CHAPTER 2 – The Land Use Element

2.1 Introduction

The Land Use Element takes stock of how land is currently being used in Lynden and determines how the land will be used in the future as the City plans for its predicted growth. It recognizes that land is a finite resource and the manner in which it is developed and used impacts every aspect of the city: economic, public safety, roads and utilities, and quality of life.

The continued growth within Lynden will obviously impact the look and feel of Lynden. More than 6,400 people are estimated to find their new homes in Lynden over the next 20 years. More than 2,100 jobs will be created over that same time period. Accommodating the residential, employment, and recreational needs for these people will alter the landscape. Open fields within the Urban Growth Area will be filled with houses, apartment buildings, and commercial space. Creative residents will figure out ways to fill in vacant lots in already developed neighborhoods. Downtown and commercial areas on the edge of town will continue to evolve and make changes based on community needs. There is no doubt that Lynden will look different in 20 years than it does in 2016.

The Land Use Element provides a plan for how this change will occur. It gives the city, its government officials, its developers, builders, and all of its residents a guide for growth. It acknowledges that change will occur and attempts to minimize conflicting land uses so that the City’s vision can still be met.

The Land Use Element, like all the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, are not static. They require constant refinement and adaptation both to opportunities and obstacles. For example, the 2004 plan gave a detailed plans for several of Lynden’s sub-areas. While these are not specifically updated for this plan, in the coming years they will be addressed.

2.1.1 The Growth Management Act

The 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA) addressed a problem that at the time was considered the haphazard and often chaotic development of land within Washington State. This lack of coordination was having a negative impact on the health, safety and quality of life of residents. The GMA was adopted in an effort to force municipalities to focus growth in already “urban” areas and to plan for future growth in a thoughtful manner.

The Growth Management Act requires cities to include a land use element that designates the general distribution for housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses. The land use element shall include population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth. It should also provide for the protection of public water supplies and address drainage, flooding, and storm water run-off issues. (from RCW 36.70a.070(1)).
Furthermore, the GMA recognizes the importance of coordinating growth between municipalities. Lynden fully agrees with this coordination and has adopted the Whatcom County-wide Planning Policies. These refined policies give a framework for organization amongst the varied County municipalities. These policies and their development offer a coordinated path forward so that competition can be minimized and the broader geographical context is considered. The Whatcom County-wide Planning Policies are included in Lynden’s Comprehensive Plan as Appendix C.

2.1.2 Lynden’s Urban Growth Area (UGA)

Lynden’s Urban Growth Area was initially established as a requirement of the GMA in 1997. It was established with the concern that Lynden will limit its impact to the surrounding agricultural areas as long-term growth occurs. In 2009, the UGA was expanded and a UGA reserve was added in order to support forecasted growth. In 2015, Lynden proposed three changes to its UGA in order to meet the forecasted land capacity needs. Further analysis of these changes can be found in 2.3 below.

2.2 UGA Existing Conditions: THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

2.2.1 Natural Resource Lands

Resource lands are used for agriculture, forests, fisheries, and mining.

Agricultural Land in Lynden and Vicinity

Lynden is located in the heart of the fertile Nooksack Valley and is surrounded by agricultural land. The quality of agricultural land within and surrounding Lynden is a primary consideration in the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. It is a major factor in the consideration of the City’s Growth Boundaries, as stipulated in the Growth Management Act.

The Whatcom County Planning Department prepared The Lynden-Nooksack Valley Sub-Area, Background Document in December, 1983. The prime farmlands of Whatcom County as derived from the Soil Survey of Whatcom County are defined as follows:

- Class 1: Prime Farmland
- Class 2: Prime When Drained
- Class 3: Prime When Protected From Flooding
- Class 4: Prime When Irrigated
- Class 5: Prime When Drained and Protected from Flooding

The report states: Prime Farmland class, capability class and subclass, and yields per acre all relate to native soil properties and management considerations. However, there are differences in the categories. The Prime Farmland Classification identifies soils which currently are productive agricultural soils or have the potential to be so when
drainage, irrigation or protection from flooding is employed. Capability class and subclasses relate to the existing condition of the soil, and indicate general types of suitable crops and management concerns. Yields per acre enumerate specific crop yields in "best management practice" for soils currently in cultivation.

