

# How Bellingham is Accommodating Growth

## Whatcom County Council Planning Committee

*November 9<sup>th</sup> 2021*

*Greg Aucutt – AICP, Assistant Director*

*Bellingham Planning & Community Development*



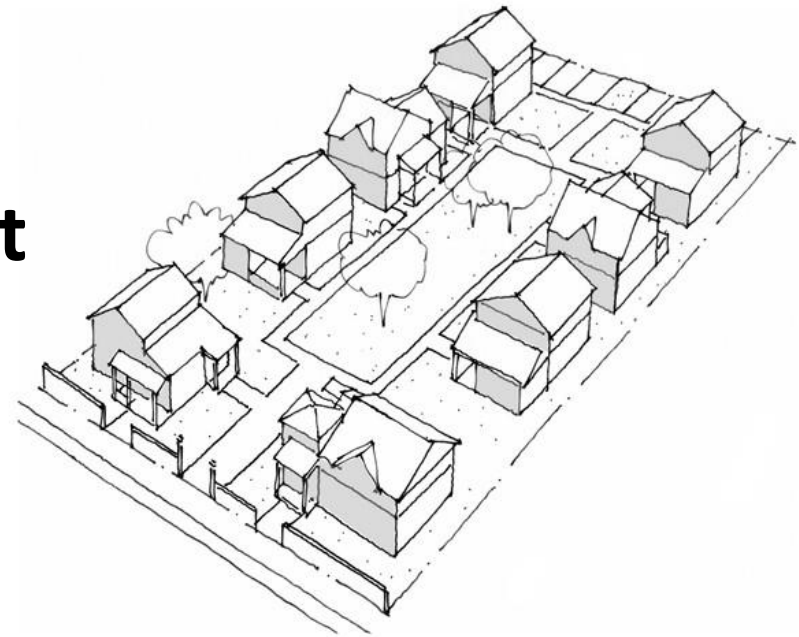
# Outline

**Population and housing growth 2016-2021**

**Annexations**

**Programs and regulatory changes that encourage housing production**

**What's coming – permit system snapshot, and next steps**

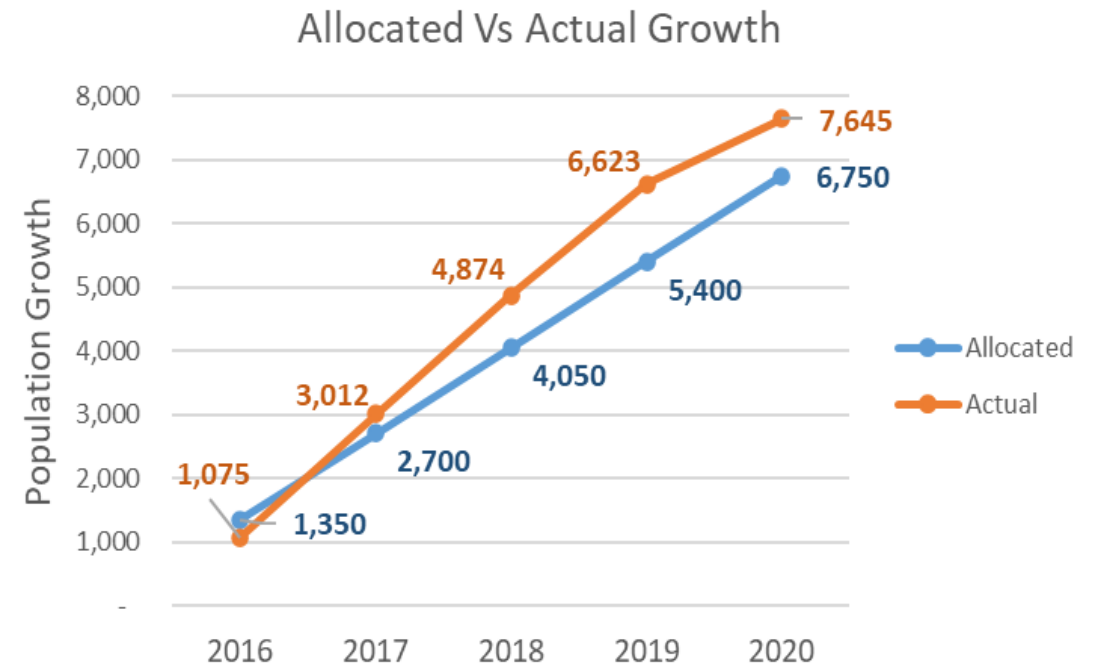


# Bellingham is exceeding its growth allocation

In the past five years the Bellingham UGA accommodated an estimated 7,645 new residents.

This is 113.3% of its growth allocation from the County Comprehensive Plan (five-year allocation is 6,750 people).

