

CHAPTER 5

LAND USE ELEMENT

Purpose of the Land Use Element

The Land Use Element is the heart of La Conner's Comprehensive Plan and is developed in accordance with the Growth Management Act, Section 36.70A.070. It is the tool that will guide growth as changes occur within La Conner during the next twenty years. It considers the general distribution and location of land uses, the existing and future intensity of these uses, and the density of these uses.

Accommodating population growth while protecting natural amenities and quality of life is the reason for land use planning. A town must anticipate and plan for a variable influx of jobs and people; therefore, land must be preserved for those future uses. Growth brings greater demands on the community's infrastructure: more schools, more water, bigger wastewater treatment facilities, more extensive transportation facilities, and more land. By correctly and appropriately identifying how and where La Conner, as a community, wants to grow, La Conner has a greater likelihood of moving towards the collective ideals of its citizens.

The Land Use Element addresses land uses within the Town limits and Urban Growth Area (UGA) established by the Town of La Conner. It represents the community's policy plan for growth over the next 20 years. The Land Use Element describes how the goals in the other plan elements will be implemented through land use policies and regulations, and thus, is a key element in implementing the Comprehensive Plan.

The general distribution and location of land uses, appropriate intensity and density of land uses given current development trends, the provision of public services, and stormwater runoff were considered for this element.

Urban Growth Area

The planning area includes the lands to which the Town of La Conner provides urban services or public utility infrastructure. In 1995, the Town of La Conner chose not to have an Urban Growth Area for the purpose of development. The Town did intend to establish two small Urban Growth Areas totaling 16.5 acres. The first area was 2 acres in the northwest corner between the Port of Skagit County and the Swinomish Channel. The second area was a 14.5-acre area extending east along Chilberg Road to Sullivan Slough and south ½ mile, encompassing the area between the slough dike and the dike protecting the farmland and Town to the west. The 14.5-acre parcel was intended as the site for

the Town's Wastewater Treatment Facility, Stormwater Treatment Facility, the Public Works facilities, and a new Fire Hall jointly owned with Skagit County Fire Protection District #13.

When Skagit County adopted a Growth Management Act (GMA) Comprehensive Plan in 1997, the La Conner's intended Urban Growth Areas were not included. In 2003, the Town proposed a 44-acre UGA, and in 2004, the Town applied to amend the County Comprehensive Plan Map to include the La Conner UGA. This decision was continued and combined with the 2005 amendments. The Town reduced the UGA size request to Skagit County from 44 to 14 acres during the 2005 amendment process. That request was approved and current UGA reflects that amendment. The UGA only includes the Wastewater Treatment Facility, Stormwater Treatment Facility and the Fire Station. No development is anticipated in the existing UGA and the land use analysis for the plan does not include analysis of the UGA.

The Town corporate limits and UGA are represented on the maps attached to this plan as Maps 1 (Zoning/Comprehensive Plan), and 2 (Critical Areas).

The Urban Growth Boundary was established with Skagit County to ensure that the Town would be able to provide urban services to all existing and new development. The location of the boundary was based on environmental constraints, concentration of existing development, existing infrastructure and services, and the location of agricultural resource lands. Town sewer and water, drainage facilities, utilities, communication lines, and local roads would be available to develop within the Urban Growth Boundary. No revisions to the Urban Growth Area are proposed for this amendment cycle.

Major Land Use Considerations and Goals

The Town periodically experiences development pressure that calls for efficient planning and explicit land use decisions. The Town residents and officials respect the need to preserve farmlands and have chosen not to project the Town boundaries beyond the current Town limits for Residential, Commercial or Industrial development. Due to this policy, the Town is constrained by the availability of land and financial resources, and quality of development is a concern. Therefore, the allocation of available land among competing uses is a critical factor in the Town's decision-making process. The Town has chosen the following strategies to accommodate this policy:

- A. Densification – The Town single-family dimensional standards allow for a unit density of 8.7 units per acre. This is twice the GMA requirement.
- B. Ensure affordable housing availability.
- C. Allow for innovative development to meet growth needs and demands.
- D. Allow for appropriate Essential Facilities to meet community needs.

The goals and policies of the Land Use Element are a combination of essential components of the Vision Statement and RCW requirements. The goals and policies are divided into the following topics:

- Growth Management
- Economic Development
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Environmental Preservation, Conservation and Critical Areas
- Open space, Parks and Recreation
- Shoreline
- Historic and Cultural Preservation
- Community Design
- Healthy Living

GOALS AND POLICIES

The goals and policies set out in this element, and the community goals outlined in the Vision Statement, will guide all local government decisions affecting land use. The Town will ensure that the character of land use optimizes the combined potentials for economic and social benefits. The following goals and policies are intended to provide the enjoyment and protection of natural resources while minimizing threats to health, safety and welfare posed by hazards, nuisances, incompatible land uses, and environmental degradation.

Growth Management

GOAL A

Manage growth so that the delivery of public facilities and services occurs in a fiscally responsible and timely manner to support existing and new development.

Policies

- 5A-1 Maps available on the Town's website and available at Town Hall show the area designated as the Urban Growth Boundary for the Town of La Conner.
- 5A-2 Update as necessary zoning ordinances to conform to the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies for the Land Use Element.
- 5A-3 Make public facilities and services available to meet the needs of the community and provide for future growth through improvements and expansion.

- 5A-4 Address impacts of new development and redevelopment on public services and facilities and determine those impacts concurrently with any proposals for development.
- 5A-5 Developers should have the primary fiscal responsibility to extend facilities and services to serve new development and redevelopment, and to mitigate impacts created by their development.
- 5A-6 Developers should have the primary fiscal responsibility to provide parks, recreation, and open space to mitigate the impacts created by their development.
- 5A-7 Essential public facilities will not be precluded from being sited in town. The Town will enforce the Comprehensive Plan and regulations to ensure compatibility of any proposed essential public facility with surrounding uses and development.

GOAL B

Ensure that public facilities and services necessary to support existing and future development are adequate to serve the community without decreasing current service levels below established minimum standards.

Policies

- 5B-1 Require developers to provide information relating to impacts that the proposed development will have on public facilities and services. The Town will conduct a thorough evaluation of that analysis.
- 5B-2 The Town of La Conner shall not issue any development permits which result in a reduction of the Level of Service (LOS) Standards for public facilities consistent with the provisions identified in the Capital Facilities Element.
- 5B-3 Consider the impacts on personnel, equipment, training and other needs for adequate levels of service for police and fire protection in the community for any development proposal.
- 5B-4 Ensure appropriate identification of public improvements, which are needed to properly serve existing and planned future growth and the means to finance these improvements.

GOAL C

Seek to provide equitable distribution and maximum utilization of Town resources in

the delivery of services and protection to the community.

Policies

5C-1 New and existing developments should contribute to the cost of providing general capital facilities and services commensurate with their impacts.

GOAL D

Protect private citizen rights while also protecting the welfare of the community as a whole.

Policies

5D-1 Enforce the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations to ensure reasonable compatibility with other land uses.

5D-2 Protect individual property rights in the course of developing and maintaining Town properties.

5D-3 Ensure that developers receive full disclosure of all applicable rules, regulations and utility guidebooks. Provide ample opportunity for consultation with Town staff, and a time to present the project and any perceived problems in a public forum.

GOAL E

Protect life and property from natural or manmade disasters and ensure public safety.

Policies

5E-1 Develop and implement emergency response plans for natural and manmade disasters.

5E-2 Coordinate planning activities with local, State and Federal agencies

5E-3 Prepare for any adverse effects of climate change.

GOAL F

Encourage citizen involvement in the planning process and ensure coordination among local, State and Federal jurisdictions.

Policies

5F-1 Coordinate growth and development planning with applicable jurisdictions to promote and protect interjurisdictional interests.

