



## ***TOWN OF LA CONNER PLANNING COMMISSION*** **Meeting Notice**

April 1<sup>st</sup>, 6PM

Upper Maple Center, La Conner WA, and Livestreamed  
Information is below and on the Town Website

Skagit County Washington  
Incorporated 1890  
[www.townoflaconner.org](http://www.townoflaconner.org)

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### **Agenda**

- I. Convene**
- II. Public Comments** (Topics not otherwise on the Agenda) – Time Limit 3 Minutes
- III. Minutes:** Approve Minutes from the March 18, 2025 meeting.

### **IV. Old Business**

- 1. Status Report – Public Participation Program
- 2. Final Draft Review: Comprehensive Plan Chapter 5 – Land Use Element
- 3. Final Draft Review: Comprehensive Plan Chapter 11 – Parks and Recreation Element
- 4. Final Draft Review: Comprehensive Plan Chapter 12 – Climate Element

### **V. New Business**

### **VI. Closing Comments:**

Live Streaming Info: <https://laconnerwa.portal.civicclerk.com/>

**TOWN OF LA CONNER  
PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING  
March 18, 2025**

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The Planning Commission meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioners present: Sommer Holt, Bruce Bradburn, John Leaver, Cynthia Elliott, Carol Hedlin, Youth Advisor Maxwell Page

Commissioners absent: None

Staff: Michael Davolio, Ajah Eills

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Assistance Planner Eills read aloud a letter into the public record detailing Laura Plamer's and Nikki Fallis' concerns with the Historic Preservation District regulations.

Amy McFeely expressed gratitude to all for taking the time to hear voices in her diverse neighborhood, and for taking the time to think about what the neighborhood could tolerate.

Linda Talman asked if she would be able to speak on agenda items later in the meeting.

Maggie Wilder expressed appreciation for the Planning Commission's interest in protecting and preserving neighborhoods.

Julie Jones asked if there are any light codes, as intense light from her neighbor's house was negatively affecting her. She was advised to consult with staff.

Linda Talman noted that there was discussion of dark sky protocol when she was on the Planning Commission.

**MINUTES:**

Commissioner Bradburn moved to approve the minutes with corrections from the February 18, 2025 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Elliott. **Motion to approve the minutes with corrections carried unanimously.**

**PRESENTATIONS:**

Students from Western Washington University presented on their class project, which was suggested updates to La Conner's Critical Area Ordinance based on staff feedback. Discussions and a question-and-answer session followed their presentation.

Students from Western Washington University presented on their staff project, which was a draft ADA transition plan for La Conner. Discussion and a questions and answer session followed their presentation.

## **OLD BUSINESS:**

Staff stated that they thought a community mingle may be a good opportunity for learning which accessibility challenges identified in the ADA transition plan are most troubling for the community.

Gary Nelson spoke regarding ADA and parking and stated that developers should pay their fair share and thinks that the Town should make them put in sidewalks on both sides of the street. There was a discussion about developer requirements and sidewalks.

Staff presented a memo regarding the history of dog grooming parlors and conditional use permits. The owner of Fifi's Bubble Palace in La Conner spoke regarding the importance of conditional use permits in ensuring proper conditions in a grooming business. Discussion ensued. No action was taken.

Staff presented the final draft of the Moore-Clark Subarea Plan. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Elliott moved to recommend the Subarea Plan for Town Council approval. Commissioner Bradburn seconded.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

Staff presented the final draft of Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, the Public Participation et al. Element. Commissioner Elliott moved to recommend Chapter 2 of the Comprehensive Plan for Town Council approval. Commissioner Bradburn seconded. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Staff presented a draft of Chapter 12 of the Comprehensive Plan, the Climate Element. There was discussion of goal F and the expanded language recommended by Commissioner Holt. Discussion ensued on the draft as a whole, with Commissioner Bradburn requesting use of the word "riparian." Staff will present another draft of the Climate element on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

Staff presented the updated Parks and Recreation Element, with an inventory and map of Town parks. discussion ensued. Staff will ensure internal consistency within the Element and represent it to the Commission on April 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **COMMISSIONER COMMENTS/STAFF COMMENTS:**

Marylee Killinger spoke regarding her concerns with the Moore-Clark building and spoke about an ordinance that Seattle passed, which allowed Seattle to quickly progress with the condemnation process for buildings.

Lori Wise spoke in support of Marylee Killinger's comments.

A discussion on condemnation ensued.

With no further business Commissioner Bradburn moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Holt. **Motion carried unanimously.**

## MEMORANDUM

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TO: Planning Commission  
FROM: Planning Staff  
SUBJECT: La Conner Land Use Element  
DATE: April 1, 2025

Please see attached the final draft of the Land Use Element. Although this has come before you many times, we were waiting to request approval until the Moore-Clark Subarea Plan was finalized. That occurred during the Town Council meeting on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The only changes in this document are highlighted. These changes were requested by the WA Department of Fish and Wildlife.

This Element has several appendixes, listed below:

Appendix 5A Inventory and Analysis: Included within Element

Appendix 5B: Residential Land Use Capacity Analysis – not included within this packet due to space. Copies can be produced upon request.

Appendix 5C: Sea Level Rise – not included within this packet due to space. Copies can be produced upon request

Appendix 5D: Growth Projection Methodology – not included within the packet due to space. Copies can be produced upon request.

Appendix 5E: Commercial-Transition (Moore-Clark) Subarea Plan – not included within this packet due to space. Copies can be produced upon request.

Please come ready to vote on this element.

# 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-household dimensional standards allow for a unit density of 8.7 units per acre. This is twice the GMA requirement. However, the Town must continue to ensure that the multi-household dimensional standards are equitable.
- B. Plan for and accommodate for affordable housing availability for all levels of area median income.

- 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. Additionally, the Town will require the evaluation of climate-related hazards to ensure facilities are appropriately sited and designed for long-term safety.

## **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 such as increased frequency of flooding, extreme heat, smoke, and wildfire.

### **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. Promote and integrate native plant species and low impact development techniques in all landscaping and land management practices to enhance biodiversity, support local ecosystems, and ensure environmental sustainability.

## **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.
- 5L-12 Prioritize soft armoring techniques over hard armoring to preserve natural shoreline functions and resilience.**

5L-13 Support the benefits and ecosystem services provided by healthy, connected floodplains and riparian systems, such as water attenuation, pollution filtration, flooding resilience, and drought resistance.

5L-14 Seek cooperation with all entities such as tribal, federal, state and local jurisdictions, countywide planning groups, salmon recovery groups, and watershed councils on issues impacting fish and wildlife habitat.

5L-15 Partner with Watershed Councils and external partners to support and expand public education and outreach efforts on the importance of, and ecosystem services provided by, habitat conservation areas.

## **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 and climate resiliency 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 ensuring no net loss of ecological values and function in 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-adjacent infrastructure 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.

## **GOALS**

*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.*

### **Policies**

- 5U-1 Require all applicants for ground-disturbing work within the Town limits to contact the Swinomish Tribal Historic Preservation Office.

**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 the 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 zoning and mixed-use area development, including both horizontal and vertical mixed use. Encourage mixed-use structures and work to identify priority areas for development. Mixing uses within a structure promotes an efficient use of space, fosters community, and 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. **Additionally, utilize landscaping within parking lots to mitigate heat island and stormwater impacts.**

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.

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## APPENDIX 5A

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### 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 Datum	Tidal
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.

In December of 2022, La Conner experienced a major flood event that caused extensive flooding throughout Town. In respond to this, La Conner has created an Emergency Management Commission and completed an analysis of potential sea level rise. That report, *Sea Level Rise and Impact on La Conner*, is attached to this Land Use Element as Appendix 5C.

## **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. The most recent studies done on this wetland indicate that is a Category III wetland. Although this wetland site has a low potential to support habitat, there is evidence that this site provides hydrological functions to the surrounding area. In addition to other Local, State, and Federal guidelines for regulating development in this area, any development would need to show an adequate replacement of these hydrological functions through. 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 July 2021 La Conner adopted its most recent Shoreline Master Program (SMP). 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-household dwellings; accessory dwelling units; manufactured homes; and multi-household units, such as apartments and condominiums. Density is between 2 and 12 units per acre (medium density) in this zone.

**Total Residential Land Use:** The Town has recently completed a Residential Land Use Capacity Analysis that addresses future options for in-fill development and affordable housing. That analysis, *La Conner Land Capacity Analysis – Residential Zone Full Review* is attached as Appendix 5B

### **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 24% of the developed area, 63 acres, is used for commercial uses. Commercial uses include retail, office, personal services, business services, lodging, health services, parking, grocery and food stores, government (Department of Fish and Wildlife located in Commercial zone) marinas and restaurants. This is almost twice as much as the average U.S. small city.

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. La Conner will continue to explore how mixed-use zoning could be used to resolve this competition and supportive walkable and livable communities.

### **Industrial and Port Industrial Zone**

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 38 acres are designated for industrial uses. Of these, 36 acres are considered Port Industrial. Industrial uses include construction and trade, storage and warehousing, 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. As of 2024, this is the most recent Industrial Lands Study in Skagit County. 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.

In 2022, La Conner designated approximately 36 acres in the north of Town as Port Industrial. The Port of Skagit is the sole land owner in the Port Industrial Zone. The Town worked closely with the Port of Skagit to develop this zoning which is designed to provide areas for marine manufacturing and maritime services that require facilities and/or waterfront access available to port properties, with the goal to support a strong maritime economy.

## **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, although it is within La Conner's UGA.

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.

The Town of La Conner acquired Parcel P74265 (also referred to as the Jenson property) in 2022. The parcel is roughly half an acre in size. The final land use of the parcel has not been determined.

### **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 (HPD) encompassing approximately 51.1 acres in 1972, which was nominated and accepted to the National Register of Historic Places the same year. The Town recognized 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. The HPD as it appears on the State and National Registry of Historic Places includes the area bounded by the Swinomish Channel on the west, Commercial and the west end of Douglas Street on the south, Second Street Street on the east, and ends between Morris and Center 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. In 2023, the La Conner Planning Department and the Swinomish Tribe Planning Department began holding annual meetings to improve coordination between the two jurisdictions.

### **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.

In 2023, La Conner established an Emergency Planning Commission to better address and prepare for emergencies. La Conner is in the process of developing our own Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, which is expected to be completed by the end of 2025.

