

## 2. LAND USE ELEMENT

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 health and safety, roads and utilities, and quality of life.

The continued growth within Lynden will impact the look and feel of Lynden but can also provide great opportunities for the city. Growth projections indicate that more than 6,600 people are expected to find their new homes in Lynden over the next 20 years, and nearly 1,800 jobs will be created over that same time period. Open fields within the Urban Growth Area (UGA) 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 change based on community needs.

The background information used to develop the goals and policies of this element can be found in the Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) in [Appendix X](#), and the Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) in [Appendix X](#). The Housing Needs Assessment identifies that Lynden will need to plan for an additional 3,535 new housing units over the 20-year planning period. The Land Use Element provides a plan for how Lynden will accommodate its projected growth. It gives the city, its government officials, its developers, builders, and all of its residents a guide for

### GMA Requirements

Land Use Elements are required to:

- Designate the proposed general distribution, location and extent of land uses, including lands useful for public purposes.
- Ensure sufficient capacity and space for future population and employment, by including analysis of population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth.
- Provide for protection of critical areas and the quality and quantity of ground water used for public water supplies.
- Utilize urban planning approaches that promote physical activity.
- Review drainage, flooding, and storm water run-off in the area and provide guidance for preventing degradation of waters of the state.

State legislation, including HB 1181 (2023), also require the land use element to:

- Consider environmental justice in its policies, including efforts to avoid creating or worsening environmental health disparities.
- Identify open space corridors and green spaces within and between UGAs, including lands useful for wildlife habitat, recreation, urban and community forests, and connection of critical areas.
- Reduce and mitigate the risk to lives and property posed by wildfires.
- Reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled.

**Commented [HG1]:** I'd like to pull elements of our vision statement into the land use element.

growth. It acknowledges that change will occur and attempts to minimize conflicting land uses so that the City's vision can still be met.

**i** The following two paragraphs were moved from under the LU goals and policies subheading to this introduction.

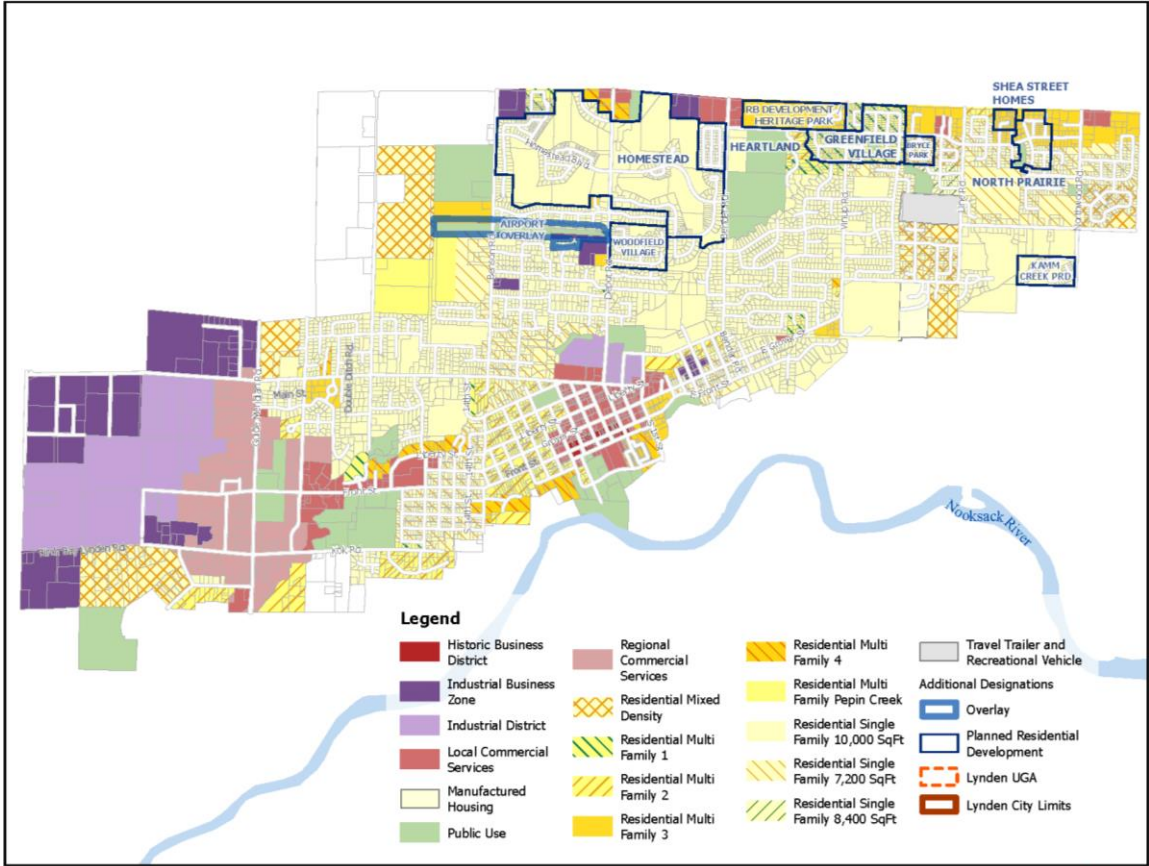
In order to enhance Lynden's charm and residents' quality of life and meet the goals outlined in the Growth Management Act and the Whatcom County Countywide Planning Policies, the following goals and policies have been developed related to the purpose and pattern of growth in the Urban Growth Area, the annexation of those areas to the City of Lynden, and the future land use within the City. This element also incorporates goals and policies for the West Lynden Gateway Subarea to plan for the further development of this area while balancing protection of the subarea's species-rich critical areas.

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.

The Land Use Element, like all the other chapters of the Comprehensive Plan, is not static. It will require periodic refinement and adaptation to address both opportunities and obstacles throughout the planning period. The City's Zoning Map can be found in Figure LU-1, and the Future Land Use Map can be found in Figure LU-2.



