THE
# BELLINGHAM PLAN
## BELLINGHAM'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR GROWTH

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

## THE BELLINGHAM PLAN IS FOR EVERYONE AND HELPS SHAPE OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE.

This plan provides a vision for our future built through intentional collaboration between City of Bellingham staff and the community. We lay out high-level goals for our city and identify ways to work toward them, continuing today's successes while identifying new work to move Bellingham forward.

# OUR GUIDE TO GROWTH

Bellingham is growing, and this comprehensive plan – The Bellingham Plan – will guide how our city grows over the next 20 years. We are planning intentionally for more housing, jobs and services that will make the Bellingham of the future a place where everyone can thrive.

To that end, this plan sets goals for critical topics, such as housing, transportation, climate resilience and community wellbeing, and establishes policies that keep us on track to achieve our vision.

**Woven throughout the plan are several key and interconnected topics that reflect the community we want to be.**

## KEY & INTERCONNECTED TOPICS

Investing in a network of vibrant urban villages that are connected by well-designed transit corridors with mobility options for all: cars, bikes, buses and pedestrians.

Fostering complete neighborhoods with housing, services, activities and more nearby.

Supporting more housing development in a range of types and costs to meet everyone's needs.

Planning inclusively and equitably across the city, with everyone's interests in mind.

Planning for compact growth and urban services that can be sustained into the future.

Balancing urban growth priorities and environmental stewardship.

Prioritizing access to parks and nature across the city.

Adapting to a changing climate with resiliency while continuing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Ensuring a mix of commercial, institutional and industrial uses while working with partners to support a strong local economy.

Fostering strong community and civic connections, where everyone feels safe, included and connected as part of the community.

Doing our part to create conditions that promote health and wellbeing.

Together, the chapters, goals and policies on the following pages reflect these concepts, forming the governing framework that represents the community's plan for the future. They guide development, capital investments, City programs and other actions across Bellingham as we collectively work toward our vision for 2045.

# CHAPTER OVERVIEW

## EACH CHAPTER INCLUDES A SERIES OF GOALS, ABBREVIATED HERE, FOR THE CITY TO WORK TOWARD OVER THE NEXT 20 YEARS.

### LAND USE

**DEFINING THE RIGHT MIX OF BUILDINGS AND USES**

Clustering Growth

Urban Growth Areas

Urban Villages

Transit Corridors

Land Use Designations

Complete Neighborhoods

### HOUSING

**SUPPORTING A RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR ALL**

Housing Quantity

Housing for all Incomes

Housing Variety

Service-enriched Housing

Homeownership

Livable Housing

### COMMUNITY DESIGN ❖

**SHAPING VIBRANT URBAN SPACES**

Community Identity and Sense of Place

Streets as Places

Site and Building Design

Natural Features and Open Space

Historic and Cultural Resources

### CLIMATE

**PREPARING FOR AND PREVENTING CLIMATE IMPACTS**

Citywide Approach

Climate Equity

Extreme Weather Preparation

Wildfire Impacts Preparation

Sea Level Rise Preparation

Resource Resiliency

Ecosystem Resiliency

Building Emissions Mitigation

Transportation Emissions Mitigation

Renewable Energy

### ENVIRONMENT

**STEWARDING AND PROTECTING NATURAL RESOURCES**

Protect Aquatic Ecosystems

Protect Terrestrial Ecosystems

Natural Resource Management

Human Health and Environment

## FACILITIES AND SERVICES

### PROVIDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND URBAN AMENITIES

**Network Planning**

**Sustainable Funding Strategy**

**Equitable Siting and Maintenance**

**City Buildings**

**City Utilities**

**Private Utilities**

**Other Public Facilities**

## TRANSPORTATION

### PROMOTING SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS

**Safety and Reliability**

**Transit**

**Mode Shift**

**Multimodal Connections**

**Equitable Access**

## PARKS AND RECREATION

### ENSURING ACCESS TO RECREATION, NATURE AND PLAY

**Equitable Facilities and Services**

**Well-Designed Environments**

**Conservation and Resilience**

**Recreational Opportunities**

**Interconnected Parks and Trails**

**Effective and Sustainable System**

**Partnerships and Collaboration**

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### FOSTERING WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

**Regional Collaboration and Coordination**

**Supportive and Inclusive Business Environment**

**Employment Lands and Supporting Infrastructure**

**Workforce Support**

## COMMUNITY WELLBEING �

### STRENGTHENING HEALTH, SAFETY, AND BELONGING

**Health and Wellbeing**

**Vitality and Belonging**

**Arts and Culture**

**Equity and Inclusion**

**Community Engagement**

**Tribal Relations**

## ✤ NOT REQUIRED ELEMENT

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that cities include certain elements in the plan. These elements can be spread throughout the plan or consolidated into a single chapter. Those chapters listed with an asterisk (*) are not required by the GMA but are important to the City.

# HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

**Each chapter of the Bellingham Plan follows a consistent format with recognizable parts.**

**Where You Are**

Each page includes this guide, with the current chapter icon highlighted in blue and the name of the chapter listed below. Clicking on one will jump to that chapter.

**Resource Links**

These link to other documents relevant to this chapter. The top list shows implementation plans that are adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan (see "Other Documents"), while the bottom provides additional information that may be helpful. This bottom list is not formally adopted as part of the plan, so it may be updated more frequently (as needed).



**Goal (Summary and Full)**

Most of the content is separated into goals (with green headers) and supporting policies. Goals are statements of high level intention.

**Policies**

Policies support the goal above them on the page. They are more specific than the goal and act as ongoing guidance for City work. They are not actions that can be "checked off" - those actions generally live in more detailed plans that are updated more frequently.

**Definitions**

When a concept is essential to the nearby text, it is explained in a definition box. The definition is also included in the glossary.

Underlined <u>Glossary Links</u> throughout the text will also jump to the definition of that term in the glossary.

**Related Policy Links**

Blue boxes at the end of a goal's policy list provide links to other goals or policies. These goals and policies are located in other chapters but relate to that goal. If you click one of these links, you can read the full text of the goal or policy. Use the "go back" button to jump back to where you started.



**Go Back Button**

You can use this button to go back to your most recent page. If you followed a link from another chapter to get to this page, it will return you to that other chapter.

**Other Graphics**

Additional diagrams, narrative and images help provide context to the chapter.

# COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

## WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed by the Washington State Legislature in 1990. The GMA was enacted in response to rapid population growth and concerns about suburban sprawl, environmental protection, quality of life and other issues. It requires cities and counties of a certain size to develop a comprehensive plan.

Comprehensive plans, like the Bellingham Plan, are used by communities to establish a vision for the future and provide a framework for building towards that vision. The Bellingham Plan looks forward 20 years and provides goals and policies for development, capital investments, City programs and other implementation actions. It is updated significantly every ten years in a "periodic update" that is required by a defined GMA schedule. This last took place in 2023-2025 for the 2025 Periodic Update.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLANS MUST INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVES:
*(See RCW 36.70A.020 for more details)*

**Urban Growth -** Encourage development in urban areas.

**Reduce Sprawl -** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land.

**Transportation -** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems.

**Housing -** Plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all incomes.

**Economic Development -** Encourage economic development.

**Property Rights -** Ensure that private property is not taken for public use without just compensation.

**Permits -** Applications should be processed in a predictable and timely manner.

**Natural Resource Industries -** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries.

**Open Space & Recreation -** Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities.

**Environment -** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

**Community Participation & Coordination -** Encourage the involvement of all community members.

**Public Facilities & Services -** Ensure that public facilities and services can support development.

**Historic Preservation -** Identify and encourage preservation.

**Climate Change & Resiliency -** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans and strategies adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate.

**Shoreline Management -** Manage shorelines through an adopted program.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
Many other documents help implement the Bellingham Plan, like the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans. These implementation documents are adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan and provide more detail on how to achieve the Bellingham Plan's vision.

# 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ENGAGEMENT

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is a critical part of the periodic update process. Between 2023 and 2025 the City actively engaged with the community to understand current values and concerns, as well as hopes for the future. The engagement process also helped inform the public of any changes to state law, local regulations and new proposed concepts in the plan. Additional information about this engagement is available under the Data and Resources section of the Comprehensive Plan website.

Thousands of residents, students, workers and visitors shaped the Bellingham Plan. Engagement took many forms including open houses, presentations, surveys, a community workgroup, focus groups, tabling at community events and more. The community feedback was invaluable, and the City is grateful for all those that participated.
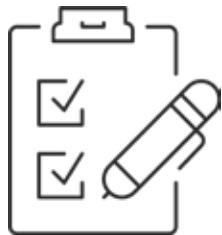
## 8,992
### SURVEY RESPONSES
4,287 Community Vision Responses
1,475 Housing Preference Responses
3,230 Growth Responses

## 14
### OPEN HOUSES
980+ total participants

## 750+
### ENGAGED ONLINE
9,880+ site visits

## 11
### COMMUNITY WORKGROUP MEETINGS
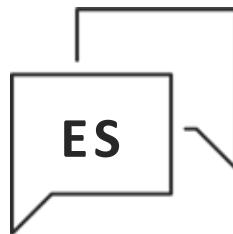
## 3
### SPANISH SPEAKING FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS
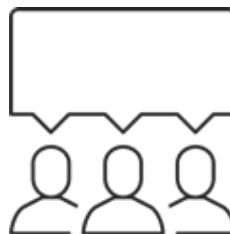
## 20+
### PRESENTATIONS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH EVENTS

# ENGAGEMENT IN ACTION

Community engagement is factored into the development of the Comprehensive Plan, which in turn influences actions that are taken as a result of its adoption. These actions may be more detailed City action plans as well.

Comments heard during Bellingham Plan engagement don't lead to immediate change, but they support the plan's identification of priorities and goals. Later work on implementation also integrates engagement, but these decisions focus more on specific actions rather than overarching priorities.



## COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Public engagement helps determine community priorities. Patterns emerge through community conversations and feedback channels.

## FOR EXAMPLE:

Significant comments saying "We want to feel safer biking to work and school!"

## PLAN GOALS & POLICIES

Community priorities influence goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

The Bellingham Plan goals and policies

#### GOAL

**Provide a transportation system that prioritizes safety, comfort, and reliability for all ages and abilities.**

#### POLICY

Develop pedestrian and bicycle facilities that minimize interactions with vehicular traffic, ensuring safe and comfortable routes for users of all ages and abilities.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Goals and policies get implemented through City plans and decisions.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

The Bicycle Master Plan calls for many specific improvements that get implemented over time, such as the James Street Bike Comfort Improvements.
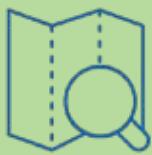
# LAND USE
## DEFINING THE RIGHT MIX OF BUILDINGS AND USES

## AS BELLINGHAM GROWS, WE NEED TO PLAN AHEAD TO ENSURE NEW HOMES, BUSINESSES AND PUBLIC SPACES CAN MEET OUR NEEDS.

To do this, the City establishes rules and incentives to guide construction and improvements. They define how land in different areas can be used. This chapter provides a map and policies to guide what is allowed, encouraged or discouraged in different areas of the city. Together, these define a vision for what growth and changes Bellingham should see in the coming decades.

# LAND USE

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO LAND USE, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

## CLUSTERING GROWTH

**Goal LU-A | Limit urban sprawl, encouraging sustainable growth in urban areas and clustering it in compact, walkable and transitable areas while protecting the community's natural resources.**

### POLICIES

LU-1. Provide sufficient land area and densities to meet Bellingham's projected needs for housing, employment and public facilities. Plan to accommodate a total population of 135,829 people, 66,109 housing units and 89,768 jobs in the City of Bellingham and its unincorporated Urban Growth Area (UGA) by 2045.

LU-2. Support high-density and mixed commercial/residential development in the City's urban villages and along high capacity transit corridors connecting the urban villages, allowing people to work, shop and recreate near where they live.

LU-3. Encourage and support development near amenities like parks and schools and in areas where adequate public facilities and services exist, maximizing use of existing and future infrastructure and services and allowing preservation of other natural areas.

LU-4. Encourage design flexibility (e.g. clustering) to preserve existing site features, including trees, wetlands, streams, natural topography and similar features.

LU-5. Consider potential wildfire spread impacts and mitigation opportunities when planning land use regulatory changes or significant public projects within the Wildland-Urban Interface.

LU-6. Encourage the assembly and redevelopment of underdeveloped parcels through incentives and public/private partnerships.

LU-7. Incentivize residential development in proximity to and mixed with commercial development, especially in areas that lack significant residential development.

LU-8. Minimize development and its impacts to water quality within the Lake Whatcom Watershed.

LU-9. Coordinate with Whatcom County and other appropriate agencies to intentionally discourage development in rural areas outside cities and unincorporated UGAs, sustainably directing growth to urban areas.

LU-10. Work with the county and constituent cities to implement a regional growth strategy that preserves land outside the unincorporated UGA for long-term agricultural use and recreation and preserves a network of open space corridors, green space, community forests, wildlife habitat and critical areas, including between Ferndale and Bellingham UGAs.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> H-1-10 | Housing Quantity

>> CD-20 | Form-based Code

>> FS-1-5 | Network Planning

>> T-21 | Bicycle & Vehicle Parking

>> CW-24-31 | Equity & Inclusion

>> CW-32-39 | Community Engagement

>> CW-40-46 | Tribal Relationships & Engagement

## BELLINGHAM'S PROJECTED GROWTH

**Bellingham is expected to continue growing at similar rates in the next two decades as it did in the last two decades. While new housing is a critical need, it is important to also plan for more jobs of various kinds.**
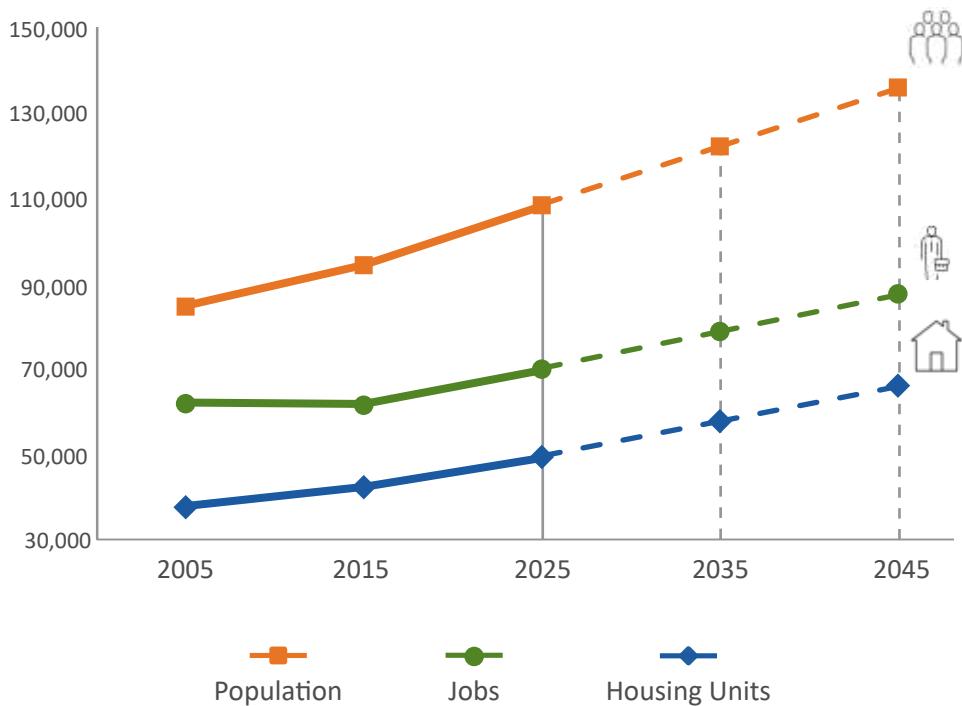


*Table Source Notes: 2005-2025 population and housing estimates are from the OFM Small Area Estimate Program (SAEP) and include the City of Bellingham and Bellingham UGA areas. The projected population, housing and jobs estimates are from the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) and represent additional growth anticipated out to 2045. Bellingham employment totals derived using US Department of Labor Statistics total employment for Whatcom County split for Bellingham UGA using percentage of employment for Bellingham UGA and Whatcom County from US Census LEHD data. LEHD proportional split available 2004-2022 and 2022 percentage also used to split 2023 and 2024 US DLS employment totals.*

# LAND USE

## URBAN GROWTH AREA

**Goal LU-B | Manage the long-term needs of the community through effective and sustainable planning of the urban growth area (UGA) and the annexation process.**

### POLICIES

LU-11. Utilize and periodically update an annexation plan that includes for each area of the UGA and UGA Reserve:

› Identification and assignment of future land use and zoning designations for that area, considering long-term community needs;

› Analysis of the costs of annexing that area and potential ways to cover or mitigate those costs, including but not limited to:

» Fiscal impacts of providing urban facilities and services such as police, fire, water and sewer, which may include phased level of service standards; and

» Impacts to the environment; and

› Examination of the opportunities and priorities for annexing that area (e.g. providing needed land uses, infrastructure, revenue or other benefits to the city) in relation to the costs.

LU-12. Retain or add to the UGA or UGA reserve areas that have the ability to provide urban levels of development with land uses that fulfill an identified need, applying those urban land use designations upon annexation.

LU-13. Collaborate with Whatcom County and applicable school or utility districts to identify areas for addition to the UGA or UGA Reserve, discourage rural development in the UGA and UGA Reserve and develop a transition strategy for annexation of those areas.

LU-14. Work with Whatcom County to apply the City's infrastructure improvement standards and environmental regulations in the City's unincorporated UGA.

LU-15. Establish and maintain a periodic collaboration with the City of Ferndale to intentionally plan future annexations or UGA and open space corridor changes within the areas between Bellingham and Ferndale.

LU-16. Only consider annexations of land in Bellingham's unincorporated UGA only when the analysis required in the annexation plan is complete for that area and includes a financially sustainable approach to provide urban facilities and services.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> FS-6-16 | Sustainable Funding Strategy

>> FS-38 | Private Utility Coordination

>> PR-20 | Open Space Corridors Property

>> PR-42 | Links to Adjacent Jurisdictions

>> EV-15 | Assessments, Plans, & Regulations

## BELLINGHAM'S BOUNDARIES



- ◼ Urban Village
- ◼ Urban Growth Area (UGA)
- ▨ Urban Growth Area Reserve
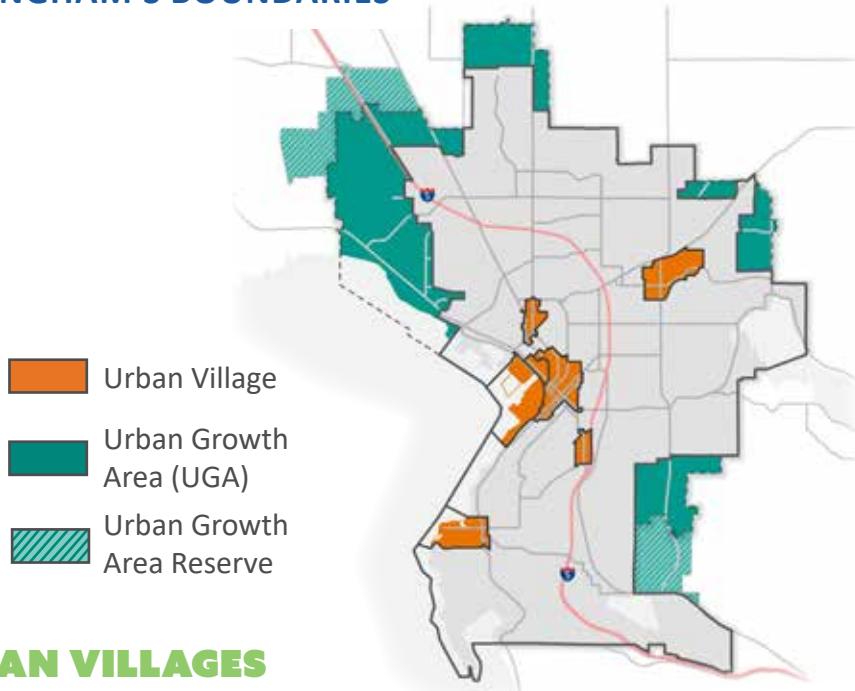
## URBAN VILLAGES

**LU-C | Foster vibrant urban villages.**

### POLICIES

LU-17.   Encourage well-developed, pedestrian-oriented and vibrant mixed-use urban villages with good access to infrastructure, transit and other public facilities and services. Support a mix of employment opportunities, variety of new housing and recreational opportunities in these areas.

LU-18.   Continue to encourage compact urban village development with minimum development requirements, transportation fee reductions or other requirements and incentives.

LU-19.   Develop and periodically update master plans to reflect the unique nature of each urban village. Include flexibility for a healthy mix of land uses, clear and objective design standards, support for multi-modal transportation options, sustainable development practices and supportive public amenities.

LU-20.   Provide flexible and effective incentives for development in the planned urban villages to provide income-restricted Affordable housing, public open space and other needed public benefits.

LU-21.   Establish benchmarks and annual monitoring of key indicators for urban villages to assess the effectiveness of incentives and implementation progress.

LU-22.   In instances where a proponent controls multiple properties within an existing urban village and seeks to coordinate infrastructure, collaborate in the development of plans, approaches and agreements, including development agreements.

LU-23.   Ensure that Bellingham's City Center (i.e. Downtown, Waterfront and Old Town Districts) retains its unique role as the dominant and attractive cultural, civic, employment and service center for the community and region.

LU-24.   Periodically review community needs, identifying potential future urban villages or smaller mixed-use nodes needed to address gaps in access to housing, commercial uses or amenities, such as in the northernmost part of the city.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

# LAND USE

## TRANSIT CORRIDORS

**LU-D | Encourage growth in proximity to transit service and support increased transit service as areas grow.**

### POLICIES

LU-25.  Collaborate with Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to identify important transit corridors connecting urban villages, transit centers and other key locations such as those identified in the Transit Connections figure, including both existing and new frequent transit routes in which to invest further.

LU-26.  Identify transit-oriented development opportunities throughout the city, integrating them into the transit corridor network as shown in the Transit Corridor Planning figure and fostering pedestrian-oriented design and mixed-use development.

LU-27.  Develop integrated transportation-land use plans along the identified transit corridors. Include consideration for the following in tandem rather than individually:

› A mix of land uses and higher densities within each corridor that support increased transit use;

› Design standards that enhance the pedestrian experience and support the multi-modal nature of the corridors;

› More frequent transit service; and

› When provided, appropriate parking design and quantity.

LU-28.  In areas outside urban villages and their connecting transit corridors, collaborate with WTA to:

› Periodically update transit service to meet shifting development trends; and

› Identify long-term opportunities and investments in existing transit routes prior to considering significant land use changes along them.

LU-29.  Discourage auto-oriented strip commercial development. Where such areas already exist, discourage linear expansion.

LU-30.  Identify opportunities and encourage action to redevelop auto-oriented commercial areas into more compact, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use nodes of activity, especially along transit routes.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> CD-14 | Streetscape Design Priority Areas

>> T-8-12 | Transit

## TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

The City has identified a series of important destinations and connections between them. The policies in this section guide collaboration with WTA to define routes, whether existing, adjusted, or new, to complete these connections. This also relates to transit corridor planning, described later in this chapter.



**WCC**

**Airport**

**St Joseph Hospital**

**Barkley**

**Fountain**

**BTC**

**Whatcom Falls**

**Civic Athletic Complex**

**Old Town, Downtown & Waterfront**

**Samish Way**

**WWU**

**Fairhaven**

**Lake Padden**

### Legend
— City Boundary
--- Urban Growth Area
▨ Urban Growth Area Reserve
● Urban Village
● Institution
● Areas of Interest
● Transit Center
— Primary Connection
— Secondary Connection
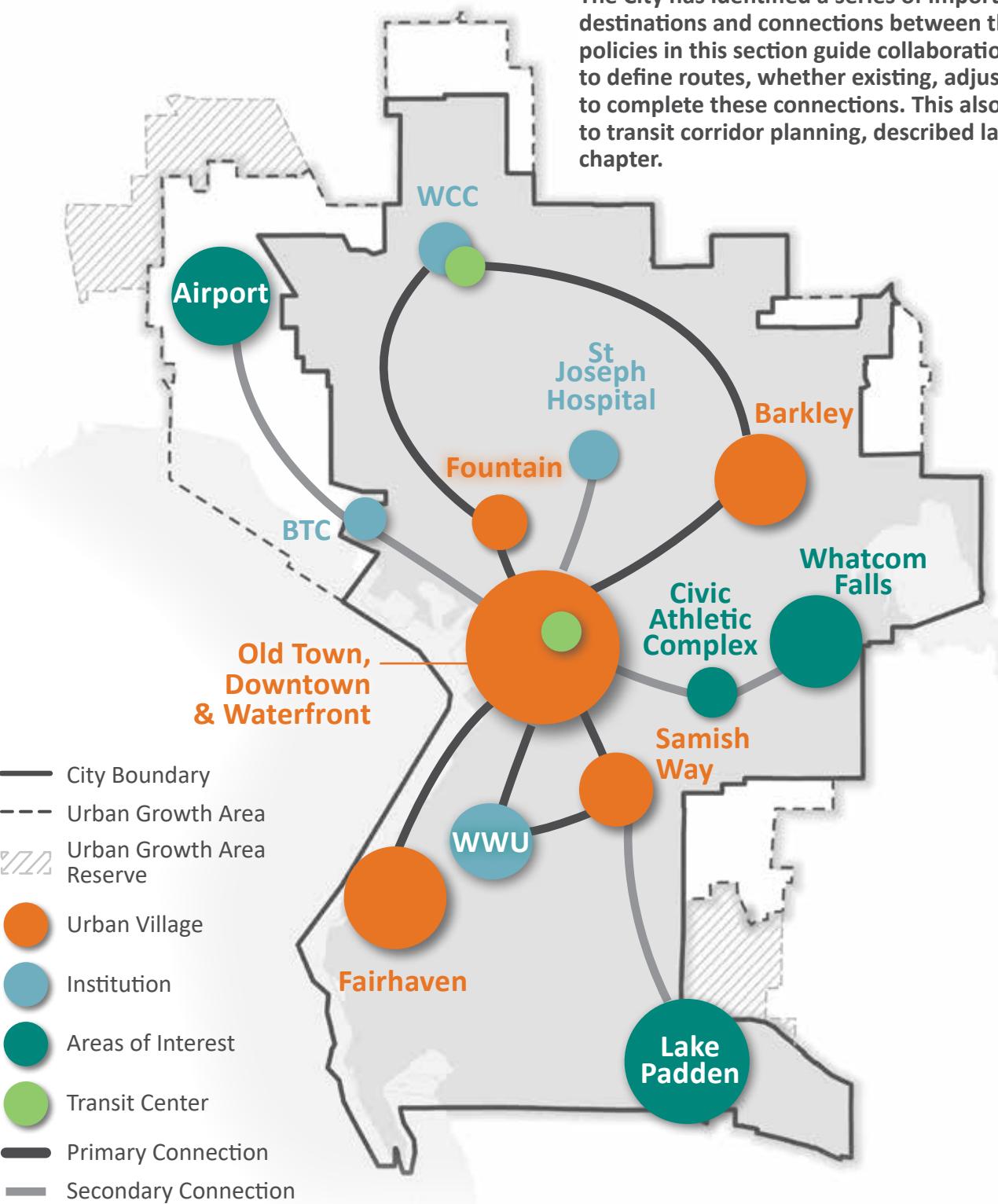
# LAND USE

## LAND USE DESIGNATIONS

**LU-E | Ensure a mix of land uses across the city with capacity to meet future community and economic needs.**

### POLICIES

LU-31.   Regularly monitor land use capacity, especially during rezone discussions, to assess the available supply, adequacy and serviceability of developable land for residential, commercial and industrial land uses as it compares to the city's anticipated needs.

LU-32.   Utilize consistent citywide approaches to manage land use regulations and planning processes.

#### Residential Watershed

LU-33.   Utilize the Residential Watershed designation to permit a limited range of small-scale housing types at a low density level to limit development and water quality impacts within the Lake Whatcom Watershed.

#### Residential Low

LU-34.   Utilize the Residential Low designation to permit a range of small-scale housing types and densities to achieve the city's housing diversity and affordability goals. Allow accessory, public and semi-public and limited small-scale commercial uses as well. Require development within this designation to meet minimum density standards.

#### Residential Medium

LU-35.   Utilize the Residential Medium designation to permit a range of mid-scale housing types and densities to meet the city's housing needs. Permit an expanded range of uses from the Residential Low designation, including limited office and neighborhood commercial uses. Require development within this designation to meet a higher minimum density than that required within the Residential Low designation.

#### Residential High

LU-36.   Utilize the Residential High designation to permit the same range of uses as the Residential Medium designation while requiring development within this designation to meet a higher minimum density.