### **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. In the 2022-2023 school year, the student-teacher ratio was 24.2 to 1 for the entire district. This ratio has remained relatively consistent for the last 7 years. 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. In 2021, a new 5,525 square foot library was constructed on Morris Street in order to improve the La Conner Rural Partial Library District's ability to serve the community.

### **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

For a full accounting of vacant and underdeveloped lands within the Residential Zone, please see Appendix 5B.

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.

**TABLE 5-2**  
**ACREAGE IN TYPE OF LAND USE**  
**(TOTAL - 264 ACRES)**

Land Use	Acreage	Percent of Total
Residential	107.7	40%
Commercial/Transitional	62.3	24%
Commercial		
Industrial/Port	38	14%
Industrial		
Public Use	55.2	21%
Historic Preservation	51.5	19%
District Overlay (not counted in total)		
Totals	~264	~100%

Vacant Land Breakout	Acreage	% of Total Land	% of All Vacant Land
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 are based on the 2023 Skagit County Population, Housing and Employment Growth Allocations as directed by the Washington State Department of Commerce. The full methodology of the 2023 Skagit County Population, Housing and Employment Growth Allocations is included here as Appendix 5D. La Conner has been projected to experience 1% population growth between 2022 – 2045, resulting in a projected population increase of 211 people, resulting in a 2045 population target of 1,191 people. 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)

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Change</b>
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

2022	980	110
<b>Population Trends 2000-2017</b>		
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
2022	980	55

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.

### **Residential Land Capacity Analysis**

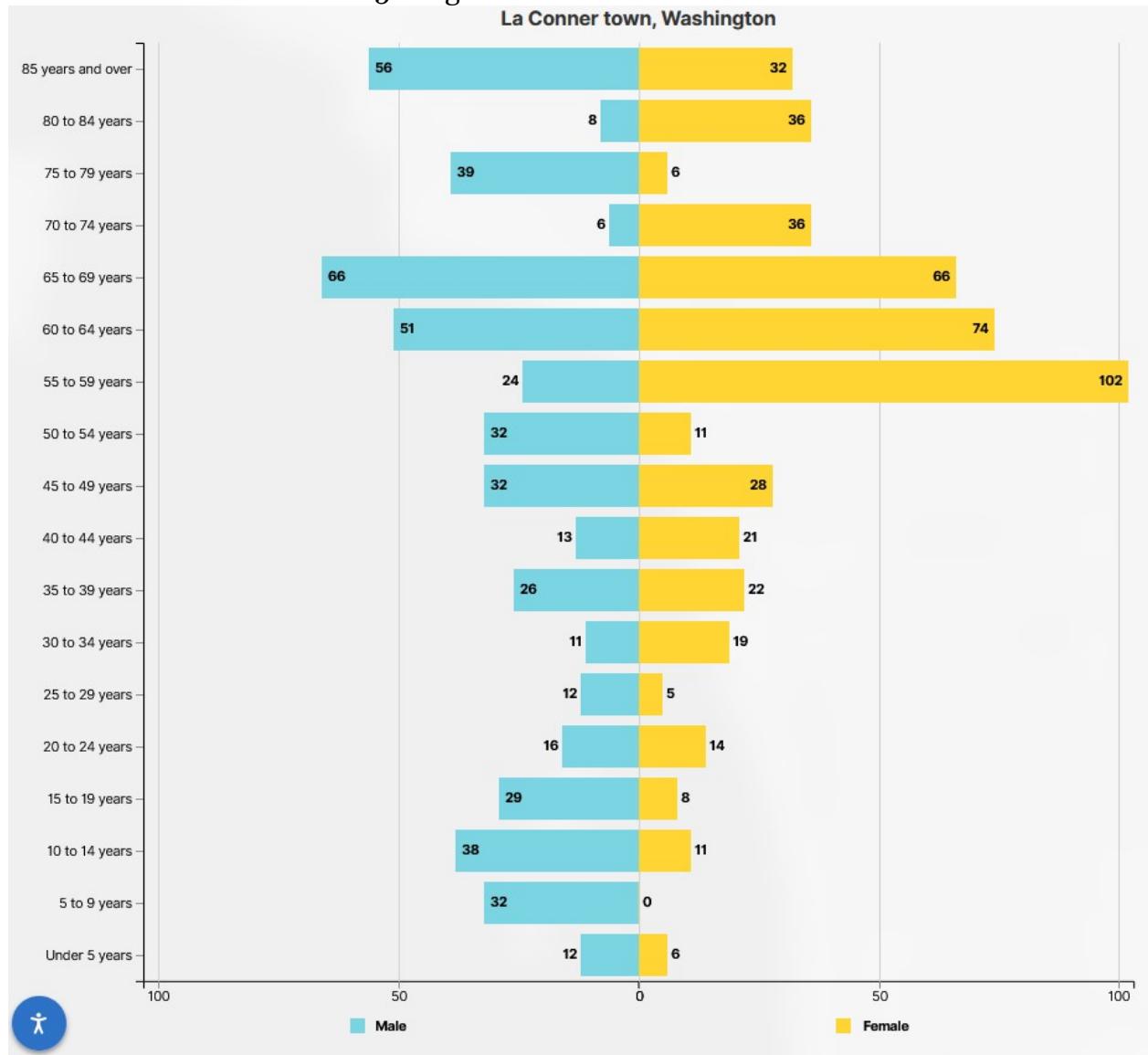
Please see Appendix 5B for a Land Capacity Analysis of the Residential Zones in La Conner.

#### **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-household growth.

Age Distribution of Population<sup>1</sup>: The following table shows the age and sex distribution for La Conner in 2022:

Table 5-8 Age and Sex Distributions<sup>2</sup>



The median age in La Conner was 59.5 in 2022. This is 20 years older than the median age in Washington State, which was 38.6 in 2022. In addition, over a third of La Conner's population is over the age of 65. This indicates that La Conner continues to have an older average population than the rest of the State. A large retired population contributes income dollars, but is not looking for employment opportunities.

<sup>1</sup> 2010 Census

<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2017-2022

**Home Ownership:** In 1990, Home ownership outnumbered renters; 70% owners versus 30% renters. By the 2000 Census, the percentages shifted significantly to 55% owners and the 45% renters. By the 2010 Census the shift had increased to 54% renters versus 46% owners. However, the 2016 data shows a shift back toward home ownership with 55% owners and 45% renters. This trend continued in the 2022 data, showing a home ownership percentage of 61% and a renter percentage of 39%. For a full discussion of Home Ownership and Housing Burden, please see the Housing Element.

**Household Size:** In 2022, the average household size in La Conner was 2.04. This is a slight decrease from 2016, when the average size was 2.06. La Conner has consistently seen small changes in the average household size from year to year in the last decade, with the average household size ranging from 1.78 to 2.06. 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 2022, 96.1% had a high school diploma or higher. 38.2% of the Town's population over the age of 25 in 2022 had a Bachelor's degree or higher. This is a slightly higher education level than that attained by Skagit County's population as a whole. The statistics for Skagit County show that 96.6% completed high school and 30.4% 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.

**Income:** Median income – According to the 2010 American Community Survey, the median income for La Conner was \$35,682. By 2022, according to the 2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, the median income for La Conner was \$72,981. This is a significant increase, and reflects increases seen by communities in the United States. 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.

## M E M O R A N D U M

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TO: Planning Commission  
FROM: Planning Staff  
SUBJECT: La Conner Parks and Recreation Element  
DATE: April 1, 2025

Please see attached the final draft of the Parks and Recreation Element. Changes made include the removal of the numbers on the map, and minor changes to the inventory and formatting. Please come prepared to vote on this element.

# CHAPTER 11

## PARKS AND RECREATION ELEMENT

### Overview

The Parks and Recreation Element of the Comprehensive Plan is designed to provide general policy guidance for the growth and development of parks and recreation facilities for the Town of La Conner. This element of the La Conner Comprehensive Plan is intended to update and replace the town's 2013 Parks Plan.

Parks, open space, and recreation planning is an opportunity to improve the quality of life of a community. It is also an opportunity to hear from residents regarding types of facilities they need and the types of recreational programs they desire. The planning process is also an opportunity to involve the public in responding to changing recreational needs, and to introduce a new vision.

This plan analyzes supply, demand, and need for park and recreation property and facilities within the La Conner service area. The inventory includes a comprehensive assessment of all public and private facilities and services within the Town's boundaries.

Development strategies presented in the Plan are the result of an analysis of need and opportunity. The proposed strategies recommend the Town focus resources where park, recreation, and open space needs are most critical and effective. The Plan provides representations of many of the Plan-recommended actions.

The La Conner Parks Commission was founded in 1915 and is responsible to "act as an advisory board for the Mayor, Town Administrator, and Town Council regarding the operations, policies, procedures, and improvements to the Town's parks, play fields, street ends, and open space". (See *Ord. 188 § 1, 1915*).

From the 2013 Parks Plan: "*The Town of La Conner is committed to enhancing our community's quality of life by providing well planned and managed leisure and recreational opportunities for the residents and guests of La Conner.*"

*The Comprehensive Parks Plan recognizes and ensures that the natural human need for open spaces and places for outdoor activities be considered equally with the economy, housing and other services that the Town provides.*

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

In 2019, La Conner's Parks Commission undertook a survey to evaluate public responses to active and passive recreational facilities in the community. A total of 75 responses were received. Of those responses, the highest priorities were for walking trails (64), an off-leash dog park (61), and extensions of the boardwalk (south, 66; north, 67). Active recreation facilities that received the highest ratings (at least 2/3 positive responses) were soccer, basketball, and tennis. Those priorities are reflected in the Goals and Policies set forth in this document.

## **GOALS AND POLICIES**

In order to ensure internal consistency between the different elements of this Comprehensive Plan, the following goals and policies are taken from the Land Use Element:

### **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.

The following Goals and Policies are intended as a management and council decision-making tool to help provide consistency and priority to park and recreation development and funding.