- 5F-2 Coordinate the review and approval of development proposals with applicable local, State and Federal permitting agencies.
- 5F-3 Conduct an annual forum with the Town Council and Planning Commission to discuss future growth and development in the Town and consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.
- 5F-4 Promote cooperation between the Town and the La Conner School District to provide adequate opportunities for community use of school facilities.
- 5F-5 The Planning Commission should hold public workshops and public hearings with the involvement of the Town Council on important matters pertaining to growth management and development in town.
- 5F-6 Encourage use of community surveys and questionnaires to ascertain the preferences and concerns of all citizens.

GOAL G

Ensure that public facilities are well designed and compatible with the Town's natural and man-made environment.

Policies

- 5G-1 Facilitate and improve access and circulation by vehicles and pedestrians to new and existing facilities wherever possible.
- 5G-2 Locate, design, and construct public utilities and facilities to be compatible with designated land uses and natural systems such as drainage ways and shorelines.
- 5G-3 Siting of proposed public buildings and other facilities should conform to land use policies and regulations. The Town of La Conner should not be exempt from its own requirements.
- 5G-4 Strongly encourage the development of pedestrian corridors along the shoreline connecting activity centers, open spaces, and parks.
- 5G-5 Plan landscapes using native plants to support birds and other fauna of the Pacific Northwest.

Economic Development

GOAL H

Promote a stable and diversified economy offering a wide variety of services and employment opportunities to the citizens of La Conner.

Policies

- 5H-1 Promote an interdependent local economy.
- 5H-2 Encourage a predictable development atmosphere through the provision of consistent, well-organized plans and regulations.
- 5H-3 Encourage diversity in the range of goods and services to meet local and regional needs, including those of the traveling public.
- 5H-4 Support an economic development program in coordination with the State Department of Commerce.
- 5H-5 Coordinate and seek economic development assistance from the Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC), the Department of Commerce, Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG), the Port of Skagit County, and other entities in the economic development area.

GOAL I

The Town should identify and adopt policies and practices that encourage productive, creative, and artistic activities and uses and adjust land use policies to enhance these uses within the Urban Growth Area and surrounding area.

Policies

- 5I-1 Make publicly owned land available for placing works of art and cultural attractions.
- 5I-2 Maintain an outdoor sculpture tour that is periodically changed.

GOAL J

Achieve a balance between commercial and industrial interests to avoid over-concentration in one particular segment of the economy.

Policies

- 5J-1 Expand and recruit additional commercial services which primarily serve the needs of the residents.
- 5J-2 Encourage light industrial uses within designated zones.
- 5J-3 Encourage land uses and activities located within the industrial zone to contribute to the economic diversity and social health of the community.

- 5J-4 Encourage a diversity of uses within the industrial zone emphasizing both emerging technology and traditional industrial uses that have always been associated with La Conner.

Neighborhood Conservation

GOAL K

Encourage a balanced and organized combination of open space, commercial, industrial, recreation and public uses served by a convenient and efficient transportation network, while protecting the fabric and character of residential neighborhoods.

Policies

- 5K-1 Protect residential zones from encroachment by commercial or industrial uses.
- 5K-2 Maintain stable neighborhoods with sound housing stock and viable commercial and industrial districts.
- 5K-3 Encourage siting and designing of new construction to minimize disruption of visual amenities and solar resources to adjacent property owners, public roadways, parks, and waterways.
- 5K-4 Mitigate incompatible adjacent uses, including commercial and industrial uses, with landscape buffers, or recreation and open space corridors.
- 5K-5 Encourage livability, pedestrian orientation, and retain the historic character of the community, limiting stress factors such as noise pollution and traffic congestion.
- 5K-6 Encourage the use of native plants.

Environmental Preservation, Conservation and Critical Areas

GOAL L

Protect and conserve significant landscape features, fish and wildlife habitat, natural systems and critical areas.

Policies

- 5L-1 Recognizing that the Town will have special needs in the future for urban services, the Town shall continue to enforce, amend and adopt land development regulations which ensure the protection of the attributes, functions, and amenities of the natural environment. Of particular

- concern are the Swinomish Channel, its shorelines, Pioneer Park, sloped areas, established greenbelts, tree canopy, and other critical areas including adjacent agricultural lands.
- 5L-2 Assess the impact of any proposed development upon the stormwater drainage basins and require mitigation of negative impacts.
 - 5L-3 Ensure land use compatibility in all permitting and enforcement activities with topography, geology, soil suitability, surface water, frequently flooded areas, wetlands, vegetation and wildlife.
 - 5L-4 Protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands and regulated slopes, to retain open space and natural areas whenever possible.
 - 5L-5 Site and design development to avoid impacts to environmentally sensitive areas such as wetlands and regulated slopes.
 - 5L-6 Promote Best Management Practices (BMP) and Best Available Science (BAS) to preserve the natural environment and conserve natural resources.
 - 5L-7 Participate with County, State, and Federal agencies in formulating and executing the Emergency Management Disaster Preparedness Plan for the area.
 - 5L-8 Prevent unnecessary disturbance of native vegetation in new development and encourage retention of trees and other vegetation.
 - 5L-9 Pursue the installation of a dike to protect La Conner from Skagit River flooding from the northeast.
 - 5L-10 Establish a town-wide strategy to address increasing frequency and intensity of storm-surge events.
 - 5L-11 Conduct design consultation meetings periodically with regional experts on weather and climatic changes and trends that may impact Town infrastructure, residences and/or businesses.

Open Space, Parks and Recreation

GOAL M

Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat and increase public access to natural resource lands and the Swinomish Channel.

Policies

- 5M-1 Maintain and support existing and future recreational and cultural activities through the dedication of public properties to such uses.
- 5M-2 Maintain or set aside publicly owned land suitable for recreation purposes.
- 5M-3 Maintain or develop available street-ends and, undeveloped right-of-ways and to allow public access for viewing and recreation.
- 5M-4 Develop a pedestrian corridor along the shoreline to connect activity centers, open spaces, and parks.
- 5M-5 Acquire, preserve and develop land and waterfront areas for public recreation based on area demand, public support, and use potential.
- 5M-6 Maintain public access to publicly owned property.

GOAL N

Encourage the acquisition and development of parks, open space, and recreation facilities, both active and passive that are attractive, safe, functional, and available to all segments of the community.

Policies

- 5N-1 Pedestrian access to public spaces, pathways and facilities located within the commercial, residential, and industrial zone shall be safely accommodated to the greatest extent possible. Special emphasis shall be placed on establishing pedestrian corridors and vibrant, amenity-rich pathways along the water's edge.
- 5N-2 Maintain and update the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- 5N-3 Develop additional cultural resources, programs and activities at Maple Hall and Maple Center.
- 5N-4 Distribute parks and/or open spaces throughout commercial, residential, and industrial zones to more equitably serve the entire community.
- 5N-5 Use existing school district facilities or other public facilities to maximize recreational and cultural opportunities whenever possible.
- 5N-6 Identify and develop bicycle corridors on main streets where feasible.

GOAL O

Enhance the quality of life in the community by encouraging or providing recreation programs and events that are creative, productive, and responsive to the needs of the public.

Policies

- 5O-1 Encourage citizen participation in the design and development of public facilities and/or recreation areas.
- 5O-2 Encourage and promote cultural facilities and social services compatible with recreational use.
- 5O-3 Encourage opportunities for recreational and cultural activities for all ages.
- 5O-4 Maintain and support existing and future recreational and cultural activities through the dedication of properties for such uses.

Shoreline

The Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58.100) requires that specified elements be considered in the preparation of the Shoreline Master Program including: Economic Development, Public Access, Recreation, Circulation, Shoreline Use, Conservation, Historic/Cultural Resources, and Floodplain Management. The goals and objectives established for these elements provide the basis for policies and regulations included under the general and specific requirements of the Shoreline Master Program. As such those goals and objectives are incorporated herein by reference. The entire Shoreline Master Program document is included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

GOAL P

Reserve designated shoreline areas for water-oriented uses.