#### Residential TOD

LU-37.   Utilize the Residential TOD designation during the transit corridor planning process to require areas that are serviced by frequent transit to support higher concentrations of people and services.

#### Commercial

LU-38.   The Commercial designation includes a range of commercial development intensities, from small neighborhood commercial areas to large planned commercial and mixed-use center areas. In general, commercial areas should provide and encourage a broad range and mix of services, commercial uses, residential uses and personal service establishments.

#### Public

LU-39.   Utilize the Public designation to define parcels of land that are owned or leased by public agencies such as city, county and state governments and the Bellingham School District. Certain public uses may be located in other zoning districts as designated in the Bellingham Municipal Code. Public zoning is used for a range of uses, including parks, recreational facilities, trails, open space, schools, utilities and other local governmental facilities. Limited commercial uses are permitted when appropriately located to activate public spaces.

#### Institutional

LU-40.   Utilize the Institutional designation in areas containing public or quasi-public institutional uses requiring large land area that benefit from comprehensive and coordinated planning efforts. These large "institutional" public or quasi-public campus-type developments currently include Western Washington University (WWU), Whatcom Community College (WCC) and St. Joseph Medical Center.

#### Industrial

LU-41.   Utilize the Industrial designation to provide land for a range of potential uses, including "light" and "heavy" industrial uses and, in some industrial zones, commercial uses.

## FUTURE LAND USE MAP

This map provides a guide for the ways in which land will be used in the future. The City's zoning must fall within the bounds of this map. Here, the land uses permitted within each urban village have been shown for context, but those land uses are defined by the zoning map.



**Legend:**
- City Boundary
- Urban Growth Area
- Urban Growth Area Reserve
- Urban Village Boundaries
- Lake Whatcom Watershed
- Airport Operations

Map Notes:

Click on the map to launch an interactive map viewer.

Cross-hatch patterns denote zones with multiple allowed uses or levels of development.

Colors within urban village areas correspond to urban village land use areas rather than zoning general use categories.

Residential TOD areas have not yet been designated on the Future Land Use map.

## LAND USE DESIGNATIONS, CONTINUED

LU-42.   Ensure that the supply of industrial zoned land supports local and regional needs, particularly by reserving existing industrial zoned land in the city and UGA for industrial uses and appropriate accessory uses.

LU-43.   Separate heavy industrial uses from incompatible land uses such as housing or schools. Use transition zoning, buffers and other techniques to protect industrial areas and nearby uses from conflicts.

LU-44.   In all zones where housing is permitted, permit transitional, supportive and emergency housing with regular or consistent occupants through a low-barrier process.

LU-45.   Encourage the provision of emergency shelters and other emergency housing forms with irregular or inconsistent occupants, providing a clear and easily navigable process for locating them in any zone in scale with similar residential development.

LU-46.   Promote a wide distribution of, and access to, human services by encouraging these uses, especially in areas with good access to transit, employment, education and services, at scales similar to other office and commercial activities.

LU-47.   Coordinate land use regulations for areas adjacent to the Bellingham International Airport in order to

› Limit uses that could be impacted by airplane noise;

› Discourage uses that could create (e.g. height hazards) or be impacted by airplane accidents; and

› Ensure consistency with the Airport's Master Plan and applicable airport compatibility regulations.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> H-16 | Mixed-income Incentives

>> H-20 | Housing & Shelter

>> H-49 | Clustering for Nature Access

>> FS-20 | Minimizing Impacts

>> ED-22-29 | Employment Lands & Supporting Infrastructure

>> CW-5 | Food Systems Assets

# LAND USE CAPACITY CHART (2023 - 2045)

Capacity for different land uses is calculated using a multi-step method. This approach identifies parcels that are undeveloped or under-developed, meaning that additional building(s) could be built there. It deducts some of these areas based on critical areas and their buffers, areas that are lacking in complete infrastructure, area that is needed for public facilities like parks and areas with potential landmark trees present. Additionally, a market factor is used to calculate how much of that remaining potential buildable land may actually be redeveloped within the planning period (by 2045).

The land uses shown in the Future Land Use map (previous pages) allow for significant housing and jobs growth beyond what has already been constructed in 2045. Most of the jobs growth is anticipated to be within the city's designated urban villages, while the housing growth is anticipated to be spread between the urban villages and other areas of the city, particularly with an increased capacity for middle-scale housing across the city.

| Map Key* | Land Use Designation | Estimated Housing Unit Capacity (Units) | Estimated Employment Capacity (Jobs) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Residential Low | 6,629 | 66 |
| | Residential Medium | 1,872 | 31 |
| | Residential High | 1,405 | 43 |
| | Residential Watershed | 354 | - |
| | Urban Village | 6,407 | 9,202 |
| | Commercial | 1,375 | 1,505 |
| | Industrial | - | 5,767 |
| | Commercial / Industrial | 9 | 44 |
| | Industrial / Residential Medium | - | - |
| | Commercial / Industrial / Residential High | 535 | 54 |
| | Institutional / Residential High | - | 60 |
| | Institutional | 304 | 2,770 |
| | Public / Institutional | - | 71 |
| | Public | 1 | 795 |
| | Airport Operations | - | 677 |
| **Total** | | **18,891** | **21,085** |

*Map Key corresponds to land use designations shown on the map on the previous pages.

# LAND USE

## COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS

**LU-F | Promote neighborhood resilience and vibrancy through the support and development of neighborhoods complete with a mix of housing, gathering spaces, essential goods and services and more.**

### POLICIES

LU-48.  Encourage the provision of public open spaces, art, childcare and other public amenities within development projects across the city.

LU-49.  Seek out publicly or privately managed opportunities to activate public spaces like plazas and parks with public-oriented commercial uses such as food purveyors or cultural events.

LU-50.  Promote small-scale commercial uses (e.g. corner stores) within neighborhoods to encourage walkability and provide opportunities for employment and placemaking.

LU-51.  Within Residential zones, limit the size of each commercial space and ensure the overall building scale and design is similar to that allowed for residential buildings in the area.

LU-52.  Consider impacts to neighbors, such as noise, night-time activity and parking, when governing the operations of commercial uses in Residential zones

LU-53.  Allow more flexibility in commercial and residential scale and building types along arterials and near frequent transit stops, Urban Villages and other amenities, including in small-scale predominantly residential areas.

LU-54.  Actively track and participate in efforts by the State Building Code Council to consider allowances for alternative and new building practices.

LU-55.  Evaluate opportunities for flexibility to maintain and improve nonconforming buildings and uses that contribute to Bellingham's sense of place, identity and history as valuable assets to the community.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **H-35 | Service-enriched Housing Distribution**

>> **CD-18 | Streetscape Commercial**

>> **CD-40 | Comprehensive Preservation Strategy**

>> **FS-44 | Infill School Development**

>> **CW-2 | Community Serving Land Uses**

>> **CW-6 | Food Access & Production**

>> **CW-11 | Flexible & Adaptive Gathering Spaces**

## WHAT ARE NEIGHBORHOODS?

Any area that has people living there is a neighborhood, whether it is very dense or more suburban in feel. Some have significant commercial or other uses as well as homes. The city includes 25 (capital N) Neighborhoods, each with a defined boundary. These Neighborhoods are often associated with specific neighborhood associations or other organizations to help connect residents to one another and to the City.

## COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOODS

Often, a successful way to integrate a mix of uses into less dense neighborhoods is to cluster them in close proximity to one another. This graphic shows an example where a variety of businesses and public spaces are clustered around an intersection. Essential uses like grocery stores or pharmacies are particularly good to encourage. Housing often needs to be dense enough in proximity to these businesses to help support them economically, so a variety of housing types and densities are shown nearby.

# LAND USE

## TRANSIT CORRIDOR PLANNING

**Developing a clear strategy for creating a mix of uses along transit lines is an important part of developing complete neighborhoods. Clustering these uses in nodes at important intersections helps make them successful.**

### Define Corridors

This will start with identified connections but will repeat in the future, when additional urban villages or other destinations may be identified. Ideally, these routes will include smaller destinations or important intersections along their length.
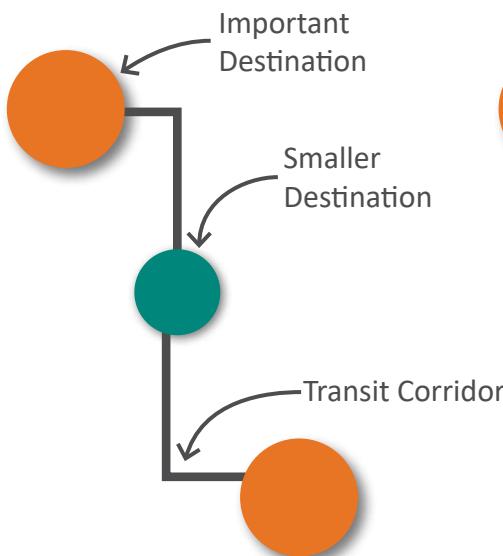
### Adopt Regulations

Once the corridor is defined, opportunities for new mixed-use centers along the route will be identified. Regulations will be adopted to designate these new centers and encourage a denser mix of uses there.
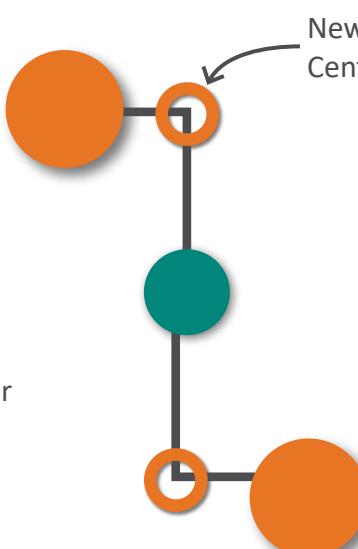
### Make Adjustments

As the corridor develops over time and those identified mixed-use centers fill in, collaboration to provide pedestrian improvements and increased transit access along the corridor will continue.
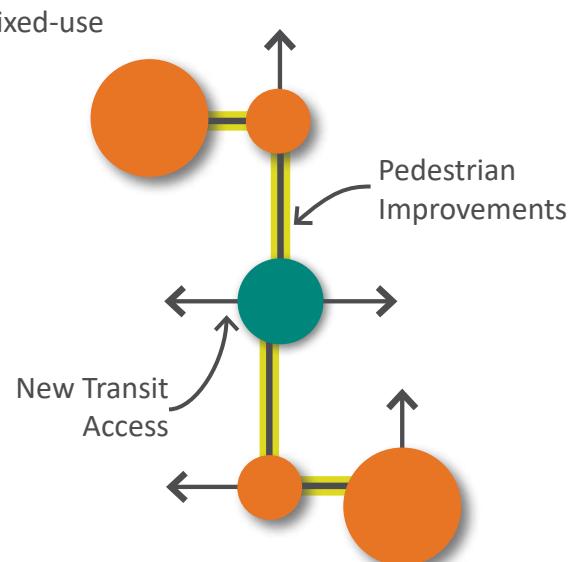


**Collaboration between the City and WTA will result in a clear definition of a transit corridor.**

# HOUSING

## SUPPORTING A RANGE OF OPTIONS FOR ALL

## BELLINGHAM NEEDS A VARIETY OF HOUSING TO MEET THE RANGE OF NEEDS OF CURRENT AND FUTURE RESIDENTS.

Housing cost in Bellingham has increased significantly. Ensuring we have housing that meets the needs and incomes of residents continues to be one of the biggest challenges facing the city. Everyone has different needs, such as a certain number of bedrooms or access to a particular job. The City does not construct housing but does define the regulations that result in specific housing types, design styles, neighborhood configurations and more.

# HOUSING

**THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO HOUSING, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.**

## HOUSING QUANTITY

**H-A | Ensure that Bellingham has a sufficient quantity of housing units and densities to accommodate projected growth.**

### POLICIES

H-1.   Remove barriers to housing creation and preservation by periodically reviewing existing and proposed development regulations and policies for potential impacts on citywide housing capacity, development patterns, affordability and diversity.

H-2.   Reduce the City's direct impacts on housing costs by periodically reviewing and updating the permitting, infrastructure improvement, City fee, and other processes for opportunities to reduce cost barriers when fiscally sustainable.

H-3.   Encourage preservation of existing housing and the construction of new housing as appropriate to increase housing availability and work towards a healthy vacancy rate.

H-4.   Track the prevalence of empty residential investment properties, vacation homes, and short term rentals that are not available to the residential rental or ownership market. If this reveals a significant impact to the availability of housing in Bellingham, explore opportunities to discourage such empty homes.

H-5.   Periodically evaluate local development regulations to remove barriers to a variety of state-enabled construction types such as mass timber, six-story wood-frame construction, and single stairway residential buildings.

H-6.   Encourage well-designed infill housing development throughout the city, especially near amenities like transit, jobs, parks, or services.

H-7.   Consider opportunities for flexibility in development standards for large-scale housing developments proposed to align with the City's growth strategy.

H-8.   Encourage a variety of active uses at ground level of residential buildings. In most mixed-use areas, allow ground level uses such as live-work units, communal or recreational resident spaces, and collaborative work spaces.

H-9.   Explore opportunities to remove barriers to the conversion of underutilized buildings to residential uses, including identification of and connection to federal or state programs for historic preservation, adaptive reuse, seismic upgrade, or other scenarios.

H-10.   Explore creative solutions for creating permanent affordability and community wealth-building such as community land trusts, limited equity cooperatives, resident owned communities, and public development authorities.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-1-10 | Clustering Growth

>> LU-17-24 | Urban Villages

## BELLINGHAM'S PROJECTED GROWTH

**Bellingham has been growing steadily for decades, with similar projected growth throughout this planning time frame.**
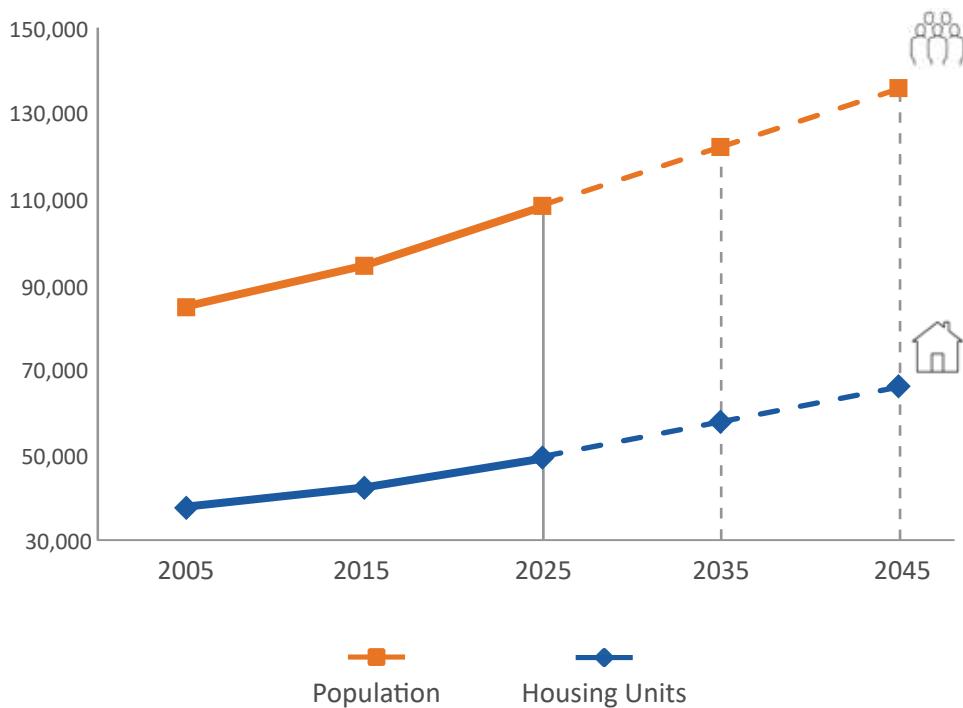


Population | Housing Units

*Table Source Notes: 2005-2025 population and housing estimates are from the OFM Small Area Estimate Program (SAEP) and include the City of Bellingham and Bellingham UGA areas. The projected population and housing estimates are from the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) and represent additional growth anticipated out to 2045.*

## RESOURCE LINKS

### CITY DOCUMENTS ADOPTED HEREIN

These references are adopted as part of the Bellingham Plan, requiring the same process for updates as the plan itself.

**>> CONSOLIDATED PLAN**
Assessing and planning for community development needs, including housing

### REFERENCES

These references are not adopted as part of this plan and may be updated periodically.

**>> ASSESSMENT OF FAIR HOUSING**

**>> APPENDIX A**
Background documents that informed housing goals and policies

# HOUSING

## HOUSING FOR ALL INCOMES

**H-B | Foster a mix of housing in all neighborhoods that is affordable for all income levels.**

### POLICIES

H-11. Increase the supply of income-restricted Affordable rental and ownership housing in all neighborhoods, especially in areas with good access to transit, employment, education and services.

H-12. Regularly monitor the city's housing market and trends, including:

› Reporting on the city's housing affordability through housing price, cost burden, and other statistics;

› Identifying areas and populations vulnerable to economic, cultural and physical displacement; and

› Tracking out-migration trends, utilizing this information when making policy decisions.

H-13. Actively counter displacement of residents through actions such as supporting housing assistance programs, linking residents with programs, considering displacement risk factors in policy choices, and preserving existing manufactured home parks and other naturally occurring affordable housing.

H-14. Consider transportation and parking costs and accessibility of services when planning for housing affordability.

H-15. Encourage the rehabilitation, relocation and reuse, rather than demolition, of existing housing, especially that which is considered naturally affordable.

H-16. Encourage income-restricted Affordable housing and mixed income residential buildings by providing incentives such as density bonuses, expedited permitting, multi-family tax exemption program and fee reductions.

H-17. Monitor the residential development economy for opportunities to develop a mandatory inclusionary affordability zoning program without significantly reducing overall housing production.

H-18. Strive to avoid segregation of housing opportunities by income level by regularly evaluating barriers to the production and just distribution of income-restricted Affordable housing across Bellingham, identifying ways to reduce or eliminate them.

H-19. Encourage the development of housing that is more affordable than current alternatives, such as modular construction, small units, co-living housing, and other opportunities to share amenities or space to reduce housing costs.

H-20. Support the development of safe and innovative housing and shelter solutions, such as tiny house villages, that enable a continuum of options between living unsheltered and in permanent housing.

H-21. Seek out opportunities to support and expand low- and extremely-low-income housing programs and public funding (e.g. the local Housing Levy, state and regional funding initiatives, and HUD entitlement funds).

H-22. Actively coordinate with public and private partners, community groups, and trade representatives in efforts to monitor, plan for, fund, and meet regional housing needs.

H-23. Consider the viability of incorporating income-restricted Affordable housing when planning public projects or capital facility improvements on surplus public and quasi-publicly owned land.

H-24. Proactively collaborate internally and externally to identify land opportunities for income-restricted affordable housing, emergency housing, or associated services.

H-25. Utilize City messaging and partnerships to provide information to residents, especially underserved populations, on affordable housing opportunities and first-time homeownership programs.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> ED-31 | Wages & Housing Affordability Gap**

*Table Source Notes: Existing housing for 2023 from Leland Consulting compilation of Whatcom County housing inventory using Commerce HAPT allocations and 2020-2023 housing permit data from each jurisdiction. Housing capacity includes 20-year expectations based on the Future Land Use Map.*

# BELLINGHAM'S HOUSING BY INCOME PROJECTIONS

State law requires that we plan for future housing need. We must identify capacity for housing that meets demand at each income level. This analysis is based on zoning and its probable resulting housing types, with denser housing more capable of meeting deeper affordability needs. Housing in the lower income categories will require financial subsidy and incentives. The need is significantly greater than available resources.

**Legend:**
- Existing Units (gray)
- Capacity (based on land availability, not funding) (blue)
- 2045 Allocations/need (orange)

Subsidies required for lower ranges of AMI. A blend of subsidies and incentives will be necessary for the 50%-80% AMI category.

**Chart values:**
- 0%-30% AMI: 6,185 / 6,187 (Capacity 4,980, Existing 1,207)
- 0%-30% AMI (Permanent Supportive): 2,530 / 2,536 (Capacity 1,950, Existing 586)
- 30%-50% AMI: 8,277 / 8,279 (Capacity 4,160, Existing 4,119)
- 50%-80% AMI: 17,979 / 17,997 (Capacity 1,215, Existing 16,782)
- 80%-100% AMI: 7,389 / 7,757 (Capacity 1,357, Existing 6,400)
- 100%-120% AMI: 6,429 / 6,451 (Capacity 1,422, Existing 5,029)
- >120% AMI: 17,167 / 17,249 (Capacity 3,807, Existing 13,442)

| Housing Capacity (units) by Income and Housing Type | 0%-30% AMI | 0%-30% AMI (Permanent Supportive) | 30%-50% AMI | 50%-80% AMI | 80%-100% AMI | 100%-120% AMI | >120% AMI |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Single, Detached | - | - | - | - | - | - | 931 |
| Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) | 250 | - | 377 | 469 | 498 | 66 | - |
| Middle Housing (2-6 units) | - | - | 1,073 | 673 | 250 | 950 | 2,876 |
| Multi Attached (7+ units) | 4,730 | 1,950 | 2,710 | 72 | 609 | 406 | - |
| **Totals** | **4,980** | **1,950** | **4,160** | **1,215** | **1,357** | **1,422** | **3,807** |

## WHAT IS AMI?

Area Median Income (AMI) is the median income for the area (Whatcom County). That means that there are the same number of Whatcom County households earning more than this amount than there are that earn less than that amount. AMI varies by household size, meaning that a four-person household AMI (the baseline AMI number most commonly referenced) is higher than a two-person household AMI. When AMI is used to reference a housing unit, it is referencing the cost for that housing in relation to an equivalent household appropriately sized for that unit. For instance, a 3-bedroom 80% AMI unit is more expensive than a 1-bedroom 80% AMI unit because a larger household is assumed. See also affordable housing or income-restricted affordable housing.

# HOUSING



## THE HOUSING CONTINUUM

We need a range of options to support the variety of needs across our community. While historic planning approaches have differentiated between "single-family" and "multi-family" housing, housing is not so binary. Homes can be different sizes, share different amenities, and be arranged in different ways. In general, the smaller the private unit and the more that units can share land and amenities, the lower the cost for each unit. This graphic represents a generalized continuum, rather than a strict rule or representation of each housing type.

## MULTI-UNIT BUILDINGS



| Co-living Housing (large) | Apartments | Co-living Housing (small) | Fourplex-Sixplex | Triplex/ Stacked Flats | Courtyard Apartments |

**UNITS PER BUILDING**

# HOUSING VARIETY

**H-C | Ensure that Bellingham has a sufficient variety of housing types to accommodate the needs of the entire community and promote other community goals.**

## POLICIES

H-26. Utilize development regulations, fee structures, and City messaging that represent the full housing continuum beyond single-family and multi-family structures.

H-27. Encourage a mix of housing types in new development projects in all areas of the city.

H-28. Encourage middle-scale housing forms across the lower-density areas of the city outside the Lake Whatcom Watershed. These housing forms include small lot single-unit homes, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), cottages, multiplexes, common courtyards, townhomes, and co-living housing.

H-29. Ensure a continued supply of medium-sized housing units as options for households with children or other space needs and for those just entering the housing market by promoting development of two- to three-bedroom housing units and appropriate amenities in every neighborhood.

H-30. Encourage the construction, retrofit, and preservation of a range of housing options in every neighborhood and within individual development projects that meets the unique needs for seniors and people with disabilities, allowing them to remain in their community. These may include units without stairs, those meeting universal design or visitability standards, group homes or assisted living opportunities.

H-31. Encourage a variety of off-campus housing options that meet students' needs, are high quality, provide enough bedrooms and/or communal spaces to encourage shared and therefore lower expenses, and are near local institutions of higher education.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **CD-21 | Economically Feasible Design**

>> **CD-45 | Redevelopment Alternatives**

>> **CW-24-31 | Equity & Inclusion**

>> **CW-32-39 | Community Engagement**

## SINGLE-UNIT (ATTACHED OR DETACHED) BUILDINGS

$$$                    $$$$
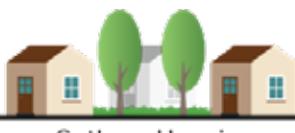


Cottage Housing    ADU    Duplex    Townhomes    Single Family (small)    Single Family (large)

### UNIT SIZE

# HOUSING

## SERVICE-ENRICHED HOUSING

**H-D | Support service-enriched housing options across Bellingham**

### POLICIES

H-32. Continue to prioritize, partner towards, and support the development of permanent housing with appropriate on-site services across the city for people with challenges related to age, health, or disability and those who have experienced homelessness throughout the city and county.

H-33. Coordinate and support the provision of services addressing substance-abuse, behavioral health issues, and physical disabilities, either on-site or near Affordable and emergency housing options. Ensure that these services are scaled alongside housing investments.

H-34. Maintain an inventory and expand the city's supply of emergency shelter beds, transitional housing, and other interim housing types, providing temporary service-enriched solutions while supporting a path towards permanent housing.

H-35. Promote an equitable distribution of all service-enriched housing, encouraging options in every neighborhood and especially near amenities like transit, jobs, parks, or other services.

H-36. Collaborate with Whatcom County and nearby cities to address regional disability and homelessness challenges, planning for appropriate service-enriched housing options throughout the region.

H-37. Support the public provision of factual, regularly disseminated information about homelessness.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **LU-44 | Emergency Housing**

## HOMEOWNERSHIP

**H-E | Support and encourage homeownership opportunities.**

### POLICIES

H-38. Promote middle-scale housing types, such as small-lot development, cottage housing, and townhomes, that can be sold on individual unit lots.

H-39. Explore opportunities to reduce costly impacts of ownership models for infill housing projects, such as utility connection costs.

H-40. Permit and encourage shared equity housing ownership options such as condominiums, cooperative living, and other co-living housing.

H-41. Support statewide and regional reductions of barriers to condoization of new and existing housing.

H-42. Support and encourage limited equity housing models, such as land trusts, to provide long-term affordable home ownership opportunities.

H-43. Support and promote anti-displacement opportunities, such as programs that either assist homeowners remaining in their homes or provide opportunities to transition rental units to resident ownership models.

H-44. Continue permitting new and encouraging preservation of existing manufactured homes.



## ANTI-DISPLACEMENT

Displacement of residents or businesses can be an unintended consequence of planning decisions. This may be because of physical changes, economic changes, or cultural changes in the area and can impact both owners and renters. It is important to consider these impacts and possible mitigation strategies alongside planning strategies. Several chapters include policies related to displacement, ensuring consideration of displacement impacts in a variety of settings.

>> H-12 | Monitoring Market

>> H-13 | Anti-Displacement

>> H-15 | Rehabilitation and Reuse

>> H-30 | Options, Seniors & those with Disabilities

>> H-43 | Anti-Displacement (Ownership)

>> C-2 | Provide Safe Environments

>> C-21 | Climate Displacement

# HOUSING

## A CONTINUUM OF OPTIONS TO SUPPORT PATHWAYS TOWARDS PERMANENT HOUSING

Planning for housing means working to ensure there is a supply of homes for everyone. A community also needs a range of housing and shelter solutions to help people transition from being unsheltered to being stably and permanently housed.

Some people can transition directly into permanent housing, but most people need a transition option. Transitional housing might be within more formal buildings, like an overnight shelter, or it might be more informal, like a safe parking site.

The right mix of transitional housing can meet the variety of needs for people who are unsheltered. The graphic below shows a range of specific examples but does not include all possibilities. Each project can be unique, and the continuum generally shows a stability trajectory, with less stable forms on the left that generally have more irregular or inconsistent occupants. This ranges to the right, with more stability and more regular or consistent occupants.