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### **GOAL A.**

*Designate, retain, maintain, and enhance publicly owned lands and facilities for the purpose of parks and recreation for town residents, service area residents (school district) and visitors to town.*

#### **Policies**

- 11A-1. Identify and create appropriate park, recreation, and open space facilities in the La Conner service area that preserve and enhance climatic, natural, wildlife, historic, cultural, and current developmental conditions, and ensure access to park facilities for persons with disabilities.
- 11A-2. Use creative economic methods for retaining public properties such as leasing and requiring open space incentives for new development.
- 11A-3. Develop public properties through private/public partnerships and grants.
- 11A-4. Encourage coordination and cooperation between the Town and other entities such as private enterprise, the County, State and Tribal agencies in exploring opportunities to share the development of park and recreational resources and facilities.
- 11A-5. Determine the costs involved in maintaining and/or improving park, recreation, and open space levels-of-service (LOS).

### **GOAL B**

*Provide, maintain, and enhance public access both physically and visually to publicly owned lands and facilities.*

#### **Policies**

- 11B-1. Define an implementation program by outlining the actions necessary to realize the park, recreation, and open space plan's development.
- 11B-2. Acquire public spaces whenever appropriate and possible.
- 11B-3. Develop and implement a forest "Best Management Practices" maintenance program to enhance the Pioneer Park facilities.
- 11B-4. Enforce development standards in the Shoreline Master Program to require public access to shorelines.

- 11B-5. Work to coordinate efforts with the private sector to increase access to the waterfront
- 11B-6. Provide quality waterfront docks, floats, and boat launches for diverse public boating uses.
- 11B-7. Increase pedestrian and recreational trail opportunities on public right-of-ways and Town owned properties.
- 11B-8. Develop signage, maps and brochures to identify parks and other public spaces.
- 11B-9. Ensure that access to parks and other public facilities meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **GOAL C.**

*Protect and develop view corridors to waterways, farmlands and scenery of the community as public land locations permit.*

### **Policies**

- 11C-1. Connect waterfront access points with one another where feasible through the continued development and implementation of a plan to provide a waterfront “boardwalk” from North First Street to Connor Waterfront Park.
- 11C-2. Have viewing areas that display La Conner as an attractive community.
- 11C-3. Continue to develop waterfront open space for people to enjoy the waterfront.
- 11C-4. Coordinate with Skagit County and private property owners to develop a waterfront trail along the west side of Sullivan Slough.
- 11C-5. Enhance the use of walking trails, where applicable.

### **GOAL D**

*Provide recreational opportunities to areas and groups that are underserved*

### **Policies**

- 11D-1. Identify appropriate roles and responsibilities that should be undertaken by La Conner to meet critical recreational facility and programming needs, especially the needs of underserved communities including minorities and persons with disabilities.

11D-2. Survey public opinion on a regular basis to determine which issues are most important to La Conner residents, and the public desire for improved recreational opportunities.

11D-3. Ensure that planning efforts are consistent with neighboring communities.

### **GOAL E**

*Ensure safe usage of publicly owned lands and facilities*

#### **Policies**

11E-1. Support and maintain park and recreational properties for their optimum use.

11E-2. Ensure American Disabilities Act compliance with access and usability.

11E-3. Ensure proper maintenance through the Town's budget and other secure funding sources.

11E-4. Maintain safety equipment and ladders from water on Town floats along the channel.

### **GOAL F**

*Provide diversity in parks and recreation for both active and passive opportunities for a wide range of users*

#### **Policies**

11F-1. Identify and provide recreational opportunities to all ages.

11F-2. Tourism should be considered together with the needs of the community when planning for recreational facilities in the community.

11F-3. Continue to develop waterfront areas with a variety of waterfront facilities.

11F-4. Work with the local school district to ensure continued access to active recreational facilities such as soccer fields, and basketball and tennis courts.

### **GOAL G**

*Integrate wildlife habitat and conservation elements in parks planning*

#### **Policies**

11G-1. Plan for wildlife habitat and conservation areas, open spaces and natural resource areas, trails, athletic fields and facilities.

- 11G-2. Survey the public to determine the need for future park, recreation, and open space facilities and services that may be provided by the Town.
- 11G-3. Encourage coordination and cooperation between the Town and other entities such as private enterprise, the county, state and tribal agencies in exploring opportunities to share the development of park and recreational resources and facilities.
- 11G-4. Encourage and develop habitat improvement programs.
- 11G-5. Provide appropriate habitat for pollinators, where possible.

#### **GOAL H**

*Preserve the historical heritage of La Conner and the surrounding area*

#### **Policies**

- 11H-1. Identify, maintain and enhance historic landmark structures and sites.
- 11H-2. Grant applications should emphasize the regional, state and national significance of many of La Conner's recreational lands and facilities to fund improvements to those properties.
- 11H-3. Review development standards with the goal of increasing open space.

#### **GOAL I**

*Integrate parks and open spaces in the display of public art*

#### **Policies**

- 11I-1. The La Conner Arts Commission shall have the authority to fulfill the Town Council mandate for public art inclusion in the Parks Plan in cooperation with the Parks Commission.
- 11I-2. Provide opportunities to include artwork in public spaces.
- 11I-3. Incorporate design elements that unify efforts to enhance parks and public spaces through creative signage, brickwork and the use of colors, with special attention paid to preserving the historic elements of the community.
- 11I-4. Encourage the use of public spaces for the use of active artists.

#### **GOAL J**

*Promote healthy life styles through recreational opportunities in La Conner Parks*

## **Policies**

- 11J-1. Have a park system that provides a diverse level of physical activity.
- 11J-2. Develop park spaces with amenities for physical activities.
- 11J-3. Develop a La Conner cell phone app (QR technology) that will enable hearing brief descriptions of key public spaces, parks and points of historical interest.
- 11J-4. Promote the image of La Conner as a destination point for walking, cycling, kayaking, canoeing, and enjoying other outdoor activities.
- 11J-5. Seek and develop a location for an off-leash dog park.

## **TOWN PARK AND RECREATION INVENTORY**

### **Overview**

The Town of La Conner, La Conner School District, Skagit County, and other public and private agencies have assembled land devoted exclusively to park, recreation and open space uses within La Conner.

These lands provide a variety of park, recreation and open space activities including picnic facilities, athletic fields and playgrounds, community centers, and related park supporting administrative and maintenance facilities.

Approximately 22.5 acres (Pioneer Park and waterfront sites) of the total park, recreation and open space inventory is regionally significant sites. Town and County residents, regardless of where they reside within La Conner or the surrounding region, use these sites. Out-of-area visitors and tourists also use a significant portion of these regional sites and facilities.

The remaining 16 acres of the total park, recreation and open space inventory consists of locally significant sites and properties used by residents who reside within the immediate area.

### **Town of La Conner**

La Conner owns many properties with approximately 38.5 acres of land for possible public park, recreation and open space use. The locations are shown in Appendix 11A.

Park	Features
North Pioneer Park	Undeveloped parkland with campsites and walking trail.
South Pioneer Park	<p>Large parcel of property with a picnic shelter, barbecue pit, amphitheater and walking trails. Also the site of the water trails camp area.</p> 
Sherman Avenue End	<p>Public boat launch with trailer parking.</p> 
Maple Avenue Park	<p>This public park is the remainder of the ball fields previously leased from the Hedlin family. Its current use is open space, with potential future plans for more active use.</p>
Caledonia Street End	<p>Undeveloped street end with accompanying DNR waterfront lease.</p>

## Channel Passage

This waterfront walkway currently runs from Center Street to Douglas Street. Continued expansion of this walkway to the south and north is planned in the future.



Park	Features
Commercial Street End	<p>Undeveloped street end adjacent to channel. Excellent view of the Rainbow Bridge.</p> 
John Hammer Park	<p>Small neighborhood toddler park with play equipment. Donated by Kiwanis.</p> 
Magnus Anderson Cabin and Totem Pole	<p>Originally constructed in 1869. Relocated to this Historic Site located just below Town Hall.</p> 

Old Fire Hall Park	Located across from Catholic Church on Douglas Street. Landscaped area with picnic table.
Butterfly Garden	Adjacent to Civic Garden Club. Excellent views of the channel, bridge and downtown.
	
Civic Garden Club	Older historic structure used for town meetings and other civic events.
Maple Hall/Maple Center and Plaza	Community facility for theater, conferences, and other social events. Includes a barbecue, courtyard, and public art.
	

Park	Features
Dirty Biter Waterfront Park (Calhoun Street end)	<p>Street end on waterfront side of first street. Features benches, picnic tables, art work, and public boat moorage. <u>Possible location for active artists.</u></p>
	
Old Log Park	<p>Old growth cross-section log, with historic timeline. Restroom provided for tourism use.</p> 
Swinomish Park (Benton Street End)	<p>Public boat moorage and waterfront viewing. Dock owned by Town. Information kiosk, benches, picnic tables, and art work.</p>

Benton Street Stairs	<p>Stairway leading from First Street to Second Street with excellent views of town and channel, connecting downtown with hilltop. Art work at Second Street entrance, <u>with the possibility of adding additional artwork at the bottom of the staircase.</u></p>	
Peace Park	Quiet, comfortable public seating with art work.	
Washington Avenue	Landscaped area with public art on south side of Washington Street between 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 1 <sup>st</sup> Streets	
Washington Avenue and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street Corner Triangle	Bench and planted area.	
Washington Avenue End	<p>Public boat moorage, picnic tables, benches, art work, and views of the Channel. Gazebo donated by Rotary Club. <u>Possible location for active artists.</u></p>	

Gilkey Square (Morris Street End)	<p>Excellent channel views and focal point from Morris Street as visitors enter town. Summer music event site. <u>This area is also the site for the town's Christmas tree.</u></p> 
Morris and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street Stairs	Stairway connects Morris Street with hilltop. Public restrooms available <u>on Morris Street</u> .
Jordan Street	Undeveloped waterfront site with picnic table <u>on North First Street</u> . <u>Future waterfront access is being considered.</u>
Pioneer Monument	Not in Town limits, maintained in cooperation with the town's Public Works Department, the Rotary Club, Kiwanis Club, Soroptimists, and Pioneer Association.
Maple Avenue Triangle	Undeveloped, triangular piece of property.
Garden Street End	Undeveloped right-of-way in south residential area. Possible "pea-patch" garden and neighborhood park.
Orchard Street Right-of-Way	Undeveloped street between Park Street and Maple Avenue
4 <sup>th</sup> Street Right-of-Way, South Hill and North Hill	Green Space
1 <sup>st</sup> Street Right of Way between Commercial and Caledonia	Current half of the property is being used for public parking and the majority of this street portion is undeveloped.
Conner Waterfront Park	Dramatic open space waterfront beneath the Rainbow

	Bridge. Kayak launch site. Public picnic area with barbecues <u>and public art</u> . Access to camping area at Pioneer Park.
<u>Skateboard Park</u>	<u>Opened in 2011. Located at the end of North Sixth Street.</u>

### **La Conner School District**

The La Conner School District owns a large amount of property dedicated to recreational facilities.