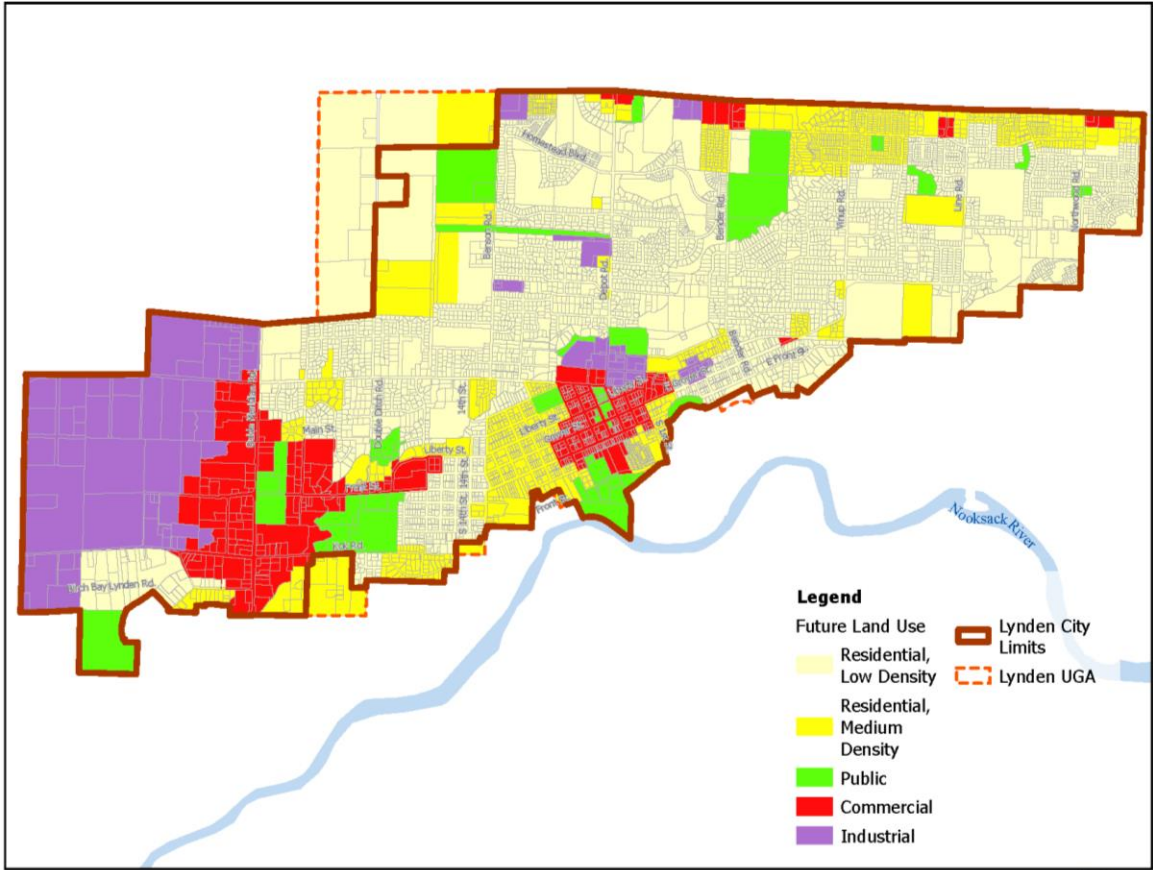
Figure LU-1. City of Lynden Zoning Map



**Zoning**  
City of Lynden 2025 Comprehensive Plan | March 2025  
Source: City of Lynden, Whatcom County.



Figure LU-2. Future Land Use Map



**Future Land Use**  
City of Lynden 2025 Comprehensive Plan | February 2025  
Source: City of Lynden, Whatcom County.



## Land Use Goals and Policies

### URBAN GROWTH AREA (UGA)

**Goal LU-1: Maintain an Urban Growth Area (UGA) that adequately accommodates projected population and employment growth over the 20-year planning period.**

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| Policy LU-1.1 | Maintain an UGA that supplies a land supply adequate for Lynden's future growth, is consistent with the County Wide Planning Policies, and considers which lands are better suited for agriculture vs. urban development.   |
| Policy LU-1.2 | Preserve sufficient commercial land to accommodate the 20-year employment growth projections, while preventing commercial and industrial developments from encroaching beyond designated UGAs.  |
| Policy LU-1.3 | Preserve or acquire public land, if necessary, to provide public facilities, services, and public open spaces necessary to serve projected growth and maintain a high quality of life.  |
| Policy LU-1.4 | 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.   |
| Policy LU-1.5 | Review the potential impacts on established neighborhoods when considering zoning changes, whether they are implemented through the comprehensive planning process or through a site-specific rezone.   |
| Policy LU-1.6 | 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, and other applicable development policies, regulations, and standards. |
| Policy LU-1.7 | Plan cooperatively with Whatcom County for areas within the unincorporated Urban Growth Area, including the use of inter-local agreements that reflect community input and provide guidelines on the size and timing of annexation.   |
| Policy LU-1.8 | Ensure that adequate public facilities are available to serve new growth and development, by considering funding mechanisms including impact fees for Transportation, Park, and Fire, Local Improvement Districts (LIDs), connection fees, or other mitigation or system fees allowed by state law.   |

**Commented [RC2]:** Relates to Commerce checklist CF item g and Whatcom County CWPP L1. **Need to update to identify impact fees and what the money will be used for.**

**Goal LU-2: Anticipate 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.**

- Policy LU-2.1 The City of Lynden will anticipate annexation of land by developing and updating subarea plans and capital facility plans which consider Urban Growth Area (UGA) properties. The City of Lynden will review Whatcom County development applications in the UGA to encourage development patterns consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and applicable subarea plans.
- Policy LU-2.3 Coordinate with Whatcom County to limit urban development outside of the designated UGA in order to conserve rural and agricultural lands.
- Policy LU-2.4 Encourage infill development and creative use of under-utilized properties within the city.

**Commented [HG3]:** It's disingenuous to say we will phase annexations when we do not have a phasing plan and Council hasn't supported one. I think it's more accurate to say we will anticipate annexation.

**Commented [HG4]:** We do not have any brown fields.

## LAND USE TYPES

**i** These are from the draft climate element and include staff edits already.

**Goal LU-3. Encourage infill development and higher-intensity land uses in the existing Mixed-use Center Overlay near transit corridors and commercial centers.**

- Policy LU-3.1 **STRATEGIZE.** Increase or remove density limits within the mixed-use overlay zones, along transportation corridors, and in the city's core.
- Policy LU-3.2 **CONNECT.** Require pedestrian infrastructure such as trails, sidewalks, and protected roadway shoulders in association with development with the goal of creating a network of safe bike and pedestrian routes.
- Policy LU-3.3 **INCENTIVIZE.** Encourage efficient design by adjusting impact fees and system development charges so the homes with larger impacts on utilities pay more.

**i** This policy is new.

- Policy LU-3.4 Balance tree canopy coverage with infill development to allow for more efficient use of land that provides adequate trees for shading, maintaining the small-town feel of the city, and public health benefits.

**Commented [HG5]:** We understand that SB 5258 (RCW 82.02) requires the city to adjust impact fees based on the size of the home? Or at least consider it as a factor. More research needed on our part to understand what this looks like.

**Goal LU-4: Allow residential uses that reflect Lynden's small-town charm and architectural styles, while safeguarding property owners' rights to build a variety of housing types that meet the needs of all community members.**



- Policy LU-4.1 Provide adequate residential land and densities to accommodate allocated housing targets for households from all income levels and backgrounds.
- Policy LU-4.2 Allow two ADUs on qualifying residential parcels in the city, consistent with state law ([RCW 36.70A.680, 36.70A.681](#)) and the Lynden Municipal Code (LMC 19.20).

**Goal LU-5: Identify and preserve land for public recreation and community facilities, ensuring these spaces are accessible, well-maintained, and meet the needs of current and future residents.**

- Policy LU-5.1 Prioritize the identification and conservation of natural landscapes or wildlife habitat areas and land suitable for public amenities and facilities.

## AGRICULTURAL LANDS

**i** Goal LU-6 and Policy LU-6.3 are from the draft climate element and have been reviewed by city staff.

**Goal LU-6: Maintain agricultural land outside of the unincorporated UGA for long-term agricultural use by encouraging smart growth techniques such as infill development.**

- Policy LU-6.1 Continue to support agriculture and the right to farm in areas surrounding the city. Require a covenant on all development adjacent to agricultural lands that acknowledges the potential impacts of farming practices on urban uses and recognizes the farmers' rights to utilize those practices that are necessary to agricultural use.
- Policy LU-6.2 **AGRICULTURAL IDENTITY.** Consider the needs of the local agricultural industry when updating the City's Transportation Element and Capital Facilities Plan. Specifically, consider expanding truck routes to seasonally accommodate farm equipment, coordinate with local Water Improvement Districts to develop stormwater and flood solutions, and participate in water conservation efforts. Policy LU-6.3 **SMART GROWTH.** Prioritize infill development in the UGA to reduce development pressures on prime agricultural land outside of the city.

## QUALITY OF LIFE

**Goal LU-7: Ensure that new development maintains the small-town charm and community spirit that define Lynden, while providing a welcoming environment for new residents.**

Goal LU-7 and its corresponding policies strongly relate to those found in the **Health and Wellness Element**.

