

Image - west of Skagit River Delta from top of Little Mountain Park, Mount Vernon



*Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan
Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG)
January 2009*

Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG)

SCOG – Kelley Moldstad, Executive Director, and James Mastin

City of Anacortes - Ian Munce, Attorney and Planner

City of Burlington - Margaret Fleek, Planning Director

City of Mount Vernon - Jana Hanson, Planning Director

City of Sedro-Woolley - Jack Moore, Planning Director, and John Coleman

Port of Anacortes - Bob Hyde, Executive Director, and Connie Thoman, Environmental Administrator

Port of Skagit County – Patsy Martin, Executive Director, and Sara Young, Manager Planning & Environmental Services

Skagit County - Gary Christensen, Planning Director

Skagit PUD - Scott Spahr, Planning Engineer

Swinomish Tribe - Ed Knight, Associate Planner, and Scott Andrews

Town of Concrete – Lacy Lahr/Rick Cisar, Planner

Town of Hamilton PDA - Lauren Freitas, Grants Coordinator, Margaret Fleek, Planner, Curt Miller, Landscape Architect

Town of La Conner - John Doyle, Planner

Town of Lyman – Chris Stormont

Upper Skagit Tribe – Lauren Rich, Environmental Planner

Participating Agencies & Organizations

Active Community Task Force (ACT) – Liz McNett Crowl, Coordinator

Anacortes Park & Recreation Department – Gary Robinson, Director

Friends of Skagit County – Ellen Bynum

La Conner Alliance for Youth & Family - Marcy Shapley

Mount Vernon Parks & Recreation Department- Larry Otos, Director

Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) – Terry Stevens, Sharon Riggs

Puget Sound Energy – Connie Freeland

Puget Sound Partnership – Hilary Culverwell

Samish Indian Nation – Leslie Eastwood, General Manager, Ted Gage AICP, Planning Director

Seattle City Light – Ed Connor

Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board – Allision Aurand/Kendra Smith

Skagit County Forestry Advisory Board – Kendra Smith

Skagit County Parks & Recreation Department – Bob Vaux, Director, Brian Adams

Skagit County Physical Activity Coalition (SCPAC) – Liz McNett Crowl, Coordinator

Skagit Fisheries Enhancement Group – Alison Studley

Skagit Land Trust – Molly Doran, Executive Director, Martha Bray, Conservation Director, Brenda Cunningham, Retired

Skagit River System Cooperative – Steve Hinton, Larry Wasserman
Skagitonians to Preserve Farmland (SPF) – Allen Rozema, Executive Director

South Fidalgo Island Community Council – Tom Conroy

The Nature Conservancy – Bob Carey, Program Director, Melisa Holman, Upper Skagit Stewardship Manager, and Kevin Morse, Skagit Delta Project Manager

Urban Trail Committee & Mount Vernon Healthy Communities Project – Liz McNett Crowl, Coordinator

US Army Corps of Engineers – Linda Smith

US Forest Service, Wild & Scenic River – Greta Movassaghi, Phil Kincare, Jon Vanderheyden

WA Department of Commerce, Trade & Economic Development (CTED) – Douglas Peters, Senior Planner

WA Department of Fish & Wildlife – John Carleton, Conservation Planner, Lora Leshner

WA Department of Natural Resources – Stan Kurowski, Program Section Manager, Northwest Region

WA Department of Transportation (WSDOT) – Elizabeth Sjostrom, Highway System Planner, Tim Hostetler

Skagit County Planning & Development Services

Director - Gary R Christensen AICP

Senior Planner – Kirk Johnson AICP, Community Planning Team Leader, Senior Planner

Senior Planner/Project Manager – Jeroldine Hallberg

Geographic Information Services (GIS) – Kim Berry

Consultant Team

Team Leader - Tom Beckwith FAICP, Beckwith Consulting Group
Recreation/Open Space Planner – Lee Springgate, Point Wilson Group

Terry Reckord ASLA, Landscape Architect – Terry Reckord ASLA, MacLeod Reckord

Public Opinion Surveys – GMA Research Corporation

Open Space Definitions

Following are some alternative approaches to defining the term “open space” in the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Plan:

Open space and UGA open space definitions

The 2007 Skagit County Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 2: Urban, Open Space and Land Use Profile, pages 4 and 5 define open space as:

A. Open Space

Land and water that is in its natural state or is developed or restored consistent with the following:

Greenbelts - are made up of combinations of public and private properties of various ownerships with varying levels of access including no public access including the following categories:

1. Private
 2. Public
 3. Access
 4. No-Access
1. Greenbelts within and around urban growth areas;
 2. Greenbelts connecting critical areas;
 3. Lands receiving open space tax incentives;
 4. Resource lands (*agriculture, forest, and aquatic*);
 5. Conservation easements;
 6. Rural areas (created by low-density zoning);
 7. Park and recreation lands, including trails; and
 8. Significant historic, archaeological, scenic and cultural lands.

B. Urban Growth Area (UGA) Open Space

A system of open space and greenbelts that weaves within and between urban growth areas and helps define the edge between urban and rural areas.

Open Space Areas

There are a variety of types of open space lands in Skagit County. Open space areas include greenbelt corridors within

and around urban growth areas, greenbelts which connect critical areas, lands receiving open space tax incentives, resource lands, conservation easements, rural open space areas, park lands, and significant historic, archaeological, scenic and cultural lands.

By December 1, 2007, Skagit County will develop a program to identify and prioritize open space corridors and greenbelts within and between UGAs that include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas. The program will include a list identifying and prioritizing open space and greenbelt lands desirable for public acquisition. Any potential acquisition that may be proposed by such a program will not include any condemnation actions; any potential acquisition for land for open space or greenbelts shall only be achieved by voluntary donation, CaRD subdivision, or mutually agreeable sale.

Public Open Space

Public open space areas include publicly owned lands that are dedicated or reserved for public use or enjoyment for recreation, scenic amenities, natural resource land management, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. *Where identified below to be of regional or statewide importance, such lands are designated on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map.* Other publicly held lands, such as local neighborhood parks, scenic roads and highways, shorelines, rivers and streams, and utility corridors, *although not designated as open space on the Comprehensive Plan Map*, nevertheless offer similar open space functions and benefits. However, certain areas may not be open to the public, such as utility corridors, road easements, etc., where ownership or public safety reasons may preclude public access, even though these areas may provide open space benefits to wildlife.

Private Open Space

There are several private organizations in Skagit County that in some way set aside lands for conservation purposes, such as for their ecological, scenic, or natural resource values. Private land

trusts, such as the Skagit Land Trust, the San Juan Preservation Trust, and the Nature Conservancy, among others, own or in some way administer a significant amount of land in Skagit County.

These private organizations contribute to the preservation of wildlife habitat, biodiversity, natural and scenic greenbelts and open-space corridors. Through the use of such techniques as conservation easements, purchase of development rights, or the outright purchase of land, development of these lands is limited or precluded altogether.

Open Space Taxation

Lands enrolled in a taxation program as defined in RCW 84.34 are identified in the Current Use Open Space Taxation Program map. This map also may change over time according to participation.

Open space lands public accessibility

The degree of public access on open space lands is determined on a case-by-case basis. While three types of open space are shown below with no public access, individual cases could have access depending on the owner’s desires. For example, certain rural CaRD subdivisions may choose to make their open space area accessible to the public. The same holds for urban clustered subdivisions. A range of public access is illustrated below, using the types of open space listed in the Comprehensive Plan.

Public Access Array

	None	Limited	Extensive
1. Greenbelts within and around urban growth areas	X	X	X
2. Greenbelts connecting critical areas	X	X	
3. Lands receiving open space tax incentives	X		
4. Resource lands	X		
5. Conservation easements	X	X	

6. Rural open space areas	X		
7. Park lands	X	X	X
8. Significant historic, archaeological, scenic, and cultural lands	X	X	X

Passive and active open space

The terms “passive” and “active” are used in park planning literature in a very general manner. The following scale was derived from examples in various parks plans.

Parks tend to have both passive and active features and the goal is to balance the two. For example, if an open space area has habitat protection as its primary function, it may have only passive uses and access limited to soft-surface trails or a small interpretive area. An example at the “active” end of the scale is a sports field with parking and high numbers of people visiting and using the site. Trails are described as either passive or active, depending on the intended use. Further trail definitions originate with transportation regulations that require non-motorized planning. Trails that are part of a UGA open space area may also be part of the non-motorized system.

Intensity of Public Use - Examples

<i>Passive</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Active</i>
Habitat area Resource land Community forest	Scenic overlook Interpretive kiosk Trailhead Soft-surface trail Picnic Shelter	Ballfield Off-leash area High-volume, hard-surfaced trail Boat launch

FAQs - Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan

Following are answers to some of the basic questions that have been asked about this plan:

1 Background

1.1: What is an Urban Growth Area (UGA) Open Space Concept Plan?

State law (RCW 36.70A.160 of the Growth Management Act - GMA) requires every county and city covered by the Growth Management Act to ***identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas.***

In the 3-part system of Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, this plan identifies a system of open spaces that are in and near the county's current and future UGAs.

1.2: What are the benefits of a UGA Open Space Plan?

A UGA open space concept plan differs from more familiar parks and recreation plans in that it helps to shape urban form, particularly where the developed area ends and rural begins. The concept plan provides boundaries between incompatible uses and breaks from continuous development. The concept plan can shape land use patterns to promote more compact development. The goal is to provide a continuous system of open spaces, linking those from within the cities into the edges and rural areas.

Other benefits of a UGA Open Space Concept Plan may include protection of:

- Flood control measures, water supply protection, air quality, separation from hazards
- Wildlife and habitat
- Commercially significant resources including agricultural products, forestry, fisheries, minerals
- Economic development through improved quality of life
- Natural features and spaces important to defining community image and distinctive character
- Healthy lifestyles

- Historic and cultural preservation opportunities

1.3: What are the Skagit County UGAs?

Skagit County has 10 UGAs including Concrete, Hamilton, Lyman, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Bayview, La Conner, Swinomish, and Anacortes.

The legal definition of UGAs includes both the area within the existing city or town limits and any area in the unincorporated county identified for future growth. In common use, many people use the term UGA to specify only the unincorporated growth area.

1.4: Why is the plan being prepared now?

The plan is being developed now because of a decision in an appeal to the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board by Friends of Skagit County. The provisions for UGA open space were found to be inadequate and not explicitly mapped. The appeal was settled when the County adopted the following policy in the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan:

2B-1.3 By December 1, 2007, Skagit County will develop a program to identify and prioritize open space corridors and greenbelts within and between UGAs that include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas. The program will include a list identifying and prioritizing open space and greenbelt lands desirable for public acquisition. Any potential acquisition that may be proposed by such a program will not include any condemnation actions, but instead will be achieved by voluntary donation, CaRD subdivision, or mutually agreeable sale.

Note - instead of including a list of prioritized open space and greenbelt land acquisitions, the implementation program for this concept plan (Chapter 4, task 6) proposes to establish a funding source and solicit competitive proposals on an annual basis from interested parties including local public jurisdictions,

nonprofit interest groups, and private property owners that will implement the open space preservation, restoration, enhancement, interpretive, and recreational benefits defined herein. During the planning process for this plan, it was determined that this competitive proposal approach will result in a more responsive and implementable series of projects, which may include open space and greenbelt enhancements in manners other than outright acquisition, than a simple list of presumed acquisition targets would be.

1.5: Who updates or makes revisions to the proposed UGA open space concept plan?

In accordance with GMA requirements (RCW 36.70A.130(4)), each jurisdiction reviews, and if needed, revises all its GMA plans, including this one every 7 years.

1.6: Where can I get more information about the GMA requirements, case law, and open space planning?

Detailed information about GMA requirements and planning for UGA Separators and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space planning elements is available on the state's website:

http://www.cted.wa.gov/_CTED/documents/ID_1691_Publications.pdf

2 The Skagit County plan

2.1: How was the Skagit County Plan developed and funded?

This plan is a cooperative project between the cities and the county. It was overseen by the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) using funds provided by a grant from the Washington State Department of Community, Trade & Economic Development (CTED) with additional money from Skagit County. Cities are responsible for planning for open space within their incorporated city limits. Outside the city limits, most cities have expansion areas, or unincorporated UGAs. The county is responsible for integrating all of the individual city UGA open space corridors into a **countywide network of UGA defining open spaces** and is working with the cities to do so. The countywide network may include, as appropriate, areas “between” urban growth areas.

The staff and consultant team met with representatives of each of the 10 UGA jurisdictions to review the open space proposals in their adopted comprehensive plans.

The planning team integrated all of the individual city's UGA concept graphics into a countywide UGA open space network. To address the “between” portion of the state mandate, the plan includes lands protected by Skagit County critical area ordinances, lands or development rights acquired by public agencies and non-profit organizations for open space preservation, and lands that presented potential open space linkages between and into/out of the UGAs.

These integrated countywide UGA concepts were then reviewed with each UGA jurisdiction's planning and park staff representatives, Planning or Parks Commission, or City Council to obtain their suggestions, criticisms, and to resolve their accuracy during public workshops and official meetings.

2.2: Who else was consulted during this planning process?

In addition to the UGA jurisdictions, the planning team met with other public agencies and non-profit organizations involved in open space. These organizations included:

- **Regional** – Port of Skagit County, PUD #1, Seattle City Light,
- **State** – Washington State Department of Fish & Wildlife (DFW), Natural Resources (DNR), Transportation (WSDOT), Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)
- **Tribes** – Samish, Upper Skagit, Swinomish (a UGA jurisdiction)
- **Federal** – US Forest Service (USFS),
- **Non-profits and private** – Skagitonians for Farmland Preservation, The Nature Conservancy, Skagit Land Trust, Puget Sound Energy
- **Advisory groups** – Skagit County Agricultural Advisory Board, Forest Advisory Board, Active Community Task Force, Physical Activity Coalition (SCPAC), among others.

2.3: Aren't there already enough organizations working to save open space in the County?

Numerous private organizations in Skagit County are actively involved in conserving open space assets including fish and wildlife habitat, working farmlands, and unique forestlands.

These groups have accomplished a great deal through their efforts to conserve important county open space assets and are actively involved in the management, restoration, and enhancement of these conserved lands.

However, their missions do not include a focus on the urban growth areas. With a few exceptions, most lands they protect are located in more remote parts of the county. As a consequence, some of the most threatened remaining open spaces are located within or adjacent to the designated urban growth areas (UGAs) of the county.

Therefore, the task of meeting the GMA open space goals has not been accomplished. And, **there is a "gap" or lack of sufficient** funds with which to make up the cost differences necessary to protect open space lands adjacent or within the UGAs compared to the lower cost of such lands in the rural areas.

2.4: What happens next and how can I get involved?

The cities, towns, county, and SCOG board will be asked to adopt the plan. The Skagit County Planning Commission will schedule public hearings before making a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners. The schedule for public hearings will be posted on the county web site.

3. Public involvement and survey

3.1: How is the public involved in creating, updating, and approving these UGA open space plans?

Cities were consulted at public meetings of their choice and included Planning Commissions, Parks Commission, and joint meetings of Planning Commissions and City Councils.

Two public information meetings were held April 14 and June 24, 2008, with announcements in the local newspapers and county web site with email notifications to various groups that have expressed interest.

A survey of public opinion was conducted during the summer of 2007 and the county web site was used to publicize it. Results are summarized below.

Future comment opportunities will be available when each jurisdiction considers the final plan for adoption. The Skagit County Planning Commission is expected to take the plan under advisement in late 2008, at which time at least one public hearing will be held.

The county and the cities are subject to RCW 36.70A.140, which requires early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans including this open space plan.

3.2: What are the results of the public survey?

In June 2007 a random sample of resident voter households in Skagit County was contacted to participate in a controlled sample survey concerning open space needs and priorities in general and the proposed concepts in this plan in particular.

450 households agreed to participate in the survey and were mailed a copy of a summary description of the plan and a copy of the questionnaire. Survey results were compiled for the first 200 households who completed the surveys by follow-up telephone call - the number planned for in the original survey scope.

