

**WHATCOM COUNTY**  
**10-Year Urban Growth Area Review**

**Columbia Valley**  
**Urban Growth Area Proposal**

June 9, 2009

# Columbia Valley UGA — Local Group Proposal

## *Introduction*

The County Executive appointed a Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee (FSPAC) to make recommendations on the Subarea Plan update, which includes the Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area (UGA). This Advisory Committee, which was confirmed by the County Council, recommended a Draft Foothills Subarea Plan in Oct. 2007.

The Draft Subarea Plan would reduce the Columbia Valley UGA from 1,489 acres to 1,339 acres, and establish a Planned Town Center, Planned and Potential Planned Light Impact Industrial designations, and a Planned Urban Residential designation. There are several modifications to the Draft Subarea Plan for purposes of the 10-year UGA review: (1) The planning horizon year has been modified from 2027 to 2029/31, (2) The total UGA population allocation has been modified from 7,053 recommended by the FSPAC to 5,000 (County Council motion approved on March 17, 2009), and (3) An employment allocation of 455 new jobs is being utilized for the UGA.

## *Existing Conditions*

### **Columbia Valley UGA Profile**

Columbia Valley is one of three unincorporated UGAs in Whatcom County. Situated between Sumas Mountain and Red Mountain, the Columbia Valley UGA contains two large residential subdivisions, Peaceful Valley and Paradise Lakes. It also includes a recreational development called Camper's Paradise. Kendall Lake, Kendall Creek, Sprague Lake and associated wetlands are located within the Columbia Valley. There are also alluvial fans that extend into portions of the UGA.

### *2008 UGA Population*

The estimated population for the Columbia Valley UGA in 2008 is 3,924 or 2.05% of the total County population. Between 1990 and 2008, the UGA's population increased by about 3,450 residents, accepting 5.46% of the total County growth during that time period. The Draft Foothills Subarea Plan indicates that the Columbia Valley area was originally developed to cater to a seasonal population, but has been transitioning to more permanent residents (p. 13).

### *2008 UGA Employment*

Jobs for 2008 are based on the Washington State Employment Security Department estimates of employment. It is estimated that there are a total of 90 jobs within the existing Columbia Valley UGA boundary (this includes the Kendall Small Town Commercial zone and Kendall School, which are proposed for removal from the UGA). Columbia Valley has the lowest

job/population ratio of any UGA in Whatcom County. Additionally, this UGA's job/population ratio is lower than in rural areas of the County (Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 10-Year UGA Review, May 2009, p. 4.7-16).

### *Existing Plans:*

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan was amended in 1999 to establish a UGA in the Columbia Valley (Ordinance 99-075). Comprehensive Plan goals and policies relating to the Columbia Valley UGA include, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Resolving infrastructure and public service issues.
- Studying factors necessary to create an economically viable city in the future.
- Requiring "ability to serve" letters from schools, fire districts, water purveyors and sewer purveyors prior to receiving subdivision approval.
- Clustering and adequate setbacks from Kendall Creek, Kendall and Sprague Lakes and wetlands.
- Considering light impact industrial zoning north of Limestone Rd.
- Precluding additional commercial zoning within the UGA until the Small Town Commercial zone in Kendall is fully developed (the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee recommends removing Kendall from the UGA and deleting this policy).

The existing Foothills Subarea Plan was adopted in 1988, prior to the Growth Management Act.

### **Land Capacity Analysis Overview**

According to the Land Capacity Analysis (LCA) for Columbia Valley, the UGA recommended by the FSPAC has about 594 gross developable acres with residential capacity and 101 gross developable acres with commercial capacity. After the removal of critical areas, infrastructure, and other deductions, the UGA has 233 net developable acres for residential and 48 net developable acres for commercial and industrial development. This indicates a total population growth capacity for 2,055 more people and 418 additional jobs.

The land capacity analysis indicates that the proposed UGA has approximately 110 net acres more than needed to accommodate allocated population growth and about 4 net acres less than needed to accommodate allocated employment growth.

## **Public Facilities and Services**

### *Water*

- Water District 13 had about 991 additional water connections in 2006. The next update of the District's water system plan is due by March 2011.
- Evergreen Water and Sewer District 19 had about 56 additional water connections in 2006. The next update of the District's water system plan is due by August 2010.

### *Sewer*

- Water District 13 had about 197 additional sewer connections in 2007. The District is in the process of updating their comprehensive sewer plan.
- Evergreen Water and Sewer District 19 does not provide sewer service at the present time.