- Policy LU-7.1 Consider the historical mixture of land uses and design elements in developing and implementing regulations that increase the vitality and walkability of Lynden.
- Policy LU-7.2 Consider changes to land use regulations that will help improve the quality of life of residents.

**i** The following policy was drafted to satisfy the commerce checklist requirement (Land Use item o) and HB 1181

- Policy LU-7.3 Avoid land use actions that create or worsen environmental health disparities and disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations within the city.

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

**Goal LU-8: Ensure the City's development regulations, processes, and procedures protect and preserve natural resources and environmentally critical areas, for both the benefit of the environment and public health and wellbeing.**

- Policy LU-8.1 Encourage the preservation and protection of critical areas within the Urban Growth Area..
- Policy LU-8.2 Consider changes to land use regulations that will protect the natural resources within the city and the surrounding area, including the quality and quantity of groundwater resources, and implement the goals of the Growth Management Act and stormwater control regulations.

Critical areas include wetlands, frequently flooded areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, and geologically hazardous areas. Lynden's **Critical Area Ordinance** outlines regulations to protect critical areas.



**i** Drafted for compliance with Commerce checklist item Land Use p and HB 1181.

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| Policy LU-8.3 | Explore ways, such as land use planning tools, elevation requirements (freeboard), setbacks, buffers, and wildfire adaptation measures, to reduce the risk to lives and property posed by natural disasters such as flooding, landslides, and wildfires. |
| Policy LU-8.4 | Utilize Best Available Science (BAS) when updating development regulations for critical areas.   |
| Policy LU-8.5 | Ensure fishery resources and their extended habitat areas, including tributaries and wetlands, are protected from activities that threaten their health, including coordination with Whatcom County efforts where applicable.                            |
| Policy LU-8.6 | Encourage Best Management Practices to reduce or eliminate impacts on natural resources and the environment.   |
| Policy LU-8.7 | Protect the quantity and quality of groundwater resources for public water supply in accordance with BAS and through coordination with other jurisdictions and agencies, where appropriate.  |

**i** This policy was drafted from an introduction policy statement under “environment”

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| Policy LU-8.8 | Consider opportunities for private property owners to preserve open space as a visual amenity through techniques such as conservation easements, clustering, transfer or purchase of development rights, and density bonuses. |
| Policy LU-8.9 | Coordinate with Whatcom County and tribal governments to protect water resources, restore stream corridors where feasible, and reduce stormwater runoff and flooding.   |

**Goal LU-9: Identify and encourage the protection and preservation of historic, cultural, and archaeological resources in the City.**

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| Policy LU-9.1 | Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic properties so they continue to provide useful benefits beyond their initial, intended use.  |
| Policy LU-9.2 | Collaborate proactively with tribal governments and local and regional historic preservation organizations, including the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP), to implement strategies that support historic preservation and the preservation of cultural and archaeological resources. |

**i** Taken from introduction vision policies on historic preservation. May need to be edited further/updated.

- Policy LU-9.3 Encourage the process of further identifying and designation of historic places (districts, buildings, landmarks) within the city.
- Policy LU-9.4 Continue to assist the Lynden Historic Preservation Commission with administering the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- Policy LU-9.5 Work with property owners to list appropriate properties onto the Lynden Register of Historic Places, and designate eligible properties for Special Valuation for rehabilitation projects.

**i** These goals and policies were taken from the community value statements and reworded. They need to be reviewed and edited as appropriate, especially if some of these have already been done or priorities have changed.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Goal LU-10: Encourage the diverse development of commercial and industrial lands to foster economic growth and development, support a stable and diverse economy, and provide job opportunities for all residents.**

- Policy LU-10.1 Promote economic development by zoning land suitable for commercial and industrial development west of the Guide Meridian.

**Appendix X** includes Lynden's Employment Capacity Analysis, which explains how Lynden could accommodate 1,799 new jobs by 2045. Overall, and particularly as a result of the large amount of industrial employment capacity, **Lynden has more than enough capacity to meet its job targets for this comprehensive planning period.**

**i** Edits to this policy are based on community feedback that they would like to have jobs that help retain younger residents in the community.

- Policy LU-10.2 Encourage new and a diverse range of employment opportunities that can help retain younger residents and replace jobs lost due to the changing needs of the agricultural industry.
- Policy LU-10.3 Ensure that the city's land uses optimize the potential for economic benefit, while protecting the City's open space and natural resources.
- Policy LU-10.6 Maintain a positive business climate that is consistent, responsive to the needs of the business community, and affordable to business owners.

**Commented [HG6]:** Identify how this might be done.

**Commented [HG7]:** Unless we identify ways in which we are promoting business I prefer to leave this out.

**Commented [DT8]:** I don't believe such a team exists at this time.

- Policy LU-10.7 Work with business owners and citizens to enhance commercial centers across the city, by supporting Mixed Use Development on qualifying parcels, continual support of the downtown Historic Business District, the 4<sup>th</sup> St civic corridor, and other commercial centers (Fairway, Lynden Market Square, Guide Meridian corridor, etc.)
- Policy LU-10.8 Continue to support and encourage agriculture-related businesses and industry in the city. Identify code and regulatory barriers for ag-related businesses and appropriately seek to remove those barriers.
- Policy LU-10.9 Coordinate with landowners, developers, and the Airport Board to reduce potential conflicts between the airport and nearby uses. Reduce the regional use of Benson Road by providing alternative routes and facilitate the protection of the Runway Protection Zone (RPZ).



The runway of the Lynden Municipal Airport comes right up to the edge of Benson Road, one of the main transportation corridors in the city, and is in close proximity to many homes.

## DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

**Goal LU-11: Ensure orderly growth that respects the City's scale and prevents sprawl while also accommodating allocated population, housing, and employment growth targets and the requirements of the GMA.**

- Policy LU-11.1 Encourage development in areas where adequate public facilities and services are available or convenient to promote a logical and efficient extension of the City's transportation and utility networks.
- Policy LU-11.2 Support land use patterns that reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled.
- Policy LU-11.3 Provide landscaping and buffering standards to mitigate impacts from high-intensity uses, such as commercial and industrial development, on critical areas and residential development.
- Policy LU-11.4 Facilitate zoning regulations and land use designation which can provide sufficient capacity for housing units serving lower-income households (those earning 80 percent AMI or less), such as by adjusting the maximum allowed density in the Mixed Use Centers Overlay to 40 units per acre.
- Policy LU-11.5 Continue the development of subarea plans for each of the City's subareas to highlight and acknowledge the unique character of each one and identify growth opportunities appropriate for each subarea's characteristics. Consider supporting the development and administration of neighborhood groups and associations.

**Goal LU-12: Ensure streamlined and predictable permit review processes.**

- Policy LU-12.1 Coordinate efficiently and consistently across departments, and agencies (if applicable) in permit review processes.
- Policy LU-12.2 Promote efficiency and predictability when updating regulations for permit review.
- Policy LU-12.3 Protect property rights from discriminatory action to allow property owners reasonable use of their private property and avoid unconstitutional taking of private property for public use without just compensation.

**i** Drafted from existing introduction - vision policy statements under "permit review"

- Policy LU-12.4 Continue to process permits in a timely and fair manner, ensuring adequate staffing to provide a reasonable review period for permit applications. Develop tracking reports as a metric for review times.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

**i** Most of these (10.3-10.8) were repurposed from vision statements in the introduction of the current comp plan and may need further editing.