Maps developed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service shows that Lynden is surrounded by prime farmlands except in the area between the City limits and Badger Road, east of Double Ditch Road, as well as a small area west of the Guide Meridian. As a result, almost any growth outside the City’s current boundaries will take prime farmlands.

Forests

No working timberlands exist within the City limits or the Urban Growth Area.

Fisheries

Several salmon species are known to spawn in Fishtrap Creek and Double Ditch, including two ESA listed species, the Puget Sound Steelhead and the fall Chinook. In 2009, 20 percent of the Nooksack River basin’s steelhead spawning population was found to be using Fishtrap Creek for spawning grounds. The other two creeks whose watersheds are within the City of Lynden are Kamm Creek and Duffner Ditch Creeks; both of which provide fish habitat. Finally, many of the ditch networks, Assink, Benson, Bender, and Depot, that both surround and enter the City provide rearing habitat for anadromous and resident fish species.

Mineral Lands

According to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Interim Urban Growth Areas in Whatcom County, Lynden is not known to possess any mineral lands.

2.2.2 Critical Areas

In 2002, the City contracted W. Perry Welsh, Jr. and Sehome Planning & Engineering to jointly construct a Critical Areas Inventory for Lynden and the UGA. Under the GMA, cities must identify wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologically hazardous areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and other critical areas. Critical areas within Lynden and the Urban Growth Area were identified through aerial mapping and field survey.

Lynden’s Critical Area Ordinance is due for an update in 2017.

Wetlands

Most wetlands in Lynden and the Urban Growth Area are associated with riparian systems on Duffner Creek and Fishtrap Creek. Riparian wetlands can also be found in lower segments of Double Ditch Creek. Wetlands include forested, scrub shrub, and emergent wetlands. Several slope wetlands are present in sloping areas along
floodplain areas. A few units that were mapped as wetlands, based on ponds, may be man-made and not regulated.

Fish & Wildlife

Fishtrap Creek and Double Ditch provide spawning and rearing habitat for two ESA listed fish species, steelhead and fall chinook. Other anadromous fish, such as coho and chum, spawn and rear in these watercourses and some of the other “ditches”. These are primarily north of the city but they continue into the city limits and provide rearing habitat for anadromous and resident fish. Portions of Duffner Creek also support resident fish. Lamprey species are common in these watercourses and two species of rare sucker, the Nooksack Dace and Salish Sucker have been observed in Fishtrap and Double Ditch Creeks (North Lynden WID, *Drainage and Fish Habitat Management Plan 2010*).

According to the *Lynden-Nooksack Valley Sub-Area* report there are no endangered plants in the area, but the agricultural fields are used as a dry land feeding area for migratory birds. The animals included in the distributed land habitat are listed as: opossums, shrews, moles, bats, Eastern cottontails, Mountain beaver, gophers, beaver, skunk, Bushy tailed woodrats, voles, Deer mice, weasels, coyotes, Red foxes, and Black-tailed deer, hawks, Blue grouse, California quail, Ring-necked pheasants, killdeer, gulls, doves, owls, Common nighthawk, Rufous hummingbirds, flickers, woodpeckers, kingfishers, Say’s phoebes, Horned larks, swallows, Purple martins, jays, ravens, crows, chickadees, bushtits, Bewic’s wrens, robins, thrushes, kinglets, water pipits, waxwings, starlings, warblers, meadowlarks, and are mentioned in *Whatcom County Wildlife Resources*, 1976.

Geologically Hazardous Areas

Six geologic hazard units are catalogued, including steep slopes, ravines associated with streams, and areas mapped with organic soils, such as mulch and peat deposits. The presence of steep slopes area indicated by topographic features which are apparent on the USGS maps for the vicinity. Presence of organic soils (muck) is based on the NRCS Soil Survey. This study used large-scale mapping to identify potential geologic hazard areas and did not result in a comprehensive evaluation of geologic hazards based on site specific land review.

Flooding

The City of Lynden has adopted the Flood Insurance Rate Maps and the regulations for monitoring flood hazards recommended by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Additionally, the adopted Critical Area Ordinance provides buffers, riparian areas and other methods to control flooding within the City and its Urban Growth Area.

