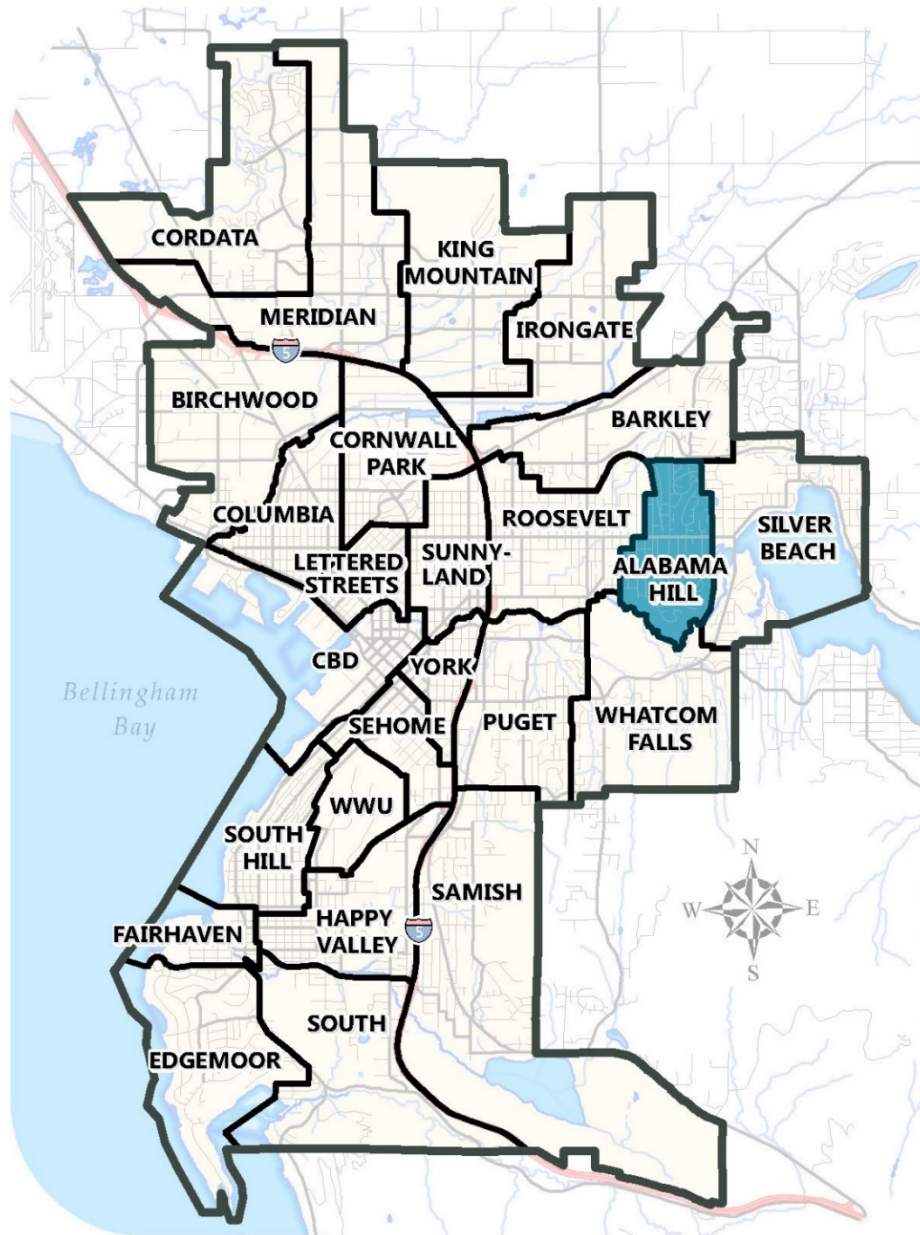




# Alabama Hill Neighborhood Plan

*As adopted by Ordinance No. 8868 and amended by Ordinance 8946, 2004-12-087, 2021-10-040 and 2021-10-044.*



**Neighborhood Plan Adoption:** In 1980, the Bellingham Plan was adopted and included individual plans for each neighborhood. When the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) was adopted in 1990, the City was required to update and amend the Bellingham Plan to include comprehensive planning elements required by the GMA. The Bellingham Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1995 and again included all of the individual neighborhood plans.