**Goal LU-13: Engage and collaborate with local and regional stakeholders to improve the livability of the city and reduce conflicts.**

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|----------------|---|
| Policy LU-13.1 | Provide meaningful opportunities for collaboration with interested Tribal governments on land use planning.   |
| Policy LU-13.2 | Provide opportunities for meaningful, inclusive engagement with residents and community groups, making a concerted effort to reach vulnerable populations, overburdened communities, and populations that have historically been excluded or unable to participate in engagement opportunities. |

**i** The following policies were moved from the existing introduction policies.

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|----------------|---|
| Policy LU-13.3 | Utilize a variety of methods of communication, such as the addition of a community newsletter or a page in the local newspaper in addition to the use of the City's web page and social media networks in order to engage all members of the Lynden community.  |
| Policy LU-13.4 | Facilitate and work with community groups to sponsor Town Hall meetings where residents and civic leaders have the opportunity to discuss issues regarding the growth, development, and livability of the City.   |
| Policy LU-13.5 | Actively promote interagency cooperation through continued involvement in intergovernmental committees and cooperatives such as the Small Cities' Caucus, Growth Management Oversight Committee, Watershed Inventory Resource Area Planning Group, NPDES Phase II Stormwater Partnerships, and Whatcom County Conservation and Watershed Improvement Districts. |
| Policy LU-13.6 | Recognize the need and invaluable contributions of volunteers and community groups across the city.   |
| Policy LU-13.7 | Continue to sponsor community task forces to navigate complex issues and planning topics.   |
| Policy LU-13.8 | Continue to notify the public about dates for public hearings, by ordinance, in local papers, and through other public means of communication.  |
| Policy LU-13.9 | Increase communication regarding budgeting, public projects, and other city-wide decision-making processes.   |

# LYNDEN SUBAREAS

**Subarea Plan Concepts:** As a land use planning tool, the City of Lynden is divided into nine subareas. Division in this way recognizes that different sections of the city possess unique characteristics, opportunities, and challenges. As such, each subarea benefits from a clear articulation of how the City's vision applies to these areas as well as specific goals and requirements associated with growth and development.

Since the early 1990s the city has adopted subarea plans in a wide range of formats. Some plans are primarily concepts while others are more detailed. All land use development is required to show compliance with Council-adopted subarea plans. Because of this, consistency between the overall Comprehensive Plan, the Transportation Element, individual subarea plans, and development regulations is critical to successful implementation of each subarea's vision.

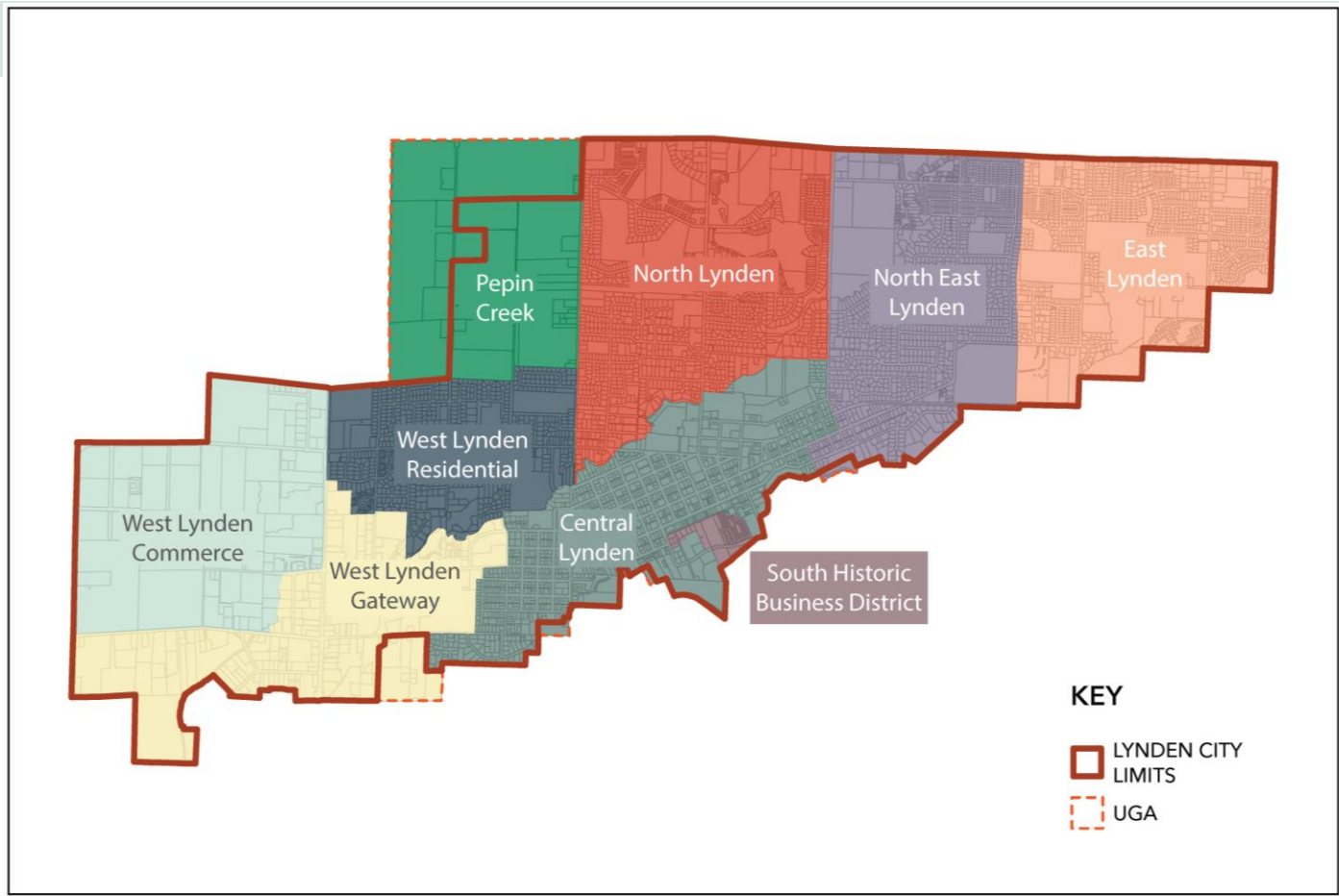


Recent changes to the city's subarea boundaries included a revision to the West Lynden Commerce Subarea and the addition of the West Lynden Gateway Subarea. This subarea was created at the end of 2022 with a Comprehensive Plan Amendment when the City simultaneously adopted modifications to the regulations for mixed-use development near qualifying commercial centers. The change warranted a shift in subarea boundaries that

created the West Lynden Gateway Subarea which is likely to see significant growth with the city's mixed-use provisions. 2022 revisions also redefined the perimeter of West Lynden Commerce Subarea, a subarea which specifically excludes mixed-use developments to protect land for industrial and commercial opportunities. The 2025 periodic update includes goals and policies specifically for the West Lynden Gateway Subarea because growth and development in this area seems imminent. Policies here focus on accommodating growth and contributions to the city economy while mitigating potential conflicting uses and negative traffic impacts.

DRAFT





**LYNDEN SUBAREAS MAP**

City of Lynden 2025 Comprehensive Plan | March 2025

## East Lynden Subarea

**Characterization:** The adopted subarea plan for the East Lynden Subarea was last amended in 2004. Since that time a significant amount of residential growth and development have occurred. Development has largely followed the subarea plan except that most commercially zoned properties in this area were converted to residential use in 2017 due to lack of commercial viability.

