included in Appendix A of the PRO Plan. A detailed inventory of recreation activities within each facility, organized by ownership and classification, is also included in Appendix B of the PRO Plan.

3.1 Neighborhood Park (NP)

Neighborhood parks are the basic recreational focus and center of neighborhoods. They should be developed with both active and passive recreation activities and serve those living within a half-mile walk along a designated pedestrian route, sidewalk or trail. Neighborhood parks should accommodate a wide variety of ages and user groups: youth, adults, seniors and special needs populations. Creating a sense of place by bringing together the unique character of the site with that of the neighborhood is vital to a successful neighborhood park.



Sunset Pond in Fall. Photo by Jeffery Barclay.

3.2 Community Park (CP)

Community parks are generally larger than neighborhood parks and are intended to serve a broader range of activities and users. Their focus is on meeting the recreation needs of the larger community with more specialized activities, as well as preserving unique landscapes, open spaces or environmental features. They allow for group activities and offer other recreation opportunities,

such as lighted programmed sports facilities not generally found at the neighborhood level. Due to their larger size, they are often designed to serve both as a neighborhood park function as well as having expanded and unique activities.

3.3 Special Use Site (SU)

The special use classification covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward a single-purpose use. They often fall into three general categories:

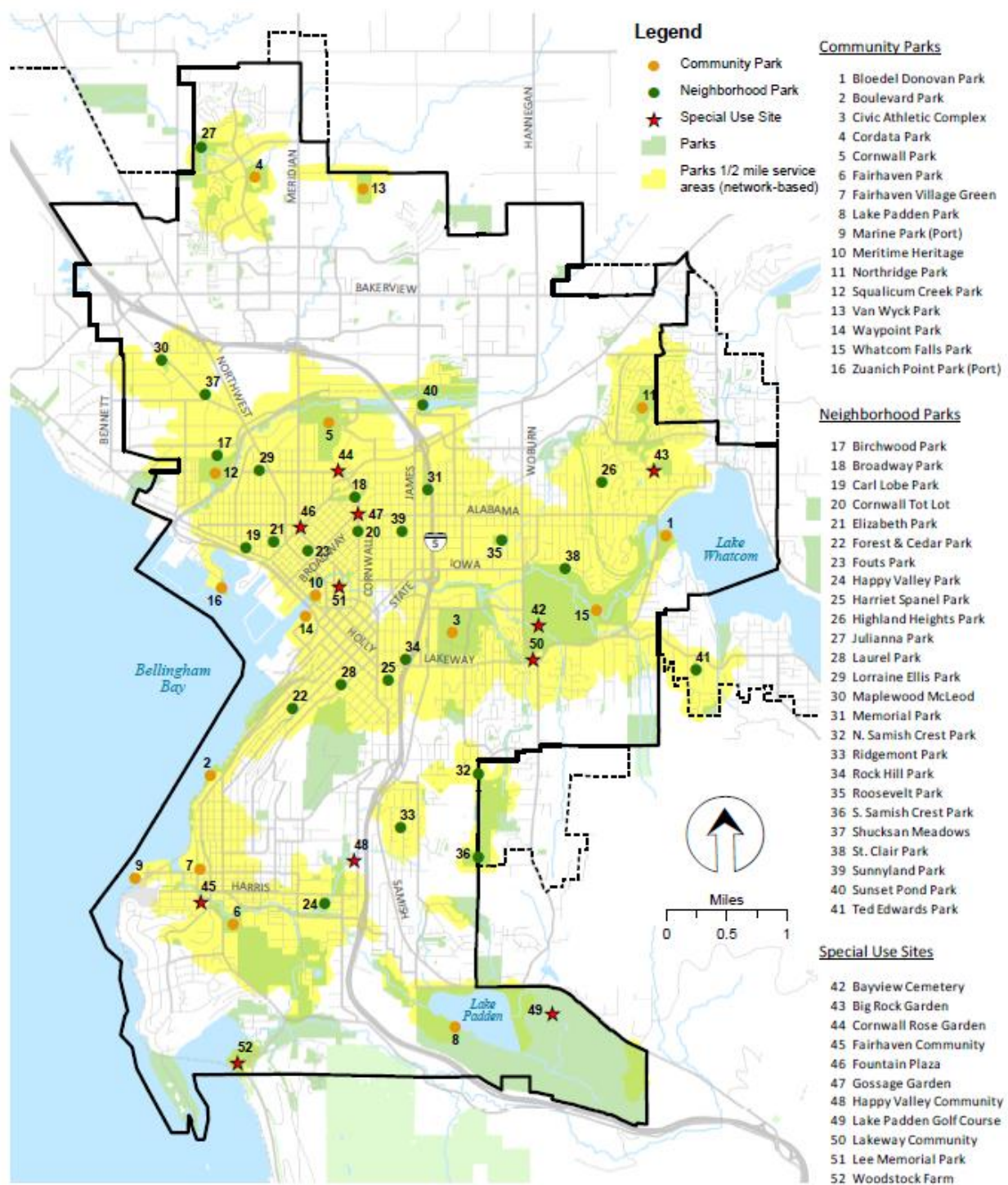
- Cultural Facilities – unique resources offering historical, educational, visual/performance art or other similar experiences. These include gardens, art displays, and historic sites.
- Indoor Facilities – focused toward indoor uses, such as gymnasiums, community centers, teen/senior centers, aquatic centers, ice arenas, etc.
- Unique Sites – generally, but not necessarily, a single use, of a significance that draws from a larger region. These may include arboretums, cemeteries, plazas, sports stadiums, golf courses, etc., especially when they are not in conjunction with other typical park amenities.