**Neighborhood Plan Amendment:** The Bellingham Municipal Code (BMC) 20.20 includes procedures by which individual property owners may petition the City for an amendment to an individual neighborhood plan. This may be a simple text amendment to address a condition or concern in a particular neighborhood or it may be a request for a change to the land use designation in a portion of a neighborhood. Because the neighborhood plans are adopted as part of the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the GMA restricts amendments to once per year. The deadline for submitting neighborhood plan amendments to the City is December 1 of each year (See BMC 20.20). An amendment to a neighborhood plan is made by ordinance. All of the changes made to this plan since it was originally adopted are listed on the last page of the plan.

**Neighborhood Plan Update:** Periodically, individual neighborhood plans merit a complete update due to changes of conditions in the neighborhood and/or the City. A complete neighborhood plan update can be a complex process requiring a great deal of time, public participation, and planning staff resources. Some of the individual neighborhood plans that were originally adopted in 1980 have received complete updates, while others have not.

## **I. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

Alabama Hill is predominantly a residential neighborhood with single family, detached houses built during the 1960's and 1970's. The majority of the street improvements and platting were accomplished after contemporary design practices were well established and the Bellingham Subdivision Ordinance was enacted. Houses are predominantly of contemporary design and oriented toward views of the bay and city. Broad, curved streets, cul-de-sacs, limited access to arterial streets, sidewalks adjoining curbs, and alley-less lots with a two/one depth/width ratio are common features in the neighborhood.

In addition, the neighborhood has many excellent views of the city and bay, a high level of maintenance of the homes, and good opportunities for access to open space.

## **II. OPEN SPACE**

Whatcom Falls Park at the south end of Alabama Hill represents an opportunity for open space amenities in this neighborhood. Auto traffic to and from Whatcom Falls Park has been, and should remain, through the Whatcom Falls Neighborhood.

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ACCESS FOR FOOT AND BICYCLE TRAFFIC TO WHATCOM FALLS PARK FROM THE NORTH, NEEDS TO BE IMPROVED TO ENCOURAGE ITS USE BY THE NEIGHBORHOOD. THE EXISTING RAILROAD RIGHTS-OF-WAY, WHICH NO LONGER ARE USED FOR RAIL TRANSPORTATION, HOLD POTENTIAL FOR CONNECTING THE ALABAMA HILL NEIGHBORHOOD WITH WHATCOM FALLS PARK, BLOEDEL-DONOVAN PARK AND LAKE WHATCOM TO THE EAST, AS WELL AS ROOSEVELT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SUNNYLAND PARK, AND THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS AREA TO THE WEST AND SOUTH (SEE BICYCLE PLAN). PROHIBITION OF MOTORCYCLES AND TRAIL BIKES, WHICH CREATE DISTURBING NOISE AND ERODE TRAILS, SHOULD BE A PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

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WHERE THE RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY IS NEAR VINING, BETWEEN RIDGEVIEW DRIVE AND CROWN LANE, THE OPPORTUNITY EXISTS FOR A VIEWPOINT PARK. EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE THIS PROPERTY SHOULD BE EXPLORED.

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St. Clair Park was designed as a neighborhood park with creative recreation facilities for grade school children. Because of the popular appeal of these facilities, and their comparative high quality, parents have been bringing their children to St. Clair Park from distant neighborhoods of Bellingham and Whatcom County. The park improvement program to refurbish existing parks and secure additional sites for neighborhood parks should ease the congestion problem at St. Clair.

Smaller undeveloped recreation sites are needed north of Alabama Street. Highland Park, on Vining between Maryland Place and Illinois Lane, serves this function.

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THE UNIMPROVED SILVER BEACH DRIVE RIGHT-OF-WAY EAST OF EAST CRESTLINE DRIVE, SHOULD BE LIGHTLY IMPROVED TO HELP MEET THE NEED FOR PLAY-LOTS.