One area, one that is particularly important to the next stage of Lynden’s residential growth is the area north of Main St between Double Ditch Road and Benson Rd. Since the 2004 update, this area has seen two dramatic floods associated with winter storms.
In January 2004 and 2009 winter floods inundated huge areas of agricultural land, roads, and many resident’s basements. The 2016 Van Zee annexation sits right in the center of where this flooding occurred. The city is at the forefront of large project, the Pepin Creek project, to relocate the ditches from these two roads into a “natural” channel that would hold excess water during flood events. It would also improve fish habitat, enhance the riparian zone, and create recreational opportunities for the residents of the new developments in this area. Furthermore, it will allow the City to make improvements to these roads that are currently not at city standards.

Archeological Sites and Aquifers

The City currently does not have any site of archeological or historical significance within the City limits that are registered with the State Historical Preservation Office. However, there is an Indian cemetery in the 2007 annexed portion of the City limits and the Century House just south of the City limits. The Waples Building in downtown Lynden is listed on the National Historic Register. The Historic Business District, which is essentially downtown Lynden, contains a rich history in its buildings. Additionally, the Berthusen Barn located within Berthusen Park – operated by the City but outside the City limits and Urban Growth Area, was listed on the National Historic Register list in 2003. The Lynden Museum on Front Street also preserves items from Lynden’s past and displays what life used to be like in this town.

In early 2016, the City adopted a new Historic Preservation Ordinance and began the process of becoming a Certified Local Government, setting up a Historic Preservation Commission. This commission will work to create a Lynden Historic Places Register and uphold the ordinance. This is a big step in further identifying and protecting historic structures and landmarks in the city.

The City has a surface water source, the Nooksack River, for its potable water supply. Lynden has also adopted the Washington State Department of Ecology Stormwater Management Manual for the Puget Sound Basin to regulate all runoff, for the protection of surrounding watersheds and aquifers, as well as a stormwater management plan for the City.

2.3 UGA Existing Conditions: THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

2.3.1 Zoning and Land Use

Since the 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update, the City has adjusted its zoning code to remain relevant with modern zoning codes and plans. It dropped the RM-5 zone. It updated the Industrial Zone changing the I-1 and I-2 to an ID (Industrial District) and IBZ (Industrial Business Zone). Finally, it updated the Commercial Zone, dropping the CS-1, CS-2, CS-3 and adding the CSL (Local Commercial Services) and CSR (Regional Commercial Services). The land use plan and zoning ordinance are used to guide orderly development of land based on projected growth and population estimates for the City.
The City of Lynden has existing policies surrounding the use of public lands for utility and transportation corridors, sewage treatment and stormwater management facilities, as well as for schools, recreation, and other public uses. These policies can be found in various elements of the City's Comprehensive Plan, as well as in separate management/land use plans and regulations, and in local ordinances for the community. This Comprehensive Plan establishes a range of Future Land Use (FLU) designations that reserve land within the UGA for a variety of land uses, including agriculture, residential, commercial, industrial, and public. Under each FLU designation, one or more zoning designations may be established by the Lynden Municipal Code (LMC), which contains development regulations specifying allowed uses, density, setbacks, building heights, and other building and site design requirements. Table 2.3 below summarizes the FLU designations and corresponding zoning, as well as a summary of the total existing zoned acreage for each category within the City Limits (excluding the unincorporated UGA). Note that FLU designations apply to all areas within the UGA.

