

## Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas,  
Tuesday, January 21, 2025 at 5:30 PM

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### Agenda

#### Open Meeting

#### 1. Review/Correct and/or Approve Minutes

A. November 18, 2024 Draft Minutes

#### 2. Old Business

B. Comprehensive Plan Review

Chapter 2 - Community Vision Goals

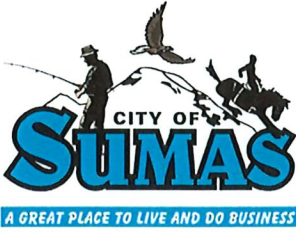
Chapter 3 - Land Use Element

Chapter 4 - Capital Facilities Element

Chapter 5 - Housing Element

#### 3. New Business

#### 4. Adjournment



## Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas, WA 98295

Monday, November 18, 2024, at 5:30 PM

### Minutes

#### Present

John VanWingerden

Lizette Custer

Helen Solem

Teresa Josephson

Jacob Williams

Josh Clawson, Ex-Officio

Carson Cortez, City Planner

Michelle Quinn, City Clerk

Lizette Custer made a motion to approve October 21, 2024, Minutes, John VanWingerden seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

Carson Cortez, City Planner, opened the meeting with going over what happened at the public hearing regarding the subdivision on Sumas Avenue. The applicant and a homeowner did not want a connecting sidewalk to Highway 9, the area runs through private property. Discussion on having sidewalks throughout town to make walking paths for our residents.

Jessica Koehler wanted to know if the commissioners have any concerns or questions about subdivision that should be brought to the council before they make their final decision. One concern was about why the City must maintain the retention pond. Carson explained that the City maintains all the retention ponds in town. Helen Solem would like to see landscaping as part of the developer's responsibility, the city has no requirements for a subdivision to have landscaping.

The commission would really like to see an agreement between the single-family residents due to sharing the roof and wall.

Carson Cortez, City Planner, went over the community vision and goals on what the town wanted to be from the prior comprehensive plan. The city's vision from the 1992 survey was to protect the natural elements, protect the residential character for a rural town, encourage commercial development, encourage clean industrial development, enhance the facilities at existing parks and develop new trails, protect groundwater resources and critical areas for shoreline management.

Helen and Lizette both agree with the past community vision for our town. Carson said that the projected population and employment growth plan for Sumas was presented to the Whatcom County Planning Commission along with all the other cities. The general feedback from the community has not been

encouraging, the whole county's projection for the population and employment is higher than the state's prediction over the next twenty years.

The next commission meeting January 06, 2025

John VanWingerden made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Jacob Williams seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

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Councilmember Josh Clawson, Ex Officio

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City Clerk

# Chapter 2 - Background

## Community Vision and Goals

Based upon the results of the community survey, the input of the planning commission, and citizen feedback at public meetings, the following vision has been identified:

Sumas should be a small rural town that offers a vibrant commercial district, spacious residential neighborhoods, a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities, and an industrial base that provides decent jobs. The community should exhibit self-reliance and the citizens should have pride in their town.

Several policy objectives have been identified to help the city attain this vision.

- Sumas should protect the natural elements -- the clean air, pure water, and beautiful open space -- that create the pastoral environment enjoyed by residents.
- Sumas should protect the residential character that is the essence of a rural town: residents should have "room to breathe", yet should still be able to walk anywhere in town.
- Sumas should encourage commercial development that provides a benefit to local residents. Sumas should capitalize upon the large number of "passers-through" in order to support desirable businesses that would otherwise not survive in such a small town.
- Commercial development should be contained within compact, well-defined areas, both to minimize the impact on surrounding neighborhoods and to serve patrons conveniently.
- Sumas should encourage "clean" industrial development in areas separate from residential use.
- Sumas should enhance the facilities at existing parks and also develop new trail and park facilities by conversion of land that is unsuitable for development because of flooding.
- Sumas should protect groundwater resources to ensure that potable water meeting the current high standard and in quantities sufficient to support new growth will continue to be available into the future.
- Sumas should provide special protection of anadromous fisheries through implementation of the city's critical areas regulations and shoreline management master program goals, policies and regulations.