The East Lynden Subarea encompasses the City's most eastern region. It is bounded north by East Badger Road and extends from a line a quarter mile east of Vinup Road to a quarter mile east of Northwood Road. The southern boundary follows a combination of property lines, section lines and the floodplain to include the most developable land within the area.

Since annexation in 2001 the East Lynden Subarea has seen significant construction of single-family and multi-family housing developments. This subarea is not expected to expand within the next planning period as there is no Urban Growth Area located on the eastern edge of the city.

Although approximately 48 acres of the East Lynden Subarea initially held a commercial land use designation, the rural demographics surrounding this section of the city do not support isolated commercial development. Commercial entities are currently limited to the Northwood Market, the Thirsty Badger, and Badger Storage (east of Northwood Rd). Mixed use development was constructed along Mercedes Drive using early versions of the City's mixed-use code. This development generally utilizes self-storage as the commercial entity on the first floor with residential use dominating the remainder of the building. A similar storage use also occupies the 1.5 acres west of Mercedes Drive.



Given the challenging commercial market in this area, the City Council approved a land use map amendment in December 2017. This change resulted in a shift of 12 commercial properties (26.87 acres) to residential land use with corresponding zoning designations ranging from RM-3 to RS-72. The remaining commercial property is centered on the intersection of Badger Road and Northwood Road. This area, combined with the Fire District's nearby property and the

adjacent location of Cornerstone church and school is intended to serve as a neighborhood node / entry point.

Visitors to Lynden are drawn into the East Lynden Subarea by the popular Lynden KOA Journey Campground which is located on a scenic 25 acres at the western edge of this subarea. This

section of the city is also home to the Lynden School District's Middle School and the private K-12 school, Cornerstone Christian.

**Opportunities:** It is essential that the sub-area, in serving a growing residential base, include a significant effort to make trail connections especially connections to schools, parks, the KOA, and neighborhood commercial destinations. Pursuant to Policy 1B of Goal LU-5 of Chapter 2 The Land Use Element, and as a condition of CPA #17-01 which changed land use designations on 12 commercial zoned properties in the East Lynden Subarea to residential zones, the City will require future development in East Lynden to facilitate better pedestrian movement. This requirement obligates residential developers throughout the subarea to provide trail connections and sidewalks. Specifically, a multimodal trail will be required along Badger Road (WA-546) in the East Lynden Subarea and the East Lynden Loop Trail. These requirements are also documented in the 2020 update to the City's Park and Trail Master Plan which outlines specific trail and multimodal routes that make build on the City's trail network across the city.

Opportunities for connections to the regional trail system exist within this subarea as Northwood Road connects with Hampton Road – a well-known County bike route. Additionally, long range plans also include the potential of converting the nearby unused BNSF railroad corridor to a regional trail connecting Lynden to the small cities of Sumas and Everson.

Additional residential growth can be anticipated here south of Bradley and Kamm Roads and at the intersection of Kamm and Northwood Roads which are slated primarily for single-family housing types. These parcels are owned by a relatively few owners who have decided, at this point, to maintain their properties as undeveloped.

Neighborhood commercial opportunities exist in the small commercial node at Badger Road and Northwood Road has the capacity to grow to include additional services. Trail and sidewalk connections to this node will make it a more desirable destination.

**Challenges:** Badger Road, at the north perimeter of the subarea is a State Highway that accommodates a significant amount of traffic including heavy truck traffic. Connections to this road are limited and existing street networks south of the Badger have, at times, failed to connect to properties along the Badger Road leaving them to front a busy highway with no multi-modal accommodations and access points on the highway.

Infrastructure challenges exist in that some primary corridors within the East Lynden Subarea remain in substandard condition. Line Road, Kamm Road, and Northwood Road are all critical arterials with very few areas that have been improved to City standard. A significant cost and effort will be needed to update these roadways especially as development on and near these arterials is already existing.

The southern edge of the Subarea is impacted by the Kamm Creek and Nooksack River flood plain along with associated wetlands. These areas, when combined with peat soils make some areas south of Kamm Road challenging to develop.

### *Northeast Lynden Subarea*

**Characterization:** The City of Lynden does not have an adopted subarea plan for North East Lynden. This subarea is characterized by residential subdivisions with generous lot sizes and homes constructed primarily in the 1970's through the early 2000's.. At the northern end of the subarea there are several housing developments focused on Seniors. The Planned Residential Development Heritage Park houses the Christian Health Care Center and the Lynden Manor, which are both significant assisted living facilities that provide housing and health care for Lynden's senior residents. Supporting that, the nearby Bryce Park retirement community and the Parkview Apartments are both age restricted to residents who are 55+.

The southern end of the subarea includes the spacious homes associated with East Front Street and Terrace Drive which are somewhat disconnected from the remainder of the subarea by the Grover Street corridor.

Commercial services here are located within Bender Plaza on the corner of Badger and Bender Roads. Bender Plaza is an active space that contains a gas station, restaurants, and professional offices.



Finally, this subarea contains the Lynden High School campus and Bernice Vossbeck Elementary school, Bender Fields Park and portions of the Jim Kaemingk Trail run through this subarea.

**Opportunities:** Recreationally and economically, Bender Fields Park is a significant regional draw as thousands of athletes visit to play soccer, baseball, softball and even cricket tournaments each year. Additional amenities of Bender Fields such as walking paths, bocci ball, pickleball courts and play structures make the location a draw for a wide demographic.

Although the subarea appears primarily residential in nature there are some significant employment generators here with services at Bender Plaza, as well as employment associated with the assisted living and care facilities, the elementary and high schools.

The Fishtrap Creek corridor enters Lynden at the northern edge of this subarea and flows southwest along the southern perimeter of Bender Fields. This creek corridor has historically been impacted by adjacent residential development as structures and lawns reduced riparian areas to bare minimums. Efforts to improve the habitat in the creek channel and provide public education about the benefits of creek riparian areas began in the early 1990's to improve the

health of the creek. The corridor provides a significant ecological and open space asset for the Northeast Lynden Subarea and the City as a whole.

**Challenges:** Roadway infrastructure within the Northeast Subarea is generally more complete than the neighboring East Lynden Subarea. However, providing pedestrian accommodations on Bradley Road near the high school has continually been raised as a top priority. Improvements here are slated to begin in the summer of 2025 with a longer-term goal of addressing the intersection of Bradley and Vinup Roads with a roundabout to improve traffic flow during peak hours.

At Bender Fields Park, high demand during spring and summer seasons challenges the City with ongoing field maintenance and visitor management. Managing Park budgets is challenging as maintenance and upgrade costs always outpace the fees collected for field usage.

High water flows in the Fishtrap Creek channel have, in some places, resulted in significant erosion and property damage.

### *North Lynden Subarea*

**Characterization:** The City of Lynden adopted a North Lynden subarea plan in 2012. This plan has not been updated since that time. The southern portion of this subarea was incorporated into the City by the close of the 1960s. Annexations in 1991 brought the lands north of Sunrise Drive into the City limits and development of the Homestead Northwest golf community began shortly afterward. The northern boundary of the North Lynden Subarea is the heavily traveled State Route 546 (East Badger Road). The western boundary for the North Lynden Subarea is Benson Road. Fishtrap Creek and Main Street are the southern boundaries. The Subarea relative to the rest of Lynden is located north of downtown.

Land use in the North Lynden Subarea is characterized by established residential developments such as the Homestead golf community, the Woodfield Neighborhood and South Park Street but also the Lynden Municipal Airport and some long standing commercial and industrial users. Flora, Inc., VanderPol Building Components, Inc., Martin's Feed, Inc., Kulshan Veterinary Services and Daritech, Inc. are all relatively intense manufacturing or service-oriented business all located within this Subarea.