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### **III. PUBLIC FACILITIES AND UTILITIES**

#### Water and Sewer

The majority of water distribution lines are adequately sized and reflect the contemporary engineering standards in effect at the time the neighborhood was developed. Because of the neighborhood's nearness to the water screening plant in Whatcom Falls Park, upgrading of selected lines to accommodate growth beyond the neighborhood can be anticipated.

Development on Alabama Hill above an elevation of 500 feet will have to be served by the existing water distribution system on top of the hill. This will require careful planning during the plat design phase of development.

There are no sewer capacity problems on the west side of Alabama Hill. The East side of Alabama Hill towards Lake Whatcom is served by the Silver Beach sewer trunk. Growth patterns and projections dictate that this trunk line be upsized within the next five to ten years.

#### Storage Drainage Facilities

Urban development has a significant effect on the amount, duration, and timing of storm water runoff. Replacement of natural forest cover with asphalt streets, buildings, and other impervious surfaces can cause a three to ten-fold increase in the peak surface runoff. Long, wet winters and poorly draining soils aggravate drainage problems.

There are two basic approaches to management of increased storm water flows. The first and most common is to construct a storm water network to carry the maximum flow. This solution treats the symptoms rather than the cause, and in many cases the costs of treatment are paid by the people who suffer property damage rather than by the owners of the development which causes the problem. The second solution is to maintain existing natural drainage ways and as much of the natural vegetation as possible, while building storm water retention facilities that hold back the increased flow until after the peak of the storm has passed.

Development has encroached upon the natural storm drainage channels on Alabama Hill. Storm trunk drainage is developed only along Alabama Street, and there only in sections.

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IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT ALL THE OPEN DRAINAGE DITCHES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTUALLY BE ENCLOSED.

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Detailed drainage recommendations are presented in the public facilities and utilities section of the plan.

## Schools

Access to Roosevelt School has been improved by the construction of a sidewalk on the Illinois Street right-of-way from Vining west to the school property.

## Library

The Library Board's long range plans include a priority for a branch library in the Alabama Hill - Silver Beach area. If possible, this facility should be located on an arterial and combined with another public facility (school, fire station, etc.)

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A BRANCH LIBRARY ACQUISITION BUDGET NEEDS TO BE IDENTIFIED TO ALLOW SITE SELECTION TO PROCEED BEFORE ALL THE DESIRABLE SITES ARE DEVELOPED.

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Click here to view the [Alabama Hill Neighborhood Circulation Map](#)

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## IV. CIRCULATION

### Arterial Circulation

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THIS PLAN RECOGNIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF ALABAMA STREET AS AN ARTERIAL AND THE NEED TO DEVELOP AN ARTERIAL FOR TRAFFIC FROM SILVER BEACH AND THE ADJOINING DEVELOPMENT AREA IN THE COUNTY. ALABAMA STREET SHOULD BE IMPROVED TO FOUR MOVING LANES WITH ADJOINING SIDEWALKS.

THE PROPOSED NEW EAST-WEST BURNES WAY ARTERIAL CORRIDOR WILL HELP TO PROTECT THE ALABAMA NEIGHBORHOOD FROM ADDITIONAL TRAFFIC IMPACTS WHICH WOULD RESULT FROM FURTHER RESIDENTIAL EXPANSION NORTHWARD.

BECAUSE OF TOPOGRAPHY AND THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF WOBURN STREET TO THE WEST AS A MAJOR NORTH-SOUTH ARTERIAL, VINING STREET SHOULD NOT BE DEVELOPED AS A COLLECTOR ARTERIAL.

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THERE SHOULD BE NO DIRECT COLLECTOR ACCESS TO BURNES WAY UNTIL BURNES WAY IS DEVELOPED FROM BRITTON ROAD TO WOBURN STREET AND THE WOBURN STREET ARTERIAL IS COMPLETED.

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FUTURE CONNECTIONS TO BURNES WAY SHOULD BE MINIMIZED AND SHOULD BE MADE WHERE IT IS POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE SAFELY DESIGNED INTERSECTIONS. STAGGERED INTERSECTIONS WITH MULTIPLE ACCESSES SHOULD BE AVOIDED.

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Specific details concerning construction standards for the recommended street improvements are contained in the circulation element of the plan.