The resulting survey results are accurate to within +/-8% of the opinions of the county's registered voter household population. Key findings include:

a: Existing open space protection and conditions - most of the respondents felt existing protections are inadequate for each of the following:

- farmland,

- scenic areas,
- wildlife habitat,
- historical landmarks,
- forests,
- parks,
- trails, and
- other access features

b: Open space trends and values - respondents agreed that Skagit County:

- Has some of the most valuable wildlife habitats, woodlands, and farms in the region if not country (90%),
- UGA open spaces should be interconnected (70%),
- Unacceptable amounts of these open spaces are being lost to urban development (64%),
- Open space efforts should do more than preserve land – but should also restore, enhance, and manage the land 59%),

c: Priorities for open space include:

- Productive and working farmlands adjacent to UGAs (74%),
- Forestlands adjacent to UGAs (67%),
- Wildlife habitat and corridors within UGAs (62%),
- Scenic landscapes and roadside views (61%),
- Historical & cultural landmarks (55%),
- Public access trails extending through and outwards from UGAs (64%),
- Day-use parks within UGA open space (65%), and
- Interpretive trails within UGA open space corridors (52%).

d: Specific UGA concept maps:

When shown maps of each UGA concept, respondents from throughout the county supported each illustrated plan with high ratings given by more than 50%

e: Specific trail proposals:

Respondents also gave high ratings to each of the following trails: Anacortes-Burlington, Cascade, Swinomish Channel, Pacific Northwest/Interurban, Centennial, and Skagit-Snohomish Trails.

f: How to organize and pay for an open space program - respondents were asked for their opinion about how to implement and fund an open space plan.

- Regarding organization - survey respondents favored a coordination role for the county and cities, rather than a more active role as “principal agent.”
- Regarding funding - survey respondents were informed about and then asked to rate funding sources available to counties and cities. 59% said they would pay some amount for a property tax levy (the mean dollar amount was \$89.40 per household per year. Survey participants were marginally supportive of a local option sales tax dedicated to open space and not at all in favor of a 3rd real estate excise tax (REET), local option fuel tax, or local option vehicle license fee where each option would be dedicated to open space.

4 Farms and forests

4.1: How will this plan protect farmland?

County residents place a high value on protecting farmland and forests, as borne out in the survey results above. Farms and forests have inherent open space qualities as a secondary benefit to their productive value.

RCW 36.70A.160 stipulates the open space corridors shall include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas as defined in RCW 36.70A.030. Identification of a corridor under this section of the RCW by a county or city ***shall not restrict the use or management of lands within the corridor for agricultural or forest purposes.***

Farm and forest protection is accomplished by a variety of tools outside the scope of this plan. Examples are restrictive zoning, purchase of development rights, and limits on urban expansion.

This plan can help protect farms and forests by providing “urban separators” where UGAs are close to the agriculture and forest zones. It is in these areas that the potential for “edge” conflicts exist.

Advisory groups to both agriculture and forestry expressed concerns that the open space plan could create more conflicts with their operations by bringing more people. While such conflicts are occurring even without a UGA open space concept plan, this plan has been modified to address these concerns by emphasizing passive forms of open space next to working farms and forests, the careful location of trail corridors, and providing interpretive information about their productive value.

5 Property rights

5.1: If the officially adopted open space plan map shows open space on my property, does that mean I am restricted to open space uses?

The open space plan map does not change the uses currently allowed by the property's zoning.

According to the Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board: "RCW 36.70A.160 does not require regulating to protect open space corridors, it does not provide that mere identification is protection of an open space corridor, not does it provide an independent source of authority for regulating land use activities within an open space corridor. Any authorized land uses, or limitation, restriction, or prohibition of land uses that a jurisdiction might choose to employ within an identified open space corridor must be grounded in separate legal authority, not RCW 36.70A.160." [LMI/Chevron, 8312, FDO, at 54.]

5.2: Are there other techniques that can be used to protect UGA open space corridors besides acquisition of development rights or property title?

RCW 36.70A.090 stipulates that a city or county comprehensive plan should provide for innovative land use management techniques, including, but not limited to, *density bonuses, cluster housing, planned unit developments, and the transfer of development rights.*

6 Implementing the UGA open space concept plan

6.1: How would the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan be implemented?

Consistent with the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan policy 2B-1.3 directive to develop a "program," this plan proposes the following mechanism:

- A countywide funding source would be established with a "bottom-up" approach to allocating funds.
- Community groups, parks departments, non-profits, or private groups could propose projects that meet the program goals and compete for funding.
- The Board of County Commissioners would establish a UGA Open Space Advisory Committee to provide citizen advice regarding the use of any UGA open space funds.
- The funds would be used to acquire and maintain UGA open space.

6.2: Who would be on a Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee?

Committee membership could include 9 or more members appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. Members could be appointed from among community-minded citizens who are active in civic matters, supportive of the intent and objectives of the UGA Open Space Plan and Program, and geographically representative of the county's UGAs.

6.3: What would be the responsibilities of the Advisory Committee?

The Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee would be authorized to do the following:

- Evaluate current and future conditions, needs, opportunities, and priorities.
- Develop procedures and processes for soliciting requests-for-proposals (RFPs).
- Develop public benefit evaluation and selection criteria for RFP submissions.
- Award (on the Board of County Commissioners behalf) Skagit Countywide UGA open space funds.
- Monitor compliance and expenditures.

- Issue annual evaluation reports and consult with the Board of County Commissioners and the public-at-large.
- Issue any revisions, modifications, or other actions that should be undertaken.

6.4: What public benefit criteria would the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee likely use to rate and award UGA funds on a competitive basis?

The following criteria (not listed in any priority order) could be used to evaluate properties or programs submitted for funding consideration under the proposed UGA open space program:

- **Land use** - benefits for UGA separators, public/private network opportunities, flood control,
- **Natural resources** - benefits for agricultural lands, woodlands, aquatic habitat, wildlife habitat,
- **Scenic resources** -benefits for scenic landscapes, scenic byways, and viewpoints,
- **Cultural resources** -benefits for landmark preservation,
- **Interpretive opportunities** -benefits for interpretive exhibits, trails, centers, and programs,
- **Recreation** -benefits for regional multiuse trails, community connections, trail linkages, water trail linkages, and accessibility,
- **Transportation** -benefits for interconnections, water trails,
- **Jurisdictional and leveraging** -opportunity to implement land use policy, leverage local monies, match state and federal funding opportunities, elicit public support, and
- **Feasibility and timing** -resolving land threatened status, restoration, stewardship, geographic distribution, feasibility, resolving hazards.

6.5: Impact fees - can new growth be tapped to contribute to the open space "funding gap"?

Skagit County could expand upon the growth impact fee provisions provided in the Growth Management Act (GMA). Park and/or traffic impact fees could be applied to all new residential developments within the unincorporated county to maintain existing park, recreation, and open space and traffic levels-of-service (LOS).

The cities and county could determine an equitable means to collect and allocate impact fees where the county and city maintain the same local and regional or citywide level-of-service (LOS) presently existing within the incorporated (city) and unincorporated (county) sections, and for the urban growth area in total.

A common fee could be collected by each agency then shared on a project by project basis for open space improvements benefiting the residents of the UGAs as well as the county-at-large. Impact fees are not likely to raise the same level of funding as most of the methods identified above.

Impact fees **cannot** be used to expand or improve facilities that do not increase the capacity of these systems to meet the needs of new growth, nor can they be used for maintenance or management.

6.6: What are the other potential funding sources and how much would these sources create?

Based on the results of the survey, the plan analyzed the potential amount a Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) or Property Tax Levy (PTL) could raise in Skagit County over a 6 year funding period assuming county voters would prefer a 6-year pilot project be used to demonstrate program success and to build public support for a more long-term commitment. This approach has been successfully used in other Western Washington communities.

- **Local Option Sales Tax (LOST)** - if approved by voter referendum, LOST would add an additional \$0.010 per \$1.00 of retail sales to be dedicated exclusively for open space purposes and be paid by in-county residents as well as out-of-county residents and tourists. *The annual proceeds from the LOST option would likely be \$924,868 based on recent annual sales tax trends.*
- **Property Tax Levy (PTL - Levy Lid Lift)** - if approved by voter referendum, would add **on a limited duration** (typically 6 years) an additional property tax to be dedicated exclusively for open space purposes. The following 3 alternative amounts are

based on the 2005 assessed value of average county house at \$222,500:

<i>Rate/\$1.00 value</i>	<i>Annual cost</i>	<i>Annual proceeds</i>
\$0.00011	\$24.68	\$1,641,082
\$0.00016	\$35.60	\$2,387,028
\$0.00022	\$48.95	\$3,282,163

Approval to use either the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) or Property Tax Levy (PTL) would likely depend on what extent a referendum on the issue would motivate the respondents who rated the proposal a 3 or mid-level priority. A proposal to use either approach will require more detailed descriptions of how much would be raised how it would be used.



Photo – view to the south of Swinomish Channel from SR-20 bridge to Fidalgo Island

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Skagit County population is forecast to increase by over 46,000 new residents by the year 2025 – which is equal to the current (2007) population of Mount Vernon and Anacortes combined. Most of this new growth is expected to occur in the county’s 10 Urban Growth Areas – Anacortes, Bayview Ridge, Burlington, Concrete, Hamilton, La Conner, Lyman, Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and Swinomish.

The choices that confront Skagit County at the present time are significant and could alter the character and quality of wildlife, agriculture, forest, scenic, historic, and recreational open spaces permanently if not adequately planned and protected.

This document outlines the choices that are available and the means for implementing preferred actions found to be of most interest and benefit to Skagit County residents concerning open space separators around the 10 county UGAs.

1.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of this planning effort were to:

- ***Inventory assets*** – including the programs, properties, ideas, and objectives of the numerous public and non-profit agencies and organizations that are involved in protecting, preserving, and enhancing wildlife, agriculture, forest, scenic, historic, and recreational open spaces within the county, and particularly within and around the 10 county UGAs.
- ***Develop the elements of a countywide UGA open space plan*** – that provides a thematic concept for preserving and enhancing open spaces, trails, and interpretive opportunities on a countywide basis that extends around, within, and through the 10 county UGAs.
- ***Define an implementation program*** – outlining the roles, responsibilities, and actions necessary to realize the countywide UGA open space plan including regulatory and financing issues.

- ***Determine public opinion*** – through a series of workshops with SCOG, participating agencies and organizations, and ultimately a mail-out/phone-back survey of a sample of registered county voter households that resolves final plan and financing particulars.

1.2 Approach

This planning process analyzed the current condition of wildlife, agriculture, forest, scenic, historic, and recreation open space conditions in and around the 10 county UGAs and the results of past and on-going programs sponsored by public and non-profit agencies and organizations within Skagit County.

The proposed UGA open space concepts and implementation strategies are the result of this comprehensive or holistic analysis.

Generally, the proposed strategies recommend Skagit County focus its resources to resolve UGA open space concept plans with the 10 UGAs, and create gap financing to assist existing



Photo – Lake Campbell from top of Mt Erie, Anacortes

public and non-profit agency and organization efforts to preserve and enhance open space assets around and within the UGA areas.

1.3 Public involvement

The Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) and Skagit County Planning & Development Services oversaw this planning process using a partial grant from the Washington State Community, Trade & Economic Development Department (CTED). During the course of the planning program, the participants conducted:

- **Interviews and workshops** – with public and non-profit agencies and organizations involved in wildlife, agriculture, forest, scenic, historic, and recreation open space issues within the county to determine their plans, concerns, and recommendations.
- **Public workshops and presentations** – with the Planning or Parks Commissions or City Councils of each UGA, the SCOG Board, and Skagit County Commissioners to determine their assessments of plan and strategy proposals prior to the development of final concept proposals.
- **Mail-out/phone-back survey of countywide registered voter households** - towards the end of the process to determine concept validations, strategy, and financing preferences with which to implement this plan.

The proposals contained within this document represent the opinions developed from these public participation events.

1.4 Documentation

This report is organized into 4 chapters outlining Introduction to the planning process, Findings of the analysis, UGA Open Space Concept Plan, and Action plan.

Separate technical appendices detail Growth Management Act (GMA) Urban Growth Area (UGA) open space separator requirements, resources available from public and non-profit

agencies and organizations, Goals and objectives of this plan, Mail-out/phone-back survey results, Financial resources available to this plan, UGA Open Space Levy & Advisory Committee proposal, and Public benefit criteria and are available from the Skagit County Planning & Development Services Department.



Photo - Tommy Thompson Trail over Fidalgo Bay, Anacortes

Chapter 2: Findings

2.1 Growth Management Act (GMA) initiatives

Public agencies have been active in protecting and conserving open space in Skagit County using the following methods.

Critical Area Ordinances (CAOs) - the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) mandated counties and cities to conserve and protect sensitive environmental features including aquifer recharge areas, streams, wetlands, steep slopes subject to landslide hazard, and floodplains from urban developments that would increase risk to the landowner (or adjacent properties) and degrade the environment.

Skagit County and all 10 Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) have enacted critical area ordinances (CAOs) that protect these features and the buffered areas from urban development. By and large, CAOs have protected significant and critically sensitive areas in the county and within and adjacent the urban growth areas (UGAs) from inappropriate urban development. Most of these lands remain in private ownership subject to private land use activities that do not impose an environmental risk.

While CAOs protect, and thereby conserve these significant open space resources, the CAOs do not restore, enhance, or manage these resources for wildlife, forest, farm, mineral resource areas, or scenic purposes for which they were once suited, nor to achieve UGA open space or public access benefits.

Resource and rural zoning districts - have been established by Skagit County to conserve productive and working farm and forest soils and properties - and to distinguish urban from rural settlement patterns. The county's Natural Resource Lands (NRL) zoning districts require large parcels ranging from 80 acres in Industrial Forest to 40 acres in Agricultural and Rural Resource to minimum 20 acre lots in Secondary Forest lands.

The rural zoning districts provide a transitional density and lot definition to provide a graduated settlement pattern between the urbanizing areas and the rural landscape. The density pattern ranges from 1.0 acre lots in Rural Village Residential zones with public water, 2.5 acre lots in Rural Intermediate, and 10.0 acre lots in Rural Reserve, or 2 lots per 10.0 acres in a rural cluster.

While the resource and rural zoning districts conserve the ownership pattern that is compatible with working farms and forests, and with a graduated urban to rural settlement pattern - zoning alone does not guarantee that the land will be used for farm and forest production, or that developments on the rural sized lots will actually reflect a rural or scenic pattern or appearance.

Differential tax assessments - have been established by Skagit County to provide an additional incentive to maintain resource properties in active farm and forest use. Considerable lands



Photo - wetlands in Ted Reep Park, Mount Vernon

within the county are provided this tax incentive and are maintained in working farm and forest use for this purpose.

Skagit County also provides a differential open space tax assessment with an optional additional incentive if the property meets a Public Benefit Rating System – though no rating system is currently in place.

Conservation Futures – is a county tax levy that generates funds on a countywide basis for the acquisition of easements on “farm, agricultural land, and critical areas”. While the program is important for the conservation of open space, the funding levels have not been sufficient to protect the most threatened agricultural and crucial areas within an adjacent the UGAs.

By and large, these GMA related efforts have been successful at protecting critical environmental areas and their open space attributes, conserving large and potentially productive farm land property parcels, maintaining a graduated land ownership pattern between the most urban and rural areas, and acquiring some significant and threatened open space parcels. Most of the protected parcels have been located in rural areas removed from the UGAs.

However, these initiatives have heretofore not been sufficient, even when complemented by private organizational conservation efforts, to establish open space corridors within and adjacent to the most urbanizing areas of the county.

2.2 UGA open space separator/greenway requirements

In addition to protecting critical areas and providing incentives for rural resource protections, the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) also requires counties with urban growth areas (UGAs) to designate and develop open space separator or greenway plans with which to distinguish cities and urban areas from each other – and to prevent urban sprawl into the rural landscape.