Site	Features
Tennis Courts	Two courts in need of reconstruction; possible adaptation for pickle ball.
Playgrounds	Elementary school playground contains swing sets, <del>sand area</del> , climbing structures, tetherball and blacktop for ball games. <u>Also includes a toddler playground.</u>
Basketball (outdoor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behind the Elementary School is an <del>covered</del> outdoor basketball court with several hoops.</li> <li>Adjacent to the Braves Hub is an outdoor court (2 hoops).</li> </ul>

Baseball Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One permanent softball field behind the <u>Elementary Middle</u> School playground with dugouts and a bleacher on one baseline.</li> <li>• One regulation baseball field behind the <u>Middle Elementary</u> School with dugouts and bleachers on both baselines, and a field house.</li> </ul>
Soccer Fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One soccer area adjacent to the softball field.</li> <li>• Two soccer fields adjacent to the baseball field.</li> </ul>
Track	One $\frac{1}{4}$ mile track with high jump and pole vault areas.
Football Field	One football field in the center of the track with covered bleachers on one side.
<u>Skateboard Park</u>	<u>Opened in 2011. Located at the end of North Sixth Street.</u>
<u>YMCA Day Care Facility</u>	<u>A modular building with a toddler play area behind the Administration Building.</u>
Braves Club	A cement block field house behind the Administration Building and adjacent to Best Place. 
Gymnasiums	Three gyms. One each at the Elementary, Middle and High Schools. The <u>Middle School</u> gyms also serve as a multi-purpose rooms ( <u>also serving as cafeterias</u> ).

### **State of Washington and the Port of Skagit County**

These two entities have holdings that impact the Town of La Conner.

The Port of Skagit County maintains a large marina that is filled primarily with recreational boats. The Port also owns and manages a recreational vehicle park. In addition, the Port also has property adjacent to the Town that will be used as a dual use area. The primary use will be as a constructed wetland to process the storm water from the Town. This area will also function as an interpretive

nature walk to demonstrate the importance of wetlands to our ecology and an innovative approach to storm water management.

The State of Washington does not own any recreational facilities in or near the Town, however, the Department of Natural Resources leases shoreline properties to the Town and to private entities that provide recreational opportunities. In addition, the State has provided the Town with funding for several public recreation projects in the past.

### **Private Facilities for Public Use by Membership or Fee**

Other nonprofit and private agencies own properties with land and buildings of possible use for recreational facilities for a membership or a fee within or adjacent to the Town of La Conner.

<b>Park</b>	<b>Features</b>
RV park	The port leases sites for temporary use by recreational vehicles.
Thousand Trails	Camping, boat launch, cabins, recreation center, RV park, waterfront beach, hiking, and picnicking. The Thousand Trails facility is located 3 miles west of La Conner.
Swinomish Yacht Club	Private facility located at the Port of Skagit County.

### **Inventory Implications**

- The Town of La Conner, La Conner School District, Skagit County and other public and private agencies have significant amounts of acreage, including park, recreation, and open space land and recreational facilities in the La Conner area.
- A significant portion of the inventory are regional facilities that are used by populations who reside outside of the La Conner service area boundaries, even though the maintenance and operation of these sites has been financed by the city and school district.
- The La Conner School District has developed a significant percentage of the inventory of park and recreational related facilities, including outdoor playgrounds and athletic fields, indoor arts and crafts, meeting rooms, and gymnasiums. School facilities are competitive, higher quality, capacity sites.

## DEMAND AND NEEDS ANALYSIS

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### OVERVIEW

The following proposals concerning elements of the park, recreation, and open space plan are based on the results of field analysis, inventories, demand analysis, and planning sessions.

Site descriptions are organized by the major type of land or activity to be provided. A particular park may include one or all of the following features.

The descriptions provided in this section describe the improvements that will be accomplished under each major type of plan element - see each element for a composite description for any particular site. Also see the chapters on existing land and facilities or opportunities for a description of each site's current conditions, ownership and other particulars.

### CONSERVANCIES – HISTORICAL

Resource properties that retain and preserve significant historical and cultural sites and facilities throughout La Conner should be protected. Generally, historical conservancy properties may be acquired that conserve and provide interpretive access to significant sites. These include original homesteads or prominent building sites, commercial or public buildings with unique architectural characteristics, locations of important industrial or resource-oriented activities, and other culturally important areas. Lands may also be acquired that conserve significant man-made constructions on the land including bridges, dikes, dams, and other features.

To the extent possible and practical, historical sites and buildings will be linked with other parklands to create activity centers or facilities that reflect the original cultural use. In some instances, the buildings or sites may be adapted to provide supporting services such as trailheads, parking lots, restrooms, and utilities.

Whenever possible, historical buildings and structures will be preserved on their original sites. In some instances, however, the buildings or other

improvements may be relocated to other public properties in order to better conserve, display, or provide interpretive access.

To protect archaeological significance, historical or archaeological sites may be marked or use signage as part of the conservancy park element. Interpretive signs may be located off-site or in areas that do not risk exposure or possible vandalism of underlying archaeological resources or properties (including private lands).

### Vision

As described herein, historical conservancies may be realized through:

- Acquisition of title and/or development rights of properties that would otherwise be destroyed or developed for other land uses;
- Provision for public access and interpretive use which would not be possible if the properties remained in private ownership; and
- Provisions for signing and interpretation subject to appropriate security measures and underlying property owner agreements.

### **EXISTING HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES<sup>1</sup>**

The following sites have been acquired and may be improved to provide historical or cultural exhibits and activities as part of surrounding park features.

Civic Garden Club	Formerly the Territorial Courthouse prior to statehood and has served as the county seat, school, Grange hall and general public meeting place.
Gaches Mansion	The home of one of the early Town pioneer families that is now a private quilt museum. 
Town Hall	The original bank for the Town which is now being used as the administration building and sheriff's office.

<sup>1</sup> Site includes portions providing historical resource value. Site may also include characteristics that may be listed under other plan element proposals.

Canoe Shed	Authentic Native American Cedar Canoe housed under a cedar shed structure. Located on the North side of Moore Street below Town Hall.	
Pioneer Homestead	Original Magnus Anderson homestead relocated to the corner of Moore and Commercial below Town Hall. Surrounded by civic gardens.	
Louisa A. Conner Monument	Monument to the founders of La Conner located in Pioneer Park.	
Log Cross Section	Log cross-section located on the south side of the First Street public restrooms.	
Pioneer Memorial	Located at East entrance to town and in memorial to Pioneer Heritage.	

## PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO HISTORIC/CULTURAL SITES

Maple Hall Plaza	Study potential improvements to display artwork. Discuss future of barbecue. Reconfigure the plaza space at the entrance to Maple Center to highlight the Town's heritage and founding families.
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## PROPOSED HISTORICAL/CULTURAL SITES

The following sites may be provided conservancy protection through easements, land use agreements, or acquisitions.

Heritage Trees	Several trees in the community have reached maturity and are spectacular examples of their species. The Town should inventory, determine the health of, and provide special designation for such trees. Possibly create and display a map of these tree locations.
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## RESOURCE LANDS AND ACTIVITY PARKS

Resource lands may be preserved in La Conner that provides public access to significant environmental features. Generally, resource lands provide access to the Swinomish Channel, woodlands (Pioneer Park), agricultural open space, and scenic areas.

To the extent practical, resource lands may also be traversed and linked by all types of pedestrian corridors, increasing access to significant and visually interesting features.

Resource and activity-oriented facilities may be developed that provide public use and enjoyment of environmental resource sites throughout La Conner. Water-oriented resource activities include fishing piers, docks, and boat launches.

Where appropriate, resource-oriented and outdoor activity sites may also be improved with a variety of outdoor facilities including group and individual campsites, picnic facilities, playgrounds, and open grassy playfields. Supporting services may also be developed including parking lots, restrooms, and utilities.

Resource activities may be located on independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for resource conservancies, trail corridors

or other public facilities. Resource activities may also be developed on other publicly owned lands subject to public use agreements or easements; or on lands acquired for other public purposes including stormwater management detention and retention ponds, and wastewater treatment sites.

### **Vision**

As described herein, the resource activities vision will be realized through:

- Acquisition of resource lands - that would otherwise be developed for other land uses;
- Provision of public access - and use of natural features which would not be possible if the lands remained in private ownership; and
- Conservation for public access - and use of unique and available natural features that visually define and separate developed areas and neighborhoods.

### **BOAT LAUNCH POINTS**

Sherman Avenue	Power and hand-carry boat launch ramp located on Sherman Avenue street end. Some conflicts exist between kayaks, power boats, and sailboats.
Port of Skagit County	Boat launch/lift facility. Equipped to handle large and small vessel launching.

### **PICNIC FACILITIES**

#### *Existing*

Old Fire Hall Park	Picnic table located adjacent to the bluff near the Catholic Church. Corner of 4 <sup>th</sup> and Douglas.
Dirty Biter Park	Picnic tables located on Calhoun Street end. Waterfront picnic area.
Pioneer Park	Picnic tables throughout.
Swinomish Park	Waterfront picnic area at Benton Street End.
John Hammer Park	Picnic table with children's play area near historic canoe and below Town Hall.
Gilkey Square	Waterfront picnic area.
Butterfly Park	Picnic table overlooking the channel.
Conner Waterfront Park	Picnic facility with barbecues.
Washington Street End	Picnic facility.
Jordan Street Park	Picnic facility.

