

# **Urban Growth Area Review**

## **Columbia Valley UGA/UGA Reserve Proposal**

September 2, 2025

## **I. Introduction**

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires each county to designate urban growth areas (UGAs) within which urban growth will be encouraged (RCW 36.70A.110(1)). GMA planning goal 11 requires coordination between jurisdictions in the comprehensive planning process (RCW 36.70A.020(11)). Additionally, the GMA indicates that county and city comprehensive plans must be coordinated and consistent when they share common borders or related regional issues (RCW 36.70A.100). Therefore, Whatcom County and the cities have undertaken a joint planning process to allocate population, housing and employment growth, review permitted densities, and review UGA boundaries. The joint planning process includes a number of steps, including:

- Approval of interlocal agreements (2022).
- Preliminary County and city UGA population and employment proposals (2024).
- County Planning Commission review of preliminary city and County population and employment growth proposals (2024).
- County and city approval of non-binding multi-jurisdictional resolutions regarding preliminary population, housing and employment allocations (2025). See Whatcom County Council Resolution 2025-011.
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (2025).
- Final Environmental Impact Statement (2025).
- City and County UGA boundary proposals (2025).
- County Planning Commission review (2025).
- County Council and City Council approval of comprehensive plans (2025-26).

UGAs must include areas and densities sufficient to accommodate the projected urban growth for the 20-year planning period (RCW 36.70A.130(3)), which extends through 2045. However, cities and the County are not required to plan for the future based solely upon past trends. Local government goals and policies, public input, new GMA requirements to plan for and accommodate housing for all economic segments of the community, infrastructure availability, capital facility planning, land capacity, and other factors are also taken into consideration.

Existing interlocal agreements indicate that the County and cities will work together to develop proposed population and employment allocations to UGAs and review UGA boundaries. The County and cities are recommending UGA boundary proposals for their respective UGAs. Review of these proposals includes opportunities for public comments and County Planning Commission

recommendations. Final growth allocations and UGA boundaries will be adopted by the County Council in the Comprehensive Plan update in 2025 or 2026.

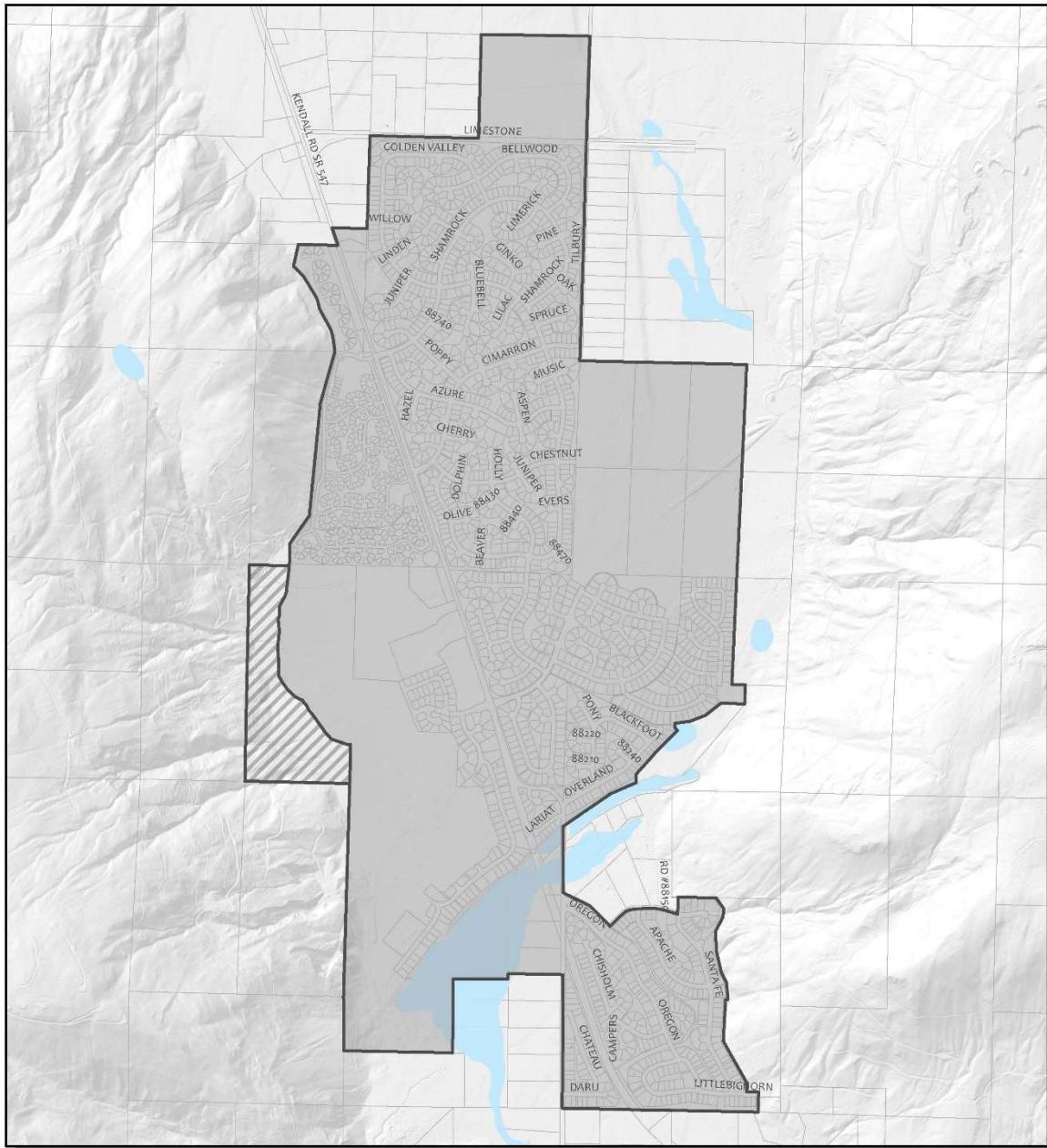
## **II. Columbia Valley UGA Profile**

The Columbia Valley is located between Sumas Mt. and Red Mt., southeast of Sumas. The Columbia Valley area was originally developed with several relatively large subdivisions to cater to a seasonal population. However, because real estate prices were affordable, the area became more attractive for full-time residents and has transitioned to a higher percentage of year-round housing.

In 2009, a General Commercial zone was established in the Columbia Valley UGA (Ordinance 2009-071). A Planned Town Center designation, that corresponded to the General Commercial zone, was included in the 2011 Foothills Subarea Plan. The concept of a Planned Light Impact Industrial area north of Limestone Rd. was also included in the 2011 Foothills Subarea Plan (although this area has not yet been rezoned to Light Impact Industrial). The approximate acreages of land use designations in the current UGA are as follows:

Planned Town Center designation/General Commercial zone:	42
Planned Light Impact Industrial designation:	38
Urban Residential (UR4) zone:	<u>1,076</u>
Total: 1,156	

The existing boundaries of the Columbia Valley UGA and Urban Growth Area Reserve (UGA Reserve) are shown below.



### - Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area

- Urban Growth Area
- Urban Growth Area Reserve

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The Columbia Valley UGA is approximately 1.8 square miles (1,156 acres) and has an estimated 2023 population of 3,577 (*Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Population and Employment: Growth Projections and Preliminary Allocations Technical Report*, May 2024, p. 10). Developed land in the UGA is characterized by single-family residential development within the Paradise Lakes, Peaceful Valley, Red Mountain Estates, and Balfour Village subdivisions and recreational units in Camper's Paradise. The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center created a focal point for the community in the Planned Town Center when it opened in 2011. Population within the current UGA boundaries for Census years, population growth, average annual growth rates, and growth shares are shown below:

### **Population Growth in the Columbia Valley UGA (1990-2020)**

Year	Population	Growth for Decade	Average Annual Growth for Decade	Average Annual Growth Rate	Share of Countywide Growth for Decade
1990	454				
2000	2,384	1,930	193	18.0%	4.9%
2010	3,056	672	67	2.5%	2.0%
2020	3,353	297	30	0.9%	1.2%

Source: Population data from 1990 and 2000 is from the *Whatcom County Population and Employment Projections and Urban Growth Area Allocations Phase I Technical Report* (BERK, 2013). Population data for 2010 and 2020 from the State Office of Financial Management's Small Area Estimates Program.

Real estate in the Columbia Valley UGA is relatively more affordable and it is anticipated that residential development will continue over the planning period. The UGA does not have an associated commercial or industrial base to provide job opportunities close to home for about 3,600 residents. However, the 2009 UGA review and the 2011 Foothills Subarea Plan provided potential opportunities for businesses to locate in the UGA by establishing land use designations that would support such development.

### **III. Review of Permitted Densities**

The GMA, at RCW 36.70A.130(3)(a), requires that:

Each county that designates urban growth areas under RCW 36.70A.110 shall review . . . its designated urban growth area or areas, patterns of development occurring within the urban growth area or areas, and the densities permitted within both the incorporated and unincorporated portions of each urban growth area. In conjunction with this review by the county, each city located within an urban growth area shall review the

densities permitted within its boundaries, and the extent to which the urban growth occurring within the county has located within each city and the unincorporated portions of the urban growth areas.

The Columbia Valley UGA is not associated with a city and, therefore, Table 1 does not apply.

**Table 1. Permitted Densities in the City**

Zoning Abbreviation	Zoning	Permitted Densities
N/A	N/A	N/A

County zoning designations in the UGA are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2. Permitted Densities in the Columbia Valley UGA**

Zoning Abbreviation	Zoning	Permitted Densities
GC	General Commercial	<p>Duplexes and multifamily dwellings not to exceed 18 dwelling units per gross acre (when public water and sewer are available)</p> <p>Residences on premises in a commercial structure: The overall residential density will not exceed 12 units per acre</p> <p>NOTE: Within the Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area, single-family dwellings are not permitted in the General Commercial Zone</p> <p>Hotels and motels shall not exceed a floor area ratio of .60</p>
RF	Rural Forestry	1 dwelling/20 acres
UR4	Urban Residential	<p>Maximum gross density: 4 dwelling units/1 acre, if public water and sewer are available</p> <p>Minimum net density: 4 dwelling units/1 acre, if public water and sewer are available</p> <p>1 dwelling/10 acres, if public water sewer are not available</p>

## **IV. UGA Growth Allocation Proposal**

This section compares population, housing and employment growth allocations in the 2025 County proposal to those in the non-binding multi-jurisdictional resolution approved by the County Council in March 2025 (Resolution 2025-011).

The proposed growth allocations for the Columbia Valley UGA over the planning period are an additional 1,137 people, an additional 502 housing units, an additional 350 jobs. These allocations are consistent with the multi-jurisdictional resolution approved by the County Council in March 2025.

<b><i>Table 3. UGA Population Growth Allocation Proposal (2023-2045)</i></b>		
1	Multi-jurisdictional Resolution Growth Allocation	1,137
2	County Growth Allocation Proposal	1,137
3	<b>Difference</b>	0

The Columbia Valley UGA had relatively high growth from 1990-2000 (193 people per year) and more moderate growth from 2000-2010 (67 people per year). The Columbia Valley UGA grew at a slower pace from 2010-2020 (30 people per year).

While housing tends to be less expensive in the Columbia Valley UGA, it is about a 50-mile round trip to downtown Bellingham. Therefore, gas prices influence overall cost of living in this area. Adequate land supply, public water & sewer in portions of the UGA, and less expensive housing have led to a growing Columbia Valley UGA community that has increased from 2,384 residents in 2000 to 3,577 in 2023.

The Technical Report (2024) middle population growth scenario, which is based upon the share of countywide growth the UGA received from 2013 to 2023, would equate to an additional 45 people per year in the Columbia Valley UGA from 2023-2045. The County growth proposal extrapolates the annual average population growth in the UGA between 2013 and 2023 to the new planning period (2023-2045). The proposed growth allocation of 1,137 would equate to about 52 people/year through 2045.

<b><i>Table 4. UGA Housing Growth Allocation Proposal (2023-2045)</i></b>		
1	Multi-jurisdictional Resolution Growth Allocation	502
2	County Growth Allocation Proposal	502
3	<b>Difference</b>	0

In order to identify the number of housing units needed for each jurisdiction, the State Department of Commerce developed the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) spreadsheets for use by local jurisdictions (the County's consultant modified the tool to address UGAs and limitations on Rural housing under GMA). The overall

countywide population figure is inserted in the HAPT, and it calculates the number of housing units that are needed at the various income bands (low, moderate, high income households) in each UGA and the Rural & Resource Lands outside UGAs. The housing units needed in the Columbia Valley UGA, which were included in County Council Resolution 2025-011 (the Multi-jurisdictional Resolution), are shown above.

<b>Table 5. UGA Employment Growth Allocation Proposal (2023-2045)</b>		
1	Multi-jurisdictional Resolution Growth Allocation	350
2	County Growth Allocation Proposal	350
3	<b>Difference</b>	0

The Technical Report middle employment growth scenario is based upon the share of employment that each UGA had in 2021. Although the Columbia Valley UGA had 1.5% of the county-wide population in 2023, it only had 0.1% of the county-wide jobs (2021).