Encourage uses, densities and development patterns on lands adjacent to shorelines that are compatible with shoreline uses and resource values to fully and effectively accomplish the goals, objectives, and policies of the adopted Shoreline Management Program.

Policies

- 5P-1 Encourage preferred shoreline uses while protecting and preserving the shoreline environment.

5P-2 Restrict new development over-water commercial and industrial uses to those which are water-dependent or related and provide public access where appropriate.

GOAL Q

Protect the economic viability and resource values of the shoreline.

Policies

- 5Q-1 Encourage renovation and reuse of under-utilized or obsolete structures.
- 5Q-2 Provide adequate access, utilities and public services to serve existing and future shoreline development.
- 5Q-3 Encourage appropriate innovative development (including open space and recreational uses/facilities) to help sustain the economic viability of the urban shoreline.
- 5Q-4 Work with the Swinomish Tribe and the Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) to enhance recreational uses of the Swinomish Channel and its shorelines.
- 5Q-5 Develop and redevelop the current shoreline to adapt to changing physical and environmental conditions that threaten residences and businesses.

GOAL R

Protect and enhance shoreline visual and physical access consistent with the Shoreline Management Act, the Town’s adopted Shoreline Management Program and Public Trust Doctrine principles.

Policies

- 5R-1 Restrict over-water commercial and industrial uses to those which are water-dependent or water-related and provide public access where at all feasible.
- 5R-2 Site and design new development and redevelopment to minimize impacts on views of the Swinomish Channel and shoreline.
- 5R-3 Give priority to uses and developments which maximize public visual and physical access to the shoreline.

GOAL S

Protect the quality and quantity of water in the Swinomish Channel by minimizing soil disturbance, erosion, sedimentation, and non-point runoff affecting water quality.

Policies

- 5S-1 Encourage restoration of degraded waterfronts to minimize erosion, sedimentation and flooding.
- 5S-2 Require Best Management Practices (BMPs) contained in the Department of Ecology's Puget Sound Stormwater Quality Manual be implemented for all new development and redevelopment.
- 5S-3 Conduct dredging and fill activities to minimize the introduction of suspended solids, leaching contaminants or habitat disturbance into adjacent waterways.

GOAL T

Ensure consistent application of the Floodplain Ordinance, the Town's adopted Shoreline Management Program, Stormwater Drainage Comprehensive Plan, State and Federal policies to shoreline areas and adjacent lands.

Policies

- 5T-1 In 2013 the Town adopted its required Shoreline Management Plan. The vision, goals and policies included in that document are hereby incorporated by reference and the entire Shoreline Master Plan is included as an appendix to this document.

Historic and Cultural Preservation**GOAL U**

Preserve and protect historic and cultural resources of significance to the Town and local Tribes'. Support the cultural values, language, and art forms of local Native Americans.

GOAL V

Protect and preserve the historic character of La Conner's historic district.

Policies

- 5V-1 Define and document the existing forms, design, styles and other characteristics, which form an integral part of the historic district.
- 5V-2 Reflect historic development patterns with consistent zoning standards.
- 5V-3 Encourage building forms and design consistent with historic design including scale, massing, architectural details and roof style.
- 5V-4 Limit the mass, size and scale of new structures and additions to the historic standards addressing scale, forms and proportions.
- 5V-5 Encourage the use of colors and building materials characteristic of La Conner's historic structures.
- 5V-6 Preserve the historic spatial relationship of buildings to site, natural features, open space, views and surrounding development.
- 5V-7 Identify historic view corridors and adopt development regulations that ensure their protection.
- 5V-8 Preserve the historic district through strict enforcement of the Historic Preservation District ordinance.

GOAL W

Encourage the preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and renovation of historic sites and structures.

Policies

- 5W-1 Encourage the adaptive reuse of existing historic structures through development regulations and financial incentives when a historic use is no longer possible.
- 5W-2 Strongly discourage the demolition or destruction of historic sites and structures.
- 5W-3 Provide incentives for historic buildings outside of the Historic District to be nominated for, and listed on, the state or national historic register, or to be recognized as local historic landmarks.

5W-4 Strongly discourage new construction attempts to reproduce or replicate historic structures within the Historic Preservation District.

Community Design

GOAL X

Encourage the development of spaces that attract residents and promote social and community interaction.

Policies

5X-1 Commercial and multi-family development should provide improved, useable open space areas such as plazas, common areas, and colonnades as a component of the design.

GOAL Y

Create commercial and higher density residential areas, which provide high levels of public amenities.

Policies

5Y-1 Commercial and multi-family development, which do not have appropriate areas for useable open space on site, should contribute to the development of public or private common areas in close proximity.

5Y-2 Locate open space and common areas to preserve existing views and vistas, or other significant site features.

5Y-3 Develop minimum common area standards for both small and large-scale commercial development.

GOAL Z

Encourage architectural styles that reflect the Town's built and natural environment.

Policies

5Z-1 Maintain a small town scale for structures. New structures should not overpower existing structures or visually dominate La Conner's small town streetscapes.

5Z-2 Discourage boxy, single mass building design. Identify appropriate design forms for new structures.

5Z-3 Develop design guidelines for commercial, multi-family and high-density development outside of the historic district.

- 5Z-4 Keep impervious surfaces to a minimum to achieve open space, greenery, and reduce impact on drainage system.

GOAL AA

Encourage building and site designs, which define and respect the human scale and enhance the pedestrian experience.

Policies

- 5AA-1 Scale buildings in relation to the human form, particularly at the sidewalk level.
- 5AA-2 Encourage mixed-use structures. Mixing uses within a structure enhances the ability to give interesting form and character to a building.
- 5AA-3 Discourage the location of new off-street parking lots between the street and front façade. Parking should be located alongside or to the rear of buildings.
- 5AA-4 Use landscaping to screen parking lots from pedestrian ways and building entrances.
- 5AA-5 Include entrances, storefronts, plazas or common areas on sides adjacent to public right-of-ways in commercial buildings.

GOAL BB

Preserve existing view corridors, rights of way, open public spaces, and vistas of the Swinomish Channel and Skagit Valley.

Policies

- 5BB-1 Identify and map important view corridors and vistas and adopt land use policies that protect them.
- 5BB-2 Incorporate view corridors into regulations controlling building and site design.
- 5BB-3 Identify and adopt regulations that encourage building and site designs that frame views and vistas.
- 5BB-4 Encourage trees to be part of the view. Panoramic views are not necessarily void of trees.
- 5BB-5 Require and use architectural standards by such means as sign ordinances for aesthetic and view protection.

Healthy Living

Goals and policies relating to land use, food access, and the transportation system have been shown to influence the health of local community members.

GOAL CC

Encourage land use arrangements and decisions that encourage safe and convenient opportunities for walking bicycling, and public transportation to access schools, parks, employment, healthy foods, leisure activities and commerce.

Policies

- 5CC-1 Encourage land use arrangements and decisions that encourage safe and convenient opportunities for walking bicycling, and public transportation to access schools, parks, employment, healthy foods, leisure activities and commerce.
- 5CC-2 Encourage land use decisions that create equitable access to healthy foods through farmers markets, farm stands, urban agriculture, community gardens, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) programs.
- 5CC-3 Encourage the use and acceptance of food assistance programs at farmers markets and farm stands.
- 5CC-4 Promote a land use pattern that encourages people to walk and bicycle. Maximize the proportion of residences within safe walking distance of uses like parks, schools, grocers, retailers, service providers, employment public transportation, and other desirable community features.

APPENDIX 5A

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**Physical Description****Topography and Geology**

The Town of La Conner is located on the east bank of the Swinomish Channel near the mouth of the Skagit River in the northern region of Puget Sound. The elevation of the Town ranges from 0 feet at sea level to approximately 150 feet at the highest point. The central part of the Town is hilly with steeply sloping bluffs. The surrounding area consists of agricultural floodplains, rock outcroppings, forested uplands, wetlands, and a complex system of river and marine waters.