Source: 2020 Whatcom County Population Growth Monitoring Report – Whatcom County PDS 10/30/2020

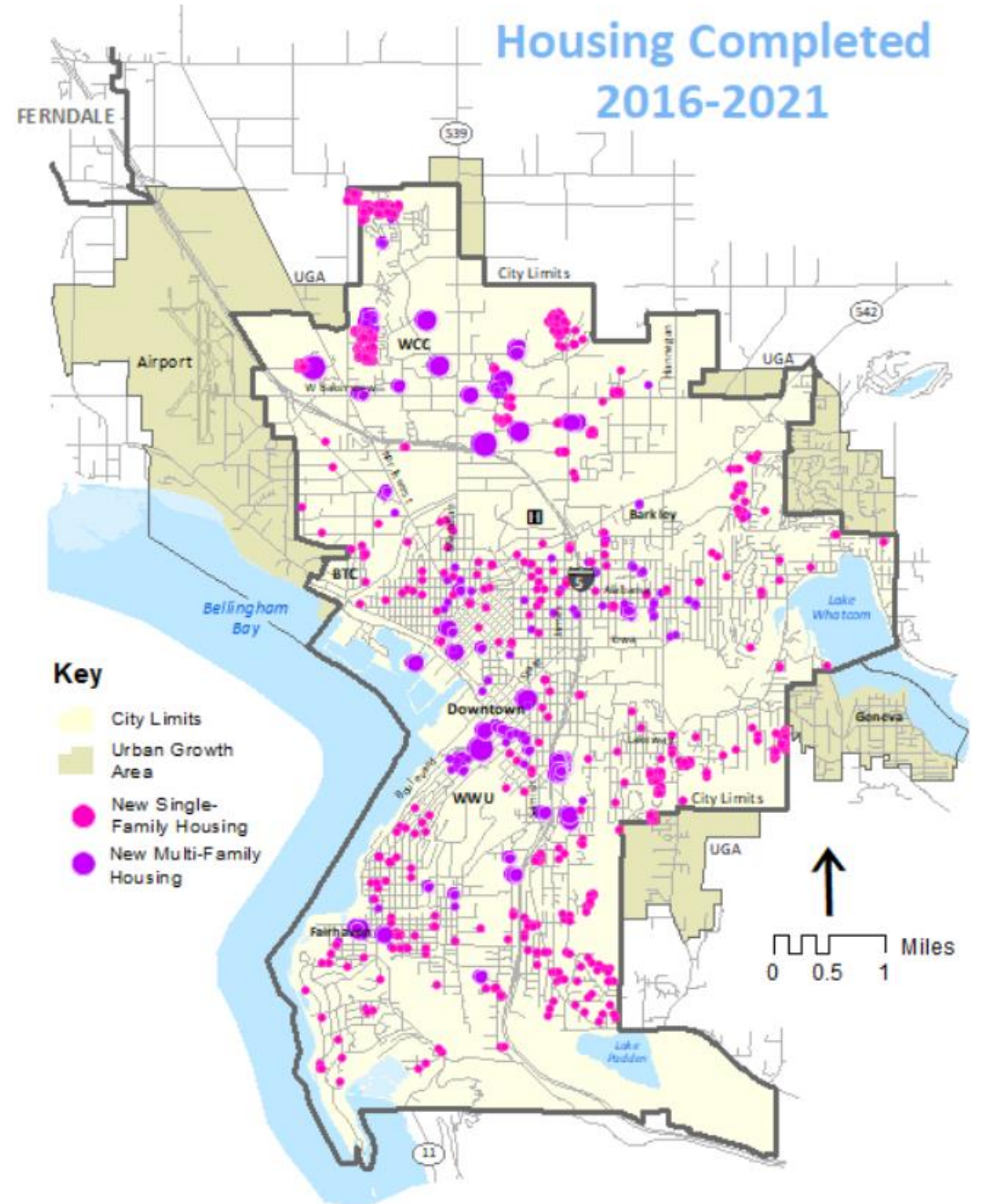


# Bellingham is exceeding its infill density goals

In the past five years Bellingham completed 3,700 housing units.

- 878 single-family units
- 2,822 multi-family units

This development occurred at an average developed density of 9.5 units/acre which is 2.3 units/acre greater than the 2016 Comprehensive Plan estimated density of 7.2 units/acre.