The vision statement in the Foothills Subarea Plan states, in part: “. . . The Columbia Valley will become a fully-served urban area set within this rural context, providing a range of shopping, housing, and employment opportunities and accommodating the majority of new Foothills residents. . .” (p. 2-6). The Subarea Plan also contains the following goal and policy:

**Goal LU4** – Provide for increased employment opportunities in the Foothills.

**Policy LU4A** - Encourage development of light impact industrial or business park land uses in the Columbia Valley UGA in areas planned for light impact industrial uses.

If the Technical Report middle growth allocation of 13 jobs was adopted (2023-2045), with the proposed population allocation, the Columbia Valley UGA would add about 1 job for every 87 new residents over the planning period. Such an allocation would also be substantially lower than the 359 jobs allocated to the Columbia Valley UGA in the current Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.

The Foothills Subarea Plan indicates that many Foothills residents must commute 30 minutes or more to western Whatcom County to work (p. 7-1). The Subarea Plan also indicates that the Planned Town Center/General Commercial zone and the Planned Light Impact Industrial area were intended to boost economic development in the Columbia Valley UGA (p. 7-5).

In order to support opportunities for businesses to locate in the Columbia Valley UGA and potential job growth, the proposal is for an employment allocation of 350 jobs over the new planning period from 2023 to 2045.

## **V. UGA / UGA Reserve Boundary Proposal**

The Columbia Valley proposal includes the following features:

**UGA Boundary:** No change. The existing UGA is sufficient, with the zoning changes set forth below, to accommodate the allocated population, housing and employment growth for the planning period (2023-2045).

**UGA Reserve:** The Urban Growth Area Reserve on the western side of the UGA contains steep slopes, landslide hazard areas, and alluvial fans. The Comprehensive Plan designation would be changed for the approximately 40 acre UGA Reserve to Rural Forestry. Currently, there is a Rural Forestry designation to the west and south, Commercial forestry to the north, and UGA to the east. Additionally, the land would be rezoned from Rural 1 dwelling/10 acres (R10A) to Rural Forestry (1 dwelling/20 acres) to implement the proposed Comprehensive Plan designation and minimize development potential in this area.

**Residential Rezoning:** Land in the UGA west of State Route 547, totaling about 163 acres, would be rezoned from Urban Residential 4 dwellings/1 acre (UR4) to Urban Residential Medium Density 6 dwelling units/1 acre (URM6). The GMA requires that local comprehensive plans must make adequate provisions for existing and projected housing needs of all economic segments of the community, including lower and moderate incomes (RCW 36.70A(2)(d), which the State Legislature amended in 2021 to strengthen the housing provisions with the passage of House Bill 1220). The URM6 zone allows multi-family housing, which would allow opportunities to build housing for lower and moderate income households.

**Zoning Text Amendments:** The UR4 zoning text would be amended to allow duplex, triplex, and fourplex development (would apply countywide). This would allow opportunity for housing to accommodate moderate income households in accordance with House Bill 1220.

**Commercial Rezoning:** Two parcels in the UGA, west of State Route 547 totaling about 5 acres, would be rezoned from UR4 to General Commercial (GC), so that these parcels would no longer be "split zoned" parcels (a parcel with two different zoning designations). Split zoned parcels can create difficulties in administration of the Zoning Code. Foothills Subarea Plan Map 2.3 would be amended by expanding the existing "Planned Town Center" designation to match the revised GC boundary. County Comprehensive Plan Policy 2BB-15 supports a commercial uses in the Columbia Valley as follows:

Recognize the Columbia Valley UGA as a developing urban community with potential to establish a viable town center, which includes commercial uses, a variety of residential housing types, and institutional uses (Chapter 2, p. 2-50).

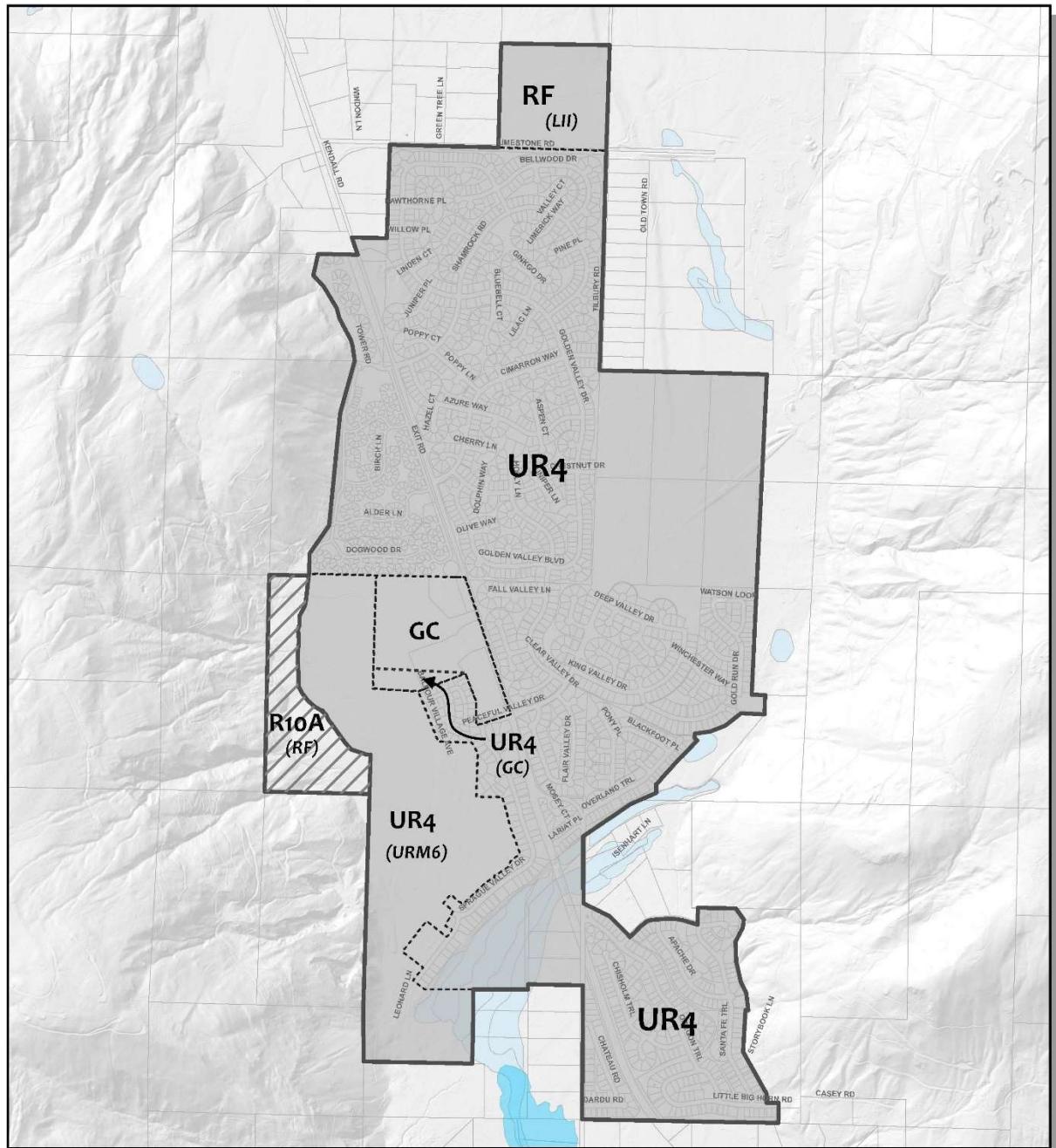
Industrial Rezoning - The existing Rural Forestry zone, within the UGA north of Limestone Rd., is designated as "Planned Light Impact Industrial" in the Foothills Subarea Plan (Chapter 2, p. 2-12). This approximately 40 acre site would be rezoned to Light Impact Industrial (LII). The rezone would implement the Planned Light Impact Industrial designation and potentially provide more employment opportunities in the UGA.