The Swinomish Channel is a navigable waterway 6.5 miles long connecting Skagit Bay to the south with Padilla Bay to the north. Throughout the entire length a 100-foot wide, 12-foot deep channel is maintained as part of a longer 11-mile long federal navigation project maintained by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE). The channel is subject to strong tidal currents. Bank erosion is common due to La Conner's position on an outside bend of the Channel and COE dredging activities. Federal, State, and local jurisdictions govern all development within 200 feet landward of the ordinary high water mark. The La Conner Shoreline Management Program, hereby incorporated by reference, regulates development of the Town limits within 200 feet of the Swinomish Channel. The Department of Ecology has designated the area north of the No. 12 navigation light on the Swinomish Channel as a Shoreline of Statewide Significance.

Some potentially geological hazardous areas, regulated by the Critical Areas Ordinance, within and surrounding the Town of La Conner have been identified and mapped. The Town maintains a critical areas map indicating the location of identified areas regulated by the Town's adopted Critical Areas Ordinance. Damage to life and property could occur from potentially unstable slopes, liquefaction due to unstable soils, and possible earthquake activity. Areas with potentially unstable slopes may require geological surveys and engineering before any development may occur.

Surface Water

The Swinomish Channel and the rivers and sloughs that drain into it are important industrial and recreational transportation resources, as well as valuable environmental and scenic areas. The quality of water is vital to maintaining a healthy aquatic habitat for marine life and plant systems. Improvements in water quality through drainage treatment systems, and redirection of wastewater treatment plant outfall, will enhance both the environmental and scenic value of these waterways.

In La Conner the quality of surface water, the channel, river and sloughs is generally good; however, future development must consider point source discharges, non-point source discharges, soil erosion, and any development that could damage the viability of the ecological system.

Frequently Flooded Areas

La Conner is located within the Skagit River Floodplain and adjacent to the Swinomish Channel estuarine system, which at very high tides subjects the waterward streets of the Town to flooding. The source of major flooding in the delta area fronting Samish, Padilla, and Skagit Bays, is the Skagit River. Flooding may occur in La Conner when high tides from Skagit Bay and/or overland flood flows from the Skagit River outflank, overtop, or breach levees along the northern, eastern, and southern sides of the Town.

Tide levels and rainfall are important in determining the extent of flooding, as well as determining pumping requirements and the extent of gravity flow in a drainage system. The following Table 5-1 shows the tide levels in the Swinomish Channel based on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Mean Lower Low Water datum and U.S. Army Corps of Engineer surveys.

TABLE 5-1

DATUM PLANE	ELEVATION REFERENCED TO MLLW IN FEET	
	NGVD '29 Datum	NOAA Tidal Datum
Highest Tide (Estimated)	7.77	13.15
Mean Higher High Water	4.96	10.34
Mean High Water	4.05	9.43
Mean (Half) Tide Level	0.68	6.06
Mean Sea Level	0.0	5.38
Mean Low Water	-2.69	2.69
Mean Lower Low Water	-5.38	0.00
Lowest Tide (Estimated)	-7.68	-2.30

Approximately 196.7 acres (77% of the Town) of land surrounding the Town's hills and slopes are in the floodplain.

Three elevation landmark monuments are available for reference in La Conner. Reference Marker 1 is at the southwest corner property of the Washington-

Second Street intersection. It is set at the top of the rockery facing Washington Street; Reference Marker 2 is at the rear of the old Chevron Station property on Morris at the northwest corner of the property; and Reference Marker 3 is at the northeast corner of the Post Office loading dock.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency/Department of Homeland Security (FEMA/DHS) has defined areas showing the extent of the 100-year floodplain to establish flood insurance rates and assist communities in efforts to promote sound floodplain management. The base flood elevation for the Town is 8 feet. This is typically 3 to 4 feet above grade. La Conner is a participant in the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) depicting the official floodplain zones for La Conner is available at Town Hall and on line at the FEMA website. The Town enlists a number of mitigation measures to minimize the potential for loss of life and property damage.

Wetlands

Wetlands provide an important habitat for wildlife, plants and fisheries as well as help reduce erosion, flooding, and ground and surface water pollution. La Conner has approximately 1.5 acres of potential wetlands located southeast of town on private property in a residential zone. The area is not considered to be a high quality wetland, as it was created many years ago through the cessation of agricultural activity and the construction of the approach to the Rainbow Bridge. A portion of the land was used as a disposition site for dredged spoils from the Swinomish Channel in the early part of the century. Local, State, and Federal guidelines for regulating development in this area would apply. Army Corps of Engineer permits will be necessary for property development in this area.

Climate

Temperatures in La Conner are relatively mild with summer daytime highs around 70 degrees and nighttime lows in the 50's. Average winter temperatures range from 49 degrees during the day to 36 degrees at night. Precipitation during winter averages 3.46 inches of rainfall per month and 1.55 inches per month in summer.

Vegetation

Due to increased development of the available land in La Conner, much of its natural vegetation has been lost. However, the Town does support a wide variety of trees, grasses, shrubs and flowers in its landscaped areas as well as a park of old growth deciduous and evergreen trees located at the south end of town (Pioneer Park). The wetland area at the southeast corner of town is dominated by non-native invasive species and supports a limited selection of wetland plants.

Wildlife

Although the Town has no designated wildlife conservation areas within its boundaries, it is home to a variety of wildlife, marine and aquatic plant species. The Swinomish Channel provides migratory habitat for a variety of resident and anadromous fish species. Anadromous fish, including chinook, coho, pink and

chum salmon, steelhead, and sea-run cutthroat trout are species of special concern to fisheries management agencies. Dungeness crab, herring and surf smelt may also be found in the channel. The area is home to a variety of aquatic birds, such as seagulls, great blue herons, cormorants, shorebirds, and waterfowl. Endangered species that may occur in the area include the bald eagle and peregrine falcon. River otter and harbor seals may also be found in the Channel. Small mammals, such as squirrels and birds, are common in the Town's developed areas.

Shoreline Master Program

In September 2013 La Conner adopted its most recent Shoreline Master Program (SMP). It was amended in May 2014. That document is included as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan. The document specifically discusses the relationship between the SMP and the Comprehensive Plan and includes goal and objectives that are incorporated by reference as part of this Comprehensive Plan (see Shoreline Goals above).

Shoreline management is most effective when accomplished in the context of comprehensive planning. The Growth Management Act (GMA) defines SMP policies as a part of the local comprehensive plan. RCW 36.70A.480 (1) incorporates the goals and policies of the SMA into the GMA as follows:

“For shorelines of the state, the goals and policies of the shoreline management act as set forth in RCW 90.58.020 are added as one of the goals of this chapter as set forth in RCW 36.70A.020 without creating an order of priority among the fourteen goals. The goals and policies of a shoreline master program for a county or city approved under chapter 90.58 RCW shall be considered an element of the county or city's comprehensive plan. All other portions of the shoreline master program for a county or city adopted under chapter 90.58 RCW, including use regulations, shall be considered a part of the county or city's development regulations.”

Cities that plan under the GMA are required under RCW 36.70A to ensure that there is a mutual and internal consistency between the comprehensive plan elements and implementing development regulations including the SMP. RCW 365-195-500 requirements include consistency between the SMP and the future land use plan, specifically demonstrating that there is consistency regarding:

- (1) *“Ability of physical aspects of the plan to coexist on the available land.”*
- (2) *“Ability of the plan to provide adequate public facilities when the impacts of development occur (concurrency).”*

In addition the GMA also calls for coordination and consistency of comprehensive plans among local jurisdictions under RCW 36.70A.100:

“The comprehensive plan of each county or city that is adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040 shall be coordinated with, and consistent with, the

comprehensive plans adopted pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040 of other counties or cities with which the county or city has, in part, common borders or related regional issues.”