#### *Proposed*

Pioneer Park South	▪ Implement a forest Best Management Program to enhance and maintain the Park's tree and plant health.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue to improve the trail system in the north section and connect to south section under Pioneer Parkway.</li> <li>▪ Continue to improve water access camp areas for kayaks for inclusion as a Water trails park.</li> </ul>
Pioneer Park North	Additional picnic tables and camping sites to be located in redeveloped park area.
Calhoun Street End - Whatcom	Develop as a picnic rest area and link for walking tour of the Town.
Jordan Street	Mini-park proposed to be developed, <u>with water access</u> .
Morris Street End - (Gilkey Square)	Enhance park and landscape features for pedestrian access and special events.
<u>Maple Street Park</u>	<u>Future plans may include picnic tables for public use.</u>

### **Picnic facilities – shelters/cook facilities**

#### *Existing*

Pioneer Park	Large group facility
Maple Center Plaza	Covered outdoor cooking facility

## **WATER TRAILS**

A water access system has been developed for canoes, kayaks, and other hand-carry or car-top boating activities. The water trails provide access to salt and freshwater bodies that are not readily accessible or suitable for powerboats or other larger watercraft.

Water trailheads are located adjacent to other trail corridors, resource conservancies, and other park and recreational facility services including parking lots, restrooms, and utilities. When provided on separate sites, water trailheads may be improved with launch ramps or landings, picnic tables, parking lots, restrooms, and other services.

#### **Vision**

As described, the water trail vision may:

- Increase and promote public access to the area's significant salt water resources - particularly for car-top boating enthusiasts.
- Provide access to scenic natural areas and features of interest that can not be accessed from other trail systems.
- Provide for boating enthusiasts of all skill levels.
- Provide for extended boating duration including overnight trips.

## WATER TRAIL ACCESS SITES

### Existing Launch Sites

The most popular spot for hand carry boat launches is from the Sherman Avenue float. There is an additional launch site at the south end of Conner Waterfront Park. Kayak clubs routinely launch from the Sherman Avenue site.

Sherman Avenue End	Power and hand-carry trailer boat launch ramp located on the east bank of the Swinomish Channel. 
Conner Waterfront Park	An open bay facility for kayaks and canoes.

### Proposed launch sites

The following project will be considered for development and funding under a future RCO grant.

Sullivan Slough Wetland	The storm water treatment project may provide an opportunity for a kayak launch site in the future.
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## WALKING AND HIKING TRAILS

Walking and hiking trails may be developed to link major environmental assets, park and recreational facilities, community centers, and historical features throughout La Conner. Generally, walking and hiking trails may be developed as dirt or bark surfaced routes on interior alignments through environmental features. Portions of the system within the more densely developed areas, however, may be developed as sidewalks or boardwalks with urban streetscape furnishings and amenities.

Wherever possible, walking and hiking trails may be developed in alignments separate from vehicular or other motorized forms of transportation. For example, walking and hiking trails may be located within natural drainage corridors, wooded ravines, utility easements, and undeveloped alleyways/right of ways. In some instances, and for short duration, walking and hiking trail systems may be developed as improvements within the right-of-way of established vehicular or other transportation corridors.

Generally, walking and hiking trails may be developed to class 2-5 walking trail standards providing 2-way travel on a crushed rock, bark or compacted dirt base varying between 2 and 5 feet in width. The trails may be of a slope not more than 1:12 unless stairs or other erosion controls are provided. Class 2-3 trail segments may be handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Within the most urban alignments, walking and hiking trails may be developed to class 1 walking trail standards providing 2-way travel on an asphalt or concrete surface between 4 and 6 feet in width. Such sidewalk or boardwalk trails may be of a slope not more than 1:50. Class 1 trail segments may be handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Walking and hiking trail corridors may be located to coincide with other park and recreational improvements or public facilities to access rest stops, parking lots, restrooms, and other services.

Walking and hiking trail corridors may be independent properties or include portions of other sites provided for resource activities, athletic facilities, and other park and recreational or public facility properties.

Walking and hiking trail corridors will not be available for use by motorized vehicles of any type.

### **Vision**

As described, the walking and hiking trails vision may be realized by providing recreational trail opportunities in La Conner that:

- Access natural features that may not be available otherwise,
- Link park spaces and other areas into a greenway system,
- Serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills,
- Establish high visibility and volume pedestrian routes through the most developed urban areas, and
- Expand the park system to connect with public properties.

Wherever possible the Town should attempt to connect pedestrian corridors. Examples include establishing a walking waterfront connection between Pioneer Park and downtown, or a connection between the La Conner School grounds and the Marina along the drainage system. A pedestrian connection should be established between the top of the hill and Whatcom Street. An additional trail may be constructed through the constructed and natural wetlands associated with Sullivan Slough.

## PARK WALKING TRAILS

### Existing trails

The following sites have been identified as formal and informal trails:

Channel Passage from Center Street to Commercial Street	An over-water trail providing excellent water views, and providing access to South First Street businesses.
Benton Street Stairs	A significant pedestrian corridor linking downtown with the residential area on the hill.
Morris and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street Stairs	A significant pedestrian corridor linking the Morris Street commercial area with the residential district on the hill.
Port Walk	A popular walk for exercise along Pearle Jensen Way.
Pioneer Park/Rainbow Bridge	A significant number of pedestrians travel through Pioneer Park and over the Rainbow Bridge.



***Proposed trails and improvements to trails***

Downtown Waterfront Boardwalk	Continue waterfront access both north (to the marina) and south (to Sherman Street) from the existing ends of the facility.
La Conner School to Port connection	Connect the Port property at Third Street with the north end of Sixth Street by providing a walking path along the drainage system.
East Hill Connector	Develop a pedestrian path linking the hill to Whatcom Street. Investigate developing stairs such as those located at Benton and 3 <sup>rd</sup> Street.
Sullivan Slough and Eastern Dike Trail	Work with the County and establish walking and hiking paths connecting to the County's Open Space Plan.

**TRAILHEADS**

***Proposed***

Parking, restroom, signage, and other biking services may be provided at the following sites.

North Port Area ( <u>Port of Skagit County</u> )	Designate parking and restrooms, and install signage indicating beachfront walk north of the Port area.
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**ON-ROAD BICYCLE TOURING ROUTES, IN-LINE SKATING, AND BIKING**

Cross-county bicycle touring, commuter routes, bike and skate paths may be developed to access major environmental assets, park and recreational

facilities, historical features, scenic corridors and vistas, and other features of interest to experienced bicycle touring, skating and skateboard enthusiasts throughout La Conner.

Where appropriate, and to the extent practical and safe, bicycle touring routes may be extended into Town to create an integrated on-road bicycling system. The local on-road bicycling system may provide access to local park and recreational facilities, schools and public facilities, community centers and business districts, places of employment, and transit transfer centers for adult and youth bike riders from local areas.

To the extent possible, bicycling touring routes may be developed to class 1-3 AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) standards with expanded, designated or marked road shoulders and lanes. In the less congested areas, bicycle touring routes may be simply designated for joint vehicular/bicycle use of a class 4 AASHTO standard.

Bicycling enthusiasts working in conjunction with public agencies and other private cycling interest groups could identify most of the bicycle touring routes to be designated.

## **Vision**

As described, the bicycle touring route vision may:

- Increase on-road bicycle touring access for experienced riders to scenic areas and features,
- Increase bicycle trail access for local residents, including commuters, to community facilities, schools, employment, and transit transfer centers,
- Improve access to service for persons with varied physical abilities and skills, and
- Expand roadway corridors and park features to provide recreational and commuter uses.

## **ON-ROAD BICYCLE TOURING ROUTES, IN-LINE SKATING, AND BIKING**

### **Proposed**

No routes have been proposed as a part of this plan. Skagit County is working to develop an integrated bicycling plan for the entire county.

## STREETSCAPES

Streetscape improvements, which are a more urban form of multipurpose trail, may be developed to link community facilities, public buildings, commercial business districts, and other major activity centers within the La Conner business district. Streetscapes may provide for one or more modes of recreational and commuter travel use including biking, and, where appropriate, may be linked with public transit and other vehicular conveyance systems.

To the extent possible, streetscape improvements may be developed within the right-of-way of established vehicular or other transportation corridors. Where appropriate or necessary, however, the right-of-way or the streetscape improvement may be aligned off the roadway to incorporate gateways, parks, storefront boardwalks or plazas, and other pedestrian spaces.

Typically, the bikeway portion of streetscape corridors may be developed to a class 1 walking trail and to class 1 AASHTO (American Association of State Highway & Transportation Officials) bicycle trail standards. The trails may provide 2-way travel on concrete, brick, paved or asphalt base between 8 and 12 feet in width. The trails may be of a slope not more than 1:50, handicap accessible and usable by all age and skill groups.

Streetscape corridors may be improved with trailhead services including rest stops, parking lots, and transit connections. Where the streetscape is located in association with another park and recreational improvement or public facility, the corridor may be improved with active picnic, playgrounds, and play areas, restrooms, water, and air utilities. Where the streetscape is incorporated into adjacent retail spaces or plazas, the corridor may be improved with artworks and sculptures, water fountains, outdoor dining areas, amphitheaters and performing areas, and other activities of interest.

Streetscape corridors may be contained within, or extensions of the public road right-of-way, or include portions of other public sites acquired to define gateways or other linear park definitions. Streetscape improvements may also be developed and maintained on privately owned lands subject to public use agreements or public access easements.

### **Vision**

As described, the streetscape vision may be realized by providing recreational and commuter trail opportunities within the most urban developed areas that:

- Conserve natural features,
- Define gateway and urban identities,
- Link public facilities and commercial business centers,
- Serve persons with varied physical abilities and skills,
- Promote commuter and other more functional transportation methods, and
- Create pedestrian-friendly access zones and activity areas that support urban core areas.

## FUTURE GROWTH IMPLICATIONS

The Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) indicate that the current population of the town of La Conner is 985 persons. More accurate population projections will be available when the state releases the results of the 2020 census.

The Town has an estimated visitor rate of over 1,300 per day. This places specific pressure on facilities such as park areas, walking areas, boating facilities, and museums.

While the town has recently increased its capacity for new housing by reducing the required minimum lot size, the Level of Service standard established by the town would meet the needs for a population twice its size.

The information contained in this chapter documents that the town is fully capable of meeting and maintaining LoS standards with its current inventory of lands available for parks, recreation, and open space. However, attention must be given to maintaining the desired quality of parks and recreation facilities. Such attention would relate to improvements to existing facilities, in order to meet current and future needs. In addition, potential uses for the Maple Field park may require the expenditure of funds to create those uses, and to provide adequate public access to that facility.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

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These levels of facility investment cannot be financed with the resources available to La Conner, Skagit County, and the La Conner School District, if each jurisdiction pursues an independent delivery approach or uses traditional methods of funding. The Town will not be financially able to develop, manage, and maintain a comprehensive, independent park, recreation, and open space system using traditional financing methods in light of the needs projected.