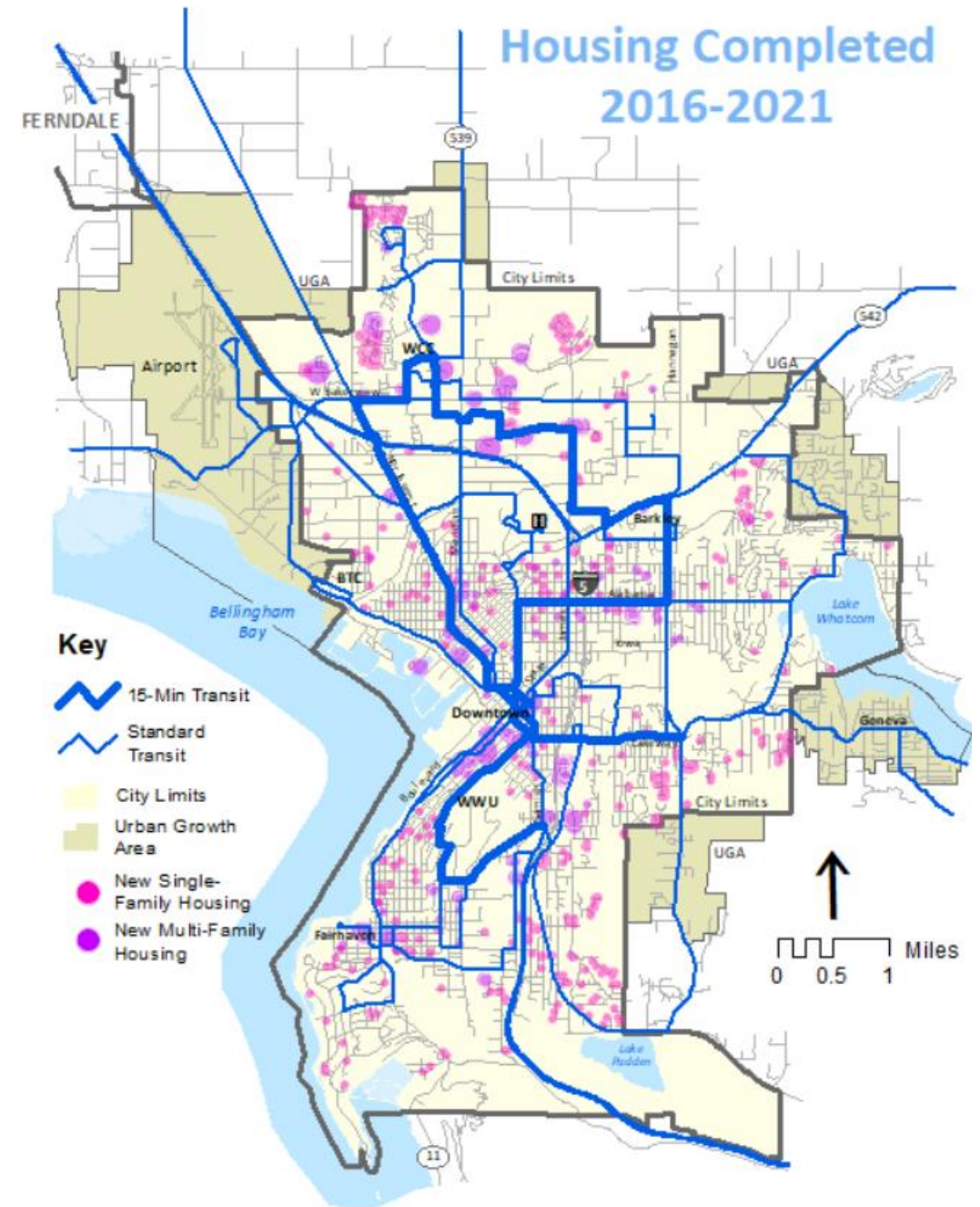




# More housing on less land

These two data points mean Bellingham is accommodating more housing on less land than was allocated in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

This efficient use of Bellingham's developable land resource means we are growing in a more sustainable fashion and leverages other community assets like our public transit system.