Foothills Subarea Plan Text Amendment - Foothills Subarea Plan Policy CV1-D recognizes the need for light impact industrial uses in the Columbia Valley UGA (Chapter 12, p. 12-10). However, it contains provisions that may hinder rezoning the site north of Limestone Rd. to Light Impact Industrial in the current Comprehensive Plan update process. Therefore, the UGA proposal includes modifying this policy as follows:

Recognize the need for light impact industrial land uses within the Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area. Consider establishing a light impact industrial zone located on the north side of Limestone Road as shown on the Planned Light Impact Industrial and Potential Planned Light Impact Industrial map.

1. ~~Retain the existing zoning until Mitigate traffic impacts and address infrastructure/utility/service needs through the land division and development permitting process, and appropriate mitigation measures have been identified.~~
2. If the existing Planned Light Impact Industrial designation is built out or unavailable for industrial use, consider modifying the Columbia Valley UGA boundary in the Potential Planned Light Impact Industrial designation to allow rezoning of up to 40 acres to light impact industrial.
3. Assure an adequate supply of light impact industrial sites to meet future market demands for light impact industrial development.

The rationale for the above Foothills Subarea Plan policy change is that the developer typically is required to address project-specific transportation improvements and public facility and service requirements through State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review at the time of proposed development. The County's transportation concurrency management program (WCC 20.78) and the County's other concurrency provisions (WCC 20.80.212) also apply when a development is proposed. The type and extent of mitigation is based on the specific proposed development project, which is not known at the current time. The proposed amendment would allow the approximately 40-acre site north of Limestone Rd. to be rezoned to Light Impact Industrial in current Comprehensive Plan update process. Specific mitigation measures would be determined at a later date when actual site-specific development is proposed, consistent with how development impacts are addressed in the County.



## - Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area

- Urban Growth Area - No change
- Urban Growth Area Reserve - Change to Rural Forestry Comp. Plan Designation
- Zoning Designations - Existing Zoning in **BOLD**, Proposed Zoning in Parentheses ( )
- Effective Flood Zone



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## **VI. Land Capacity Analysis Overview**

A land capacity analysis compares the proposed growth allocations to the capacity of the UGA to accommodate growth. The land capacity analysis is an important tool for sizing UGAs. Land capacity analysis results for the 2025 County Proposal, based upon proposed UGA densities and boundaries, are shown below.

<b>Table 6. Proposed UGA – Population Land Capacity Analysis Results</b>		
1	Population Growth <b>Capacity</b> of Proposed UGA	1,688
2	Population Growth <b>Allocation</b> Proposed	1,137
3	<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>	551

The land in the existing UGA can accommodate about 551 more people than allocated over the planning period. It should be noted that rezoning from UR4 to URM6 is proposed within the boundaries of the existing UGA to meet the requirements of House Bill 1220. This will increase the potential to accommodate middle housing (such as duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes) and higher density multi-family housing to meet the needs of a various income level households. The capacity of the UGA to accommodate more population has increased because of these proposed rezone. The land capacity is sufficient to accommodate the proposed population growth allocation over the planning period. Therefore, no changes to the existing UGA boundary are needed to accommodate projected population growth.

**Table 7. Proposed UGA – Housing Land Capacity Analysis Results**

<b>Income Band (AMI)</b>	<b>Aggregated Housing Needs (housing units)</b>	<b>Total Capacity of Proposed UGA (includes pending development)</b>	<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>
0-80%	335	357	<b>22</b>
80-120%	65	86	<b>21</b>
120+%	102	413	<b>311</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>856</b>	<b>354</b>

NOTE: AMI means "Area Median Income"

With the proposed rezones, the land in the existing UGA can accommodate approximately 354 more dwelling units than allocated over the planning period. The UGA can accommodate a variety of housing types to meet the needs of various income level households under House Bill 1220. The land capacity is sufficient to accommodate the proposed housing growth allocation over the planning period. Therefore, no changes to the existing UGA boundary are needed to accommodate projected housing growth.

<b>Table 8. Proposed UGA - Commercial/Industrial Land Capacity Analysis Results</b>		
1	Employment Growth <b>Capacity</b> of Proposed UGA	404
2	Employment Growth <b>Allocation</b> Proposed	350
3	<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>	54

With the proposed rezones, the land in the existing UGA can accommodate about 54 more jobs than allocated over the planning period. The land capacity for commercial and industrial jobs exceeds the proposed employment growth allocation. Therefore, the commercial and planned industrial land capacity is sufficient to accommodate the proposed job growth allocation over the planning period. No changes to the existing UGA boundary are needed to accommodate projected commercial and industrial growth.

## **VII. Capital Facility Planning**

Special districts have undertaken the following capital facility planning efforts in order to plan for adequate public facilities and services in the UGA.

Water – Water District 13 and the Columbia Valley Water District provide water service to the UGA.

Water District 13's service area encompasses the Peaceful Valley development, the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center and undeveloped land within the UGA. District 13 adopted a *Small Water System Plan* in 2021. The draft Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP, May 2025) indicates Water District 13 has approximately 889 connections available for future growth (p. 3-17). *Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Allocations for Special Districts by Growth Alternative* (June 2025) project 456 new dwelling units in Water District 13 over the planning period (2023-2045). New commercial development in the General Commercial zone would also use an undetermined amount of water.