## UNSHELTERED
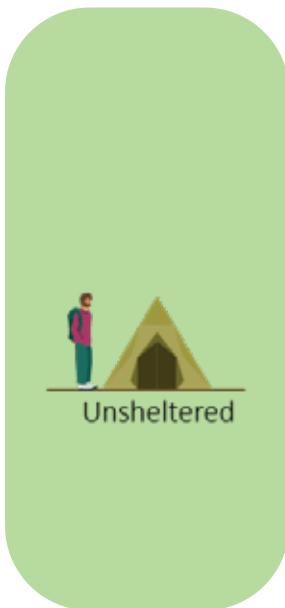
## EMERGENCY/TRANSITIONAL HOUSING AND SHELTER



Unsheltered

Tent Encampment

Severe Weather Shelter

Safe Parking

Emergency Shelter

>> LU-45 | More Irregular/ Inconsistent Occupants

## PERMANENT HOUSING



Tiny House Village

Transitional Housing

Permanent Supportive Housing

Other Permanent Housing (any form)
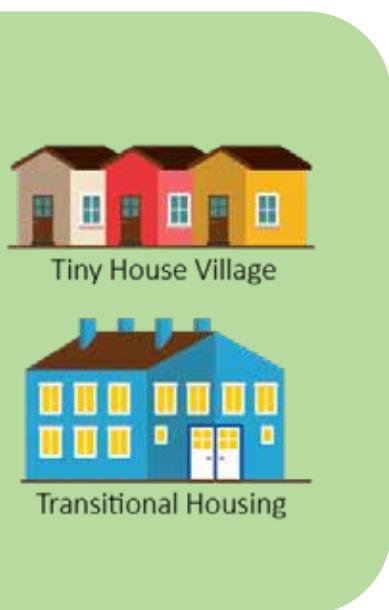
>> LU-44 | More Regular/ Consistent Occupants

# HOUSING

## LIVABLE HOUSING

**H-F | Promote safe, healthy, and livable housing across Bellingham.**

### POLICIES

H-45. Support fair and equal access to housing for all persons, regardless of race, religion, ethnic origin, age, household composition or size, disability, marital status, sexual orientation or economic circumstances.

H-46. Enforce the City's Rental Registration and Safety Inspection Program to ensure that rental housing units comply with life and fire safety standards and provide a safe place for tenants to live.

H-47. Ensure all residents have access to open space, either on site or in nearby public park space.

H-48. Periodically evaluate the impacts of development regulations on the livability of housing produced and consider amendments to balance regulation flexibility with better quality site and building design, improved usable space for residents, and other livability features.

H-49. Encourage clustering of housing and mixtures of housing types together to preserve natural resources and trees and consolidate open space.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-30 | Mixed-use Redevelopment

>> LU-33 | Residential Designations

>> LU-50 | Small-scale Commercial

>> CW-1-9 | Health and Wellbeing

>> CW-15 | Housing Encampments

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## SHAPING VIBRANT URBAN SPACES

## THE PUBLIC REALM AND THE COMMUNITY'S SENSE OF PLACE IS SHAPED BY THOUGHTFUL AND INTENTIONAL DESIGN.

This chapter reflects public values and focuses on how the city looks, feels and functions. It addresses the design of buildings, open spaces and landscapes, streetscapes and other physical features. These physical features define Bellingham's unique identity and set the stage for the community's image, economic vitality and daily life.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY DESIGN, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

### ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITY DESIGN

Each element of the illustration represents one of the five goals in this chapter. Each element is an important aspect of shaping how the community looks, feels and functions.

**Community Identity and Sense of Place (Goal CD-A)**

All four of these elements below are key parts of the community's identity and sense of place, making it visually attractive, well-connected and livable.

**Streets as Places (Goal CD-B)**

Active, complete streets that accommodate different uses are essential to supporting economic activity and circulation.

**Historical and Cultural Resources (Goal CD-E)**

Preserving historic and cultural resources is important to our unique identity and has many benefits.
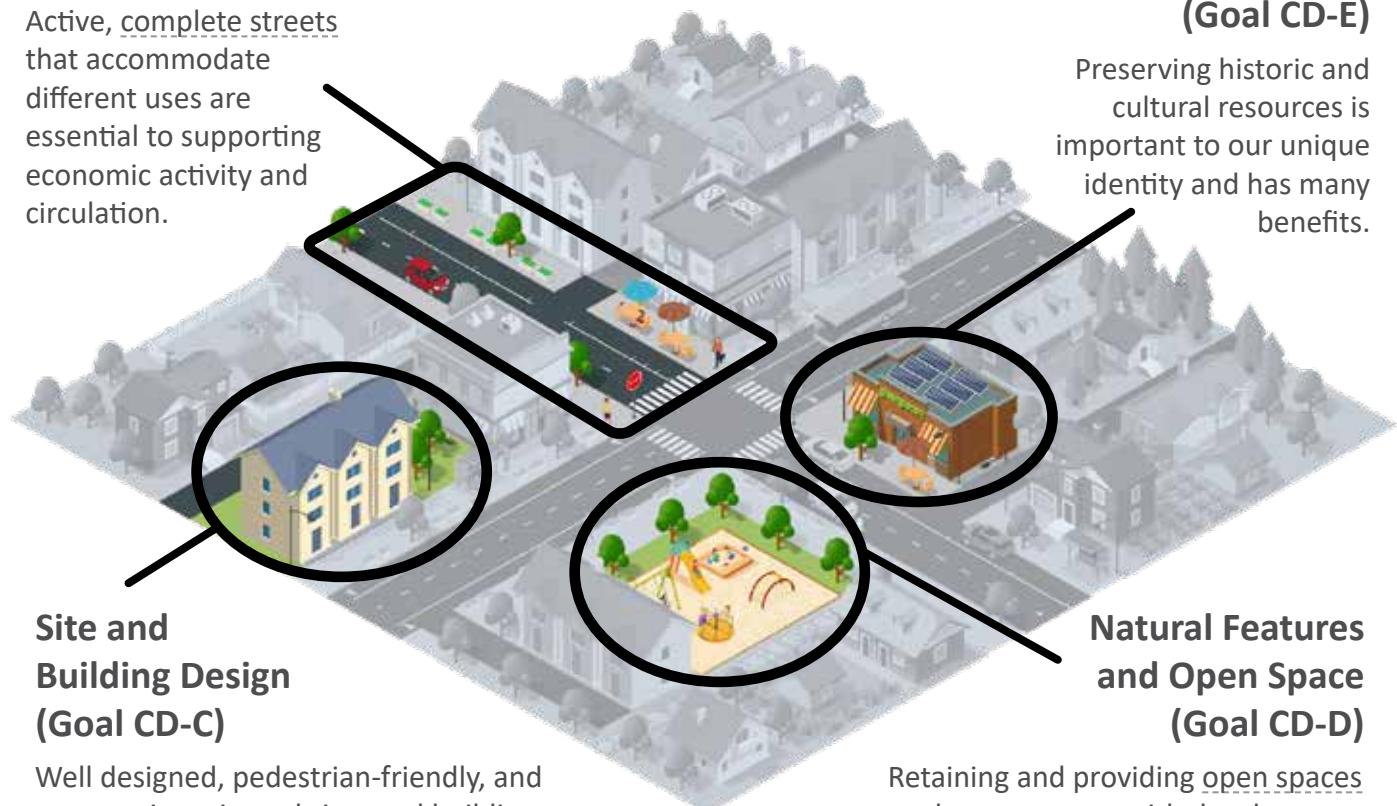
**Site and Building Design (Goal CD-C)**

Well designed, pedestrian-friendly, and community-oriented sites and buildings contribute positively to the community.

**Natural Features and Open Space (Goal CD-D)**

Retaining and providing open spaces and green spaces with development makes a city more habitable.

# RESOURCE LINKS

## REFERENCES

These references are not adopted as part of this plan and may be updated periodically.

**>> URBAN VILLAGE DESIGN GUIDELINES**

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND SENSE OF PLACE

**Goal CD-A | Express community identity and sense of place across districts and neighborhoods through improvements to the appearance, function and design of new development, commercial centers, urban villages, transit corridors, streetscapes and the public realm.**

### POLICIES

CD-1. Create an attractive, walkable, urban environment within and between districts and neighborhoods that prioritizes safety, accessibility and connectivity over auto-centric design. Implement this through careful street design, site planning, architectural design, pedestrian amenities and other strategies that enhance the public realm.

CD-2. Strengthen and improve the urban form by promoting distinct, attractive and livable neighborhoods.

CD-3. Ensure that the design and development of urban villages and transit corridors convey a positive image of the city, contribute to its economic vitality and improve visual and physical transitions into adjacent neighborhoods. Establish flexible standards that support these objectives.

CD-4. Continue to implement individual urban village plans that contribute to their distinct identities; continue to evolve these plans in response to changing circumstances.

CD-5. Ensure that Bellingham's City Center (i.e. Downtown, Waterfront and Old Town) is unique, attractive and reflects Bellingham's history and natural setting. Recognize the generally larger bulk and mass of downtown buildings as a positive aspect of urban design.

CD-6. Acknowledge and promote community design as an evolving reflection of the community's diversity and makeup as they change over time.

CD-7. Support public and private investment in improved design quality of infrastructure and amenities in existing neighborhoods, particularly in underinvested areas.

CD-8. Establish appropriate transitions between commercial, industrial, mixed-use development and residential areas with different scales and intensities of development. Consider methods such as architectural techniques, creative landscaping, screening or transitional uses such as plazas, pedestrian-scale amenities and pedestrian-oriented commercial uses.

CD-9. Promote community identity through streetscape enhancements, building designs and treatments marking the primary entrances, or gateways, to and within the city.

CD-10.  Foster placemaking by supporting unique design themes in building facades, public spaces, streetscapes and other built elements within the visual public realm to create a sense of place and inspire a greater sense of community pride and ownership.

CD-11.  Encourage the incorporation of creativity, culture and public art features with new and existing development.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> LU-27 | Transit Corridor Planning**

**>> H-6 | Infill Housing**

**>> CW-20 | Creative Worker Involvement**

**>> CW-24-31 | Equity and Inclusion**

**>> CW-32-39 | Community Engagement**

## STREETS AS PLACES

**Goal CD-B | Promote streetscapes that enhance the economic vitality and overall visual quality of the city, support the circulation network and support pedestrian-scale streets and patterns of activity.**

### POLICIES

CD-12.  Coordinate across City departments to provide well-connected, human-scale, accessible and complete street design that ensures greater pedestrian comfort and safety and more active modes of transportation while accommodating mobility, utilities, green infrastructure and design amenities.

CD-13.  Adopt criteria for administrative authority to allow flexible right-of-way standards when appropriate.

CD-14.  Prioritize streetscape design enhancements within the city's urban villages and other mixed-used centers, and along transit corridors and other thoroughfares with coordinated public and private improvements.

CD-15.  Install, protect and maintain curbside street trees in the public right-of-way. Recognize their role in contributing to shade cover, public health, and community character.

CD-16.  Require new and retrofitted sidewalks to be set back from the curb and designed to include curbside street trees. Where possible, install other physical buffers between the sidewalk and traffic such as landscaping, street furniture, Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management techniques, separated bike lanes and on-street parking.

CD-17.  Identify and prioritize high opportunity platted alleys for proactive improvement within urban villages and along transit corridors in order to maintain a pedestrian-oriented streetscape, facilitate infill development and activate alleys.

CD-18.  Activate the streetscape where all commercial uses are permitted by encouraging and reducing barriers to activities such as sidewalk retail, outdoor dining and mobile food vending.

#### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **FS-22 | Utility Undergrounding**

>> **T-2 | Vehicle Speed Reduction**

>> **T-4 | Wayfinding**

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## SITE AND BUILDING DESIGN

**Goal CD-C | Provide a built environment of well-designed, pedestrian-friendly and community-oriented sites and buildings.**

### POLICIES

CD-19. Establish and maintain a predictable, clear and objective set of design standards and review processes for development.

CD-20. Explore the use of form-based codes, incentive zoning and similar regulatory means to implement the Bellingham Plan's goals and policies.

CD-21. Promote high-quality and economically feasible development that achieves desired intensities while also encouraging creativity and variety in building and site design across Bellingham.

CD-22. Ensure that development and design standards are adaptable to a variety of conditions to allow for diversity in building styles and accommodate infill development.

CD-23. Emphasize pedestrian-oriented design with street-oriented entries, windows and architectural and landscape features that add human-scale visual interest and complement building and site design.

CD-24. Use development and design standards to ensure that the design, proportion, rhythm, scale and massing of new development contributes positively to the quality of the surrounding corridor or neighborhood.

CD-25. Encourage the use of high-quality and durable materials, as well as innovative, low-impact and environmentally-friendly construction techniques and designs.

CD-26. Consider potential impacts on adjacent properties and surroundings when developing or updating standards. This may include impacts related to noise, lighting and glare, refuse and equipment screening, privacy, view corridors and solar access.

CD-27. Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles into objective design and development standards.

CD-28. Encourage safe, accessible and secure bicycle parking while reducing the visual impacts of auto parking areas and garages on the urban form.

CD-29. Include alleys in the design of new developments, and use abutting alleys and private access easements for a site's vehicular access, unless impractical or environmentally constrained.

CD-30. Create and implement sign regulations that limit visual clutter, protect the public interest and enhance the city's appearance and safety. Achieve this with measures such as limiting billboards and pole signs, encouraging signs to be consolidated and complementary in scale and discouraging signs that are dominating or distracting to drivers.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-53 | Location-Based Development Flexibility

>> LU-55 | Nonconforming Buildings

>> H-7 | Growth Strategy Housing Flexibility

>> H-48 | Livability Regulations

>> FS-21 | Buffering Facilities

>> FS-27 | Public Building Priorities

>> T-21 | Bicycle and Vehicle Parking

>> ED-25 | Underutilized Employment Lands

## PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED DESIGN

**Pedestrian oriented design refers to features of the built environment that create safe, comfortable and attractive places which encourage pedestrian activity and improve pedestrian mobility.**



Examples of pedestrian oriented design features:
- Convenient sidewalk access and amenities
- Buildings oriented towards the street
- Active ground floor uses
- Building fronts designed to provide visual interest
- Locating surface parking away from streets

### WHAT IS CPTED?

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is an approach to designing spaces that reduces opportunities for crime and increases safety. Common CPTED principles include:

- Natural Surveillance
- Natural Access Control
- Maintenance
- Territorial Reinforcement
- Activity Support

### WHAT ARE FORM-BASED CODES?

They are regulations that focus more on the physical form of buildings and public spaces rather than on their function. They guide the design, scale and placement of buildings instead of simply controlling land uses. This helps different uses coexist and creates more walkable, compact neighborhoods.

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## NATURAL FEATURES AND OPEN SPACE

**Goal CD-D | Integrate and emphasize natural features and open space across the community and in the design of new development and redevelopment.**

### POLICIES

CD-31.  Preserve, encourage and enhance open and green spaces as key elements of the community's character through parks, trails, trees, water features and other significant properties that provide public benefit.

CD-32.  Encourage land uses that promote and allow public access to and along the marine shoreline, while protecting shoreline habitats and functions.

CD-33.  Identify and strive to preserve scenic vistas of important natural features from public spaces such as the Cascade Mountains, Lake Whatcom, Bellingham Bay, Chuckanut Bay, the San Juan Islands and hills that provide the natural backdrop to the city.

CD-34.  Require or incentivize the connection and linkage of parks, neighborhood greenways, trails, and open spaces in the design of new development and redevelopment projects.

CD-35.  Encourage and provide incentives to create publicly-accessible neighborhood parks, plazas, green spaces and other open spaces of various sizes throughout the city, particularly within commercial areas, urban villages and transit corridors.

CD-36.  Encourage the design of publicly-accessible spaces to integrate arts and culture and provide amenities and facilities such as seating, lighting, landscaping and connections to surrounding uses. Encourage activities in these spaces that contribute to a sense of security.

CD-37.  Require the installation and maintenance of adequate landscaping throughout the city and in development projects, prohibiting invasive plant species and encouraging the use of native or climate-adaptive plant species whenever possible. Where feasible, preserve trees and mature vegetation.

CD-38.  Consolidate landscaped areas to be large enough to balance the scale of development and functional enough for leisure and recreation. In denser development, allow open space requirements to be satisfied with innovative and flexible applications of landscaping - including green walls and roofs and more intense landscaping of smaller open spaces - to allow more efficient use of the land for buildings.

CD-39.  Develop an implementation strategy that seeks to balance a healthy urban forest canopy with the growing demand for housing units. Consider flexible ways to promote tree management within a larger area or city scale when a development proposes significant housing opportunities.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> H-49 | Clustering for Nature Access**

**>> PR-6-15 | Conservation & Resilience**

**>> EV-13 | Integrate Trees Into Urban Growth**

**>> EV-17 | Early Project Planning**

# COMMUNITY DESIGN

## HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

**Goal CD-E | Preserve Bellingham's heritage, authenticity, and diverse identities through the preservation of historic buildings, sites, landscapes and cultural resources.**

### POLICIES

CD-40.  To aid in maintaining and improving the City's existing historic preservation program, create, implement, and continually update a citywide preservation plan or strategy that sets priorities and includes at a minimum: 1) a comprehensive historic resources inventory, 2) regulatory and financial incentives for preservation, restoration and adaptive reuse and 3) outreach and engagement strategies.

CD-41.  Promote the many benefits of historic preservation beyond the aesthetic and expand historic preservation to embrace tangible and intangible cultural heritage and include a broader spectrum of places, under-represented communities, persons and experiences that have shaped our community.

CD-42.  Protect significant archaeological and cultural resources, especially those that pre-date colonization, from the adverse impacts of development or changing environmental conditions.

CD-43.  Recognize the important role of Bellingham's industrial past and maritime heritage, including the role of the indigenous community.

CD-44.  Encourage and assist historic districts to retain their unique identities and qualities as they grow and change, and promote context-sensitive design of new buildings in proximity to other historic buildings.

CD-45.  Steward historic preservation by encouraging preservation, restoration or adaptation of buildings with significant historic elements prior to redevelopment.

CD-46.  Incorporate features, such as interpretive signage, historic relics and other elements reflecting historic structures, sites and stories into parks, transportation or other civic projects.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> H-9 | Conversion to Residential

>> PR-9 | Education and Interpretation

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMUNITY BENEFITS

**Provides environmental sustainability and resource conservation**

**Boosts the local economy, including job creation, tourism, and revitalization**

**Provides housing, including hidden density and naturally occurring affordable housing**

**Supports "third spaces" and valued community gathering sites**

**Preserves culture and history for future generations**

## WHAT IS ADAPTIVE REUSE?

It means taking an old building and converting if for a different - often modern - purpose instead of leaving it vacant or demolishing it to build something new.
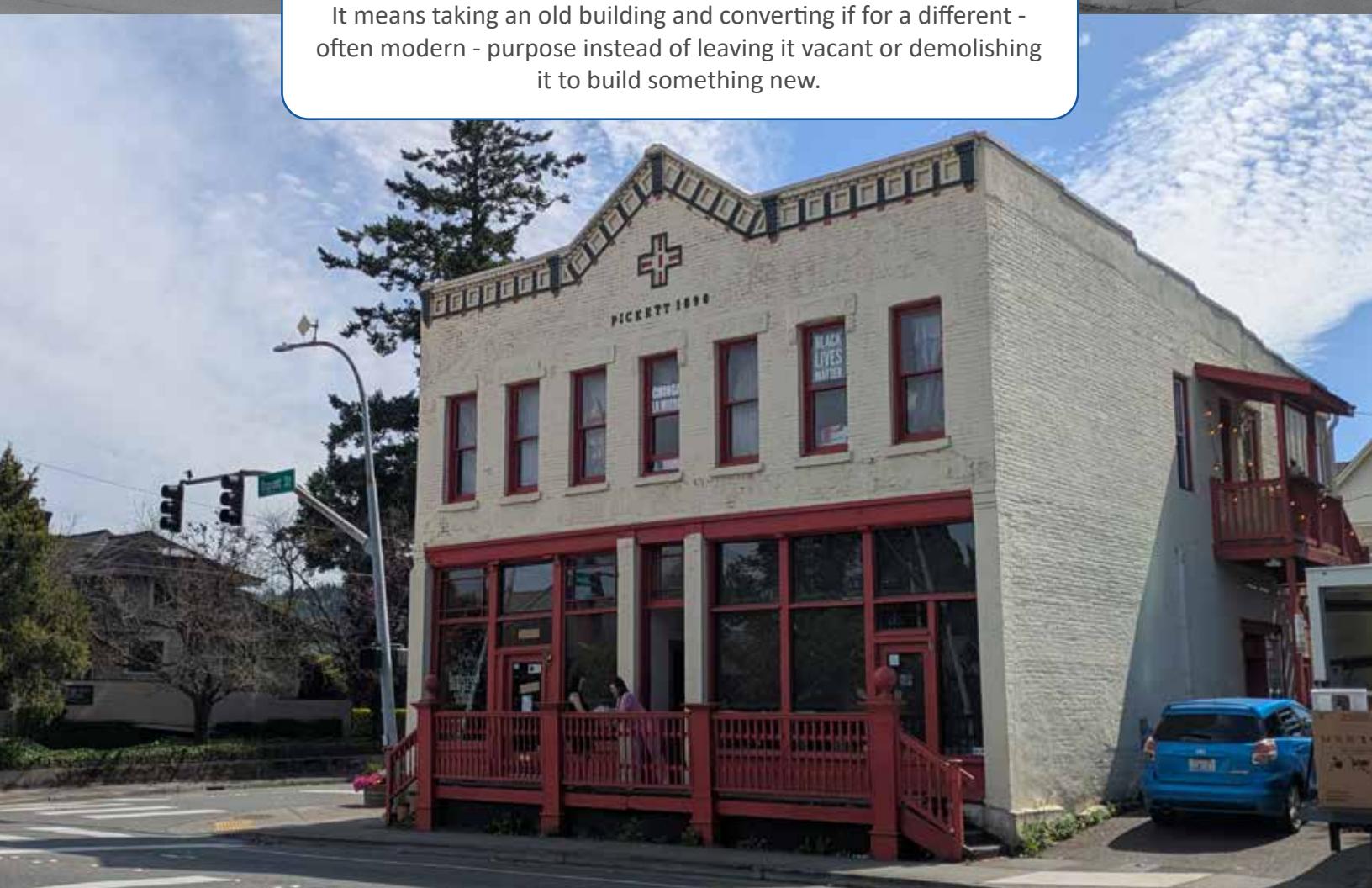
# FACILITIES AND SERVICES

## PROVIDING PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

## A NETWORK OF FACILITIES AND STAFF PROVIDE IMPORTANT SERVICES TO THE COMMUNITY.

The City of Bellingham, other public agencies and private organizations each play an important role. Together, they provide urban utilities, streets, parks, public safety, educational opportunities and more. Careful coordination ensures needed buildings, infrastructure and staffing are provided as the city grows and changes.

# FACILITIES AND SERVICES

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO FACILITIES AND SERVICES, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

### THIS CHAPTER'S SEVEN GOALS

The first three goals apply to all facilities and services, including the topics specified at right as well as transportation and parks facilities. Each of the remaining four goals represents a particular type of facility or service, with unique policies applicable to that type. The City of Bellingham is directly responsible only for the first two types, while they play an important role in collaborating with other agencies to ensure the final two types are provided.

### NETWORK PLANNING

Ensuring that a reliable network of facilities and services is provided.

### SUSTAINABLE FUNDING STRATEGY

Proactively planning for facilities and services that can be sustained over time, balancing physical and staffing costs with anticipated revenues and systems.

### EQUITABLE SITING AND MAINTENANCE

Intentionally planning systems to foster equitable system improvements that minimize adverse impacts on others.

Transportation

This chapter, and these goals in particular, apply to all facilities and services, including those addressed in the Transportation and Parks and Recreation chapters.

Parks & Recreation

Community
Wellbeing

The facilities described in this chapter provide the public with clean water access, literacy, public safety, and more. Each of these benefits the community's wellbeing. While this Facilities and Services chapter focuses on ensuring the buildings, staff and other infrastructure are scaled as the city grows, the Community Wellbeing chapter guides the programming and benefits provided by these services.

*For example, this chapter provides a framework to ensure library buildings and staff are available to serve the whole city, but the Community Wellbeing chapter provides guidance on how library programs may be designed to support the wellbeing of the community.*

## CITY BUILDINGS

Buildings like City Hall, a fire station, or Mount Baker Theater

Equipment like City fleet/vehicles

## CITY UTILITIES

Water, stormwater, sewer infrastructure

## PRIVATE UTILITIES

Solid Waste Service (SSC)

Electricity (PSE)

Gas (Cascade Natural Gas)

Telecommunications (internet/phone)

Pipelines

## OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES

Local School Districts (Bellingham, Meridian and Ferndale)

Other Public Schools (WWU, BTC, WCC)

Other Public Entities (Whatcom Co., State of WA, etc.)

Transit Authority (WTA)

## FACILITIES PROVIDE NEEDED SERVICES

**Transportation and Utilities**

**Public Safety (Fire, Police, EMS)**

**Parks and Trails (spaces & programs)**

**Museum and Library (services & programs)**

**Education**

**Other Community Services (e.g. health)**

# FACILITIES AND SERVICES

## NETWORK PLANNING

**Goal FS-A | 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.**

### POLICIES

FS-1. Support the expansion, maintenance, and upgrading of adequate capital facilities and services to meet the primary service needs of the city as its population grows, recognizing regional needs, resources, and goals.

FS-2. Explore ways to utilize innovative technology while continuing to provide reliable and cost-effective utilities and services to community members.

FS-3. Regularly update system plans for capital facilities, utilities, and fire and enforcement services, identifying measurable objectives to maintain or improve services provided as infrastructure ages and the city grows.

FS-4. Coordinate and cooperate with Whatcom County, county fire and law enforcement agencies, the Port of Bellingham, and university police in the planning for fire protection, emergency services, and law enforcement in Bellingham and its unincorporated Urban Growth Area (UGA).

FS-5. Continue to coordinate with local jurisdictions in the Whatcom Unified Emergency Management partnership to prepare and respond to disaster events, including the maintenance of a reliable communication network with county agencies.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **LU-3 | Clustering Uses**

>> **T-13-24 | Mode Shift**

>> **CW-9 | Changing Needs of Residents**

>> **CW-19-23 | Arts & Culture**

## WHAT ARE CAPITAL FACILITIES?

Capital Facilities are buildings and significant infrastructure that provide for the community needs. These often represent the physical assets needed to provide a particular service. These may include individual assets, like a library or water reservoir, or systems, like streets and utilities.

# FACILITIES AND SERVICES

## SUSTAINABLE FUNDING STRATEGY

**Goal FS-B | Proactively plan and implement a sustainable funding strategy for the anticipated capital facilities and service network needs.**

### POLICIES

FS-6. Ensure a sustainable approach to funding, planning, installing, and maintaining facilities and services, balancing proactive public investment with improvements and fees linked to private development.

FS-7. Regularly convene an interdepartmental team to evaluate recent and projected development trends across the city, identify impacts on City services, and determine changed staffing, service, or infrastructure needs.

FS-8. Implement a concurrency management system that assures that adequate public facilities and services are available at the time a development project is ready for occupancy without decreasing current service levels below locally established standards.

FS-9. Require new development to install or pay its proportional share of the cost of new or improved public facilities and services that serve the subject development, including streets, parks and trails, public utilities, public schools, and permit processing.

FS-10. Implement an administrative process that allows for departures from required infrastructure improvements in cases where no public purpose would be served by strict compliance with the required standard.

FS-11. Assess water utility fees at a rate adequate to fund the functioning of the water utility system.

FS-12. To prioritize the financing of public facilities within projected funding capacities, adopt a six-year CIP and update the plan as part of the City's regular budgeting cycle.

FS-13. To limit unplanned development and sprawl prior to annexation and its coordinated urban integration, prohibit new water and sewer utility extensions into the city's Urban Growth Area (UGA) prior to annexation, unless approved by the City Council.

FS-14. As the city grows or additional land is annexed, proactively define additional or expanded funding and financing mechanisms, such as utility rates, bonds, impact fees, local improvement districts, and grants, for funding the increased need for public facilities and services.

FS-15. Periodically update the City's annexation plan and Interlocal Agreements with Whatcom County and the existing utility and fire service districts to assure that Bellingham's urban growth areas are planned to receive urban levels of infrastructure and services upon annexation.

FS-16. Coordinate with Whatcom County to ensure that development within Bellingham's UGA is consistent with major existing and planned transportation, utility, and open spaces or trails.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> LU-11-16 | Urban Growth Area**

**>> H-2 | Housing Cost Impacts**

**>> H-39 | Reducing Infill Ownership Costs**

**>> CW-18 | Library & Museum Support**

## LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS)

**It is a metric used to identify the level at which the community is served. Standards for LOS are used to indicate minimum benchmarks of acceptable levels of service. These may be calculated as a total number, on a per resident basis, or through other calculations.**

**Adopted LOS Standards**

Define what constitutes an adequate and acceptable condition at which a particular system performs, such as:

Public safety response times

Water service pressure

Library square footage per capita

Multimodal person trips (by vehicle, bicycle, or other means) available

Acres of parks and open space per person, walking distance to parks and trails

**Service Quality**

Used to represent the public experience or impact from these services, such as:

Maintenance service, like park landscaping or street maintenance

Customer service, like the library help desk or planning permit counter

Processing services, like construction permit review or utility payment processing

Programs provided at parks, libraries, the museum, City-sponsored events, and more

Any other way, visible or behind-the-scenes, that City staff provide services to the community

**The City also often measures LOS through interaction with the public, measuring public satisfaction with services and public participation in programs.**

# FACILITIES AND SERVICES

## EQUITABLE SITING AND MAINTENANCE

**Goal FS-C | Foster equitable, efficient, sustainable, and considerate siting and maintenance of public and private facilities and infrastructure.**

### POLICIES

FS-17.   Utilize processes to site new facilities that require consistency with the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan; incorporate regional coordination; emphasize public involvement; identify and minimize adverse impacts; and promote the equitable location of these facilities throughout the city, county and state.