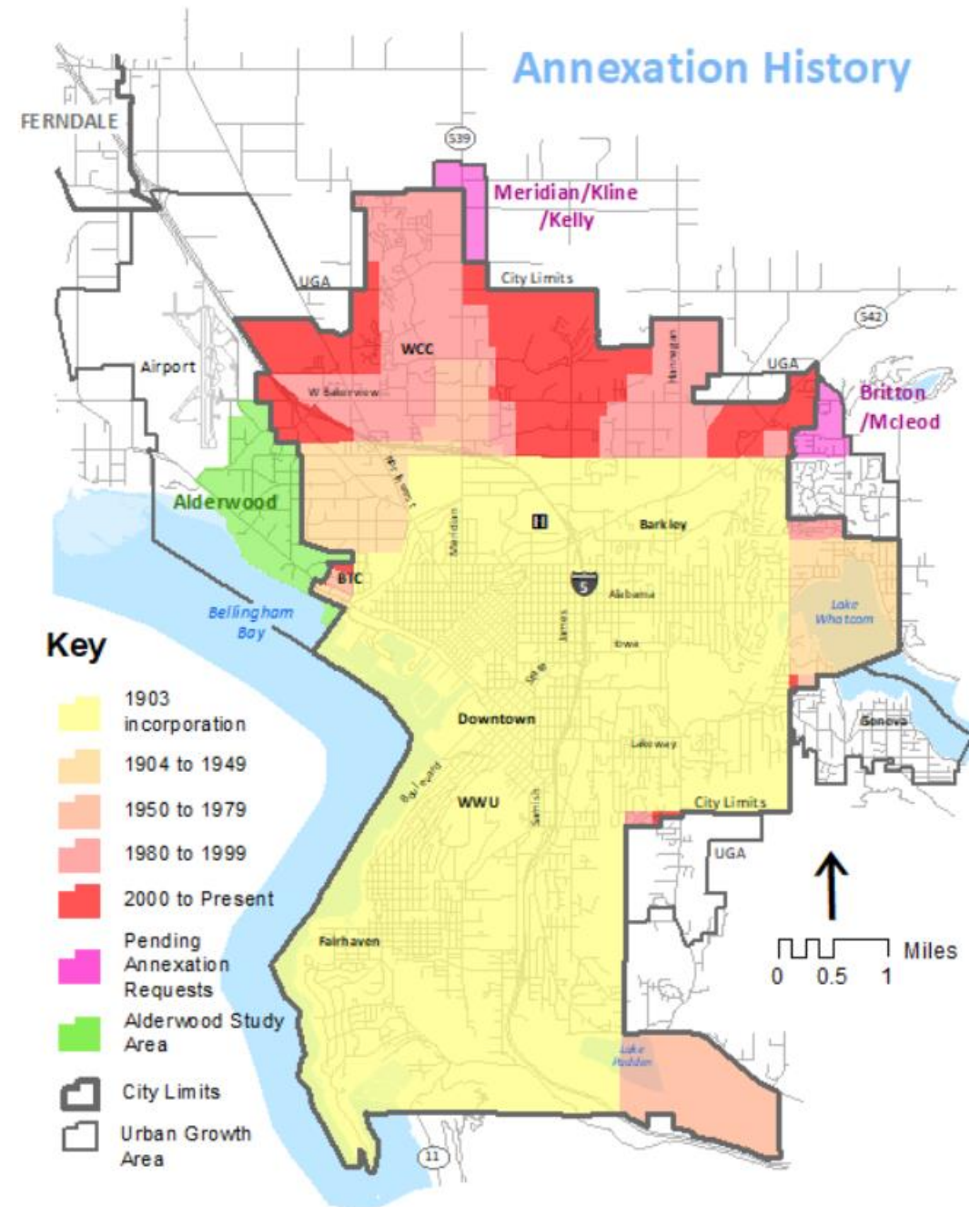


# Annexations

Bellingham has approved 17 annexations over the past 20 years.

These annexations total 1,920 acres (3 square miles) or about 11% of the City's 28 square mile area.

Today these areas accommodate over 2,100 housing units, 4,400 residents, and 1,500 jobs.





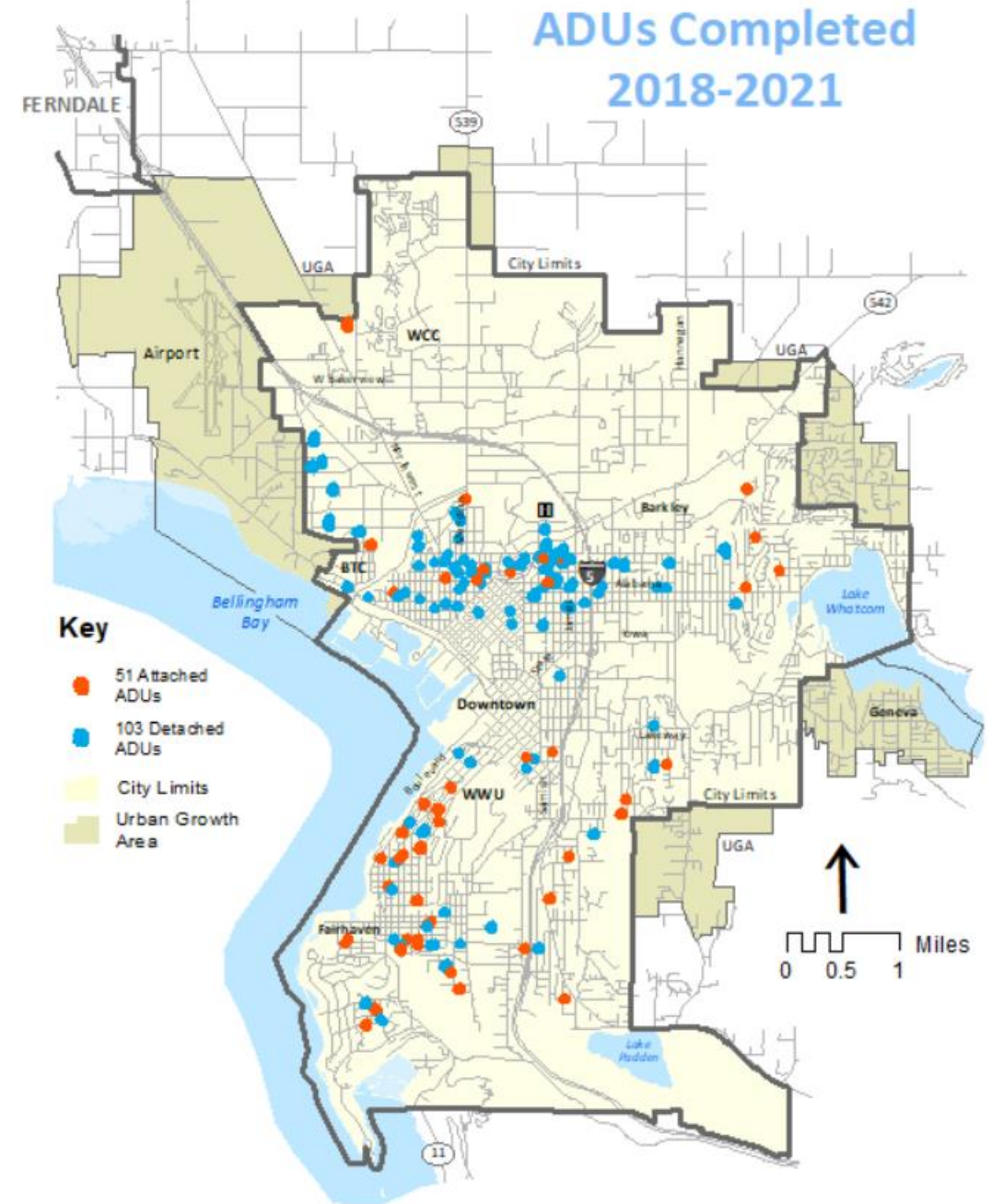


Bellingham has worked hard to implement the infill goals set forth in its comprehensive plan. The following slides highlight regulatory tools and programs adopted to address these goals in existing neighborhoods, urban villages, and greenfield development areas.