The Columbia Valley Water District's service area includes the Paradise Lakes development, Campers' Paradise and the area north of Limestone Rd. The *Columbia Valley Water District Water System Plan Update* was approved by the District in 2013. The draft CWSP (May 2025) indicates Columbia Valley

Water District has an “unspecified” number of connections available (p. 3-16). The draft CWSP indicates:

For larger water systems, DOH [State Department of Health] will approve a water system plan and identify in Sentry that there is an unspecified number of authorized connections remaining. This action is usually taken for larger water systems and systems that are still preparing updates to water system plans through the planning process. In doing this, DOH has authorized the water system to manage how many connections can be served based on its own analysis (p. 3-11).

*Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Allocations for Special Districts by Growth Alternative* (June 2025) projects 92 new dwelling units in the Columbia Valley Water District over the planning period (2023-2045). New industrial uses in the proposed Light Impact Industrial zone would also use an undetermined amount of water.

Sewer – Water District 13 provides sewer service to a portion of the UGA. District 13’s service area encompasses the Peaceful Valley development, the East Whatcom Regional Resource Center and undeveloped land within the UGA zoned for residential and commercial land uses. The *Whatcom County Water District No. 13 Comprehensive Sewer Plan* was approved by the District in 2012. District 13’s engineer indicated, in an email of August 8, 2025, that:

... with the existing aerated lagoon WWTP, the District can serve about 100 more connections, to a total of about 550. As you know we are in the process of preparing a new General Sewer Plan and WWTP Engineering Report for review and approval by Ecology to replace the existing WWTP with a modern facility that will provide a much higher, and more reliable, level of treatment. This new plant will be designed, per the current planning numbers, to treat sewage from approximately 900 connections, with expandability to go to buildout. Of course, after the planning phase, the new WWTP will need to be designed and constructed, which will require the District to acquire funding, so the new WWTP is scheduled to hopefully be on line in 2029.

*Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan Allocations for Special Districts by Growth Alternative* (June 2025) project 446 new dwelling units in the sewer service area over the planning period (2023-2045). New commercial uses in the General Commercial zone would also use an undetermined amount of sewer capacity.

Stormwater – A “Water Quantity and Quality Report – Foothills Subarea” was prepared in 2008 in association with the Foothills Subarea Plan update and environmental impact statement (EIS). Regarding public Stormwater facilities, this report states:

In the Columbia Valley/Kendall UGA coarse soils allow for ready infiltration of stormwater and there are no existing public stormwater flow control facilities (e.g., detention/retention or infiltration ponds) or water quality treatment facilities. Limited conveyance features (e.g., culverts and ditches) are present in the county and state road rights-of-way. Since most, if not all, proposed development in the subarea will be private, additional pressure on these existing features should be minimal. It is not anticipated that any programs or capital facility improvements will be needed in the subarea over the 6- and 20-year planning periods (pages 2-3).

This report came out about the time the economic downturn started. Development in the UGA has been modest since that time. The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center was constructed in 2011, but this facility has its own on-site stormwater facilities.

Fire Protection – Fire District 14 provides fire protection and emergency medical services to the UGA. The *Whatcom County Fire District # 14 Capital Facilities Plan* was approved by the District Commissioners in 2015. This Plan states:

The County has a Planned Light Impact Industrial designation north of Limestone Rd. in the Columbia Valley UGA. The Fire District can serve this area, if rezoned to Light Impact Industrial, if adequate water supply and hydrants are provided for fire flow. Additionally, depending on the nature of the light impact industrial development and uses proposed, the District may request mitigation fees (p. 12).

The Fire District may request mitigation fees pursuant to RCW 82.02.020 (voluntary agreements) and/or RCW 43.21C.060 (SEPA mitigation) from developers to partially finance planned capital facilities needed to serve new growth (p. 14).

Schools – The Mount Baker School District serves the UGA. Children in the UGA can attend the Kendall Elementary School, located south of the UGA. The Mount Baker Junior High School and High School are located in Deming. The *Mount Baker School District Capital Facilities Plan* was approved by the District in 2013. The Plan shows that, between 2002 and 2012, the total population of the District increased by about 17%. However, during this same time-frame, student enrollment dropped by about 24% (pages 4 and 5). The District's enrollment has continued to decline over the last decade.

Transportation – Kendall Road (SR 547) bisects the UGA and connects with Sumas to the northwest and Mount Baker Highway (SR 542) to the south. Limestone Rd., a County road, is located in the northern portion of the UGA. The Washington State Department of Transportation constructed a

roundabout at the SR 542/SR547 intersection, south the UGA, in 2015 to improve traffic flow and safety.

## **VIII. UGA Expansions into UGA Reserves (if applicable)**

Is the County proposing to expand the UGA into the UGA Reserve?

No.

## **IX. UGA Expansion in the Floodplain (if applicable)**

Is the County proposing to expand the UGA into the floodplain?

No.

## **X. UGA Expansions into Resource Lands (if applicable)**

Is the County proposing to expand the UGA or UGA Reserve into lands designated as Agriculture, Rural Forestry, Commercial Forestry, or Mineral Resource Lands on the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan map?

No.

## **XI. UGA Swap (if applicable)**

Is the County proposing a UGA swap under the GMA?

No.