In addition to the goals set forth above, the planning goals established in the Growth Management Act (GMA) pursuant to RCW 36.70A.020 are hereby adopted and incorporated by this reference as planning goals under this comprehensive plan. In addition, the policy of the Shoreline Management Act established under RCW 90.58.020 is added as one of the GMA planning goal, without creating any priority order, and is incorporated by this reference into the Sumas comprehensive plan.

6. This 9.9 acre area extends along the reach of Johnson Creek from the rail trestle behind Elenbaas to the rail trestle under the B-N main line. The area includes a 60 foot swathe along the left bank of the creek; and all of the right bank of the creek north of Front Street and west of the rail line; and the forested portion of the right bank south of Front Street; but exclusive of the Front Street right-of-way. This creek reach is identified as quality fish habitat within DEA's assessment. The reach should be preserved and enhanced. Possible enhancements include planting of riparian vegetation, particularly on the right bank at the north end of the reach. The area is also the main route of Johnson Creek flooding, which limits its development potential.
7. This 7.1-acre area stretches across the southern edge of four large parcels containing or intended for industrial development. Existing development within the four parcels is distant from Johnson Creek. The NSPA contains a 60-foot wide swathe on the left bank of Johnson Creek, as well as all portions of the four parcels on the right bank of Johnson Creek. DEA's habitat assessment identifies improvements to riparian vegetation that could be made along this reach. Developers or the parcels should enhance the riparian zone as mitigation for wetland impacts elsewhere on site
8. This 3.6-acre area is a topographically low area on the left bank of Johnson Creek at the back of the Tyrell parcel, together with a swathe 60 feet wide on the opposite bank. DEA's report identifies this area as a good site for a constructed side-channel. The site should be enhanced as off-site mitigation for impacts to low value wetlands elsewhere in town.
9. This 1.4-acre area contains a wetland that is tributary to Bone Creek. DEA's report notes that the wetland could be enhanced to provide off-channel rearing habitat. Alternatively, the wetland could be enhanced to improve water quality and wildlife habitat functions. The site should be enhanced as mitigation for impacts to low value wetlands elsewhere in town.
10. This 1.8-acre area contains a forested wetland associated with an old oxbow of the Sumas River. The oxbow is no longer continuous with the river, but it does offer significant habitat value to water fowl. The oxbow wetland should be preserved.

### Areas of Historical Significance

Several structures in Sumas are listed on the Whatcom County Register of historic places, including: the Parkinson House, the Sumas Methodist Church, the Thomas House, the BB & BC Railroad Depot, the Northern Pacific Railroad Depot, and the old U.S. Border Station. None of the sites are listed in either the state or national registers of historic places, although the U.S. Border Station was determined to be eligible for listing on the state register. The county register also includes a Native American campsite adjacent to the Sumas River at the east edge of the city.

### Goals and Policies

Sumas adopts the following goals and policies pertaining to land use:

**Goal:** To encourage a land use pattern that supports a balance between residential, commercial and industrial development while protecting and enhancing the natural environment and quality of life enjoyed by local residents.



- The city should establish well-defined areas within which particular land uses are planned to occur.
  - Wherever possible, the city should avoid creating conflicts between incompatible land uses.
- Goal:** To encourage a mix of residential housing opportunities that can meet the needs of current and future residents.
- The city should establish residential areas that accommodate low-, medium-, and high-density neighborhoods.
  - The city should encourage in-fill within existing neighborhoods.
- Goal:** To encourage a mix of commercial businesses that can meet the needs of both local residents and those passing through town.
- The city should establish centrally located commercial areas within waling distance of most residents.
  - The city should limit the proportion of the overall commercial area intended to serving the traveling public.
- Goal:** To encourage a mix of industrial businesses that can provide jobs and support the local tax base.
- The city should establish an industrial area that is geographically separated from residential neighborhoods.
  - The city should encourage industrial businesses that increase employment opportunities over those that include low employment densities.
- Goal:** To protect the natural environment and increase recreational opportunities for local residents.
- The city should establish regulations to protect the functions and values of the natural environment, including wetlands, rivers, streams and other priority habitats.
  - The city should develop and maintain parks and other recreational amenities to serve local residents.

## Current Land Use and Zoning

Table 3-1 contains a summary of land use within the city limits as of October 2015. The table is organized according to general land use categories utilized by the County Assessor's office. Table 3-2 presents the total acreage within the City's current zoning designations. Map 6A shows undeveloped or underdeveloped properties that have infill potential for residential development. Map 6B shows commercial and industrial properties that have infill potential.