Land Use Classifications

Residential

La Conner’s residential zone includes single-family dwellings; accessory dwelling units; manufactured homes; and multi-family units, such as apartments and condominiums. Density is between 2 and 12 units per acre (medium density) in this zone.

Total Residential Land Use: Approximately 60 acres (23.5% of the total area and 25.9% of the developed area) are designated Residential Use. Of that acreage, 26 acres are either undeveloped, underdeveloped or used for public right-of-way. The net land currently developed for residential purposes is approximately 47 acres (18.4% of the total area and 20% of the developed area).

Build-out Potential¹: The Town has limited potential for building within the existing land boundaries. There are 26 acres of vacant and underutilized land in the residentially zoned area, available for development of single and multi-family housing. The current single-family development standard density for the Town is 8.7 dwelling units per acre for lots under 14,000 square feet, and multi-family is 10.1 dwelling units for lots over 14,000 square feet. This equates to an additional 152 dwelling units to accommodate the future build-out within the Town limits under current residential development densities. Accessory dwelling units and commercial conditional use will augment this number beyond the 152 units ensure that the Town has an adequate number of dwelling units for the planning period.

Commercial

The percentage of area devoted to Commercial uses in Skagit County ranges from 4% to 14% outside La Conner. Nationally the average increased 7% between 1955 and 1992 primarily due to the rise of parking requirements (an entire parking lot is considered a commercial use, and many uses require as much area in the way of parking as the actual use requires). Another factor in the increase in commercial land is the transition in the national economy from a manufacturing based economy to a service-based economy.

In the Town of La Conner, approximately 27% of the developed area, 69 acres, is used for commercial uses. Commercial uses include retail, office, personal services, business services, lodging, health services, parking, grocery and food stores, marinas and restaurants. This is almost twice as much as the average U.S. small city.

¹ Reference 2017 Population Land Use and Capacity Report

Based on the ratio method of determining land demand, between 8 and 18 acres of commercial land would be needed by the year 2035 to maintain the existing ratio of commercial land to people. However, La Conner has an unusually high ratio of commercial land to total land area, and therefore to population, so use of this method exclusively would lead to a high estimate. There are several factors, which indicate that additional commercial land beyond what is currently available may be needed if the Town were to maintain its high ratio of commercial land to total land area and population:

- *Parking Requirements.* The Town currently has requirements in the Commercial zone, which require at least half of the required spaces to be on site. This is different from the past where at one time all required parking could be off-site, and more recently where there was no parking requirement in the Commercial zone at all. For uses in the commercial zone, an average of approximately 162 square feet of parking is required for each 200 feet of usable floor area. The parking requirements will nearly double the need for commercial land. The perceived need for additional parking whether real or only perceived continues to be an issue of discussion for Town residents and appointed and elected officials.
- *Available Land.* Approximately 2% (5 acres) of commercial land is vacant and available. Of this, nearly half of the properties have existing buildings. Existing redevelopable parking lots are not counted in this amount. Assuming that at least 5% to 10% of commercial land should be available to keep land prices from rising too steeply, this would mean that between 2 and 5 additional acres of commercial land are needed at the present.
- *National Trends.* The transition from a manufacturing economy to a service economy, which is occurring nationwide, indicates that there will be demand for additional commercial land.
- *Local Economy.* The strength of the local economy in retail trades indicates that there will likely continue to be demand for land for retail trade, which appears to be primarily due to La Conner's status as a tourist destination. With increased commercial properties there would be additional fire and service uses in Town, based on the economic base analysis and the perception of the community.

Given La Conner's limited land area and the current desire not to expand its Urban Growth Area, adjustments may need to be made to the ratios of commercial land to overall land area and population. This is particularly true given the competition for land with residential uses.

Industrial

On a national basis, the average share of developed industrial property in small cities is approximately 7% based on a 1992 study of 66 municipalities. The range

in cities under 100,000 was from 1% in multiple jurisdictions, to 25% in Galveston, TX. This average decreased 1% between 1955 and 1992 primarily due to trends in the national economy away from manufacturing towards a service based economy. Between 1955 and 1985, industrial land uses increased to approximately 10.5%. Between 1985 and 1992, industrial land use declined from 10% to 7%. Industrial vacancy rates for buildings over 100,000 square feet were at an all-time high of 6.9% in 1990.

In the Town of La Conner approximately 9% of the developed area, 22 acres, is designated for industrial uses. Industrial uses include construction and trade, storage and warehousing, government (Department of Fish and Wildlife located in industrial zone), transportation, light assembly and manufacturing, heavy assembly and manufacturing, and parking. This is twice as much as the average U.S. small city.

Based on the ratio method, between 1 and 6 acres of additional industrial land would be required in the year 2035 to keep the ratio of industrial land to population the same. As in the commercial land analysis, the ratio basis is probably high because the Town has an unusually high ratio of industrial land to total area and population. There are several factors, which may indicate that the same amount or less industrial land than what is currently available may be needed in the future:

- *Specific site characteristics:* One of the most important characteristics required for successful industrial land is easy access to major transportation routes. Both industrial areas in La Conner, to the north and south, have poor access on substandard roads to major transportation routes, except for water-related industries, such as boat building, which are not dependent on land-based transportation routes. In addition, the south-end industrial area is in close proximity to relatively dense residential development, so heavier industries or those that produce smells and noise are not appropriate. These characteristics, in combination with the amount of available industrial land close by (Bayview, Anacortes), will make it more difficult to attract non-water dependent industry.
- *National Economy.* The national economy is in the process of becoming less manufacturing based and more service based. This is due to many global issues, primarily competition from countries where labor is cheaper. However, it should be noted that jobs in the industrial zone appear to have increased from 200 in 1995 (based on existing Comprehensive Plan data) to 258 in 1999, and that the existing manufacturing sector is a basic industry. The 2002 Skagit Profile from Washington State Employment Security indicates that manufacturing jobs continue to increase although the sector share is decreasing.
- *Available Land.* In 2016, there was a 21.7% vacancy rate for industrial lands, which indicated that there wasn't enough demand for industrial land in the

Town to keep vacancy rates between 5% and 10%. The La Conner industrial area competes with Bayview and Anacortes UGAs.

In 2013 the Port of Skagit in conjunction with Skagit Council of Governments commissioned an Industrial Lands Study. A copy of that Study is included as an appendix to this comprehensive plan. The objectives of the study were to:

- Develop a detailed and accurate inventory of industrial land for Skagit County
- Establish a methodology for conducting subsequent inventories
- Develop estimates of demand for industrial land countywide and by urban growth area (UGA), using the draft 2014 employment forecast prepared for the regional transportation plan (The employment forecasts used in this analysis are preliminary and subject to change). In discussions with the SCOG Technical Advisory Committee TAC, it was determined that the draft 2014 forecasts would provide a higher level of accuracy than the previous forecasts.)
- Determine, at a high level, if Skagit County has an adequate supply of industrial land to accommodate forecast growth and economic aspirations

The study found that while overall Skagit County has an adequate supply of industrially designated land, La Conner has a deficit based on the employment forecasts used by the consultant. The findings show a demand of between 5 acres at the lowest estimates and 38 acres at the highest estimates. The report concluded that based on a moderate demand scenario the Town would have a deficit of between 6 and 17 acres. As discussed previously La Conner competes with Anacortes and Bayview industrial areas and each of these have a surplus (between 260 and 325 acres and between 534 and 662 acres respectively). Given the huge surplus of industrial land at the Town's primary competitors resolving La Conner's forecast deficit is not a priority for this Comprehensive Plan update. Additionally, the study uses a different methodology for forecasting demand based on employment forecasts. Using the ratio method the forecast need projected by the study would result in 14% of the developed land being in industrial designation which is twice the national average. Given La Conner's land area constraints, an unusually high ratio of industrial land is not realistic.