FS-18.   Support public and private investment in improved infrastructure in existing neighborhoods, particularly in areas with underinvested infrastructure.

FS-19.   Site, design  construct, and maintain capital facilities to avoid or minimize environmental impacts to the extent feasible.

FS-20.   Weigh community needs and the potential adverse impacts when siting public and private facilities, particularly in residential zones. Minimize adverse impacts, particularly for telecommunication technologies, through placement and design requirements and encouraging co-location of facilities.

FS-21.   Provide setbacks and visual buffers to mitigate impacts of above-ground facilities. Include noise mitigation in circumstances which involve significant impacts on nearby uses.

FS-22.   Require undergrounding of distribution utility lines where possible whenever new streets or significant portions of streets are constructed or when new utilities are added to existing streets.

FS-23.   Promote joint use of utility corridors by private and public utilities whenever possible to minimize adverse and environmental impacts and use land efficiently.

FS-24.   Provide timely and effective notice to interested utilities about road construction, maintenance and upgrades to facilitate coordination of public and private utility trenching activities and reduce disruption in the street rights-of-way.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-39 | Public Designation

>> CD-46 | Historic Features

>> C-12 | Drought Resilience Strategy

>> EV-18 | City Department Coordination

>> CW-24-31 | Equity & Inclusion

>> CW-32-39 | Community Involvement

>> CW-40-46 | Tribal Relationships & Engagement

# CITY BUILDINGS

**Goal FS-D | Develop, maintain, and plan for the future needs of the City's buildings and equipment.**

## POLICIES

FS-25.   Provide, maintain, and upgrade City buildings and equipment in a manner which meets primary service needs and protects public and worker health.

FS-26.   Develop and implement a proactive plan to prioritize maintenance and anticipate improvement needs for existing City buildings, maximizing the reasonable lifespan of public investments. Identify and utilize efficiencies in implementing multiple improvements simultaneously.

FS-27.   Maintain, retrofit, site, and build Bellingham's public buildings to serve as models for the community. Prioritize sustainable, environmentally sensitive, and accessible design and operation while meeting diverse needs; providing multimodal access; and using best practices, innovative techniques, and high-quality materials.

FS-28.   Encourage the efficient use of energy, water, and materials, including adaptive reuse, in public buildings to conserve natural and consumable resources.

FS-29.   Identify and plan for public services and associated facility needs as the city grows, particularly in the northern area of the city and in other areas of significant growth.

FS-30.   Continue to focus a consolidated set of City services and administration in the City Center, providing a central public face to the community and  contributing to economic development in the area.

FS-31.   Encourage the use of appropriate public buildings as essential gathering places for the community, including transforming into emergency resources during emergencies or disasters.

FS-32.   Encourage coordination between City departments, other public agencies, and public-serving organizations to efficiently utilize and share facilities and resources for the public benefit.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> H-23 | Incorporating Affordable Housing**

**>> H-24 | Land Opportunities**

**>> C-2 | Provide Safe Environments**

# FACILITIES AND SERVICES

## CITY UTILITIES

**Goal FS-E | Plan for and implement a network of reliable City utilities to support the community's growing and shifting needs.**

### POLICIES

FS-33.   Sustainably manage the city's water supply and protect the water quality and quantity within the Lake Whatcom Watershed to ensure the distribution of clean, safe drinking water.

FS-34.   Ensure that City water reservoirs have adequate storage to meet the fire protection needs of the areas they service.

FS-35.   When upgrading or extending water lines, sanitary sewer lines, or stormwater system infrastructure, consider opportunities for simultaneously upgrading or extending the other City utilities to efficiently meet City standards.

FS-36.   Support efficient and reliable data transmission for City services and infrastructure, such as fire service or traffic lights, through maintenance of the City's fiber network.

FS-37.   Reduce demand on local and regional utility systems by supporting water conservation efforts and promoting efficient use of existing resources.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-8 | Watershed Development

>> C-24 | Water Supply Impacts

>> EV-16 | Sustainable Land Practices

>> ED-28 | Infrastructure Investment

## PRIVATE UTILITIES

**Goal FS-F | Support a planned network of private utilities, systems, and other infrastructure that provide for community needs.**

### POLICIES

FS-38.   Coordinate with private utility companies in planning service ahead of potential development shifts, such as for areas anticipating significant zoning changes or annexation.

FS-39.   Collaborate with community organizations and private utility providers to promote  waste reduction and recycling efforts  and reduce demand for new energy generation or additional infrastructure.

FS-40.   Support new telecommunications technologies and periodically review and update regulations to provide reliable and modern service to Bellingham customers.

FS-41.   Utilize pipeline safety requirements to lessen the risk of third party damage to pipelines and help reduce adverse impacts to the public in the event of a pipeline failure.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> C-26 | Sustainable Waste Systems

>> C-39-41 | Renewable Energy

>> ED-35 | Public-private Partnerships to Finance/Manage Opportunities

# OTHER PUBLIC FACILITIES

**Goal FS-G | Coordinate with and support the provision of other public facilities and infrastructure.**

## POLICIES

FS-42.    Coordinate with State and County agencies, the transit authority, the housing authority, local school districts, and public higher education facilities to communicate anticipated growth and collaborate on planning how services and facilities may serve that growth over time.

FS-43.    Regularly monitor demographic, land supply, and permit activity changes (particularly anticipated distribution of youth) on an annual basis and communicate these to the school districts, allowing them to anticipate future needs and acquire land for future facilities.

FS-44.    Retain neighborhood schools in developed areas and work with the school districts to locate new schools consistent with the City's commitment to encourage infill development, walkability and compact growth.

FS-45.    Work with the school districts that serve Bellingham and its UGA to utilize school impact fees to help offset the costs of new capacity necessary to serve the new development and allow the City and County to collect those fees on their behalf.

FS-46.    Continue to work to provide consistency between the school districts' and institutions' facilities plans and the City's Comprehensive Plan.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **ED-14 | Support Major Employers**

# TRANSPORTATION

## PROMOTING SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIONS

## FOSTERING A SAFE, CONNECTED AND SUSTAINABLE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION NETWORK IS ESSENTIAL TO BELLINGHAM'S GROWTH.

This chapter includes goals and policies to ensure that people of all ages and abilities can move around Bellingham by walking, rolling, biking or taking transit. By prioritizing a multimodal transportation system that reduces dependency on single occupancy vehicles, we can achieve climate goals and promote public health.

# TRANSPORTATION

**THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO TRANSPORTATION, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.**

## SAFETY AND RELIABILITY

**Goal T-A | Provide a transportation system that prioritizes safety, comfort and reliability for all ages and abilities.**

### POLICIES

T-1.   Coordinate with Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and other transportation agencies to implement a comprehensive Safe Systems Approach that strives to eliminate serious injuries and fatalities.

T-2.   Reduce vehicle speeds through traffic calming measures and enforcement, especially in school zones.

T-3.   Proactively fund ongoing maintenance, preservation, and repair to sustain the substantial investments that the City has made to the transportation network.

T-4.   Implement a consistent and intuitive bicycle and pedestrian wayfinding system with clear signage that helps users navigate key routes, destinations, and trail connections.

T-5.   Develop pedestrian and bicycle facilities that minimize interactions with vehicular traffic, ensuring safe and comfortable routes for users of all ages and abilities.

T-6.   Incorporate the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicle drivers into Bellingham's multimodal street standards with a focus on maximizing safety and comfort.

T-7.   Continue to collaborate with WSDOT to ensure effectiveness, connectivity, and safety of I-5 and State Highways through Bellingham.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **CD-12 | Complete Street Design**

## BELLINGHAM'S SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH

The Safe Systems Approach includes overlapping and integrated elements that provide layers of safety. It focuses on both human mistakes and human vulnerability, with multiple protections in place.
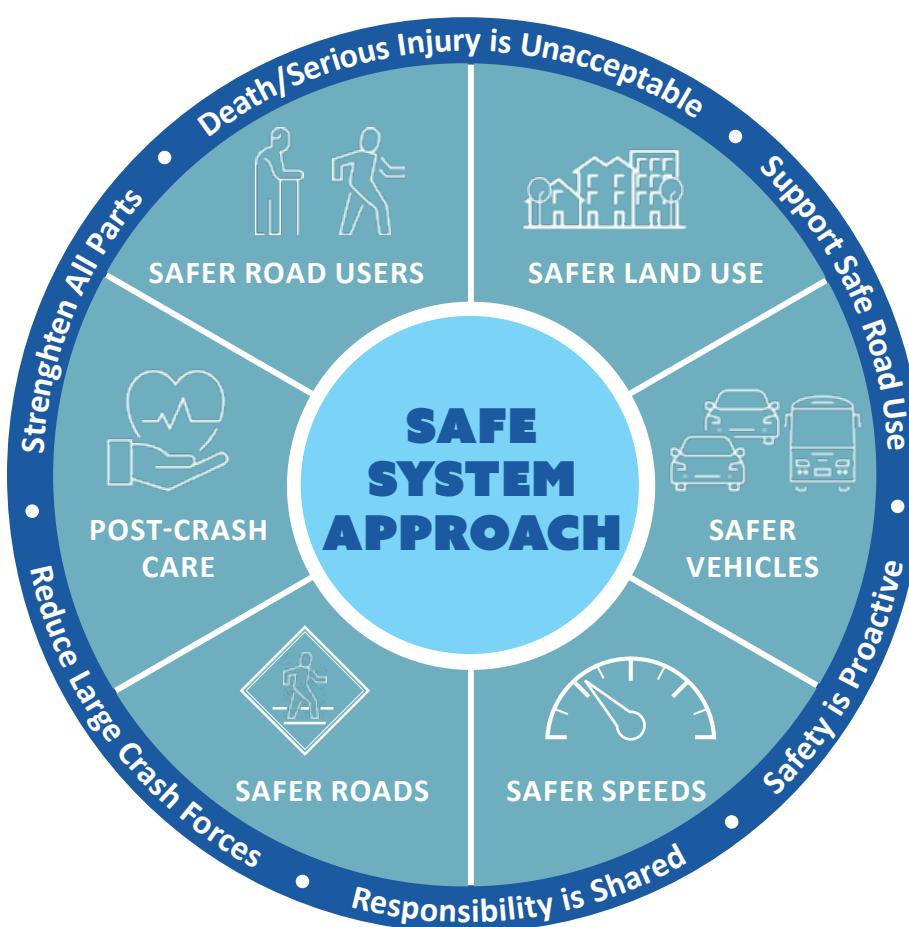
### CITY DOCUMENTS ADOPTED HEREIN

These references are adopted as part of the Bellingham Plan, requiring the same process for updates as the plan itself.

**>> MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**
Identifying transportation inventory, funding sources, and major planned projects and improvements

**>> PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN**
Identifying future projects to create a more walkable community

**>> BICYCLE MASTER PLAN**
Identifying future projects to create a more bikeable community

**>> ADA TRANSITION PLAN**
Defining planned projects to provide ADA improvements to City buildings

### REFERENCES

These references are not adopted as part of this plan and may be updated periodically.

**>> TRANSPORTATION REPORTS ON ANNUAL MOBILITY (TRAM)**

**>> SIX-YEAR TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**

# TRANSPORTATION

## BELLINGHAM'S TRANSPORTATION MODAL HIERARCHY

All mobility needs for all modes must be carefully considered, balanced and implemented so that the citywide multimodal transportation system continues to work for everyone. To maximize safety and efficiency, some streets will prioritize cyclists through bike lanes and other infrastructure improvements, and other streets will prioritize transit in order to increase frequency and reliability.



| PEDESTRIAN & BICYCLE CORRIDOR | PUBLIC TRANSIT CORRIDOR |
| --- | --- |

**HIGHER PRIORITY**

| Pedestrian | Pedestrian |
| Bicycles | Public Transit |
| Public Transit | Bicycles |
| Commercial Vehicles/Trucks | Commercial Vehicles/Trucks |
| High Occupancy Vehicles | High Occupancy Vehicles |
| Single Occupancy Vehicles | Single Occupancy Vehicles |

**LOWER PRIORITY**
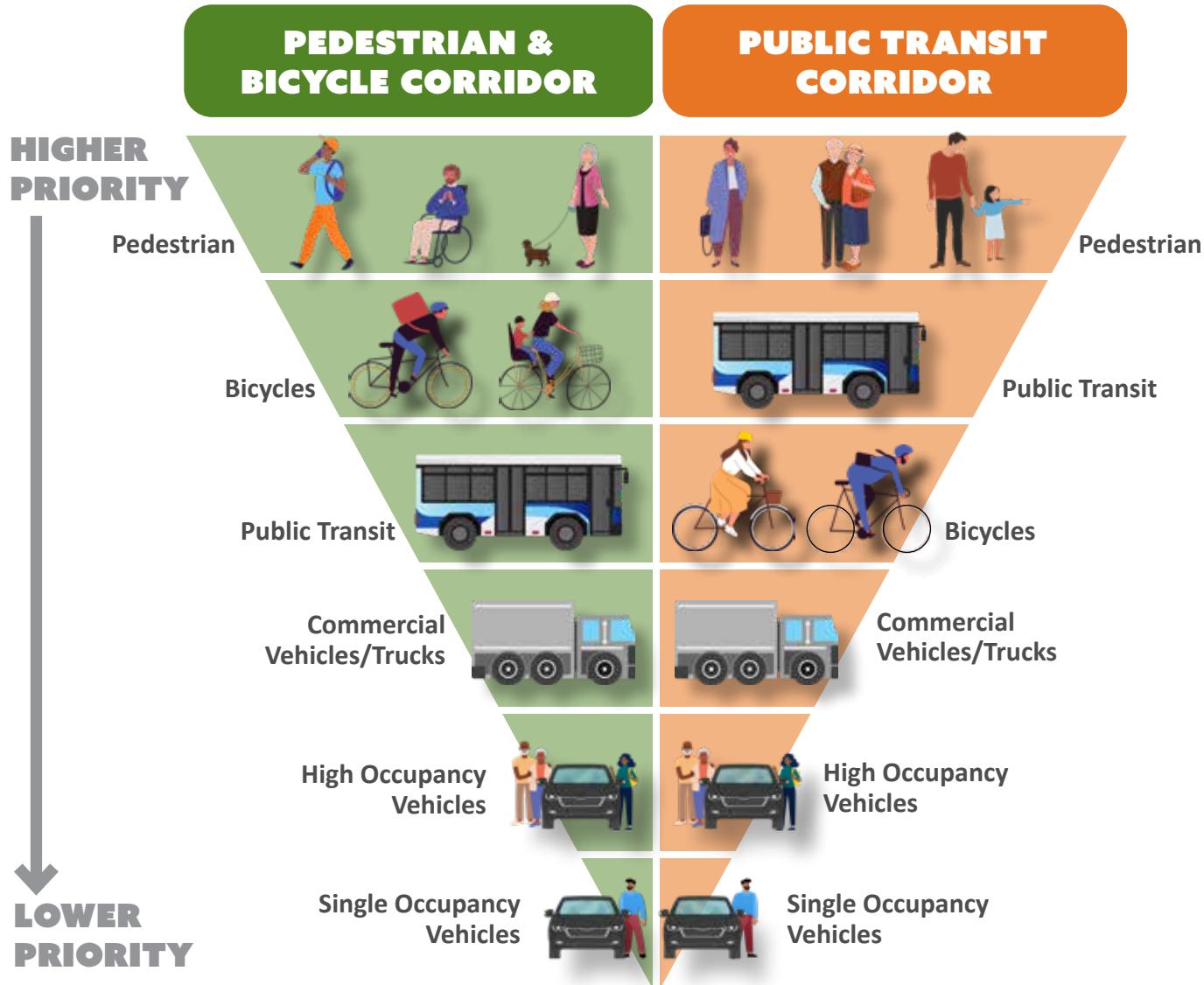
# TRANSIT

**Goal T-B | Commit to transit as a key element of Bellingham's overall growth strategy.**

## POLICIES

T-8.   Continue to collaborate with Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to strategically employ transit as a key high occupancy mode of transportation, supporting their continued investment in the community.

T-9.   Work closely with WTA to ensure that City and WTA policies are consistent, and prioritize transportation improvements that support and increase transit ridership and access by reducing barriers throughout the community.

T-10.  Work with WTA to define the appropriate balance between route coverage and frequency, while accounting for priority transit populations and needs.

T-11.  Collaborate with regional and local transit agencies to enhance reliable and efficient transit connections that enable seamless and convenient movement into and out of the city.

T-12.  Regularly collaborate with WTA to evaluate current and future performance metrics to identify and address system inefficiencies.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-25-30 | Transit Corridors

>> LU-37 | Residential TOD Designation

# TRANSPORTATION

## MODE SHIFT

**Goal T-C | Provide a** multimodal transportation **network that promotes a community-wide mode-shift from single occupancy vehicles to more active transportation options such as walking, biking and transit.**

### POLICIES

T-13. Regularly monitor and evaluate progress toward the 2045 Mode Shift Goals to inform programs, policies and projects.

T-14. Incorporate sidewalks, crosswalks, and bikeways identified in the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans into all transportation capital improvements on public streets, wherever feasible.

T-15. Develop and implement street standards and improvement requirements, such as sidewalks and bikeways, that are proportional to development impacts. Require new developments to provide for street improvements meeting that standard.

T-16. Maintain a simplified multimodal concurrency system that ensures adequate transportation capacity, supports planned growth, upholds level of service standards, and includes annual reporting on system performance.

T-17. Assess all new development for transportation impact fees to recover a proportional share of the costs of constructing planned transportation system improvements.

T-18. Develop innovative new methodology to measure, forecast, and mitigate negative impacts that new vehicle traffic may have on pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit bus service when Transportation Impact Analyses are completed for new development.

T-19. Improve the efficiency and usability of the transportation network by employing Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to incentivize alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle trips.

T-20. Serve as a leader in TDM by making walking, rolling, biking or taking transit a feasible and enjoyable commuting option for City employees.

T-21. Facilitate a community wide mode shift by periodically evaluating vehicle and bicycle parking needs and amending private development requirements and public infrastructure design as needed.

T-22. Utilize Census and other available data to track transportation mode to work and trip patterns to inform future decisions.

T-23. Reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips through continued collaboration with Whatcom Council Of Governments (WCOG) to implement commute trip reduction initiatives.

T-24. Evaluate the potential of future shared mobility services and develop a policy framework as appropriate.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-17 | Urban Village Mix

>> LU-18 | Compact Urban Villages

>> CD-28 | Bike & Car Parking

>> FS-1-5 | Network Planning

>> FS-6-16 | Sustainable Funding Strategy

>> C-35-38 | Transportation Emissions Mitigation

## WHAT IS MULTIMODAL CONCURRENCY?

Multimodal concurrency is a framework used to assess Bellingham's transportation network to determine if it can support the city's anticipated growth.

# TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT (TDM)

**Transportation Demand Management (TDM) refers to the methods used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a transportation system by reducing travel demand generated by users, rather than physical expansion to increase system supply. TDM leads to improved mobility, reduced congestion and lower carbon emissions.**

Work with Whatcom Transportation Authority to enhance the Primary Transit Network and encourage transit-oriented development along high-frequency routes and transit-supportive development throughout Bellingham.

Educate and encourage the public to walk and bike for transportation.

Continue to utilize and implement urban design standards that encourage and promote development that is transit supportive, pedestrian oriented and bicycle friendly.

Encourage compact land use patterns that reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled.

Provide safe, convenient, secure and a sufficient amount of public bicycle parking to encourage more bike trips.

Support and collaborate with the Whatcom Council of Governments to implement the Commute Trip Reduction program for large employers, while also promoting the Whatcom Smart Trips program to encourage walking, biking and transit use.

Support the expansion of car-sharing and ride-sharing services to provide convenient alternatives to car ownership and reduce single-occupancy vehicle trips.

Review vehicle parking standards and curb management policies to minimize impacts on urban form, pedestrian mobility and the natural environment.

Report annual progress toward transportation mode shift goals by increasing the share of work trips made by walking, biking and transit while reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips.

## WHAT IS TOD?

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a specific type of development built around transit stops or stations, typically within a quarter to half-mile radius, to maximize ridership and encourage compact development.

## WHAT IS TSD?

Transit-Supportive Development (TSD) is a broader approach that encourages transit use throughout a city or corridor, not just around transit stations. It includes zoning policies, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure and reduced parking requirements to make transit more accessible.

# TRANSPORTATION

## MULTIMODAL CONNECTIONS

**Goal T-D |** Ensure a multimodal transportation network that efficiently connects people to opportunity, social networks, recreation and services.

### POLICIES

T-25. Connect missing links within the citywide multimodal transportation network for all modes of transportation, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, freight trucks and private automobiles.

T-26. Prioritize investments that maximize network efficiency across all modes of transportation.

T-27. Collaborate with WCOG, Whatcom County, nearby cities, and WSDOT to implement complete streets on State Routes, ensuring a unified multimodal standard.

T-28. Provide mobility choices and opportunities for people of all ages and abilities.

T-29. Develop and maintain select off-street multiuse paths and trails as accessible, safe and low stress transportation routes for cyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

T-30. Ensure clear, accessible transitions between streets and trails to provide safe and intuitive connections for all users.

T-31. Prioritize connections in alignment with the City's growth strategy, while considering environmental impacts.

## CONNECTED TRANSPORTATION NETWORKS

**A well-connected, multimodal network reduces travel distances, increases route options, and can encourage walking and biking. There are fewer dead-ends and physical barriers, making it easier and more efficient to get around.**



CONNECTED NETWORK

DISCONNECTED NETWORK
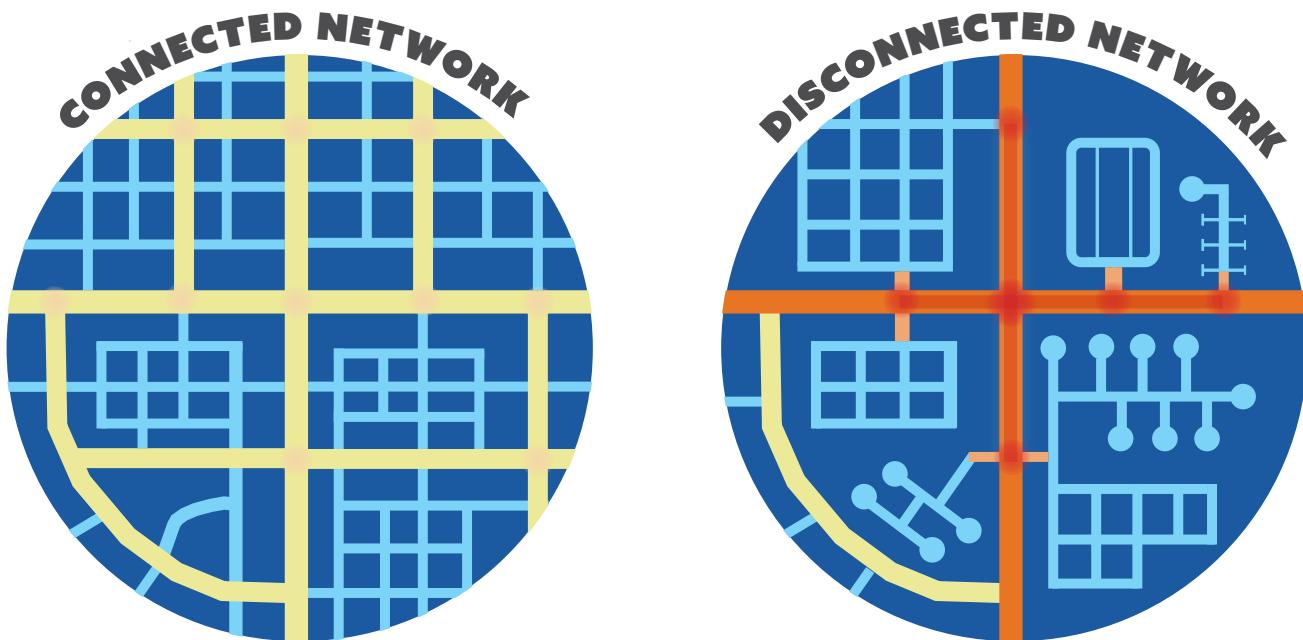
## A more connected network is better for:

**Resiliency** – avoids reliance on a single road.

**Safety** - promotes quicker emergency response times and lively bike and pedestrian routes.

**Efficiency and Maintenance** – no particular street carries all the traffic and there are more direct routes with fewer barriers for all modes of transportation.

# TRANSPORTATION

## BELLINGHAM'S ARTERIAL ROUTES

Arterial streets connect different parts of Bellingham and facilitate travel between neighborhoods, commercial centers and other popular destinations. Bellingham's arterial street network is classified into Principal, Secondary and Collector arterials.



**Legend:**
- City Boundary
- Urban Growth Area
- Urban Growth Area Reserve
- Principal Route
- Secondary Route
- Collector Route
- Interstate 5
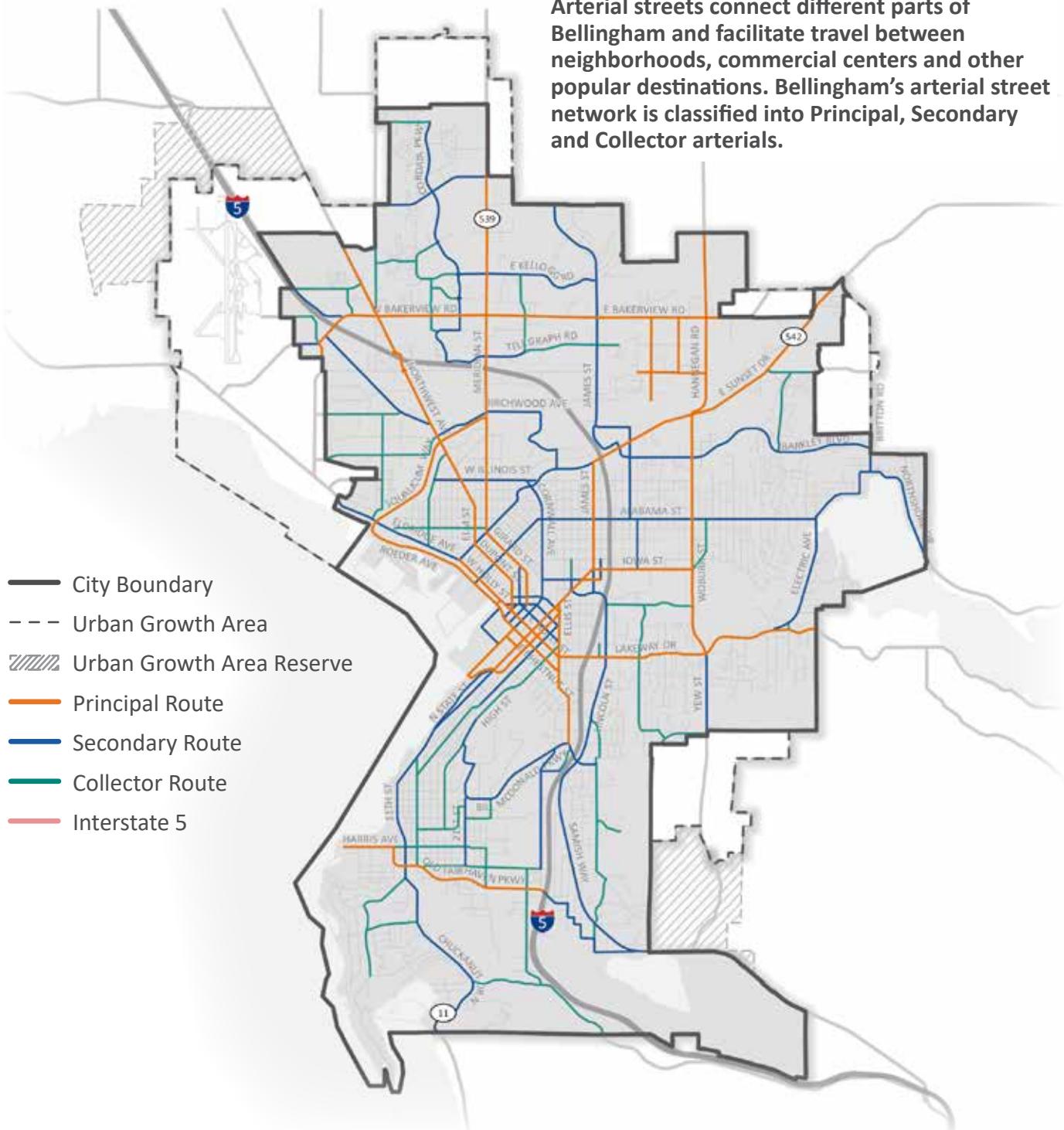
# EQUITABLE ACCESS

**Goal T-E | Ensure that the needs of diverse and <u>vulnerable transportation users</u> are addressed in all transportation projects and that facilities are accessible for all users.**

## POLICIES

T-32. Through a balanced prioritization process, invest in transportation infrastructure citywide, ensuring equitable investment across all modes of transportation.