GMA’s intent is to determine and protect significant and important open spaces and corridors that define the edges of an

urban area – and that can provide interpretive and recreational opportunities to be accessed by rural and urban area residents alike. GMA’s intent is also to provide for wildlife habitat, connections between critical areas, and trails (which can serve as transportation routes as well as for recreational uses), as well as connectors between UGAs.

2.3 Private conservation initiatives

Numerous private organizations in Skagit County are actively involved in conserving open space assets including wildlife habitat, working farmlands, unique forestlands, scenic landscapes, historic features, and recreational activities including on and off-road trail systems.

In fact, Skagit County has more organizations involved in open space conservation than is common of any other area in Washington State or the surrounding Pacific Northwest region. A conservation focus has emerged in Skagit County due to:

- the Skagit River’s habitat value - the most productive river west of the Mississippi,
- the Skagit Valley’s agriculture potential – one of the largest



Photo – channel mitigation project in Edgewater Park, Mount Vernon

- remaining viable farming areas in the region, and
- the county’s overall scenic, cultural, and historical diversity, among others.

By and large, these groups have accomplished a great deal through their efforts to conserve important county open space assets through property owner use agreements, conservation easements, and outright land purchases.

These groups have also been actively involved in the management, restoration, and enhancement of the natural features that once existed on these conserved lands and which provide their unique ecological, environmental, scenic, and cultural values.

In general, these organizations have been able to obtain the minimum funds necessary to implement their basic conservation missions – which are unique to each entity. These groups have been adept at raising monies through grants, donations, fund-raising drives, and other enterprises – primarily from residents of the county and surrounding region.

However, most of these organizations and their efforts have been focused in the more rural areas outside of the existing cities and proposed urban growth areas (UGAs). A rural focus



Photo – Beaver Pond in Eaglemont Development, Mount Vernon

has been followed for a variety of reasons including:

- higher land costs within or next to the urban areas,
- increased land management requirements,
- greater coordination requirements with other public and private parties, and
- the potential for conflict with local city land use objectives and priorities.

As a consequence, some of the most threatened remaining open spaces are located within or adjacent to the designated urban growth areas (UGAs) of the county.

2.4 Open space conditions

Interview and workshop sessions were conducted with over 30 public and non-profit agency and organization representatives during the course of this plan’s analysis. The participants were asked to describe in quantitative and anecdotal terms open space conditions they observed in the county.

In addition, registered voter household participants in the mail-out/phone-back survey were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following condition statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 4-5 were considered to be very strong concurrence with the workshop statements.

Following is a statement of the condition statements from the mail-out/phone-back survey in order of most agreement.

<i>UGA open space conservation efforts</i>	<i>poorest/best</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
Protection of prime agricultural soils and working farmlands adjacent urbanizing areas?	31%	33%	36%
Protection of scenic areas and landscapes including viewpoints and vistas from hilltops and along entry roads into urbanizing areas?	25%	38%	36%
Conservation of wildlife habitat – especially within the Skagit River and its tributaries as they flow through the urban areas?	27%	42%	30%
Identification and preservation of historical	27%	41%	30%

and cultural landmarks, sites, and features within and adjacent to urbanizing areas?	
UGA open space conservation efforts	poorest/best 1-2 3 4-5
Preservation of woodlands – particularly mature, older forest stands within the urbanizing areas?	39% 34% 26%
UGA public access activities	
Picnic grounds, shelters, and other day use activity areas in open space systems in the urbanizing areas?	21% 42% 36%
Public access trails for hike, bike, and horse (including handicap accessible) to or through open spaces in the urbanizing areas?	31% 37% 31%
Waterfront access for fishing, swimming, kayaking, and canoeing in open spaces in the urbanizing areas?	33% 35% 31%
Interpretive markers, exhibits, trails, and centers located in open spaces within or adjacent to urbanizing areas?	32% 41% 25%

As shown, the survey respondents did not rank any open space or trail feature to be of a best condition overall. In some instances, the respondents indicated conditions were equal (rating 3) or of worse condition (rating 1-2) than those that considered them to be in good condition (rating 4-5).

2.5 Open space trends

The public and non-profit agency participants of the workshops were also asked to describe the open space trends they observed were occurring in the county and the impact such trends were and could have on open space conditions.

In addition, registered voter household participants in the mail-out/phone-back survey were also asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements concerning trends that may be affecting the conservation of open spaces and trail developments within the UGAs of the county.

Following is a statement of the trends statements from the mail-out/phone-back survey in order of most agreement.

Open space trends	dis-/agree 1-2 3 4-5
Skagit County has some of the most valuable and productive wildlife habitats, woodlands, and farms in the region if not the country?	7% 10% 85%
Open spaces within the UGAs should be interconnected to flow through the cities into the surrounding countryside in a manner that conserves important assets and provides some logical and visible corridor networks?	11% 16% 73%
Open space conservation efforts must do more than just preserve land – conservation programs should also restore, enhance, and manage the land to provide the valuable natural and ecological functions it once did?	14% 17% 70%
Open spaces that are being created are often small, landlocked preserves within new residential developments that are not linked to a continuous open space network for the surrounding city or its residents – or between cities and urbanizing areas?	14% 21% 63%
An unacceptable amount of these valuable open space assets (wildlife, woodlands, and farms) are rapidly being lost to urban development within UGAs?	18% 19% 63%
An unacceptable amount of these valuable assets are also being lost to rural type land uses including roadside stands, hobby farms, big box houses, and other developments adjacent UGAs?	28% 25% 46%
Skagit County has some of the most diverse and scenic resources in the region including mountain, valley, waterfront, and farm landscapes and viewpoints?	2% 8% 90%
Scenic resources	
Rural roads and byways, especially the entry roads into and out of the urbanizing areas should retain an open and rural character	15% 16% 70%

“rural by design”) that is not cluttered with commercial uses, advertising, and other urban characteristics?

Scenic resources	<i>dis-/agree</i> 1-2 3 4-5			
“The view from the road”, however, is rapidly disappearing or being blocked or replaced with roadside clutter consisting of advertising signs, rural commercial uses, hobby farms, and/or inappropriate developments?	21%	19%	59%	

Public access activities				
Skagit County public access trail systems and park activities could extend from open space corridors within the urbanizing areas out into the countryside to access some of the most diverse and scenic features in the county and region?	12%	17%	72%	
Public access trail systems and park activities should extend from the inner most urban areas out into the countryside within and through natural open space corridor networks to provide easy access to urban and rural residents alike?	16%	19%	64%	
Major existing public trail corridors, however, are located within park boundaries or on former railroad corridors and dikes located in rural areas that are not easily accessed by residents of the urbanizing areas on a daily basis?	20%	25%	54%	

As shown, the survey respondents agreed overwhelmingly with the statements elicited from public and non-profit open space agency and organization representatives concerning trends that are imperiling open space, scenic resources, and public access in the county at the present time.

2.6 Population growth impacts

Survey respondents were asked if in the next 20 years the Skagit County population is projected to increase by another 51,600 people or 46% more than the existing population of 113,100

persons, whether existing policies and programs will be sufficient to protect the county’s open space resources.

In your opinion, will <u>existing UGA open space and public access trail conditions, trends, policies, and programs</u> be enough to conserve and protect Skagit County’s UGA related open space resources?	51% no	18% yes	32% don't know
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As shown, a majority of the respondents do not think existing policies and programs will be sufficient to conserve and protect Skagit County’s UGA related open space resources. However, a significant percent of the respondents may not know what existing policies and programs are. They may also not know whether they are or will be sufficient.

2.7 UGA open space and public access trail priorities

In light of the preceding, survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following open spaces within and adjacent to the urbanizing areas (UGAs) of the county in general whether such areas are protected by critical area ordinances, land use agreements, conservation easements, or land purchases by public or private organization efforts.

	<i>low / high</i> 1-2 3 4-5		
UGA open space conservation needs			
Productive and working farmlands adjacent the urbanizing areas?	13%	14%	74%
Mature and older growth forestlands within and adjacent the urbanizing areas?	16%	18%	67%
Wildlife habitat and migration corridors within and through the urbanizing areas?	19%	20%	62%
Scenic landscapes and roadside views entering and leaving the urbanizing areas?	14%	26%	61%
Historical and cultural landmarks and sites within and adjacent the urbanizing areas?	14%	33%	55%
UGA public access activities			
Public access trails and facilities that extend through and outwards from the urbanizing areas?	15%	22%	64%
Fishing, swimming, car-top boating,	15%	21%	65%

picnicking, and other day use activities within open space corridor networks in and adjacent the urbanizing areas?	
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	<i>low / high</i> <i>1-2 3 4-5</i>
Public access activities	
Interpretive trails, exhibits, and centers within open space corridor networks that extend outwards from the urbanizing areas?	16% 34% 52%

As shown, survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated **all** of the open space conservation and public access trails and activities were of the utmost importance (scores greater than 50% for ratings of 4-5) per the rank orders shown.

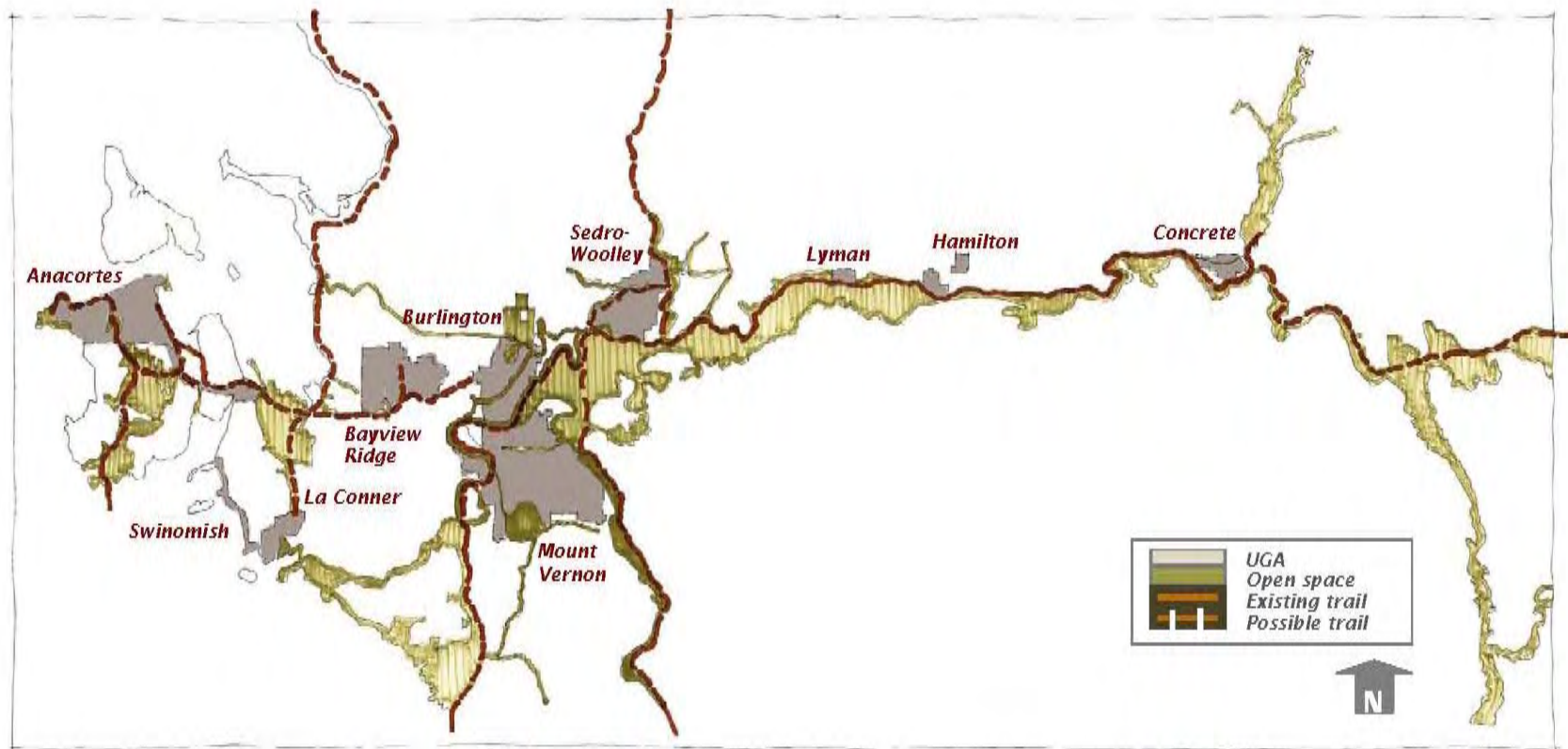
2.8 Conclusions

Based on the results above, a principal purpose of this SCOG planning effort, therefore, is to define concepts and strategies by which to define UGA open space and greenway separators that can also link with the other open space initiatives being carried out in the more rural areas of the county by public and non-profit agencies and organizations.

A secondary purpose of this SCOG planning effort is to devise a UGA open space separator and greenway strategy that will complement existing open space efforts by other public and private agencies and organizations in a manner that will benefit and enhance rather than duplicate or compete with these on-going and successful efforts.



Photo - historic Rosario Schoolhouse (1891) on Fidalgo Island



Chapter 3: UGA Open Space Concept Plans

3.1 Countywide concept plan

The following proposals are based on the results of the workshop planning sessions and the mail-out/phone-back survey of countywide resident voter households. The proposals are CONCEPTUAL, in some instances, subject to further study and coordination with public and private participants that may modify the eventual project particulars.

The Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan is and will be a composite of the open space, recreation, trail, and land use plans developed by each city, sub-area, tribal, port, state, and federal jurisdiction - subject to the updating of these plans and planning elements by each jurisdiction on a

housekeeping basis every year and on a comprehensive basis every 7 years in accordance with GMA requirements.

The individual jurisdictional plans share common open space definitions and objectives consisting of a focus on the Skagit River from Concrete through Hamilton, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, and Mount Vernon; on the Swinomish Channel to La Conner and the Swinomish Indian Reservation; on the Community Forests through Anacortes; and on Deception Pass State Park lands across Fidalgo Island to Whidbey Island.

As shown in the graphics, these UGA corridors could extend around and from the cities outward into the most rural

landscapes and features linking the UGAs into continuous greenway systems across the county using these features as an open space framework.

This concept was vetted in the countywide mail-out/phone-back survey of registered countywide voter households described in Appendix D. Survey respondents were asked to rate the countywide concept on a 1 to 5 scale where 1-2 were the lowest priorities, 3 was a neutral score, and 4-5 were the highest priorities.

<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>low / high</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>Countywide UGA open space corridors</i> - could focus on the Skagit River from Concrete through Hamilton, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, and Mount Vernon; on the Swinomish Channel to LaConner; and on the Community Forests and State Park through Anacortes? As shown in the graphics, these corridors could extend from the cities outward into the most rural landscapes and features linking the UGAs into continuous greenway systems?	12%	18%	71%

As shown, survey respondents gave overwhelming support to this countywide approach to the UGA open space concept.

Public access systems

The UGA open space corridors could be accessed by a network of regional on and off-road multipurpose hike, bike, and some horse trails extending through the open space corridors and the UGAs, and outwards from the UGAs and Skagit County to connect with Whatcom, Snohomish, and Island Counties.

These multipurpose trail systems have been planned on a regional basis by public and non-profit agencies and organizations and include proposals extending north to Bellingham and Whatcom County, east through Rockport to Ross Lake National Recreation Area, south to Arlington and Snohomish County, southwest to Stanwood and Snohomish County, and west through Anacortes and Whidbey Island.

These trail concepts were also vetted in the countywide mail-out/phone-back survey of registered countywide voter households described in Appendix D. Survey respondents were asked to rate the trail proposals on a priority scale.