Public Use

In 1992 the average amount of land dedicated to public use for small cities was 51%. Of this amount, approximately 4-7% was developed for park purposes, 13% for institutional uses (schools, museums etc.), and the remaining 34% to 37% for transportation and utilities. Between 1955 and 1992, these uses increased from 47% to 51%, primarily due to the increase in road widths and curvilinear streets in suburban subdivisions that made up much of the growth of suburbs and small cities.

The Town of La Conner has a total of 34% of developed land in public uses (similar to a large city). Of this, 7% is in institutional facilities, 17% is in parks

and open space, and 10% is in streets. La Conner has historically supported the surrounding agricultural area, and functions more as a large city does in terms of providing schools and museums for the surrounding rural population. In addition, the sewage treatment plant is outside of the Town limits.

No additional lands are identified as being needed in the Capital Facilities Element of Comprehensive Plan. Based on the historical standard of 1 acre of park land for every 1000 people, between 10 and 10.5 acres of park land would be required in 2015. Pioneer Park has 12 acres.

Natural Resource Lands

La Conner is surrounded by agricultural land that is used for crop production, produce sales, and single-family residences attached to farms. The quality of this agricultural land was a primary consideration in designating the Town's Urban Growth Area. The County has classified, designated, and protected all farmland according to the U.S. Soil Conservation Service's classification of prime farmland soils. The Town chose not to infringe on adjacent farmlands in the interest of agricultural conservation. It is unlikely that the County would support expansion of the Town into the surrounding agricultural land.

Historic and Archaeological Resources

The first act commemorating La Conner's historic heritage was the establishment of Pioneer Park through a donation from Louisa A. Conner in the early 1930's. In the 1950's, the Town Beautification Committee began a call for landmark preservation. By the early 1970's landmark preservation achieved national recognition and had become a local concern. The Town of La Conner established a Historic Preservation District encompassing approximately 51.1 acres in 1972, which was nominated and accepted to the National Register of Historic Places the same year. The District includes the area bounded by the Swinomish Channel on the west, Douglas Street on the south, Whatcom Street on the east and Morris Street on the north. Approximately 1,600 feet of the waterfront is in the Historic Preservation District. Historic Design Review is required as a land use permit for additions or changes to buildings in the Historic Preservation District. An inventory of La Conner's historically significant structures, which were identified and plotted on a map in 1984, is available for review at Town Hall. The Town also shares a rich heritage with the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. Having lived side by side for over 120 years, the people of La Conner and the Swinomish Tribe share a common interest in the preservation of cultural values, historic landmarks, and natural resources.

Critical Areas

The location and size of these areas are an important consideration in planning for future development; therefore, each critical area is mapped. Specific Critical Areas regulations are addressed in the Uniform Development Code, §15.65 Environmentally Sensitive and Critical Areas. The Town maintains a map showing identified critical areas. The map is available at Town Hall and on the Town's web site and is attached as Map 2.

Public Facilities and Services

Public Utilities are addressed in the Utilities Element.

Medical and Emergency Facilities

A variety of medical, dental, and pharmaceutical services are available to serve the community. First Response Emergency Medical service is provided by the Volunteer Fire Department. Two hospitals are within 11 miles of Town, at Anacortes and Mount Vernon.

Police and Fire Protection

In 2001, La Conner disbanded the Town's Police Department and contracted with the Skagit County Sheriff's Department for community policing services. The Sheriff's Department has an office located adjacent to Town Hall and provides service to the Town and surrounding area.

Fire protection for the La Conner area is provided by a mutual aid agreement between the La Conner Volunteer Fire Department and all other fire departments in the County. There is also a cost sharing agreement between Fire District 13 and the Town of La Conner. As development has progressed, and based on an analysis of the impact of growth in the near future, the Town will have to increase response capacity for fire and emergency medical demands. Accordingly, the Town and Fire District #13 have jointly built a new five-bay fire hall near the wastewater treatment plant with provisions for sleeping quarters.

The number and close proximity of older buildings along First Street, combined with severe access limitations along the Swinomish Channel, create a potentially hazardous situation in the event of fire or earthquake. La Conner has an interlocal agreement with the Skagit County Permit Center for compliance with the Uniform Building Codes, and access to the County Fire Marshall for Fire Code inspections.

Emergency Management Disaster Preparedness

The Town of La Conner is covered under the umbrella of the Skagit County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (most recent version adopted in 2013) and the Emergency Management Council. The plan provides guidelines for coping with, and mitigating the effects of, a natural or manmade disaster or emergency to preserve lives and property.

Public Education Facilities

The Town has an elementary school housing kindergarten through fifth grade, a middle school housing grades six through eight, and a high school housing grades nine through twelve. The student-teacher ratio is 16.2 to 1 for the entire district. Sports facilities are available in the elementary school and the high school.

Library

The La Conner Regional Library is located on Morris Street and provides services to residents of La Conner, the School District, and the surrounding area. This rural partial-County Library District was established on September 28, 1993. On November 2, 1993, residents of La Conner voted to be annexed into the new library district. The library is currently in the process of designing and fund raising for a new library facility.

Other Services

Public restrooms are located on First Street and on Morris Street.

Museums

A number of museums are located within La Conner including: Skagit County Historical Museum on South Fourth Street, the Pacific Northwest Quilt & Fiber Arts Museum on South Second, and the La Conner Volunteer Firefighters Museum and Museum of Northwest Art on First Street.

Transportation Facilities

The location and quality of all transportation facilities are detailed in the Transportation Element.

Parking continues to be perceived as an issue in the commercial zones and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Vacant/Underdeveloped Lands

La Conner has approximately 36 acres of undeveloped or underdeveloped land within its boundaries. Approximately 26 acres in the residential zone could be developed in the future. Approximately 5 acres are available for industrial development or redevelopment, with 5 acres available for commercial development.

The following summary of the Acreage in Type of Land Use includes all the uses described above, as well as the critical areas discussed in the Physical Description section. This acreage corresponds to the land use Zoning Map 1.

**TABLE 5-2
ACREAGE IN TYPE OF LAND USE
(TOTAL - 255 ACRES)**

Land Use	Acreeage	Percent of Total	Percent of Developed Land
Residential	60	23.5	25.9
Commercial	69	27	29.7
Industrial	22	8.6	9.5
Public Facilities	19	7.5	8.2
Parks and Open Space	40	16	17.2
Streets	22.	08.6	9.5
Vacant Land	23.	09.0	9.9
Totals	255		

Vacant Land Breakout	Acreeage	% of Total Land	% of All Vacant Land
Vacant Residential	13	5.1%	56.5%
Vacant Industrial	5	2.0%	21.7%
Vacant Commercial	5	2.0%	21.7%
Total Vacant	23		

Future Needs and Alternatives

Growth and development in La Conner is limited by its designated urban growth boundary and physical constraints peculiar to the land. The Town is entirely surrounded by natural open space corridors; agricultural lands to the north and east, the Swinomish Channel to the west, and Pioneer Park to the south. The Swinomish Channel runs along the entire western side of the Town, dividing the Town of La Conner and the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. Pioneer Park, a naturally vegetated recreational area, is located along the most southerly portion of Town. It is a wooded rock outcrop with a combination of fir, cedar, and pine trees. A hilly, rocky area with steep slopes covers the central area of town bounded by First Street on the west, Caledonia Street to the south, Whatcom Street to the east and Morris Street to the north.

Plans for growth and development in La Conner were developed based on the following analysis:

- A. Population and demographics: Corresponding to the residential land use inventory.
- B. Economic conditions: Corresponding to the commercial, industrial, and resource lands inventory.