# Accessory Dwelling Units

Bellingham has approved construction of 154 accessory dwelling units since adoption of the 2018 ADU ordinance (Ord. 2018-05-009)

- 103 are detached ADUs
- 51 are attached ADUs



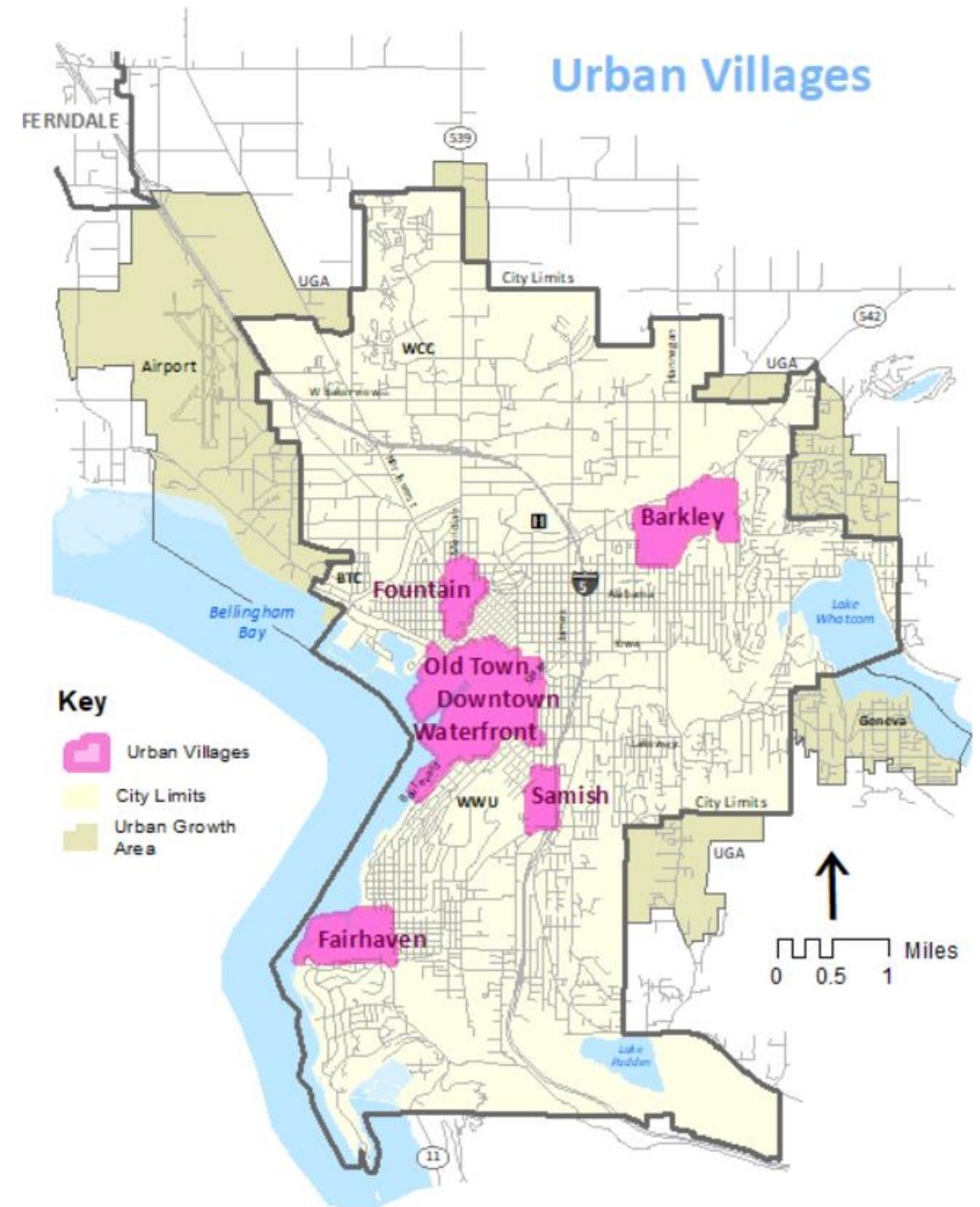


# Urban Villages

The City has adopted six urban village master plans and provides incentives for development in these areas with:

- increased densities
- reduced development fees
- tax deferrals
- investments in infrastructure

The urban villages have accommodated over 2,000 housing units, or about 28% of all housing built in Bellingham since 2006.

