



Planning and Community Development Department  
City of Bellingham

## ANSWERS TO THE MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ALDERWOOD ANNEXATION AREA

### 1. What area is proposed for annexation by the City of Bellingham?

The area proposed for annexation is in the City's northern urban growth area (UGA) and is approximately 802-acres in size and known as the Alderwood annexation area. The area is bordered by the City of Bellingham to the east, the Bellingham International Airport to the northwest, and Bellingham Bay to the south. The area currently contains approximately 1,162 housing units and has a population of about 2,315 people.



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## 2. What is an annexation?

Annexation is the process of expanding the boundaries of a city by incorporating adjacent county land. Once annexed, the city provides the full range of urban services including police and fire protection, emergency services, utilities (water and sewer), parks and recreation facilities, street improvements and a variety of other governmental services.

## 3. What is the procedure for annexation?

The City of Bellingham will be using the interlocal agreement method. This requires the City, Whatcom County, and Fire District 8 to negotiate an agreement for annexation of the Alderwood Neighborhood. The City and County councils must hold public hearings prior to making a final decision to approve or deny the annexation.

## 4. Why is Bellingham seeking to annex the Alderwood area?

Bellingham is considering annexation of the area for several reasons:

- The Alderwood area has been eligible for annexation since 1997. The City has been planning to annex the area, and now is the time.
- Under the Growth Management Act, cities are intended to be the primary providers of urban services in areas like Alderwood. The City of Bellingham can provide the full range of urban services to the area (also see question 5.).
- With annexation, the area will receive improved public services and facilities such as street and sidewalk improvements, neighborhood park facilities, and faster police response times. The City's intent is to build a strong community and improve the quality of life for the residents and business owners in the area.

## 5. What services does the City provide to an area that is annexed?

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Law enforcement, fire protection and emergency medical services</li><li>• Public sewer and water services</li><li>• City parks, recreational facilities, and recreation programs</li><li>• Financial support for projects benefitting low/moderate income households and neighborhoods</li><li>• Neighborhood representation on City Council</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• City street maintenance and improvements</li><li>• City building regulations and safety inspection program</li><li>• Zoning and environmental protection regulations</li><li>• City library system and educational programs</li><li>• Government and educational community television programs</li></ul> |
|--|--|

## 6. What happens if the Alderwood area is not annexed?

The Alderwood area currently contains existing levels of urban development and is receiving a lower level of service in Whatcom County than current Bellingham residents/business owners receive. Without annexation it is likely the current level of service would not improve. Properties currently on City water/sewer would continue to pay the 50% surcharge and new development would not have the option to connect to these utilities.

## 7. Will annexation change my zoning and land use?

If the area is annexed, the City of Bellingham generally adopts comparable zoning. The table below provides some examples of similar zoning designations.

| Whatcom County           | City of Bellingham       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Recreation Open Space    | Public                   |
| Urban Residential (URMX) | Residential, Single      |
| Urban Residential (UR3)  | Residential, Single      |
| Urban Residential (UR6)  | Residential, Single      |
| Neighborhood Commercial  | Commercial, Neighborhood |
| Light Impact Industrial  | Industrial               |
| Heavy Impact Industrial  | Industrial               |

## 8. Will it cost more or less to be in the City?

While each property owner's situation is unique, usually there is a decrease in property taxes and some living expenses upon annexation. The reasons for this may vary, but generally, property owners may save money on the following:

- Elimination of a 50% surcharge for sewer and water for properties currently on City service.
- Elimination of Fire District 8, County Road District and County Library District levies.

### Residential Properties

The City of Bellingham estimates that property taxes for the owner of a home with an assessed property tax valuation of \$300,000 will save approximately \$900 per year upon annexation. The lower City property tax rate would mean the owner of a duplex could save about \$1,100 per year.

For an estimated cost breakdown on businesses and other residential uses, please visit the following web link:

[https://www.cob.org/Documents/planning/growth/annexations/EstimatedSampleCostsForPropertyOwnersIfAnnexed%20\(002\)%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.cob.org/Documents/planning/growth/annexations/EstimatedSampleCostsForPropertyOwnersIfAnnexed%20(002)%20(002).pdf)

## 9. Will I be forced to hook up to City sewer or water upon annexation?

Pre-existing septic systems and wells are allowed in the City. The only time a property owner would be required to hook up to City water and sewer is if a septic or well system is found to be unsafe by the Whatcom County Department of Health or Washington State Department of Ecology.

### Still have questions?

Please contact the Planning Community Development Department, Moshe Quinn at (360) 778-8354 or email [mquinn@cob.org](mailto:mquinn@cob.org).