- C. Amenities: Corresponding to the historic resources, recreational lands, open spaces, and part of the public facilities inventory.
- D. Physical conditions: Corresponding to the physical description and the critical areas inventory.
- E. Infrastructure: Corresponding to part of the public facilities inventory. Examines overall land use compatibility, and coordinates land usage with the other elements of the Comprehensive Plan (Housing, Transportation, Capital Facilities, and Utilities).

Population and Demographics

Population Changes

The analysis of population projections for the next 20 years is based on the La Conner/Skagit County estimated population growth rate of approximately 1.0%, Department of Commerce 2015 data on Selected Population and Housing Characteristics, and the 2010 U.S. Census. La Conner's population has increased slowly but steadily over the past 50 years as shown in Table 5-3 below.

TABLE 5-3
HISTORICAL POPULATION GROWTH
(US Census and OFM Official Count)

Year	Population	Change
1890	398	
1900	564	166
1920	516	-48
1940	624	108
1950	594	-30
1960	638	44
1970	639	1
1980	660	21
1990	686	26
2000	761	75
2010	870	109
Population Trends 2000-2017		
2000	761	-39
2001	765	4
2002	775	10
2003	760	-15
2004	785	25
2005	795	10
2006	839	44
2007	901	62
2008	886	-15
2009	870	-16

2010	870	0
2011	885	15
2012	895	10
2013	890	-5
2014	895	5
2015	895	0
2016	905	10
2017	925	20

In La Conner, the past trends between 2000 and 2017 were used for most of the analysis. The Recession effects began in 2008 and are still impacting the local economy. No analysis of the components of population change (births, deaths and migration) has been done for the Town. It is so small and influenced so heavily by nearby employment centers that the proportional share of County population is probably as good or a better indicator of population growth. The County's estimate is provided by the Office of Financial Management and summarized by Employment Security, which has taken into consideration many indicators including natural increase, migration and economic factors.

One projection of future population is provided based on building permits issued and the total residential capacity of the Town. This method assumes that there will be consistent construction, similar to what occurred in the immediate past until the Town is nearly completely built out in the year 2036. Since population growth is cyclical (usually driven by migration which follows the economic cycles), this would tend to apply high rates of growth to future decades where it is likely that there will be a mixture of high and low rates of growth. However, this method may be useful as a short term indicator for the next 2 to 5 years, since the number of building permits that were issued, and approximately when they will be built are known.

- Growth Rates:*** Growth rates for La Conner are inconsistent from year to year and are not a reliable indicator to project population growth in the short view. Reviewing the last two decades, the average annual growth rate ranged from 1.08% per year between 1990 and 2000, to 1.5% between 2000 and 2015. The last decade's average growth rate per year is close to the 1% growth rate used in the current Comprehensive Plan. Although the annual average rate taken over ten years is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the growth rates over that same time period ranged from - 4.49% to 7%. It is difficult to generalize or project an accurate growth rate for La Conner based strictly on these figures. While these rates vary significantly, the trend line for La Conner is holding steady. The county-wide trends show that growth rates have been in a steady decline since a high in 1991. If this is the case, using the 1% compounding rate should result in an appropriate population estimate. The projections shown in Table 1-3 are the population numbers using a variety of approaches:

Column A are the 2005 Comprehensive Plan projection numbers based on 1% growth using 2015 as the baseline year.

Column B is a population estimated projections based on a percentage of the county population allocated from OFM.

TABLE 5-4 PROJECTIONS

Year	(A) 2005 Comp Plan	(B) Percentage of County (0.75%)
2015	895	1019
2020	964	999
2025	1039	1103
2030	1119	1218
2035	1205	1342

- Projection A, a 1% growth rate compounded annually, is the projection that was used for the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. For 2015, the estimate of 887 is close to the actual figure of 895. However this was not always evident. The recession of 2008 significantly reduced population numbers and slowed growth. The Town has begun to recover, but much more slowly. La Conner's population is very cyclical and dependent on the employment opportunities outside the Town. Slight shifts by employers have a large impact on the Town's population.
- Projection B is based on a percentage of the County's population allocated by OFM. The County population figures have been more stable and shift more gradually. As expected, over the last several years, La Conner's percentage of the County total is decreasing. It took a sharp turn downward La Conner is the only jurisdiction in the County without an Urban Growth Area for commercial or residential expansion. The Town has a small 14-acre Urban Growth Boundary that extends to the east encompassing the sewage treatment plant and public works facilities. La Conner's growth will be accomplished through in-filling within the Town limits.

There are two alternatives that would be relatively accurate given the past and current population growth trends, and the limitations placed on the Town by the County-Wide Planning Policies.

- A. Base the Comprehensive Plan on Projection A which is based on the current 1% per year growth rate that was the basis for the 2005 Comprehensive Plan, but calculates the future population using a compound rate (instead of adding the same increment to each year), and using the 1999 population estimate. This will be less accurate in the short term, but may correct itself in the long term, and would not necessitate that the Town request a change to the County-Wide Planning Policies. In addition, this rate was upheld before the Western Growth Management Hearings Board and is therefore less subject to challenge. Total population projection for 2035 would be approximately 1,205 versus the adopted CPP projection of 1,226 for 2036. As discussed

previously the difference between the two values is less than 10% and therefore allowable.

Note: La Conner's Urban Growth Area is for public infrastructure and cannot be used for population or commercial growth. The Town has chosen to accommodate growth through in-fill and increased densities. The current density prescriptions will allow a growth potential that is described by Projection B. This projection assumes complete build-out by the year 2035. This projection is the maximum capacity that the Town has to accommodate growth. While individual years may spike up to this level, long-range growth should be less than the maximum capacity.

- B. Base the Comprehensive Plan population estimate on Projection B, proportionate share of the total County population. This gives a high range projection, however it would necessitate the Town request a change to the County-Wide Planning Policies, and would be more open to challenge before the Western Growth Management Hearings Board. Total population projection for 2035 would be approximately 1,342.

For purposes of this Comprehensive Plan the Town will use option A.

Residential Land Capacity Analysis

The future population capacity of the Town was calculated by multiplying the amount of developable land by the densities allowed under the current Comprehensive Plan and Zoning regulations to obtain the number of dwelling units possible. Total population that could be accommodated within those dwellings was determined by first using 2002 ratios of both single and multi-family units to determine the number of units of each type of housing expected. The number of units was then multiplied by the occupancy rate and persons per household for that type of housing. Developable land was determined by subtracting land affected by critical areas, land needed for streets and utilities, and a 25% market factor. [Note: The density capacity calculation assumes that under UDC regulations the property owner could develop the property to the densities listed below.]

- *Densities:* For lots under 14,000 square feet in size, the current zoning allows 8.7 dwellings per acre. For lots over 14,000 square feet, density allowed ranges from approximately 9 to 10.5 dwellings per acre as the lot size increases, with a conservative average of around 10.1 dwellings per acre.
- *Critical Areas:* Ten percent of the available land is considered undevelopable. This figure was obtained by subtracting $\frac{1}{2}$ of the lot area of all lots encumbered with critical areas and dividing by the total vacant residential land area. The entire lot was not subtracted since there are

few if any lots that are so encumbered with critical areas as to be unbuildable. In fact, since the 1990’s several houses have been constructed on some of the steepest hillsides in Town.

- *Street and Utility Needs:* Seven percent of the available land is considered to be required for streets and other utility corridors to serve new development. Seven percent is a typical figure in an area that already has much of its infrastructure developed and/or platted. In La Conner, most of the existing vacant land is served by existing platted roads, and will require little, if any, additional land for roads and utilities.
- *Market Factor:* A market factor of 25% is subtracted from developable land to ensure that there is adequate choice and selection of locations available, and to allow for a normal 5% vacancy rate.
- *Underutilized Land:* Underutilized land was calculated by adding up the acreage of all developed lots with a density of 4.3 dwellings per acre or below, and multiplying by the percent of the underutilized lots which were also underdeveloped.