### *Fire*

- Fire Protection District No. 14 provides service to the Columbia Valley UGA. On March 2, 2009, Fire District 14 submitted a draft "Fire and EMS Capital Facilities Plan."

### *Schools*

- Mount Baker School District serves the Columbia Valley UGA.

### *Parks*

- There are no public parks in the UGA at this time. The Draft Foothills Subarea Plan (p. 43), the Foothills Subarea Plan Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (pp. 92-94), and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 10-year UGA Review (p. 4.10-37) all include consideration of a new park in the Columbia Valley UGA.

## **Open Spaces and Green Belts**

In addition to the need for a park as mentioned above, the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan states that:

The Growth Management Act mandates and good planning practice dictates that urban areas include natural areas and open spaces. The green spaces allow for more natural treatment of vital ecological functions within urban areas and provide for recreation opportunities for urban residents.

The Columbia Valley's primary greenbelt is Kendall Creek and its associated wetlands, which provide useful wildlife habitat. Other greenbelts occur on the rim of the UGA along the hillsides that define the UGA's limits. . . (p. 114).

## ***UGA Update Process***

### **Public Participation**

Public participation for the Columbia Valley UGA has been occurring over the last three years in the context of the Foothills Subarea Plan update. This process, which has addressed rural, resource land, and other issues in addition to the Columbia Valley UGA, has included:

1. The Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee met approximately 40 times between March 2006 and October 2007 in the effort of developing the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan. The Advisory Committee typically provided a period for public comments at their meetings.
2. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department, in conjunction with the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee and planning consultant Studio Cascade, hosted a series of four visioning workshops the week of June 5 through June 8, 2006. These meetings were held in Deming, Kendall, Glacier and Maple Falls.
3. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department, in conjunction with the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee and planning consultant Studio Cascade, hosted a Kendall Small Town workshop on September 15 and 16, 2006.
4. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department, in conjunction with the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee and planning consultant Studio Cascade, hosted a Columbia Valley Urban Growth Area (UGA) Workshop in Kendall on October 14, 2006.
5. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department, in conjunction with the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee and planning consultant Studio Cascade, hosted a Foothills Subarea Plan Policy Workshop in Deming on November 16, 2006.
6. Whatcom County Planning and Development Services Department, in conjunction with the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee and planning consultant Studio Cascade, circulated a questionnaire in October and November 2006. The results of the questionnaire are presented in the Foothills Subarea Plan Questionnaire Report (January 2007).
7. A Draft Foothills Subarea Plan rollout meeting was held on October 15, 2007 at the Kendall Elementary School.
8. The Planning Commission held a work session on the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan (October 2007 version) on November 29, 2007.

9. In December 2007, the Planning and Development Services Department determined that a supplemental environmental impact statement (SEIS) would be prepared for the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan and alternatives. The Draft SEIS was issued on August 1, 2008. A public hearing on the Draft SEIS was held on September 4, 2008. The Final SEIS was issued on December 19, 2008.
10. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan on January 15, 2009. The Planning Commission held related work sessions on January 29 and February 19, 2009.
11. The Whatcom County Council held a public hearing relating to the UGA status as an urban growth area, and whether it should be designated as a "limited area of more intensive rural development" (LAMIRD), on March 17, 2009.
12. The Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee reconvened for three additional meetings in April and May of 2009 to provide additional input relating to employment growth and UGA boundaries.

## **Proposal**

### **Comprehensive Plan Changes**

- The Columbia Valley UGA would decrease in size from approximately 1,489 to 1,339 acres. The proposal would remove approximately 190 acres in the Kendall area from the UGA and add about 40 to the east side of the UGA, for a net decrease in size of about 150 acres.
- The Subarea Plan, which would be reviewed and approved in the 2010 comprehensive plan amendment cycle, includes three “planned” land use designations and one “potential” land use designation associated with the Columbia Valley UGA. These land use designations are described below.
  - A Planned Town Center comprehensive plan designation on approximately 44 acres to accommodate commercial, a variety of residential housing types, and institutional uses near the center of the UGA. There is also an associated policy that supports rezoning the Planned Town Center to General Commercial or a new Town Center zone.
  - A Planned Urban Residential comprehensive plan designation on approximately 120 acres and an associated policy that would support rezoning the Planned Urban Residential comprehensive plan designation from Rural Forestry to Urban Residential 4 dwellings/acre (UR4).<sup>1</sup>
  - A Planned Light Impact Industrial comprehensive plan designation on approximately 40 acres north of Limestone Rd. and an associated policy to consider rezoning this area to Light Impact Industrial (LII) when impacts and mitigation have been identified.
  - Potential Planned Light Impact Industrial comprehensive plan designations on an additional 120 acres generally north of Limestone Rd. Associated policies consider designating up to 40 acres of this 120 acre area as Planned Light Impact Industrial when certain conditions are met and rezoning this area to LII when impacts and mitigation have been identified.

