

# THE BELLINGHAM PLAN



## CAPITAL FACILITIES & URBAN SERVICES

Chapter Update Summary | April 2025



# What the Community Said

*These descriptions summarize the most common opinions we heard relevant to this chapter.*

We need to plan sustainably, with efficient use of facilities and avoiding sprawl.

We want to make sure the City coordinates with the school districts as we grow.

We love the programs the Library and Museum put together! We want more ways to connect with the community.

I'm not sure which facilities and utilities are run by the City, other Public entities, or private companies. How do we learn more?

It is confusing when you move to or within Bellingham to figure out what you need to sign up for – we would love more guidance.

Public buildings and events need to be more accessible and welcoming.





# Summary of Updates

**We are proposing a variety of updates to our 2016 Comprehensive Plan. While the plan is divided into distinct chapters, there are updates that touch multiple chapters.**

Here are the most significant updates related to capital facilities and urban services. These themes span multiple chapters beyond this one.

- >> Inclusive and equitable facilities and services
- >> Energy efficiency and resiliency
- >> Planning long-term infrastructure needs

**Get a quick overview of the most significant updates we're proposing.**

If you haven't yet, take a look at the [Summary of Proposed Updates](#). It describes the most significant updates we are proposing. We recommend viewing that the summary first, and then diving in here for more details on capital facilities and urban services.



# Capital Facilities and Urban Services Chapter Draft Topics

Each blue box represents a draft goal in the Capital Facilities and Urban Services Chapter. These will each have more specific policies to support them.

## Proposed Topics

### Reliable Facilities & Services

Plan for and deliver an equitable, safe, cost-effective, and reliable network of public facilities and services in alignment with the City's growth strategy.

### Sustainable Funding

Proactively plan and implement a sustainable funding strategy for the anticipated capital facilities and service network needs.

### Equitable Siting & Maintenance

Foster equitable, efficient, sustainable, and considerate siting and maintenance of public and private facilities and infrastructure.

### City Buildings & Equipment

Develop, maintain, and plan for the future needs of the City's buildings and equipment.

### City Utilities & Infrastructure

Plan for and implement a network of reliable City utilities and other infrastructure to support the community's growing and shifting needs.

### Private Utilities

Support a planned network of private utilities, systems, and other infrastructure that provide for community needs.

### Other Public Facilities & Infrastructure

Coordinate with and support the provision of other public facilities and infrastructure.



# Walking through the Topics

Now, we'll walk through an overview of the proposed updates for each goal. Each bubble represents a concept within that goal. Each concept may become a single policy or several in the final document.

## Existing Concept

*This concept exists in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan already.*

## Some Updates

*Either this concept will be emphasized more than in the current plan, or something minor is being changed about it.*

## New Concept/ Major Updates

*This concept does not exist in the 2016 plan at all or will include significant changes.*



*This icon indicates this concept is related to state requirements or legislation.*





# Community Feedback

**As you learn about the concepts proposed in this chapter,  
think about...**

**Is anything big  
missing?**

**Are you excited or  
concerned about any  
of the ideas proposed  
here?**



- Reliable Facilities & Services
- Sustainable Funding
- Equitable Siting & Maintenance
- City Buildings & Equipment
- City Utilities & Infrastructure
- Private Utilities
- Other Public Facilities & Infrastructure



Ensuring levels of service and other community needs are met

*Quantitative levels of service will be defined elsewhere in the relevant action plan for each topic*

Utilizing innovative technology

Regular coordination of and updates to plans

*Including fire and enforcement planning*

Public safety and emergency management coordination

*Including communication network maintenance*

- Existing
- Update
- New



Reliable  
Facilities &  
Services

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure



Fiscal sustainability

*Proactively and regularly planning land use and growth alongside needed public facilities and services*

Interdepartmental team to  
evaluate service needs

Concurrency/Development  
paying its share (impact  
and development fees)

Departures allowed when  
no public purpose served

*Previously in Transportation Chapter*

Planned facilities ready by  
development opening

Planning in the UGA  
and for annexation

*Ensuring long-term funding strategies for areas in the UGA (Urban Growth Area, the area into which the city can grow); disallowing utility expansion prior to annexation*