Table 3-1: Current Land Use (City limits)

Land Use Category	Acreage	Percentage
Single-family residential	129	14%
Multifamily residential	10	1%
Mobile homes	15	2%
Commercial	42	5%

## Planning Approaches to Increase Physical Activity

Item B.

use for agriculture or open space.

Open space will also be maintained between Sumas and the nearest urban growth area, the City of Nooksack that lies seven miles to the southwest. All of the area between these two cities is zoned for agricultural use by the county and will ,therefore, remain in open space.

### Planning approaches to increase physical activity

Sumas has established several approaches to encouraging increased physical activity among its citizens. These include:

- Requiring the construction of sidewalks within all new subdivisions
- Planning for interconnections between neighborhoods
- Planning for a compact urban commercial area, including establishment of areas where provision of off-street parking is not required
- Establishing higher density residential areas at locations surrounding the downtown commercial core and along the major transit route through town
- Maintaining existing park facilities that include ball fields, tennis and basketball courts, play structures, walking trails and open space
- Maintaining public access to Johnson Creek to accommodate fishing and other water-related recreational activities
- Planning for and developing additional park, recreation, trail and open space facilities
- Securing easements for public access to off-street pedestrian trails

**Goal:** To support physical activity for the citizens of Sumas through implementation of a combination of regulatory and non-regulatory means.

**Policy:** The city should continue to require the development of sidewalks and other pedestrian ways as part of approved subdivisions.

**Policy:** The city should work with local property owners and developers to establish and increase pedestrian connections throughout the city.

**Policy:** The city should utilize local zoning designations to encourage pedestrian access to commercial areas from surrounding residential areas.

**Policy:** The city should maintain and expand access to existing park, recreation and open space areas.

**Policy:** The city should work in partnership with private, community groups and state and local funding agencies to develop additional park and recreation facilities.

### Essential Public Facilities

“Essential public facilities” include those facilities that are typically difficult to site, such as airports, state education facilities, state or regional transportation facilities, regional transit authority facilities, state and local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, and in-patient facilities, such as substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities, group homes, and secure community transition facilities.



## 4. Capital Facilities Element

This chapter is a required element of a comprehensive plan developed to meet the provisions of the GMA. This element is crucial because it serves as a gauge of the practicality and feasibility of the other elements. Essentially, this element reveals which public facility projects are required in order to accomplish the development described in other elements, and also proves that the city has the financial resources to undertake those projects.

The GMA defines public facilities as "streets, roads, highways, sidewalks, street and road lighting systems, traffic signals, domestic water systems, storm and sanitary sewer systems, parks and recreational facilities, and schools." (RCW 36.70A.030(12)) This element includes a discussion of each of these categories, although the transportation-related categories are all grouped together. In each section, the existing status of the system will first be described, and future needs will then be discussed. Preceding these sections is a presentation of Sumas's goals and policies related to capital facilities, as well as a discussion of the planning assumptions developed in other chapters that are pertinent to the analysis presented in this chapter.

### **Goals and Policies**

**Sumas adopts the following goals and policies pertaining to capital facilities:**

**Goal: To provide capital facilities consistent with statutory requirements and with the other elements of this plan.**

- **The city shall accord highest priority to those projects required by statute or necessary for the preservation of public health and safety.**
- **The city shall develop capital facilities in a manner that directs and controls land-use patterns and intensities in accordance with the land-use element of this plan. As required by RCW 36.70A.070, the city shall reassess the land-use element if funding is unavailable for the capital projects needed to support a planned use. Development shall be allowed only when and where there are facilities and services available to serve that development.**

**Goal: To allocate the cost of a facility fairly among those that benefit from the facility.**

- **Long-term borrowing should be used to pay for facilities that will benefit more than one generation.**
- **General governmental revenues should be used to pay only for facilities of general benefit. Other financing methods such as connection fees, utility rates, LIDs, and revenue bonds should be used to pay for facilities that benefit a narrower group.**
- **Facilities providing benefit only to a new development should be paid for by the developer.**
- **Facilities providing benefits to both existing residents and newcomers should be paid for by both groups, with each group paying a share proportional to their corresponding benefit. Connection fees and impact fees shall be based upon this principle of proportional benefit.**