T-33. Provide accessible multimodal transportation facilities for all abilities, and consider the experience and unique needs across ages, genders, races, ethnicities and incomes.

T-34. Intentionally manage accessibility, electric vehicle charging, delivery, and pick-up/drop-off in the parking supply on public and private properties.

T-35. Design multimodal transportation improvements with the safety and mobility needs of all user groups considered and with priority emphasis placed on the most vulnerable transportation user groups, as illustrated in Bellingham's Transportation Modal Hierarchy.

T-36. When existing transportation facilities are temporarily disrupted due to construction or other activities, safe, clearly marked, accessible, and protected detour routes should be provided for vulnerable transportation users.

T-37. Collaborate closely with school districts to develop and implement strategies that prioritize the construction of sidewalks and bikeways supporting <u>Safe Routes to School</u>, ensuring safe and direct access for students and families.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> H-14 | Transportation Related Housing Costs**

**>> FS-17-24 | Equitable Siting & Maintenance**

**>> CW-24-31 | Equity & Inclusion**

**>> CW-32-39 | Community Involvement**

# PARKS AND RECREATION

## ACCESS TO RECREATION, NATURE AND PLAY
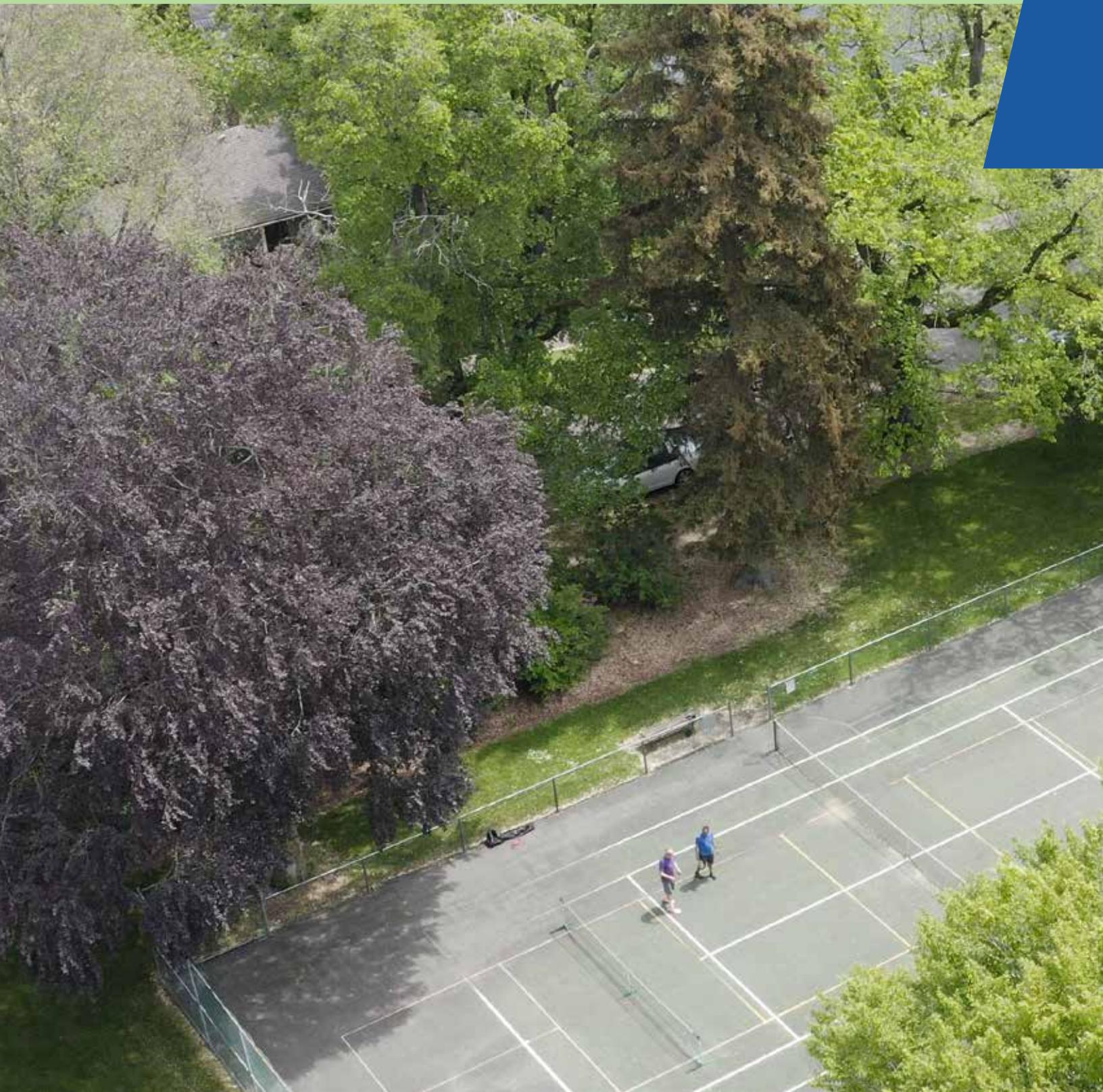
## PARKS AND RECREATION ARE ESSENTIAL TO BELLINGHAM'S QUALITY OF LIFE AND A DEFINING COMMUNITY FEATURE.

The extensive and connected park and trail system provides a sense of place, protects the environment and provides for a healthy, active and resilient community. This chapter guides the development of parks and recreational amenities, property acquisitions, maintenance and stewardship, enrichment programs and facility improvements. It emphasizes equitable access, inclusive services, new park forms and sustainable maintenance as the city urbanizes and grows.
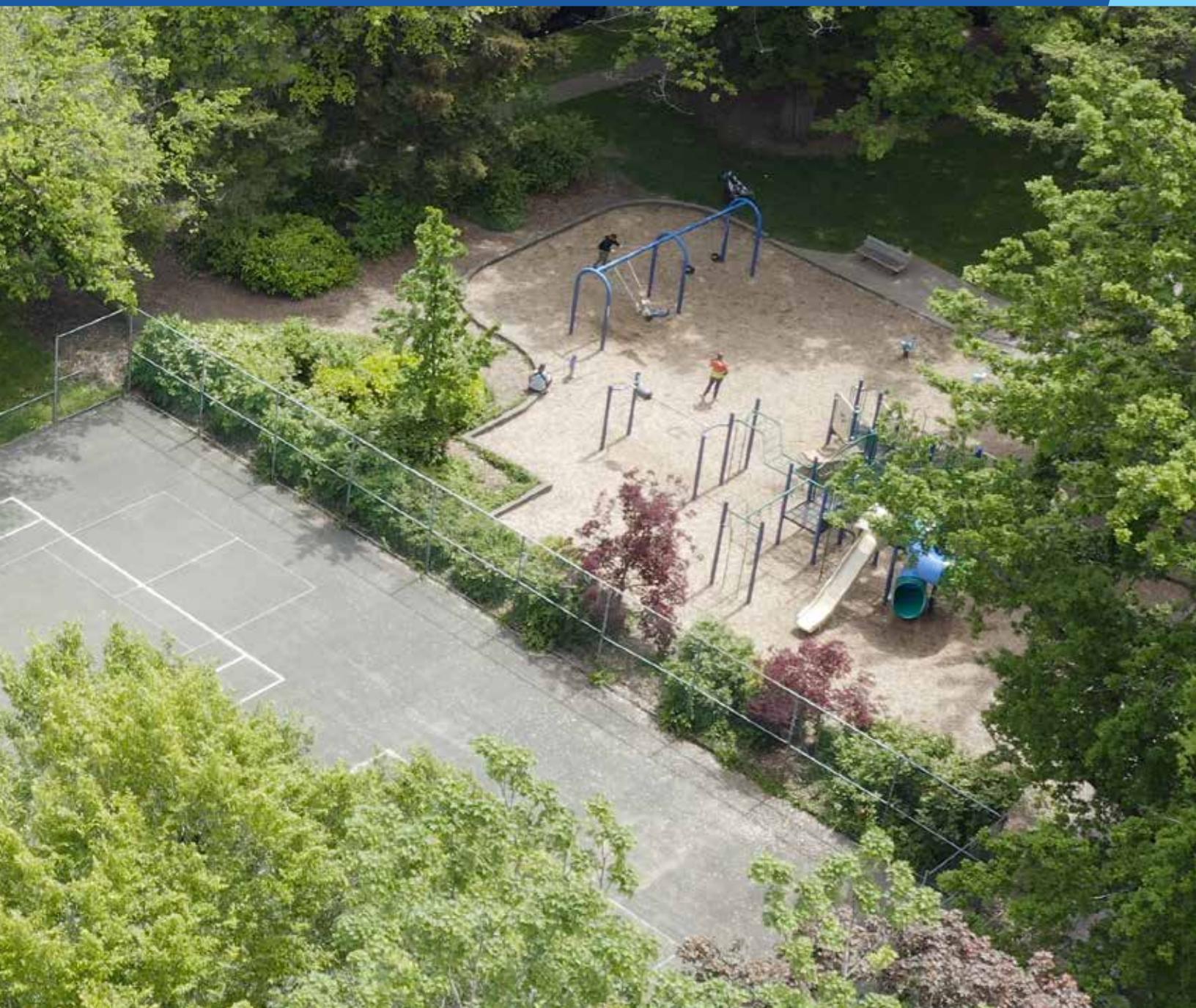
# PARKS AND RECREATION

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO PARKS AND RECREATION, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

### PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE PLAN PRINCIPLES

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan guides the development of Bellingham's park system for the next 20 years. The PROS Plan implements the goals and policies spelled out in the Bellingham Plan. This plan is driven by the community principles described below.

| PROS PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLE | CORRESPONDING COMPREHENSIVE GOAL |
|---|---|
| **EQUITY** | **EQUITABLE FACILITIES AND SERVICES**<br>Goal PR-A \| Provide high-quality park facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and distributed equitably across Bellingham. |
| **DESIGN** | **WELL-DESIGNED ENVIRONMENTS**<br>Goal PR-B \| Create environments to support wellness and a sense of safety, connect people and nature and provide a sense of place. |
| **CONSERVATION** | **CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE**<br>Goal PR-C \|Conserve nature and enhance climate resilience within the park system. |
| **PLAY** | **RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**<br>Goal PR-D \| Develop innovative and diverse programs, services and strategies for improving recreational opportunities. |
| **CONNECTION** | **INTERCONNECTED PARKS AND TRAILS**<br>Goal PR-E \| Utilize trails to interconnect the City's parks and open spaces. |
| **SYSTEM RESILIENCE** | **EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM**<br>Goal PR-F \|Operate and maintain parks, trails and facilities effectively and sustainably. |
| **PARTNERSHIPS** | **PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**<br>Goal PR-G \| Cultivate strong partnerships and community collaboration to enhance recreational opportunities. |

# RESOURCE LINKS

## CITY DOCUMENTS ADOPTED HEREIN
These references are adopted as part of the Bellingham Plan, requiring the same process for updates as the plan itself.

**>> PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE (PRO) PLAN**

## REFERENCES
These references are not adopted as part of this plan and may be updated periodically.

**>> GREENWAYS STRATEGIC PLAN**

# PARKS AND RECREATION

## PARKS DEPARTMENT STAFFING

The Parks and Recreation team is composed of four divisions, represented by relative staff size in the diagram, below. Operations and Maintenance is the largest division of the four, most often seen out in the community on a given day.
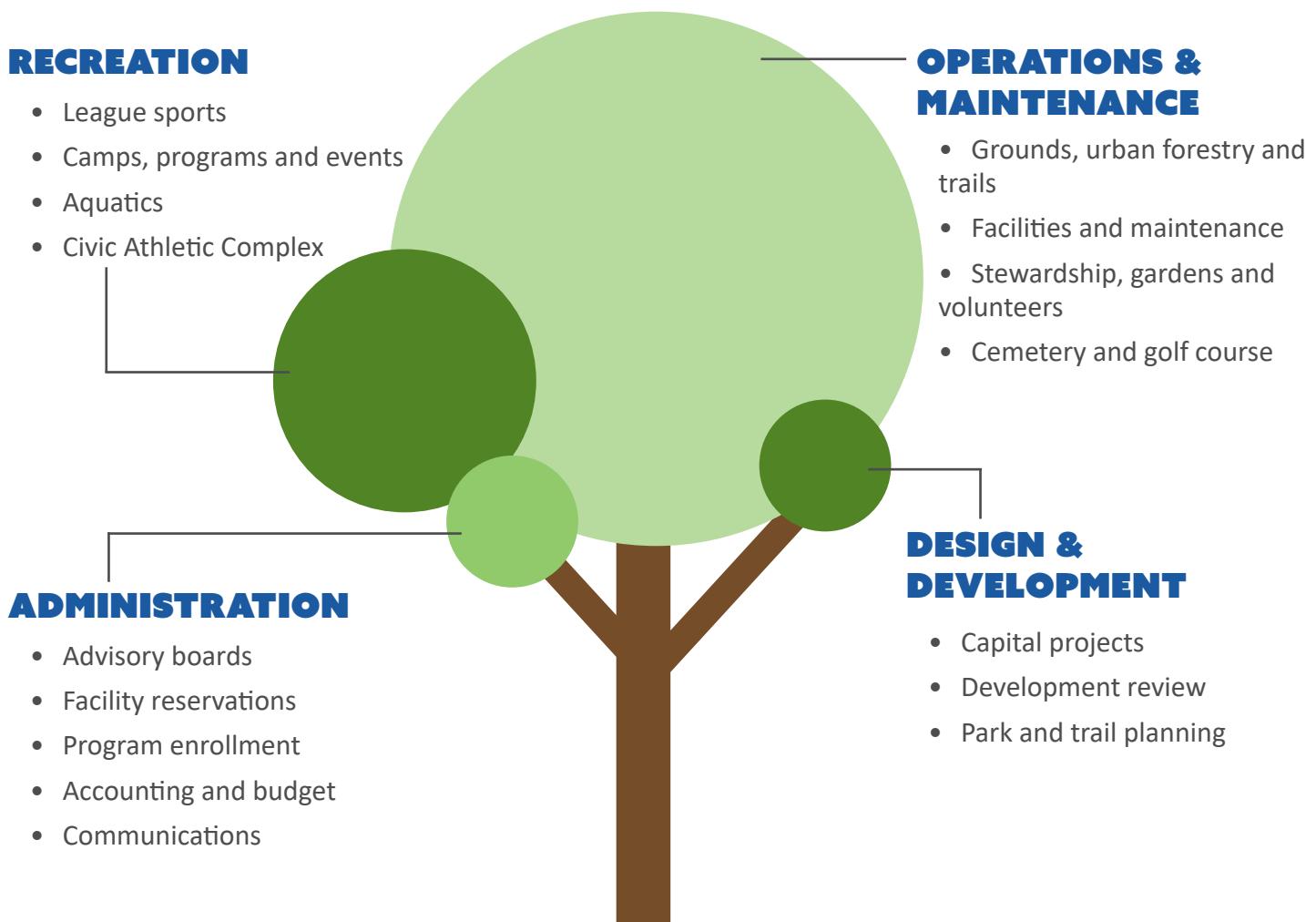
### RECREATION

- League sports
- Camps, programs and events
- Aquatics
- Civic Athletic Complex

### OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE

- Grounds, urban forestry and trails
- Facilities and maintenance
- Stewardship, gardens and volunteers
- Cemetery and golf course

### ADMINISTRATION

- Advisory boards
- Facility reservations
- Program enrollment
- Accounting and budget
- Communications

### DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

- Capital projects
- Development review
- Park and trail planning

## EQUITABLE FACILITIES AND SERVICES

**Goal PR-A | Provide high-quality park facilities and services that are accessible, inclusive and distributed equitably across Bellingham.**

### POLICIES

PR-1. Provide a system of parks, trails and open space so that all residents live within one-half mile safe route of a developed park and trail.

PR-2. Target property acquisitions that provide key trail linkages and enable infill parks in underserved areas.

PR-3. Target facility and program improvements that decrease barriers and expand park and recreation use by underserved communities.

PR-4. Provide recreational programs and cultural events that celebrate the diversity of the community.

PR-5. Prioritize new community gardens in underserved areas to improve food access, foster community and provide environmental benefits.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> H-47 | Open Space**

**>> CW-24-31 | Equity and Inclusion**

## WELL-DESIGNED ENVIRONMENTS

**Goal PR-B | Create environments to support wellness and a sense of safety, connect people and nature and provide a sense of place.**

### POLICIES

PR-6. Develop new park forms and provide recreational opportunities based on setting and level of use.

PR-7. Develop parks and trails to take advantage of views of water, islands, ridgelines and mountains.

PR-8. Design parks, open space and shorelines that respect and integrate natural systems and connect people to nature.

PR-9. Provide opportunities for education and interpretation of historic, environmental and cultural resources in the park system.

PR-10. Improve safety and extend hours of use with ground lighting in parks, trails and parking areas.

PR-11. Activate open spaces with trails, trailheads, loop trails and events.

PR-12. Incorporate art and whimsy into park facilities.

PR-13. Acquire and develop additional water access for the public.

PR-14. Design and develop facilities to be efficient, with low maintenance and operations costs.

PR-15. Design and prioritize system upgrades that respond to condition assessments, capital improvement plans, community vision and preferences.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> LU-39 | Public Designation**

**>> LU-49 | Public Space Activation**

**>> CD-31-39 | Natural Features and Open Space**

**>> EV-38 | Connection with Environment**

**>> CW-5 | Food Systems Assets**

**>> CW-11 | Flexible and Adaptive Gathering Spaces**

## WHAT IS OPEN SPACE?

It is land acquired for the protection of natural resources, landscapes and recreation. The purpose is to enhance the livability and character of a community by preserving as many of its natural amenities as possible, as well as providing wildlife habitat, public access to nature, and buffer functions in and between urbanized areas.

# PARKS AND RECREATION

## CONSERVATION AND RESILIENCE

**Goal PR-C | Conserve nature and enhance <u>climate resilience</u> within the park system.**

### POLICIES

PR-16.   Acquire environmental features that reflect Bellingham's unique natural character, including ridgelines, <u>critical areas</u>, forests and wildlife corridors.

PR-17.   Manage urban forests and street trees for human wellness and safety, to provide shade, improve wildlife habitat, <u>sequester greenhouse gases</u> and mitigate fire hazards.

PR-18.   Take action to improve facilities, parks and beaches to serve as areas of respite during extreme weather events.

PR-19.   Continue to incorporate the City's climate response objectives into park design and development projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

PR-20.   Acquire property within designated <u>open space</u> corridors between and within <u>urban growth areas</u> that provide recreation opportunities, protect habitat, species migration, critical areas, forest cover and buffer working lands.

PR-21.   Balance the demand for public access and interpretive education with protection of environmentally sensitive areas and historic sites.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-5 | Wildfire Considerations

>> EV-26 | Environmental Stewardship

>> EV-39 | Multiple Benefits of Trees

---

**GREENWAYS PROGRAM**

Since 1990, Bellingham voters have consistently supported property tax levies to fund the <u>Greenways Program</u>. Greenways Program levies sustain the Parks and Recreation Department by providing dedicated funding through voter-approved initiatives that are approved by the City Council. Guided by the Greenways Strategic Plan, this funding is essential to the legacy of acquisitions, development projects and ongoing stewardship and maintenance throughout the park system.

## PARKS, OPEN SPACE & TRAILS

**A robust, interconnected network of designated parks, open space and trails is distributed within city boundaries and throughout the Urban Growth Area. This network continues to grow and evolve over time.**



**Legend:**

—— City Boundary

- - - Urban Growth Area

▨ Urban Growth Area Reserve

■ Parks (39 parks, 1,750 acres)

■ Open Space (1,450 acres)

—— Trails (85 total miles)

*Galbraith Mt. Recreation and Conservation Easement (2,182 acres with 65 miles of trails)
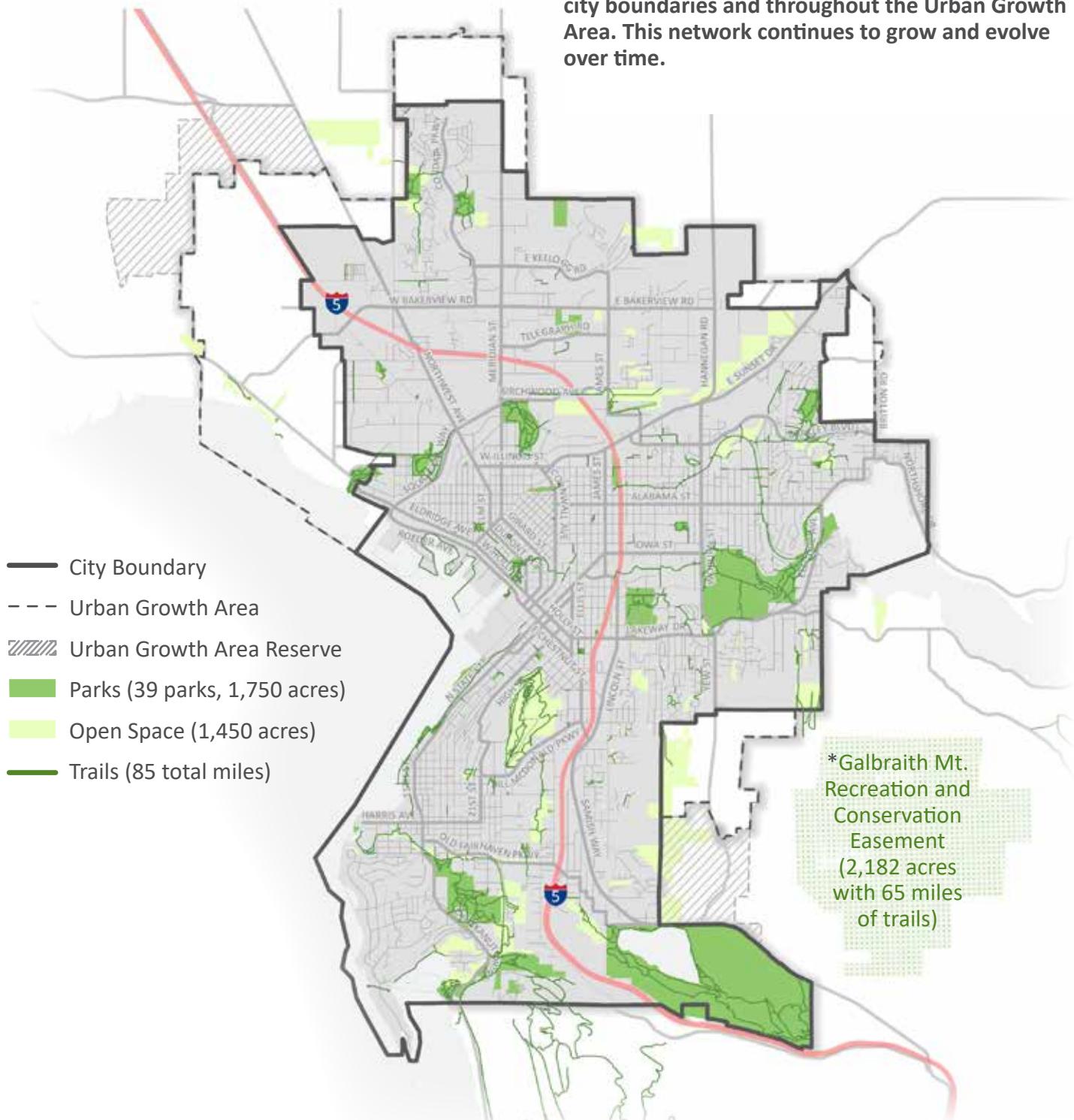
# PARKS AND RECREATION

## RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**Goal PR-D | Develop innovative and diverse programs, services and strategies for improving recreational opportunities.**

### POLICIES

PR-22. Develop programming and facilities that promote public health and wellness, encourage leisure, fun and games and strengthen community connections.

PR-23. Enhance safety with a presence in parks and trails through programming, recreation, education and enforcement.

PR-24. Evaluate opportunities to renovate existing facilities and develop multiuse facilities, including indoor recreation and community centers.

PR-25. Enhance aquatics and recreation opportunities at the Civic Athletic Complex.

PR-26. Expand reservable spaces such as enclosed meeting rooms and outdoor shelters suitable for a variety of event types to meet community needs.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> CW-8 | Activity Options

>> CW-23 | Cultural Awareness and Education

## INTERCONNECTED PARKS AND TRAILS

**Goal PR-E | Utilize trails to interconnect the city's parks and open spaces.**

### POLICIES

PR-27. Integrate and expand signage, wayfinding and outreach materials that guide users through and between trails and clearly establish rules for use.

PR-28. Explore trail surface alternatives that balance the natural character of Bellingham's trail system with accessibility requirements, long-term maintenance, sustainable development practices and availability of local materials.

PR-29. Improve public education about safe trail use to ensure they function for a range of recreation and transportation users.

PR-30. Target improvements that connect trails with transit stops, key destinations, bike routes and sidewalks to improve non-motorized transportation options.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> T-4 | Wayfinding

>> T-29 | Off-Street Multiuse Paths and Trails

>> T-30 | Transitions Between Streets and Trails

# EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM

**Goal PR-F | Operate and maintain parks, trails and facilities effectively and sustainably.**

## POLICIES

PR-31.  Establish clear maintenance standards for park assets and evaluate and report progress towards meeting standards and improving conditions.

PR-32.  Prioritize capital maintenance improvements based on safety, condition, equity factors and number of people served.

PR-33.  Explore options to improve enforcement of park rules while ensuring all park users feel welcome.

PR-34.  Proactively upgrade and restore existing facilities to address community needs, improve resilience and protect the longevity of existing park assets.

PR-35.  Steward and protect the park system from invasive species, illegal activity and repair and restore damage where needed.

PR-36.  Develop and implement metrics to evaluate ongoing costs in property acquisitions, park and trail development and recreation programming.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> FS-1-5 | Network Planning

>> FS-6-16 | Sustainable Funding Strategy

>> EV-23 | Impacts to Sensitive Areas

>> EV-24 | Manage Recreational Uses

New park amenities are developed with the help of Park Impact Fees, assessed on new residential development. Parks are also funded with Greenways Levy funds, Real Estate Excise Taxes and the General Fund. This allows Parks & Recreation to maintain its level of service as the City grows. Level of service standards based on equity and distribution are adopted through the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan.

# PARKS AND RECREATION

## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

**Goal PR-G | Cultivate strong partnerships and community collaboration to enhance recreational opportunities.**

### POLICIES

PR-37.   Work with community organizations and across City departments to keep parks safe, welcoming, maintained and clean.

PR-38.   Identify ways to support outside agencies to improve access and conditions at non-City recreational facilities.

PR-39.   Explore partnerships that expand services or leverage support for specific projects.

PR-40.   Involve the community in habitat restoration and maintenance activities through the Parks Volunteer Program.

PR-41.   Partner and collaborate with local service providers to fill in gaps in equitable programming, events and services.

PR-42.   Link open space and trail corridors with those of adjacent jurisdictions and agencies.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> FS-16 | Regional Corridors

>> ED-8 | Regional Recreation Amenities

>> ED-27 | Employment Zone Impacts

>> CW-4 | Whatcom County Collaboration

>> CW-32-39 | Community Engagement

>> CW-40-46 | Tribal Relationships & Engagement

---

# PARTNERSHIPS & REGIONAL COORDINATION

The City relies on a variety of critical partnerships and regional coordination to provide comprehensive recreational opportunities for all to enjoy. Some of these key partnerships and examples are provided below:

| Whatcom County & WA State Dept. of Natural Resources | Port of Bellingham | Bellingham School District | Non-Profits & Volunteers |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Ex: Regional trails* | *Ex: Waterfront parks and trails* | *Ex: School playgrounds and sports fields* | *Ex: Community work parties* |

## PARK STEWARDSHIP

An important partnership is with the Bellingham community itself. Through a variety of programs, community members help steward our parks and open space through community garden initiatives, volunteer work parties, school stewardship programs, and more.