<i>UGA public access systems</i>	<i>low / high</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>Anacortes-Burlington Trail</i> - could extend west from Burlington along SR-20 through the Bayview Ridge UGA to link with Swinomish Channel and PNW Trails to LaConner and Anacortes? The Anacortes-Burlington Trail would create a countywide trail linkage with other major trail systems?	16%	17%	64%
<i>Cascade Trail</i> - could extend through the Skagit River open space corridor from Rockport through Concrete, Hamilton, Sedro-Woolley, and Burlington? An eastern extension of the trail could link with the Ross Lake National Recreation Area?	13%	22%	63%
<i>Swinomish Channel Trail</i> - could extend north from LaConner along the Swinomish Channel to the PNW Trail and provide access to the estuaries and wetlands in Padilla and Fidalgo Bays.	17%	21%	59%
<i>PNW/Interurban Trail</i> - could extend south from the Interurban Trail in Whatcom County through Bayview to the Swinomish Channel then west through Anacortes to Deception Pass and Whidbey Island?	17%	22%	58%

<i>UGA public access systems</i>	<i>low / high</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>Centennial Trail</i> - could provide access from Snohomish County trail systems past Lake McMurray, Big Lake, the Nookachamps, Skagit River, and Northern State Hospital to link with Whatcom County trail systems to Lake Whatcom, Bellingham, and the Canadian border?	17%	21%	58%
<i>Skagit-Snohomish Trail</i> - could extend from the Nookachamps south through Mount Vernon and Britt Slough then along the South	21%	20%	58%

Fork of the Skagit River to link with Fir Island, Conway, Stanwood and the Snohomish County trail systems.	
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As shown, all of the trail proposals were given the highest priority (score 4-5) by a majority of the survey respondents.

The corridor locations shown in the graphics are CONCEPTUAL, subject to more detailed location planning with public and private landowners and organizations prior to actual trail project design and construction implementation.

In concept, the trails are sited along the edge or in some instances across the open space corridors in locations that do not intrude onto sensitive habitats or niches occupied by endangered or threatened wildlife or eco-systems.

The goal is to provide public access along and where appropriate, within open space corridors where the public may enjoy open space assets without risking intrusions that can detract from wildlife preservation or enhancement objectives and from agricultural or forestry operational requirements and private property prerogatives.

Interpretive centers and day-use parks

UGA open spaces preserve and protect significant natural resources, wildlife habitats, historical and cultural landmarks, scenic vistas and viewpoints, and other features of educational, interpretive, and informative interest to residents and visitors.

These features should be provided appropriate interpretive opportunities including trail and viewpoint access, signage, exhibits, and even centers with educational materials and programs.

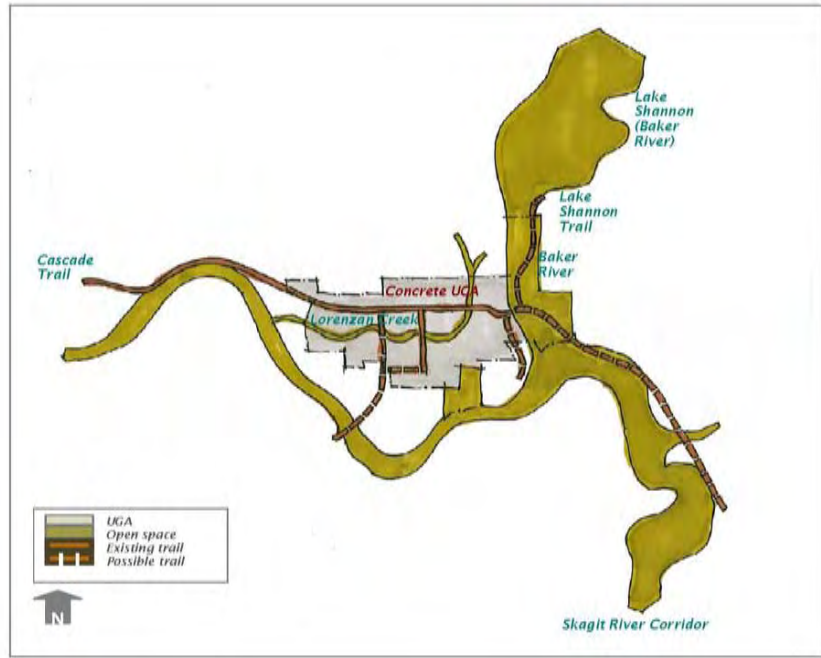
Where appropriate, open space related day-use park activities including fishing, boating, and camping may also be incorporated as open space adjuncts to increase public access and interpretive opportunities.

The concept of providing interpretive and day-use park activities was also vetted in the mail-out/phone-back survey of countywide registered voter households described in Appendix D. Survey respondents were also asked to rate interpretive center opportunities on a priority scale.

	<i>low / high</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>UGA public access systems - activities</i>			
<i>Interpretive centers and day-use parks</i> - be installed where appropriate along the trail corridors identified above to increase interpretive opportunities and open space related day-use park activities?	18%	29%	51%

As shown, a majority of survey respondents gave interpretive centers and day-use parks a high priority (score 4-5).

The following pages describe the open space concepts currently adopted in each jurisdiction’s current comprehensive plans and currently under consideration by the appropriate jurisdiction’s planning and parks staff and advisory planning groups, and by elected officials as determined from a series of public workshops with staff, Parks or Planning Commission or City Council in each jurisdictional area.



3.2 Concrete Urban Growth Area

Concrete's UGA open space corridor concept - is defined by the Skagit River floodplain around the southern boundary of the UGA, through the UGA by Lorenzan Creek and the Baker River riparian corridors, north to Lake Shannon along the Baker River corridor, and north and east by overlapping forest resource zoned lands.

The river corridors and floodplains surround and define the southern limits of feasible urban development. Additional open space definition is provided on the east along the Baker River by the former concrete plant and hydroelectric power plant and on the south below the city airport by city-owned properties.

The open space corridor and buffers along Lorenzan Creek extend through the historic 1909 era downtown, school, park,

and other city assets. Open space fingers could extend further north on Lorenzan Creek headwaters into the city's wooded watershed.

The Cascade Trail - currently extends from Burlington through Sedro-Woolley, Lyman, and Hamilton to Concrete on the former railroad right-of-way and track bed. Current plans propose to extend the trail further east on or adjacent the railroad right-of-way through Rockport to Marblemount and even eventually east parallel to SR-20 into Ross Lake National Recreational Area.

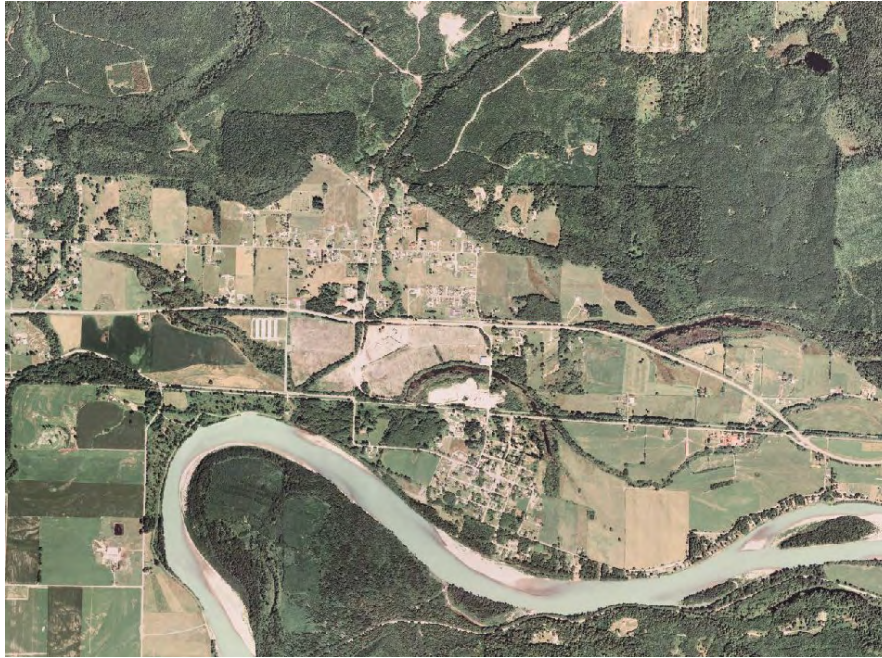
A potential local trail system could extend north from the Skagit River and the Cascade Trail along the Baker River to Lake Shannon Dam, then along the east shore of the lake on and adjacent to Baker River Road.

Another local trail system could extend south from the downtown across SR-20 and through school grounds and airport boundaries across the Skagit River to access the riverfront and South Skagit Highway/Concrete Sauk Valley Road.

The Concrete UGA concept plan was produced during public workshops conducted with the Town Planner and the Planning Commission and Town Council. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>low / high</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>Concrete UGA open space corridors</i> - could focus on the Skagit River around the UGA and extend through the city on Lorenzan Creek and the Baker River, then north to Lake Shannon linking with the downtown, schools, parks, and other assets?	15%	30%	53%

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



The Hamilton UGA Open Space concept is currently being developed by the Hamilton Town Council and the Hamilton Public Development Authority under a separate planning process.

3.3 Hamilton Urban Growth Area

Hamilton's UGA open space concept (not shown in the graphics) - is defined by the Skagit River around the southern boundary of the UGA and the slough riparian zone north of the developed town site, on the north by overlapping forest resource zoned lands, and on the east by overlapping agricultural resource zoned lands.

Hamilton's UGA boundaries were recently expanded by the County Commission. The Town Council, with assistance from the Hamilton Public Development Authority, proposed the new boundaries so that the residential and commercial portion of the town can relocate north of SR-20 and out of the Skagit River floodway. This is being done to reduce environmental and

health/safety risks and to minimize repetitive losses due to flooding in the town.

Depending on the final resolution of planning and design studies, the new town's open space system would incorporate critical areas (streams, sloughs, wetlands and their riparian buffers), steep slopes, and a Puget Sound Energy transmission line corridor into the plan. The plan also creates possibilities to link to the surrounding foothills up Red Cabin, Alder, and Muddy Creeks north of the UGA. The existing town site will be designated open space and provides public access to the river.

The Cascade Trail - currently extends from Burlington east through Sedro-Woolley, Lyman, and Hamilton to Concrete on the former railroad right-of-way and track bed.

It is envisioned that a local trail system would be incorporated into the new town plan and connect to the Cascade Trail and the open space created at the old town site along the river.

The Hamilton UGA open space concept will eventually be reviewed and approved by the Hamilton Town Council. The concept was vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

	<i>low / high</i>		
<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<u>Hamilton UGA open space corridors (not shown in the graphics)</u> - could focus on the Skagit River around the UGA? Depending on the final resolution of planning and design studies currently being accomplished for the city, the open space system could extend up Alder and Mud Creeks to link with local trails and other facilities?	21%	32%	41%

As shown, a significant percent, but not a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a medium to high priority. The results may have been affected by the lack of a concise plan graphic illustrating the potential UGA concept (which is under development at this time).



Lyman concept graphic is being prepared separately.

3.4 Lyman Urban Growth Area

Lyman's UGA open space concept - is defined on the south by the Skagit River floodplain and floodway, by Childs and Jones Creeks riparian corridors through the UGA, and on the south and west by overlapping agricultural resource zoned lands.

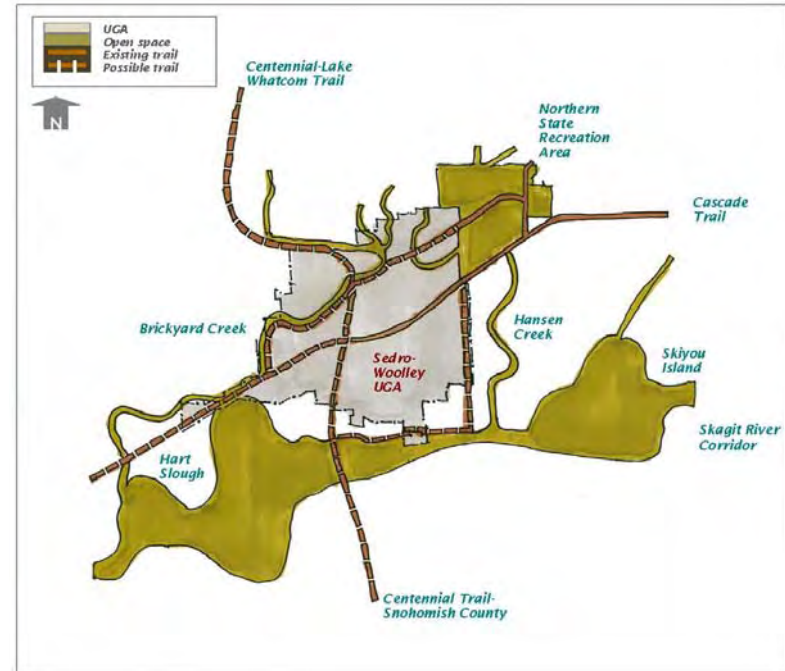
The wooded shoreline along the bends in the Skagit River are frequently flooded and therefore preserved as natural open space - particularly the western slough.

The open space corridors and buffers along Childs and Jones Creeks extend around the town and across SR-20 into the city's former watershed at the headwaters and springs of Jones Creek.

The Cascade Trail - extends from Burlington east through Sedro-Woolley and Lyman's town center then east through Hamilton to Concrete. The trail corridor adjoins the area on the west slough and crosses over Childs and Jones Creeks.

Possible local trail systems could extend from the Cascade Trail north adjacent to Jones Creek tributaries north up the hillside into Washington State Department of Natural Resources forestlands.

The Lyman UGA concept plan was produced during a workshop with the Town Mayor. The concept was not finalized or vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey of countywide registered voter households.



3.5 Sedro-Woolley Urban Growth Area

Sedro-Woolley's UGA open space corridors - is defined on the south by the Skagit River and Hart Slough floodplains, by Brickyard and Hansen Creeks riparian corridors through the UGA, and by overlapping agricultural resource zoned lands on the south, east, and west.

The Skagit River floodplains and floodway define the southern limits of feasible urban development. Additional linear open space definition is provided by overhead power transmission lines and railroad corridors.

The open space corridors and buffers along Brickyard and Hansen Creeks extend north from the river to link with the extensive landholdings of Northern State Recreational Area (former State Hospital) and the Upper Skagit Reservation lands. Open space fingers could extend further north along the railroad corridors and numerous minor streams that extend off of Brickyard and Hansen Creeks.

The Cascade Trail - extends from Burlington through Sedro-Woolley to the western edge of the downtown core then east of the downtown core through Lyman, Hamilton to Concrete on the former railroad right-of-way and track bed. The

downtown segment will eventually be created to provide a continuous link through the city.

The Centennial-Lake Whatcom Trail - has currently been completed from Snohomish to Arlington at the Snohomish/Skagit County line on the former railroad right-of-way and track bed. The Lake Whatcom Trail segment has been completed around the eastern side of Lake Whatcom from North Lake Whatcom County Park to almost the southern end of the lake on former railroad right-of-way and track bed. The trail plan proposes to eventually link the two segments through Sedro-Woolley on some or all portions of the former and existing railroad corridors though portions may initially or ultimately be routed along or around some segments.