Special use sites may be acquired or developed to provide activities for a variety of ages or interests. Special use facilities may include historic or natural interpretive centers, marina and boating activities, golf courses, or similar facilities. Special use sites also include maintenance yards, plant nurseries, and administrative offices necessary to support park and recreation programs and facilities.



Woodstock Farm in Summer. Photo by Tore Oftness.

EXISTING FACILITIES PLAN • PARKS AND SPECIAL USE SITES



3.4 Open Space (OS)

Open space sites are generally lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, unique landscapes, or visually aesthetic or buffer functions. One of the major purposes of open space is to enhance the livability and character of a community by preserving as many of its natural areas as possible, as well as providing wildlife habitat in urban areas. Examples include sites with steep slopes, old or second-growth forests, wetlands, stream corridors, tidelands, meadows, agricultural lands, shorelines (salt or fresh water), storm water features, and/or watershed or aquifer recharge zones.



Padden Creek passing through Arroyo Nature Area.
Photo by Sean Stockburger.

New open space areas should link to existing open spaces to create a network of wildlife migration corridors and greenway trail corridors. These linked areas visually define and separate developed areas in accordance with the objectives of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The linked areas should lead to open space anchors: larger open space sites that help visually break up development patterns and preserve large tracts of ecologically important areas.

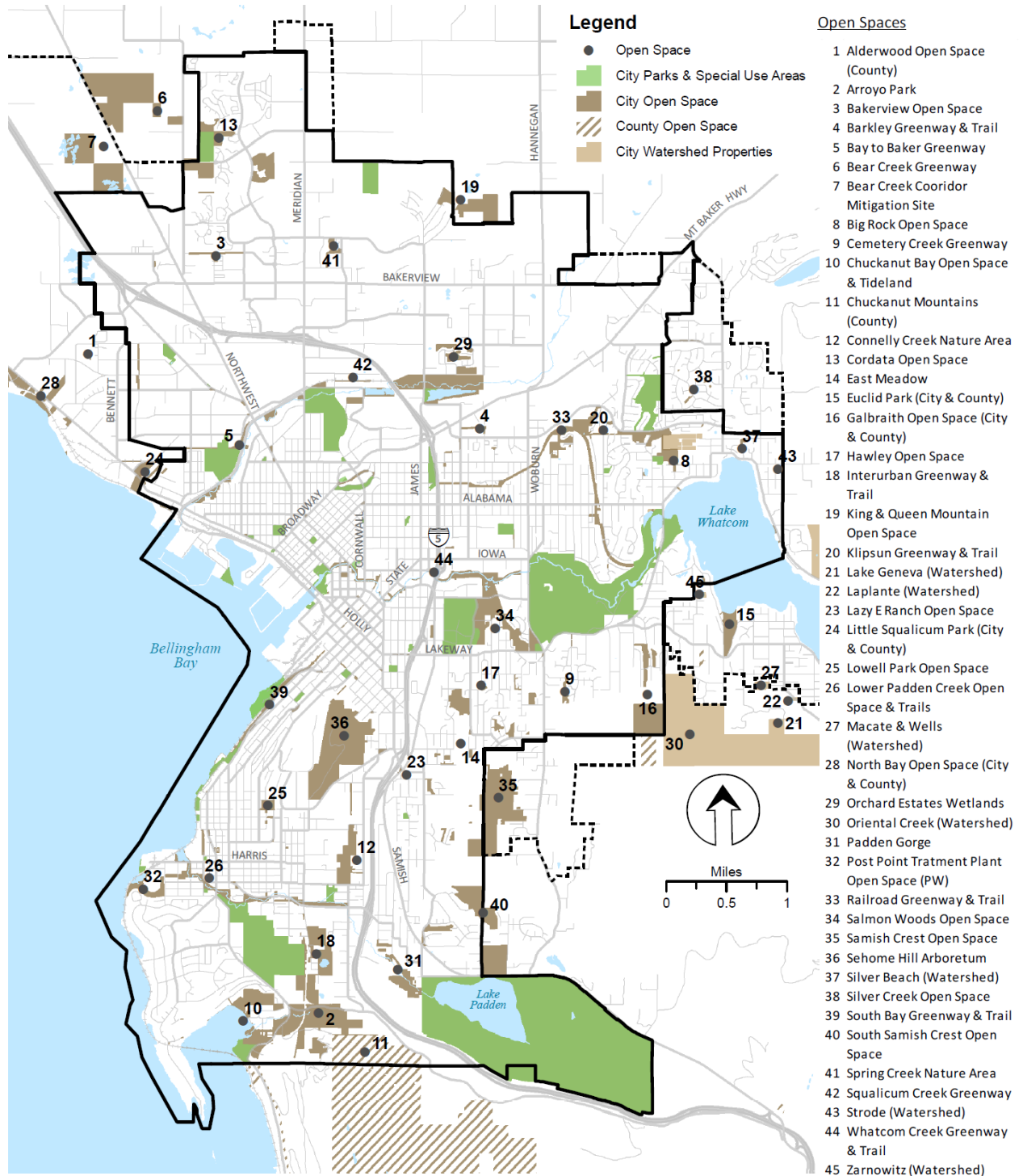
General Open Space Guidelines:

- *Protection may occur through acquisition or easements, development rights and other similar non-fee simple arrangements;*
- *Provisions for public access and interpretive use should be included where appropriate;*
- *Conservation of wildlife migration corridors and critical habitats should be considered; and*
- *Tax incentives, density bonuses, transfer rights and other methods should be encouraged.*

Open space may include trails and interpretive facilities that increase public awareness and appreciation of significant and visually interesting ecological features. Depending on site specific conditions and feasibility, supporting services such as wildlife viewing areas, trailheads, parking lots and restrooms may also be developed.

Open space may be located on independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for parks, recreation, trail corridors or other public facilities. **Open space may also be preserved on privately-owned land,** subject to public use agreements or easements, or on land acquired for public purposes such as stormwater management, watershed protection, and wastewater treatment sites.

EXISTING FACILITIES PLAN • OPEN SPACE

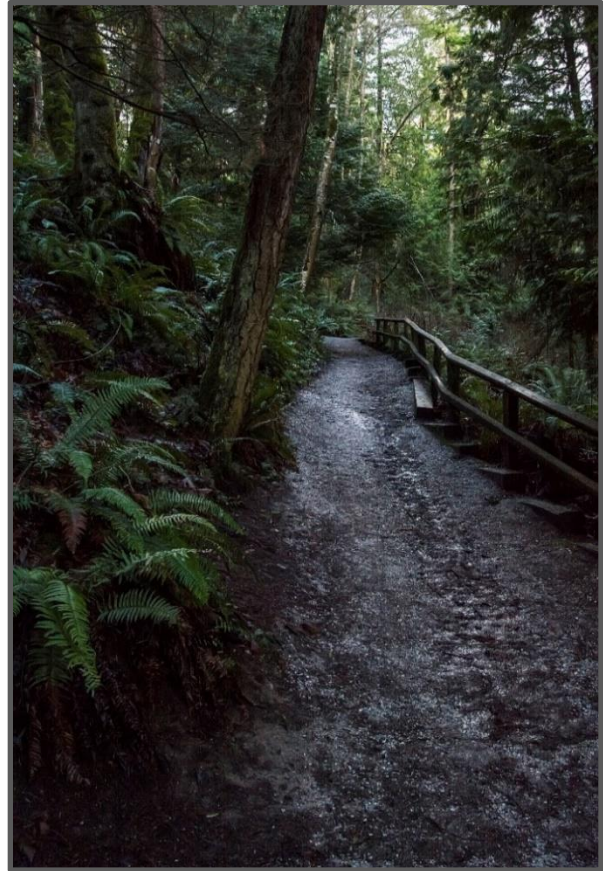


3.5 Trails (TR)

While trails may be categorized into many different types, for the purpose of the PRO Plan, trails are generally limited to non-motorized off-road trails. Trails are intended to form a network throughout the planning area, linking neighborhoods, parks, schools, open spaces, civic facilities and commercial centers.