Table 2.3 Future Land Use and Zoning Designations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Future Land Use (FLU)</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Zoning</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Existing Acreage in City Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AG (Agriculture)</td>
<td>Reserved for agricultural land uses within the City and Urban Growth Area until other land uses are planned with the necessary extension of streets and public utilities.</td>
<td>A-1</td>
<td>Zoned for agricultural land uses within the City and Urban Growth Area until other land uses are planned with the necessary extension of streets and public utilities.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL (Low Density Residential)</td>
<td>Maintains stable, low-density, largely single-family neighborhoods, while providing a range of housing types and prices.</td>
<td>RS-100</td>
<td>Requires a minimum lot area of 10,000 sq. ft. and allows for 4 D.U./acre.</td>
<td>1,935.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RS-84</td>
<td>Requires a minimum lot area of 8,400 sq. ft. and allows for 4.5 D.U./acre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RS-72</td>
<td>Requires a minimum lot size of 7,200 sq. ft. and allows for 5 D.U./acre.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Land Use (FLU)</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Existing Acreage in City Limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RM (Medium Density Residential)</strong></td>
<td>Provides higher density housing options and a range of housing types to accommodate future growth.</td>
<td><strong>RMD</strong></td>
<td>A zoning designation that allows up to a maximum of 8 units/acre and encourages the integration of single family and multi-family homes within neighborhoods.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RM-1</strong></td>
<td>Up to 2 units/building, with a development density of 8 D.U./acre.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>441.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RM-2</strong></td>
<td>Up to 4 units/building, with a development density of 12 D.U./acre.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RM-3</strong></td>
<td>Up to 12 units/building, with a development density of 16 D.U./acre.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RM-4</strong></td>
<td>Up to 50 units/building, with a development density of 24 D.U./acre.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MH</strong></td>
<td>The primary use is modular and mobile homes, but also includes mobile home parks that meet or exceed the minimum requirements of RS-72 zone.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Land Use (FLU)</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Existing Acreage in City Limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COM (Commercial)</td>
<td>Provides for commercial activity and employment growth including office and retail uses.</td>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Provides and regulates buildings and/or structures where travel trailers and recreational vehicles are permitted. This zone may also be used for travel trailer and recreational vehicle camping, tent camping and camping cabins.</td>
<td>482.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HBD</td>
<td>This is the zone of the City’s original economic activity. It is an active mix of professional offices and residences, personal services and small retail.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CSL</td>
<td>Local scale retail development (stores less than 65,000 square feet), medical, professional and financial services.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CSR</td>
<td>Primary location for businesses that support both the local and regional trade through the development of large format retail and regional commercial stores.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IND (Industrial)</td>
<td>Provides employment growth for industrial and some commercial uses.</td>
<td>ID</td>
<td>This industrial zone permits a variety of industrial uses, controlled primarily by performance standards.</td>
<td>331.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Land Use (FLU)</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Zoning</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Existing Acreage in City Limits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUB (Public)</td>
<td>Provides public land needed to supply public facilities, services, and public open space.</td>
<td>PU</td>
<td>Regulates public and quasi-public areas such as parks, open space areas, public buildings, and the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds.</td>
<td>183.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBZ</td>
<td>A light industrial zone that permits a mixture of industrial and commercial uses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.3 Current Lynden Zoning Map**

*See Figure 2.3 Lynden Zoning Map that is included at the end of this chapter.*

### 2.4 EXISTING LAND USE IN LYNDEN

Table 2.4 below summarizes the existing land use within the UGA. The acreage figures are based upon the land use codes recorded with the Whatcom County Assessor and may not coincide with the zoning map.

**Table 2.4 Estimated Acreage Per Land Use 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>City Limits</th>
<th>Unincorporated UGA</th>
<th>Total UGA Acreage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>328.4</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>335.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>61.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches</td>
<td>46.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>46.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools</td>
<td>134.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>134.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Family</td>
<td>1,178.3</td>
<td>106.8</td>
<td>1,285.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Family</td>
<td>174.4</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>177.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>92.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairgrounds</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golf Course</td>
<td>143.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>143.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Services</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Whatcom County Assessor Land Use Codes and the City of Lynden Planning Department.

### 2.4.1 Commercial and Industrial Use

The City’s current actual land use acreages show commercial and industrial uses occupying 335.9 and 61.6 acres, respectively. The City actively pursues opportunity to increase the commercial and industrial zoned land being utilized for economic development.

**Historic Business District or HBD**

The Historic Business District is the zone where the City’s economic activity originated. It is intended to be an active mix of professional offices and residences, personal services and small retail establishments serving the employees and residents of the area. Emphasis on the City’s cultural history is anchored by the Pioneer Museum and the Windmill Inn. Storefronts and streetscapes encourage pedestrian activity.

**Local Commercial Services or CSL**

The purpose of the CSL zone is to provide a location for local scale retail development (stores less than 65,000 square feet), medical, professional and financial services. Development in this zone should focus on pedestrian connectivity to the surrounding area and mixed use development is encouraged. This zone, together with the Historic Business District, provides the primary location for civic and social activity within the community.