# CLIMATE

## PREPARING FOR AND PREVENTING CLIMATE IMPACTS
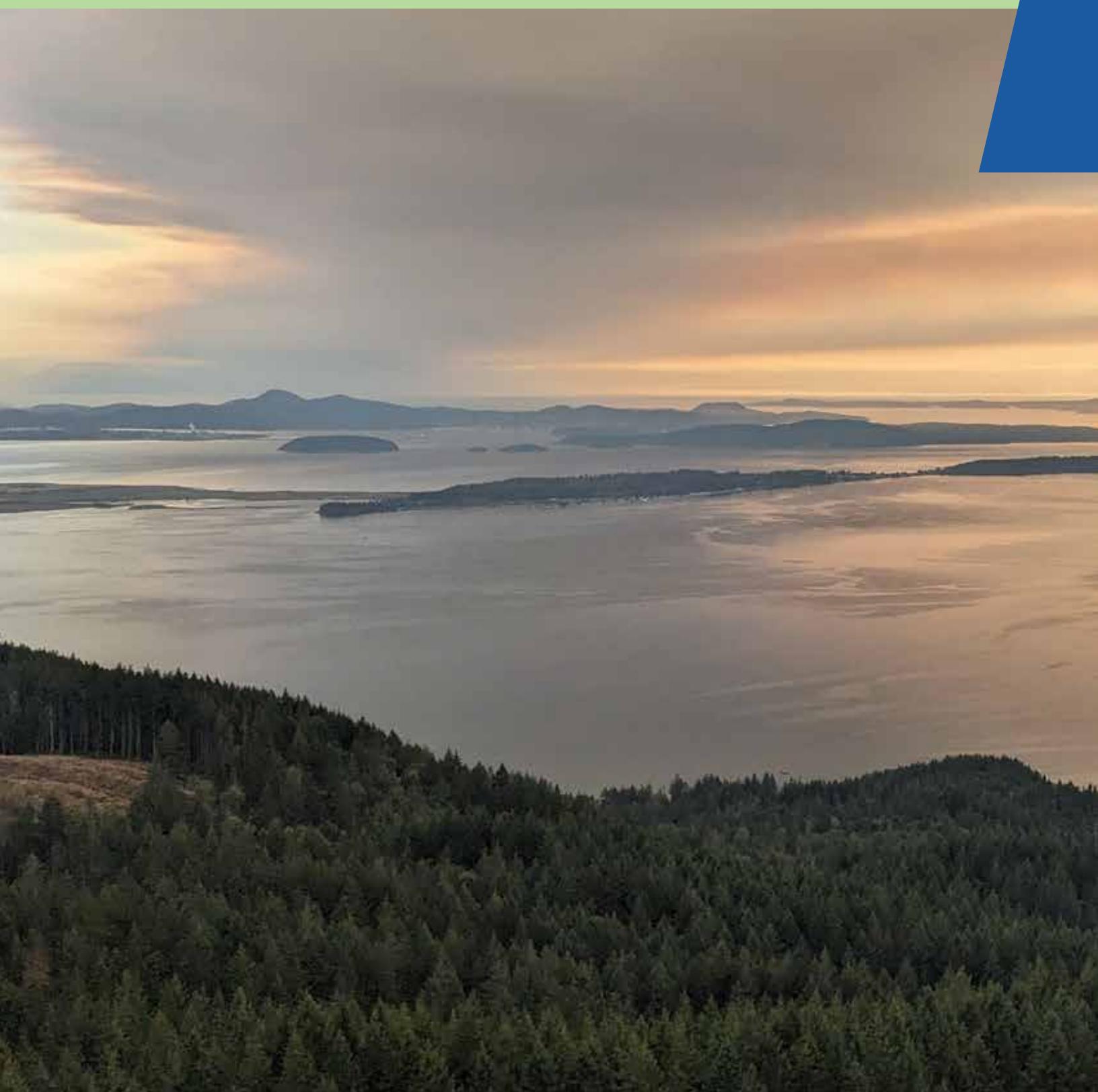
## OUR COMMUNITY RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF PROACTIVELY REDUCING AND PREPARING FOR INEVITABLE CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS.

Given the long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, this chapter provides a vision for minimizing emissions and staying resilient to climate-related human health and environmental impacts. This framework will help us collaboratively work towards a vision of net zero emissions by 2050.
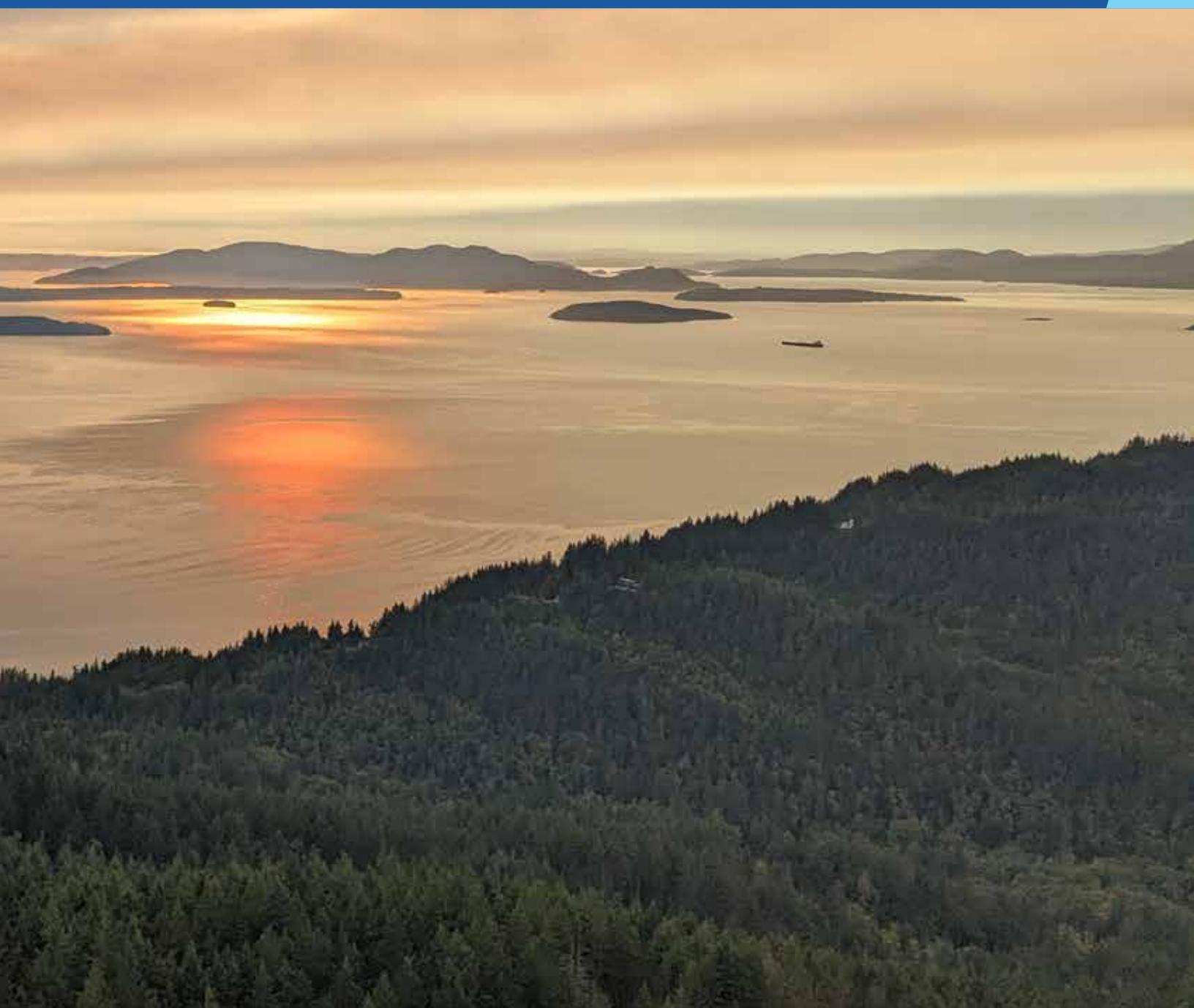
# CLIMATE

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO CLIMATE, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

### CITYWIDE APPROACH

**Goal C-A | Implement a unified, proactive and collaborative citywide approach to address climate change in the community.**

### POLICIES

C-1.   Respond to climate change through citywide implementation of science-based climate mitigation and adaptation action plans that include emissions reduction targets, community resilience goals and prioritized mitigation and adaptation actions.

C-2.   Provide safe environments in either public or private facilities during climatic and other events that endanger, displace or otherwise impact community health, safety and well-being.

C-3.   Model the City's leadership and commitment to addressing climate change across all municipal facilities, operations and civic practices.

C-4.   Coordinate climate plan updates and climate response programs with neighboring local and regional jurisdictions.

C-5.   Encourage public-private partnerships with higher education institutions, nonprofit groups and other agencies to address climate change.

C-6.   Foster business opportunities and workforce training associated with climate mitigation and adaptation.

C-7.   Provide culturally informed outreach and education initiatives and materials that will inform the community about near-term and longer-term climate change impacts and build resilience.

C-8.   Facilitate community awareness and readiness to implement changing climate-supportive state requirements such as the Clean Buildings Act.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> LU-2 | Mixed Uses**

**>> FS-5 | Whatcom Unified Emergency Management**

**>> FS-31 | Gathering Places**

**>> EV-31 | Natural Hazard Mitigation**

## RESOURCE LINKS

### REFERENCES
These references are not adopted as part of this plan and may be updated periodically.

**>> CLIMATE ACTION PLAN**

**>> NATURAL HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN**

## CLIMATE EQUITY

**Goal C-B | Integrate equity and inclusion factors into all climate program design and implementation actions.**

### POLICIES

C-9.  Implement a climate equity and engagement plan, in alignment with Citywide strategies, that ensures climate program benefits, educational components and resources are equitably distributed and impacts to all populations are minimized.

C-10. Link climate mitigation and resilience strategies with social equity and public health strategies to limit the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities.

C-11. Build and support partnerships with community organizations to convene diverse coalitions of residents and to educate and empower them to implement climate mitigation and resilience actions.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> CW-24-31 | Equity and Inclusion**

**>> CW-32-39 | Community Involvement**

# CLIMATE

**Climate Resilience** (or adaptation) is the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate and minimizing negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure, and communities. (RCW 70A.65.010) SEE GOALS C THROUGH G

## EXTREME WEATHER PREPARATION

**Goal C-C | Protect community health, wellbeing, infrastructure and the natural environment from extreme weather impacts, such as drought, flood and extreme heat or cold.**

### POLICIES

C-12. Develop, implement and regularly update as needed a comprehensive drought resilience strategy that factors in projected climate impacts and sets action levels for drought stages.

C-13. Implement and regularly update a comprehensive floodplain management strategy that considers climate change, including extreme precipitation, increased winter streamflow, sea-level rise and other impacts.

C-14. Consider increased flooding events in land use planning, development requirements and the siting of buildings or infrastructure.

C-15. Develop, implement and regularly update a climate resilience plan that addresses extreme temperature impacts to people, infrastructure and buildings.

## WILDFIRE IMPACTS PREPARATION

**Goal C-D | Protect community health, wellbeing, infrastructure and the natural environment from wildfire impacts.**

### POLICIES

C-16. Develop, implement, and regularly update a wildfire smoke response plan in partnership with community members, emergency management staff, regional clean air agency officials and other stakeholders to mitigate risk and exposure, especially for high risk community members.

C-17. Develop, implement, and regularly update a comprehensive, community-wide wildfire resilience strategy to improve emergency response capabilities, create fire-resilient landscapes, promote fire-adapted communities, protect the economy and foster short- and long-term recovery.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-5 | Wildfire Considerations

## SEA LEVEL RISE PREPARATION

**Goal C-E | Protect community health, wellbeing, infrastructure and the natural environment from sea level rise.**

### POLICIES

C-18. Design, site and build infrastructure, natural system restoration and recreation projects to avoid sea level rise impacts, or provide feasible mitigation.

C-19. Incorporate sea-level rise, storm surge and tsunami hazard information into land use and development requirements and emergency management response planning.

C-20. Assess the vulnerability of wetlands, aquatic vegetation, beaches, bluffs and other valuable natural assets to sea level rise.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> EV-5 | Coastal Resiliency

## RESOURCE RESILIENCY

**Goal C-F | Anticipate and plan for sustainable, resilient resources to meet community needs.**

### POLICIES

C-21. Include land use, social services access, housing, jobs and other considerations in planning for a potential influx of people displaced due to climate change.

C-22. Support opportunities for businesses to adapt their operations in anticipation or in response to a changing climate.

C-23. Bolster the local food system's resiliency to the impacts of extreme weather and other natural hazards worsened by climate change.

C-24. Continue to evaluate the impacts of changes to temperature and hydrologic patterns on the municipal water supply's quality, quantity and infrastructure to ensure that changes due to climate can be anticipated and managed effectively.

C-25. Encourage building retrofits, particularly those with sensitive land uses, that make them more resilient to natural disasters and climate change.

C-26. Ensure that the community is able to reduce, reuse, recycle and compost waste materials sustainably.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> CD-42 | Archaeological and Cultural Resources**

**>> EV-34 | Outdoor Air Quality**

**>> ED-13 | Environmentally-Friendly Practices**

## ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCY

**Goal C-G | Protect, enhance and restore ecosystems that could be adversely impacted by climate change.**

### POLICIES

C-27. Manage the urban forest system to boost carbon sequestration, reduce heat islands, improve air quality and improve tree and watershed health.

C-28. Increase the resilience of native plant and animal species and their habitats to climate change.

C-29. Take early action to eliminate or control non-native invasive species that take advantage of climate change, especially where invasives threaten native species or ecosystem function.

C-30. Use an integrated approach to prevent and address the establishment or spread of pests and disease that impact ecosystems and thrive in a changing climate.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

**>> PR-16-21 | Conservation & Resilience**

# CLIMATE

> **Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emission Reduction** (or mitigation) relates to actions taken to reduce or eliminate the emissions of greenhouse gases (present and future) in order to reduce the rate and extent of climate change damage (Washington Department of Commerce) SEE GOALS H THROUGH J

## BUILDING EMISSIONS MITIGATION

**Goal C-H | Ensure that buildings use renewable energy, conservation and efficiency technologies and practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality and conserve natural resources.**

### POLICIES

C-31. Reduce carbon emissions by encouraging the preservation and renovation of existing and historic buildings and prioritizing the use of lower embodied carbon, long-lived and low-maintenance building materials in new construction or building retrofits.

C-32. Use regulations, incentives and green building rating systems to promote and encourage energy efficiency, the use of renewable (non-fossil-fuel) energy sources and sustainable construction practices in existing and new buildings and site designs throughout the community.

C-33. Promote the electrification of existing and new buildings with approaches such as education, technical assistance, design services, financing incentives, homeowner co-ops and more.

C-34. Investigate the feasibility of developing and implementing district energy systems.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **CD-25 | Materials and Construction**

>> **FS-28 | Efficient Resource Use in Buildings**

## LOWERING BUILDING EMISSIONS

Constructing and retrofitting buildings with the climate in mind means finding various ways to lower greenhouse gas emissions.

### RENEWABLE ENERGY
Power buildings with clean energy sources, such as wind and solar.

### ELECTRIFICATION
Replace fossil fuel-based systems with electric alternatives like heat pumps and induction stoves.

### EFFICIENCY
Reduce overall energy consumption by using efficient appliances, designs, insulation and more.

## TRANSPORTATION EMISSIONS MITIGATION

**Goal C-I | Eliminate Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions from municipal and community transportation by focusing on multimodal transportation, zero emissions vehicles and modernizing parking requirements.**

### POLICIES

C-35. Continue to implement and improve multimodal and active transportation systems to reduce fossil fuel reliance, vehicle miles traveled and vehicle emissions.

C-36. Support and invest in the adoption and use of zero emissions modes of transportation within the city, by implementing regulations, programs and subsidies.

C-37. Support the expansion of electric vehicle infrastructure, including the well-distributed placement of charging stations on private and public property, including rights-of-way.

C-38. Modernize vehicle and bicycle parking requirements to achieve climate objectives while improving air quality and bicyclist and pedestrian safety.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> T-13-24 | Mode Shift

## RENEWABLE ENERGY

**Goal C-J | Encourage and support renewable energy generation and use.**

### POLICIES

C-39. Encourage, support and implement renewable energy infrastructure and systems, and evaluate potential future energy and energy storage projects.

C-40. Maximize the generation and use of renewable energy sources to supply electricity and heat for municipal and community buildings and transportation needs.

C-41. Ensure energy infrastructure can accommodate clean energy programs.
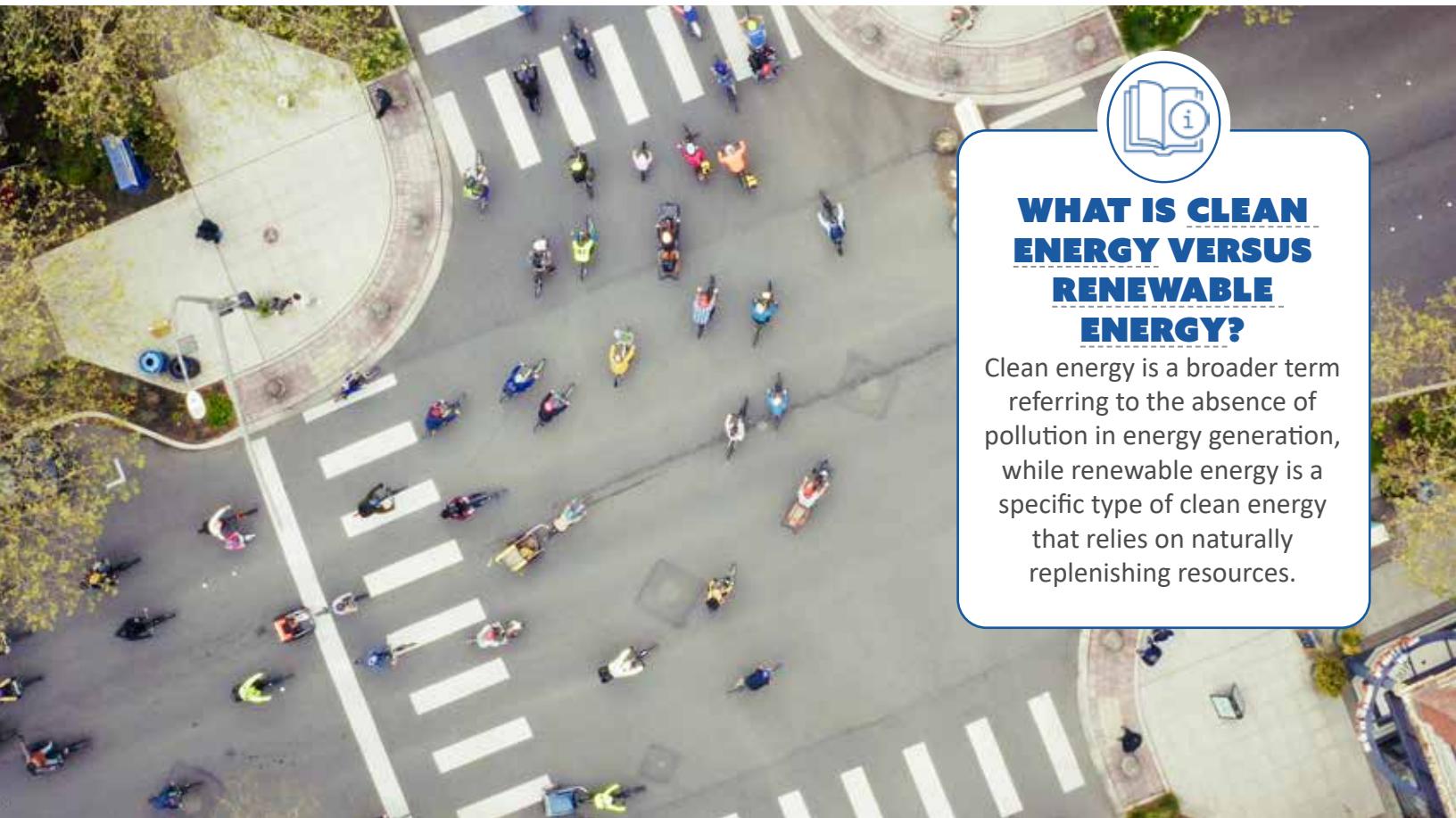


### WHAT IS CLEAN ENERGY VERSUS RENEWABLE ENERGY?

Clean energy is a broader term referring to the absence of pollution in energy generation, while renewable energy is a specific type of clean energy that relies on naturally replenishing resources.

# ENVIRONMENT

## PROTECTING, ENHANCING AND RESTORING NATURAL RESOURCES
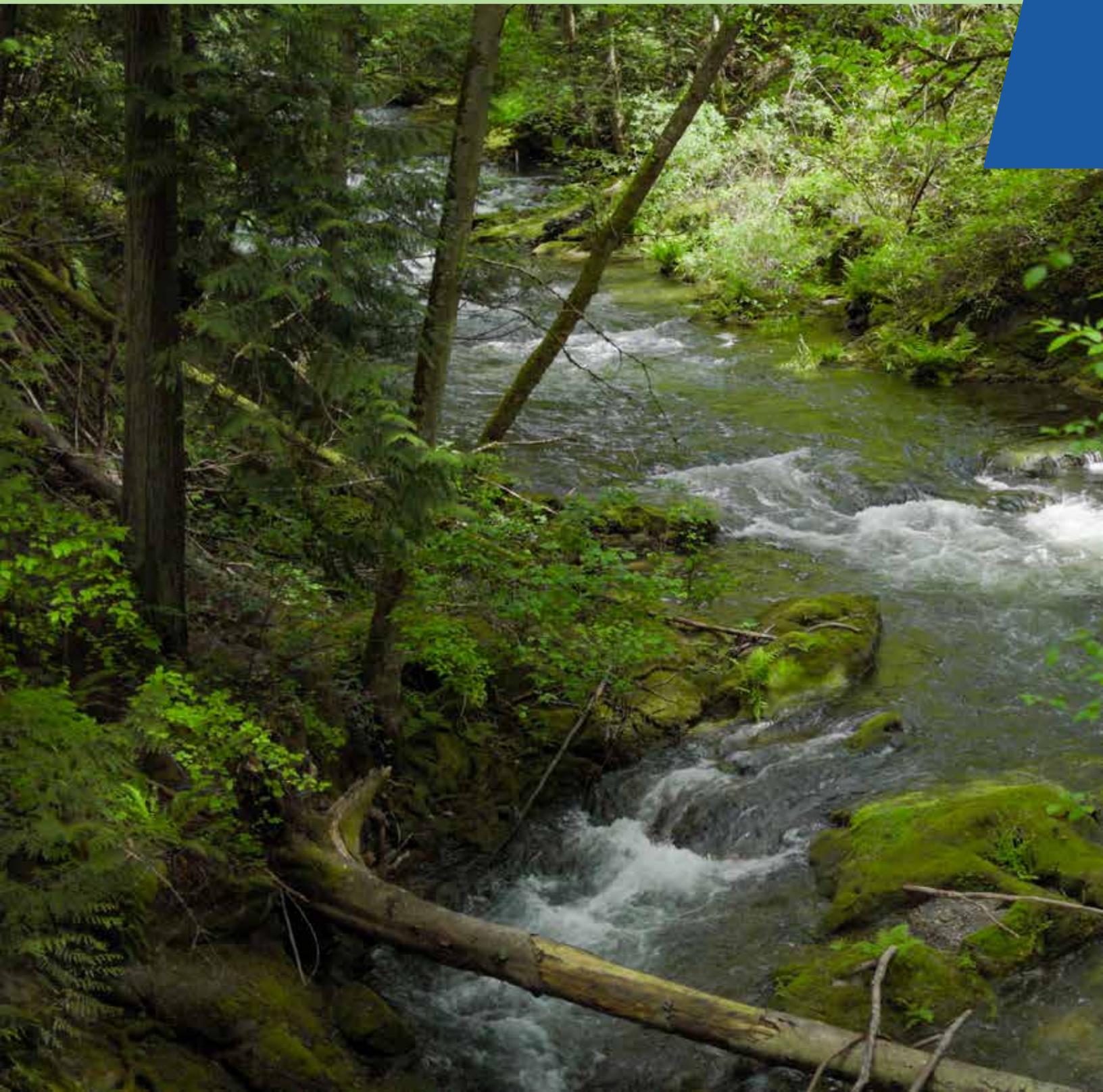
## BELLINGHAM'S KEY ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES AND VALUES ARE CRITICAL TO SUSTAINABILITY.

These natural elements support recreation and human health, provide vital habitat and create inherent beauty. In planning for future growth and development, we recognize the need to protect, enhance and restore the environment in a carefully planned and coordinated manner. This ensures that environmental benefits to both humans and wildlife can be enjoyed for generations to come.
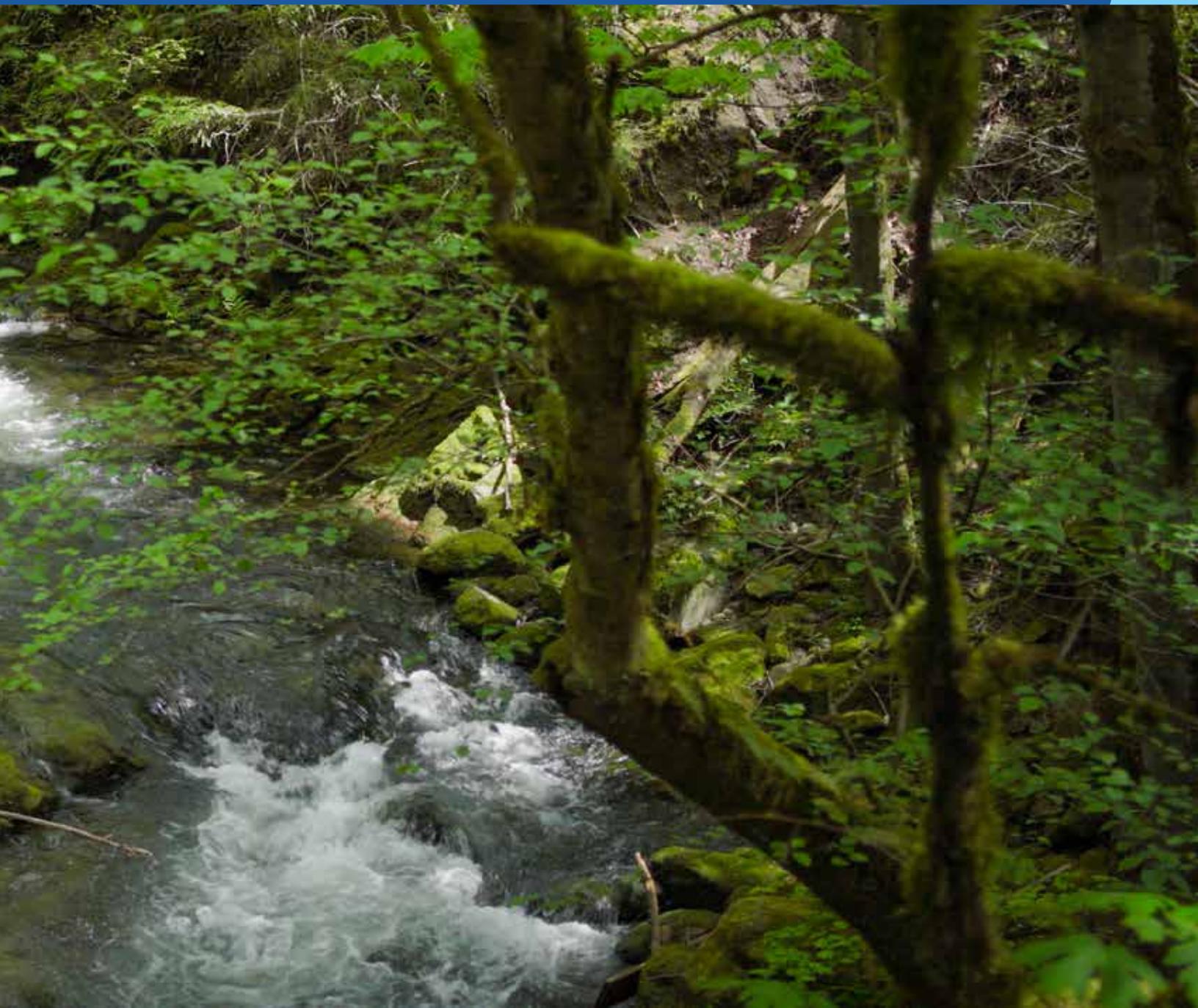
# ENVIRONMENT

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO ENVIRONMENT, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

## PROTECT AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

**Goal EV-A | Protect and improve aquatic ecosystems including lakes, streams, wetlands, floodplains and the Salish Sea.**

### POLICIES

EV-1. Improve water quality, especially in waterbodies with listed water quality impairments, by protecting, enhancing or restoring riparian and aquatic ecosystems.