The City's 2022 Comprehensive Plan Amendment made changes



*Development of the Homestead Golf Community began in the early 1990's*

to the City's subarea boundaries particularly in west Lynden. The changes included the creation of a new subarea, the West Lynden Gateway Subarea. The corresponding new subarea boundaries resulted in shifting approximately 90 acres of the North Lynden Subarea, the portion west of Benson Road, into the West Lynden Residential Subarea.

**Opportunities:** The commercial center of Bender Plaza, located immediately north of Bender Fields, is a neighborhood hub which stands to benefit economically from adjacent neighborhood and visitors to the nearby Bender Fields Park. Property immediately west of Bender Plaza, currently occupied by Martin's Feed, has the potential to redevelop into a significant commercial or mixed-use project as it currently operates as a legal nonconforming use.

**Challenges:** The Homestead golf community, now more than 30 years old, is needing infrastructure upkeep, a challenge that is testing the durability of the private association intended to care for these needs. In 2024 the golf course closed for business as legal disputes between homeowners and the association's declarant, and golf course owner, languish in court.

Historical uses like the municipal airport and agricultural manufacturing and trucking have been impacted by the city's residential growth and vice versa. Ongoing management is needed as these uses can be incompatible with each other. Residential tree height has conflicted with the airport approach. Neighborhood residents occasionally complain about the noise and odors from manufacturing and trucking industries. It is important to note that industrial users continue to contribute to the city's economy and also represent future development opportunities.

### *Pepin Creek Subarea*

**Characterization:** A detailed Pepin Creek Subarea plan was adopted in 2020 and amended in August of 2021. This subarea is approximately 460 acres including the northwestern Lynden city limits and urban growth area (UGA). Approximately 180 acres is within city limits and the remaining 280 acres are in the UGA. This subarea has traditionally been used for agricultural and currently has little to no urban infrastructure. Primary roadways here are Double Ditch Road and Benson Road both of which are flanked by fish-bearing waterways on one or both sides of the roadway. The adopted subarea plan calls for the rerouting of a portion of Pepin Creek from the ditches alongside Double Ditch Road into a new man-made creek channel. Shifting the path of the creek will allow for roadway improvements and a more effective roadway network, the mitigation of overland floodwater to improve the resilience of existing and future residential neighborhoods, and improved fish habitat.

About 155 acres of what is now the Pepin Creek Subarea was added to Lynden's UGA as part of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Update and the City's Comprehensive Plan Update adopted in 2016. Annexations in 2023 and 2024 brought in approximately 68 acres to the city. Although there is capacity for growth in other parts of the city, the Pepin Creek Subarea has been identified as a primary area for future residential development over the next 20 years.



The City of Lynden owns more than 40 acres of property within this subarea which are slated for the development of Benson Park and connecting recreational trails.

**Opportunities:** The expectation that this area will receive a majority of the City's population growth prompted the city to develop the Pepin Creek Subarea Plan. This plan lays out future land use and zoning, traffic circulation patterns, as well as design standards for neighborhood development while considering the need for flood mitigation and the potential re-channelization of Pepin Creek. Please refer to the [Pepin Creek Subarea Plan](#) (2021) for more detailed information.

This subarea a relatively 'blank slate' regarding infrastructure and, despite its challenges, has been planned more proactively than any other area of the city. This allows for requirements to be set in place early so as to facilitate a thoughtfully connected subarea with Pepin Parkway acting as the spine of the roadway and pedestrian networks.

**Challenges:** The Pepin Creek Subarea is challenged by the need for extensive infrastructure improvements as the area is served only by Double Ditch and Benson Roads which are, for the most part, unimproved from the County standard with deep ditches on one or both sides. Additionally, the area is challenged with high ground water and the need for extensive sewer network expansion.

### *Central Lynden*

**Characterization:** The Central Lynden Subarea is characterized by downtown Lynden, the Historic Business District, and the City's oldest residential construction that radiates from downtown. This subarea, in many ways, gives Lynden its unique charm and identity. Front Street, with its the remarkable tree lined right-of-way leads into the downtown commercial core which has a diversity of retail and professional offices, dining establishments, a hotel, the Pioneer Museum, and the Jansen Art Center. The residential neighborhoods to the west, northwest and east of downtown are characterized by the traditional street grid with varying lot sizes and a diversity of architecture. The commercial/residential area to the north of downtown has a mix of single family and multifamily structures throughout with small scale commercial buildings that generally house professional offices and small non-retail businesses.



This subarea also contains the historic industrial area which was located here because of Lynden's once heavily trafficked rail spur that shipped lumber and agricultural products out of



*City Hall and the Library (beyond) are located in the Central Lynden subarea.*

Lynden. The 100+ year old Darigold plant is located here, as well as the Versacold facility, a lumberyard and agricultural warehouses. The Lynden Christian Schools campus (including an elementary, middle and high school) is found in this subarea, as is the former Lynden Middle School property.

The Central Lynden subarea also contains much of the City's public facilities. City Hall, City Hall Annex building, the Lynden Public Library, the Fire Station, the Community Center, the Lynden Water Plant and the Wastewater Treatment Plant are located here. Furthermore, the City Park, Centennial Park, Schoolyard Park, Patterson Park, and portions of the Jim Kaemingk trail are found in this subarea.

**Opportunities:** The Central Lynden Subarea is rich with opportunity. Bolstered by its history and charm, and benefitting from dedicated local business owners, downtown and central Lynden have remained economically viable even while the downtown areas of other small cities have struggled. Community events focused within the Central Lynden Subarea such as the Farmers Day Parade and Razz Fest draw regional visitors while property owners in the area are actively seeking to create additional living units within this section of town through infill and conversions.

The Fishtrap Creek corridor is an asset to this subarea as it runs along its northern edge with public access to the water at the City Park and Jim Kaemingk Trail.

Several studies have been done which provide a guide for development here. This includes the concept of a civic corridor along 4th Street (highlighted in the plan for the neighboring South Historic Business District) and conceptual plans for expanding Centennial Park and utilizing 4th Street for community events such as the Lynden Farmers Market.

**Challenges:** As popularity of the Central Lynden Subarea continues the City has been weighing policy regarding parking with the goal of continuing to provide easy parking access to visitors and shoppers within the downtown area.

The neighboring South Historic Business District has seen an increase in residential development which may continue in the near future. Residential density in this area stands to benefit the businesses within the Central Lynden subarea but residential, service, and visitor traffic circulation is somewhat challenging due to misaligned streets and the narrowness of Judson Alley.

## South Historic Business District

**Characterization:** The South Historic Business District (HBD) is a distinct subarea located south of the downtown commercial core. In 2007 the city adopted the [South HBD subarea plan](#) that specifically focused on planning the future of this subarea. The award-winning document lays out plans for transportation, public use and private land use, as well as concepts for pedestrian focused building layout and design. This area has significant development potential as it will be an extension of Lynden's commercial downtown with mixed residential space. Development here will likely be stimulated by the 2019 completion of Riverview Road, which will provide easy access to this area from Front Street as well as Hannegan Road. Future updates to this subarea plan are needed.

**Opportunities:** Properties within the small subarea of the South Historic Business District are within walking distance to downtown Lynden and several of the city's parks. Commercially zoned properties here are eligible to utilize the city's Mixed-Use Centers overlay which opens the door to high density housing but maintains opportunities for the establishment of new commercial entities.