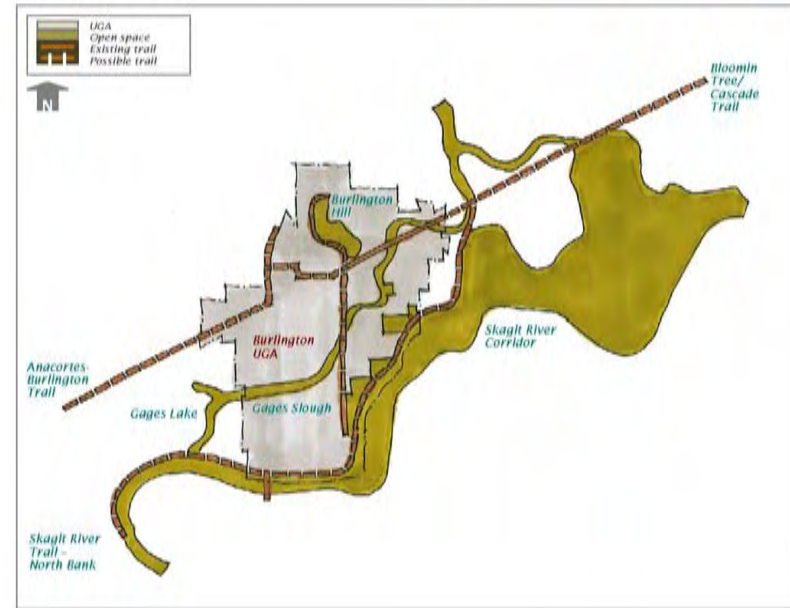
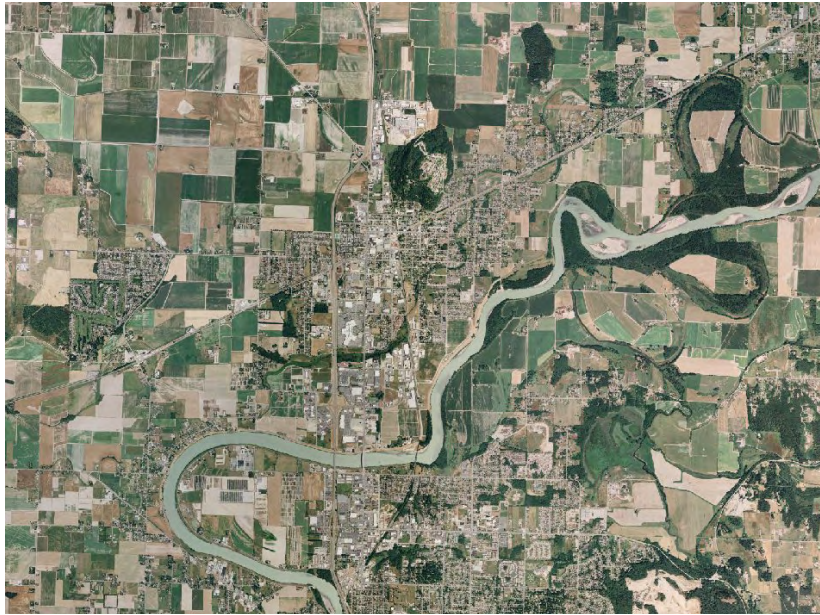
Potential local trail systems could be extended adjacent to Brickyard and Hansen Creeks to create a trail loop from Hart Slough through Northern State Recreational Area and back to the Skagit River.

Another potential local trail could be extended along the north bank of the Skagit River from the Centennial Trail east to Hansen Creek.

The Sedro-Woolley UGA concept plan was produced during public workshops conducted with city planning staff and City Council. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey of countywide registered voter households.

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.

<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>low / high</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<u><i>Sedro-Woolley UGA open space corridors</i></u> - could focus on the Skagit River, Hart Slough, and Skiyou Island around the UGA and extend through the city on Brickyard and Hansen Creeks to link with Northern State Hospital County Park as well as the downtown, city trails, parks, schools, and other assets?		14%	23%	59%



3.6 Burlington Urban Growth Area

Burlington's UGA open space concept - is defined by the Skagit River floodplain around the southern edge of the UGA, by Gages Slough riparian corridor through the UGA, and by overlapping agricultural resource zoned lands on the east, north, and west boundaries.

The Skagit River floodplain and floodways define the southern and eastern limits of feasible urban development - particularly within and around the original river oxbows.

The open space and buffers along Gages Slough loop from the Skagit River through the center of the city linking parks, schools, commercial areas, and older neighborhoods.

The Skagit River's original route extended north around the city to flow into the Samish River and Samish Bay before cutting the current channel. The former riverbed can also provide an open space extension along the northern developable limits of the city UGA.

The eastern slopes of Burlington Hill are being developed for low density residential uses, through slope stability and geological problems have slowed construction. The western slopes are steeper and largely undeveloped and could provide relief on the hillside.

The Cascade Trail - begins at the western edge of the historic downtown on the former railroad right-of-way and track bed and extends east through Sedro-Woolley, Lyman, and Hamilton to

Concrete. Planning efforts have proposed extending the trail west through the downtown and across I-5 to create a linking trail within or adjacent to SR-20 right-of-way past Bayview to Anacortes.

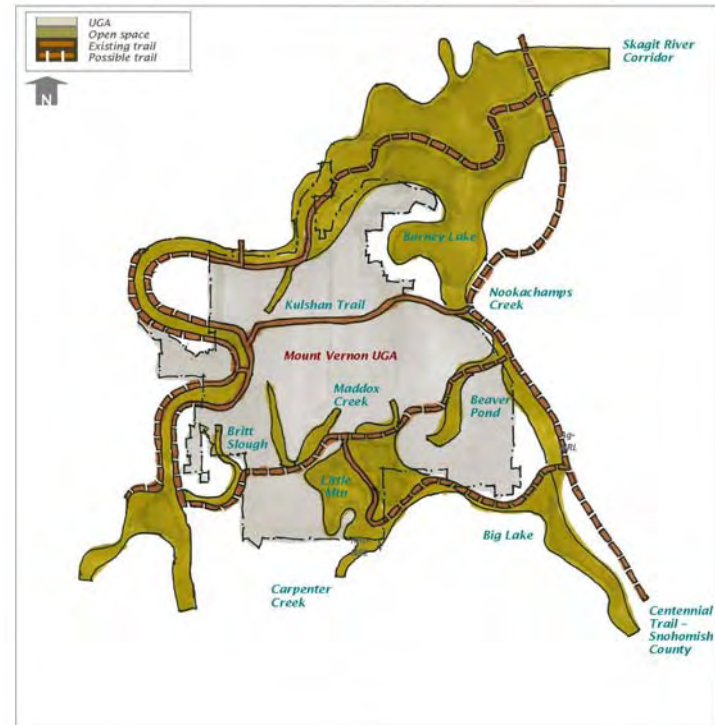
The Skagit River Trail North Bank proposal - is to extend trail access along the north bank of the Skagit River from Gages Slough on the east through Burlington city parks and open spaces to Mount Vernon's Edgewater Park and areas further south. Depending on more detailed planning with affected property owners and interests, possible trail corridor alternatives could be located on or adjacent river dikes, local roadways, and city parklands.

Possible local trail systems could extend north from the Skagit River past the historic downtown to Burlington Hill adjacent railroad tracks and/or on local roadways, and to and around Burlington-Edison Regional Park and the high school within or adjacent to I-5 right-of-way.

The Burlington UGA concept plan was produced during working sessions with the City Planner. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

	<i>low / high</i>		
<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>Burlington UGA open space corridors</i> - could focus on the Skagit River and Hart Slough around the UGA and extend through the city on Gages Slough to link with Burlington Hill as well as the downtown, city trails, parks, schools, and other assets.	15%	24%	57%

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



3.7 Mount Vernon Urban Growth Area

Mount Vernon's UGA open space concept - is defined on the north and west by the Skagit River floodplain, on the east by the Nookachamps Creek and Barney Lake floodplains, by Britt Slough's riparian corridor on the west, through the UGA by Maddox and Carpenter Creeks riparian corridors, on the south by Little Mountain Park, and on the south and west by agricultural resource zoned lands.

The Skagit River floodplains extend up the Nookachamps and Barney Lake on the east boundary of the UGA before being

channeled by dikes through the corridor between Burlington, West Mount Vernon, and East Mount Vernon.

The east and south segments of the river corridor are defined by river oxbows and old channel cuts overgrown with woodlands and river habitat. Some portions of these corridors have been preserved through acquisitions and easements, and some public land in Mount Vernon's Edgewater Park has been restored and enhanced for salmon habitat.

The central segment of the river corridor is very constrained and except for Lions Park North and the sand bar along Dunbar Road, limited by dikes and shoreline improvements.

The open space corridors and buffers along Kulshan, Maddox, and Carpenter Creeks extend through and into the developed areas of the city linking the interior with the Skagit River, Nookachamps Creek and Big Lake, and Britt Sough open space systems.

These finger systems also define the edges and provide access to Beaver Pond and Little Mountain, significant natural and aesthetic resources in the center of the UGA.

The Centennial Trail - may extend along the eastern edge of the UGA within or adjacent or parallel to the original railroad right-of-way, portions of which have since reverted or been acquired by adjoining private property owners and developers.

The trail could link Big Lake, the Nookachamps, Barney Lake, and the Skagit River open spaces with Mount Vernon by Carpenter Creek and the city's Kulshan Trail.

The Skagit River Trail South Bank proposal - is to extend a trail access along the south bank of the Skagit River from the Centennial Trail and Nookachamps Creek on the east through Mount Vernon's Lions Parks, the downtown, and areas further south to Stanwood.

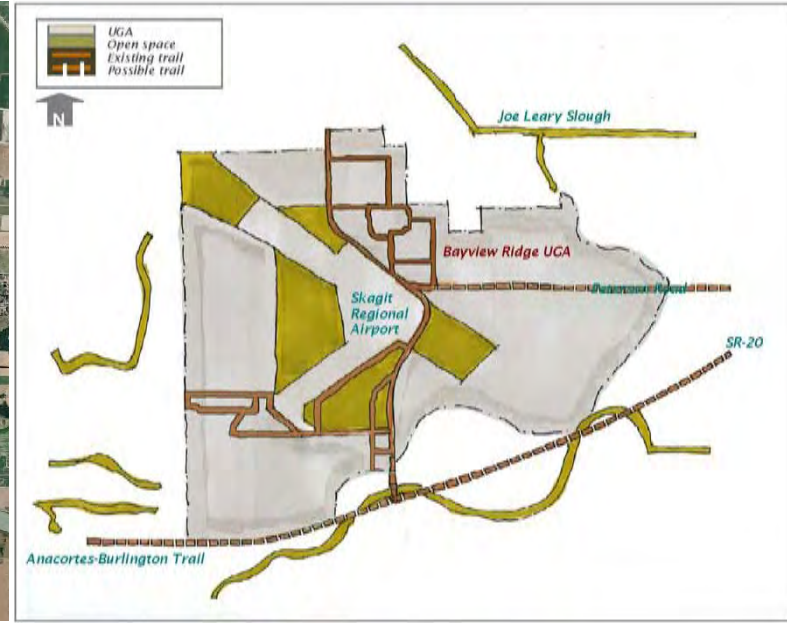
Depending on more detailed planning with affected property owners and interests, possible trail corridor alternatives could be located on or adjacent river dikes, local roadways, and city parklands.

Possible local trail systems could extend through the UGA to link the Centennial and Skagit River South Bank Trails by way of the Kulshan Trail, and adjacent to Beaver Pond, Little Mountain, and Big Lake on trails adjacent to Maddox and Carpenter Creeks, and Britt Slough.

The Mount Vernon UGA concept plan was produced during public workshops with city planning and parks staff, and City Council. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>low / high</i>		
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<u><i>Mount Vernon UGA open space corridors</i></u> - could focus on the Skagit River, Nookachamps Creek, Barney Lake, and Britt Slough around the UGA and extend through the city on Maddox and Carpenter Creeks to link with the Kulshan Trail, Beaver Pond, Little Mountain as well as the downtown, city trails, parks, schools, and other assets.	17%	20%	58%

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



3.8 Bayview Ridge Urban Growth Area

Bayview's UGA open space concept - is defined by the land buffers surrounding the Skagit Regional Airport runways and storm retention areas, Joe Leary Slough, the riparian stream corridors that extend along SR-20 and west from the airport to Padilla Bay, and agricultural resource zoned land on the east, south, and west boundaries.

The FAA's required runway approach and buffer zones create sizable wooded preserves around the north, west, and south boundaries of the airport. The west edge of the property is adjoined by Paccar's testing facility which also contains sizable wooded buffer areas.

The airport stormwater retention system is located in the south airport boundary and includes a perimeter trail around the system that also extends north through the airport and industrial park to Josh Wilson Road.

The approach and buffer zone extends in open fields to the east across Avon Allen Road. Bayview's subarea plan proposes residential uses be developed to the edge of the buffer areas.

The Anacortes-Burlington Trail proposal - is to develop a trail linkage between the Centennial Trail in Burlington and the Tommy Thompson Trail in Anacortes.

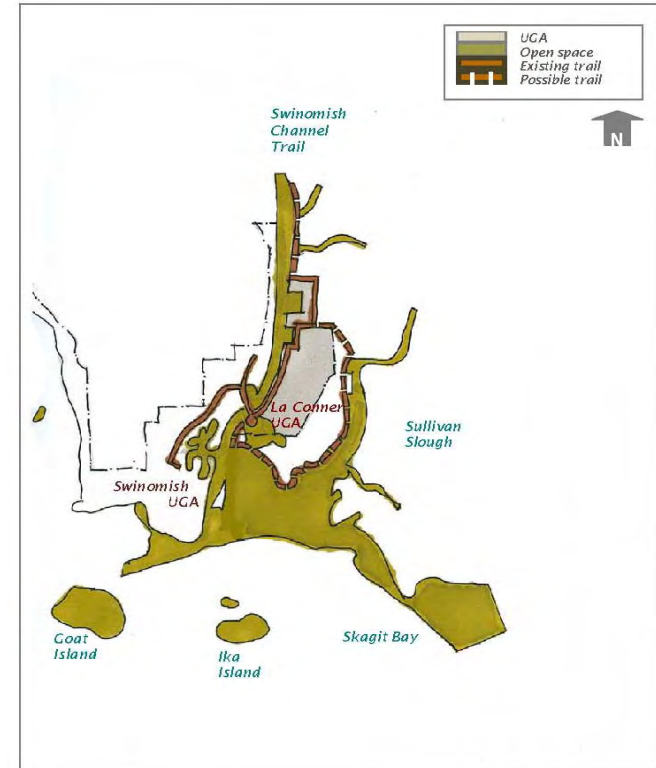
Depending on more detailed planning with affected property owners and interests, possible trail corridor alternatives could be located within or adjacent to SR-20 right-of-way and/or adjacent to the drainage corridors and ditches that extend west to the Swinomish Channel.

The Bayview UGA concept plan was abstracted from public workshops and proposals conducted during the Bayview subarea planning process, and working sessions with Port of

Skagit County staff. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>low / high 1-2 3 4-5</i>
<i>Bayview UGA open space corridors</i> - could incorporate the lands surrounding the runways and storm retention areas and extend through the UGA to link with Padilla Bay and Burlington?	17% 27% 53%

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



3.9 La Conner Urban Growth Area

La Conner's UGA open space concept - is defined on the west, south, and east by the Swinomish Channel, Sullivan Slough, and Skagit Bay floodplains, and on the south, east, and north by agricultural resource zoned lands.

Skagit Bay and Sullivan Slough are relatively unconstrained natural estuary and freshwater drainage systems that extend along the eastern boundary of the UGA except where limited by a dike along the northern edge.

The Swinomish Channel is defined on the west edge by topography and along the entire east edge by dikes. A series of ditches drain the open farm fields into the Channel during low tides through a series of tidegates.

The channel through the La Conner UGA has been expanded for marinas and lined with buildings, piers, and docks on or adjacent to filled high ground or the dikes. The city has developed a series of overlook parks, landings, and segmented shoreline trails.

The Swinomish Channel Trail proposal - is to access a proposed ring dike around the town that would restore the town's original flood protection system. The dike would restore the segment on the north of the school and UGA limits.

Depending on more detailed planning with affected property owners and interests, possible trail corridor alternatives could be located on or adjacent the ring dike and extend south along the Channel dike to Skagit Bay, and north along the dike to connect with the Anacortes-Burlington Trail proposal at SR-20.

The Town also proposes to eventually complete development of the shoreline trail system from the marina south through the downtown to Pioneer Park and a linkage with the proposed ring dike trail system.