**2029/31 Population Allocation:** 5,000<sup>2</sup>

**2029/31 Employment Allocation:** 545

<sup>1</sup> The Whatcom County Planning Commission recommended rezoning approximately 80 acres of this 120 acres from Rural Forestry to UR4 on May 28, 2009 (file # CMP 2006-00005).

<sup>2</sup> The FSPAC recommended a population allocation of 7,053 (Draft Foothills Subarea Plan p. 6). The County Council passed a motion on March 17, 2009 to use a population projection of 5,000 for the review process.

## UGA Size

<i>UGA Additions/Subtractions</i>		
1	Existing UGA Size (Total Acres)	1,489
2	Total Acres Added (or Subtracted) to Accommodate Population	(109)
3	Total Acres Added (or Subtracted) to Accommodate Employment	(41) <sup>3</sup>
4	<b>Proposed UGA Size (Total Acres)</b>	1,339

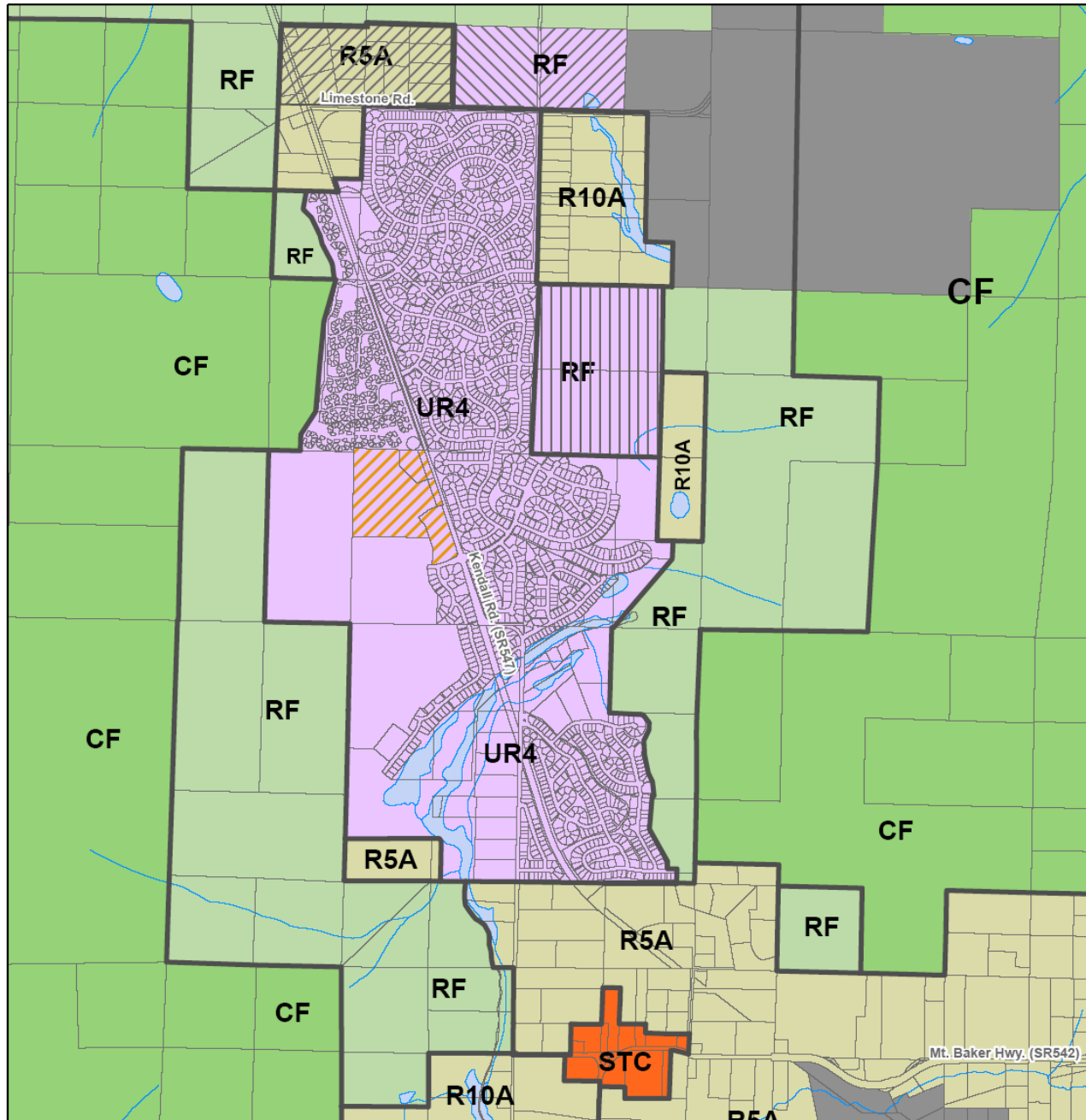
<sup>3</sup> The 41 acres represents the Small Town Commercial zone in Kendall that is proposed for removal from the Columbia Valley UGA.