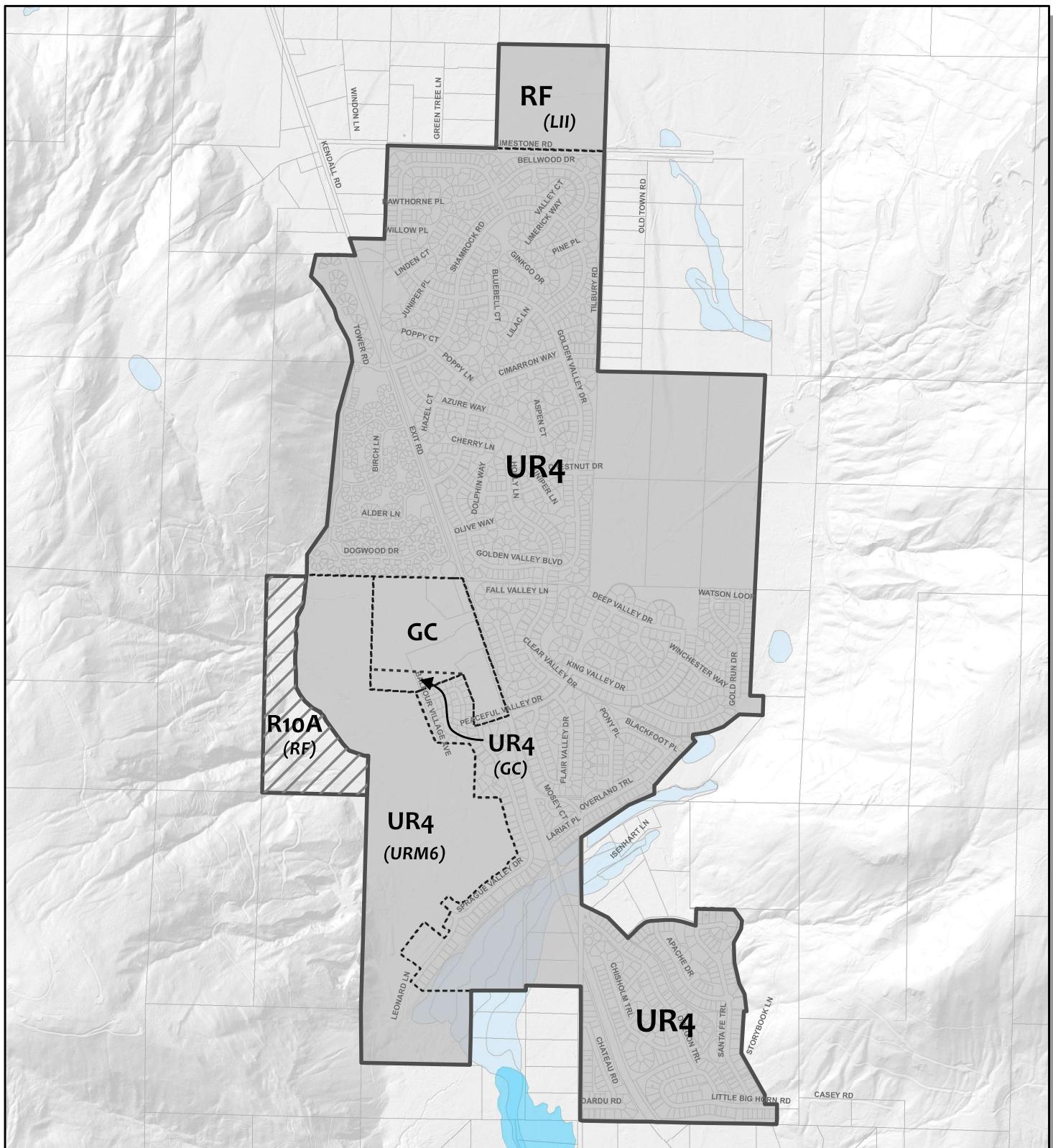
## **XII. Conclusions**

In summary, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services recommends a population growth projection of 1,137, a housing growth projection of 502, and an employment growth projection of 350 jobs for the Columbia Valley UGA over the new planning period (2023-2045). These projections are consistent with the non-binding multi-jurisdictional resolution regarding preliminary population, housing and employment allocations (County Council Resolution 2025-011).

The UGA boundary would not change. Proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan and zoning are:

- The UGA Reserve on the western side of the UGA, which is approximately 40 acres, would be re-designated to Rural Forestry also rezoned from R10A to Rural Forestry.
- Land in the UGA west of State Route 547, totaling about 163 acres, would be rezoned from UR4 to URM6.
- The UR4 zoning text would be amended to allow duplex, triplex, and fourplex development (this would apply countywide).
- Land in the UGA west of State Route 547, totaling about 5 acres, would be rezoned from UR4 to General Commercial (two split zoned parcels). Foothills Subarea Plan Map 2.3 would be amended by expanding the existing “Planned Town Center” designation to match the revised General Commercial zone boundary.
- The existing 40-acre Rural Forestry zone, within the UGA north of Limestone Rd., would be rezoned to Light Impact Industrial.
- Foothills Subarea Plan Policy CV1-D, relating to mitigation of impacts associated with the Light Impact Industrial rezone, would be amended.

The Columbia Valley UGA proposal would provide land zoned to accommodate the projection population, housing and employment growth over the planning period. It would also accommodate housing to serve lower, moderate, and higher income levels.



## - Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area

Urban Growth Area - No change

Urban Growth Area Reserve - Change to Rural Forestry Comp. Plan Designation

Zoning Designations - Existing Zoning in BOLD, Proposed Zoning in Parentheses ()



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# WHATCOM COUNTY

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October 27, 2025

TO: The Whatcom County Planning Commission

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

RE: 2025 Comp Plan Update – Columbia Valley URM6 Modification

The County's Columbia Valley UGA/UGA Reserve Proposal (September 2, 2025) included rezoning approximately 163 acres on the west side of SR 547 (Kendall Rd) from Urban Residential 4 dwellings/acre (UR4) to Urban Residential Medium Density 6 dwellings/acre (URM6). The URM6 zone allows multi-family housing, which could accommodate housing for lower and moderate income households.

Jack Hovenier sent emails to the Planning Commission on September 30 and October 2, 2025 requesting that the Commission consider rezoning land on the east side of State Route (SR) 547 from UR4 to URM6 and removing a portion of the land on the west side of SR547 from the proposed rezone to URM6. The parcels on the east side of SR 547 are called the "TREK properties" and consist of the following Assessor's Parcel #'s:

Parcel A: 400522 300462

Parcel B: 400522 300334

Parcel C: 400522 363462

Parcel D: 400522 363331

The Planning Commission approved a motion on October 9, 2025 to "ask staff to evaluate the distribution of density on east and west of the road in the TREK properties proposal." In accordance with this motion, the Planning and Development Services Department modified the Land Capacity Analysis and created a Columbia Valley UGA map based upon the Hovenier/TREK Properties proposal as follows:

- West side of SR 547: Rezoning the north 84 acres of this parcel from UR4 to URM6. The southern 80 acres of the parcel would retain the current UR4 zoning (i.e. the southern 80 acres would not be rezoned).

- East side of SR 547: Rezoning approximately 82 acres (per Assessor's records) from UR4 to URM6.

### **Housing Land Capacity Analysis for Hovenier/TREK Properties Proposal**

<b>Income Band (AMI)</b>	<b>Aggregated Housing Needs (housing units)</b>	<b>Total Capacity of Proposed UGA (includes pending development)</b>	<b>Surplus (Deficit)</b>
0-80%	335	432	<b>97</b>
80-120%	65	74	<b>9</b>
120+%	102	405	<b>303</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>409</b>

The revised land capacity analysis shows that the UGA can accommodate a variety of housing types to meet the needs of various income level households under House Bill 1220.