**Goal:** To build and operate facilities as efficiently as possible.

- A planning process should precede all major capital expenditures. This capital facilities element should be the cornerstone of that process. This element should be updated every other year and, with the exception of emergency projects, the capital budget for any given year should include only those projects identified in this element.
- The city should coordinate the projects in a given location in order to reduce costs.
- The city should aggressively pursue low-cost funds such as grants and subsidized loans.
- Major developments should have a full range of facilities, including streets, water, sewer, storm sewer, sidewalks, and neighborhood parks. These facilities should be installed and paid for by the developer and thereafter dedicated to the city.
- The city should adopt and enforce sensible design and construction standards for capital facilities systems.
- Existing facilities should be adequately maintained, because maintenance is usually more cost-effective than replacement.

## Sewer System

The following discussion is based on a 2007 study, *Wastewater Treatment Alternatives*, prepared by the engineering firm Wilson Engineering LLC. Map 9 accompanies this discussion.

### Existing conditions

Collection. Prior to 1972, sewage disposal in Sumas was handled by on-site septic systems. In 1972 a sewage collection system and treatment plant were built. As shown on Map 9, the sewage collection system now consists of over 10 miles of pipe spanning 300 acres, less than half of the incorporated area. The system provides service to 366 single-family residential, 37 multifamily, 66 commercial, and 11 industrial customers. Approximately twelve residences are still on septic tanks.

The system is divided into seven drainage basins, each basin served by a lift station. Generally, gravity mains carry sewage from south to north within each basin, and a lift station then pumps the sewage past a barrier such as a creek or highway. Sewage ultimately reaches lift station 1 in the northeast (i.e., the lowest) corner of town. Lift stations 1, 2, and 3 were rehabilitated in 1998 as part of the project to connect to the Abbotsford sewer and are in good shape. Station 5 was installed in 1997 in order to serve the western part of the industrial zone and is in good shape. Station 4 was installed in the mid to late 1980s, at the time that the Sumas industrial park was developed, and has received a major upgrade in 2005. Station 4 is in good condition, with a design capacity sufficient to accommodate new growth through the planning period. Station 6 is located adjacent to Hovel Road and was designed to serve the City as it expands to the south. It was constructed in 2007 in conjunction with development of the new ball fields and is in good condition. In addition, Station 7 is located at the west end of town near Barbo Road. This station is capable of handling anticipated flows from residential development at the west end of the Moe

## Parks and Recreation Goals and Objectives

Item B.

- Build a wetland park with trails.
- Existing sidewalks need to be kept clean and passable.

### Goals and objectives

In consideration of local capacity, existing facilities, and community vision/preferences, the following goals and objectives are adopted.

- Goal 1. Provide sidewalks and trails in support of the Comp. Plan vision of easy pedestrian access to all downtown amenities.
  - Objective 1.1. Provide pedestrian access from major neighborhoods to the downtown core.
  - Objective 1.2. Provide pedestrian access to major public facilities such as schools, churches, and libraries.
  - Objective 1.3. Provide pedestrian access to the rodeo grounds and new ball fields.
- Goal 2. Provide neighborhood parks consistent with the overall City vision of convenient pedestrian access.
  - Objective 2.1. Provide a neighborhood park in the Garfield Street subdivision.
  - Objective 2.1. Ensure that adequate land for neighborhood parks is acquired through developer dedication when processing major new subdivisions.
- Goal 3. When economically feasible, support the recreational needs of the Nooksack Valley community.
  - Objective 3.1. Continue to assess the need for additional community facilities to serve city residents and the surrounding area.
  - Objective 3.2. Allow access to City recreational programs and facilities by residents of the Nooksack Valley.
  - Objective 3.3. Develop a skateboard/BMX facility.
- Goal 4. When economically feasible, provide facilities and events targeted to the County and the region.
  - Objective 4.1. Continue to provide a facility for rodeo events.
  - Objective 4.2. Develop a recreational center targeted at a regional user-group, including amenities such as a rock-climbing wall, jogging track, weight room, exercise room, gymnasium, and/or pool.
- Goal 5. Provide recreational facilities and opportunities to residents of all ages.
  - Objective 5.1. Continue to provide a senior center facility and program.
  - Objective 5.2. Enhance the program currently offered at the Youth Center, to include more operating hours and structured summer classes and activities.
  - Objective 5.3. Maintain existing facilities such as the basketball and tennis courts that are used by people of all ages.