**Regional Commercial Services or CSR**

The purpose of the CSR zone is to support the development of large format retail and regional commercial development. This zone is located where larger parcels and arterial streets are available to support the traffic and land needs for these types of uses. This zone provides the primary location for businesses serving both the local and regional trade area.
2.4.2 Schools

There are 3 school systems in Lynden:

1. Lynden Public Schools, limited to the Lynden School District, currently has: three elementary schools (Bernice Vossbeck, Fisher, and Isom Elementary) with 1,360 students, one middle school (grades 6-8) with 606 students, and a high school (grades 9-12) with 809 students. It also runs the Lynden Academy an Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) program. There are 258 K-12 students in this program. Lynden passed a school bond in 2015 which will build a new (replacement) middle school on the east side of the city as well as rebuild Fisher Elementary. These are scheduled to open during the 2017-2018 school year.

2. Lynden Christian School students come from all over Whatcom County. The Lynden Christian School campus is centrally located with 3 schools on their property - an elementary school with 416 students, a middle school with 298 students and the high school with 344 students. Total enrollment in 2016 was 1058. It also runs a recycling center and second hand thrift store.

3. Cornerstone Christian School is a small private school located in the NE part of the city. Its building location was a part of the East Lynden annexation in 2007. Students primarily live within the city limits but some come from the surrounding north county area. The total enrollment is 121 students divided amongst grades 1-12.

Figure 2.4. Land Use in Lynden

See Figure 2.4 Land Use Map that is included at the end of this chapter.

2.5 Projecting the Next 20 Years

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires each county and city to look at least twenty years into the future and make accommodations for the growth that is projected to occur. Additionally, GMA planning goal 11 requires coordination between jurisdictions in the planning process (RCW 36.70A.020 (11)) and that county and city comprehensive plans must be coordinated and consistent when they share common borders or related regional issues (RCW 36.70A.100). Therefore, Whatcom County and the cities have undertaken a joint planning process to allocate population and employment growth in their respective Urban Growth Areas.

The population and employment growth allocation process followed 2 phases

Phase I - As an initial step in this process, the cities and County jointly funded a report entitled “Whatcom County Population and Employment Projections and Urban Growth
Allocations – Phase I Technical Report” (BERK, July 22, 2013). This report shows how future population and employment growth would be allocated to UGAs if based primarily on historical shares.

Phase II - Cities and County are not required to plan for the future based solely upon past trends. Local government goals and policies, public input, infrastructure availability, land capacity, and other factors are also taken into consideration. Existing interlocal agreements indicate that the County and cities will work together to develop proposed population and employment allocations to UGAs. At the request of the County, each city developed recommended population and employment allocations for their respective UGAs.

**Lynden**

An average growth of almost 3.5% since 1980 has made Lynden one of the fastest growing communities in the county. Actual growth has almost always exceeded expectations. The City has adopted a lower growth rate (1.9%) than the city has experienced over time. For Lynden, that amounts to slightly more than 6,400 new residents by 2036 using the high projection or 1.9% per year. The 1.9% rate is based on the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the consultants Berk and Associates’ assumption that growth in Washington State as a whole will slow.

- Between 1990 and 2010, the City’s growth rate has only been at or below 1.5% per year in Census correction years, and in 2008.
- The average growth rate for Lynden between 2000 and 2013 has been 2.7%
- The average number of people added to the City between 2000 and 2013 has been 285.

Should Lynden continue to grow at a higher rate, the City will need to determine whether it needs to accelerate plans to accommodate the growth, continue to increase density and continue to promote multi-family housing, or begin to find ways to limit growth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UGA Population Allocation Proposal</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Phase II - Preliminary City Proposal (Technical Report High)</td>
<td><strong>6,403</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Phase I - Technical Report Medium Growth Allocation</td>
<td>5,063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Difference</td>
<td><strong>1,340</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparing the Phase 1 and Phase II allocation decisions, the City determined to use the Technical Report High allocation and plan for 6,403 people to move to Lynden.
2.5.1 Summary of UGA changes since the 2009 UGA review

In 2015, Lynden proposed 3 changes to its UGA, the largest is changing the UGA reserve (155) acres to actual UGA. The other 2 additions are not for residential growth. Based on the 2013 Berk Report and County’s land capacity analysis, the UGA before these changes held enough land to accommodate 5,385 people, less than the 6,400 people that are expected to move to Lynden in this planning period. Adding the 155 acre UGA reserve to the UGA brings the UGA land capacity up to 6,472 people which is enough to accommodate the projected population growth.