If Planning Commission accepts, the Hovenier/TREK Properties changes, the overall Columbia Valley UGA/UGA Reserve Proposal would be modified as follows:

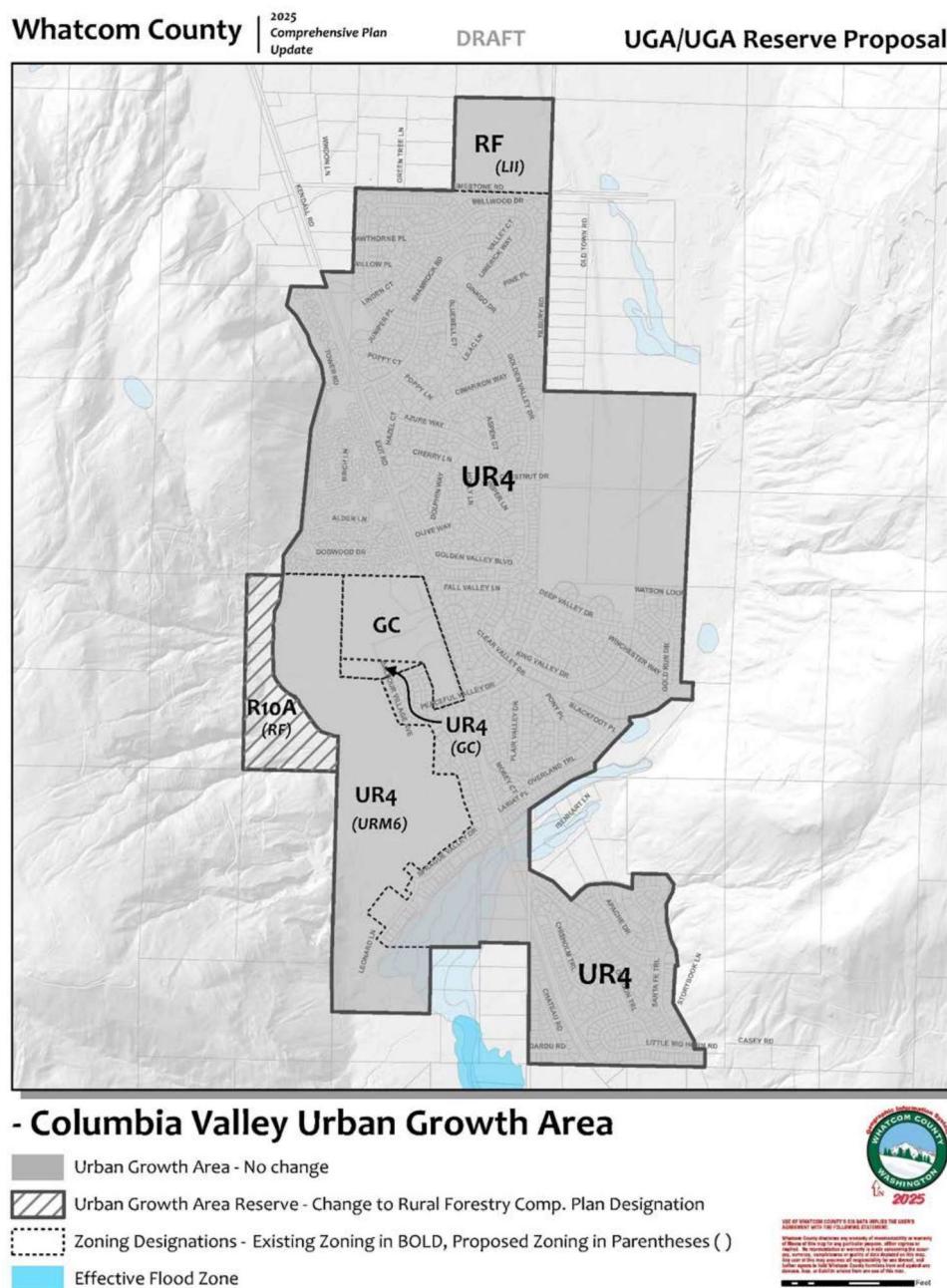
The UGA boundary would not change. Proposed changes to the Comprehensive Plan and zoning are:

- The UGA Reserve on the western side of the UGA, which is approximately 40 acres, would be re-designated to Rural Forestry also rezoned from R10A to Rural Forestry.
- Land in the UGA west of State Route 547, totaling about 84163 acres, would be rezoned from UR4 to URM6.
- Land in the UGA east of State Route 547, totaling about 82 acres, would be rezoned from UR4 to URM6.
- The UR4 zoning text would be amended to allow duplex, triplex, and fourplex development (this would apply countywide).
- Land in the UGA west of State Route 547, totaling about 5 acres, would be rezoned from UR4 to General Commercial (two split zoned parcels). Foothills Subarea Plan Map 2.3 would be amended by expanding the existing

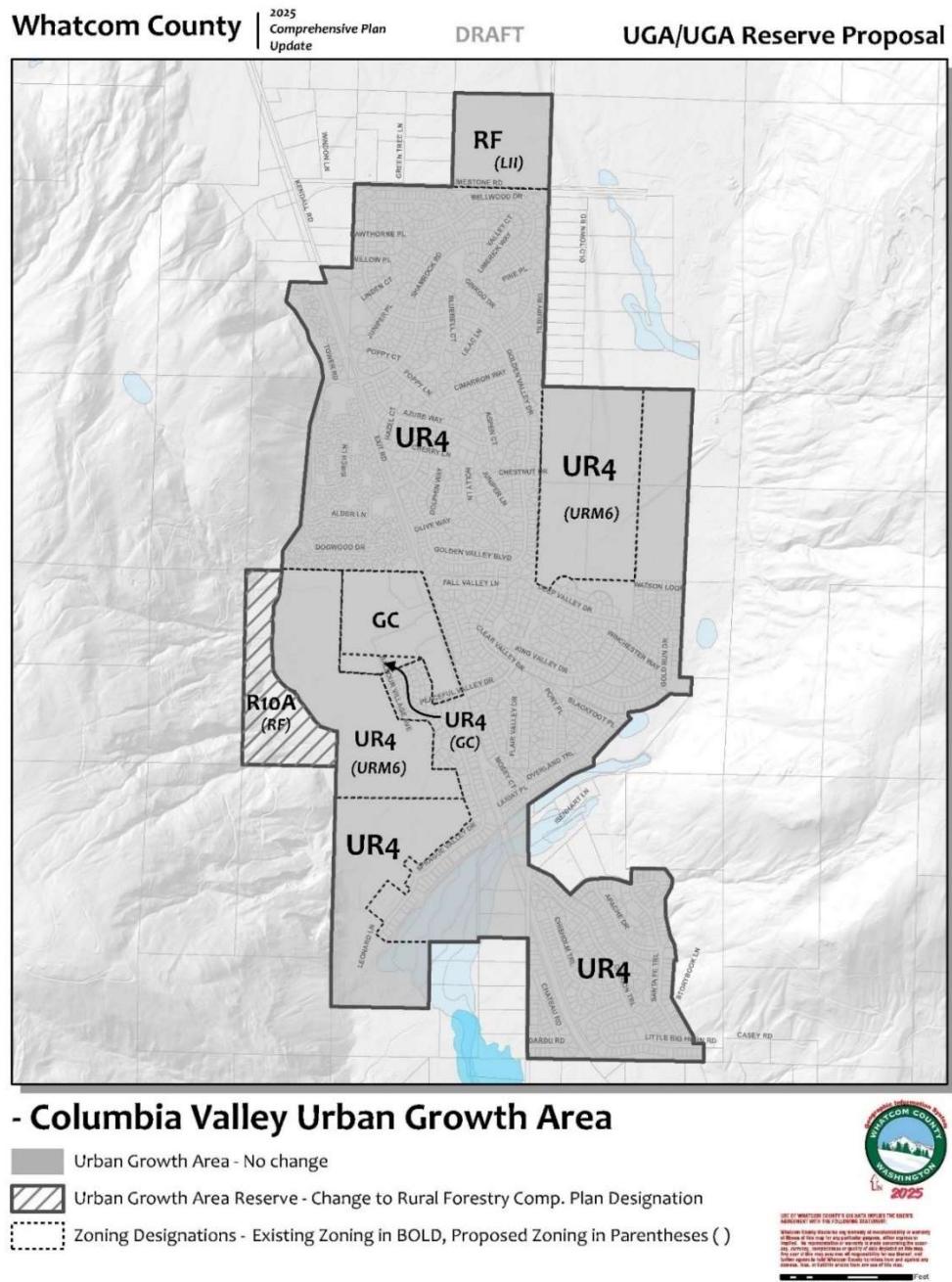
“Planned Town Center” designation to match the revised General Commercial zone boundary.

