

Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas
Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Agenda

Open Meeting

1. Review/Correct and/or Approve Minutes

[A.](#) January 21, 2025 Draft Minutes

2. New Business

[B.](#) Chapter 2 - Background

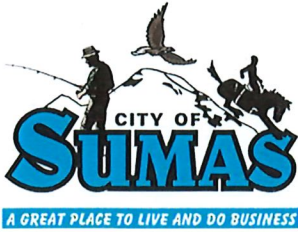
[C.](#) Parks & Recreation Goals & Objectives

[D.](#) Chapter 6 - Transportation Element

[E.](#) Chapter 7 - Utilities Element

[F.](#) Chapter 8 - Economic Development Element

3. Adjournment



Planning Commission Meeting

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

Minutes

PRESENT

Ex-Officio Josh Clawson
Carson Cortez, City Planner
Michelle Quinn, City Clerk

Present

John VanWingerden
Helen Solem
Teresa Josephson
Lizette Custer
Absent
Jacob Williams

John VanWingerden made a motion to approve November 18, 2024, Minutes, Lizette Custer seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

Carson Cortez, City Planner, explained he was going to start with the goal and policies from each section chapters two through five of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan.

Chapter 2 - Community Vision and Goals, Carson went over the visions and goals from the 2016 comprehensive plan. Discussion about these visions and goals and what changes are needed. One suggestion for the vision was to be adding that we are a Bordertown. Teresa would like to see a more updated vision and goals statement for the city; the committee will do research and bring back their recommendations on their thoughts for changes to our vision and goals.

Chapter 3 - Land Use Element, Carson wanted to know what their thoughts were on encouraging the city to have more high density and in-filling, which contradicts the vision for residents to have room to breathe and keeping it more of a rural town. Lizette would like to see more single-family residences and not so many multi-families residential building. Helen would like to see us grow in a different direction without the in-filling, Carson explained the State does not like urban sprawl and encourages in-filling within the city limits.

Planning Approaches to Increase Physical Activity - Lizette asked about the requirement for open space between Sumas and Nooksack, is this to help control urban sprawl. Carson explained this is so the cities do not grow into each other and maintains the agricultural use of the land in between. The city already has approaches for encouraging increased activity for its citizens.

Chapter 4. Capital Facilities Element, this chapter is a required element to meet the provisions of the GMA. One of the goals states that this element should update every other year, with only exceptions of emergency projects. Carson would like to update the wording so that it is not only for budgeted projects. John made suggestions for changing the wording; that all capital facilities projects are done efficiently and when needed.

Parks and Recreation Goals and Objective will be brought back to the next planning commission meeting.

Chapter 5 - Housing Element goals and policies are to support residential neighborhoods that reflect a high degree of pride in ownership. Carson thinks it should reflect a high degree of pride in both homeowners and individuals who rent. Discussion on how to enforce these rules, Sumas does have codes in place to enforce any issues with yards.

The next meeting will be February 18, 2025, at 5:30 pm

John VanWingerden made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Lizette Custer seconded; all were in favor the motion passed.

Councilmember Josh Clawson, Ex Officio

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.

- 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

6. Transportation Element

Pursuant to the Growth Management Act, the transportation element of each comprehensive plan must include the following elements:

1. Inventory of all transportation facilities and services (land, air and water including transit alignments);
2. Land-use assumptions used in estimating travel forecasts;
3. Identification of system expansion needs and transportation system management needs to meet current and future demands;
4. Level of service standards for all arterial and transit routes;
5. Specific actions and requirements for bringing into compliance any facilities or services that are below the established level of service;
6. Traffic forecasts (based on an adopted land-use plan) to provide information on the location, timing, and capacity needs of the future;
7. Finance, including a multi-year financing plan and identification of additional funding sources if there is a funding shortfall;
8. Intergovernmental coordination; and
9. Demand management strategies.

This chapter will first establish Sumas's transportation-related goals and policies. It next will demonstrate how the transportation element meets the requirements listed above. Finally, it will contain sections describing Existing Conditions and Future Conditions.

Goals and Policies

In consideration of the needs and issues identified within this chapter, the City of Sumas adopts the following goals and policies:

Goal: Provide transportation systems that provide convenient and safe access to employment, educational and recreational opportunities for citizens and visitors, and that provide for the movement of goods and services.

Policy: The city should control access to arterials and connectors in order to minimize disruption of traffic.

Policy: The city should require new subdivisions to front on connectors and arterials rather than state routes.

Policy: The city should establish and maintain connectivity between new subdivisions, benefiting pedestrians, automobiles, utilities, and emergency services.

Policy: The city should keep industrial / commercial truck traffic off residential and local streets.

Policy: Within the city's financial ability to do so, the city should bring poor roads up to standard.

Policy: The city should consider Intelligent Transportation Systems, when cost effective, to increase the capacity and safety of the transportation system.

Goal: Coordinate transportation planning and construction with neighboring jurisdictions and with the state.

Policy: The city adopts LOS "D" (V/C ratio of 0.8 during p.m. peak hours) for non-HSS state routes within city limits.

Policy: The city adopts LOS "D" for city-designated principal arterial streets.

Policy: The city should participate in the regional planning processes coordinated by Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), including the IMTC process.

Policy: The city should coordinate with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) with regard to state routes.

Policy: The city should coordinate with Whatcom County with regard to county arterials and collectors.

Policy: The city should coordinate with WTA with regard to transit.

Policy: The city should coordinate closely with Whatcom County during annexations and work toward solutions providing long-term benefit to citizens of both the city and the region.

Policy: The city should incorporate Intelligent Transportation Systems initiatives and projects into the Whatcom Regional ITS Architecture.