This addition is strategically positioned for the next stage of residential growth for the City. It is between Double Ditch Road and SR 539 and is located within the Pepin Creek project area. The Pepin Creek project is a regional habitat improvement project that will move fish bearing waters away from the roadways (where it is currently impounded in ditches) into a new stream channel. This channel will increase flood water capacity, offer recreational opportunities for the new developments, and provide improved fish habitat for resident and anadromous fish. Furthermore, it will allow the City to improve Double Ditch Road and Benson Road to urban standards.

The second addition to the UGA is a small (0.4 acres) portion of a parcel that has been in the City limits that was “legally” described as being outside the city and not in the
UGA. This parcel had been the old waste water treatment plant that was no longer in use and was deemed surplus. It was sold to an adjacent landowner. The 0.4 acres portion of the parcel was not legally described to be within the City when it was annexed in 1967. The current UGA change is an attempt to reconcile the parcel differences. The southern half of this parcel is in the 100-year Nooksack River floodplain and will include a floodplain covenant to restrict development within the floodplain.

The third addition to the UGA is a 38 acre parcel that is already owned by the city and used for regional stormwater detention. Since it is owned by the city it makes sense to designate it in its UGA. The parcel is within the 100-year floodplain so will include a floodplain covenant to restrict its use to the stormwater detention that it already is.

Figure 2.5 UGA Additions

2.5.3 Land Capacity Analysis Overview

A land capacity analysis compares the proposed growth allocations to the capacity of the UGA to accommodate growth. The land capacity analysis is an important tool for sizing UGAs. Land capacity analysis results for the Phase II City Proposal, based upon existing UGA boundaries, including the change to the UGA reserve, are shown below. The analysis shows that the capacity of the current UGA with the recent changes is sufficient for the project population growth.
The land capacity analysis shows the City is proposing an urban growth area that is short of land for as many as 490 jobs. The City is not proposing to increase the size of the urban growth area to account for that projected demand at this time. Lynden has a broad range of employee to square feet ratios. From small retail uses that are employee dense, to very large cold storage facilities or farm equipment dealerships that are employee light. The range makes it difficult to define the exact land needs over time.

The City also recognizes that some of the biggest employers are not located within Commercial or Industrial zones. Two new schools are being constructed, assisted living and skilled nursing facilities (which employ many people) are currently located in residential zones.

**2.5.4 Density**

In order for Lynden to continue to move toward its density targets of 5 dwelling units per acre, it will need to consider methods of increasing density throughout the current city limits and plan for higher density development in newly incorporated areas. Developing at higher density will allow the City to maintain its desire to protect the surrounding agricultural lands. Several methods for increasing density within the city are discussed in the Chapter 3 The Housing Element.

Assumed Density is the density needed within new development areas to bring current densities up to the density goals. Lynden’s land capacity analysis shows that the assumed density of future development in its UGA is over 7 dwelling units per acre. This means that the new UGA additions for residential growth will need to be developed at a fairly high density to help Lynden reach its goal. This is a topic that city officials and the public should continue to discuss as this level of density will look different from existing development.

**Figure 2.5.4 Future Land Use in Lynden**

*See Figure 2.5.4 Future Land Use in Lynden that is included at the end of this chapter.*
2.6 LAND USE Goals and Policies

In order to preserve Lynden's character and the residents' quality of life; and to meet the goals outlined in Vision 2036, the Growth Management Act, and the Whatcom County County Wide Planning Policies, the City of Lynden hereby establishes the following goals and policies relating to the purpose and pattern of growth in the Urban Growth Area, the annexation of those areas to the City of Lynden, the process to amend the comprehensive plan, and the future land use within the City.

Although the City of Lynden does not have approval authority over development applications in unincorporated UGA areas, Lynden will encourage Whatcom County to plan jointly for the area through the adoption of inter-local agreements as required by the County Wide Planning Policies and a sub-area plan that directly addresses Lynden's Urban Growth Area.

Goal LU-1: The City of Lynden will establish an Urban Growth Area that provides a supply of land adequate to accommodate projected population and employment growth over the 20-year planning period.

Policies

1.1. Establish an Urban Growth Area that supplies a land supply adequate for Lynden's future growth and is consistent with the County Wide Planning Policies.

1.2. Residential land will be zoned to achieve and maintain an average density of 5 units per acre within the Urban Growth Area, while maintaining the small town atmosphere of Lynden.