The proposed Burnes Way arterial should also serve to reduce traffic volume growth on Alabama Street as a diversion route for developing areas to the east in Silver Beach and Whatcom County. Because of adverse environmental impacts on Whatcom Falls Park, steeper grades, and lack of convenience to potential users, the alternative of Iowa Drive as a secondary arterial is less desirable than Burnes Way as a solution to the Lake Whatcom arterial traffic demand.

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IOWA DRIVE SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A FEASIBLE ROUTE FOR AN EAST-WEST ARTERIAL.

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## Residential Streets

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ALABAMA HILL NEIGHBORHOOD STREET STANDARDS SHOULD BE FULL RESIDENTIAL STANDARD: 36 FEET WIDE, WITH CURBS AND SIDEWALKS ON BOTH SIDES.

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The majority of the neighborhood is developed to this standard. The practice of parking recreational vehicles on the street suggests the need for extensive on-street parking.

## Bicycle Circulation

A companion study of the Comprehensive Plan, Bicycle Facilities Planning, completed in 1978, for the Office of Planning and Development, proposes actions for a safe and adequate city-wide bicycle transportation system with both a five and a twenty-five year focus.

The goal of the five year program is to provide opportunities for safe cycling on existing streets; and the goal of the twenty-five year program is development of off-street bikeways coordinated with open space greenbelts that will serve both the recreational and commuter bicyclists.

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PLAN PROPOSALS IN ALABAMA HILL INCLUDE:

### FIVE YEAR FOCUS:

SIDEWALKS ALONG A WIDENED ALABAMA STREET.

### TWENTY-FIVE YEAR FOCUS:

BICYCLE PATH ALONG NORTH BANK OF WHATCOM CREEK.

RAILROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY ACQUIRED FOR BIKE TRAIL USE AS OUTLINED UNDER OPEN SPACE ABOVE.

IMPROVEMENT OF THE EXISTING BRIDGE WHERE THE WATER LINE CROSSES WHATCOM CREEK, OF THE ERIE STREET WATER MAIN TRAIL, AND OF THE ARBOR STREET EXTENSION.

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Click here to view the [Alabama Hill Neighborhood Land Use Map](#)

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## **SECTION V. SUBAREA DESCRIPTIONS AND LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

### **Area 1**

This area has a land use designation and development prerequisite considerations similar to those in Mt. Baker Neighborhood to the north. A single-family area, the base zoning density is 10,000 square feet per lot, with an allowance for clustering at 7,200 square feet per lot. Steep slopes, difficulty of access from existing streets, and drainage problems suggest that the area develop at single family density lower than Area 2. Access to new subdivision developments in this area is to be via the new Burnes Way arterial to the north, as a prerequisite consideration.

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**AREA 1 LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, LOW DENSITY**

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### **Area 2**

This is the largest central segment in the neighborhood and reflects many of the characteristics described in the Neighborhood Character section of this plan. The portion north of Alabama was generally developed later than the area south of Alabama. In some places this difference is apparent in the design of streets, homes, etc. The land use designation for Area 2 reflects the developed trend of the Alabama Hill neighborhood. Views of the city and the bay should be protected or enhanced where possible. Access from developing portions south of Alabama should minimize traffic hazards at the intersections with Alabama.

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**AREA 2 LAND USE DESIGNATION: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY**

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### **Area 3**

The plan calls for a Residential Multi, Transition designation. This designation reflects the increasing demand for multiple-housing development to the west in Roosevelt Neighborhood and the desirability of a gradual change in scale between land use types. Views of the City should be preserved where possible and drainage solutions should be sought for runoff problems.

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**AREA 3 LAND USE DESIGNATION: MULTIFAMILY RESIDENTIAL, MEDIUM DENSITY**

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#### **Area 4**

Area 4 encompasses St. Clair Park and that portion of Whatcom Falls Park north of Whatcom Creek. The property should be retained by the city and continue to be used as a park and open space.

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**AREA 4 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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#### **Area 5**

This area is comprised of Highland Heights Park, an approximately 1.2-acre neighborhood park.

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**AREA 5 LAND USE DESIGNATION: PUBLIC**

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