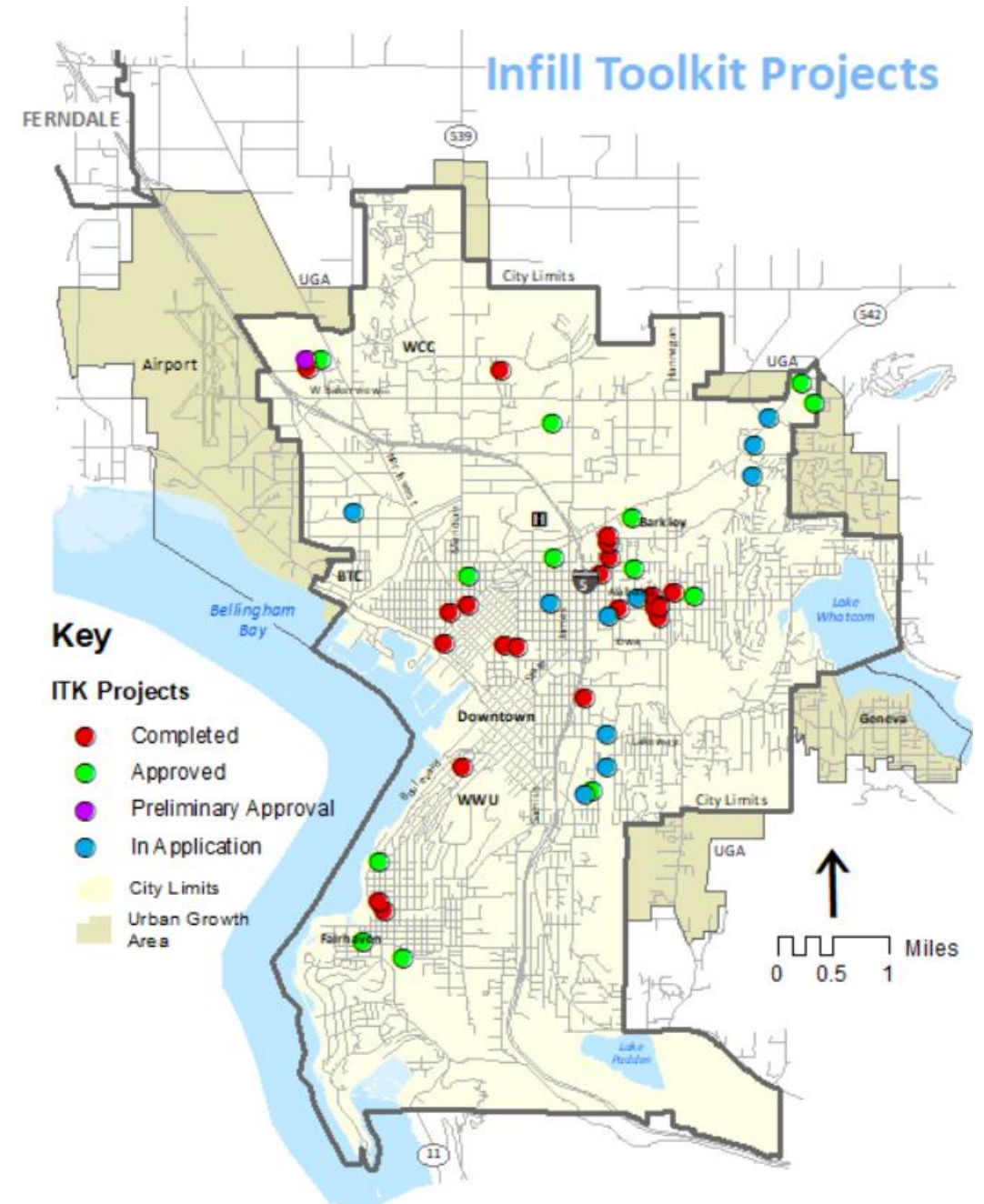


# The Infill Toolkit

Bellingham's Infill Toolkit (ITK) development regulations were adopted in 2009. They encourage innovative "middle" housing forms that utilize smaller footprints making efficient use of available land and providing greater opportunities for affordability.

Typical ITK housing includes duplex, triplex, townhouse, small and smaller house forms.