EV-2. Maintain water quantity in streams, wetlands and lakes by protecting, enhancing or restoring hydrologic processes.

EV-3. Protect, enhance or restore fish and wildlife habitats and corridors in riparian, freshwater and marine ecosystems.

EV-4. Protect, enhance or restore ecological functions such as flood storage, habitat and conveyance in frequently flooded areas.

EV-5. Protect, enhance or restore aquatic marine nearshore and estuarine areas when implementing measures for resiliency against coastal flooding and sea level rise.

EV-6. Manage the city's surface and stormwater to protect aquatic resources, improve fish habitat, respond to flooding and erosion damages, reduce flood risk and reduce the discharge of pollutants into the environment that impact aquatic resources.

EV-7. Develop and implement urban forest management strategies that result in water quality and water quantity benefits.

EV-8. Give special consideration to conservation and protection measures necessary to protect and restore anadromous fisheries.

# RESOURCE LINKS

## CITY DOCUMENTS ADOPTED HEREIN

These references are adopted as part of the Bellingham Plan, requiring the same process for updates as the plan itself.

>> **SHORELINE MASTER PLAN**

## REFERENCES

These references are not adopted as part of this plan and may be updated periodically.

>> **LAKE WHATCOM MANAGEMENT PROGRAM 2025-2029 WORK PLAN**

# ENVIRONMENT

## PROTECT TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS

**Goal EV-B | Protect and improve terrestrial ecosystems.**

### POLICIES

EV-9. Protect, enhance or restore wildlife habitat and corridors in terrestrial ecosystems.

EV-10. Protect intact cliffs, bluffs and embankments that are within priority habitat blocks and corridors to maintain critical habitat and geologic processes.

EV-11. Adopt, implement and update a comprehensive urban forest plan to support a healthy and resilient urban forest through well-coordinated, consistent, efficient and sustainable long-term urban forestry management.

EV-12. Regularly monitor and evaluate progress towards canopy coverage goals, to be included in an urban forestry plan, to inform programs, policies and practices.

EV-13. Develop management strategies that integrate the city's tree canopy and green infrastructure with increasing urban growth patterns. Consider mechanisms that support active management and increased tree preservation.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> CD-39 | Balancing Trees and Housing

## URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTS

**City-owned** <u>urban and community forests</u> **provide many environmental, economic and social benefits.**

Legend:
- **City Boundary**
- **Urban Growth Area**
- **Urban Growth Area Reserve**
- **Significant City-owned Forested Parcels**
- **Tree Canopy (2022 LiDAR)**
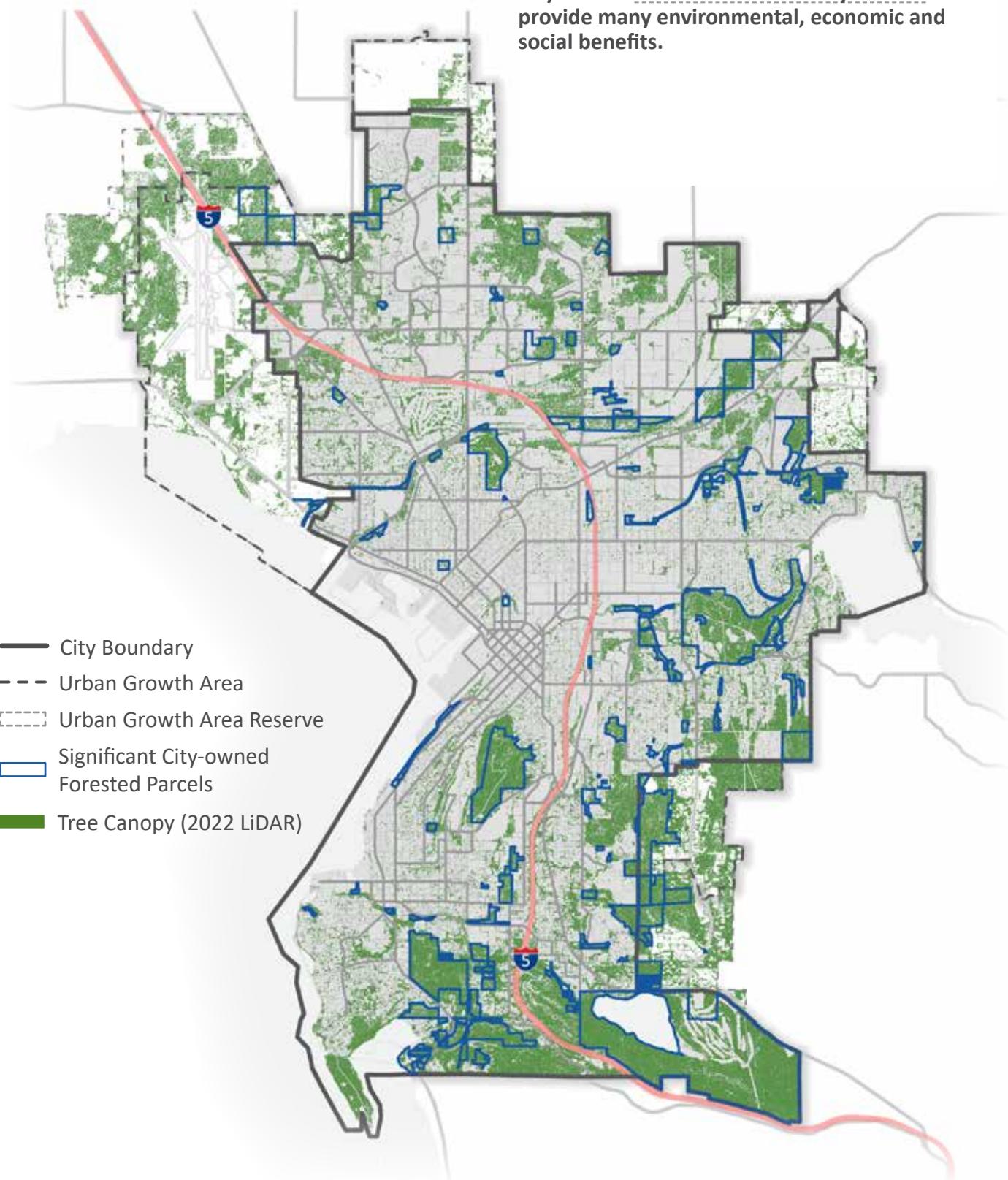
# ENVIRONMENT

## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

**Goal EV-C | Protect and improve natural systems and ensure environmental sustainability through coordinated natural resource management and planning.**

### POLICIES

EV-14.   Continue to create, update and utilize an inventory of best available science to preserve and enhance ecosystem-wide functions and processes through policies, regulations, programs and incentives.

EV-15.   Utilize natural resource assessments, plans and regulations that identify high priority aquatic and terrestrial habitat areas, corridors and corridor breaks to guide annexation, zoning, urban growth area expansion, restoration, mitigation site selection and capital facility planning.

EV-16.   Continue to implement programs, regulations and incentives that result in sustainable land use practices, such as Low Impact Development (LID) stormwater management techniques, that prevent the degradation of water quality and sustain watershed processes.

EV-17.   Incorporate sustainable land use practices and design elements into public and private projects early in the planning stages to avoid impacts to ecological functions and habitats, including critical areas.

EV-18.   Ensure coordination among City departments in planning, constructing and maintaining City facilities and infrastructure to protect ecological functions and habitats.

EV-19.   Protect fish, wildlife and pollinator habitats and corridors from development impacts, such as light, noise, pollutants and fragmentation; and provide mitigation for unavoidable impacts.

EV-20.   Require mitigation sequencing early in project planning stages to safeguard ecological functions and values.

EV-21.   Ensure wetland mitigation sites are selected based on current state mitigation guidance documents, best available science and on the watershed approach with an emphasis on the ecologically-preferable site with high potential for success.

EV-22.   Pursue development of mitigation options such as a City mitigation bank, in-lieu fee and advanced mitigation programs.

EV-23.   Manage and employ measures to minimize impacts to environmentally-sensitive areas from public access, especially from illicit uses, solid waste and domestic animals.

EV-24.   Manage recreational uses in a manner that prevents degradation of water quality and habitat.

EV-25.   Support ecological functions and the restoration of natural systems by promoting the use of native plants, controlling the spread of invasive species and creating guidance for human-assisted movement of species to more suitable habitats.

EV-26.   Provide opportunities for public education and engagement to promote awareness and responsible individual actions for environmental stewardship.

EV-27.   Work in cooperation with other agencies, tribes, groups and community volunteers to support biodiversity and protection and restoration of native vegetation, fish, wildlife and pollinator habitat.

EV-28.   Continue to collaborate with relevant partners to restore, protect and preserve Lake Whatcom and its surrounding watershed.

## WHAT IS BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE?

It is scientific information prepared by local, state, or federal natural resource agencies, a qualified scientific professional, or team of qualified scientific professionals that is consistent with criteria established in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC).

EV-29.   Continue collaborating with relevant partners on initiatives within Water Resource Inventory Area 1 (WRIA 1) to address water quality and quantity, in-stream flow, fish habitat and passage and salmon recovery.

EV-30.   Continue collaborating with relevant partners to incorporate land use planning and habitat restoration into the cleanup of State-listed contaminated sites within Bellingham Bay.

EV-31.   Continue partnering with Whatcom County and other neighboring jurisdictions to assess vulnerability and formulate mitigation strategies for natural hazards.

EV-32.   Continue collaborating with state agencies regarding state and local forest practices within the city for all phases of the conversion of forestland including:

› Land clearing and grading;
› Protection of critical areas;
› Wildfire and wildland-urban interface; and
› Efforts to address nuisance abatements

consistent with Bellingham's development regulations and the urban forest plan.

Washington State's Growth Management Act requires the designation and regulation of critical areas. Protecting, maintaining, and restoring these environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas and their functions and values benefits both the community and the environment.

## REGULATED AND PROTECTED CRITICAL AREAS

- **Wetlands**
- **Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas**
- **Frequently Flooded Areas**
- **Geologically Hazardous Areas**
- **Fish & Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas**

# ENVIRONMENT

## HUMAN HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

**Goal EV-D | Recognize the environment's inherent value and essential role in supporting human health and wellbeing.**

### POLICIES

EV-33.   Foster environmental equity and justice, where the community has fair and equitable access to environmental resources and benefits, protection from environmental hazards and participation in environmental decision making.

EV-34.   Consider factors that contribute to maintaining healthy outdoor air quality and acknowledge its importance to human health and wellbeing.

EV-35.   Discourage the use of toxic chemicals and promote the safe disposal of hazardous materials or other waste products, including pharmaceuticals, to protect the environment and public health.

EV-36.   Coordinate with State and federal agencies to support and encourage the cleanup of contaminated soil and other environmental remediation activities.

EV-37.   Protect people and public resources and facilities from injury, loss of life or property damage due to landslides and steep slope failures, erosion, seismic events or flooding.

EV-38.   Encourage and expand access to nature and green spaces to foster human health and connection with the environment.

EV-39.   Encourage the preservation and planting of trees on private and public property due to their environmental, economic, health and social benefits.

EV-40.   Encourage regenerative ecological design, which focuses on creating human and natural systems that work together.

EV-41.   Explore opportunities to collaborate with local tribes to consider the use of traditional ecological knowledge - which incorporates indigenous knowledge, practices and beliefs - into decision-making and resource management.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **CD-31 | Open Spaces Benefits**

>> **FS-33 | Drinking Water Supply**

>> **PR-8 | Nature Connection Design**

>> **PR-40 | Parks Volunteer Program**

>> **ED-26 | Employment Lands Remediation**

>> **CW-24-31 | Equity and Inclusion**

>> **CW-32-39 | Community Involvement**

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## FOSTERING WORKFORCE AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

## CREATING JOBS AND IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL WORKERS AND RESIDENTS.

This chapter provides a framework to improve the economic prosperity of Bellingham through efforts that encourage the creation and retention of jobs, enhance the local tax base and solidify our role in the greater region.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.**

## CITY'S ROLE IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### LEADERSHIP FOR A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT

Provide a positive physical and social environment that supports business activity and a high quality of life for all.

### ZONING AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ensure that there is enough properly zoned, developable land and infrastructure capacity to accommodate the expected 20-year employment growth.

### SERVICES FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

Provide excellent services that foster business growth and retention, and minimize expenses.

Additionally, the City partners with a variety of agencies and organizations that recruit, start and grow businesses.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## REGIONAL COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

**Goal ED-A | Continue coordination and collaboration with local and regional economic development organizations to retain, grow and attract industries and businesses that provide living wage jobs in Bellingham.**

### POLICIES

ED-1. Coordinate City activities and share resources with agencies, organizations, and coalitions that provide direct economic development and other business services.

ED-2. Continue to build strong working relationships with Whatcom County, the Port of Bellingham and other nearby cities within Whatcom County to address regional economic development issues and support a thriving regional economy.

ED-3. Support the Port of Bellingham's primary role in growing Bellingham's economy, including efforts to advance Bellingham International Airport and redevelop the waterfront.

ED-4. Work with the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County and others to explore and pursue opportunities to increase Bellingham's global relations, especially with British Columbia, Canada. Strive for new investment and expansion from regional, national and international businesses.

ED-5. Recognize Bellingham's strategic role in the Cascadia Region and commit to advocating for future high-speed rail and other regional collaboration and connectivity efforts.

ED-6. Aid the efforts of business associations to promote economic activities and tourism.

ED-7. Continue to support events, facilities, and other tourism related activities through the use of the City's lodging tax.

ED-8. Maintain partnerships to continue and grow regional recreation amenities, such as Galbraith Mountain and Civic Athletic Complex.

ED-9. Partner with Whatcom County and the Port of Bellingham to conduct a regional employment study to assess existing and anticipated land, infrastructure and supporting service needs; identify Bellingham's key employment sectors; and evaluate barriers to and explore strategies necessary for sustainable and diversified economic growth in Bellingham.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **LU-47 | Airport Area Planning**

## WHAT IS A LIVING WAGE?

A living wage is what someone working a single full-time job needs to earn to support their basic needs. A living wage is generally significantly higher than the poverty level or minimum wage. It gives workers the ability to afford a decent standard of living where they can afford housing, food, childcare, healthcare, transportation and other life necessities.

# REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The City partners with many agencies throughout Whatcom County to provide workforce and economic and community development services.

These partnerships help start, grow and relocate businesses in Bellingham and Whatcom County.

Working together, these partnerships strategically collaborate to promote economic vitality throughout Bellingham and Whatcom County.

PORT OF BELLINGHAM
*Washington State*

The Port of Bellingham's Regional Economic Partnership (REP) is the state-designated Associate Development Organization for Whatcom County. The goal of REP is to retain and attract living wage jobs and to assist businesses, entrepreneurs and local organizations to thrive.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## SUPPORTIVE AND INCLUSIVE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

**Goal ED-B | Foster and sustain a supportive and inclusive business environment that promotes collaboration and growth in both the public and private sectors.**

### POLICIES

ED-10.   Periodically review and adjust to the impacts of the City's regulatory structure, taxes, fees and utility rates on Bellingham's economic development goals .

ED-11.   Continually review and evaluate the City's permit processes in order to provide timely, cost-effective services and predictable outcomes.

ED-12.   Recognize and consider the potential economic impacts of proposed legislative actions prior to adoption.

ED-13.   Work with partners to support businesses in developing environmentally-friendly practices.

ED-14.   Continue to support the infrastructure and expansion needs of higher education institutions, school districts, healthcare providers, the Port of Bellingham and other major employers that offer a diverse range of living wage jobs.

ED-15.   Support the ongoing efforts and programs of Bellingham's educational institutions and businesses that connect education to industry and train workers to meet the current and future needs of local businesses.

ED-16.   Support efforts to make it easier for businesses to learn about and act on opportunities to get started in Bellingham.

ED-17.   Support the retention and growth of Bellingham's locally-based or owned businesses.

ED-18.   Support the retention and growth of businesses providing opportunities for skilled employment and living wage jobs, especially the industrial/manufacturing sectors.

ED-19.   Continue to support a downtown that is

› Economically healthy;

› Uses environmentally-friendly building and business practices; and

› Offers a variety of residential, retail, office, service, cultural, civic and recreational opportunities.

ED-20.   Continue to support public safety, behavioral health services, cleaning and beautification in downtown and other urban villages, recognizing that these are foundational elements of a welcoming and healthy business environment.

ED-21.   Partner with the Bellingham Whatcom Public Facilities District to continue investing in the City Center to foster a thriving creative economy that attracts visitors, nurtures local talent, and stimulates economic opportunities across multiple sectors.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-48-55 | Complete Neighborhoods

>> H-4 | Investment Properties

>> FS-30 | City Center Services

>> C-6 |Business & Workforce Opportunities

>> C-22 | Adaptive Business Environment

>> CW-13 | Community Oriented Safety

>> CW-16 | Thriving Downtown

## WHAT ARE EMPLOYMENT LANDS?

Employment lands are Land parcels with either commercial, industrial, institutional or mixed-use zoning designations. These zones can accommodate a variety of potential employment uses such as office, retail, services or industry.

# EMPLOYMENT LANDS AND SUPPORTING INFRASTRUCTURE

**Goal ED-C | Ensure sufficient employment lands and supporting infrastructure for numerous and diverse employment opportunities.**

## POLICIES

ED-22.  Periodically assess the adequacy of the supply of vacant and redevelopable employment lands in Bellingham and the Urban Growth Area (UGA), considering environmental constraints, especially land zoned for industry.

ED-23.  Support the development of marine trades and related industries in the Waterfront District.

ED-24.  Explore options for public-private partnerships that would maximize public benefit when redeveloping City-owned properties.

ED-25.  Reduce barriers to the efficient development of vacant or underutilized employment lands and buildings, such as reviewing land use regulations, incentives, development standards and design guidelines.

ED-26.  Promote the efficient use/reuse of employment lands by coordinating with other levels of government to support and encourage the cleanup of contaminated soil and other environmental remediation activities.

ED-27.  Evaluate rezone proposals, changes to development regulations, and City land acquisitions for potential impacts on the supply of land zoned for employment activities.

ED-28.  Identify employment land that lacks sufficient infrastructure and coordinate City investments in utilities, transportation and other public facilities with business and employment opportunities whenever possible.

ED-29.  Encourage urban villages, especially the City Center, to develop as employment centers, allowing a wide range of permitted uses to support their redevelopment and vibrancy.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-1 | Growth Projections

>> LU-6 | Parcel Assembly

>> LU-17-24 | Urban Villages

>> LU-29 | Auto-oriented Strip Development

>> LU-31-47 | Land Use Designations

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## WORKFORCE SUPPORT

**Goal ED-D | Encourage programs and practices that support and sustain the Bellingham workforce.**

### POLICIES

ED-30.   Recognize that childcare is a critical component of workforce participation and economic growth, and promote easy to access, affordable and high-quality childcare services.

ED-31.   Regularly assess the gap between wages and housing availability and incorporate that assessment into planning for housing action.

ED-32.   Recognize the connection between economic development and quality of life factors such as a healthy environment, locally-based food production, arts and culture and recreation opportunities.

ED-33.   Continue to provide early career and job training opportunities in City government.

ED-34.   Encourage continued and expanded transportation options, such as aviation and rail, connecting Portland, Oregon, Seattle, Bellingham and Vancouver, British Columbia, and ferry service to the San Juan Islands, British Columbia and Alaska.

ED-35.   Encourage public-private partnerships to finance or manage facilities and services which promote community and economic opportunities.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

> **>> H-11-25 | Housing For All Incomes**

> **>> H-38-44 | Homeownership**

> **>> CD-21 | Economically Feasible Design**

> **>> CW-1-9 | Health & Wellbeing**

> **>> CW-12 | City Center Gatherings**

> **>> CW-19-23 | Arts & Culture**

> **>> CW-24-31 | Equity & Inclusion**

> **>> CW-32-39 | Community Involvement**

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CONNECTIONS

Economic Development helps businesses and institutions start, expand, and stay in Bellingham. These businesses provide additional tax revenue to the City, which helps fund important infrastructure and services. Local businesses and institutions also create a sense of place and identity, which strengthens Bellingham's social fabric. With a strong workforce and an increased tax base, the City can reinvest in economic development strategies, foster vibrant urban villages and improve quality of life.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Resources
Partnership
Opportunities

**SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES & INSTITUTIONS**

Community Gathering

Increased Quality of Life

Stronger Sense of Place

Parks & Infrastructure

Funds for Housing & Community Service

Increased Tax Base

Strong Workforce

Community Identity

**BELLINGHAM FOR ALL**

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## STRENGTHENING HEALTH, SAFETY AND BELONGING

**COMMUNITY WELLBEING IS A COMBINATION OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, CULTURAL AND CIVIC FACTORS THAT SUPPORT A CONNECTED, SAFE AND EQUITABLE SOCIETY.**

This chapter considers the socioeconomic determinants of health to address systemic issues and promote positive community health outcomes. Community wellbeing is achieved when everyone can meet their basic needs, feel safe, connect with others and engage in City government.

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN GOALS AND SUPPORTING POLICIES RELEVANT TO COMMUNITY WELLBEING, ALONG WITH RELATED INFORMATION.

### HEALTH DETERMINANTS

Health determinants are key factors that influence our health. Factors such as the physical and built environment, income and education level, and access to food and transportation can determine individual health outcomes, including longevity. The below factors are outlined in Healthy Whatcom's Population Health Framework.

**40%**
INFLUENCE ON HEALTH

## SOCIAL & ECONOMIC

Social determinants of health are non-medical factors that affect health outcomes. Education, housing security, community safety, income, social support and employment play a primary role in a person's overall quality and length of life.

### Community Safety

### Social Support

### Education
Bellingham School District, Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College and Bellingham Technical College all provide educational opportunities.

### Housing Security
The Housing Chapter contains goals and policies that strive to make it easier and more affordable for people to obtain housing and remain in it.

### Employment & Income
The Economic Development Chapter provides a framework to support efforts that encourage living wage jobs and steady employment opportunities.

**30%**
INFLUENCE ON HEALTH

## HEALTH BEHAVIORS

Whatcom County Health and Community Services provides services, programs and systems that promote positive health behaviors. Many health care providers and non-profit providers also do so.

### Alcohol & Drug Use

### Tobacco Use

### Sexual Health

### Nutrition & Physical Activity

### Immunizations

While certain agencies and organizations directly impact health outcomes, it is critical that the City, County and other agencies and organizations support health equity throughout Bellingham. They can create environments that impact these health determinants and thereby promote positive health outcomes.

**20%**
INFLUENCE ON HEALTH

**10%**
INFLUENCE ON HEALTH

## HEALTH CARE

There are a variety of private health care providers throughout Bellingham, including PeaceHealth.

**Access to Care**

**Quality of Care**

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

**Built Environment**
The Land Use and Community Design Chapters support a positive built environment.

**Air & Water Quality**
The Climate and Environment Chapters protect clean air and water throughout Bellingham.

**Transportation**
The Transportation Chapter contains goals and policies to ensure that walking, biking, and transit are accessible, safe and reliable transportation modes.

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

**Goal CW-A | Confront systemic and regional community health and wellbeing issues through ample social services, a resilient food system and interactive programming.**

### POLICIES

CW-1.   Foster and support partnerships and approaches that have proven to be successful in

› Reducing food insecurity, homelessness and other issues that are detrimental to community health; and

› Promoting positive health and wellbeing outcomes.

CW-2.   Reduce barriers to establishing healthcare, childcare, grocery stores, faith-based, and educational uses through permissive land use and navigable permitting and review processes.

CW-3.   Leverage public safety resources and partnerships to continue to support the goals in the Whatcom County Justice Project Implementation Plan (JPIP), including strategies to address substance-use challenges, behavioral health issues, childcare, therapeutic courts and a wide range of other urgent community needs.

CW-4.   Collaborate with Whatcom County to further their actions and plans in providing and promoting health and community services, regional parks and recreation and a sustainable regional food system.

CW-5.   Consider the importance of local and regional food systems assets and infrastructure in policy decisions, encouraging locally-based food production, processing, distribution and consumption, such as through community gardens, urban farming and farmers and seafood markets.

CW-6.   Encourage access to a diversity of nutritious, affordable, and culturally-appropriate food by exploring opportunities to support, incentivize, or encourage the location of food purveyors and urban food production near residential areas and transit, especially in low-income and underserved areas.

CW-7.   Promote and encourage food waste reduction and food recovery initiatives as part of a healthy and resilient local food system.

CW-8.   Encourage activity for all ages and abilities through parks and recreation, educational and cultural programming, active transportation and other city amenities.

CW-9.   Consider the experience and changing needs of residents as they age through universal design approaches, accessible facilities and social opportunities and programming.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-44 | Emergency Housing

>> LU-46 | Human Services

>> H-30 | Options For Seniors & Those With Disabilities

>> H-32-37 | Service-enriched Housing

>> T-28 | Mobility Choices & Opportunities

>> PR-5 | Community Gardens

>> PR-25 | Civic Athletic Complex

>> C-23 | Food System Resiliency

>> EV-33-41 | Human Health & Environment

# HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

The food system includes the complex set of activities, processes and relationships that help deliver the food we eat every day. Bellingham Plan policies related to the food system support a variety of local needs and create a broad range of social, economic and environmental benefits. These community benefits result in more equitable food access, environmental sustainability and a vibrant local food economy.



SOCIAL BENEFITS

Supporting food security for all
Providing food education
Building community and social fabric

ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Creating and sustaining local jobs
Improving economic viability of local agriculture
Using land efficiently for urban agriculture

Waste

Growing & Fishing

Processing & Packaging

Distribution

Access & Consumption

Decreasing food waste
Reducing food miles traveled
Promoting sustainable production

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## VITALITY AND BELONGING

**Goal CW-B | Foster community vitality, reduce loneliness and promote a positive sense of belonging through safety and connection.**

### POLICIES

CW-10. Further a culture of support and belonging within Bellingham that aspires to be more understanding, respectful and accountable to those who experience marginalization and exclusion.

CW-11. Support and encourage a variety of flexible and adaptive gathering spaces for the community to come together and strengthen connections, including spaces for all ages, abilities, cultures, identities and traditions.

CW-12. Provide and support programming and safety of large community gatherings within the City Center.

CW-13. Continue implementing proactive safety strategies, such as community-oriented policing, bike patrols and community paramedics, to support safe neighborhoods.

CW-14. Maintain support for incarceration diversion strategies, such as alternative response programs or other outreach teams, throughout our community.

CW-15. Work to decrease public health risks, social tensions and environmental impacts related to unauthorized encampments by leveraging resources to promote safety and wellbeing, balancing the needs of individuals experiencing homelessness with those of nearby residents and businesses.

CW-16. Continue to prioritize bold actions and innovative thinking to ensure a thriving future for Downtown Bellingham, providing opportunities for all community members to live, work or play.

CW-17. Foster lifelong learning and social interaction opportunities for all ages through City programs and partnerships that support a curious, informed and resilient community.

CW-18. Amplify the adopted Library and Museum standards and policies as Bellingham grows, to ensure the City continues to support personal and community enrichment and be welcoming and easy to access for all.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> LU-23 | City Center

>> LU-48-55 | Complete Neighborhoods

>> FS-31 | Gathering Places

>> PR-22-26 | Recreational Opportunities

>> C-2 | Provide Safe Environments

>> ED-20 | Public Safety, Behavioral Health, Cleaning & Beautification

>> ED-30-35 | Workforce Support

### ISOLATION & LONELINESS

**Social connection is a fundamental human need. In 2023, the US Surgeon General declared an Epidemic of Loneliness and Social Isolation, noting that the lack of social connections in the US can increase the risk for premature death and other illnesses. The Bellingham Plan strives to reduce loneliness and promote connection, recognizing the importance for advancing community wellbeing.**

## WHAT IS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

Social infrastructure refers to the programs, policies, and physical elements of a community that support the development of social connection. This includes libraries, parks, volunteer groups and member associations. These elements can help foster connections, build social support and reduce loneliness.

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## ARTS AND CULTURE

**Goal CW-C | Promote and celebrate Bellingham's arts and culture.**

### POLICIES

CW-19. Support our community's commitment to arts and culture and our Downtown Arts District.

CW-20. Involve artists and creative workers in integrating art into public places and events that celebrate Bellingham's diverse identities.

CW-21. Integrate indigenous culture and history into the community dialogue, art installations and event programming, recognizing and respecting its importance in the region.

CW-22. Foster curiosity and joy about our world by continuing to support and expand access to creative and interactive opportunities at the Museum, Library and in the broader arts community.

CW-23. Promote cultural awareness and education for all ages through City programs, partnerships, communication, and ongoing fulfillment of the Parks & Recreation, Museum, Library and Theatre missions.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> CD-11 | Creativity, Culture and Art

>> PR-12 | Art and Whimsy

>> ED-21 | Public Facilities District

## LOCAL INSTITUTIONS AND ENTERPRISES

Local organizations are key to promoting community wellbeing. Local non-profits, arts venues and businesses, both independently and through City partnerships, provide essential services, community enrichment and social infrastructure.