TABLE 5-5 Additional Residential Capacity-Dwelling Units

R Zoned Class	Vacant Land (SF)	Underutilized Land (SF)	Total Available	Sensitive Areas (SF) 10%	Streets/ Utility (SF) 7%	Developable Land (acre)	Market Factor (25% vacant)	Allowable Density (units per acre)	Potential Dwelling Units	
0-14,000	283,140	207,925	491,065	49,106	34,375	9.3	7	8.7	61	
14,000 +	283,140	349,500	632,640	63,264	44,285	12	9	10.1	91	
Totals Acres	13	12.8								
									Total Potential Units	152

TABLE 5-6 Residential Capacity-2015 Population

2015 Population Capacity*						
Dwelling Type	# Units	% of Total	Occupancy Rate	Occupied Units	Persons/Unit	Population Capacity 2015
Single Family	370	70%	0.88	326	2.52	821
Mobile Homes	35	7%	0.88	31	2.52	78
MF 2-unit	34	6%	0.84	29	1.5	43
MF3 -4 unit	63	12%	0.95	60	1.5	90
MF 5+ units	26	4%	0.92	24	1.5	36
Boats	2	1%	0.05	2	1.5	3
Totals	528			472		1,071

*Note: Base unit numbers were derived from OFM 2015 Population and Housing Report.

TABLE 5-7 Residential Capacity-2035 Projections

Dwelling Type	# Units	% of Total	Occupancy Rate	Occupied Units	Persons/Unit	Population Capacity 2035
Single Family	417	59%	0.88	357	2.52	900
Mobile Homes	39	6%	0.88	35	2.52	88
MF 2-unit	62	9%	0.84	52	1.5	78
MF3 -4 unit	114	16%	0.95	109	1.5	163
MF 5+ units	47	7%	0.92	43	1.5	64
Total						1,293

Note: The capacities projected in Table 2-4 assume full build-out of dwelling units expressed in Table 2-2. For 2035 the boat category has been eliminated as the Port of Skagit has indicated that they will no longer allow “liveaboards” and are phasing them out. Town moorage is negligible and it is likely to be more so in the future. It is assumed that by 2036 there will be no “liveaboards”.

Residential capacity in the next 20 years is extremely limited. The first fundamental fact is that La Conner only has a small amount of property that remains undeveloped or underdeveloped. For this evaluation, it is assumed that all remaining developable properties are built-out. The next assumption is that underdeveloped properties are redeveloped to its highest potential. While for planning purposes this has value, the economics and circumstances that drive development may not materialize. In addition, there are other assumptions in the prediction that are likely to change over time.

Predicting growth and growth patterns is more art than science. There are several assumptions regarding the build-out capacity. The most critical are:

- Unit Density – How many units per acre.
- Unit Occupancy – How many people occupy a particular dwelling.
- Vacancy Rate – What percentage of the units are unoccupied on average.

There are other factors that will contribute to additional residential capacity in the Town. One is the allowance of accessory dwelling units in the residential zone with a conditional use permit. The second is the allowance of up to 49 percent of the square footage of the buildings, for all uses to be residential in the Commercial zoning designation. While it is impossible to quantify with any certainty the number of residential units that will be created using these two techniques, there has been strong interest in these options and it is quite likely that these two techniques will help to ensure that the Town meets its obligation for providing an adequate number of housing units for the planning period. Another option that is available would be to modify all or a portion of the Transitional Commercial area to residential or to require some type of mix of residential or

commercial uses. All of these factors are driven by local and regional economic conditions that change.

Demographics

Development Patterns: La Conner is situated on approximately 255 acres (.4 square miles) with a population density of 3.6 persons per acre in 2017. In 1993 the density was 2.8 persons per acre, and in 2035 it is estimated at 4.7 persons per acre. Settlement has occurred uniformly around the center of town with industrial areas to the north and south. New residential development could occur through infilling (building on vacant lots), or through rehabilitation of older structures which could allow for multi-family growth.

Age Distribution of Population²: The following table shows the age breakdown for La Conner in 2010:

TABLE 5-8 2010 Age Data

	Number	Percent
Total population	891	100.0
Under 5 years	39	4.4
5 to 9 years	44	4.9
10 to 14 years	37	4.2
15 to 19 years	37	4.2
20 to 24 years	30	3.4
25 to 29 years	34	3.8
30 to 34 years	41	4.6
35 to 39 years	38	4.3
40 to 44 years	50	5.6
45 to 49 years	60	6.7
50 to 54 years	69	7.7
30 to 34 years	41	4.6
35 to 39 years	38	4.3
40 to 44 years	50	5.6
45 to 49 years	60	6.7
50 to 54 years	69	7.7
55 to 59 years	86	9.7
60 to 64 years	93	10.4
65 to 69 years	61	6.8
70 to 74 years	37	4.2
75 to 79 years	35	3.9
80 to 84 years	40	4.5
85 years and over	60	6.7
Median age (years)	52.8	

² 2010 Census

For La Conner's population, 60% were over the age of 35 in 1990. That same age group was 64% by 2000 and 70.5% for 2010. As this trend continues, planning for the special considerations of an aging population is needed for housing, transit and social services. A large retired population contributes income dollars, but is not looking for employment opportunities.

Home Ownership: Between 1980 and 1993 home ownership in La Conner increased by 31 new units. In 1992 La Conner had 224 single family units, 83 multi-family, and 38 mobile/manufactured homes for a total of 345 dwellings. In 1993, there were 219 single-family units, 98 multi-family, 22 mobile homes, and 26 special (boats) units for a total of 365 dwellings. In 1995, there were 228 single-family units, 78 multi-family, 16 mobile/manufactured homes, and 28 special (boats) units for a total of 350 dwellings. The total number of dwelling units in 2002 rose to 491.³ The 2015 breakdown of home types is shown in Table 5-6 above.

In the Town, 47% of the housing units were built before 1970. According to the 2010 Census home ownership outnumbered renters; 52.2% owners versus 47.8% renters. The median home value in La Conner was \$263,300 in 2016. The median value has raised 55% since 2000.

Household Size: In 2015, a typical household in La Conner was 2.52 persons per unit in owner occupied homes, and 1.5 in renter occupied units. The average household size decreased from 2.83 in 1970 to 2.1 in 1993, to 2 in 2000; by 2015 the household average had increased to 2.52. The fluctuations and unpredictability in the household size component of land capacity analysis underscores the fact that capacity analysis is more art than science. As discussed previously, household size is just one of several factors that impacts build out capacity. The margins that exist for determining if La Conner has enough housing for the future or not are so tight that small fluctuations of any of the variables can influence whether an adequate number of units will be available to serve the community over the planning period. Future updates will need to consider alternative approaches to how to accommodate future population.

Education: Of the Town's population over the age of 25 in 2016, 98.6% had a high school diploma and 28.4% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. This is a higher education level than that attained by Skagit County's population as a whole. The statistics for Skagit County show that 88.9% completed high school and 24.7% had a Bachelor's degree or higher. This indicates La Conner has been successful in attracting and keeping a well-educated populace who not only contribute to the economic welfare of the community but also the cultural climate.

³ Refer to 1999 Population, Land Use and Capacity Report, Erika Jenson; 2002 Population and Land Use Analysis Report, John Doyle; 2010 Census; 2016 American Community Survey; and 2017 Population and Land Use Analysis Report, John Doyle and Marianne Manville-Ailles

Income: Per capita median income - According to the 2000 Census the per capita income for La Conner was \$24,308. That figure has risen to \$25,289 by the 2010 census. This is an indication of the buying power of the average resident and is important in determining the type of housing, retail businesses, recreational opportunities, capital improvements, and feasible transit alternatives that would be appropriate for the community. The 1990 median household income for La Conner was \$25,054 and for Skagit County was \$28,389. In 2010, La Conner's median household income was \$68,333 and Skagit County was \$47,245.

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