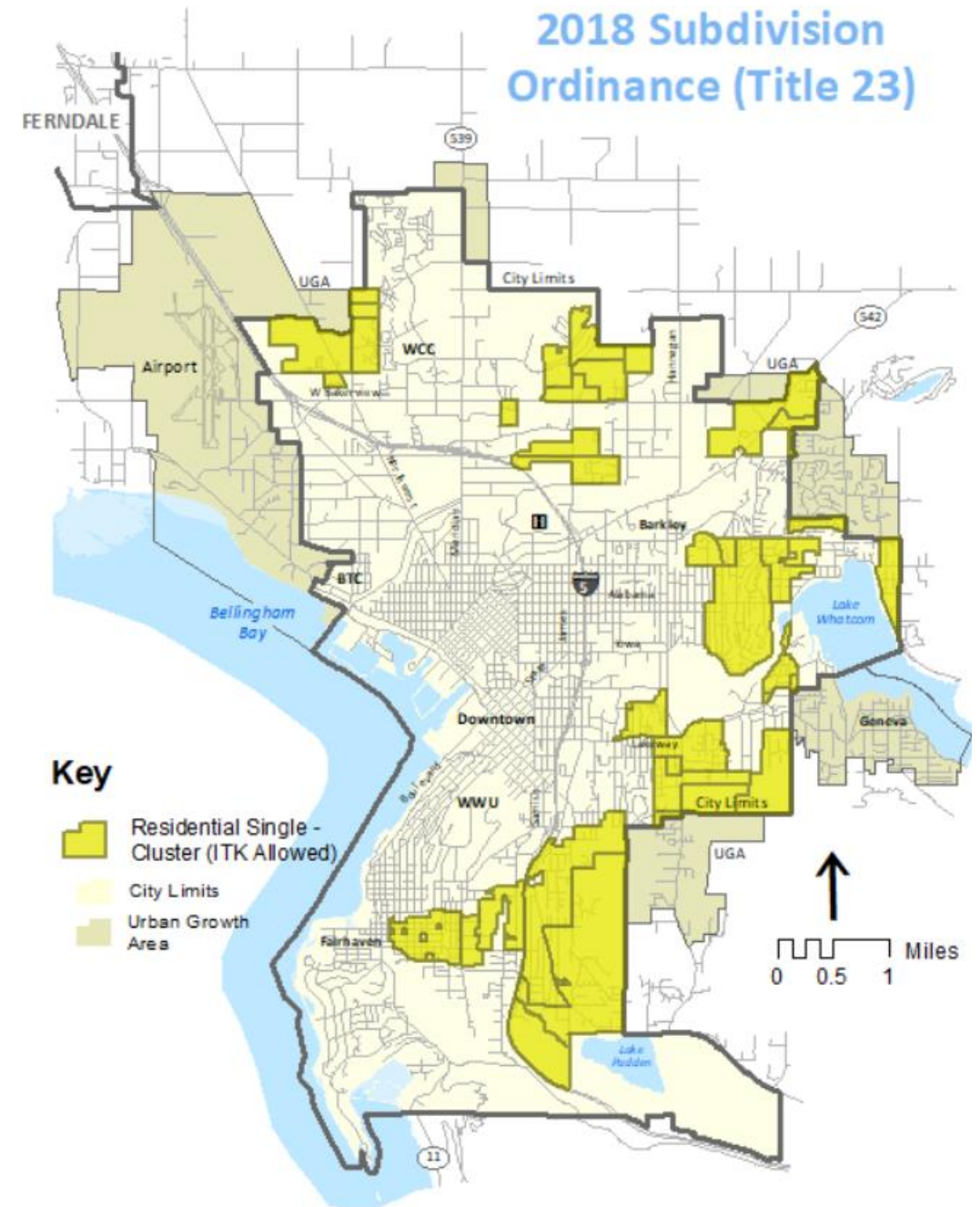
Bellingham has approved over 360 ITK housing units. Another 200 have preliminary approval, and there are currently over 150 in application for a total of over 700 ITK housing units.



# 2018 Land Division Ord.

Bellingham's 2018 Land Division ordinance (Title 23) allows for a 50% density bonus in single-family cluster zones if ITK housing forms are used.

The flexibility and additional units allowed under this bonus system provide opportunities to maximize the potential of Bellingham's single-family zoned land supply.