On-road systems (sidewalks and bike lanes) are included in the transportation element of the Comprehensive Plan which includes a pedestrian plan and a bike plan. Pedestrian and bike facility improvements can increase safe access to existing parks and trails. The community has expressed the desire for **all non-motorized elements** to be coordinated with an integrated system of directional signage and overlay maps. Therefore, the trail system should be coordinated and connected to the street system.

Trails should be developed for a variety of uses including walking, biking, running, and horseback riding. Trail widths and surfacing varies depending on the type of use and location. While multi-use trails are generally desirable, not all trails are appropriate for all uses. Narrower trails or trails in sensitive areas may be suitable for pedestrians only. Trails in Bellingham are often located within greenway corridors that preserve and enhance native vegetation and wildlife habitat.



Trail in Whatcom Falls Park. Photo by Roberta Hochreiter.

General Trail Guidelines:

- *Conserve natural features*
- *Define urban identities*
- *Link community facilities;*
- *Ensure safety/security along trail corridors;*
- *Provide identification, way-finding and directional signage along routes;*
- *Serve people with varied abilities;*
- *Promote commuter and other non-motorized transportation.*

Trails that parallel established vehicular corridors or other transportation systems should be separated from them with a physical and/or visual barrier (vegetation, low walls, etc.). Trail corridors may include picnic areas, educational features or trailhead development located independently or shared with other types of park facilities.

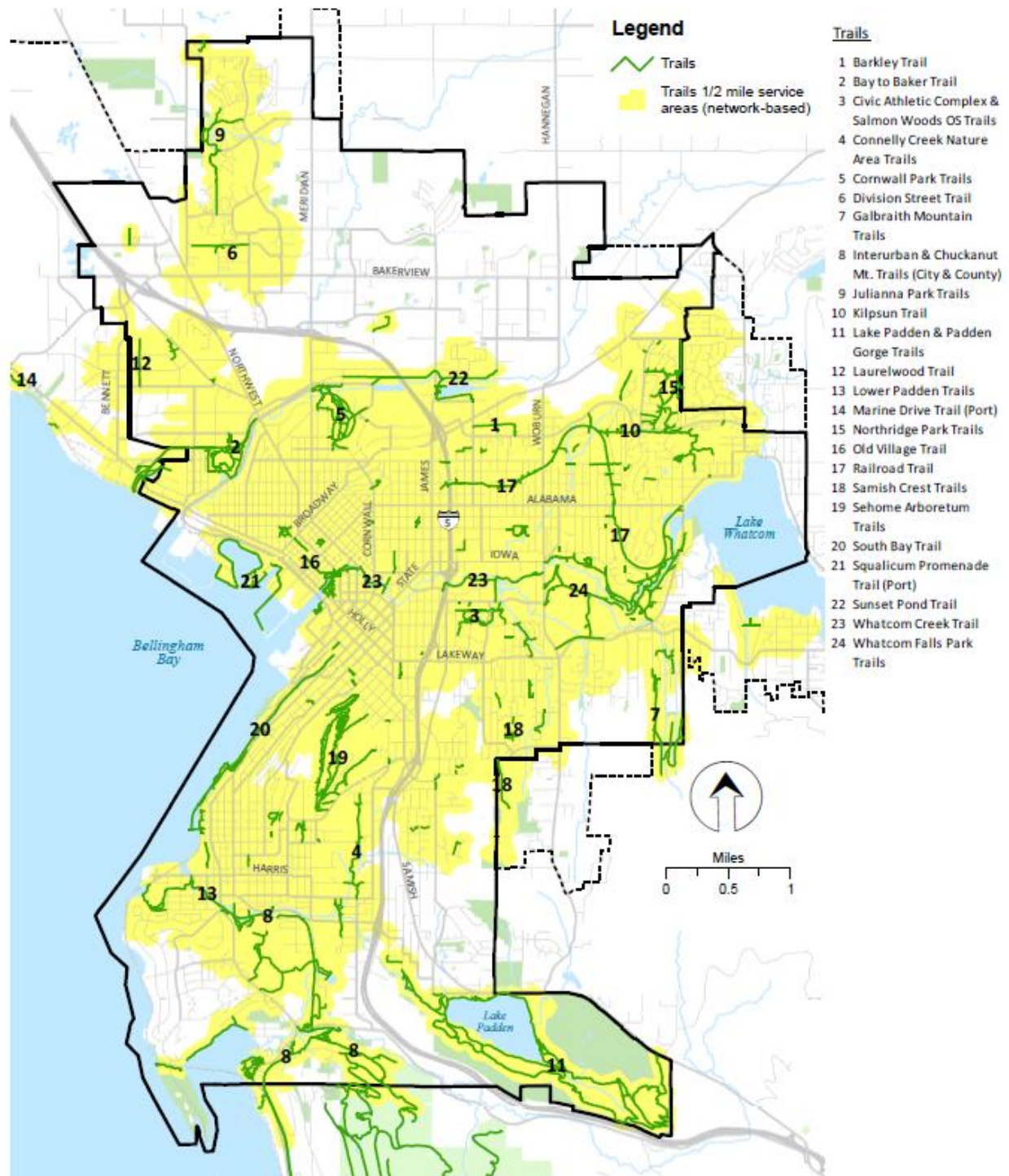
Multipurpose trails should generally be developed to Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials (AASHTO) trail standards. Trails may be concrete, asphalt or a fine crushed rock base, provided the material meets the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and is usable by all age and skill groups. Select trail corridors, including those within the Waterfront