Jason LaClair
Main Library

# EQUITY AND INCLUSION

**Goal CW-D | Expand and strengthen equity and inclusion throughout the City's civic processes and practices.**

## POLICIES

CW-24.  Develop and implement a strategic plan to guide the City's work in building a more equitable and welcoming Bellingham for all.

CW-25.  Promote community understanding about racism's impact on health and wellbeing, working with local organizations to further Bellingham as an anti-racist community.

CW-26.  Foster inclusion and diverse representation in the City workforce, particularly for first responders and others that interact with the public, including through training opportunities, accessible hiring and appointment processes and a supportive workplace culture.

CW-27.  Foster community representation in City decision-making, by evaluating opportunities to tailor the appointment process and reduce barriers to achieve a diverse perspective and representative set of advisory groups.

CW-28.  Provide inclusive guidance and resources to welcome residents of all backgrounds as they interact with the City, supporting them in navigating complex processes with greater ease.

CW-29.  Proactively reduce barriers to make City services and facilities more accessible, available and easily navigable, ensuring access to all.

CW-30.  Explore and quantify disparities in both beneficial and detrimental impacts of past, current, and proposed City practices. Consider factors such as access to infrastructure, City services and programs and housing and economic opportunity.

CW-31.  Identify under-invested and marginalized communities and direct resources to reduce disparities between areas and populations.

### JUMP TO RELATED POLICIES

>> **H-11-25 | Housing For All Incomes**

>> **H-43 | Anti-displacement**

>> **H-45-49 | Livable Housing**

>> **T-32-37 | Equitable Facilities & Infrastructure**

## CITY AS A LEADER

The City of Bellingham strives to lead by example and be a model for others throughout the community. These policies ensure that the City is doing its part to be a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable organization:

>> **FS-27 | Public Building Priorities**

>> **T-20 | TDM for City Employees**

>> **C-3 | Model Addressing Climate Change**

>> **ED-33 | City Career Opportunities**

>> **CW-26 | Diverse Representation**

>> **CW-39 | Culture of Service**

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Goal CW-E | Foster a welcoming environment for outreach and engagement by inviting and enabling community members to be involved in City government.**

### POLICIES

CW-32. Continue implementing systems and strategies to inform the community of City processes and provide meaningful opportunities for public engagement.

CW-33. Build community trust and foster transparency in City decision-making processes.

CW-34. Proactively reduce barriers to engagement for community members across a continuum of needs and abilities, prioritizing access, accessibility, ease of use and cultural sensitivity.

CW-35. Coordinate and balance community engagement efforts, ensuring outreach is sensitive to social context and overall community capacity.

CW-36. Strive to tailor community outreach strategies, considering an achievable range of engagement levels before identifying the appropriate approach methods to meet specific project needs and address community expectations.

CW-37. Continually evaluate effectiveness of engagement strategies to reach populations that may be most impacted by the City decision(s) under consideration.

CW-38. Focus resources to increasing involvement by under-represented and historically-marginalized community members.

CW-39. Foster a culture of service among City staff, supporting and enhancing their roles as City ambassadors.

## SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Community engagement looks different for each project or topic. Robust public participation may not be appropriate for some decisions, especially when there is limited time or legal implications. When it is appropriate, early discussions envisioning the right kind of engagement are critical. The City should clearly define where on this range each engagement approach should fall.

INFORM → CONSULT → INVOLVE → COLLABORATE → EMPOWER

## ENGAGEMENT PLAN BEST PRACTICES

- Prioritize Listening
- Set expectations clearly
- Implement culturally sensitive outreach
- Integrate community feedback into decision-making

- Provide multiple and varied opportunities (locations, times, and formats) to meaningfully engage
- Provide material in different languages
- Work with messengers identified by the community

- Use accessible material and plain language that is easy to understand
- Report back to the community regularly

# COMMUNITY WELLBEING

## TRIBAL RELATIONS

**Goal CW-F | Strengthen relationships and engagement processes with tribal nations and indigenous community members through informed practices that respect tribal sovereignty and honor treaty rights.**

### POLICIES

CW-40. Provide and prioritize opportunities for City staff to learn about appropriate engagement practices, and tribal governance, culture and history.

CW-41. Actively listen to tribal nations to better understand their needs and priorities; utilize this input to inform and refine City processes in closer alignment with their interests.

CW-42. Uphold City government relationships and protocols with tribal governments, prioritizing early and ongoing consultation or communication about City plans, projects and processes.

CW-43. Elevate the important relationship between tribal leadership and the City's elected executive.

CW-44. Standardize internal protocols, improving consistency and centralization of tribal engagement processes Citywide.

CW-45. Welcome and seek opportunities to build relationships and greater connection with the indigenous community, both for the public and between tribal and City leaders.

CW-46. Support enhanced community awareness, recognition and understanding of tribal nations and indigenous cultures through culturally appropriate actions that are responsive to tribal input.

### TRIBAL RECOGNITION

**Tribal governance, culture and history is integral to our region. The City recognizes that we are gathered on the traditional and unceded territory of the Lummi, Nooksack, Samish and Semiahmoo People who have cared and tended to this land since time immemorial.**

## MEMORIAL HEALING TOTEM POLE

Created by the Lummi House of Tears in 2006 to help the community heal, this totem pole commemorates a 1999 tragedy. A gas pipeline under Whatcom Falls Park spilled gasoline into Hanna and Whatcom Creeks and caused an explosion that took the lives of three people.

# PLANNING DOCUMENTS

## WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE PLANNING PROCESS? YOU CAN FIND IT HERE.

# UPDATING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

## 10-YEAR PERIODIC UPDATE PROCESS

Cities and counties planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) are required to review and update their comprehensive plans every 10 years. Updates should reflect new population and employment projections and any changes related to the Urban Growth Area (UGA), state law and community priorities. At this time, policies across all chapters of the plan may be reviewed and updated as needed. Given the scale of the periodic update, the GMA requires a community engagement process to ensure the community's current goals and priorities are reflected in the plan. The 2025 Bellingham Plan was the next periodic update after the City's 2016 Comprehensive Plan. The next will be due in 2035.

## ANNUAL UPDATE PROCESS

Outside of the 10-year periodic update process, the GMA limits amendments to the comprehensive plan to once a year. Each year, the City Council establishes a coordinated list or "docket" of proposed amendments to be reviewed. This provides an opportunity to evaluate and update the document as needed. These updates may include changes to the land use map, goals, policies, narrative, or graphics throughout the plan. Below is a list of comprehensive plan amendments that have been adopted since the 2025 Periodic Update. This list will be updated annually to reflect current conditions.

| COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Ordinance Number** | **Description** | **Adoption Date** |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

# CITY DOCUMENTS

## DOCUMENTS ADOPTED BY REFERENCE

**Some documents are adopted as part of the Bellingham Plan, requiring the same process for updates as the plan itself.**

Documents that are adopted by reference are essential to putting the Comprehensive Plan into action. These types of documents can be more detailed and technical than the visionary goals and policies in the Bellingham Plan. They are often updated more frequently than the Bellingham Plan itself. While they are separate documents, they get adopted or amended together with the Comprehensive Plan.

## Documents adopted by reference follow the same Type VI legislative process as the Comprehensive Plan.

These documents can also be used to fulfill Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements for comprehensive plans. On the following spread, you will find a list of all of the documents adopted by reference, listed by chapter.

You will also find these documents referenced in the relevant chapter of the Bellingham Plan in the blue reference column on that chapter's first page.

### OTHER RELEVANT BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

For some documents, other relevant boards or commissions also weigh in on the adoption or amendment process, providing input and making a recommendation. For example, the Transportation Commission reviews the Bike and Pedestrian Master Plans.

### TYPE VI LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

**The Bellingham Plan itself and any documents adopted by reference must follow this process.**

**Amendments are allowed only once per year.**

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN

Document Adopted by Reference

e.g. Bike and Pedestrian Master Plans

Planning Commission Recommendation

City Council Decision and Adoption
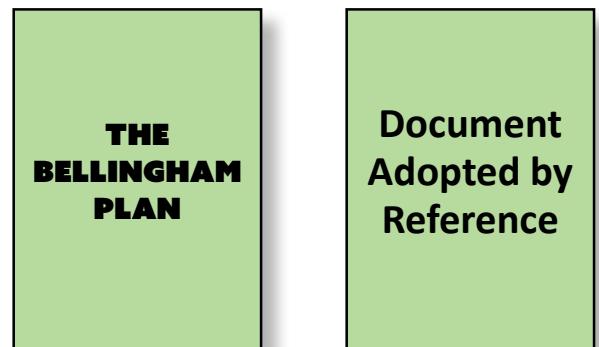
# OTHER DOCUMENTS

**Other documents are NOT adopted as part of the Bellingham Plan, and may be updated periodically.**

Documents not adopted by reference are also important to putting Bellingham's vision into action. However, updating these documents does not require updating the Comprehensive Plan.

## Documents not adopted by reference get updated with a separate process, on their own schedule.

These documents are not needed to fulfill GMA requirements.

You will find these documents referenced in each chapter of the Bellingham Plan in the lower section of the blue reference column on that chapter's first page.

### NOT A TYPE VI LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

**Most documents do not require a Type VI process to amend. These are usually adopted more often.**

**These documents may be amended as needed and are not limited to once per year.**

**Other Document**

e.g. TRAM (Transportation Reports on Annual Mobility)

# ALL DOCUMENTS ADOPTED BY REFERENCE

## HERE IS A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL DOCUMENTS ADOPTED BY REFERENCE, LISTED BY RELEVANT CHAPTER.

| LAND USE | Document Adopted By Reference | Relevant Board or Commission |
|---|---|---|
| Urban Village Plans | Downtown Urban Village Plan | Planning Commission |
| | Waterfront District Urban Village Plan | |
| | Fairhaven Urban Village Plan | |
| | Fountain District Urban Village Plan | |
| | Samish Way Urban Village Plan | |
| | Old Town Urban Village Plan | |
| | Barkley Urban Village Plan | |
| Institutional Master Plans | Western Washington University | |
| | St. Joseph's Hospital (North Campus) | |
| | Whatcom Community College | |

| HOUSING | Document Adopted By Reference | Relevant Board or Commission |
|---|---|---|
| | Consolidated Plan | Community Development Advisory Board |

| ENVIRONMENT | Document Adopted By Reference | Relevant Board or Commission |
|---|---|---|
| | Shoreline Master Program | Shoreline Committee of the Planning Commission |

## WHERE ARE THE REFERENCES IN OTHER CHAPTERS?

Good observation! Not all of the Bellingham Plan's 10 chapters include documents which are adopted by reference. Instead, some chapters only include links to other relevant city documents or resources, not adopted by reference.

| FACILITIES & SERVICES | Document Adopted By Reference | Relevant Board or Commission |
|---|---|---|
| | Surface and Stormwater Comprehensive Plan<br><br>Comprehensive Sewer Plan<br><br>Wastewater Conveyance Plan (Vol I, Vol II)<br><br>Comprehensive Water System Plan and Update | Water Resources Advisory Board |
| | Capital Facilities Plan | |
| | Bellingham Public Library Facilities Master Plan | Bellingham Publc Library Board of Trustees |

| TRANSPORTATION | Document Adopted By Reference | Relevant Board or Commission |
|---|---|---|
| | Multimodal Transportation Plan<br><br>Pedestrian Master Plan<br><br>Bicycle Master Plan | Transportation Commission |
| | ADA Transition Plan | |

| PARKS | Document Adopted By Reference | Relevant Board or Commission |
|---|---|---|
| | Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PRO) Plan | Greenways Advisory Committee<br><br>Parks & Recreation Advisory Board |

# GLOSSARY

## WONDERING WHAT SOMETHING MEANS? YOU CAN FIND IT HERE.

**Accessibility** | The design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them. (US Center for Disease Control)

**Accessory Use** | A land use that is related and subordinate to the main use located on the same lot (see Land Use).

**Adaptive Reuse** | Taking an old building and converting if for a different - often modern - purpose instead of leaving it vacant or demolishing it to build something new.

**Affordable Housing** | Housing that does not exceed thirty percent of a household's monthly income. When capitalized, "Affordable housing" or "income-restricted Affordable housing" generally refers to housing that is legally reserved for households below a certain income threshold (often 80% of the area median income).

**Anadromous Fisheries** | Fish species that migrate from saltwater to freshwater to spawn.

**Annexation** | The process by which a city expands its border to include new area, generally adjacent to its existing city limits.

**Area Median Income (AMI)** | The median income for an area. That means there are the same number of households earning more than this amount as are earning less than it. The amount is different for different household sizes - a four-person household AMI (the baseline AMI number most commonly referenced) is higher than a two-person household AMI. AMI is also used to reference the affordability of housing units. Larger housing units are assumed to be occupied by larger households, so a 3-bedroom unit will cost more than a 1-bedroom unit at the same AMI level. See also affordable housing or income-restricted affordable housing.

**Bellingham Whatcom Public Facilities District (BWPFD)** | An independent municipal taxing authority created solely to fund facilities that encourage or enhance economic development within a regional core area. The BWPFD's mission is to fund a regional center that will increase economic prosperity and lay a foundation for further public and private investment in our community.

**Best Available Science** | Scientific information prepared by local, state, or federal natural resource agencies, a qualified scientific professional or team of qualified scientific professionals that is consistent with criteria established in the Washington Administrative Code. (WAC)

*Capital Facilities* | Physical infrastructure, buildings, or other built forms that support public services. Capital Facilities have reasonably long life spans and generally require an architect or engineer for design.

*Carbon Sequestration* | The process of capturing and storing atmospheric carbon dioxide to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and help mitigate climate change.

*Cascadia Region* | The general geographic area between Portland, OR and Vancouver, BC known for innovation, access to nature, and its location on the Pacific Rim.

*City* | If lowercased, it refers to Bellingham as a community within a geographic boundary. If capitalized, it refers to the City of Bellingham as a local government.

*City Center* | The geographic area that encompasses Bellingham's Downtown, Old Town, and Waterfront districts.

*Clean Energy* | A broad term referring to the absence of pollution in energy generation.

*Climate Mitigation* | Also known as Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emission Reduction, relates to actions taken to reduce or eliminate the emissions of greenhouse gases (present and future) in order to reduce the rate and extent of climate change damage. (WA State Dept of Commerce)

*Climate-Adaptive Plants* | Plant species that can survive and thrive under changing or extreme climatic conditions such as drought, heatwaves, irregular rainfall or saline soils.

*Co-Living Housing* | A residential development with sleeping units that are independently rented and lockable and provide living and sleeping space, and residents share kitchen facilities with other sleeping units in the building. Co-living housing is often called a congregate living facility, single room occupancy, or boarding house. (GMA)

*Commercial Use* | A business or other use that focuses on the buying and selling of goods and/or services.

*Community Capacity* | The collective resources and determination needed to engage with local government. Community capacity can be overwhelmed by confusing processes or too many simultaneous opportunities for engagement.

*Community Members* | People that live, work, play, or visit in Bellingham.

*Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)* | A Washington State required program that requires worksites with 100 or more full-time employees to develop a strategy to reduce vehicle trips and miles traveled to and from the workplace. This is implemented through the Smart Trips program in Whatcom County.

*Complete Streets* | Streets that are designed for safe and comfortable travel by everyone, including people walking, biking, driving, or using public transit.

*Concurrency* | The installation, improvement, and operation of facilities and services needed to serve new development. This operation should meet the adopted level of service standards for that service type (see Level of Service). For example, as the city grows, additional parks are developed to maintain the balance between park area and residents.

*Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)* | An approach to designing spaces that reduces opportunities for crime and increases safety. Common CPTED principles include: Natural Surveillance, Natural Access Control, Maintenance, Territorial Reinforcement and Activity Support.

*Critical Areas* | Environmentally sensitive and hazardous areas regulated and protected under Washington's Growth Management Act, which include wetlands, critical aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas.

*Culture of Service* | The commitment among City employees to serve the public interest through accountability, professionalism and respect.

*Displacement* | The process by which a household is forced to move from its community because of conditions beyond their control.* Physical displacement: Households are directly forced to move for reasons such as eviction, foreclosure, natural disaster or deterioration in housing quality.*Economic displacement: Households are compelled to move by rising rents or costs of home ownership like property taxes.*Cultural displacement: Residents are compelled to move because the people and institutions that make up their cultural community have left the area. (WA State Dept of Commerce)

*District Energy System* | A system that heats or cools multiple buildings from a central plant, instead of each building having its own heating or cooling equipment.

*Embodied Carbon* | The carbon pollution created during the entire lifecycle of a building - from making and transporting materials, to construction, maintenance and demolition.

*Employment Lands* | Land parcels with either commercial, industrial, institutional or mixed-use zoning designations. These zones can accommodate a variety of potential employment uses such as office, retail, services or industry.

*Environmental Remediation* | The process of cleaning up pollution or contaminants from soil, water or air to protect human health and the environment.

*Environmental Stewardship* | The responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation, sustainable practices and active care.

*Equity/Equitable* | The act of developing, strengthening and supporting fairness in systems, resources, opportunities and outcomes. Equity ensures that outcomes in the conditions of wellbeing are improved for marginalized groups, lifting up outcomes for all.

*Form-Based Code* | Regulations that focus more on the physical form of buildings and public spaces rather than on their function. They guide the design, scale and placement of buildings instead of simply controlling land uses.

*Goal* | A broad vision statement of intention, defining what the city would like to achieve over time.

*Greenways Program* | A local program that uses property tax levys to raise funds for park and open space land acquisition and trail projects.

*Habitat Blocks and Corridors* | An essential approach to supporting wildlife, habitat blocks are large, connected areas of natural land where wildlife can live; habitat corridors are strips of natural land that connect habitat blocks, allowing animals to move safely between them.

*Historically Marginalized Populations* | Groups of people with shared identities or lived experiences who have experienced systemic exclusion and oppression because of social, political, cultural, and economic identity markers.

*Impact Fees* | Fees imposed on development to help pay for City improvements, infrastructure, and services needed to serve the area in which the development will occur.

*Incentive Zoning* | A land use tool that allows developers to build more (such as taller buildings or higher density)  in exchange for providing public benefits or amenities. Examples of benefits include affordable housing, open space or public art.

*Inclusion* | The degree to which organizations meaningfully and intentionally involve community members and employees in work, conversations and decision-making processes. Inclusion is a qualitative measure of authentic representation and participation.

*Inclusionary Affordability* | The inclusion of Affordable housing within a building that otherwise contains market-rate (rented or sold at market value) housing units. This may be achieved through an optional incentive such as a density bonus for providing affordability or through a required or mandatory provision for affordability.

*Income-Restricted Affordable Housing* | (See Affordable housing)

*Infill* | The development or redevelopment of land within a built-up area, especially as part of a strategy to increase density, utilize vacant or underutlized spaces, or reduce urban sprawl.

*Invasive Species* | Species that have been introduced to a new area, usually by humans, and cause ecological or economic harm because they can spread quickly and disrupt the natural balance.

*Land Capacity* | The potential future use that an area could fulfill if built out completely.

*Land Use* | The way in which an area is used, such as for housing (a residential land use), businesses (a commercial land use), parks (a public land use) or other uses.

*Land Use Designation* | The assigned land use that is permitted in a particular area (see land use).

*Level of Service (LOS) Standards* | A metric used to identify the level at which the community is served. Standards are used to indicate minimum benchmarks of acceptable levels of service. These may be calculated as a total number, such as on a per resident basis, or through other calculations.

*Living Wage*  | What someone working a single full-time job needs to earn to support their basic needs. A living wage is generally significantly higher than the poverty level or minimum wage. It gives workers the ability to afford a decent standard of living where they can afford housing, food, childcare, healthcare, transportation, and other life necessities.

*Loneliness Epidemic* | A phenomenon posing major health risks due to the prevalent and widespread social isolation throughout the United States.

*Low Impact Development (LID)* | A stormwater and land-use management approach that tries to mimic natural hydrologic conditions by emphasizing the following techniques: conservation, use of on-site natural features, site planning, and distributed stormwater best management practices (BMPs) integrated into a project design. (WA State Dept of Ecology)

**Maritime Heritage** | A non-regulatory region-wide partnership program that strengthens, shares, and connects our state's maritime communities and resources. The designation is managed by the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation. National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape. (maritimewa.org)

**Middle-Scale Housing** | Housing that is generally larger in bulk than a traditional single-family home but smaller than a typical apartment building. These multi-unit projects generally result in individual units that are larger than apartment units but smaller than single-family homes. Examples include townhomes, cottage housing, and triplexes.

**Mitigation Sequencing** | Refers to a step-by-step approach required by Washington State to avoid, minimize, and compensate for environmental impacts - particularly to sensitive natural areas - from development.

**Mobility** | The ability for people and goods to move easily, efficiently, and safely throughout Bellingham.

**Multi Unit Housing Forms** | Housing with units that are attached to one another, with separations between units occurring horizontally between floors, such as in a stacked triplex. Additional vertical separation is also possible, such as between apartment units.

**Multimodal Transportation** | A system that considers and incorporates several travel modes such as pedestrian, bicycle, transit, automobile, freight truck, marine ferry, light rail, railroad, and airplanes.

**Multimodal Concurrency (also see Concurrency)** | A framework used to assess Bellingham's transportation network to determine if it can support the city's anticipated growth.

**Native Species** | Species that naturally live and grow in a specific area or ecosystem.

**Neighborhood** | An area with people living within it, whether it is very dense or more suburban in feel. Some have significant commercial or other uses as well as homes. Bellingham includes 25 (capital N) Neighborhoods, each with a defined boundary. These Neighborhoods are often associated with specific neighborhood associations or other organizations to help connect residents to one another and to the City.

**Open Space** | Land acquired for the protection of natural resources, landscapes and recreation.

**Pedestrian-Oriented** | A design approach that intentionally incorporates and prioritizes the needs of pedestrians, improving the experience and access for those walking along or adjacent to the area.

**Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)** | Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH): Subsidized, leased housing with no limit on length of stay. People who need comprehensive support services, such as community-based health care or behavioral health care, to retain tenancy are prioritized. These services - often delivered on-site - are designed to support people living with complex and disabling behavioral or physical health conditions who were experiencing homelessness (or were at imminent risk of homelessness) prior to moving into housing. Services are intended to help them retain stable housing so they can improve their health, and be connected with community-based health care, treatment, or employment services.

**Placemaking** | A process that connects people to the place(s) around them and enhances their wellbeing. This may be achieved through physical design elements or shared experiences and memories that foster community connection.

**Policy** | A high-level statement of how the City will achieve a stated goal. Policies are not actions that can be checked off once complete but rather describe ongoing, general approaches that could be achieved through multiple specific actions.

**Port of Bellingham** | Public organization responsible for economic development, aviation, maritime transportation, and some publicly owned land in Whatcom County.

**Priority Transit Populations** | Low-income households, Black, Indigenous, and people of color in the community, disabled populations, persons over 65 years and zero-car households. (WTA)

**Public-Private Partnership** | An agreement between the public and private sectors to finance, build, operate and/or maintain services or infrastructure.

**Public Facilities** | See Capital Facilities.

**Reliability (Transportation)** | Consistent and predictable transportation travel times.

**Renewable Energy** | A specific type of clean energy that relies on naturally replenishing resources.

**Resiliency** | Also known as adaptation, the ongoing process of anticipating, preparing for, and adapting to changes in climate and minimizing negative impacts to our natural systems, infrastructure and communities. (RCW 70A.65.010)

**Restoration** | The process of returning a natural area to a healthier, more natural condition with the goal of helping ecosystems recover and support native plants, animals and natural processes.

**Safe Routes to School** | A state and federal program for projects within two-miles of a primary, middle, and/or high school that aims to improve safety and mobility for students by encouraging and enabling them to walk and bike to school.

**Sensitive Land Uses** | Types of land uses that are especially vulnerable to pollution, noise or other environmental impacts. These often include places where people live, learn, or receive care - such as homes, schools, daycares, hospitals and parks.

**Service-Enriched Housing** | Housing that includes on-site services for those residing within the building. These services may range in size or intensity but are intended for the use of residents only. These services are intended to promote housing stability, without which the residents would have an increased likelihood of becoming homeless.

**Shared Mobility Services** | Transportation options that are available for different users on an as-needed basis, including car-sharing, bike-sharing, ridesharing, and other on-demand services.

**Single Unit Housing Forms** | Housing with units that are physically separated only vertically, resulting in individual units that are or could be on individual unit lots. These housing units may be in attached (such as in townhomes) or detached forms.

**Social Infrastructure** | Programs, policies, and structures of a community that support social connection, build social support, and reduce loneliness. This includes libraries, parks, volunteer groups, and member associations.

*Streetscape* | The elements that constitute the physical makeup of the street including the road, sidewalks, buildings, trees, lighting, street furniture and landscaping that together create the street's appearance and character.

*Sustainable* | The use or maintenance of resources over time without harming the environment and ensuring they are available for future generations.

*Traffic Calming Measures* | Infrastructure or strategies that reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety. Examples include speed bumps, raised crosswalks, curb extensions, and signage.

*Transit* | Shared transportation that is available for public use, including buses and trains.

*Transit Oriented Development (TOD)* | Development built around transit stops or stations, typically within a quarter to half-mile radius, to maximize ridership and encourage compact development.

*Transit Supportive Development (TSD)* | A development approach that encourages transit use throughout a city or corridor, not just around transit stations. It includes zoning policies, pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, and reduced parking requirements to make transit more accessible.

*Transportation Demand Management (TDM)* | The methods used to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of a transportation system by reducing travel demand generated by users, rather than physical expansion to increase system supply. TDM leads to improved mobility, reduced congestion, and lower carbon emissions.

*Transportation Impact Analysis (TIA)* | A traffic study that determines the potential impact of a development proposal on the transportation system.

*Tribal Nations* | Within the context of this document, the City uses the term tribal nations to refer to those federally-recognized tribes that have a formal government-to-government relationship with the U.S. These tribes are sovereign entities with the authority to govern themselves and their territories. In other contexts, the term may be used more broadly, including all indigenous communities regardless of recognition status.

*Underdeveloped* | A parcel or area of land that has not yet been developed or built out to fulfill a significant portion of its allowed uses or density. The result is significant unbuilt land capacity.

*Under-Represented Populations* | Groups of people with shared identities or lived experiences who have had less representation, influence, or access to services or resources despite their demographic proportion of the greater population.

*Universal Design* | Inclusive design that ensures places can be used by all without the need for separate accommodations.

*Urban and Community Forests* | Land in and around human settlements occupied or potentially occupied by trees and associated vegetation. (RCW 76.15.010)

*Urban Growth Area (UGA)* | Area in which growth should be encouraged. Outside of this area, growth should be limited and can only occur if it is not urban in nature. The State requires these areas to be established by counties with input from cities.

*Urban Village* | A defined area that Bellingham uses to guide smart and sustainable growth. These areas have a vibrant mix of residential and commercial uses and boost economic development. They are also dense enough to support increased pedestrian and bicycle accessibility.

*Vulnerable Populations* | Groups that are more likely to be at higher risk for poor health outcomes in response to environmental harms, due to: adverse socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, high housing and transportation costs relative to income, limited access to nutritious food and adequate health care, linguistic isolation, and other factors that negatively affect health outcomes and increase vulnerability to the effects of environmental harms; and,sensitivity factors, such as low birth weight and higher rates of hospitalization. Vulnerable populations include, but are not limited to: racial and ethnic minorities; low-income populations; and, populations disproportionately impacted by environmental harms. (RCW 70A.02.010)

*Vulnerable Transportation Users* | Individuals who are more susceptible to injury or death in collisions because they lack the protection of a motor vehicle. This includes people that walk, bike, or roll for transportation purposes.

*Water Resource Inventory Area 1 (WRIA 1)* | One of 62 specific geographic areas covered under the Washington State Watershed Management Act of 1998, which required all participating local governments to address water quantity, with the option of addressing water quality, instream flows, and fish habitat. WRIA 1 includes most of Whatcom County with a portion extending into Canada and Skagit County.

*Wayfinding* | A system of maps, signs, symbols, and design features that help people navigate from one place to another.

*Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)* | The federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPOs) for Bellingham and Whatcom County. WCOG coordinates transportation planning, economic development, and other regional issues across Whatcom County.

*Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)* | The primary public transit provider throughout Bellingham and Whatcom County.

*Wildland-Urban Interface* | The geographical area where structures and other human development meets or intermingles with wildland vegetative fuels. (GMA)

*Zoning* | The division of land into areas or "zones" that allow specific land uses and generally provide size restrictions for buildings (see Land Use).