The La Conner UGA concept plan was produced during public workshop sessions with the Town Planner and Parks

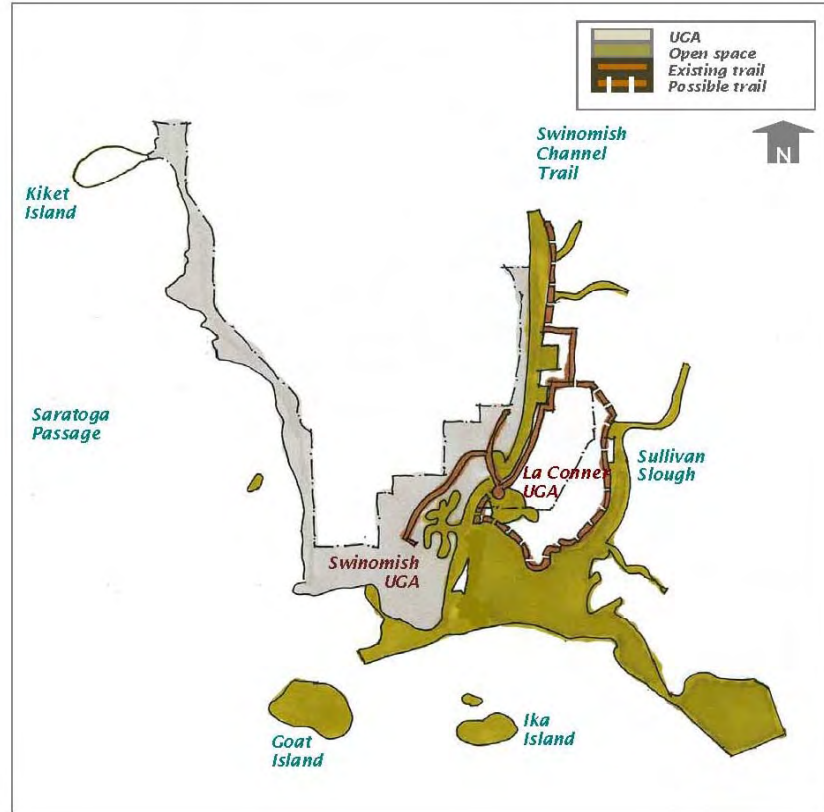
Commission. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

UGA open space corridors

low / high
1-2 3 4-5

<p><u>LaConner/Swinomish UGA open space corridors</u> - could focus on the Swinomish Channel, Sullivan Slough, and Skagit Bay through and around the UGA and extend into the city, Swinomish Village, and Shelter Bay to link with the downtown, schools, trails, and parks?</p>	<p>16% 24% 56%</p>
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As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



3.10 Swinomish Urban Growth Area

Swinomish's UGA open space concept - is defined on the east by the Swinomish Channel, on the south by Skagit Bay, Saratoga Passage, and Kiket Island, and on the northeast by forest resource zoned lands.

Skagit Bay shoreline below Eagle Crest and north of the Swinomish Channel jetty create a sandy and gravel beach under the high bank waterfront during low tides from the jetty

through Shelter Bay's Martha Beach to the point of Pull & Be Damned Road along the southern boundary of the UGA. The beach shoreline extends north in Saratoga Passage under mostly high bank waterfront around Hope Island to Kiket Island Road.

The Swinomish Channel defines the east edge of the Swinomish UGA through Shelter Bay marina, which is bordered

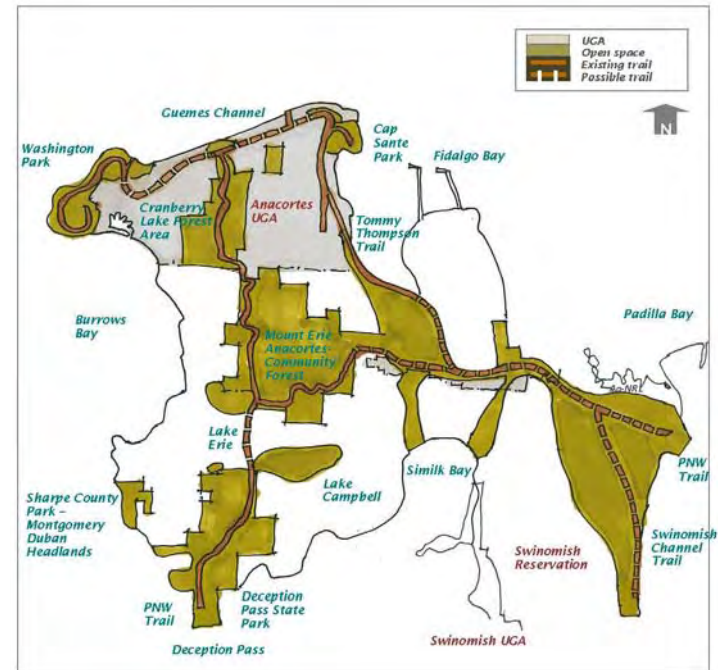
by residential development on filled lands, the Tribal fish processing plant and marina, log sorting yard, and scattered rural residential developments.

A possible local trail system could be developed from Pioneer Park in La Conner across the channel on Rainbow Bridge and then through Shelter Bay on Shelter Bay Drive to Martha’s Beach, and on Reservation Road through the village to access the Tribe’s community center, longhouse, and public facilities. The trail could extend back to the channel shoreline on the former Morris Road alignment to the original swing bridge.

The Swinomish UGA concept plan was produced during working sessions with the Tribal Planners. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households as a combined La Conner/Swinomish UGA concept.

<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>low / high</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<u><i>La Conner/Swinomish UGA open space corridors</i></u> – could focus on the Swinomish Channel, Sullivan Slough, and Skagit Bay through and around the UGA and extend into the city, Swinomish Village, and Shelter Bay to link with the downtown, schools, trails, and parks?		16%	24%	56%

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



3.11 Anacortes Urban Growth Area

Anacortes's UGA open space concept - is defined on the east by Similk and Fidalgo Bays, on the north by Guemes Channel, on the west by Barrows Bay, on the south by Cranberry Lake and the Community Forests with some forest resource zoned lands.

The northeast and western edges of Fidalgo Bay have been modified since the city was established in 1891 by a series of piers, docks, marinas, and other waterfront constructions including oil refineries and railroad over water track extensions. The north edge of the city along Guemes Channel has also been modified by a successive series of waterfront and shipping constructions. And the western edge of the city has been excavated and filled for Skyline Marina in Flounder Bay.

The north end of Similk Bay and south end of Fidalgo Bay, however, remain relatively undeveloped composed of a series of significant estuaries, tidelands, and wetlands. The city's Cap Sante and Washington Parks also preserve undisturbed natural shorelines, woodlands, and scenic vistas.

The city's Cranberry Lake Forest Area, Heart Lake State Park, and Mount Erie Community Forests preserve an extensive system of woodlands, wetlands, and lakes extending from the center of the UGA south towards Lake Campbell that is accessed by an extensive system of local trails.

Open space fingers could connect these assets into an extended network of corridors extending around the waterfront and through the forests defining the edges of the UGA and linking with other parks, schools, residential neighborhoods, the historic downtown, and working waterfronts.

The Tommy Thompson Trail - currently extends south on former railroad right-of-way, track bed, and over water trestles from the Port of Anacortes's Cap Sante Marina past the Anacortes Marina and across Fidalgo Bay to SR-20. Future trail planning may extend the trail west within or adjacent to SR-20 to connect with the proposed Swinomish Channel Trail to La Conner, and the Anacortes-Burlington Trail past Bayview to Burlington and the Centennial Trail.

The Pacific Northwest (PNW) Trail proposal - is to extend a trail network south from the Pacific Northwest Trail at Mount Baker west and south through Bellingham and the Chuckanut Mountains to Anacortes, then south across Deception Pass and Whidbey Island to Coupeville, then across the Strait of Juan de Fuca to Port Townsend, and west to the Olympic Mountains.

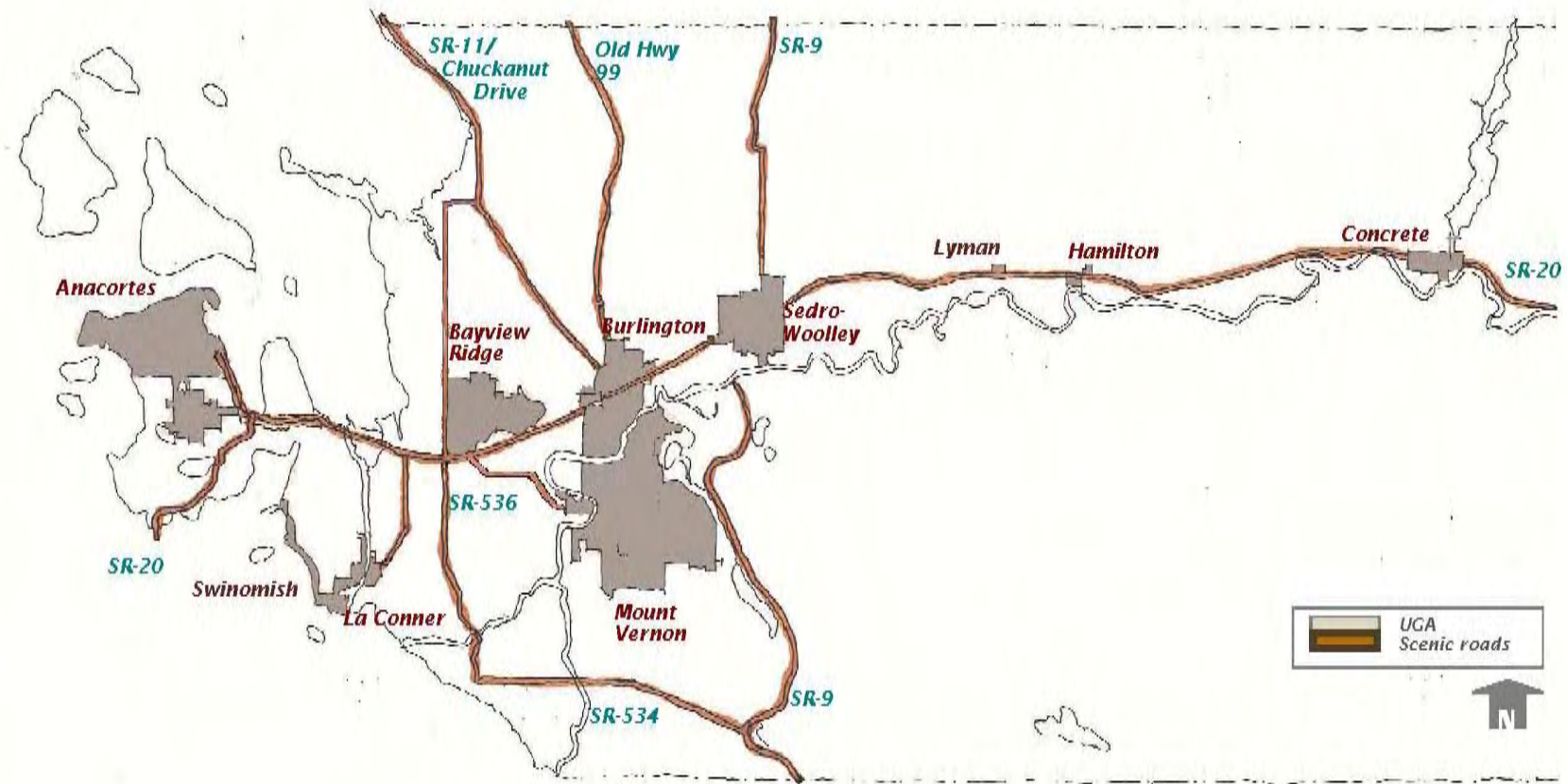
Depending on more detailed planning with affected property owners and interests, possible PNW trail corridor alternatives could be located on or adjacent dikes, roadways, utility rights-of-way, and city and state parklands through different trail segments.

The city also proposes to eventually complete development of the shoreline trail system from the end of the Tommy Thompson Trail at the Cap Sante Marina north through the downtown and waterfront then west to Washington Park. The trail would also provide linkages by ferry across the channel to Guemes Island, and into the San Juan Islands.

The Anacortes UGA concept plan was produced during public workshop sessions with the Park Planner and City Council. The concept was also vetted by the mail-out/phone-back survey with countywide registered voter households.

	<i>low</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>high</i>
	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<u><i>Anacortes UGA open space corridors</i></u> - could focus on Cranberry Lake and Community Forests, and Deception Pass State Park through the UGA and extend into the city to link with the Tommy Thompson Trail, Cap Sante and Washington Parks, the downtown, marinas, city trails, schools, and other assets.	12%		22% 61%

As shown, a majority of countywide voter household survey participants gave the concept a high priority.



3.12 Scenic Roads

“Rural by Design” scenic overlay districts be established to conserve the “rural by design” scenic aspects (but not change land use allowances) for major roadway entries into and between UGAs including SR-9, SR-11/Chuckanut Drive, SR-20, Old Highway 99, SR-237/Farm to Market Road, SR-530/Sauk Valley Road, SR-534/Conway-Lake McMurray Road, SR-536/Memorial Highway, and other significant rural state highways and county roads.

	<i>low / high</i>		
<i>UGA open space corridors</i>	<i>1-2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4-5</i>
<i>“Rural by Design” scenic overlay districts</i> - be established to conserve the “rural by design” scenic aspects (but not change land use allowances) for major roadway entries into and between the UGAs including SR-9, SR-11, SR-20, Old Highway 99, and other significant rural county roads?	16%	31%	50%



Photo - Swinomish Channel with La Conner in foreground and Mt Baker in background

Chapter 4: Implementation

Following is a summary description of the major tasks determined to be necessary to effectively implement the UGA Open Space Plan. The tasks represent the general priorities established by the SCOG coordinating group, workshops with interest groups and organizations, and the mail-out/phone-back survey of registered voter households.

As shown, a number of parties may be responsible for the lead and management, participation, and supporting aspects of each action – as described in the following summaries. The tasks are grouped according to subject matter and not priority.

4.1 Adopt plan

1 Adopt plan as GMA element – see Appendix A

Skagit County and the participating cities and UGAs including Concrete, Hamilton, Lyman, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Bay View, La Conner, and Anacortes, will complete actions necessary to adopt this planning document as a compliant element of the county, city, and UGA comprehensive and subarea plans in accordance with Growth Management Act (GMA) provisions outlined in Appendix A.

- **Participants** – Board of County Commissioners and City Councils with the assistance of the Skagit County Planning & Development Services Department and the participation of the Samish, Swinomish, and Upper Skagit Tribes, Port of Skagit County, Washington State Departments of Community, Trade & Economic Development (CTED), Natural Resources (DNR), Fish & Wildlife (DFW), Ecology (DOE), US Forest Service (USFS) and National Park Service (NPS), Skagit County Public Utilities District (PUD), Seattle City Light, and Puget Sound Energy (PSE), nonprofit organizations including Skagitonians for Farmland Preservation, Nature Conservancy, and Skagit County Land Trust, among others, and citizens of the county.

Action

- Disseminate copies of this plan document – on county and city websites and CDs to appropriate public agencies and interested public and private parties in accordance with GMA adoption provisions.
- Conduct public hearing and record comments with County and City Planning Commissions – of this document as a stand-alone UGA open space element plan and make recommendations to Board of County Commissioners and City Councils in accordance with GMA provisions.
- Conduct public hearing and record comments with Board of County Commissioners and City Councils – of this document, comments received by Planning Commissions, recommendations made by Planning Commissions, and comments provided at hearing in accordance with GMA provisions.
- Adopt this plan and accompanying Capital Facilities Program (CFP) by Board of County Commissioners and City Councils – as an element of county and city comprehensive plans and implementing CFP in accordance with GMA provisions.

4.2 Create an implementation organization

2 Establish a Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) (see Appendix F)

Establish a countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) to coordinate, oversee, and implement UGA open space programs and projects.