An area-wide financing approach needs to be developed by La Conner, Skagit County, and the La Conner School District. The approach must use a combination of shared user fees, excise taxes, joint grant applications, impact fees, and voter approved general obligation bonds if levels-of-service are to be maintained and improved upon in the face of continued Town population increases.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS**

- (1) Conner Waterfront Park development plan.
  - (a) Task(s): Develop waterfront pavilion (completed), restrooms, and boating as an addition to Pioneer Park.
  - (b) Funding: Local contributions (Rotary and others) and RCO grants.
- (2) Pioneer Park
  - (a) Task:
    - i) Continue maintaining trails and explore the possibility of lighting in the park.
    - ii) Develop and redevelop camping facilities in the north park area.
    - iii) Maintain and continue to improve picnic shelter and amphitheater.
    - iv) Children play area and facilities.
  - (b) Funding: Local contributions and RCO grants.
- (3) Bike trail along Maple Avenue
  - (a) Task: Construct a bicycle and pedestrian path along Maple Ave to connect to Pioneer Park Way and Bridge.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and WDOT Safe Route to Schools Grant funding.

(4) Connector Trail

(a) Task: Install a bicycle/pedestrian trail along the eastern boundary of the town beginning at Morris Street, extending north connecting to North Third Street.

(b) Funding: Local contributions and RCO grant.

(5) Jordan Street Park

(a) Task: Extend waterfront views; add picnic tables and barbecues.

(b) Funding: Possible collaboration between Town and Port.

(6) Maple Street Park

(a) Add picnic tables, barbecues, and other public facilities.

(b) Unknown at this time.

# IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

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## OVERVIEW

Following is a brief outline of the strategy that can best satisfy La Conner's park, recreation, and open space needs.

## STRATEGY

La Conner could perform a strategic role providing park, recreation, and open space facilities and programs that no other agency can, or is willing to provide. The Town could act as a coordinator of local interests where facilities are provided by many other agencies. In that capacity, the Town can identify unique acquisition or development opportunities that could be implemented or operated by other agencies. In the current economy, pursuing public/private partnerships could achieve the best balance of community benefit and minimum financial load on local citizens.

A strategic approach to services will require the following:

Involvement - La Conner must coordinate planning and development efforts with the public and other agencies such as the La Conner School District, Port of Skagit County, state, federal, and other public and private agencies to be aware of and have impact on these and other agency local programs and efforts.

Planning - La Conner must continually analyze long range needs and conditions for residents within town limits and the urban growth area in order to recognize and be prepared to act on opportunities.

Priorities - La Conner must decide policies and outline actions to be undertaken should opportunities allow strategic developments.

Commitment - La Conner must provide appropriate staff expertise and budgets with which to implement strategic planning programs and projects when no other agency can or is able within a strategic time schedule.

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

## *Current Practice*

Members of the public will have an opportunity to participate in the development of parks and recreation policies and programs at a number of levels. The Park Commission consists of one member of the Town Council and five members of the general public. In 2019, the Parks Commission commissioned a Visioning Survey to identify citizen's needs and priorities related to parks and recreation. Town residents were surveyed as were local business owners and residents surrounding the Town. Park Commission members have used the survey as a source of general guidelines in developing policy and programs.

Individuals and groups also present ideas for parks and recreation to the Park Commission, the Planning Commission, or the Town Council. Presentations may be informal or formal in nature. Some supporters of a specific proposal expend a great deal of effort to develop, for example, meeting with other groups and individuals and identifying possible funding sources. Others leave those tasks to the elected or appointed representatives. Once a proposal is in hand, the Park Commission, Planning Commission, and Town Council members meet with individuals or groups who favor or oppose the plan. While some of these meetings may be informal, notices about proposed plans are published in the town paper and open public meetings are held before the project can proceed.

## *Anticipated Changes*

- The Parks and Recreation Commission will continue to create surveys to determine public priorities, as they have recently initiated with relation to the future of the Maple Street Park.
- The Park Commission will review proposals for compatibility with the Parks and Recreation Plan.
- When a proposal is deemed compatible, the Commission will help the supporter to establish a Citizen's Advisory Group. If the proposal generates a strong, active advisory group, the Commission will take that as an indication that the proposal deserves further consideration and support.
- Advisory groups will also specify funding sources for the proposal over and above what the Town can provide.

To assist in the proposal development process, a member of the Park Commission will serve as a member of each Advisory Group.

## ROLE RECOMMENDATIONS BY FUNCTION

This plan recommends La Conner pursue a modified strategic approach to services where La Conner assumes responsibility for those functions no other agency or organization can provide, and helps coordinate or support those functions and activities that have other viable sponsors. La Conner would be the coordinator or planner of first resort, and the provider of last resort. For example:

### **Coordinating activities**

La Conner should provide central information and coordination services for park, recreation, and open space activities within La Conner, since La Conner alone has the local authority and resources to operate as a central facilitator. This role should include tracking future population growth estimates, inventories of existing and proposed facility developments, the identification of probable local facility and program needs, and proposals of area wide facility and program solutions. The selection and siting of public art shall be the responsibility of the La Conner Arts Commission.

### **Planning and development assistance**

La Conner should provide more detailed planning and development assistance when:

- There are no other designated agencies or organization who can;
- The activity involves siting controversies or environmental consequences that may not otherwise be equitably resolved within La Conner; or
- A proposed development will be within La Conner.

### **Development, operation and maintenance**

La Conner should not develop, operate or maintain park or recreation facilities and activities unless:

- The facility will serve the diverse needs of the user population and will be financed using Council approved methods, or
- Facility development and operating costs will be recaptured from direct charges of the populations who use the facility, or
- Facility development and operating costs will be compensated in some manner through local agreements with the using agency, area or benefiting user group, particularly where the demands will originate from a regional service requirement, or
- The site or facility has intrinsic value apart from traditional operation and maintenance needs, such as a passive natural area, waterfront access, or wetland preservation.

## **ROLE RESPONSIBILITY BY ACTIVITY**

By activity, this plan recommends La Conner assume the following responsibilities:

### **Environmental Conservation**

La Conner should assume a major responsibility for the planning, coordination, and preservation of unique wildlife habitat, ecological, wetland, and open space areas.

La Conner should work with all other public and private agencies, particularly Washington State Departments of Fish & Wildlife, Natural Resources, and Transportation to create an effective approach to these local conservation issues and proposals.

### **Outdoor Facilities**

La Conner should assume a major responsibility for the planning, development, and operation of a variety of outdoor facilities. These facilities include playgrounds, tennis courts, picnicking areas, campgrounds, skate park, public fishing, waterfront parks, or park and bicycle trails that are directly related to site opportunities within the town and are of most interest to local residents. La Conner should also actively be involved with the development of facilities for those resident populations that may be underserved by the current level-of-service.

La Conner should help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies, such as the La Conner School District, to develop major competitive outdoor athletic facilities.

### **Special Facilities**

La Conner may assume some responsibility, including enterprise operations and/or joint efforts where appropriate, for the development and operation of facilities that have special or unique interests, impacts or relevance to residents of La Conner that may not be provided by another public or private agency.

### **Indoor Facilities**

La Conner should help coordinate and assist other public and private agencies, such as the La Conner School District to plan, develop, and operate specialized indoor facilities. Since these facilities directly serve the local area and are of major interest to Town residents of all ages, their use and future role for community recreational needs should concur with community-wide needs.

### **Recreation programs**

The Town of La Conner does not have sufficient staff or budget to assist with and actively coordinate the operation of programs for athletic leagues and sports, teen and senior age groups, and special populations. The Town must rely on Skagit County and the La Conner School district for operation of such programs since these facilities directly serve the local area and are of major interest to city residents of all ages. However, the Town has begun to provide funding for Braves Club after school recreational programs.

# ADOPTION PROCESS

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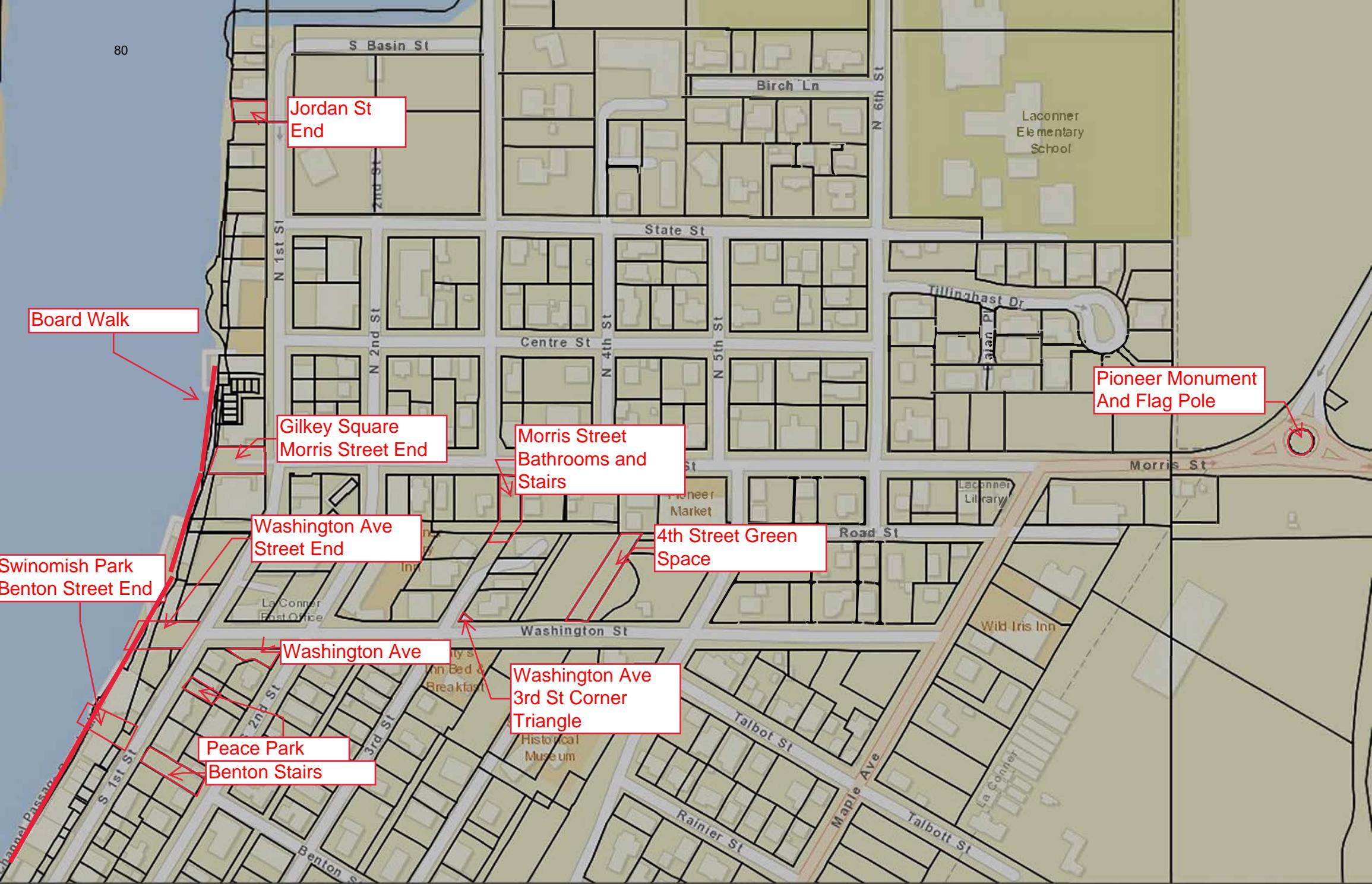
## OVERVIEW