District, should be concrete or asphalt to allow for a greater flexibility of use and accessibility.

Off-leash dog use should not be allowed on multi-purpose trails but designated only on trails specifically developed for that use.

Shoreline trails may be unimproved and may cross over tidelands. Trails may also include boardwalks developed over wetlands, other water bodies or on top of jetty breakwaters to provide access to waterfront activities and viewpoints along lakes, natural areas, or Bellingham and Chuckanut Bays.

EXISTING FACILITIES PLAN • TRAILS



3.6 Galbraith Mountain

Galbraith Mountain is a world-renowned location for mountain biking that is located in the southeastern side of Bellingham. Mainly used by mountain bikers, the trail is open to horse riders, hikers, and trail runners. For over 30 years the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition (WMBC) has worked to keep Galbraith Mountain open for recreational usage. The WMBC has built over 65 miles of trail that are connected through 3,000 acres of land that overlooks Bellingham and the surrounding area. Due to the topography, size, and number of trails available, Galbraith can offer mountain bikers a wide variety of trails with varying skill levels.

The WMBC has maintained a Recreational Use Agreement with the private landowners, Polygon Corporation, since April 2010. This allows the WMBC to coordinate with hundred of volunteers to help maintain and build trails throughout Galbraith Mountain.

In July of 2018, the City of Bellingham, Whatcom Land Trust, and Galbraith Tree Farm LLC entered into a purchase and sale agreement that secured the public's recreational use of up to 65 miles of trails on Galbraith Mountain and protected the area from development in perpetuity. Whatcom Land Trust contributed \$250,000 to the purchase and the City of Bellingham Greenway Funds contributed \$2.75 million for a total of \$3 million.

Galbraith Mountain is located east of Bellingham between Lake Padden and Lake Whatcom and is approximately 1/8 the size of Bellingham, reaching an elevation of 1,785 feet. The total area of the easement is 2,182 acres, with 1,023 of those acres inside the Lake Whatcom watershed. The acquisition adjoins 4,250 acres of public land managed by Whatcom County. As the trail network manager, the Whatcom Mountain Bike Coalition (WMBC) will be able to expand this world-class trail network and host future events.

Over the last two decades, Galbraith Mountain was developed by WMBC into a nationally recognized mountain biking facility. Galbraith's trails also support family outings, runners, hikers, and walkers.

With approximately 1,023 acres located directly within the Lake Whatcom Watershed, this agreement provides important protection for Whatcom County's drinking water supply. Galbraith Mountain will remain a working tree farm, with Galbraith Tree Farm continuing to harvest timber in a sustainable fashion.

An interactive map (not managed by City of Bellingham) is located here: <http://www.galbraithmountainmap.com/>. There are currently no E-Bikes allowed on Galbraith Mountain.

EXISTING FACILITIES PLAN • GALBRAITH MOUNTAIN