- The existing 40-acre Rural Forestry zone, within the UGA north of Limestone Rd., would be rezoned to Light Impact Industrial.
- Foothills Subarea Plan Policy CV1-D, relating to mitigation of impacts associated with the Light Impact Industrial rezone, would be amended.

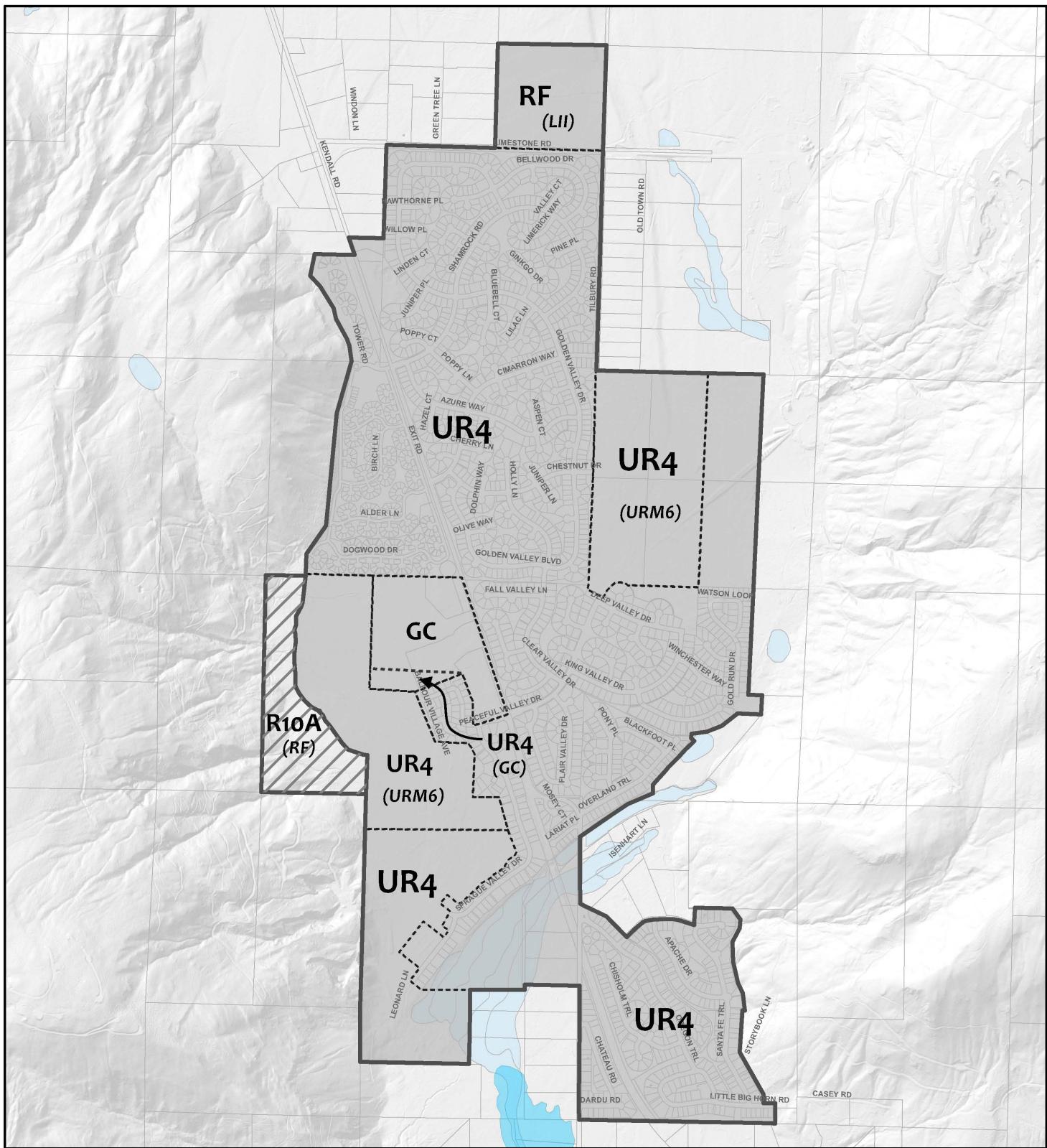
For context when considering the Hovenier/TREK Properties proposal, the original Whatcom County Planning and Development Services proposal is shown below.



The Hovenier/TREK Properties proposal, showing the rezone east of SR547 from UR4 to URM6 and reducing the amount of land rezoned from UR4 to URM6 west of SR547, is below. One issue to consider is that residents in the new URM6 zone east of SR547 would have to cross this road to access the General Commercial (GC) zone. The East Whatcom Regional Resource Center is currently in the GC zone and commercial uses could potentially be located in this zone in the future.



Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to discussing it with you.



## - Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area

Urban Growth Area - No change

Urban Growth Area Reserve - Change to Rural Forestry Comp. Plan Designation

Zoning Designations - Existing Zoning in BOLD, Proposed Zoning in Parentheses ( )



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