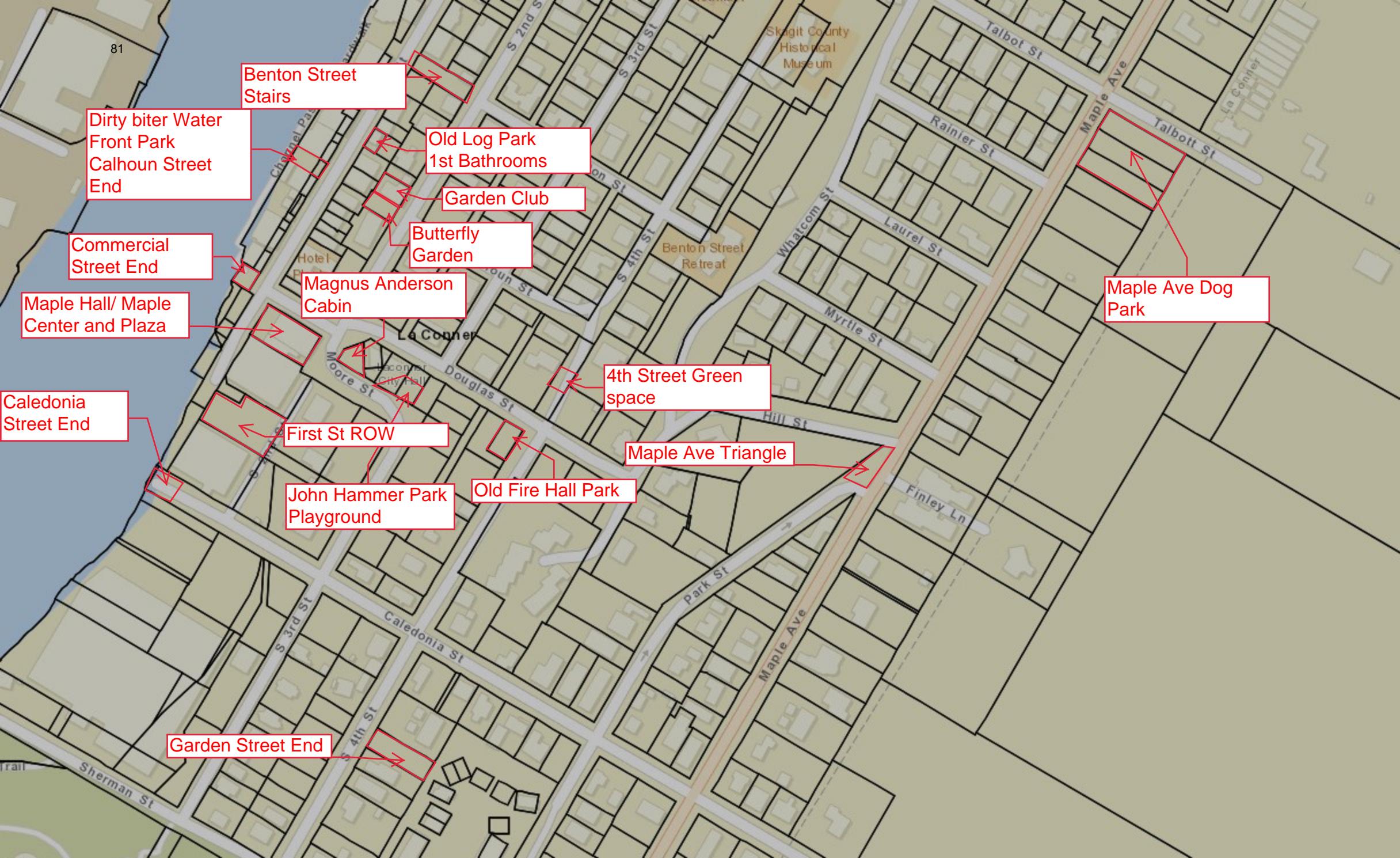
This Park Plan meets the requirements of the Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) and the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). The Plan has been adopted as an amendment to the La Conner Comprehensive Plan following guidelines within the IAC publication *"Framing a Community Future"* as well as GMA requirements adopted under LCMC 15.125.090 and 15.125.100.

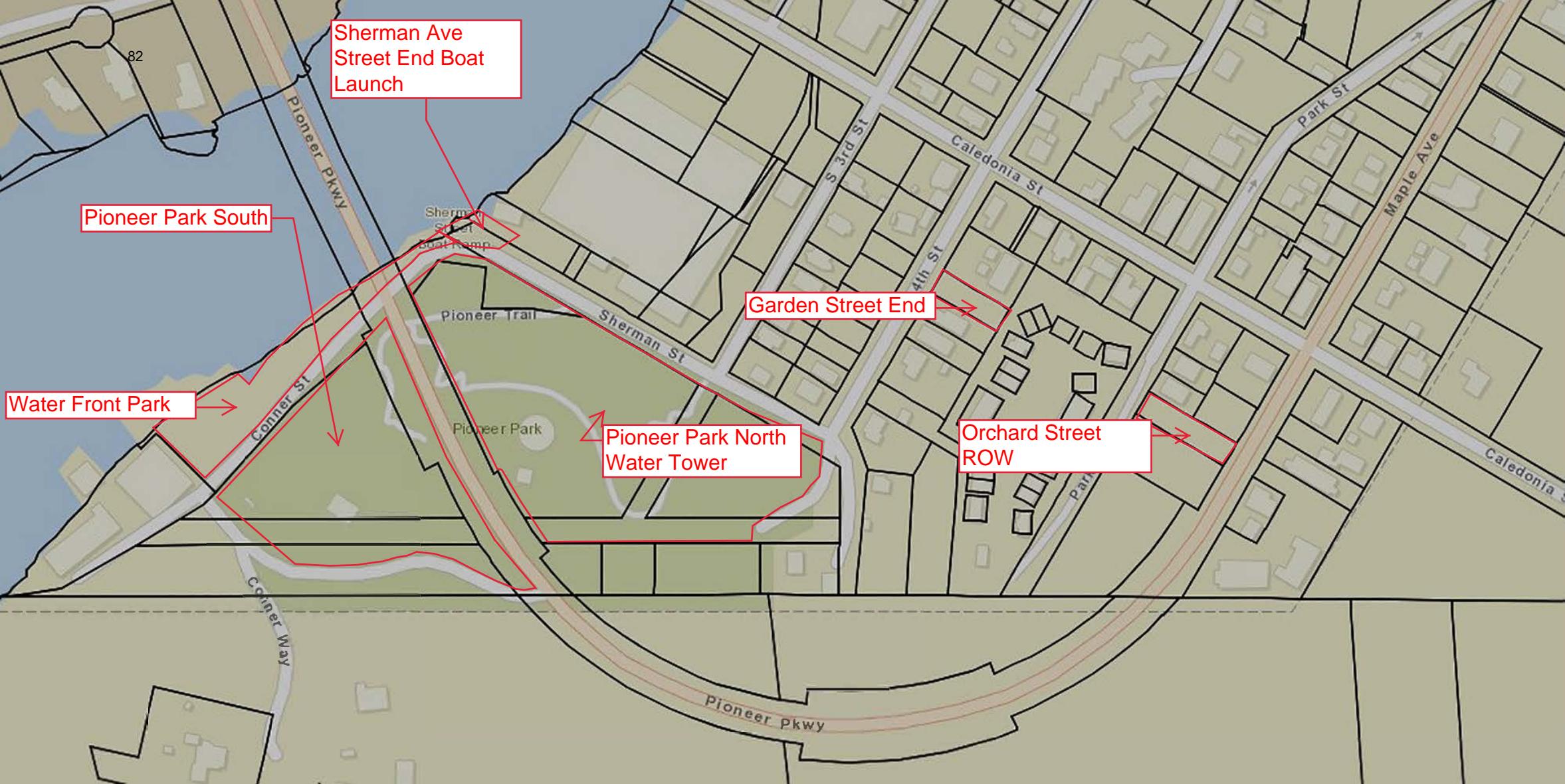
Following is an overview of the process for amending the Plan.

- The Park Commission and Planning Commission hold regular meetings which are open to the public to discuss and work on the draft plan. The Commissions develop the initial draft plan, and provide opportunities for public input.
- The Parks Commission, Planning Commission, and Planning Department finalize details of the updated plan.
- The Planning Department publishes a SEPA DNS for public and agency comment.
- The draft plan is submitted to the State's Department of Commerce for their required 60-day review period.
- The Parks plan is forwarded to the La Conner Town Council for review and a public hearing.
- The Town Council and Planning Department consider comments and possible amendments to the proposed plan.
- The Town Council adopts the plan, and docket it for inclusion on the town's Comprehensive Plan.

## Appendix 11A







## MEMORANDUM

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TO: Planning Commission  
FROM: Planning Staff  
SUBJECT: La Conner Climate Element  
DATE: April 1, 2025

Please see attached the Climate Element.