**Challenges:** Vehicular connections to the South HBD are somewhat limited. Primary access along the southern edge of the subarea is provided through the recently constructed Riverview Road. This provides access to Hannegan Road at the eastern edge and 7<sup>th</sup> Street at the western edge. Northerly access points to the subarea would connect to Judson Alley which serves as a narrow service corridor for Front Street businesses. Connections to Front Street via the 3<sup>rd</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> Streets are often misaligned at their Front Street intersections. Future traffic flow management here should be mindful of the potential residential density and be tied to street and alley improvements.

## West Lynden Residential Subarea

**Characterization:** The West Lynden Residential Subarea does not have a specific Council-approved subarea plan. It directly borders the West Lynden Commerce Subarea. Its character is dominated by residential subdivisions that were generally built in the late 20th century. These subdivisions contain some of the notable multifamily developments such as Oakwood, Woodcreek, Forest Circle that were built out in the 1980s and 90s.

This subarea is notably family oriented as it also contains the Ridnour Athletic Complex (RAC), two elementary schools (Isom and Fisher), and Dickinson Park. The City expects to continue extension of the Jim Kaemingk Jr trail into this subarea as it makes its way westward along the Fishtrap Creek corridor.

**Opportunities:** Additional residential development is expected to occur on the property surrounding the RAC with the build-out of 'LionsGate' a Planned Residential Development (PRD) that features a variety of housing types. Additionally, more single-family homes are expected when the Bogaard Hay Company eventually subdivides and converts the remainder of its historic location to a conforming land use.

**Challenges:** Challenges associated with this subarea include a high-water table which is compounded by the threat of flooding from overland flows traveling south through the Pepin

**Commented [RC9]:** Dave/Heidi - could you link to this if it is online?

**Commented [RC10R9]:** Please also see the last sentence of this paragraph, it could be phrased better, but I know you mentioned wanting to update it. May not be necessary to mention if you don't want to.

**Commented [HG11R9]:** Yes, we can link the plans that we have. That would be great.

Creek watershed. Additionally, although characterized by residential uses and elementary schools, this subarea is bisected by Main Street which serves as a significant corridor for the trucking and agricultural industries.

### **West Lynden Commerce Subarea**

**Characterization:** The West Lynden Commerce Subarea, approximately 560 acres in size, includes commercially and industrially zoned land within the city west of the Guide Meridian and north of Birch Bay Lynden Road. The significant transportation corridors in this subarea, the Guide Meridian (SR539) and Birch Bay Lynden Road, accommodate shipping traffic and provide economic opportunity for both commercial and industrial land uses. Some uses here are key to the surrounding ag industry including Scholten's Equipment and Pape Machinery Agriculture & Turf, Oxbo International Corporation, and Lineage Public cold storage. Others, key to the construction industry include Lynden Door, Inc, Westside Lumber, and K & S Woodworks.

Recent commercial additions to this subarea include the development of Lynden Commons on a property which historically hosted RV and tire sales. Now the property features Cobblestone Hotel and complimentary retail uses.



*Industry and cold storage in the West Commerce Subarea support the surrounding agricultural industry.*

**Opportunities:** The Guide Meridian (State Hwy 539), the eastern boundary to this subarea is the City's most heavily trafficked transportation corridor. This presents a commercial opportunity as properties here are accessible and visible. A 2024 annexation added approximately 130 industrial acres to this subarea. Historically used for agricultural these 130

acres are divided into only 4 parcels which sets the stage for large scale industrial users in the future. Properties in this subarea are not eligible for the Mixed-Use Overlay.

**Challenges:** Challenges associated with this subarea include a high-water table which complicates stormwater management. Additionally, costly improvements to create truck-friendly corridors along Birch-Bay Lynden Road, Berthusen Road, the Guide Meridian, and portions of Main Street are needed. Roundabout projects at the intersection of Main and Berthusen and Birch-Bay Lynden Road and Berthusen Road are at various stages of planning or design. See the Transportation Element for more information on these projects.

### ***West Lynden Gateway Subarea***

#### **Characterization:**

The West Lynden Gateway Subarea is primarily characterized by the main entrances to the city from the west, on Birch Bay Lynden Road, and from the south, on the Guide Meridian (SR 539). Residents and travelers entering Lynden from these locations, leaving the distinct agricultural landscapes, namely the vast berry fields west of town and pasture and field crops in the Nooksack River floodplain to the south, and enter the City along these busy commercial corridors.

The primary land use in this subarea is commercial, with a mix of large-scale farm implement dealers, grocery stores, chain restaurants, and general retail. The subarea contains four (Marketplace at Lynden, Lynden Towne Plaza, Lynden Market Square, and Fairway Center) of the six established “Commercial Centers” on which the Mixed-Use Overlay is centered. These Commercial Centers house Lynden’s primary grocery stores (Safeway, Food Pavilion), as well as several dining, retail, and other commercial establishments. Fairway Center also contains a large church campus (North County Christ the King).

The recently completed (2024) Lynden Commons development along the Guide Meridian contains new restaurants, retail businesses, and Lynden’s largest hotel – Cobblestone Hotel, with 68 rooms. Front Street directly east of the Guide Meridian splits Lynden’s two largest cemeteries (Monumenta and Lynden Historic Cemetery) providing a unique respite from this busy commercial area. Further east along Front Street is the Northwest Washington Fairgrounds, which has hosted the Northwest Washington Fair each summer since 1909, except for four years during WWII and in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Fair brings thousands of visitors to Lynden every year – most of which spend the majority of their time in this subarea. When not hosting the Fair, the Fairgrounds also host a variety of entertainment events (horse shows, garden shows, rodeos, concerts).

In 2024, the SW Lynden Annexation brought 280 acres into the city limits, including ~150 acres that are in the Gateway Subarea south of Birch Bay Lynden Road. This newly annexed area contains agricultural uses (pasture and berries), the City’s West Lynden Regional Storm Pond, multiple large parcel single family lots, and 2 industrial businesses (Whatcom Manufacturing and the Skagit Farmers Supply store).

The subarea’s various commercial and industrial uses are contrasted by some of the City’s richest critical areas, including salmon habitat in Fishtrap Creek and Duffner Creek, which flow

through the subarea and provide varying quality habitat for salmon and other wildlife. Both of these streams provide potential habitat restoration and recreational opportunities (trails) across this subarea. Additionally, the Nooksack River floodplain reaches the southern portion of several parcels in the subarea, though very little development has historically occurred in the floodplain. South of the city limits, it is not uncommon during the winter months to see the vast floodplain full of flood waters. This area is also prime overwintering waterfowl habitat for ducks, trumpeter swans, and flocks of snow geese.