1.3. The availability of commercial land will be preserved to provide sufficient capacity for growth that accommodates the 20-year employment growth projections.

1.4. Public land will be preserved or acquired, if necessary, to provide public facilities, services, and public open spaces necessary to serve projected growth and maintain a high quality of life.

1.5. Changes to land uses throughout the City should carefully consider the proximity to urban services necessary to serve the new land use. This may include public transit, shopping and personal services and adequate public utilities.
1.6. Zoning changes, whether they are implemented through the comprehensive planning process or through a site specific rezone, should consider the impacts on the established neighborhoods surrounding the change.

1.7. The development potential of any individual property under the land use designations of this Comprehensive Plan shall be based on the net buildable area of that property, and shall be further subject to clustering, planned unit development and low impact development provisions, availability of necessary utilities, critical area regulations, impact mitigation, and other applicable development policies, regulations and standards.

1.8. The City will engage in cooperative planning, including the use of inter-local agreements, with Whatcom County for those areas within the unincorporated Urban Growth Area.

1.9. To ensure that adequate public facilities are available to serve new growth and development, the City of Lynden should consider funding mechanisms including impact fees, Local Improvement Districts (LIDs), connection fees, or other mitigation or system fees allowed by state law.

**Goal LU-2: Phase annexations and development within the Urban Growth Area to ensure consistency with the Vision, Goals, and Policies of this Comprehensive Plan, and prioritize infill development over expansion into agricultural and rural lands.**

**Policies**

2.1. The City of Lynden will encourage annexation of land that has been developed in manner consistent with the goals and purposes of this Comprehensive Plan and the Growth Management Act. The City of Lynden will review development applications in the Urban Growth Area to encourage development patterns consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

2.2. The City of Lynden will encourage the residential annexation of lands zoned UR-4, R5-A, and R2-A under Whatcom County zoning prior to the annexation of lands designated as AG, except where public health and safety requires the urban services provided by the City (i.e. sanitary sewer).
Goal LU-3: Maintain the agricultural roots of Lynden by preserving working the working agricultural lands that are vital to Lynden’s character and economy.

Policies

3.1. The City of Lynden has adopted an ordinance supporting agriculture and the right to farm in areas surrounding the City. The City will also require a covenant on all development adjacent to agricultural lands acknowledging the potential impacts of farming practices on urban uses and recognizing the farmers’ rights to utilize those practices that are necessary to the agricultural use.

3.2. The City of Lynden will work with Whatcom County to establish a program for the transfer of development rights, as well as identify areas appropriate to receive that increased density. The City will also work with Whatcom County to identify creative ways to fund the purchase of development rights in areas that are in danger of conversion to urban uses.

Goal LU-4: Ensure that new development maintains the small-town atmosphere and community spirit that define Lynden.

Policies

4.1. The City of Lynden shall consider the historical mixture of land uses and design elements in developing and implementing regulations in order to preserve the small town character.

4.2. The City of Lynden will consider changes to land use regulations that will help preserve the character and quality of life of the community.

Goal LU-5: Implement planning and design strategies that promote physical activity and maintain a healthy community.

Policies

5.1. Provide a variety of outdoor open spaces that allow for the active and passive enjoyment of all ages.
5.2. Provide an interconnected network of sidewalks, trails, walking and bicycling paths, and bicycle lanes, that allow for non-motorized transportation or recreation between neighborhoods and commercial centers.

5.3. Ensure the safety of pedestrian and bicyclists by providing lighting, signage, and protection from vehicle traffic.

**Goal LU-6: Protect and preserve natural resources and environmentally critical areas, while ensuring private property rights.**

**Policies**

6.1. The City of Lynden will encourage the preservation and protection of critical areas within the Urban Growth Area and will advocate the annexation of land that has provided reasonable buffers for sensitive areas.

6.2. The City of Lynden will consider changes to land use regulations that will a) protect the natural resources within the city and the surrounding area, and b) implement the goals of the Growth Management Act and stormwater control regulations.

6.3. Land use and development regulations will allow property owners reasonable use of their private property and avoid unconstitutional taking of private property for public use without just compensation.
Figure 2.3 City of Lynden Zoning Map
Figure 2.4 City of Lynden Current Land Use
Figure 2.5.4 Future Land Use in Lynden’s UGA