

4. UTILITIES ELEMENT

Utility providers are typically responsible for planning for the future demands on the services they provide, however, the Utilities Element gives the City the opportunity to work with utility providers to ensure sufficient and efficient services are provided equitably among residents. This element is intended to support and increase collaboration with utility providers to provide sufficient utility services to existing and future customers. By planning with these providers, the city hopes to minimize any negative effects that might result from future demands on utilities.

Public utilities (water, sewer, stormwater) are covered in the Capital Facilities Element. The background information used to develop the utilities goals and policies and an inventory of the city's utility infrastructure can be found in the Utilities Appendix.

GMA Requirements

The Utilities element relates to all services provided, planned, paid, and delivered by providers other than the jurisdiction. It is required to:

- Show the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities, including, but not limited to electrical, telecommunications, and natural gas systems.
- Identify all public entities that own utility systems.

Utility Goals and Policies

ADEQUATE PROVISION OF SERVICES

Goal U-1: Coordinate with private utility providers to ensure high-quality service for customers within the Lynden UGA, meet the demands of projected population growth, and increase the resilience of utilities to extreme weather events and natural hazards.

Policy U-1.1 Cooperate and maintain open communications and data sharing with private utility companies who provide utility service within the Lynden UGA.

Policy U-1.2 Encourage residents to appropriately locate underground utilities prior to construction projects occurring.

i This policy was moved from an introduction policy under the “urban growth” subheading because it relates to Whatcom County CPP C2, D3, F4, I10.

Policy U-1.3 Prevent the extension of urban services, including water and sewer, outside the UGA unless such extension is necessary to protect the health of nearby residents, and require annexation as a condition of utility extensions within the unincorporated UGA.

i The following policy was moved from an introduction policy under the “reduce sprawl” subheading.

Policy U-1.4 Prevent the provision of water or sewer services to urban uses outside the urban growth area, except when providing water to surrounding rural water associations according to approved contracts or to extend services at a rural level of service for health reasons.

i These policies were drafted based on PSE recommended language to address energy equity.

Policy U-1.5 Partner with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) to promote financial assistance and discounted billing programs for income qualified residents in order to ensure that the most vulnerable are not disproportionately impacted by the State’s clean energy transition.

Policy U-1.6 Evaluate potential disproportionate impacts on vulnerable communities when making decisions regarding infrastructure investment or improvements.

Policy U-1.7 Actively seek community input on public facility and service proposals, ensuring representation from historically marginalized or underserved communities.

i The following policy was added based on discussions with city staff.

Policy U-1.8 Coordinate with PSE to increase the electrical capacity in the west side of the city and seek grant funding to support these upgrades.

INTERNET SERVICE

Goal U-2: Consider methods for increasing and improving access to high-speed internet service.

Commented [DT1]: Increasing access for remote workers came up with Advisory Group and Commercial Interests group.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Policy U-2.1 | Consider developing public Wi-Fi networks that residents and businesses can access. |
| Policy U-2.2 | Consider development regulations that require new development to provide fiber-optic infrastructure in public rights-of-way. |
| Policy U-2.3 | Pursue grant opportunities for investments in broadband infrastructure and improvements to internet services to support businesses and residents who work from home. |

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Goal U-3: Promote and expand efforts to increase energy conservation and solid waste recycling programs and reduce the amount of waste generated.

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| Policy U-3.1 | Prioritize the use of lower-carbon building materials and construction designs and materials that are consistent with energy efficiency standards and reduce embodied carbon. |
| Policy U-3.2 | Work with solid waste utility providers to ensure the community is able to reduce, reuse, and recycle waste materials sustainably and decrease the amount of waste that ends up in the landfill. |