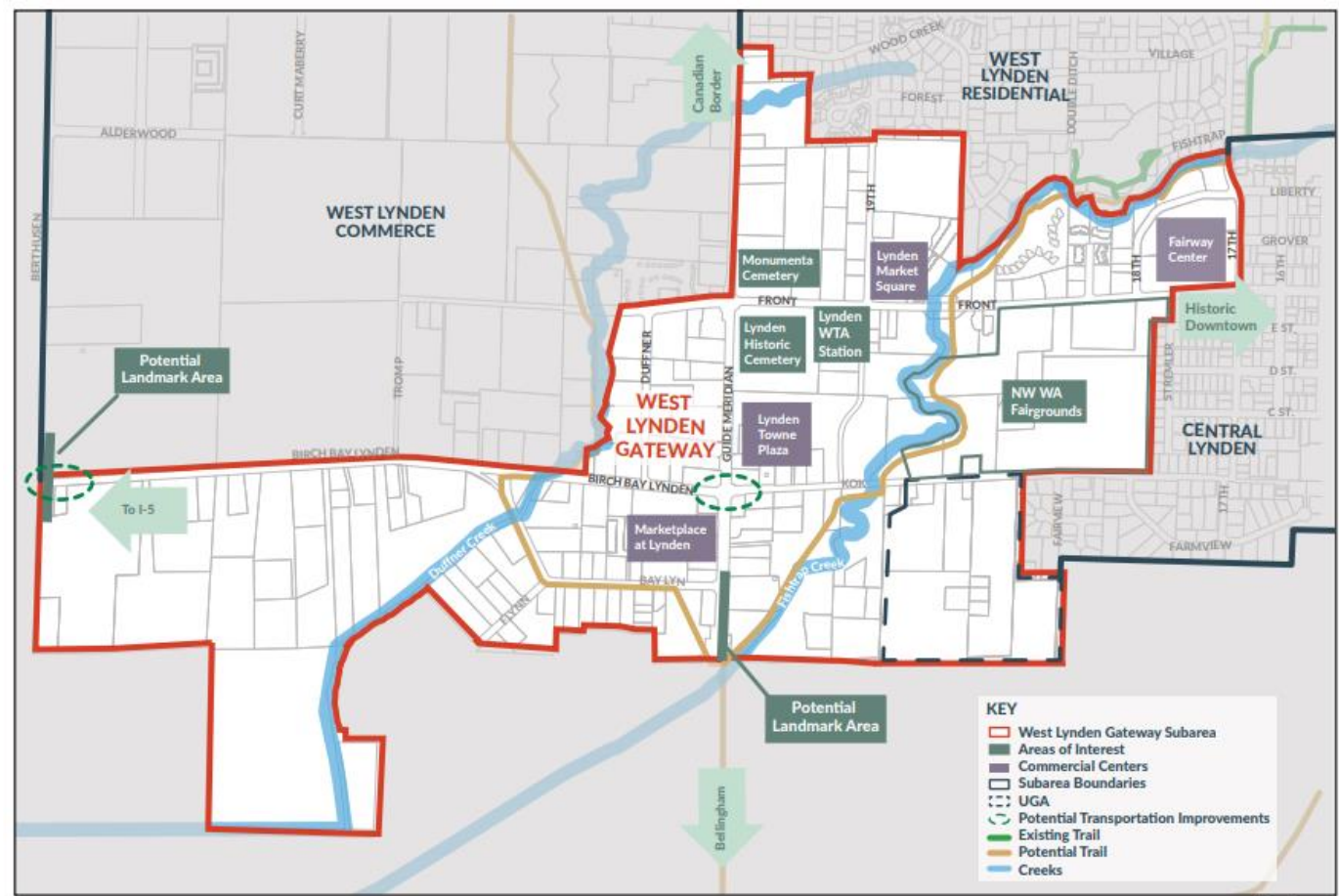
**Opportunities:** The West Lynden Gateway includes significant opportunities as it hosts the largest concentration of commercial centers along the busiest transportation corridors in the city - the Guide Meridian, the Birch-Bay Lynden Road, and Front Street. Each of these corridors present the opportunity for visual gateway landmarks.

Another significant corridor, the Fishtrap Creek corridor, should not be overlooked as the character of the West Lynden Gateway is shaped. The creek and its associated critical areas present an opportunity for residents and visitors to the subarea to enjoy open space and a rich riparian habitat despite the intensity of surrounding development. Connection to these open spaces in relation to the NW Washington Fairgrounds and future residential development should be thoroughly explored.

**Challenges:** This subarea is likely to see a significant increase in high-density housing over the next 10-20 years as property owners utilize mixed-use provisions with the city's land use code. This residential density, while a boon to local businesses, could increase traffic congestion along the subarea's busy corridors. It will be critical to identify the needed roadway improvements, restrictions to turning movements, and intersection upgrades in order to accommodate growth, maintain a safe environment, and accommodate pedestrian movement. Identifying needed improvement projects early will also assist the City in collecting developer contributions.

The critical areas within the West Lynden Gateway will, no doubt, face development pressure. It will be important that the vision and goals for the subarea clearly define expectations for these areas. While pedestrian access to these spaces would clearly be an asset to those who live there, visitors, and the community, managing trail / access impacts and the cost of improvements will require significant resources. Efforts should continue to implement trail connections within this area.

**Goals and Policies:** To increase the economic development potential of the subarea and protect the critical areas present, the following goals and policies were drafted to help balance these priorities for future development in the subarea.



**WEST LYNDEN GATEWAY SUBAREA**  
City of Lynden 2025 Comprehensive Plan | February 2025



## West Lynden Gateway Subarea Goals and Policies

### GATEWAY ENTRANCE

**Goal 1. Establish a gateway or landmark area around the intersection of Bay Lyn Drive and the Guide Meridian to welcome visitors and residents to the city.**

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| Policy 1.1 | Work with local artists and business owners surrounding the landmark area to create a welcoming landmark or gateway area representative of Lynden. |
| Policy 1.2 | Explore zoning incentives for new development to include a landmark feature or notable art installation.   |
| Policy 1.3 | Engage businesses owners and community members in identifying a unique theme or story to tell through public art or landmarks.                     |

### WALKABILITY

**Goal 2. Improve non-motorized connections to ensure pedestrians and bicyclists can safely and efficiently navigate through this subarea.**

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|------------|--|
| Policy 2.1 | Improve the walkability of the intersections along the Guide Meridian by continuing to coordinate with WSDOT on potential sidewalk improvements.                                   |
| Policy 2.2 | Develop a more extensive sidewalk network with pedestrian amenities to increase pedestrian safety by requiring new development to install sidewalks and street trees.              |
| Policy 2.3 | Advance the on-going development of multi-modal trails (Jim Kaemingk Jr., Duffner, and the River Trails) that are conceptually included in the City's Park and Trails Master Plan. |

Commented [RC12]: Lynden subareas.

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Next subareas listing them, description, the reference to the plans.





*The Northwest Washington Fairgrounds draw thousands of visitors to Lynden every year.*

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### **Goal 3. Explore ways to maximize commercial and industrial development in appropriate locations within the subarea.**

- Policy 3.1 Capitalize on the regional draw and economic development potential of the NW Washington Fairgrounds to promote tourism opportunities and services that support the needs of those events.
- Policy 3.2 Support large-scale commercial and industrial development in the subarea on vacant properties or through redevelopment of existing commercial sites (e.g., Pioneer Ford).

## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

### **Goal 4. Coordinate with private property owners to establish trail connections along Fishtrap and Duffner Creeks to increase recreational opportunities and pedestrian connections in the subarea.**

- Policy 4.1 Work with private property owners to establish trailheads that include a small parking area, bike parking, trash receptacles, lighting, and signage.

- Policy 4.2 Assist private property owners with efforts to develop trail connections.
- Policy 4.3 Maintain and improve trails to increase pedestrian connectivity and access to Fishtrap Creek, Duffner Creek, and the Nooksack River.

## ENVIRONMENTAL

**Goal 5. Ensure that existing and new development activity prioritizes environmental stewardship and avoids impacts to critical areas.**

- Policy 5.1 Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat within the West Lynden Gateway subarea.
- Policy 5.2 Avoid new development in frequently flooded areas.

## MIXED-USE CENTER DEVELOPMENT

**Goal 6. Promote the use of the City's Mixed Use Center Overlay that thoughtfully provides a compatible mix of multifamily housing, neighborhood commercial, and semi-public open space on eligible parcels in this subarea.**

- Policy 6.1 Support the Whatcom Transit Authority (WTA) in exploring higher density transit-oriented residential development on their existing Park and Ride site.
- Policy 6.2 Encourage recreational development within this subarea that can support a growing residential population.