Existing

Update

New





Reliable  
Facilities &  
Services

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting &  
Maintenance

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure



Processes for siting,  
maintaining, and  
improving facilities

*Equitable investment will be layered on top of existing  
coordination, joint use, environmental protection, and utility  
siting policies*

Balancing benefit/need  
and potential adverse  
impacts

Buffering/  
undergrounding of  
facilities

Construction/  
maintenance  
management

Existing

Update

New



Reliable  
Facilities &  
Services

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure



Providing and maintaining  
buildings to meet priorities

*Priorities including public health, accessibility,  
efficiency, environmental quality*

Prioritizing Maintenance

*Maximizing lifespan*

Public buildings as models

*Sustainability, innovation,  
and best practices*

Efficient bldg use of energy,  
water, materials (reuse)

*Within City buildings; community  
efficiency is part of the next goal*

Planning to meet growth

Services and admin.  
consolidated in city center

Appropriate public buildings  
as essential gathering

*Also for additional emergency  
response use*

Sharing of facilities and  
resources

*Separate policies for law enforcement  
and fire vs other City buildings*

Existing

Update

New



Reliable  
Facilities &  
Services

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure



*Includes need for fire protection water storage and the importance of protecting the Lake Whatcom Watershed*

Drinking water quality and quantity

*Focus on efficiency*

Coordination of water, waste water, and stormwater infrastructure

*To support services like fire protection and traffic lights*

Fiber network maintenance

*Clearer definition and separation of City building efficiency (previous goal) and community efficiency*

Efficiency of community water use and resources

Existing

Update

New



Reliable  
Facilities &  
Services

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure



Public-private  
coordination

Support for conservation  
and recycling programs

Telecommunication  
(including wireless)  
network

Pipeline safety

- Existing
- Update
- New



Reliable  
Facilities &  
Services

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure



*School districts, transit authority, higher  
education facilities, and other agencies*

Coordination regarding growth  
and service needs

Regularly monitor  
demographic changes and  
coordinate with school districts

Support for and coordination  
of school siting and impact  
fees

Consistency with school  
districts' and institutions' plans

Existing

Update

New



# Structural Changes

**Are you familiar with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and looking for a topic that was in that Capital Facilities & Utilities Chapter?**

It may be located in another part of the plan. The next few slides will show how the proposed updates relate to the 2016 Capital Facilities & Utilities Chapter.







# 2016 Capital Facilities & Utilities Chapter Topics

**The 2016 Comprehensive Plan includes a Capital Facilities and Utilities Chapter, which is organized around these 7 topics. Each one is written as a goal in the plan.**

Accountable  
Facilities &  
Services

Water, Sewer,  
& Stormwater

Fire & Police

Libraries

Museum

Public Schools

Utilities

**Note: This chapter also includes a capital facilities inventory and capital improvement plan (from the budget)**



# Shifts from Capital Facilities & Utilities

Some concepts have been moved to other chapters in the proposed updates.

Note: The current topics have been rearranged here to better align with the proposed 2025 plan topic order.

Accountable  
Facilities &  
Services

Fire & Police

Libraries

Museum

Water, Sewer,  
& Stormwater

Utilities

Public Schools

Environment  
Chapter

*Remove  
Redundancy*

New Companion  
Document

*Current data  
(that changes  
over time)*

**Note: This chapter also includes a  
capital facilities inventory and capital  
improvement plan (from the budget)**



# Shifts within Capital Facilities and Urban Services Chapter

The proposed topic adjustments help clarify the role of the City as opposed to other organizations.

## 2016 Plan Topics

Accountable  
Facilities &  
Services

Fire & Police

Libraries

Museum

Water, Sewer,  
& Stormwater

Utilities

Public Schools

*The first three topics apply  
to all facilities and services...*

Reliable Facilities  
& Services

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

Sustainable  
Funding

## Proposed Topics

*...while the remaining describe  
unique needs for each type.*

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure

City Buildings &  
Equipment

Private Utilities



# Shifts within Capital Facilities and Urban Services Chapter

Other concepts have been shifted or split between each of the proposed topics.