## Land Capacity Analysis

The land capacity analysis is based upon the UGA boundaries recommended by the FSPAC in the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan. It is not based upon the existing UGA boundaries.

<i>Residential Land Capacity Analysis Results</i>		
1	<b>Gross</b> Developable Acres	594
2	<b>Net Developable Acres Available</b> (after reductions for critical areas, public uses, infrastructure, and market factor)	233
3	<b>Net Developable Acres Needed</b> to Accommodate Population Growth Request	123
4	<b>Surplus (Deficit) in Net Acres</b>	110
5	Population Growth <b>Capacity</b> of UGA request (based on GMCC adopted land supply methodology)	2,055
6	Population Growth <b>Allocation</b> Requested	1,076
7	<b>Surplus (Deficit) in Population</b>	979
8	Average <b>Net Density</b> Used in Land Capacity Analysis	4.0 dwelling units/acre
9	<p>Comments: The Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee issued several recommendations relating to land capacity at their May 19, 2009 meeting, which are summarized below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The Columbia Valley UGA as presented in the Draft Foothills Subarea Plan is properly sized to accommodate growth (i.e. should not be reduced in size).</li> <li>b. However, if the County removes land from the UGA, the County should place land removed in an urban reserve designation to meet future needs.</li> <li>c. The committee recommended keeping prime developable land located in a sewer service area within the UGA. Additionally, the committee recommended criteria to guide the process of removing land from the UGA, <u>if</u> the County requires such removal.</li> </ul>	

<i>Commercial/Industrial Land Capacity Analysis Results</i>		
1	<b>Gross Developable Acres</b>	101
2	<b>Net Developable Acres Available</b> <i>(after reductions for critical areas, public uses, infrastructure, and market factor)</i>	48
3	<b>Net Developable Acres Needed</b> to Accommodate Employment Growth Request	52
4	<b>Surplus (Deficit) in Net Acres</b>	(4)
5	<b>Employment Growth Capacity</b>	418
6	<b>Employment Growth Allocation</b> Requested	455
7	<b>Surplus (Deficit) in Employment</b>	(37)
8	Average <b>Floor/Area Ratio</b> Used in Land Capacity Analysis	0.19
9	<p>Comments: The employment growth allocation of 455 new jobs was recommended by the Foothills Subarea Plan Advisory Committee on May 13, 2009. There was indication that committee members wanted a higher allocation, but 455 was the highest employment allocation studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the 10-Year Urban Growth Area Review.</p> <p>The Advisory Committee recommended policies to adopt mixed use zoning in the Columbia Valley UGA in the future, expand the commercial and light industrial land supply in the future to reflect a higher jobs to population ratio, and address related economic issues on May 19, 2009.</p>	



**Legend**

**Comp. Plan Designations**

- Urban Growth Area
- Rural
- Small Town
- Rural Forestry
- Commercial Forestry
- MRL
- Planned Town Center

- Planned Light Impact Industrial
- Potential Planned Light Impact Industrial
- Planned Urban Residential

**Title 20 Zoning Designations**

- COMMERCIAL**
- STC - Small Town Commercial
- URBAN RESIDENTIAL**
- UR4 - Urban Residential 4 Units/Acre
- RURAL**
- R5A - Rural 1 Unit/5 Acres
- R10A - Rural 1 Unit/10 Acres
- RESOURCES**
- AG - Agriculture
- CF - Commercial Forestry
- RF - Rural Forestry
- MRL - Mineral Resource Lands (overlay zone)

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