- **Participants** – at the Skagit Board of County Commissioner’s discretion, the membership of the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) may include members appointed from elected officials or staff of city, tribe, port, state departments, federal agencies, utility companies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have an interest in UGA open space, trail, and interpretive efforts but who do not present conflict-of-interest

Skagit County UGA Open Space Concept Plan

Participants

A=approval role
 L=lead management role
 P=major participating role

- 1. Board of County Commissioners
- 2. Planning Commission
- 3. SCUOSC/Planning & Development Services
- 4. Parks & Recreation/Public Works Departments
- 5. Concrete, Hamilton, Lyman, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, Mount Vernon, Bay View, La Conner, Anacortes
- 6. Samish, Swinomish, Upper Skagit Tribes
- 6. Port of Skagit County
- 8. CTED, DNR, DFW, DOE, WSDOT
- 9. USFS/NPS
- 10. Skagit PUD, Seattle City Light, PSE
- 11. Nonprofit organizations
- 12. Private and for-profit entities

												1	1	1	By year																
												1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	6	7+	Comments				
4.1 Adopt plan																															
1 Adopt plan as GMA element												A	P	L	P	A	P	P	P	P	P					X			County and cities		
4.2 Create an implementation organization																															
2 Establish UGA Open Space Committee (SCUOSC)												A		L	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P				X					
4.3 Adopt financing strategy																															
3 Adopt impact fees - open space provisions												A		L	P	A	P	P							P	X			With open space dedications		
4 Institute an UGA open space levy												A		L	P	P	P	P							P	X			Countywide 6 year		
4.4 Initiate UGA open space competitions																															
5 Establish public benefit criteria												A	P	L	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				X					
6 Conduct open space RFP												A		L	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				X	X	X	Annual competitions		
7 Acquire/restore/enhance open spaces												A		L	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P			X	X	X			
8 Acquire/develop trails												A		L	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P			X	X	X			
9 Acquire/develop interpretive facilities												A		L	P	P	P	P	P		P	P	P			X	X	X			
4.5 Monitor progress																															
10 Conduct progress assessments												A	P	L	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				X	X	X	With every CFP update		

issues or perceptions during the submittal, award, or monitoring of subsequent UGA open space fund competitions.

Action

- The Board of County Commissioners will formally approve the role and responsibility - of a Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) organization as the countywide UGA open space facilitating, coordinating, and implementation agent.
- Coordinate UGA open space plans, programs, projects, and other actions - to be accomplished by the county, cities, tribes, port, state, federal, utility, nonprofit, and for-profit participants.
- Engage the public - of the implications of current and forecast urban and rural development trends, the need to establish UGA open space separators and countywide open space and trail networks, and the impact open space issues have on the economic well being and development of the county-at-large.
- Resolve a funding strategy - necessary to effectively finance on a continuous basis the preservation, restoration, enhancement, and management of UGA and countywide networks of open space, trails, and interpretive facilities.
- Monitor implementation - to ensure the actions proposed in this plan are effectively realized by the assigned participants.

4.3 Adopt a financing strategy

3 Consider adopting growth impact fees for open space, trails, and interpretive facilities

Evaluate the option of adopting limited purpose county or countywide open space (park) and trail (traffic) impact fees to be dedicated to UGA and countywide networks of open space, trails, and interpretive facilities in or adjacent the UGAs and of the countywide networks connecting the UGAs.

- Participants - the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) with the participation and approval of the Board of County Commissioners and City Councils, Planning Commissions, Parks & Recreation Departments, Public Works Departments, property owners and developers, nonprofit organizations, and citizens.

Action

- Design and test jurisdiction and public support - for limited purpose open space (park) and trail (traffic) growth impact fees that would assess new residential and commercial developments the cost and value of maintaining the existing level-of-service (LOS) for open space, trails, and interpretive facilities on a UGA countywide basis to match contributions from the UGA open space levy and to be overseen by the Skagit County UGA Open Space Advisory Committee.
- Where feasible, adopt and assess impact fees - to be expended for open space, trails, and interpretive facilities by participating jurisdiction and UGA or on a countywide basis if all jurisdictions participate.
- Capitalize the impact fee revenues - to issue Revenue Bonds with which to initiate request-for-proposal (RFP) competitions for preservation through acquisition of development rights or property only - since restoration and enhancement projects, maintenance and management programs would not create added capacity and therefore not be eligible - with which to maintain the UGA and countywide open space, trail, and interpretive network level-of-service (LOS).

4 Institute countywide UGA open space levy (see Appendix F)

Submit and obtain voter approval of a special property tax levy with which to create a capital fund necessary for preserving, restoring, enhancing, and managing UGA and countywide networks of open space, trails, and interpretive facilities.

- Participants - the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) with active participation and support of city, tribe, port, state, federal, utility, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have an interest in UGA open space, trail, and interpretive efforts.

Action

- Design and test public support - for a special property tax levy to match public and nonprofit donations, grants, loans, and other funding measures with which to create a capital fund necessary for implementing the preservation, restoration, enhancement, and management programs and projects to be

overseen by the Skagit County UGA Open Space Advisory Committee.

- Submit and approve a special property tax levy - to run at a fixed rate for a specified number of years and/or at an initially higher rate until a specified amount is created (at which time the levy sunsets) with which to create a capital fund necessary for implementing UGA and countywide open space, trails, and interpretive network.
- Capitalize the levy revenues - to issue Revenue Bonds with which to initiate request-for-proposal (RFP) competitions for preservation through acquisition of development rights or property, restoration and enhancement projects, maintenance and management programs with which to implement the UGA and countywide open space, trail, and interpretive networks.

4.4 Initiate UGA open space competitions

5 Establish public benefit criteria (see Appendix G)

The Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) will establish performance and participation criteria with which to issue request-for-proposal (RFP) competitions for use of countywide UGA open space levy and optional growth impact fee funds.

- Participants - the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) with active participation and support of city, tribe, port, state, federal, utility, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have an interest in UGA open space, trail, and interpretive efforts.

Action

- Determine UGA open space objectives - including the preservation, restoration, enhancement, and maintenance objectives for each UGA and countywide based on each participating city and community planning area's adopted plans and proposals.
- Define public benefit criteria - to be used to judge and award competitive UGA open space, trail, and interpretive submittals and succeeding contracts including minimum requirements for matching funds, donations, labor, materials, performance agreements, and other particulars.

- Conduct public hearings and approve performance and participation criteria - including mandatory and performance-based project/program objectives and public benefit criteria, and the compliance terms for the awarding and monitoring of UGA open space funds.

6 Conduct UGA open space request-for-proposals (RFP) competitions

Conduct UGA open space request-for-proposal (RFP) competitions where the county, cities, tribes, port, state agencies, federal agencies, utility companies, nonprofit organizations, and private or for-profit entities compete for the opportunity of receiving grants from the UGA tax levy and growth impact fees for preservation, restoration, enhancement, and/or maintenance projects or programs.

- Participants - the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) with potential proposals to be submitted by the county, cities, tribes, port, state departments, federal agencies, utility companies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have projects and programs that qualify for UGA open space, trail, and interpretive funds.

Action

- Develop a competitive request-for-proposal (RFP) process - governing the submittal of project and program proposals for UGA open space, trail, and interpretive projects and programs.
- Judge proposals - by ranking proposals for compliance with and the furthering UGA open space project or program objectives and the public benefit rating criteria including consideration of open space characteristic intrinsic environmental and wildlife quality, extent of development threat, leveraged funds, UGA edge and rural land transitions, maintenance and management capabilities and commitments, and other factors adopted from task 5.
- Award projects and programs - following public hearings and review procedures, the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) may award UGA open space tax levy and growth impact fee monies to the project and program proposals ranked to realize the most objectives and have the

most open space, trail, and interpretive benefits to the UGAs, adjacent rural lands and uses, and on a countywide basis.

7 Acquire/restore/enhance open spaces

Based on the result of task 6, award and fund proposals that preserve through acquisition of development rights or property title, restore environmental character and wildlife habitat, enhance rural agricultural, forest, or other open space features and activities within, adjacent, or between the UGAs and countywide.

- **Participants** – the county, cities, tribes, port, state departments, federal agencies, utility companies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have projects and programs that qualify for and receive UGA open space, trail, and interpretive funds.

Action

- **Select project proposals and award funds** – from the UGA open space levy and/or growth impact fees based on the RFP proposal terms, conditions, and submitted performance agreements.
- **Approve contractual terms** – concerning the acquisition of development rights or property title, restoration of environmental and wildlife habitat, enhancement of rural agriculture, forest, or other open space features and activities and the matching funds, labor, materials, and other leveraging and commitments made by the submitting entity.
- **Monitor compliance** – with the contents of the selected proposal and resulting contractual terms from the award of UGA open space levy and/or growth impact fee funds.

8 Acquire/develop trails

Based on the result of task 6, award and fund proposals that acquire trail corridor easements, use rights, or property, develop, maintain, and manage public access trails alongside, within, or between UGA open space networks.

- **Participants** – the county, cities, tribes, port, state departments, federal agencies, utility companies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have trail

access projects and programs that qualify for and receive UGA open space, trail, and interpretive funds.

Action

- **Select project proposals and award funds** – from the UGA open space levy and/or growth impact fees based on the RFP proposal terms, conditions, and submitted performance agreements.
- **Approve contractual terms** – concerning the acquisition of easements, use rights, or property title, and develop, maintain, and manage public access trails alongside, within, or between UGA open space networks and the matching funds, labor, materials, and other leveraging and commitments made by the submitting entity.
- **Monitor compliance** – with the contents of the selected proposal and resulting contractual terms from the award of UGA open space levy and/or growth impact fee funds.

9 Acquire/develop interpretive facilities

Based on the result of task 6, award and fund proposals that acquire easements, use rights, or property; develop, maintain, and manage publicly accessible signage, exhibits, centers, tours, programs, and other facilities or activities that interpret the environment, wildlife, history or culture, rural land use, or other open space features within, adjacent, or between the UGAs.

- **Participants** – the county, cities, tribes, port, state departments, federal agencies, utility companies, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have public interpretive projects and programs that qualify for and receive UGA open space, trail, and interpretive funds.

Action

- **Select project proposals and award funds** – from the UGA open space levy and/or growth impact fees based on the RFP proposal terms, conditions, and submitted performance agreements.
- **Approve contractual terms** – concerning the acquisition of easements, use rights, or property title, and develop, maintain, and manage publicly accessible interpretive signage, exhibits,

centers, tours, or programs alongside, within, or between UGA open space networks and the matching funds, labor, materials, and other leveraging and commitments made by the submitting entity.

- Monitor compliance – with the contents of the selected proposal and resulting contractual terms from the award of UGA open space levy and/or growth impact fee funds.

4.5 Monitor UGA open space initiatives

10 Issue annual and periodic reports and update the UGA Open Space Plan on a frequent basis

The Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) will issue annual reports and update the UGA Open Space Plan on a frequent basis to ensure the above measures achieve the UGA open space, trail, and interpretive results intended.

- Participants – the Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Advisory Committee (SCUOSAC) with active participation and support of city, tribe, port, state, federal, utility, nonprofit organizations, and private entities and individuals who have an interest in UGA open space, trail, and interpretive efforts.

Action

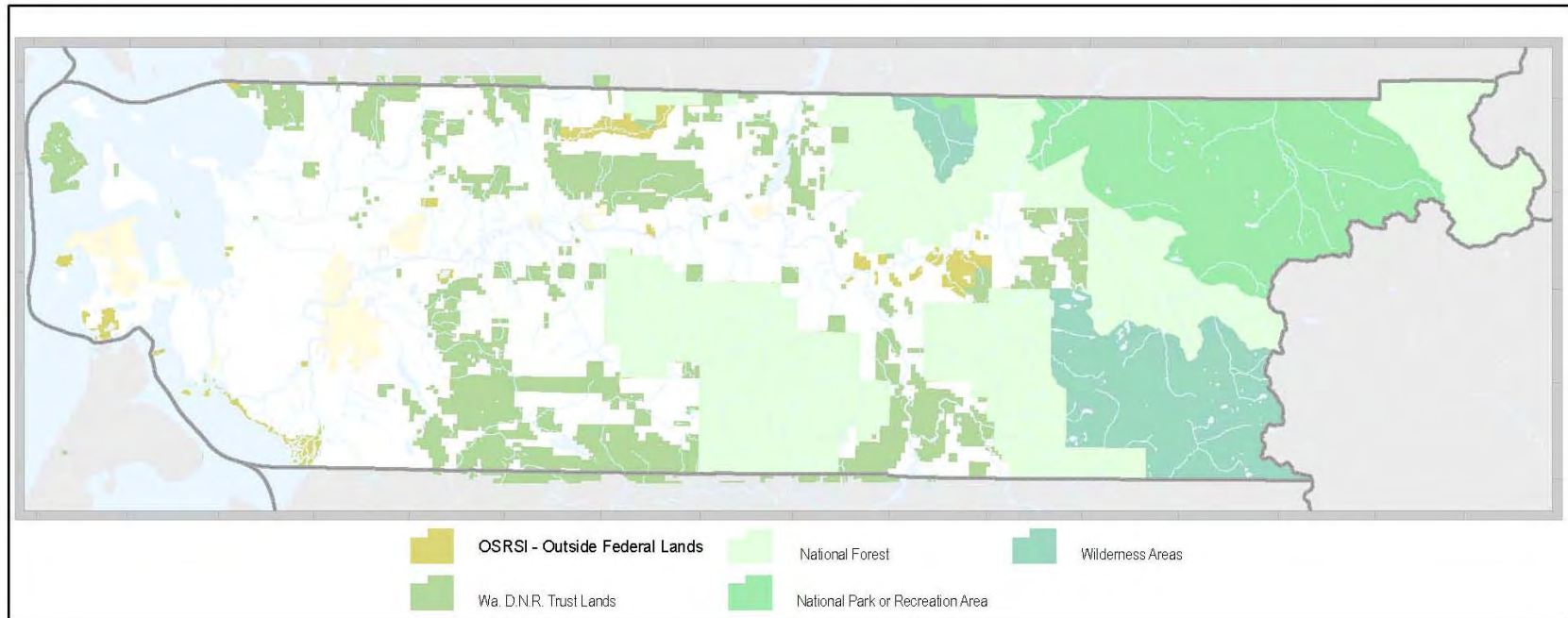
- Conduct annual progress assessments - to review action on projects and policies identified in the UGA Open Space Plan and evaluate the:
 - Acreage preserved - adjacent, within, or between the UGAs by acquisition of development rights or property and the degree to which the projects resolved development threats, linked with other open space assets, reduced urban/rural edge conflicts,
 - Acreage restored – adjacent, within, or between the UGAs and the resulting environmental, wildlife, or rural qualities achieved,
 - Acreage enhanced – adjacent, within, or between the UGAs and the increased environmental, wildlife, or rural upgrade realized,
 - Miles of public access trails developed, maintained, or managed – adjacent, within, or between the UGAs and

the extent to which the trails connect with other city and county trail systems,

- Interpretive facilities and programs installed, developed, provided, or managed – adjacent, within, or between the UGAs and the extent to which the programs increased public access, awareness, education, and appreciation of the county and city’s open space assets.
- Revise and update the UGA Open Space Plan and implementing strategies - and make revisions or adjustments to county, city, and other jurisdiction plans and policies necessary to improve methods, assign responsibilities, or take other measures necessary to be effective.



Photo – farmstead and Mt Baker from Fox Island Road



Appendix A: GMA UGA open space requirements & Skagit County policies

Following are abstracted sections of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA - RCW 36.70A) that define urban separator requirements and provisions that deal with the designation, acquisition, management, and other issues involving open space separators.

The sections are presented in the sequence as adopted or described in the RCW. *Specific text is highlighted that contains language and/or provisions that are most pertinent to the objective of creating UGA open space.*

The full text of these sections and the RCW proper is available on the Washington State website at:
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/Rcw/default.aspx?Cite=36.70A>

A.1: RCW 36.70A.011 - Findings - Rural lands

The legislature finds that this chapter is intended to recognize the importance of rural lands and rural character to Washington's economy, its people, and its environment, while

respecting regional differences. Rural lands and rural-based economies enhance the economic desirability of the state, help to preserve traditional economic activities, and contribute to the state's overall quality of life.

The legislature finds that to retain and enhance the job base in rural areas, rural counties must have flexibility to create opportunities for business development. Further, the legislature finds that rural counties must have the flexibility to retain existing businesses and allow them to expand. The legislature recognizes that not all business developments in rural counties require an urban level of services; and that many businesses in rural areas fit within the definition of rural character identified by the local planning unit.

Finally, the legislature finds that in defining its rural element under RCW 36.70A.070(5), a county should foster land use patterns and develop a local vision of rural character that will: Help preserve rural-based economies and traditional rural lifestyles; encourage the economic

*prosperity of rural residents; foster opportunities for small-scale, rural-based employment and self-employment; permit the operation of rural-based agricultural, commercial, recreational, and tourist businesses that are consistent with existing and planned land use patterns; be compatible with the use of the land by wildlife and for fish and wildlife habitat; foster the private stewardship of the land and **preservation of open space**; and enhance the rural sense of community and quality of life.*

[2002 c 212 § 1.]