## 2016 Plan Topics

Accountable  
Facilities &  
Services

Fire & Police

Libraries

Museum

Water, Sewer,  
& Stormwater

Utilities

Public Schools

These goal topics are redistributed between the below.

## Proposed Topics

Reliable Facilities  
& Services

All Goals

Sustainable  
Funding

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

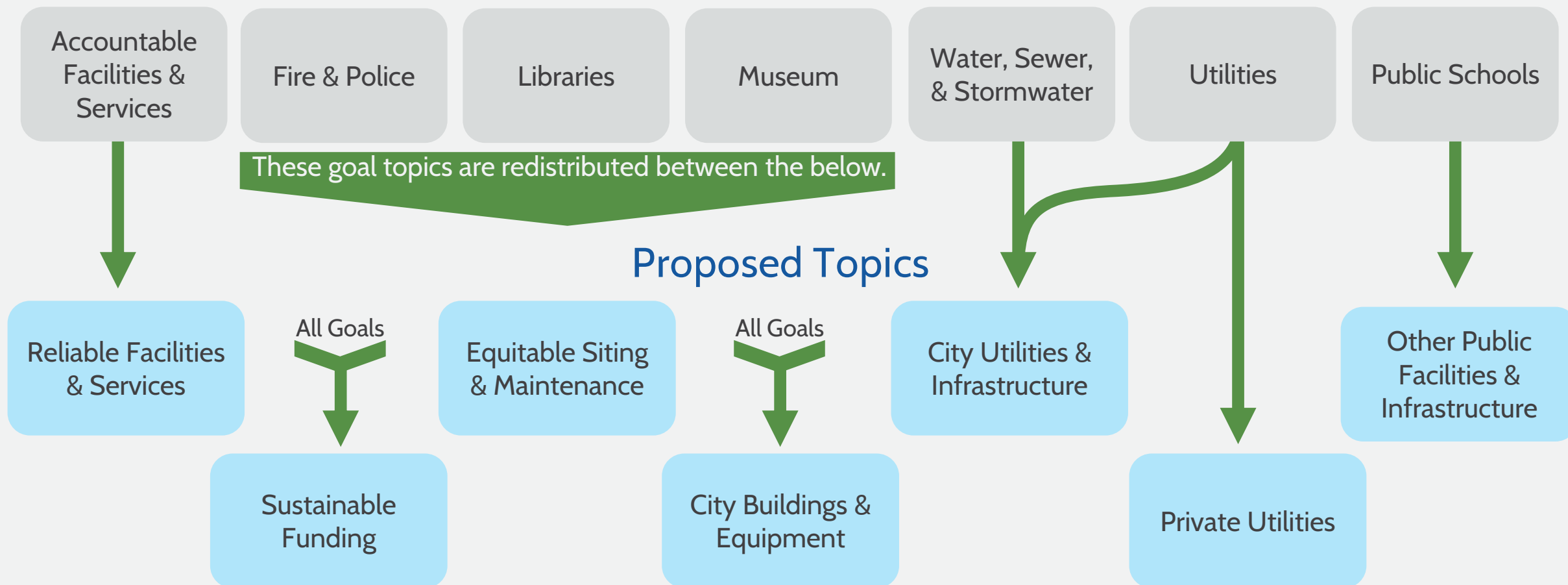
All Goals

City Buildings &  
Equipment

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Private Utilities

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure





# New Chapter Title: Capital Facilities and Urban Services

**A new title is proposed for this chapter in order to better reflect the urban services covered within.**

2016 Chapter title: Capital Facilities and Utilities

Accountable  
Facilities &  
Services

Fire & Police

Libraries

Museum

Water, Sewer,  
& Stormwater

Utilities

Public Schools

2025 Proposed Chapter Title: Capital Facilities and Urban Services

Reliable Facilities  
& Services

Equitable Siting  
& Maintenance

City Utilities &  
Infrastructure

Other Public  
Facilities &  
Infrastructure

Sustainable  
Funding

City Buildings &  
Equipment

Private Utilities