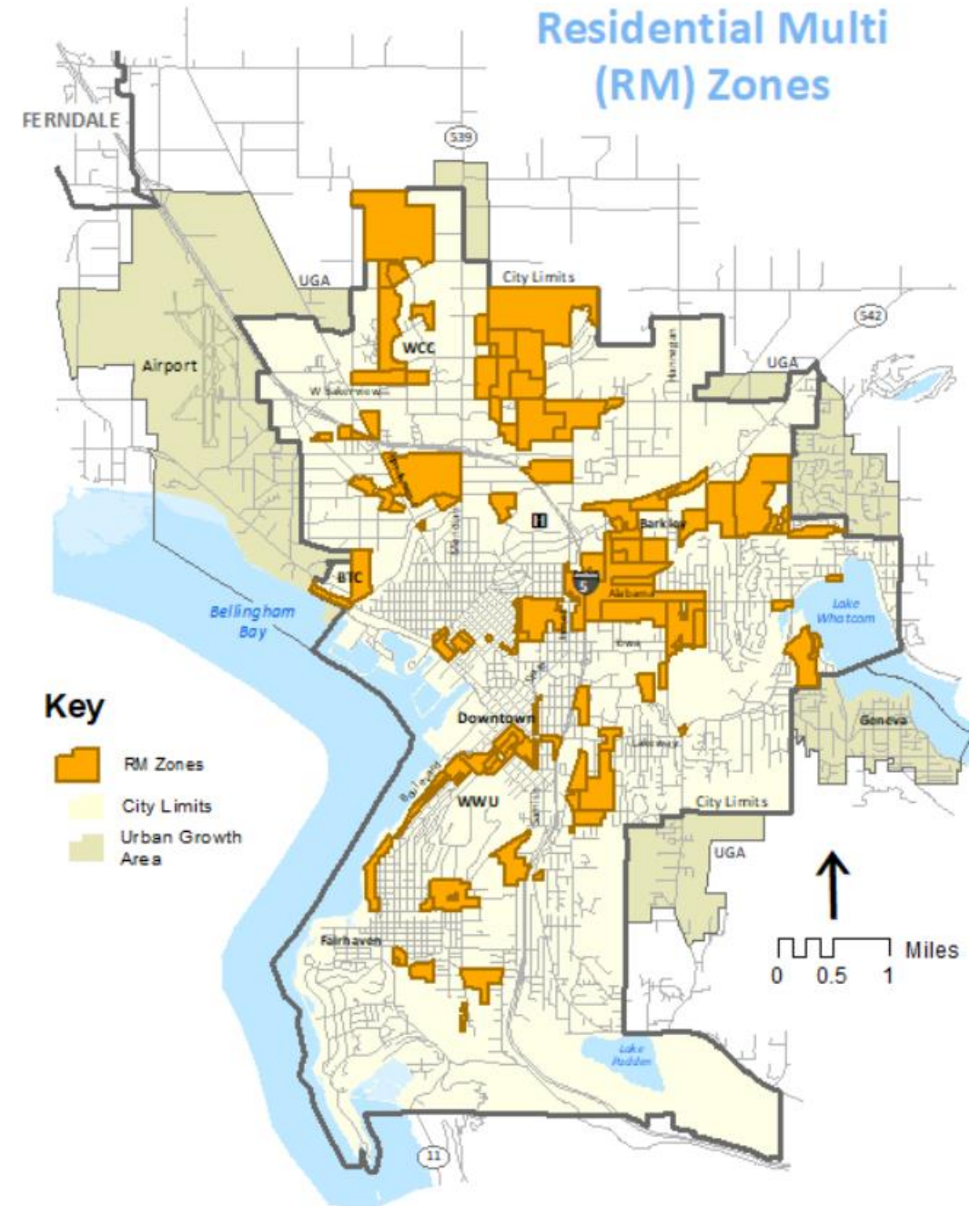




# New RM Dev. Regs.

In October 2021 Bellingham adopted new development regulations for its RM (multi-family) zoned areas.

By simplifying the density ranges and implementing minimum densities these revised rules will increase Bellingham's infill capacity by an estimated 20%.



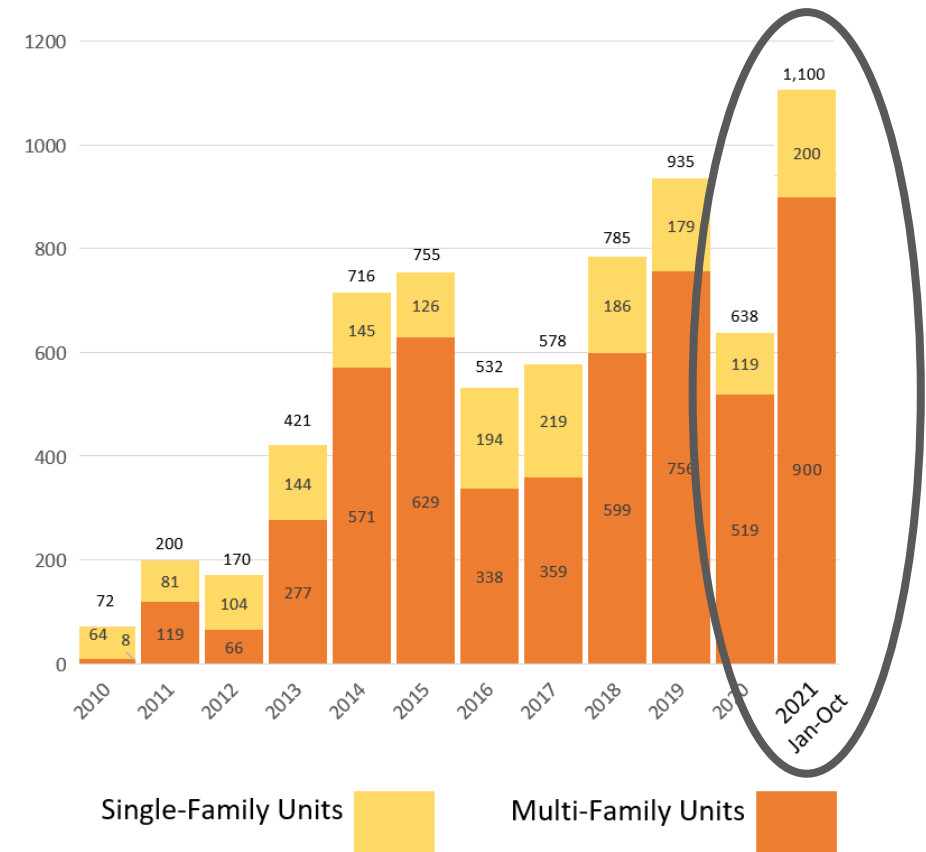
# Affordable Housing – The Home Fund

In 2012 and again in 2018 the Bellingham community approved two affordable housing levys committing over \$60M in property tax funds to build new and preserve existing affordable housing. To-date, Bellingham has leveraged these Home Fund dollars with community partners to build and preserve over 700 affordable housing units. In addition, the City spends over \$2M annually to provide housing, human and social services and rental assistance to thousands of low-income clients (2020 CAPER report).



# What's coming – Permit system snapshot

Between January and October 2021 Bellingham issued permits for over 1,100 housing units (200 single-family / 900 multi-family), far exceeding the average 693/year of the past five years. There are currently 1,459 housing units under construction in Bellingham and permits for another 829 units are in application review.





# Next Steps

- Currently working on an update to Infill Toolkit regulations
- Budget approval to study inclusionary zoning in 2022
- Another update to ADU regulations in 2022
- Evaluating ways to preserve manufactured home parks in Bellingham
- Comprehensive Plan update / UGA review



# Questions?

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