A.2: RCW 36.70A.060 – Natural resource lands and critical areas – Development regulations

(1)(a) Except as provided in *RCW 36.70A.1701, each county that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040, and each city within such county, shall adopt development regulations on or before September 1, 1991, to assure the conservation of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated under RCW 36.70A.170. Regulations adopted under this subsection may not prohibit uses legally existing on any parcel prior to their adoption and shall remain in effect until the county or city adopts development regulations pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040. **Such regulations shall assure that the use of lands adjacent to agricultural, forest, or mineral resource lands shall not interfere with the continued use, in the accustomed manner and in accordance with best management practices, of these designated lands for the production of food, agricultural products, or timber, or for the extraction of minerals.**

(b) *Counties and cities shall require that all plats, short plats, development permits, and building permits issued for development activities on, or within five hundred feet of, lands designated as agricultural lands, forest lands, or mineral resource lands, contain a notice that the subject property is within or near designated agricultural lands, forest lands, or mineral resource lands on which a variety of commercial activities may occur that are not compatible with residential development for certain periods of limited duration.*

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Appendix A: GMA requirements
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The notice for mineral resource lands shall also inform that an application might be made for mining-related activities, including mining, extraction, washing, crushing, stockpiling, blasting, transporting, and recycling of minerals.

(2) Each county and city shall adopt development regulations that protect critical areas that are required to be designated under RCW 36.70A.170. For counties and cities that are required or choose to plan under RCW 36.70A.040, such development regulations shall be adopted on or before September 1, 1991.

For the remainder of the counties and cities, such development regulations shall be adopted on or before March 1, 1992.

(3) Such counties and cities shall review these designations and development regulations when adopting their comprehensive plans under RCW 36.70A.040 and implementing development regulations under RCW 36.70A.120 and may alter such designations and development regulations to insure consistency.

(4) Forest land and agricultural land located within urban growth areas shall not be designated by a county or city as forest land or agricultural land of long-term commercial significance under RCW 36.70A.170 unless the city or county has enacted a program authorizing transfer or purchase of development rights.

[2005 c 423 § 3; 1998 c 286 § 5; 1991 sp.s. c 32 § 21; 1990 1st ex.s. c 17 § 6.]

NOTES:

*Reviser's note: RCW 36.70A.1701 expired June 30, 2006.

Intent -- Effective date -- 2005 c 423: See notes following RCW 36.70A.030.

A.3: RCW 36.70A.070 – Comprehensive plan – mandatory elements

The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles,

and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

Each comprehensive plan shall include a plan, scheme, or design for each of the following:

(1) A land use element designating the proposed general distribution and general location and extent of the uses of land, where appropriate, for agriculture, timber production, housing, commerce, industry, recreation, open spaces, general aviation airports, public utilities, public facilities, and other land uses.

The land use element shall include population densities, building intensities, and estimates of future population growth. The land use element shall provide for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies. Wherever possible, the land use element should consider utilizing urban planning approaches that promote physical activity.

Where applicable, the land use element shall review drainage, flooding, and storm water run-off in the area and nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound....

(3) A capital facilities plan element consisting of: (a) An inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities, showing the locations and capacities of the capital facilities; (b) a forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities; (c) the proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities; (d) at least a six-year plan that will finance such capital facilities within projected funding capacities and clearly identifies sources of public money for such purposes; and (e) a requirement to reassess the land use element if probable funding falls short of meeting existing needs and to ensure that the land use element, capital facilities plan element, and

financing plan within the capital facilities plan element are coordinated and consistent. *Park and recreation facilities shall be included in the capital facilities plan element...*

(5) A rural element. Counties shall include a rural element including lands that are not designated for urban growth, agriculture, forest, or mineral resources. The following provisions shall apply to the rural element:

(a) Growth management act goals and local circumstances. Because circumstances vary from county to county, in establishing patterns of rural densities and uses, a county may consider local circumstances, but shall develop a written record explaining how the rural element harmonizes the planning goals in RCW 36.70A.020 and meets the requirements of this chapter.

(b) Rural development. The rural element shall permit rural development, forestry, and agriculture in rural areas. The rural element shall provide for a variety of rural densities, uses, essential public facilities, and rural governmental services needed to serve the permitted densities and uses. *To achieve a variety of rural densities and uses, counties may provide for clustering, density transfer, design guidelines, conservation easements, and other innovative techniques that will accommodate appropriate rural densities and uses that are not characterized by urban growth and that are consistent with rural character.*

(c) Measures governing rural development. The rural element shall include measures that apply to rural development and protect the rural character of the area, as established by the county, by:

(i) Containing or otherwise controlling rural development;
(ii) Assuring visual compatibility of rural development with the surrounding rural area;

(iii) Reducing the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development in the rural area;

(iv) Protecting critical areas, as provided in RCW 36.70A.060, and surface water and groundwater resources; and

(v) Protecting against conflicts with the use of agricultural, forest, and mineral resource lands designated under RCW 36.70A.170....

(6) A transportation element that implements, and is consistent with, the land use element.

(a) The transportation element shall include the following subelements:

(vii) Pedestrian and bicycle component to include collaborative efforts to identify and designate planned improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities and corridors that address and encourage enhanced community access and promote healthy lifestyles.

(8) A park and recreation element that implements, and is consistent with, the capital facilities plan element as it relates to park and recreation facilities. The element shall include: (a) Estimates of park and recreation demand for at least a ten-year period; (b) an evaluation of facilities and service needs; and (c) *an evaluation of intergovernmental coordination opportunities to provide regional approaches for meeting park and recreational demand.*

Findings -- Intent -- 2005 c 360: "The legislature finds that regular physical activity is essential to maintaining good health and reducing the rates of chronic disease. The legislature further finds that providing opportunities for walking, biking, horseback riding, and other regular forms of exercise is best accomplished through collaboration between the private sector and local, state, and institutional policymakers. This collaboration can build communities where people find it easy and safe to be physically active. It is the intent of the legislature to promote policy and planning efforts that increase access to inexpensive or free opportunities for regular exercise in all communities around the state."

[2005 c 360 § 1.]

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Appendix A: GMA requirements
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A.4: RCW 36.70A.090 – Comprehensive plan – innovative techniques

A comprehensive plan should provide for innovative land use management techniques, including, but not limited to, density bonuses, cluster housing, planned unit developments, *and the transfer of development rights.*
[1990 1st ex.s. c 17 § 9.]

A.5: RCW 36.70A.100 – Comprehensive plans – must be coordinated

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.
[1990 1st ex.s. c 17 § 10.]

A.6: RCW 36.70A.160 – Identification of open space corridors – Purchase authorized

Each county and city that is required or chooses to prepare a comprehensive land use plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall identify open space corridors within and between urban growth areas. They shall include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas as defined in RCW 36.70A.030. Identification of a corridor under this section by a county or city shall not restrict the use or management of lands within the corridor for agricultural or forest purposes.

Restrictions on the use or management of such lands for agricultural or forest purposes imposed after identification solely to maintain or enhance the value of such lands as a corridor may occur only if the county or city acquires sufficient interest to prevent development of the lands or to control the resource development of the lands.

The requirement for acquisition of sufficient interest does not include those corridors regulated by the interstate commerce commission, under provisions of 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1247(d), 16 U.S.C. Sec. 1248, or 43 U.S.C. Sec. 912. Nothing in this section shall be interpreted to alter the authority of the state, or a county or city, to regulate land use activities.

The city or county may acquire by donation or purchase the fee simple or lesser interests in these open space corridors using funds authorized by RCW 84.34.230 or other sources. [1992 c 227 § 1; 1990 1st ex.s. c 17 § 16.]

A.7: RCW 36.70A.165 – Property designated as greenbelt or open space – Not subject to adverse possession

The legislature recognizes that the preservation of urban greenbelts is an integral part of comprehensive growth management in Washington. The legislature further recognizes that certain greenbelts are subject to adverse possession action which, if carried out, threaten the comprehensive nature of this chapter.

Therefore, a party shall not acquire by adverse possession property that is designated as a plat greenbelt or open space area or that is dedicated as open space to a public agency or to a bona fide homeowner's association. [1997 c 429 § 41.]

NOTES:

Severability -- 1997 c 429: See note following RCW 36.70A.3201.

A.8: RCW 36.70A.177– Agricultural lands – Innovative zoning techniques – Accessory uses

(1) A county or a city may use a variety of innovative zoning techniques in areas designated as agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance under RCW 36.70A.170. The innovative zoning techniques should be designed to conserve agricultural lands and encourage the agricultural economy. Except as provided in subsection (3) of this section, a county or

city should encourage nonagricultural uses to be limited to lands with poor soils or otherwise not suitable for agricultural purposes.

(2) Innovative zoning techniques a county or city may consider include, but are not limited to:

(a) Agricultural zoning, which limits the density of development and restricts or prohibits nonfarm uses of agricultural land and may allow accessory uses, including nonagricultural accessory uses and activities, that support, promote, or sustain agricultural operations and production, as provided in subsection (3) of this section;

(b) Cluster zoning, which allows new development on one portion of the land, leaving the remainder in agricultural or open space uses;

A.9: RCW 36.70A.210 – County-wide planning policies

(1) *The legislature recognizes that counties are regional governments within their boundaries, and cities are primary providers of urban governmental services within urban growth areas. For the purposes of this section, a "county-wide planning policy" is a written policy statement or statements used solely for establishing a county-wide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed and adopted pursuant to this chapter. This framework shall ensure that city and county comprehensive plans are consistent as required in RCW 36.70A.100. Nothing in this section shall be construed to alter the land-use powers of cities....*

A.10: Skagit Countywide Planning Policies – 9. Open space and recreation

Following are abstracted sections of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan that define open space policies. *Specific text is highlighted that contains language and/or provisions that are most pertinent to the objective of creating UGA open space.*

The full text may be viewed at the county website at http://www.skagitcounty.net/Common/asp/default.asp?d=PlanningAndPermit&c=General&p=comp_toc.htm

Skagit County shall:

9. Encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks.

9.1 Open space corridors within and between urban growth areas shall be identified. These areas shall include lands useful for recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas.

9.2 To preserve open space and create recreational opportunities, innovative regulatory techniques and incentives such as but not limited to, purchase of development rights, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, land trusts and community acquisition of lands for public ownership shall be encouraged.

9.3 The use of Open Space Taxation Laws shall be encouraged as a useful method of land use control and resource preservation.

9.4 Expansion and enhancement of parks, recreation and scenic areas and viewing points shall be identified, planned for and improved in shorelands, and urban and rural designated areas.

9.5 Property owners shall be encouraged to site and design new construction to minimize disruption of visual amenities and solar resources of adjacent property owners, public road ways, parks, lakes, waterways and beaches.

9.6 Development of new park and recreational facilities shall adhere to the policies set out in this Comprehensive Plan document.

9.7 The Skagit Wild and Scenic River System (which includes

portions of the Sauk, Suiattle, Cascade and Skagit Rivers) is a resource that should be protected, enhanced and utilized for recreation purposes when there are not potential conflicts with the values (fisheries, wildlife, and scenic quality) of the river system.

9.8 Incompatible adjacent uses including industrial and commercial areas shall be adequately buffered by means of landscaping, or by maintaining recreation and open space corridors.

9.9 A park and recreation system shall be promoted which is integrated with existing and planned land use patterns.

9.10 Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities shall be designed to provide a wide range of opportunities allowing for individual needs of those using these facilities.

9.11 School districts, public agencies and private entities should work together to develop joint inter-agency agreements to provide facilities that not only meet the demands of the education for our youth, but also provide for public recreation opportunities that reduce the unnecessary duplication of facilities within Skagit County.

9.12 In planning new park and recreation facilities, Skagit County shall take into consideration natural features, topography, floodplains, relationship to population characteristics, types of facilities, various user group needs and standards of access including travel time.

A.11: Skagit County Comprehensive Plan – Open space policies

Open Space

As discussed in greater detail in the Urban, Open Space and Land Use Profile, there are two major categories of Open Space in Skagit County: public, and private. Open space lands in private ownership play an important role in maintaining ecological, scenic, and natural resource values, but because of their private nature they are not shown on the Comprehensive

Plan/Zoning Map. Public open space lands are those lands in public ownership that are dedicated or reserved for public use or enjoyment for recreation, scenic amenities, natural resource land management, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive areas. *Where identified below to be of regional or statewide importance, such lands are designated on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map.* Other publicly held lands, such as local neighborhood parks, scenic roads and highways, shorelines, rivers and streams, and utility corridors, *although not designated as open space on the Comprehensive Plan Map,* nevertheless offer similar open space functions and benefits.

Goal B Open Space

Recognize the important functions served by private and public open space, designate and map public open space of regional importance, and designate open space corridors within and around urban growth areas.

2B-1.1 Public open space areas are those lands in public ownership that are dedicated or reserved for public use or enjoyment for recreation, scenic amenities, natural resource land management, or for the protection of environmentally sensitive. They include:

a. Neighborhood and community parks. These should be linked by open space networks whenever possible.

b. Land that offers special natural resource-based and recreational opportunities, such as: federal, state and local regionally important parks and recreation areas; islands; federal wilderness areas; wildlife refuges; lakes; reservoirs; creeks; streams; river corridors; shorelines and areas with prominent views.

c. Lands which include a significant historic, archaeological, scenic, cultural or unique natural feature.

d. Areas that take advantage of natural processes, wetlands, tidal actions and unusual landscape features such as cliffs and bluffs.

2B-1.2 Of these public open space areas, the County has designated certain ones on the Comprehensive Plan/Zoning Map as Public Open Space of Regional/Statewide Importance (OSRSI). These areas are so identified because their recreational, environmental, scenic, cultural and other open space benefit extend beyond the local area to be regional or statewide in significance. They include:

- Deception Pass State Park;
- Montgomery-Duban Headlands Park;
- Burrows Island;
- Saddlebag Island;
- Hope Island;
- Ika Island;
- Huckleberry Island;
- Skagit Island;
- Larrabee, Rasar, and Bayview State Parks;
- PUD #1 Judy Reservoir;
- Skagit Wildlife Refuge;
- North Cascades National Park;
- Noisy Diobsud Wilderness;
- Glacier Peak Wilderness;
- Ross Lake National Recreation Area;
- Mount Baker National Forest;
- Seattle City Light Wildlife Mitigation Lands;
- Rockport State Park;
- WA Department of Natural Resources Natural Resource Conservation Areas and Natural Area Preserves; and
- portions of the Northern State Recreation Area.

2B-1.3 *By December 1, 2007, Skagit County will develop a program to identify and prioritize open space corridors and greenbelts within and between UGAs that include lands useful for recreation, wildlife habitat, trails, and connection of critical areas. The program will include a list identifying and prioritizing open space and greenbelt lands desirable for public acquisition. Any potential acquisition that may be proposed by such a program will not include any condemnation actions, but instead will be achieved by voluntary donation, CaRD subdivision, or mutually agreeable sale.*

2B-1.4 Private Open Space is privately owned land that has been or will be set aside by the operation of the Critical Areas Ordinance, by voluntary conservation or by other means. These lands may include:

a. Critical areas as defined in the Critical Areas Ordinance.

b. Lands with conservation and land reserve easements in place.

c. Lands within urban growth areas that are wooded and serve a functional purpose in climate, noise, light or pollution control, or provide wildlife habitat or greenbelts.

d. Lands that can provide for a separation between communities, minimize or prevent sprawl, provide a buffer between urban and rural areas, or between natural resource lands and rural areas.

2B-1.5 The Current Use Open Space Taxation Program includes properties utilized for agricultural, timber and open space uses as provided in RCW 84.34. Property owners should be encouraged to enroll in the Current Use Open Space Taxation Program.



Photo - barn with snow geese on Fir Island Road, Fir Island