Goal: Build and operate facilities as efficiently as possible.

Policy: The city should maintain and preserve the existing transportation system.

Policy: The city should pursue low-cost funds such as grants and subsidized loans.

Policy: The city should undertake effective planning and build only what has been planned.

Policy: The city should coordinate road projects with utility projects.

Policy: The city should adopt road design standards that are sensible and that do not needlessly increase cost.

Goal: Allocate costs fairly among those that benefit.

Policy: The city should use SEPA to mitigate off-site impacts associated with new development and redevelopment.

Policy: The city should use "no-protest" agreements, when appropriate, as a means of allowing approval of individual small-scale projects, while still providing for eventual construction of necessary improvements through formation of LIDs.

Policy: Facilities providing benefit to both newcomers and existing residents should be paid for by both groups, with each group paying a share proportional to their corresponding benefit.

Policy: The city should require all developments to provide transportation facilities meeting adopted levels of service and other standards to be provided concurrent with completion of such developments; otherwise, the city should not issue permits and approvals for such developments until concurrency requirements have been met.

Goal: Encourage system efficiency, energy conservation and minimize impacts to the environment.

Policy: The city should support development of park-and-ride facilities when feasible.

Policy: The city should control stormwater run-off in order to reduce impacts to ground and surface waters.

Policy: The city should consider use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) that will reduce the need for construction, decrease emissions through reduced delays and idling times, and enhance the transportation network in a way that minimizes noise and environmental impacts, and preserves open space.

Policy: The city should research opportunities for requiring commercial truck traffic coming from or going to the international border crossing to travel through the industrial district to reduce congestion on Cherry Street. Utilization of ITS should be considered.

GMA Requirements

This chapter meets GMA requirements as shown below:

1. Inventory of Transportation Facilities

The Existing Conditions report in this chapter includes an inventory and assessment of transportation facilities in the City of Sumas.

2. Land Use Assumptions

The Land Use element of this comprehensive plan (Ch. 3) gives a detailed description of the land use assumptions for the twenty-year planning period. Map 8 in the Land Use element shows the expected pattern of development on which this transportation plan is based.

3. Identification of Needs

Citizen input is a key to identifying the needs of the community. A public workshop, survey and results of a 1992 survey were used to identify transportation needs of the Sumas community.

Telecommunications

Existing conditions

Telecommunication service is provided by Frontier Communications. The main switching office for Sumas is located downtown at 233 Garfield Street. All calls from the city and the surrounding area are transmitted through this main office. Network services include, but are not limited to, POTS, Digital subscriber line and Ethernet.

Television service is provided by the City of Sumas, and 61 channels are currently provided

Future conditions

No telecommunications service constraints currently exist in and near Sumas. Future expansion for telecommunications feeder systems is based on development expansion and community needs where economically feasible. Frontier currently uses fiber optic lines to connect main switching offices and to provide digital subscriber line H S I up to and including high bandwidth data networks. Building / Area WIFI are also available.

Goals and Policies

Goal. Provide access to private utilities to the residents of Sumas.

Policy: Whenever possible, the city should provide the private utilities with timely notice of the city's street and utility projects so that the utilities are able to coordinate construction and reduce overall infrastructure costs.

Policy. The city should encourage private utilities to expand service within Sumas to keep pace with development.

Policy. The city should notify private utilities regarding major developments, such as subdivisions, to support coordination on extension of utility services.

Part of the local infrastructure utilized by companies in the industrial area is the city's system of industrial roads built to Canadian heavy-haul standards. The presence of these roadways allows loads that are too heavy to travel on typical state highways in the U.S. to move between the industrial area and the international border without needing to unload and reload due to weight limitations.

Other factors that impact economic development in Sumas include the availability of relatively inexpensive water and electricity, both of which are public utilities owned and maintained by the city. The availability of these resources serves to attract businesses to town. Sumas also maintains some of the lowest utility connection charges in Whatcom County.

Future conditions

Sumas will continue to attract businesses through the planning period that benefit from a location near the Canadian border and that, in some cases, require access to an industrial site by way of a heavy haul road. Future upgrades to the regional rail system will also support increased rail traffic and businesses that rely on access to rail to transport their goods. The fluctuation of the Canadian dollar will have a strong effect on the expansion or contraction of businesses such as commercial fueling stations and food markets that rely heavily on customers coming down from Canada.

The planned increase in industrial jobs will support more local citizens being able to work locally and avoid needing to travel to other parts of the county for employment.

Goals and Policies

Goal: Maintain and increase access to the city's commercial area for local residents and those travelling through town.

Policy: The city should work with WSDOT and federal agencies to reduce back-ups at the international border crossing that block access to local businesses.

Policy: The city should work with WSDOT to ensure adequate room for vehicle queuing is provided.

Policy: Regulations limiting blockage of intersections should be enforced to ensure safe access to areas on both sides of SR 9.

Policy: The city should encourage new businesses serving local residents to locate along Sumas Avenue to avoid impacts associated with the state highway.

Policy: The city should continue to expand the local sidewalk system to increase safe access from residential areas to existing and future commercial areas.

Goal: Maintain and increase access to the city's industrial area.

Policy: The city should maintain existing roadways built to heavy-haul standards.

Policy: The city should consider options for generating revenue necessary to maintain the heavy-haul road network.

Policy: The city should work with property owners in the industrial area to expand the heavy-haul road network as part of proposed industrial developments.

Goal: Attract new businesses that provide jobs and serve the local and travelling public.

Policy: The city should work with local property owners to develop a regional truck stop to serve freight traffic moving through the international border.

Policy: The city council should continue to support new businesses or business expansion through the Economic Development fund.