- Objective 5.4. Develop a trail system for recreational walkers.
- Goal 6. Provide facilities that are compatible with and capitalize upon Sumas's rural setting.
  - Objective 6.1. Develop trails that link downtown with planned open spaces, including wetland mitigation areas.

### Project feasibility analysis

The feasibility of developing various facilities was explored by ranking each facility against a number of criteria. Four projects were omitted from further consideration based upon their poor showing in the survey: horse trails, sidewalks, civic auditorium, and conversion of the rodeo ground to an alternate use. The following matrix shows the results of the feasibility exercise.

	Soccer fields	Recreation center	Playgrounds	Recreation program	Pool	Baseball fields	Trails	Skateboard/BMX park	Fishing pond and nature trail
Ranking in survey (L, M, H)	M	H	L	H	H	M	H	H	-
Capital cost (L, M, H)	M	H	L	L	H	M	L	M	M
Operating cost (L, M, H)	M	H	L	M	H+	M	L	L	M
Staffing requirement (L, H, Zero)	L	H	0	M	H+	L	0	0	L
Grant funding likelihood (L, M, H)	M	L	L	L	L	M	H	L	H
Revenue from user fees?	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	?	Y
Risk (L, M, H)	M	H	L	L	H	M	L	M	M
Target market (City, Local, Region)	R	R	C	C	R	R	L	R	R
Competition	Sumas, Lynden, Everson	Lynden Y, Everson private gym	-	Lynden Y, Church, misc. leagues	Lynden Y, Bellingham, Abbotsford	Sumas, Lynden, Everson	-	Bellingham	Saxon



with the established UGA provide enough land to accommodate 375 new housing units, including a market factor of over 20 percent.

*Provision for diverse needs.* As noted in the summary above, the marketplace has done a good job of adjusting to the needs of the diverse economic segments found in Sumas. Availability of suitable land will ensure continued responsiveness in the marketplace, and the land-use plan identifies such land. The regions identified for infill development (see Map 6A in the land-use chapter) are adjacent to varied kinds of existing housing. The region to the northeast abuts a higher-income single-family neighborhood and can be expected to attract more development of a similar nature. The region to the northwest (Moe Hill) is also attracting larger single-family homes. The region to the south (Boon Street) encircles an attractive subsidized apartment complex, and other multi-family development has recently located there. That area will probably continue to attract a mix of single-family and multi-family housing, and the description of the area emphasizes its suitability for a mix of single-family and multi-family development.

Table 5-5. Projected Housing Demand

	2015	2021	2026	2031	2036
Population	1,468	1,712	1,916	2,119	2,323
Persons Per Unit	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7	2.7
Occupancy Rate	94.5%	94.5%	94.5%	94.5%	94.5%
Income Bracket	Number of Units Needed in Bracket				
Very Low	109	127	143	158	173
Low	98	114	128	141	155
Moderate	46	54	60	66	73
Middle/High	322	376	421	465	510
Total Housing Units	575	671	751	830	910

## Goals and Policies

**Goal:** Support healthy residential neighborhoods that reflect a high degree of pride in ownership.

**Policy** The city shall enforce the ordinances that affect the appearance of neighborhoods, such as the ordinances pertaining to abandoned cars and to noxious weeds.

**Policy** The city shall adhere to the residential zoning code and refrain from granting variances that might change the character of neighborhoods.

*Goal:* Strive to preserve and enhance the existing housing stock.

*Policy* The city should serve as lead agency for residents interested in seeking federal grant funds targeted at rehabilitation of housing.

*Goal:* Encourage the development of affordable housing for all income brackets.

*Policy* The city will supply enough residential land to meet the projected housing need over the next 20 years.

*Policy* The city should support the development of some neighborhoods containing only single-family residences.

*Policy* The city will allow for the development of multi-family housing to meet affordable housing needs, provided that the character of the community is maintained.

*Policy* The city shall regulate the construction and siting of manufactured housing in the same manner as site-built housing and shall not discriminate against the siting of manufactured housing within residential zoning districts.