## CHAPTER 12

### CLIMATE: RESILIENCY AND GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTIONS

#### **Historical Climate and Geography**

La Conner is a historic rural town settled in the 1860's that has preserved much of its small-town character. It is located approximately 12 miles southwest of the City of Mount Vernon, Washington between the Swinomish Channel, Sullivan Slough, and Skagit Bay in the agriculturally rich Skagit Valley of Washington State. Most of the community is at or near sea level. The topography of the Town area is characterized by a basaltic hill with flat agricultural lands to the east and the Swinomish Channel to the west.

Washington State's climate is strongly influenced by moisture-laden air masses created in the Pacific Ocean. The airflow from the Pacific Ocean is interrupted first by the Olympic Mountains and then significantly by the Cascade Mountains. As a result of the mountain ranges, the west or windward sides of the Cascades receive moderate to heavy precipitation. Due to its unique location in the "rain shadow" of the Olympic Mountains, La Conner receives less precipitation than areas outside the "rain shadow", an average of only 30" of rain per year. This location and mild marine temperatures help make La Conner a popular recreation area, and a pleasant tourist destination.

Mean temperatures vary from a high of 70 degrees in July to a low of 40 degrees Fahrenheit in January with extreme variations recorded at -3 to a high of 102 degrees Fahrenheit. The average annual growing season is about 170-190 days. Approximately 80 percent of the precipitation occurs from October through March.

Topography ranges from 0 to about 100 feet above Puget Sound on the hills. The main residential hill, facing the Downtown district, drops off abruptly in places with slopes ranging from 40 to 100 percent.

#### **Impacts of Climate Change and Degradation**

La Conner residents are highly impacted by changes to weather and climate. As the effects of anthropogenic change continue to accumulate, La Conner will experience changes in local weather and climate patterns. Some of these changes are outlined in the matrix below:

Hazard	Change <sup>123</sup>	Impact
Extreme Heat <sup>4</sup>	By 2050, the average summer temperature is expected to increase by 4 degrees. There will be an increase of between one and three weeks where the humidex index is over 90 degrees. The humidex is a “real-feel” measurement that combines the effects of heat and humidity.	Higher temperatures and humidex cause strain to vulnerable populations. La Conner is particularly sensitive to this due to the age of its population. High heat can cause additional wear and tear on equipment and roadways due to asphalt softening. High heat results in greater bodily stress on those working outdoors, including La Conners Public Works.
Riparian <sup>5</sup> Flooding	By 2050, the return streamflow of a 25-year riparian flooding event will be 15 years instead, meaning that the potential for high riparian flooding will be increased.	La Conner experiences effects from both coastal/tidal and riparian flooding. Many of the dikes surrounding La Conner are privately owned, and are at risk of being over-topped. An increase in the severity or frequency of riparian flooding will have large negative impacts on La Conner.
Tidal/Coastal Flooding	For a full account of how tidal flood events are expected to change, please see the Sea Level	For a full account of how tidal flood events are expected to change, please see the Sea Level

<sup>1</sup> Adelsman, H., & Ekrem, J. 2012. Preparing for a changing climate: Washington State’s integrated climate response strategy. Department of Ecology, Olympia, WA.

<sup>2</sup> Snover, A.K., Mauger, G.S., Whitley Binder, L.C., Crosby, M., Tohver, I. 2013. Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation in Washington State: Technical Summaries for Decision Makers. State of Knowledge Report prepared for the Washington State Department of Ecology. Climate Impacts Group, University of Washington, Seattle.

<sup>3</sup> Mauger, G.S., J.H. Casola, H.A. Morgan, R.L. Strauch, B. Jones, B. Curry, T.M. Busch Isaksen, L. Whitley Binder, M.B. Crosby, and A.K. Snover. 2015. State of Knowledge: Climate Change in Puget Sound. Report prepared for the Puget Sound Partnership and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Climate Impacts Group, University of Washington, Seattle. <https://doi.org/10.7915/CIG93777D>

<sup>4</sup> Abatzoglou J.T. and Brown T.J. A comparison of statistical downscaling methods suited for wildfire applications. International Journal of Climatology (2012), 32, 772-780. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joc.2312>

<sup>5</sup> Chegwidden, O. S., B. Nijsen, D. E. Rupp, P. W. Mote, 2017: Hydrologic Response of the Columbia River System to Climate Change [Data set]. Zenodo. doi:10.5281/zenodo.854763.

	Rise report attached as appendix 12A.	Rise report attached as appendix 12A.
Drought <sup>6</sup>	Although total precipitation is expected to increase by 2050, late summer precipitation is expected to decrease by roughly 7%. Between the years 2030-2059, there is a 30% chance that any given year will experience summer or year-long drought conditions	This means that there will be less water for agriculture, livestock, fire-fighting, and may result in additional impacts on vulnerable populations. These effects will be exacerbated by a longer growing season and more heat.

## La Conner Climate Goals and Policies

### **GOAL A**

*Ensure that development and redevelopment projects are resilient to the impacts of climate change.*

### **Policies**

- 12A-1 Plan and build facilities, utilities, and infrastructure projects to avoid or withstand flooding from rising sea levels and associated climate impacts (e.g., changing flood plains).
- 12A-2 Review required buffers and setbacks for steep slopes and shorelines vulnerable to erosion exacerbated by climate change, and establish new minimums, if necessary, so that improvements are not required to protect structures during their expected life.
- 12A-3 Require the design and construction of commercial and residential buildings and their surrounding sites to reduce and treat stormwater runoff and pollution.
- 12A-4 Design buildings for passive survivability to ensure that they will stay at a safe temperature for occupants if the power goes out.

<sup>6</sup> Abatzoglou J.T. and Brown T.J. A comparison of statistical downscaling methods suited for wildfire applications, International Journal of Climatology (2012), 32, 772-780. <https://doi.org/10.1002/joc.2312>

- 12A-5 Establish overlays, special zoning districts, design standards, or other strategies to increase resilience to climate hazards.
- 12A-6 Identify and plan for climate impacts to valued community assets such as parks and recreation facilities, including relocation or replacement.
- 12A-7 Develop or modify design standards to integrate exterior building features that reduce the impacts of climate change and increase resilience.

**GOAL B**

*Prioritize the adaptive reuse of buildings, recognizing the emission-reduction benefits of retaining existing buildings.*

**Policies**

- 12B-1 Retrofit buildings for energy efficiency.
- 12B-2 Preserve and reuse existing buildings.

**GOAL C**

*Protect community health and well-being from the impacts of climate-exacerbated hazards — prioritizing focus on overburdened communities — and ensure that the most vulnerable residents do not bear disproportionate health impacts.*

**Policies**

- 12C-1 Provide all residents equitable opportunities to learn about climate impacts, influence policy decisions, and take actions to enhance community resilience.
- 12C-2 Ensure that all community members have equitable access to green space within a half-mile.
- 12C-3 Protect the health and well-being of outdoor workers exposed to extreme heat and other climate-exacerbated hazards.
- 12C-4 Develop and implement an urban heat resilience strategy that includes land use, urban design, urban greening, and waste heat reduction actions.

12C-5 Choose native drought- and pest-resistant trees, shrubs, and grasses in restoration efforts to support climate resilience.

12C-6 Manage tree canopy and forests (including parks, greenbelts and urban forests) to decrease climate-exacerbated risks from severe wildfires, protect residents, and improve ecosystem health and habitat.

12C-7 Require open space set-asides (such as parks) for new development.

#### **GOAL D**

*Increase housing diversity and supply within urban growth areas to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support environmental justice.*

#### **Policies**

12D-1 Prioritize infill development through zoning and permitting process.

12D-2 Establish form-based codes where appropriate to better integrate higher-density development.

12D-3 Implement complementary, mixed land uses versus traditional zoning, such as locating business districts, parks and schools in neighborhoods to promote cycling and walking and reduce driving.

12D-4 Develop and implement inclusionary zoning to support greater income diversity in housing types.

#### **GOAL E**

*Improve the efficiency of Town systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.*

#### **Policies**

12E-1 Phase out the use of use of gas-powered landscaping equipment.

12E-2 Promote the sale and use of agricultural supplies, pesticides, fertilizers, and fuels that are not derived from fossil fuels.

12E-3 Utilize the Town's Asset Management System to reduce vehicle miles traveled by Public Works, eliminating unnecessary time spent on the road.

#### **GOAL F**

*Safely expand electric vehicle charging infrastructure that prioritizes on-site*

*installations, maintains pedestrian safety, and preserves the character of historic neighborhoods, while allowing limited right-of-way (ROW) charging where no other feasible options exist.*

### **Policies**

- 12F-1 Research and identify necessary safety requirements of EV technology
- 12F-2 Require all new and retrofitted buildings to be capable of providing electric vehicle charging infrastructure.
- 12F-3 Research the possibility of Electric Vehicle Charging Station Right-of-Way Program to create opportunities for all property owners to access EV charging stations.

La Conner must consider public safety when enacting goals and policies related to climate resiliency and greenhouse gas reductions. Electric Vehicles have the capacity to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but the infrastructure required can pose a safety hazard. Solar panels and the associated battery storage systems, particularly lithium-ion based battery systems, can also pose safety hazards.

Developing regional partnerships along with climate-based planning will help La Conner safely and responsibly manage these safety hazards while ensuring La Conner resources are properly managed. La Conner staff takes advantage of regional trainings and informational sessions, and maintaining this practice will be crucial as green technologies are introduced. In addition, collaborating with neighbors will help La Conner achieve its own climate goals, as it will be reducing waste and unnecessary expenditures.

La Conner's Emergency Management Commission took climate hazards into account when generating the La Conner Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP). In future review of this plan, climate-based hazards will also be re-elevated to ensure that they are still effectively considered within the CEMP.

Residential and commercial properties are both affected by climate. La Conner's central downtown hub is a historical waterfront community that includes both commercial and residential uses. The historic nature of the district makes it difficult to effectively floodproof the structures, leaving them susceptible to flood damage. As discussed in the Economic Element, La Conner's economy is largely tourism based. If this area of town were to experience an extreme climate-related disaster, it would be challenging to recover. In accordance with Appendix 12A, Sea Level Rise, La Conner will need to develop unique adaption-mitigation pathways based on the community's vision and held values.

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